

# **What is it like to be an Adolescent with a Speech, Language and Communication Impairment (SLCI)?**

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Reena Gogna

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# STUDENT DECLARATION

University of East London

School of Psychology

Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

## Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is appended.

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# Abstract

This study explores the views and perspectives of adolescents with a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI). With over a million children suffering from SLCI in the UK today it is more than ever necessary to unravel the mechanics of what many in the field refer to as the *hidden disability*. Whilst there is a wealth of research, evaluating the effectiveness of speech and language therapy, there is a paucity of data and analysis directly exploring the views of adolescents with an SLCI. This oversight must be addressed if researchers and practitioners are to work together to improve the wellbeing of young people with a speech and language impairment. This is particularly important for the adolescent age group as SLCIs act as a double burden at a transitional stage of physical and psychological development.

With this in mind, this study aims to link the adolescents' perspective on their impairment with their educational experiences and to highlight the key factors that promote their wellbeing. Embedded within a broad social-constructionist framework, this study devises a qualitative, interview-based approach to elicit the views of seven adolescents (five males and two females). The aim of this approach is to consolidate rich data on their world-views and perspectives which can then be analysed thematically. The focus of this approach will be their self-awareness, their perception of being included, and the role of their Speech and Language Centre (SLC –a specialist provision within their secondary school) in addressing their needs.

Upon completion of the interviewing process and the thematic analysis, this study results in a total of nine key findings that (a) link adolescents' perception of their impairment with their general sense of inclusion and wellbeing, and (b) demonstrate how those adolescents develop resiliency skills to cope in their mainstream environment. If anything, the findings underscore the importance of listening to young people's 'voices' and of engaging directly with this vulnerable and under-represented age group.

The researcher believes her own experience with living with a hearing impairment and her work in different school contexts gave her a privileged relationship with the adolescents interviewed and a broad perspective on SLCI. Whilst the study is small-scale and purely qualitative, precluding any broad generalisations, the researcher hopes that it will be a springboard for further research in the field and recommendations for practice.

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# Key Terminology

The researcher has included definitions for key terms highlighted in the thesis.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Adolescence	Adolescence is the transition between childhood and adulthood where importance is attached to establishing the self (Larson & Wilson, 2004). Physiological, sexual and emotional changes are most evident during this stage (Larson et al, 2004).
Social Competence	Social competence is widely conceptualized as effectiveness in social interaction (Rose-Krasnor, 1997).
Self –Esteem	Self-esteem is the extent to which one values oneself (Cooley, 1902; Coopersmith, 1967).

Emotional and Social Wellbeing	<p>The National Clinical Institute for Excellence (NICE, 2009)'s definition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Happiness and confidence (emotional wellbeing)</li> <li>2. Control and autonomy, resilience, attentiveness and a sense of involvement with others (psychological wellbeing)</li> <li>3. The ability to have good relationships with others and to avoid disruptive behaviour, delinquency, violence or bullying (social wellbeing).</li> </ol>
Every Child Matters (ECM)	<p>The ECM initiative was published in 2003. It covers children and young adults up to the age of 19, or 24 for those with disabilities. The aim of the initiative was for every child, whatever his/her background to have the support they need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be healthy</li> <li>• Stay safe</li> <li>• Enjoy and achieve]</li> <li>• Make a positive contribution</li> <li>• Achieve economic well-being</li> </ul>
Self-concept	<p>Self-concept refers to how people think about themselves (Steinberg &amp; Morris, 2001).</p>

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)	Cooper and Ticknaz (2007) described SEBD as an umbrella term incorporating a wide range of behaviours ranging from 'acting out' behaviours such as aggression and non-compliant behaviours, to 'acting in' behaviours such as social withdrawal, anxiety, depression and self harm.
Speech, Language and Communication Impairment (SLCI)	The term SLCI has been taken from the speech and language centre of where the research took place. The definition they used is "...All pupils with a SLCI have difficulties in comprehending/understanding spoken language and expressing their ideas orally. This will impact on all areas of the curriculum."
Resilience/Resiliency	Resilience can be defined as the process of positive adaptation in the face of adversity (Luthar, S., Cicchetti, D. & Becker, B. (2000). Specifically, traits that related to resilience included high self-esteem and self-concept as well as the abilities to reflect positively when problem solving (Place, M., Reynolds, J., Cousins, A. & O'Neill, S. (2002).

DSM-IV	The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and provides a common language and standard criteria for the classification of mental disorders.
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	SEN refers to children with learning difficulties or disabilities that prevent them from accessing the curriculum.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“A hidden connection is stronger than an obvious one”*

*—Heraclitus of Ephesus (540-480 BC)*

This study is devoted to understanding the impact of speech, language and communication impairments (SLCI) on adolescents. Research has demonstrated that nearly half of the children entering schools in some areas of high socio-economic disadvantage have speech and/or language difficulties (Locke, Ginsberg, and Peers, 2002). With over a million children suffering from such impairments in the UK today (Gross, 2012), it is more than ever necessary to unravel the mechanics of what many in the field of educational psychology refer to as the “*invisible disability*” (Patchell and Hand, 1993). The long term implications of this disability on social and emotional wellbeing have been well documented (see for example AFASIC 2012).

Whilst evocative, however, the *invisible disability* label is deeply problematic. Hidden from whom? Of course, and from the standpoint of educational professionals, SLCIs do not always present obvious or ‘outward’ signs. They are in that sense ‘hidden’. But what about the adolescents themselves? What level of understanding do adolescents with SLCI have of their own impairment? More importantly how do adolescents relate to this awareness? How does this impact upon their everyday lives and the difficult and transformative period that is adolescence?

This research will explore these themes in turn and highlight that adolescents with SLCI in fact display a high level of awareness of their impairment. Focussing on a sample of adolescents diagnosed with SLCI and currently attending a Speech and Language Centre (SLC) in a secondary school, this study will investigate their experiences within school and how they link their wellbeing to some of these experiences (Ehren, 2002; Larson and McKinley, 2003). The research questions

addressed are as follows:

1. What are adolescents' experiences of having a speech, language and communication impairment?
2. What are the experiences of adolescents with SLCI of education?
3. What are the key factors that enable the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI in education?

The aim of this introductory chapter is to provide a definition and historical overview of specific language impairment (SLI) (Section 1.1). This will include a discussion of the evolution of the concept SLI as well as its prevalence and stages in terms of language and communication. Section 1.2 will then highlight the timeliness and appropriateness of this research by providing information on the institutional context in the United Kingdom and discussing recent local and national policy initiatives. Section 1.3 provides an overview of the role of the Educational Psychologist and the relevance of this work to their professional practice. This section will also include a brief presentation of the researcher's background and the rationale for her chosen topic. The chapter concludes by introducing the chapter breakdown of this research.

## **1.1 Defining Speech and Language Impairments (SLI)**

As mentioned above this current study will delve into the complexities of the "hidden disability" and the expression is used as an umbrella term to denote various Speech, Language and Communication Impairments (SLCI). More specifically, however, this study adopts the definition of SLCI used by the specific SLC where the research was conducted, namely that "[...] all pupils with an SLCI have difficulties in comprehending/understanding spoken language and expressing their ideas orally." Moreover, and given the succinctness of the definition above, the researcher has also found it useful to rely on the definitions

provided by Baird, Norbury, Tomblin, and Bishop (2008) –namely:

1. Children with SLCI evidence delays/difficulties in language early in their development
2. Children with SLCI usually have difficulties in the core areas of language functioning: phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and communication
3. There is no single pattern of language profile that characterizes children with SLCI (beyond some deficit in receptive and/or expressive language).
4. The strengths and difficulties of children with SLCI are expected to change over time.

To provide a more informed and contextual definition of SLCI, however, the sections below (1.1.1. and 1.1.2.) will present the historical evolution of the term and a brief discussion around its prevalence within language development.

### ***1.1.1 SLI: a historical perspective***

Language impairments were first acknowledged over 150 years ago (Leonard, 1998). Since then, terminology and definitions have evolved with research (Leonard, 1998 and Weiner, 1986). The first terms widely used focussed on the ‘speechlessness’ (or ‘aphasia’ in Greek) of patients and terms such as ‘congenital aphasia’<sup>1</sup>, were popular from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, persisting well into the 20<sup>th</sup> (Vaisse, 1866). By the 1950s, definitions including ‘developmental aphasia’<sup>2</sup> and ‘infantile aphasia’<sup>3</sup> were still widely used in academia and practice (Van Gelder, Kennedy and Lagaite, 1952). Terminology relating to language comprehension difficulties nonetheless started to change at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from aphasia to a greater emphasis on deafness –see for instance ‘congenital word deafness’<sup>4</sup> (in Yearsley, 1911).

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<sup>1</sup> Congenital aphasia refers to children who are most severely linguistically delayed (Einson, 1986)

<sup>2</sup> Developmental aphasia refers to severely delayed linguistic development (Rosenthal, 1972)

<sup>3</sup> Infantile aphasia refers to a failure in development of speech (Van Gelder , Kennedy and Lagaite, 1952)

<sup>4</sup> Congenital word deafness refers to “a case in which the sense of hearing being otherwise normal there is failure to appreciate the significance of sounds” Yearsley (p.2, 1911)

By the 1970-80's the terminology of 'aphasia' had been phased out and the term 'speech and language impairment' (SLI) emerged in various fields, notably in psychology, neuroscience and medicine. This resulted in further adaptations of the term, including 'developmental language delay'<sup>5</sup> (Bishop, 1997) and 'specific speech and language difficulties' (Dockrell, George, Lindsay, Roux, 1997). The term 'specific speech language impairment' (SSLI) emerged in the 1980s (Leonard, 1981), and is currently used within the research literature and clinical practice. A good definition of SSLI can be found in Leonard, 1998, who describes individuals "[...] who show a significant limitation in language ability" and where "factors usually accompanying language learning problems - such as hearing impairment, low non-verbal intelligence test scores, and neurological damage - are not evident" (Leonard, 1998, p3).

### **1.1.2 The stages of language development and prevalence of SSLI**

Whilst the ability to communicate in infancy is fundamental, the mechanisms of language acquisition are unclear (Smith, Cowie, & Blades, 1998). Having said this, most children acquire language rapidly and the stages of communication are broadly defined as follows:

- Babies initially communicate their needs to caregivers through crying and later (6 to 9 months) through babbling (Smith et al., 1998)
- From 9 months, infants develop the ability to share attention with others and begin to understand and use single words (*ibid*)
- At 18-20 months, infants begin to put together two-word utterances (Nelson, 1973)
- From 24 months, three- and four-word utterances are produced and there is a rapid increase in the use of the rules of grammar (Smith et al., 1998)
- From the age of 3 years, the child's speech includes a range of vocabulary where they converse with others (*ibid*)

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<sup>5</sup> This describes a mild or severe delay in language development (Bishop, 1997)

The ability to use narrative and increasingly complex sentences develops and children begin to learn to read and write. At a cognitive level, language use becomes meaningful as well as complex and on a social and emotional level, awareness of social uses of language are developed. The development of language continues into adolescence (Nippold, 1993) with individuals developing sophisticated language skills such as adapting to the needs of their interlocutors (Larson & McKinley, 1998).

For some children, however, acquiring language skills is a struggle and important language milestones may be delayed. These milestones include features of phonology (sounds), syntax (grammar), semantics (meaning) and pragmatics (social use of language) (see Appendix 17 for further breakdown of key terms). Measuring the prevalence of these cases is however complex, and depends on how the diagnostic criterion is applied and on the age of the children studied. For instance, figures from the American Psychiatric Association (1994) using the DSM-IV classification suggest prevalence rates of 5% for expressive language difficulties and 3% for expressive and receptive language difficulties (respectively defined as difficulties in expressing oneself verbally and in understanding what has been said). It has been estimated that 40% to 50% of children with SLI have persistent language difficulties (Law, Boyle, Harris, Harkness, & Nye, 2000), providing a prevalence rate of approximately 3% amongst adolescents and young adults (McKinley & Larson, 1989).

## **1.2 Context and Background to the research**

The main support available to children and young people with SLCI has been enhanced provision in mainstream schools which have been termed 'language units' or 'integrated resources' and for those with complex needs associated with their SLCI, special schools are also an option available. Typically a mainstream school environment will include the provision of support in the unit as well as the mainstream school.

Law et al (2006) undertook a national scoping study of provision for the full range of children with speech and language difficulties in England and Wales. This reported that language needs identified that 'units' now often labelled as language resources continue to be a popular form of specialist support, but with a continuing imbalance of resources in favour of younger children (Lindsay et al, 2002). However, a majority of speech and language therapy provision at each age was made to mainstream schools rather than language units. Models of speech and language therapy support are changing from clinic based services to school based provision (Law et al, 2000). This shift from direct work in clinics to direct work in schools (direct or indirect through consultations with staff like teaching assistants) reflects a similar pattern of the development of professional practice undertaken by EPs in the 1970s and 1980s (Gillham, 1978). Generally units are attached to mainstream schools and resourced provision is integrated into the school but these are interchangeable. An increasing number of children are dual registered, when individuals can time both in specialist as well as mainstream. As a provision, special schools provision is small but is available for those with complex and severe SLCI. In the United Kingdom, there are a number of special schools that have developed skills in working with older children with SLCI over the years but this knowledge is fragmented and not widely available (Bishop, 1997).

### ***1.2.1 Why listen to children and young people?***

Understanding the status of children within the educational context and broader society is important as it informs perceptions and attitudes towards SLCI. This is no easy task as the question is ontological and raises epistemological issues. Ritter (2007), for example, comments that children and young people are often viewed both as 'agents and inheritors of their own development' and 'objects to be shaped for defined purposes' (p.73). Cultural heritage and evolutions in society play an important role in shaping these perceptions. In the West, for instance, perceptions are changing from the traditionally dominant view of children as passive recipients of information and knowledge to children as 'trusted agents of

their own destiny' (*ibid*).

The researcher fully endorses this shift in perception and focus and believes working interactively with children and young people can yield more promising strategies. In doing so, she is in line with the general momentum of positive psychology. Kragh-Miller and Isbell (2011), for example, enumerate the positive factors to engaging with young people in qualitative research:

“[...] interviewing children provides us as adults with information of how it feels to be a small child here and now, in the present. The interviews remind us that we have an obligation to give the children we care for happy childhoods, so they can grow up to become both well educated and healthy adults.” (p.27)

The focus on wellbeing should never be lost from sight -it is important to consider children and young people's views so they feel they are making a positive contribution to their environment (DEEWR, 2009). This objective is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UK Children Act of 1989 and the more recent UK Department for Education Green Paper (2011). In practice, however, Rose (2005) and Armstrong, Galloway and Tomblinson (1993) both report a consistent failure to include adolescent views in decision making processes. In section 1.2.2, highlights why it is particularly important to include the voices of children with special educational needs (SEN).

### **1.2.2 Why listen to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)?**

Whilst research points to the obvious benefits of listening to the views of children with SEN (e.g. Todd, 2003), studies indicate that their opinions are in fact rarely asked for. When consultations are held, these are often tokenistic and their outcomes are largely ignored. Moreover, professional discourses can lead to the opposite desired effects, namely 'silencing' individuals with SEN and reducing them to passive recipients of specialist services.

As such, Todd (2003) stresses the importance of empowering adolescents with SEN and encourages their participation in decision-making processes concerning their education. Todd (2003)'s premise is that young people can provide key insight into their own strengths and weaknesses, and share their views on interventions which in their minds are likely to yield successful outcomes. In addition, Roulstone and McLeod (2011) advocate the importance of listening to young people with SEN, for the simple reason that it provides professionals with a privileged outlet to understand the full extent of their speech and language difficulties.

Of course, studies have also explored the views of teachers, parents and other professionals in understanding the views of young people with SLI (Lindsay and Dockrell, 2000). Dockrell and Lindsay (2001), for example, interviewed the teachers of children with SLCI and reported the challenges they faced as a result of the children's difficulties and the teachers' limited knowledge of speech and language problems. Investigation of the parental perspectives of children with SLCI have shed light on some aspects of SLCI and offered potentially valuable guides to service provision (Lindsay and Dockrell 2004). However, adult perceptions of adolescents often differ substantially from what they themselves say (Greene and Hill 2005). In the end, researching the perspectives of children and adolescents 'straight from the source' offers the possibility of providing unmitigated and more comprehensive evidence of their own beliefs and views. As a point of methodology, therefore, this study will aim to collate evidence acquired directly from the adolescents themselves in a series of interviews.

## **1.3 The Educational Psychologist's current role and position in addressing young people's needs with SLCI**

### ***1.3.1 The psychological and legislative context in the United Kingdom relating to the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of young people***

Children's Services are undergoing a "fundamental and radical period of change" (DfES, 2004). There has been a spate of government initiatives over the last ten years surrounding the provision of children services and these have had a significant impact on adolescents with SLCN.

Recent initiatives including the Bercow (2008) and Rose (2009) reports have highlighted a growing 'sense of isolation' for parents of adolescents with SLCN, and a perception of being uninformed about the diagnosis of their child. The recommendations of the Bercow report resulted in the appointment of a 'communication champion' (Jean Gross), the development of a 'Better Communication Action Plan' and subsequent organisation of a 'National Year' in 2011 to deliver objectives and meet the needs of young people with SLI. This campaign sought to address parents' challenges in accessing support for their child –however its primary objective was pedagogical and aimed to share the findings of the report nationally to commissioners, local authorities, primary care trusts and schools.

Both reports also highlighted the importance of early intervention and the critical yet evolving nature of professionals' roles in fostering the inclusion of views from young people with disabilities. These findings mirrored those of the Every Child Matters agenda (2003), which illustrated the importance of professionals working together to facilitate the provision of specialist support for young people. In this agenda, Educational Psychologists (EP) arguably have a pivotal role to play. Indeed, EPs combine a professional skillset with a psychological background specifically designed to promote effective learning experiences for children with

SEN –the ultimate goal being to enhance those children’s emotional, social, cognitive and physical wellbeing (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005). EPs also provide support and advice for teachers, and speech and language therapists, and research has underscored their effectiveness in supporting this ‘marginalised and inequitably funded group’ (p.2, Patchell and Treloar, 1997).

The EP profession, however, is adapting to the ever-changing institutional landscape. Research indicates the profession should continue to drive this momentum towards greater flexibility and versatility (Booker, 2005) and also expand their role to working within multi-agency teams (Cameron and Monsen, 2005). In the next section, the researcher explores how the changing environments of schools have progressed and how this has implications for the EP.

### ***1.3.2 Changing Role of EP and working with education professionals***

Since the Academies Bill became an Act (July 2010), an increasing number of schools in England are now academies. Academies have access to central funding and are as such funded differently from maintained schools. Previously, local authorities managed funding on the schools’ behalf but with the new Act, academies can now control those budgets themselves. Schools operating under this system operate a ‘buy-in’ service from education professionals, and this has forced EPs to expand their expertise and competitiveness.

These organisational changes have nonetheless led to some teething issues. Given the size of a typical academy school, for instance, a child with a speech and language disability can easily become lost in the system if the appropriate support is unavailable. Additionally, diagnosing children with speech and language difficulties has become a more difficult exercise given recent cuts to the overall number of speech and language therapists (Gross, 2012). If anything, these changes and challenges have accentuated the importance of the EP profession in streamlining and ‘joining up’ services to improve outcomes for young people with SEN. Research suggests that the future role of the EP should include enhanced

preventative intervention and joint working, through for example uniting EPs, Speech and Language Therapy services and CAMHS (Green Paper, 2011).

### ***1.3.3 The Researcher's background and research rationale***

As discussed above, recent government initiatives have changed the organisational and financial landscape in UK schools, which has had a significant impact on the provision of Children Services and the role of the EP profession. Given this transient backdrop the researcher thought it may be useful to highlight her own professional background to anchor the framework of this study. It is self-evident that the background and experiences of a researcher will have an impact on the research they carry out (see for example Creswell, 2009).

The researcher is currently in employment in a UK Local Authority as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and is also completing a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at the University of East London (UEL).

More personally, the researcher was born with a severe hearing impairment which means she had to face a number of challenges in her personal and professional life. She believes this has given her a unique perspective on barriers to learning within the education system. Convinced that education is a major force in increasing life options, the researcher developed interests in understanding and breaking down those complex barriers and has developed interests the field of adolescents and with SLCI and "hidden disabilities." She very much hopes that the findings in this current study may add a contribution to the field of educational psychology and assist professionals working with adolescents with SLCI.

More academically, the researcher adheres to the general tenets of social constructionism, or the idea that meaning and social experiences are built both with ideas and material forces. As such, she is fascinated with the role of language in creating conceptual systems and the idea that both meaning and experience are 'negotiated' by language in everyday social interaction (see for example Willig, 2008). This underscores her determination to ensure children's voices are heard –

their voices constituting the most important tool to breaking their isolation and to overcome their 'hidden disability.' With this current study she sees a timely opportunity to explore an area which she deems under-researched in the field of educational psychology.

Furthermore, social constructionism proposes the idea that there are many different versions of the self as they are the product of the relationships we hold with other people. For instance, 'who am I?' reflects that many different versions of 'you' based on the different social interactions we hold in different situations. Therefore in relation to our identity, we hold many different identities based on who we are with, where we are and the situation we are in. Therefore as a social constructionist, the researcher believes that individuals therefore construct their own versions of reality.

The researcher herself has chosen to reject the medical model of disability that holds the belief that people with disabilities require medical treatment in order to be cured. Instead, in line with the epistemological position the researcher beholds that social model is closely related to her perceptions of her own disability- that it is society's responsibility to change its values and practices in order to remove the barriers to participation that discriminate against people with disabilities. The understanding and acceptance of the social model of disability by people without disabilities builds a community of allies that speeds the progress of attitudinal change. This in turn will have a positive impact on creating a barrier-free society that will gain the full benefit of contributions of all individuals, and in which people with disabilities will embrace in all areas of their lives. For years now this social model of disability has enabled the researcher to confront countless situations of exclusion and discrimination particularly in school. Thus it has enabled the researcher a vision of individuals being free from the constraints of disability (oppression). The researcher believes that the social model has played a central role in promoting disabled people's individual self-worth and collective identity.

This has important implications for the research given that the young people's experiences are central to this research which will help share and challenge the views and knowledge of those around them. This research promotes the

importance of making an example of young people's views in order to work towards challenging the views and opening the eyes of those working with them in education.

Traditionally, SLCI has been studied with a focus on psycholinguistics (Leonard, 1998). Recently, there has been some research that has examined social, emotional and behavioural variables associated with language impairment (Redmond and Rice, 1998). However, and as mentioned above, research among adolescents with SLI is lacking: research shows that there is even less known about the perceptions and views of the adolescents with a SLCI (Bercow Report, 2008). This is surprising and unfortunate as adolescence is a time of significant social and emotional development with impacts the rest of one's adult life (Waddell, 2002).

In short, this study is both timely and relevant given the nomination of 2011 as the 'year of communication' (Gross, 2009) and the transformative changes currently occurring in the EP profession. At a time of relative uncertainty, this research hopes to explore how EPs could best support adolescents with SLCI via creative and joint work strategies, developing specialisms and through working systemically with other professionals.

#### ***1.3.4 Summary of Chapters in the current study***

Chapter One provided the context of this research and its rationale including its relevance. The definition of SLCI is introduced and some important characteristics of this disorder are described. The theoretical accounts of the relationship between social and emotional wellbeing and SLCI are also presented. Following this, the context of this research's relationship to the Government's initiatives is discussed including the relevant role of the EP.

Chapter Two will present the literature that provides the theoretical frameworks that underpin the current research. In particular, there is a focus on adolescence,

friendships, the pupil's perspective and the long term impact on social and emotional wellbeing.

Chapter Three will discuss the methodology employed and describe how the research was carried out; including the justification for the methodology chosen and the rationale behind the chosen approach is provided.

Chapter Four will discuss the findings from the interviews and thematic analysis is used to identify core themes and sub-themes.

Chapter Five will provide a forum for reflecting on the strengths and limitations including a discussion for how the current study could be improved as well as the implications for educational psychology practice.

In the next section, Chapter Two provides a thorough review of the relevant research relating to SLCI and theoretical frameworks that underpin the current study are explored.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review was to identify the key areas linked adolescents' wellbeing and their SLCI. Firstly, this chapter presents the processes undertaken for the systematic search of relevant literature relating to SLCI including the background context to the current research. Secondly, a critical review of the research helped to collate the nine key areas in the field of research relating to children and young people with SLCI and assisted the formation of the research questions. In particular, these key areas helped to feature the relevance of the current research. Thirdly, the researcher explored the theoretical frameworks underpinning the current research linking to the key themes as well as broadcasting the relevance of investigating the views of adolescents with SLCI. In addition, this chapter reviewed studies that centred on the voice of the child including outcomes discussed for adolescents with SLCI with regards to social and emotional wellbeing. The current research explored of adolescents with SLCI views concerning their educational experiences, wellbeing, and sources of support including future aspirations. It was important for the researcher to identify the key factors that enabled wellbeing that allowed adolescents to cope in secondary school. As Patchell & Treloar (1997) commented with reference to adolescents:

“Given the negative social, academic and vocational prospects they face, pupils with language disorders remain for the most part, an inequitably funded and marginalised group.” (p.15)

## 2.1 Details of systematic search

The researcher conducted a systematic search of the literature using key terms from the research including 'SLCI', 'emotional wellbeing' and 'wellbeing', in order to locate relevant publications to inform the current research. The researcher

reviewed Athens, Swetswise and EBSCOHOST and the worldwide web (27.07.11) where several search terms were inputted. Firstly, “*children’s experiences of speech and language impairment*” returned 29890 articles. To narrow this, an additional term was used, “*quality of life for young people with speech and language impairment*” which returned 1 article. To make the search more specific to the current research, the terms “*speech and language impairment in adolescents*” were inserted and this generated 19 articles. Furthermore terms like “*understanding speech and language impairment*” returned 19 articles, “*emotional well-being and language impairment*” returned 2 articles, and “*emotional wellbeing and language impairment*” returned 8 articles respectively. Using Swetswise, the term “*speech and language units*” returned 97 articles, of which 2 were used as they proved to be most relevant to the research study and “*young people and language provision*”, generated 7 articles. The researcher did not specify time boundaries as she wanted to keep the search as open as possible in order to ensure the best articles were retrieved.

Table 2.1: Details of the Systematic Search of the literature

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010</b>
<b>Databases searched</b>	Academic Search Complete, ERIC, PsycINFO, PsychArticle, Communication and Mass Media Complete, CINAHL Plus
<b>Key words used</b>	<i>“self-esteem and speech impairment”</i>
<b>Results</b>	14 records

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010</b>
<b>Databases searched</b>	Academic Search Complete, ERIC, PsycINFO, PsychArticle, Communication and Mass Media Complete, CINAHL Plus
<b>Key words used</b>	<i>“secondary school and speech and language impairment”</i>
<b>Results</b>	24 records

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010</b>
<b>Databases searched</b>	Academic Search Complete, ERIC, PsycINFO, PsychArticle, Communication and Mass Media Complete, CINAHL Plus
<b>Key words used</b>	<i>“adolescents and language impairment”</i>
<b>Results</b>	17 records

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010</b>
<b>Databases searched</b>	Academic Search Complete, ERIC, PsycINFO, PsychArticle, Communication and Mass Media Complete, CINAHL Plus
<b>Key words used</b>	<i>“adolescents and speech impairment”</i>
<b>Results</b>	102 records
<b>Search Date</b>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010</b>
<b>Databases searched</b>	Academic Search Complete, ERIC, PsycINFO, PsychArticle, Communication and Mass Media Complete, CINAHL Plus
<b>Key words used</b>	<i>“adolescents’ experiences of language impairments”</i>
<b>Results</b>	61683 records
<b>Advanced search inclusion criteria (to help the researcher identify the key articles and reduce the number of searches returned which was not relevant)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only articles between 2000-2010</li> <li>- Involving humans</li> <li>- Peer reviewed articles</li> <li>- Children aged 12-19</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	21 records

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2011</b>
<b>Databases searched</b>	ESBOS
<b>Key words used</b>	<i>“children’s experiences of speech and language impairment”</i>
<b>Results</b>	29890 records

Advanced search inclusion criteria (to help the researcher identify the key articles and reduce the number of searches returned which was not relevant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only articles between 2000-2010</li> <li>- Involving humans</li> <li>- Peer reviewed articles</li> <li>- Adolescents</li> </ul>
Results	19 records

Search Date	Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2011
Databases searched	Swetswise
Key words used	<i>“speech and language units”</i>
Results	97 records

Search Date	Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2011
Databases searched	Swetswise
Key words used	<i>“young people and language provision”</i>
Results	7 records

Through the processes of the systematic key term searches, the researcher read the abstracts and articles and identified the ones that were most relevant. Additionally, the researcher operated the use of an advanced search inclusion criteria (see table 2.1) to minimise irrelevant articles. Furthermore, the researcher entered various key terms in the worldwide web search engine to widen the scope of the literature review. This generated a significant amount of information which partly confirmed the relevance of some of the journals found but a majority of the information was disregarded as it did not demonstrate the quality required for inclusion in the literature review. In addition, the researcher contacted some of the leading practitioners in the field of SLCI. These included Dr Olympia Palikara (Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Education, London) and Professor Susan Roulstone (who leads a team of researchers at the Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit, North Bristol NHS Trust and the University of West of England, Bristol, UK) whom both provided access to their research and journal articles.

## 2.2 Selection of Literature

Having reviewed the abstracts which were generated from the systematic and hand searches, the researcher made decisions about what articles to include in her literature review. Sixteen items are included in the literature review that the researcher believed were highly relevant to the field and provided an indication of current thinking and popular opinion. In addition the researcher took it upon herself to include references to wider background readings that related to the key areas discussed.

During the literature selection, the researcher decided on its relevance and quality of the article. The researcher then grouped the literature into four key areas and these are as follows:

1. The importance of including the child's voice
2. Research developed linking to adolescence and the experiences of adolescents with a SLCI
3. Research about peer groups and establishing the role of friendships including the impact of friendships on young people with SLCI
4. The long term impact of SLCI on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people

An overview of the research reviewed is provided below in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Overview of the literature reviewed

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Location of Research</b>	<b>Participant/Sample information</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Findings</b>
1	Bercow (2008)	The Bercow Report: A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs	United Kingdom	The recommendations made are the culmination of ten months of extensive evidence gathering and analysis, as well as consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.	Qualitative	This report makes recommendations to Government about the steps it should take to transform provision for and the experiences of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and their families.	<p>During the Review five key themes were identified; issues that need to be addressed for real change and improvement to happen. Recommendations are gathered under these five themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communication is crucial; Early identification and intervention are essential;</li> <li>▪ A continuum of services designed around the family is needed;</li> <li>▪ Joint working is critical; and</li> <li>▪ The current system is characterised by high variability and a lack of equity.</li> </ul>

1	Markham, Laar, Gibbard and Dean (2009)	Children with a speech, language and communication needs: their perceptions of their quality of life.	United Kingdom	Children aged between 6-18 years who attended a mainstream school including language units or a specialist provision for young people with SLCN.	Qualitative	The study aimed to provide a child-centred description of the quality of life experiences of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs	The findings support the development of a quality of life scale for children with speech, language and communication needs.
1	Lindsay, Dockrell, Desforges, Law and Peacey (2010)	Meeting the needs of children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties	United Kingdom	6 Local Authorities (LA) were selected including Primary Care Trusts (PCT).	Qualitative through interviews with senior LA manager for SEN and PCT's senior manager for speech and language therapy.	To examine the efficiency and effectiveness of different arrangements for organising and providing services for children and young people with needs associated with primary, speech, language and communication difficulties.	The study demonstrated a lack of consistency across LAs and PCTs. It is clear leadership from the central government is required to enable consistent approaches for young people with SLCN. A funded action plan has been implemented as a result.
1	Markham and Dean (2006)	Parents' and professionals' perceptions of Quality of Life in children with speech and language difficulty.	United Kingdom	Parents and professional carers of children with speech and language difficulties (SaLD)	Qualitative through use of group interviews.	To provide novel data on the Health-Related Quality of Life of children with SaLD.	Results indicated that the perceptions of those interviewed shared that HRQoL is impacted through SaLD. Thus suggestions were made that included the role speech and language therapist should play in considering wellbeing as well as assessing language difficulties.

1	Owen, Hayett and Roulstone (2004)	Children's views of speech and language therapy in school: consulting children with communication difficulties.	United Kingdom	12 participants aged 6-11 years with communication difficulties.	Qualitative through use of interviews.	To elicit the views of young people with communication difficulties and highlight their rights in making sure their voices are heard.	The interviews elicited valuable information about these children's experiences of speech and language therapy and about their general communication at school and at home.
2	Simkin and Conti-Ramsden (2009)	'I went to a language unit': Adolescents' views on specialist educational provision and their language difficulties.	United Kingdom	139 adolescents with SLI aged 16 who had attended a language unit at 7 years. Including parents and teachers.	Qualitative through use of interviews with adolescents, their parents and teachers	To examine the views of young people and their parents on language units and evaluation of opinions from those young people with language difficulties.	Young people with SLI may require support during adolescence with regard to their continued language difficulties, confidence and self-esteem.
2		Meeting a Need: A Transdisciplinary, School Based Team Approach to Working with Children and Adolescents with Language Disorders. Patchell and Treloar (1997)	Australia	1100 students (72% male and 28% female) accessed services through the Communication Program.	Qualitative	A report on the continuing evolution and success of one transdisciplinary, school based program developed to meet the needs of such students.	Evidence for further research to be done in this area especially with adolescents as they prove to be a marginalised group.
2	Conti-Ramsden and Durkin (2008)	Language and Independence in Adolescents With and Without a History of Specific Language Impairment (SLI)	United Kingdom	Parents of 120 adolescents with a history of SLI as well as 118 typically developing adolescents.	Qualitative and Quantitative	Parental perspectives present an investigation of the impact of language ability on independence.	Adolescents with SLI are less independent than their peers, typically developing adolescents. Level of independence is associated with poor early language and poor later literacy skills.

3	Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2010)	Young people with specific language impairment: A review of social and emotional functioning in adolescence	United Kingdom	A review of research into the social and emotional functioning of adolescents with SLI.	Qualitative	Focus on peer relations, friendships, bullying, emotional and psychiatric difficulties.	Adolescents with SLI tend to be more vulnerable to problems in these domains than are typical adolescents.
3	Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2007)	Language, Social Behaviour, and the Quality of Friendships in Adolescents With and Without a History of Specific Language Impairment	United Kingdom	120 adolescents with SLI and 118 typically developing (TD) adolescents where the effects of nonverbal IQ and prosocial and difficult behaviour, language measures were considered in relation to friendship quality.	Qualitative and Quantitative through use of assessments and interviews and self-report questions.	To distinguish if poor language difficulties are indicative of poor quality of friendships for adolescents.	Longitudinal analyses identified early language difficulties as predictive of poorer friendship quality in adolescence.
4	Lindsay, Dockrell, and Palikara (2010)	Self-esteem of adolescents with specific language impairment as they move from compulsory education	United Kingdom	54 people identified as having SLI at 8 years were followed up at 16 and at 17 years.	Quantitative-two measures of self-esteem were completed including Assessment of language, literacy and non-verbal ability were also conducted.	To examine the self-esteem of young people with a history of SLI at the transition from compulsory education (16 years) to the first year of post-compulsory education, employment and training (17 years).	Evidence for improvements in self-esteem for young people with SLI after they leave school. The study also indicated the importance of addressing self-esteem as a multi-dimensional construct and the consequent necessity to use instruments that assess different domains of self-esteem

4	Mackie and Law (2010)	Pragmatic language and the child with emotional/behavioural difficulties (EBD): a pilot study exploring the interaction between behaviour and communication disability.	United Kingdom	17 participants aged 7-11 years were identified from Educational Psychologist caseloads as having behaviour that is causing concern at school.	Qualitative and Quantitative through interviews and assessments	To investigate the level of association between pragmatic language difficulties and emotional/behavioural difficulties and investigate what explanations there might be for any association.	No significant differences found but there are implications for how language and behaviour difficulties in primary schools are viewed.
4	Rannard and Glenn (2009)	Self-esteem in children with speech and language impairment: an exploratory study of transition from language units to mainstream school.	United Kingdom	16 participants attending language units in the LEA, 8 were ready to move to mainstream without support.	Qualitative and Quantitative through interviews and assessments.	7 students and their teachers completed the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance three times during the school year. Using a pictorial scale format, children in younger age/groups can accurately judge their social academic competence.	The experience of moving from language units to mainstream school appears to have negative effects on child scores for competence and acceptance.
4	Botting and Conti-Ramsden (2000)	Social and behavioural difficulties in children with language impairment.	United Kingdom	242 children with language impairments were measured on different areas of emotional, behavioural and cognitive areas.	Qualitative and Quantitative	Examined the secondary social and behavioural difficulties of a large cohort of children attending language units.	Children with complex receptive and complex language impairments were the most likely to score over the clinical threshold when examined.

4	Conti-Ramsden and Botting (2008)	Emotional Health in adolescents with and without a history of SLI	United Kingdom	139 adolescents with SLI and a peer group of 124 adolescents with normal language development (NLD) in their final year of compulsory education.	Qualitative and Quantitative	Examined the emotional health of adolescents with and without SLI.	A clear increased risk of emotional health symptoms was found for the SLI group on both self and parental report.
4	Wadman, Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2008)	Self-Esteem, Shyness and Sociability in Adolescents with Specific Language Impairment	United Kingdom	54 adolescents with SLI aged 16 and 17 years were compared to 54 adolescents with typical language abilities.	Qualitative and Quantitative	To determine if lower global self-esteem, shyness and low sociability are associated with SLI in adolescence.	The SLI group had significantly lower global self-esteem scores than the group with typical language abilities.

### **2.2.1 Framework for reviewing quality of research**

All the items reviewed in this chapter have been considered in relation to four 'Weight of Evidence' measures proposed by Gough (2007). These measures were designed as a way of assessing evidence presented in research.

A framework developed by Gough (2007) 'Weight of Evidence' measures was utilised to aid the process of selecting and reviewing research articles. The researcher implemented the framework following the selection of articles as a way of ensuring quality of the articles selected. Gough devised four areas and labelled them as strands in 'Weight of Evidence'. The purpose of the four strands enabled the researcher to assess the quality and usefulness of the selected research journals. Gough (2007) highlighted that this approach is:

“[...] an epistemic strategy for making explicit how we identify appraises for quality and relevance and synthesizes evidence.” (p. 2006)

Although this framework was not applied as a way of selecting articles, it was used once the articles were chosen as a way of ensuring transparency with regard to the perceived quality of the articles selected. There are four areas addressed by Gough (2007). To increase the usefulness of including this as a way of assessing the quality of the selected research and to ensure transparency with regard to the approach to the literature review, it is necessary to clarify what each of the four 'Weight of Evidence' strands assessed. Table 2.3 provides an overview of the judgements made using the Weight of Evidence strands. The rating is considered low, medium, or high based on the researcher's judgment having reviewed the research. It is the researcher's belief that the articles rated as 'high' in each Weight of Evidence section should be viewed as being of higher quality.

### Weight of Evidence strands

Gough (2007) proposed four measures to help assist in reviewing the quality of research.

Firstly, Weight of Evidence A is a general measure which seeks to consider the transparency, accessibility and specificity of the research. It considers issues such as accuracy and whether the research is replicable.

Weight of Evidence B focuses more specifically on the appropriateness of the methods used with regard to answering the research questions.

Weight of Evidence C focuses on whether or not the research questions were addressed in the gathering of research evidence. This strand also considers the ethics of the research.

Finally, Weight of Evidence D provides an overall judgement based on a combination of the previous three strands. This 'Weight of Evidence' framework was useful for reviewing the selected literature for the current research on adolescents with SLCI. By including these judgments about the quality of the research, the researcher aimed to add greater transparency and quality to the literature review process. The researcher aimed to present a rigorous, transparent and reputable review of previous research in the field of adolescents' experiences of an SLCI. In Table 2.3, an overview of the judgements made using the Weight of Evidence strands is provided. The rating considered low, medium or high based on the researcher's judgement from reviewing the research. The researcher used her judgement to decide accordingly how the rating would be for each article reviewed.

Table 2.3: Key Area One: The importance of including the child’s voice

Author/Year	Weight of Evidence A (Quality of study)	Weight of Evidence B (Appropriateness of method/research design)	Weight of Evidence C (Usefulness of research and propriety)	Weight of Evidence D (overall assessment)
Bercow (2008)	High	High	High	High
Markham, Laar, Gibbard and Dean (2009)	High	High	High	High
Lindsay, Dockrell, Desforges, Law and Peacey (2010)	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Markham and Dean (2006)	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Owen, Hayett and Roulstone (2004)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

Table 2.4: Key Area Two: Research developed linking to adolescence and the experiences of adolescents with a SLCI

Author/Year	Weight of Evidence A (Quality of study)	Weight of Evidence B (Appropriateness of method/research design)	Weight of Evidence C (Usefulness of research and propriety)	Weight of Evidence D (overall assessment)
Simkin and Conti-Ramsden (2009)	High	High	High	Medium
Patchell and Treloar (1997)	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Conti-Ramsden and Durkin (2008)	High	Medium	Medium	Medium

Table 2.5: Key Area Three: Research about peer groups and establishing the role of friendships including the impact of friendships on young people with SLCI.

Author/Year	Weight of Evidence A (Quality of study)	Weight of Evidence B (Appropriateness of method/research design)	Weight of Evidence C (Usefulness of research and propriety)	Weight of Evidence D (overall assessment)
Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2010)	High	High	High	High

<b>Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2007)</b>	High	High	High	High
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Table 2.6: Key Area Four: The long term impact of the SLCI on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people.

<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>Weight of Evidence A (Quality of study)</b>	<b>Weight of Evidence B (Appropriateness of method/research design)</b>	<b>Weight of Evidence C (Usefulness of research and propriety)</b>	<b>Weight of Evidence D (overall assessment)</b>
<b>Lindsay, Dockrell, and Palikara (2010)</b>	High	High	High	High
<b>Mackie and Law (2010)</b>	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
<b>Rannard and Glenn (2009)</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Botting and Conti-Ramsden (2000)</b>	High	High	High	Medium

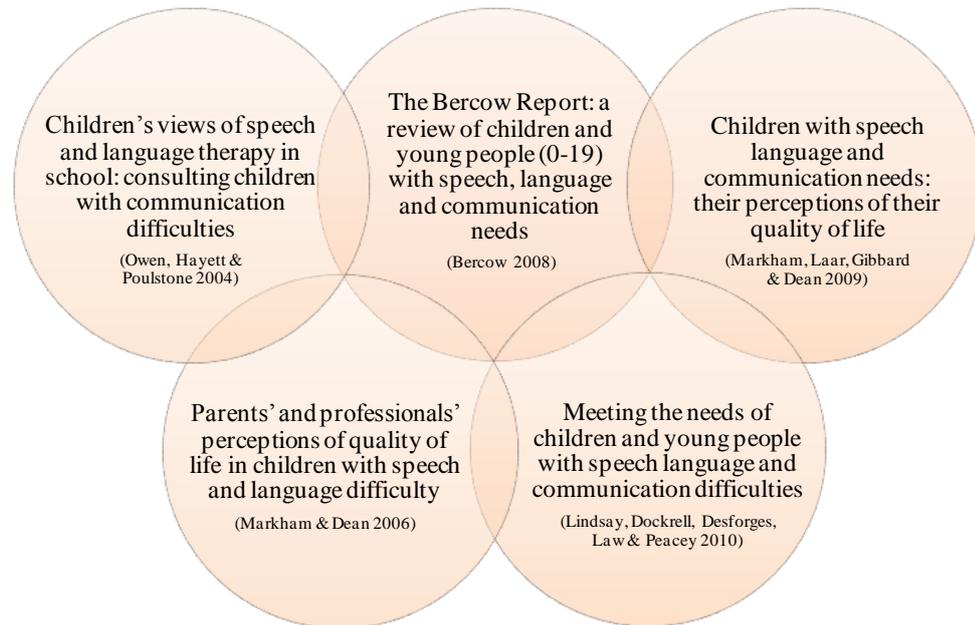
Conti- Ramsden and Botting (2008)	High	High	High	High
Wadman, Durkin and Conti- Ramsden (2008)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

### 2.3 Key Area One: The importance of including the child's voice

This section reviews the state of current research in the United Kingdom pertaining specifically to the inclusion of young people's voices and their active participation in research.

During recent years, there has been a growing interest in increasing the active participation of children in decisions made about their school life (Gersch, 1996). The Code of Practice (1994), the Children Act (1989) and the United Nations Convention (1989) all underscore the importance of listening to the child. In Figure 1, the researcher has illustrated the key articles that appeared most relevant to the current research.

**Figure 1: The importance of including the child's voice (literature reviewed in Key Area One)**



### **2.3.1 The views of young people with SEN**

As discussed above, the importance of including children and young people in research is important to understanding their needs. As such, Gray (2002)'s review of the literature on children with SEN across the 0-19 age range found limited examples of studies examining the educational experiences of children and young people with SEN. However, a large scale UK national study (Lewis, Parsons & Robertson, 2007) examined the views of the educational experiences of children and young people of 9-19 years with a range of SEN attending different types of educational settings which included specialist provisions and mainstream schooling. The findings demonstrated that young people were aware of their special needs and valued both the formal and informal support that they received in school. A significant outcome of the research demonstrated that young people's views differed from those of their parents. For instance, young people adopted a more flexible attitude regarding their education and the support they received to

help manage their difficulties in accessing the curriculum in contrast to their parents' views. Additionally, most of the children and young people expressed positive thoughts about sharing their views.

### ***2.3.2 The views of the young person with an SLCI***

A review of the research revealed that there is an absence of literature that incorporates the views of the young person with regards to perspective on their experiences of SLCI. Studies have highlighted the needs of children with SLCI by exploring the views of teachers, parents and other professionals (Lindsay and Dockrell, 2004; Marshall, Ralph and Palmer 2002). From their findings of interviews with teachers, Dockrell and Lindsay (2001) found that teachers were challenged by their own limited knowledge of speech and language problems. Furthermore, Lindsay and Dockrell (2004) highlighted the usefulness of investigating the views of parents with children with SLCI. Fundamental to an understanding of children's views, Greene and Hill (2005) highlighted how adults' perceptions may differ from children themselves. An example of this comes from Markham and Dean's (2006) study where parents showed different priorities from children as they focused more on achievement whereas the children spoke more about quality of life (QoL). Therefore, teachers and parents may not really have an accurate picture of a young person's wellbeing, as they cannot observe them in all social situations. This is likely to be particularly true in adolescence when parents are less present during the different social aspects of an adolescent's life as adolescents develop their own social interests and show a preference to be with their friends (Hartup, 1996).

In Markham et al's (2006) study, parents and professionals reported children's perceived QoL but the researchers concluded that their findings were limited by the lack of participants and consequently further research with SLCI children should be conducted. The outcome of Markham et al (2006) study showed that understanding of children's QoL is reliant upon the understanding of, and

appropriate response to, the communication needs of children within their everyday environment. A failure of this can lead to communication breakdown and feelings of frustration for young people with unmet needs. Markham et al (2009) undertook further research to include young people's perceptions of QoL experiences as a result of their SLCI. This contributed to the validity of the research as without seeking the views of young people, it is harder to identify their true feelings and views about their own difficulties.

Another example of research that identified how young people can make an important contribution comes from a small scale study with twelve primary school children with communication difficulties (Owen, Hayett & Roulstone, 2004). The children were aged six to eleven where most of the children seemed to be aware of their speech and language difficulties and the support provided by the speech and language therapy (Owen et al., 2004). They were also able to express their concerns about aspects of their social interaction with their peers and about the impact of their difficulties on their educational progress, thus providing insight into both the nature of their difficulties and the wider impact of experiencing a specific language problem. This study offered a direct exploration of children's views including their feelings towards their communication difficulties through the use of semi-structured interviews supported by visual materials (Mauthner, 1997). Nonetheless, the study still faced limitations. Firstly, this study had a limited sample of children therefore a wider range of ages would be valuable to explore an overview of children's communication difficulties. Secondly, the children and researcher interpreted the use of language differently which meant that information elicited about what communication difficulties meant could have been misconstrued. Further exploration into comparing this information with peers without disabilities would be a worthwhile investigation as many of the concerns raised may be part of normal child development. The literature review helped to determine that the views of 'adolescents' with a SLCI is under-researched.

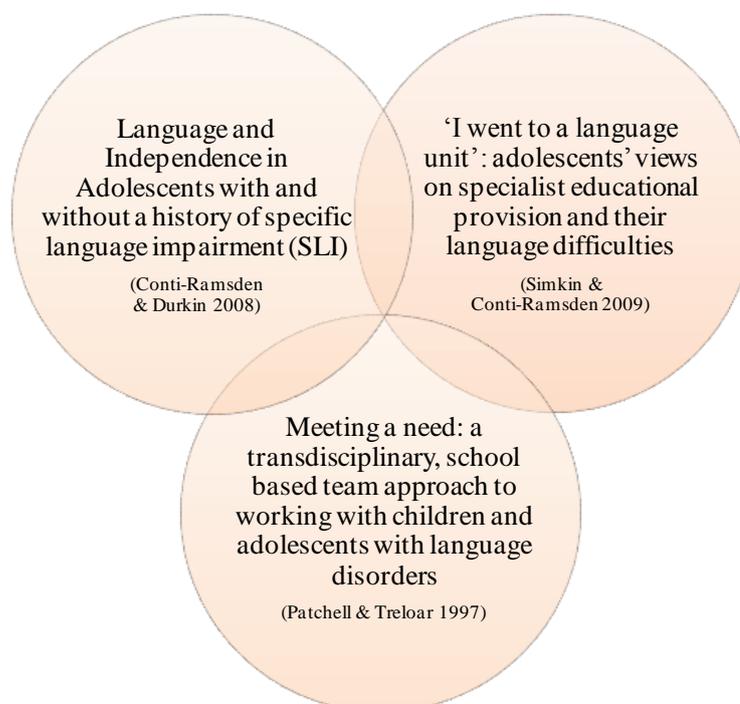
In the next section, Key Area Two centred on the review of research on adolescence. This was an important area of exploration that demonstrated how

the experiences of adolescence are exacerbated by the SLCI.

## 2.4 Key Area Two: State of current research on adolescents with an SLCI

This section reviews the literature and latest research on adolescence, and considers specifically those factors that impact wellbeing for adolescents with an SLCI. Firstly, the terms used to describe adolescence are defined and then a description of the stages of adolescence is provided. Within the stages, the researcher explored the important functions of the stages within adolescence. Then followed an analysis of how wellbeing is impacted during adolescence and what the risk factors are. The theme of friendships is discussed in relation to this.

**Figure 2: State of current research on adolescents with an SLCI (literature reviewed in Key Area Two)**



### **2.4.1 Definition of Adolescence**

Adolescence is the stage of transition between childhood and adulthood where establishing a sense of self takes place (Larson et al., 2004). The most evident challenge is the onset of the physiological, sexual, and emotional changes that occur as a result of puberty (Larson et al., 2004). Waddell (2002) suggests that:

“For adolescence the psychic agenda is a demanding one; the negotiation of the relationship between adult and infantile structures; the transition from life in the family to life in the world; the finding and establishing of an identity, especially in sexual terms, in short, the capacity to manage separation, loss, choices, independence and perhaps disillusionment with a life outside.” (p.140)

The typical developmental changes during the adolescence stage are likely to be exacerbated for the adolescent with an SLCI. For them, there may be additional challenges posed by their SLCI and the impact that these may have had on both academic achievements as well as personal self worth (Palikara, Lindsay, & Dockrell, 2009). Thus, an exploration of adolescence and SLCI is fundamental to the current research.

### **2.4.2 Important functions of the Adolescence stage**

Everyday routines for adolescents with an SLCI can prove to be challenging, including peer communication which is an essential component of developing meaningful friendships (Deutsch, Sullivan, Sage, & Basile, 1991; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). A study of adolescents (without SLCI) aged 10 to 15 found that older participants spent a significantly longer amount of time talking to peers (Raffaelli & Duckett, 1989). For example, older girls (14 to 15 years) spent on average, 9 hours per week "just talking" to friends. Talking allows friends to share their view of the (interpersonal) world (Deutsch et al., 1991). The use of communication skills

promotes the development of intimate friendships (Paul & White, 1990). In support of this, Ingersoll (1989) stated:

*“As adolescents mature intellectually, as they face increased school demands... (...) Adolescents may appear less competent because of their inability to express themselves meaningfully.” (p.2)*

Thus for the adolescent they *“must develop stable and productive peer relationships”* (Ingersoll, 1989). In particular, the extent that adolescents develop and secure friendships is a testament to the extent of how well the adolescent will successfully adjust in other areas of social and psychological development (Hartup, 1996).

In reality, an adolescent with SLCI is not always easily detectable in everyday conversations given they may be more shy and end up allowing others to speak for them (Nippold, 2007; Scott and Windsor, 2000) and professional services are less likely to be available for this age range (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2007) and this is further confirmed by Ehren (2002) and Larson & McKinley (2003) who stated adolescents with language difficulties are a relatively neglected group professionally. With the exception of severe cases, many adolescents with SLCI go unnoticed. For instance, 65% of young offenders, were found to have SLCN but in only 5% of cases had these been previously identified. (Bryan, Freer and Furlong, 2007). Their language use may be somewhat “shaky” (Reed 2005, p.169) but the level of attainment of their oral language skills appears adequate for everyday interactions (Reed 2005). This supports the view that SLCI performs as a “hidden disability” which has adverse consequences on social and emotional wellbeing for the adolescent.

The next section reviewed research on the experiences of adolescence on the emotional wellbeing of the individual with an SLCI.

### **2.4.3 Adolescence: Impact on self-esteem**

Adolescence is a crucial developmental period for the self-concept and self-esteem formation (Steinberg & Morris, 2001) and is especially a time of self-exploration to:

"...discover who they really are, and how they fit in the social world in which they live". (Steinberg & Morris, 2001, p. 91)

High self-esteem including resiliency can be argued to act as a protective factor against mental health problems and anti-social behaviour during adolescence (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs, 2003); Flory, Schneider, Tani and Tomada 2004; McGee, Williams, Nada-Raja, 2001) whereas low self-esteem is considered associated with risk factors including depression and criminal behaviour during adolescence (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, Capsi, 2006). An example of this comes from a study of 164 adolescents interviewed at 13 and then at 14 years found that adolescents who had positive perceptions of their social acceptance had good social outcomes (in terms of withdrawal, aggression and desirability as a companion) regardless of their level of popularity (McElhaney, Antonishak, & Allen, 2008). Conversely, adolescents with poor social self-esteem and low peer acceptance were at greater risk of negative social outcomes. McElhaney et al (2008) suggested that perceiving oneself as being socially accepted (high social self-esteem) may be as important for future social outcomes as an individual's popularity. Thus, social self-esteem may become an important factor for success in adolescence:

"... in part because self-reported social acceptance is likely to most accurately reflect the adolescents' successes within their own uniquely defined social milieu" (McElhaney et al, 2008, p. 720).

Social self-esteem is essential for positive wellbeing. One could assume that self-

esteem is a product of social interactions. Therefore poor wellbeing would include poor social skills and peer rejection which would predispose a negative self-perception in individuals. An individual's self-perception whether positive or negative is likely to be influenced by people's interactions with others. Furthermore, increased peer acceptance is intrinsically linked to '*better self-perceived social competence*' (Kurdek & Krile, 1982). Where, peer rejection has been associated with poor self-perceived social competence (Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Griesler, 1990). Conversely, children who have poor peer relations have more negative self-perceptions (Boivin & Begin, 1989). As such, a longitudinal study following children from 4 years to 12 years found social competence with peers and social inhibition predicted social self-esteem in middle childhood (Asendorpf & van Aken, 1994). The authors suggested that expectations about being rejected by peers (perhaps as a result of poor social competence or past negative social experiences) are generalized to other peer relations and thus negatively affect social self-esteem. Similarly, sociable behaviour and social withdrawal observed in young children predicted low social self-esteem at 9 to 10 years (Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989). However it is important to note that Asendorpf et al's (1994) research may have failed to develop satisfactory peer relationships because of a lack of time to adjust to the new groups. In addition, it failed to consider children with communication difficulties or children's cultural differences which may have contributed to the responses of the young people. The results underscore the developmental significance of the early peer group but also highlight some of the difficulties of research carried out with this group of young people. This is an important point raised by Hartup (2005) who argued 'early peer relationships' have important functions for later development. Research by Rubin et al., (1989) suggests that adolescents with social difficulties may have poor social self-esteem. Still, adolescents are an under-represented group where there are long term implications on their wellbeing.

#### **2.4.4 Typical stages of adolescence and friendship groups**

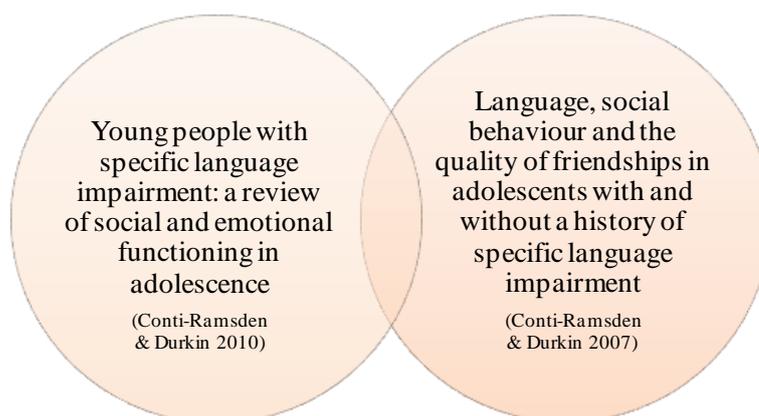
The adolescent's socialisation process is typically occupied with time spent with

peers than the family (Brown, 1990) and therefore promotes dependency on peers (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Therefore within the typical adolescent's wellbeing, peer relations become 'particularly salient' to the individual during adolescence (Brown, 1990). Peer group relations also provide a sense of belonging and identity (for example, Hogg, 1992), and peers are an important source of emotional support in adolescence (Brown, Andrews, Harris, Adler & Bridge, 1986; Hicks, McVey, and Fox, 1988). Therefore, adolescence is a period of continued development of important language skills which underpin continued educational achievement and social development (Nippold, 2007). The next section reviews the role of friendships in relation to the presence of an SLCI

## 2.5 Key Area Three: Defining peer groups and establishing the role of friendships

In Key Area Three, the researcher explored and reviewed the literature linking to friendship as this was an important factor linked to the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI.

**Figure 3: Defining peer groups and establishing the role of friendships (Literature reviewed in Key Area Three)**



In the current research, the terms 'peer' and 'peer group' refer to the people an individual interacts with regularly and usually involves more than two people in a peer group (Durkin and Conti-Ramsden, 2007). Developmentally, from a young

age, peer relationships are based on increased opportunities for social interaction and play (Durkin et al., 2007). Peer group experiences can have long-lasting implications for an individual's social and emotional well-being as rejection is associated with externalizing behaviour problems (DeRosier, Kupersmidt, & Patterson, 1994). Peer rejection has a significant correlation with increased absenteeism from school (DeRosier et al., 1994). Moreover, DeRosier et al.'s (1994) sample (N>600) of 7-9 years pupils who were followed for three years, found that peer rejection predicted both absenteeism and academic performance. Children with high levels of absenteeism then experienced peer rejection. They showed higher levels of subsequent absenteeism than children who were initially high on absenteeism and not subject to rejection. The next section establish the stages of the friendship formation including the meaning of friendships.

### ***2.5.1 Purpose of Friendships***

During the reception school level, young children form friendships on the basis of proximity and shared activities (Durkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2007). During primary school level, friendships involve greater levels of interchange and awareness of individual attributes and during adolescence many young people seek friendships to satisfy psychological needs for intimacy, shared outlooks, and identity formulation (Buhrmester, 2008; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Parker & Gottman, 1989; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Furthermore, friends perform as important support systems (Buhrmester, 2008). In addition, secure friendships are contributing factors in cognitive, social and emotional development (Hartup, 1996; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). On a cognitive level, friendships are thought to provide a context for cognitive development, perhaps through the exchange of ideas and collective collaboration, supported by increased trust (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Newcomb et al., 1995). On a social level, friendships support learning and social skills which produce "future social relationships" (Hartup, 1996; Newcomb et al., 1995; Sullivan, 1953). On an emotional level, friendships facilitate opportunities for emotional expression, experiences and support (Hartup & Stevens 1997; Newcomb et al., 1995). This leads to feeling a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

When the situation requires, children tend to spend more time conversing, negotiating, and sharing plans with friends than they do with non friends (Fonzi, Schneider, Tani & Tomada, 1997). In addition, language use in friendships is qualitatively different from that in other social contexts. For example, talk between friends involves more frequent repetition of each others' assertions and more mutually oriented utterances than does talk with non-friends (Hartup, 1996; Newcomb et al., 1995). Adolescent friendships draw on skills in initiating interactions, attending to others' perspectives and needs, providing social support and self-disclosure (Buhrmester, 1996; Rose & Asher, 2000; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Furthermore, Durkin et al., (2007) demonstrated early language difficulties as indicative of poor friendship quality in adolescence. To summarise, Hartup (1996) reported friendships are:

“[...] key markers of the selectivity of interpersonal relations, providing social and cognitive scaffolding” (p.1441-1457).

Furthermore, friendships buffer against many of life's problems with long term implications for self-esteem and well-being as well as acting as a role for information and advice (Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Shulman, 1993).

As previously discussed, there is sparse literature reviewing the social and emotional wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI (Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2008). Research over the last decade however suggests that children with SLCI experience a range of social difficulties, including poor social competence and poor peer relationships (Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2004; Fujiki, Brinton, & Todd, 1996; McCabe, 2005). Therefore adolescents with SLCI have an increased risk of social difficulties compared to peers without speech and language difficulties (Snowling, Bishop, Stothard, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 2006). In the next section, an exploration of friendships and how they impact on wellbeing is discussed.

### ***2.5.2 A review of research that looks at the social and emotional wellbeing as a consequence of poor friendship groups***

A review of literature concluded that children with poor peer adjustment (including low acceptance/rejection) are at risk of later difficulties, including dropping out of school, criminality and psychopathology (Parker & Asher, 1987). However, it is not clear if peer rejection plays a role in these negative outcomes, or if both are the consequence of a deeper psychological issue. A longitudinal study of 30 young adults found that peer rejection at around 10 years was associated with adult adjustment (in the area of job performance and trouble with the law) and experiencing psychopathology symptoms (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998). A much larger longitudinal study (N = 1265) found that children with more peer relationship problems at 9 years were at increased risk of externalizing behaviour problems at 18 years (for example, criminal offending, substance abuse), but were not at increased risk of anxiety disorder or major depression (Woodward & Fergusson, 1999).

The developmental stages of friendship discussed earlier link to positive wellbeing (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). Poor friendships can lead to feelings of loneliness as a result of lack of friends (Brendgen Vitaro, & Bukowski, 2000). A study of 14-year-olds found that those with at least one reciprocal friend had higher self-esteem than adolescents with no reciprocal friends (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995). Interestingly, it is not just about the quantity of friends, but also the quality of friendships that serves an important role (Bagwell, Andreassi, & Kinoshita, Montarello, & Muller, 2005; Hartup, 2005).

### ***2.5.3 Friendships and Young People with SLCI***

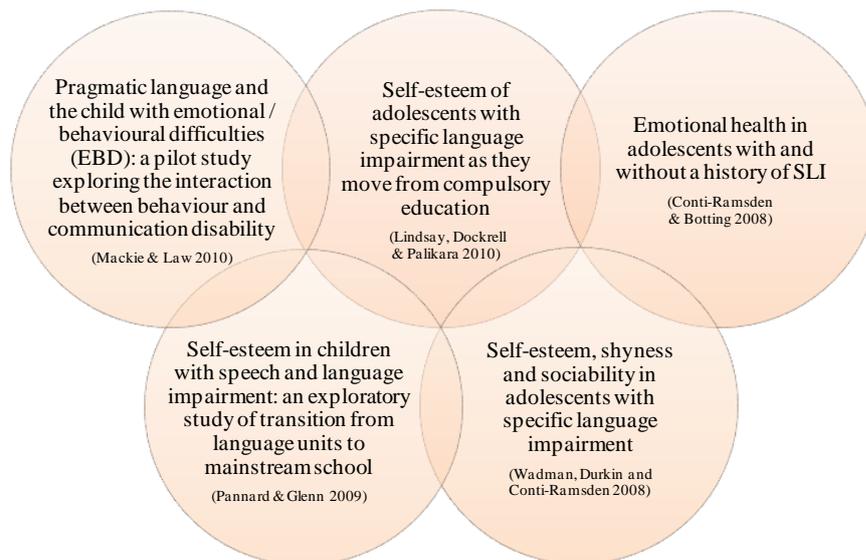
In this section, specific research looks at friendships in adolescents with SLCI. A study of friendship quality found that 16 and 17 year olds with a history of SLCI were more likely to exhibit poor quality friendships (up to 40%) than adolescents

with no history of SLCI (Durkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2007). However, 60% of the adolescents with SLCI did have good quality friendships. In this study, the measure of friendship quality used did not focus solely on close or best friends. The sampling method consisted of 120 adolescents, (72.5% males and 27.5% girls) and it is therefore difficult to generalise from the results. Furthermore, participants were assessed and interviewed either at school and home which could mean that the environmental context may have impacted on the information given by participants. Nonetheless, the fact that some adolescents with SLCI have problems in their friendships generally suggests that close friendships may be an area of weakness some individuals with SLCI. The social difficulties prevalent in SLCI and the limited research relating to close friendships and SLCI suggest that adolescents with a history of SLCI may have difficulties engaging in close relationships.

## **2.6 Key Area Four: The long term impact of SLCI on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people.**

In Key Area Four, the research reviewed explored the social and emotional wellbeing of adolescents. In particular, the research highlighted the long term consequences of the “hidden disability”.

**Figure 4: The long term impact of SLCI on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people (literature reviewed in Key Area Four)**



Nelson (1991) highlighted the pivotal changes that can occur as a result of the adolescence stage:

“Related problems of learning compliance and social adjustment increase, while peer relationships and academic success plummet”. (p.75)

Research into SLCI suggests a possible prevalence of psychiatric problems during adolescence (Beitchman, Wilson, Johnson, Atkinson, Young, Adlaf, Escobar, & Douglas, 2001) indicating the importance of examining social and emotional wellbeing during adolescence (Bercow Report, 2008). Conti-Ramsden and Botting (2008) found a clear increased risk for psychiatric disorders such as anxiety and depression in adolescents with SLCI even when concurrent levels of language and cognitive abilities were controlled for. In addition, the proportion of adolescents scoring above the clinical threshold in these areas was larger in the group with SLCI when compared to their typical language development age peers for both anxiety and depression. This finding replicates other studies that have shown raised prevalence of psychiatric difficulties in those with SLCI (Clegg, Hollis, Mawhood, & Rutter, 2005). Beitchman et al (2001) found anxiety increased in a similar cohort of young people with SLCI at 19 years of age. Furthermore, they demonstrated that increased risk of anxiety and depression appears to affect

males and females equally in those with SLCI (Beitchman et al, 2001). This was not the case for participants with typical language development. For these young people, the typical gender difference demonstrated females were more prone to internalising psychiatric disorders than males in adolescence. Conti-Ramsden and Botting's (2008) study shows that those with SLCI had increased internalising psychiatric symptoms in the form of anxiety and depression. Their results suggested no associations between the level of language ability and the development of anxiety and depression in adolescence. Examination of early factors suggested that those with emotional problems at 7 years of age also show increased anxiety at 16 years of age. Thus, level of language was not a predictor of anxiety and depression in adolescents with SLCI in their study. This is similar to the findings of Clegg et al (2005) who also failed to find a clear relationship between anxiety and communication difficulties. Nonetheless, Reed (1986) proposed that an adolescent with a SLCI can present long term difficulties like opportunities to succeed since:

“A persisting language disorder potentially limits an individual's opportunities for personal, vocational, and economic self-realisation...” (p.229)

Given the link between wellbeing and self-esteem discussed earlier, young people with SLCI may find it difficult to maintain high self-esteem if they experience problems in aspects of their wellbeing. Poor social skills and peer relationship problems are associated with SLCI in adolescence and even adulthood. Moreover, adolescence is a stressful time for many young people but for those who have SLCI, it can prove to be a “double burden” since communication performs as an important part of the adolescent years and research has demonstrated how crucial friendships serve during the school years. Therefore, the presence of the SLCI may exacerbate the difficulties experienced during the adolescence stage. The current research has been developed to further understand how adolescents with SLCI link their difficulties to wellbeing. The next section illustrates the theoretical frameworks that underpinned the research in order to frame and understand the long term impact on wellbeing for the adolescent with SLCI.

## 2.7 A Theoretical Approach

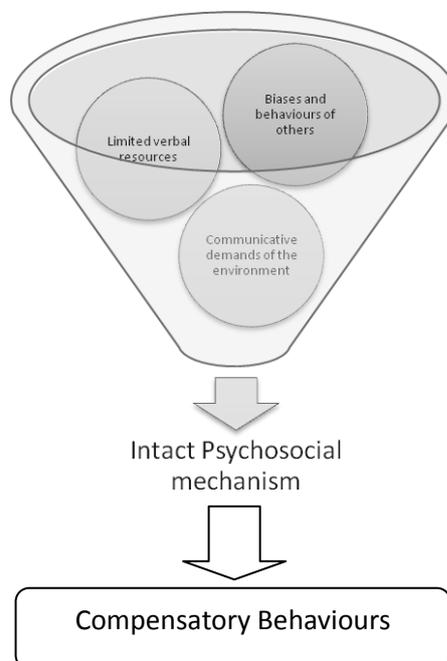
The review of the research literature has highlighted that for adolescents with SLCI there are additional difficulties that can impact on their social and emotional wellbeing. As examined earlier, young people with SLCI may often present with lower self-esteem and self-concept. Therefore, language difficulties can be a restraining factor to how individuals effectively interact with their environment. This is consistent with the efficacy-based theory of self-esteem developed by Gecas & Schwalble (1983) whom stated that successful interactions with the environment leads to high self-esteem and a view of the self being competent. Factors that impede successful interactions with the environment (such as language difficulties) could have a negative impact on self-esteem (Lindsay, Dockrell, Letchford, & Mackie, 2002). In support of this, the researcher hypothesised that adolescents with SLCI use their awareness of their impairment to develop improved resiliency skills to maintain their self-esteem in order to cope with daily school life. There have been a number of models put forward to understand the social and emotional wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI.

### ***2.7.1 Theoretical models to explain the social and emotional wellbeing of young people with SLCI.***

The Social Adaption Model (SAM) proposed by Redmond and Rice (1998) illustrated how social behaviour differences occur between individuals with SLCI and their typically developing peers. The differences would be a result of their primary language limitations, their social context and how others associate their language difficulties (Redmond & Rice, 1998). The SAM postulates that young people with SLCI compared to their typical aged peers, will have an intact psychosocial (processes that are both social and psychological) mechanism, Therefore difficulties that can arise, are a consequence of adapting in social

situations as a result of their language limitations. The model identified how the social difficulties as a result of language impairments stemmed from a psychosocial deficit as a consequence of how the individual dealt with the communicative demands of the widening social situations. Therefore, the different social contexts meant that the extent of communicative demands differed for the individual and would ergo impact on how they present themselves within that situation. As such Redmond and Rice (1998) commented that individuals adjusted their social behaviours where less engagement in interactions with peers took place (Brinton, Fujiki, Spencer, & Robinson, 1997; Craig & Washington, 1993; Hadley & Rice, 1991).

**Figure 5: Social Adaptation Model (taken from Redmond & Rice, 1998)**



Therefore adapting to social situations where avoidance of interacting with others takes place is a result of the individual's language difficulties according to the SAM. In relation to adolescents with SLCI, the SAM postulates that after years of adjusting to social situations, it is likely that the presence of negative social characteristics is found in adolescence.

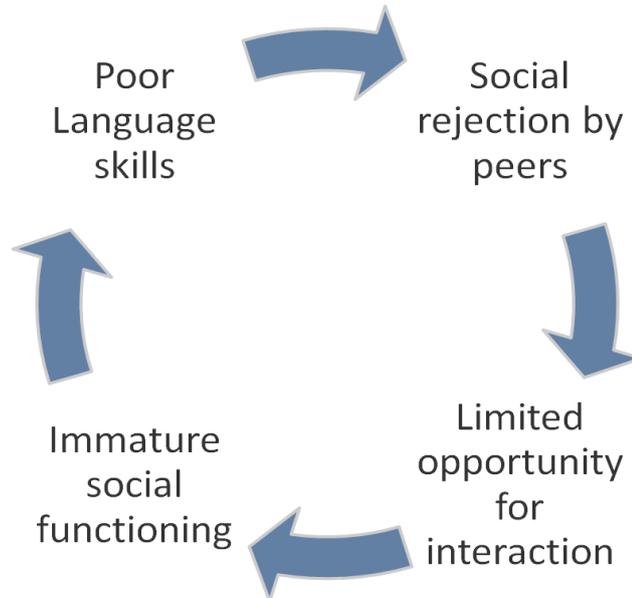
In Redmond and Rice's (1998) study, they reported significant differences in the

ratings of children's socio-emotional functioning provided by parents compared to teacher ratings. Therefore it is likely that the social behaviours of individuals differed according to the social contexts (i.e. school context, home context). Furthermore, Redmond and Rice (1998) found parent and teacher ratings did not remain stable over time (one year), which may reflect the social adjustments made by the children with SLCI to the school environment. A limitation of this study is that it relied on self-report measures which raise questions about accuracy of the findings. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that children typically under-report their difficulties. McAndrew (1999) reported for example in his self-esteem study using the lie scale, more than 60% of the children with language impairments evidenced socially desirable responses (McAndrew, 1999). In the next section, the researcher considered the second theoretical model which focused on how peer rejection can subsequently lead to social difficulties in children with speech and language difficulties.

#### Inadequate Opportunity for Social Learning (IOSL) (Bishop, 1997)

Bishop (1997) proposed the Inadequate Opportunity for Social Learning (IOSL) model which accounted for the social difficulties experienced by children with SLCI. In the IOSL model, the limited language skills lead directly to rejection by peers. This peer rejection then limits the opportunities young people with SLCI have to interact socially, impeding the development of social cognition and social skills (Figure 6). Thus poor social cognition and social skills required for successful social interaction is limited due to rejection by peers. Thus SLCI is responsible for poor social functioning which has adverse consequences on the adolescent's wellbeing.

**Figure 6: Inadequate Opportunity for Social Learning (taken from Bishop, 1997)**



Bishop (1997) argued that support for this model comes from evidence that link language difficulties and peer acceptance (Kemple, Speranza, & Hazen, 1992; Rice, Sell, & Hadley, 1991). She acknowledged the difficulty in ruling out alternative explanations for social difficulties in SLCI that suggest peer rejection is a result of an underlying impairment (for example, in social cognition). In summary, the model proposed that how a child communicates can lead to poor peer acceptance, rather than any intrinsic social impairment.

There remains a debate as to whether the social and emotional difficulties experienced by individuals with SLCI are the result of their significant language limitations or other factors. This could limit opportunities for social learning. Or, is it that the consequence of an underlying psychosocial impairment that is comorbid with SLCI? (Bishop, 1997).

In the present research, the theoretical frameworks provided by the SAM and IOSL are used as a guide to understanding the relationships between language ability, social behaviours (sociability) and self-esteem which have been shown to be contributing factors to positive wellbeing.

In reviewing the research, the models offer insightful assumptions; If individuals with SLCI adapt their social behaviours (such as becoming withdrawn) as a result of their difficulties with using language, then by adolescence (for instance after many years of adjusting to one's limitations), correlations should be observed between level of language ability and negative social characteristics (in terms of shyness, low sociability). Furthermore, a history of social difficulties and negative interpersonal experiences may impact on self-esteem (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000). For example, according to the adaptive framework, individuals who have found social interactions challenging because of their language impairments may adjust by restricting their social participation (withdrawal).

The theoretical frameworks that underpin the current research provide a way of examining how social and emotional wellbeing can be understood for adolescents with SLCI. The Bercow Report (2008) stressed the importance of examining social and emotional wellbeing in adolescence. Additionally, the evidence has shown that some of the long term implications on wellbeing for young people with SLCI include cognitive, academic, behavioural, social and psychiatric difficulties (Bashir & Scavuzzo, 1992). Furthermore, Redmond and Rice (1998) highlighted how children with SLCI are more likely to experience social and behavioural difficulties (Redmond & Rice, 1998, 2000). The characteristics and importance of friendships overall have been discussed and the theoretical models provide a basis for further exploration in the discussion chapter following the completion of the research and the analysis.

## **2.8 Summary of Chapter and findings**

The current research was developed to explore the experiences of adolescents with SLCI; an area that has received “scant attention” in research (Durkin and Conti-Ramsden, 2007). Adolescence is a crucial stage of development particularly for self-concept and self-esteem (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Within a social

context, the adolescent with an SLCI can typically go ‘undetected’ where they are often seen as shy (Reed, 2005). Therefore, this supports the view that the SLCI performs as a “hidden disability” which has adverse consequences on the adolescent’s social and emotional wellbeing.

The literature review also explored the role of friendships and their importance during the adolescence stage. In addition research confirmed how early language difficulties was predictive of poor friendships in adolescence (Conti-Ramsden and Durkin 2007; Hartup & Stevens, 1999).

Moreover, the review of the literature demonstrated that adolescence is a stressful time for many young people but for those who have SLCI, it can prove to be a double burden since communication performs as an important part of the adolescent years. Therefore, the presence of the SLCI exacerbates the difficulties experienced during the adolescence stage. The long term impact of wellbeing as a result of SLCI was explored. The literature review confirmed how the presence of an SLCI is affected by social and emotional factors which link to wellbeing. The research questions that developed following the literature review are:

1. What are adolescents’ experiences of having a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI)?
2. What are the experiences of adolescents with SLCI in education?
3. What are the key factors that enable the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI in education?

### **2.8.1 Research Rationale**

The current research study developed in order to explore the views of adolescents with a SLCI who are attending the SLC as part of a mainstream school setting. The rationale was based on the importance of carrying out research with children. Markham et al (2009) explored the views of young people which demonstrated the

importance of the voice of the child. The themes ranged from the participant's perceptions of what improves their daily lives to the difficulties they experienced within school. Markham et al's (2006, 2009) research demonstrated how beneficial the findings are in broadening professionals' including researchers and policy makers understanding of children's speech and language difficulties. As such the researcher is keen to explore adolescents' views about their SLCI and how the experiences of adolescence are exacerbated by the difficulties associated with their SLCI.

The following chapter will outline the epistemological and methodological framework of the current study. Furthermore, the researcher will provide a clear description including justification of the methodology used in relation to research presented in the literature review.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As we have seen in the literature review, there is limited research to-date on the views and experiences of adolescents with SLCI. Whilst there is a wealth of research in related areas that evaluates the effectiveness of speech and language therapy, there is a paucity of data and analysis that explores their experience of their own disability. This is clearly an issue that must be addressed if researchers and practitioners intend to work together to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. This research aims to make just such a contribution and to this end, the researcher has deliberately adopted a qualitative approach to gain an insight and better understanding of the issues facing adolescents with SLCI. Designed as an exploratory investigation, it seeks to provide descriptive data from adolescents expressing their views on having an SLCI in secondary school. The overriding aim is to get as close as possible to the 'real world' (Robson, 2002). The researcher is confident that more robust and controlled studies measuring the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI will be possible following this research.

This chapter introduces and reviews the research and analytical methods used in this research whilst briefly touching upon their epistemological framework: it is important to justify the methodological design in light of its underpinning epistemology. This chapter will therefore include:

- An overview of the methodology followed to proceed to data collection, including demographics and participant personal information.
- Ethical considerations, which are particularly important to protect children and young adolescents.
- A discussion of the trustworthiness of the data collection, with an emphasis on the strategies chosen by the researcher to ensure maximum rigour.

### 3.1 Importance of research with children and young people

This study will lend great importance to adolescents' perspectives and 'voices'. The methodological decision to work 'upstream' and at the source is not without problems but is in line with the recent works in the field. Indeed, recent literature advocates the importance of establishing and representing the views of children and young people. The value of obtaining their perspectives on their own disabilities is increasingly being recognised (Costley, 2000; Lewis and Lindsay, 2000), and whilst it is accepted that this can be a challenging process (Alderson, 1995; Christensen and James, 2000), researchers argue that careful engagement with children and young people yields important insights that can inform and improve practice (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2000; Macnab, Visser & Daniels, 2007). This study therefore holds that the inclusion of the child's voice should be central to education policy and practice. Kagan (1984) comments that "[...] the person's interpretation of experience is simultaneously the most significant product of an encounter and the spur to the next". (p.279). Without understanding the experiences of an individual, it is difficult to understand the causes behind their actions.

So far, listening approaches with children have used 'appropriate' and 'creative' methods and techniques (Clark and Moss, 2001; Coad and Hambly, 2011) which seek greater clarity when listening to children (Percy-Smith, 2006). Research nonetheless suggests that these approaches should lend greater emphasis on learning about the child's world and their experiences of the world in which they live. Researchers, Boylan and Dalrymple (2009) summarise what they consider important features of research with children:

"By listening to children and young people we can gain the information we need for a fuller understanding of the issues that affect their lives. By dealing with voices, we are affecting power relations. To listen to people is to empower them... If we were to really listen to children and hear what they have to say, it would result in the need to radically change many of the services that

are currently provided...” (p.75).

If listening more closely to the child is –as Boylan and Dalrymple argue above- an emancipatory strategy that promises more effective services, the central contention of this study is that this approach can lead even greater results in the case of adolescents in SLCI. This now leads us to discuss the purpose of this research.

## 3.2 Purpose of the Research

The overall aim of the research is to investigate how a group of adolescents with SLCI perceive their experiences of education both within the SLC and in the mainstream and whether this under-represented group link their wellbeing to these experiences. This includes an examination of the views of adolescents with a SLCI attending a specialist provision, namely the Speech and Language Centre (SLC) within a mainstream secondary school setting.

The proposed study is therefore exploratory as the aim is to investigate adolescents’ views and perspectives. Exploratory-type research helps to bring new information to light (Robson, 2002)<sup>6</sup> and is in this case necessary given that a paucity of data and analysis on adolescents’ experience of their SLCI (Gray, 2004). The broad purpose stated above is a starting point from which the researcher identified a total of three more specific questions. The first is ‘existential’ and points towards adolescents’ self-awareness of their disability. The second is ‘conditional’ and points towards adolescents’ perception of being included within their education environment. The third question draws key learning points from the first two questions and asks what the factors of wellbeing are for adolescents with SLCI. To summarise, the research questions which will form the backbone of this research are as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Robson (2002) has identified four types of research: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and emancipatory.

1. What are adolescents' experiences of having a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI)?
2. What are the experiences of adolescents with SLCI in education?
3. What are the key factors that enable the wellbeing of SLCI adolescents in education?

### 3.3 Epistemological Approach

Research paradigms provide a way of looking at the world (Mertens, 2005) and identifying and discussing these helps to outline the researcher's worldview (Creswell, 2009). It is therefore crucial to consider epistemological questions on the *nature* of knowledge, before we can answer methodological questions in terms of how we come about to *obtaining* it.

The current research is embedded in an interpretivist paradigm, specifically within a social constructionist framework. The interpretivist paradigm is based on the premise that society is socially constructed and is frequently used when research is small scale, non statistical, subjective and when the researcher is personally involved with the project (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In a nutshell, the aim of the interpretivist paradigm is to consider how people make sense of their world (MacNoughton, 2001).

#### 3.3.1 Key features of Social Constructionism

Social constructionism challenges the realist idea that there is a mind-independent 'objective' reality and rests on the notion that individuals' perception of the world is predicated on social constructs, processes and interactions. As such, language plays a significant and powerful ontological role in the social construction of understanding (Burr, 1995). As a social constructionist, the researcher therefore holds that individuals create their own reality based on their social interactions.

This position is not without problems as it necessarily implies a level of subjectivity (individuals ‘creating’ their world) which also applies to the researcher’s work itself bringing the problem of bias and reflexivity. Punch (2005) is very clear on this point:

“[...]Social research, like other things people do, is a human construction, framed and presented within a particular set of discourses (and sometimes ideologies), and constructed in a social context with certain sorts of social arrangements”  
(p.135)

Admitting this difficulty, the current research nonetheless remains social in nature and involves the study of individuals in social contexts. As such the key objective of this type of social research is to consider the interactions of individuals, an approach that dovetails with works such as that of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) whose stated aim was to ‘[...] begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them’ (p.47).

This study seeks to delve into the complexity of semi-structured interviews and to capture the importance of individuals’ beliefs about their world. In accordance with the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) this study will also seek to determine those influences shaping those beliefs, and how these result from the multilevel interaction between different ‘layers’ of perspectives, including the ‘micro system’ (referring to the adolescents’ individual behaviour) and various ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ environmental systems (referring to institutional factors –such as the SLC- and broader cultural contexts).

### **3.4 Research Participants**

The broad objectives and framework of the proposed research were discussed in an onsite planning meeting with the Head of the SLC in a mainstream secondary school. The researcher provided a description of the research aims, questions and methodology, including the next steps for data collection. A series of meetings

between the researcher and the Head of SLC (see Appendix 1 for timetable) were then scheduled. The researcher decided that 'advertising' the research would be a useful strategy and the staff within the SLC used the research handout (Appendix 7) to promote the research within the school.

The Head of the SLC advised that a majority of the pupils attending this particular school lived in remote locations requiring transportation, meaning that parents/carers may struggle to reach the SLC for preliminary meetings. To manage this issue, the researcher edited the permission letters (Appendix 2) and stated that should travel be an issue, she would endeavour to place phone calls to discuss the overall aims of the current research and would be sending out any relevant documentation by mail/email.

### ***3.4.1 The Speech and Language Centre (SLC): The Context***

This current research took place in a SLC within a large secondary mainstream school in the south-east of England. The researcher accessed the demographics of the school's population from the online database, RAISEOnline<sup>7</sup>. The database indicated that in 2011 there were 869 children attending school with girls constituting 46.4% of that population. In that year, a total of 10% of children belonged to ethnic minority groups and English was not the first language for 3.5% of children. Importantly for the scope of this research, 23% of the total population had a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and a total of 22 pupils (those with severe and complex needs) attended the SLC. Table 3.1, presents the exact breakdown for (1) minority ethnic group, (2) English not a first language and (3) SEN statements per national curriculum year groups.

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<sup>7</sup> RAISEOnline provides interactive analysis of school and pupil performance data and TEPs and EPs in their respective Local Authority access this data.

**Table 3.1: Basic Characteristics by National Curriculum year group (2011)**

NC Year Group	Number on Roll	% Boy/Girl	% Minority Ethnic Group	% 1 <sup>st</sup> Language not English	% Special Education Needs	Looked After Children	% Free School Meals
7	169	49.7/50.3	10.8	2.4	24.3	0	7.7
8	191	55.5/44.5	11.6	5.2	21.5	0	6.3
9	142	60.6/39.4	10.6	2.8	25.4	0	9.9
10	188	50.0/50.0	10.2	3.7	21.3	0	3.7
11	179	53.6/46.4	6.8	2.8	23.5	1	3.4

The SLC is responsible for the support (socially and academically) as well as for inclusion for the 22 pupils who attend the SLC, 18 of which are boys and 4 are girls. The ethnic make-up of the SLC is diverse, reflecting that of the wider school, and included the following: Afro-Caribbean, Caucasian, French, and Phillipino. Table (3.2) below provides the SLC gender breakdown for each year group.

**Table 3.2. Proportion of boys and girls with SLCI attending the SLC**

Year Group	Boys	Girls
7	4	1
8	6	0
9	1	1
10	3	2
11	4	0

As far as the setting is concerned, the SLC consists of one specialist teacher, one speech and language therapist and five teaching assistants (TAs). The pupils that attend the SLC are permitted entry to the SLC based on their Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) stating that SLCI is their main difficulty. Some of the children attending the SLC have SLCI with additional impairments such as autism,

or deafness. All pupils spend three hours a week in the SLC instead of studying a foreign language. During that time, they receive speech and language therapy timetabled by the specialist teacher and speech and language therapist. This includes a focus on social skills work, curriculum follow-up and help with homework tasks. The therapists work the equivalent of four days a week in the SLC. As many of the SLCI pupils have difficulties socialising with their peers, the SLC also provides the opportunity of accessing a 'safe place' for pupils to socialise at break and at lunch whereby they can relax within the SLC or in the playground area in front of the SLC. The TAs work in a supervisory capacity during lunchtimes and breaktimes. Pupils also receive teaching time in small groups or on a one to one basis with a TA.

The SLC's guidelines to ensure good practise of inclusion are:

1. Ensuring all young people with a SLCI can access the curriculum including opportunities to engage with the wider curriculum.
2. Supporting young people with SLCI through reviewing strategies to support their on-going needs.
3. Ensuring that all young people with SLCI have access to top quality specialist teaching and support to access the curriculum teaching as well as social inclusion within the school.
4. Promoting ongoing training and information sharing for SLC staff as ways to develop their professional practice and to ensure the best support can be given to young people with SLCI.

### ***3.4.2 Population sampling & participant design***

It is important to point out that the sample presented in this study is heterogeneous by design. A heterogeneous sample can only increase the ecological validity of our findings given that it is representative of the diversity that can be found within typical educational settings in the United Kingdom. The diversity in the sample touches upon multiple criteria, including background, gender, ethnicity, year groups and academic attainment levels. With an age range selected spanning five years (from 11-16 years), the sample included a mixture of boys and girls with a

variation of nationalities, including British, Filipino, Jamaican and Chinese.

The main criterion for sample selection was that the individuals had a written statement of SLCI and were member of the school SLC. This key criterion was also treated as flexible, however with one pupil with SLCI's statement presenting autism as the main identified need (other participants selected were also on the autistic spectrum but this was not identified as their main difficulty.) A majority of the participants were identified as having poor self-esteem and confidence, and with social skills.

Whilst it is not possible to provide descriptors in great detail due to requirements for anonymity, it is important to dwell on the heterogeneity of the sample to provide the necessary context for our findings later in this study.

- All of the students had both severe literacy and numeracy difficulties, with the exception of one who demonstrated high levels of proficiency and who was, for example, in the top set for mathematics.
- Linguistically, most of the students spoke English as their first language, with the exception of one younger student who was bilingual in French. This individual had severe difficulties with expressive and receptive language skills, and his poor auditory memory meant he was particularly slow to process language. Whilst the researcher did not conduct a dedicated analysis on this student's language skills, it is fair to assume that bilingualism could have acted as a supplemental layer of difficulty for this adolescent which was absent for the others.
- All students sampled had varying levels of established friendship groups. Whilst some had friends that remained within the confines of the SLC, others had developed friendships within the mainstream setting. This is an important point as their varying circles of friendships betokened different levels of emotional maturity; those students with friends outside the SLC would have built different constructs around key issues -namely inclusion, education, and perception of their own disability.
- Whilst all students selected were attending the SLC as of June 2011, some

had been attending the centre for longer periods than others. One individual had attended the centre for five years; two for four years; one for three years; and one for one year only. Clearly this is an important discrepancy as it would have had an impact on students' level of integration in the centre, on their circles of friendships and relationships with the staff.

This study used an interview-based qualitative design in order to explore the proposed research questions and to ensure the consolidation of a rich body of data. Such a design was important in order to gain information about the adolescents' experiences as well as to understand how this vulnerable group perceive themselves, their disability, and their wider school environment.

As a point of methodology, the researcher opted for a 'convenience' and 'opportunity' sampling technique: the researcher kicked off the sampling process with a research presentation in school, and held meetings / phone calls with prospective participants and parents who expressed an interest in the research. Twelve individuals showed initial interest and either attended the meeting or discussed the research with the researcher over the phone. In total, seven pupils agreed to participate in the current research. The gender breakdown included five males and two females and the adolescents' ages ranged from 13 to 15 years.

The researcher judged convenience sampling methodology to be adequate in this case for three reasons:

- Firstly, the inclusion of seven participants ensured that, whilst the study remained small-scale and qualitative, there would be enough data to produce a detailed exploration of the adolescents' perspectives.
- Secondly, by targeting a secondary school age group, the researcher ensured that any prospective participants would have had a reasonable amount of experience in education and (it was hoped) a sufficient level of maturity and time to reflect on those experiences.
- Thirdly, all participants sampled were defined as 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' of poor social and emotional wellbeing by the SLC –meaning this group promised interesting insights and learning points concerning their

educational experiences.

Further to the last point, five out of those seven adolescents attended the SLC from Year 7 having transferred from a primary school with a speech and language unit. On entering the SLC in Year 7, all seven adolescents had a statement of special educational needs. Some of the participants' needs included support for literacy and numeracy as well as developing communication and social skills.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for the research was awarded in April 2011 by the University of East London Board of Ethics Committee (Appendix 3) and also from the Local Authority Research Board where this research was located (October 2010). The researcher carried out this research as part of her Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology. All of the research and work undertaken adhered strictly to the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2006).

The researcher took all necessary measures and precautions to protect the welfare of the participants, by meeting minimum required standards, obtaining signed informed consent forms, respecting confidentiality, anonymity of data and informing participants of their right to withdraw. The researcher took great care to hold a pilot interview with one of the participants to identify whether any questions might be too sensitive and to monitor the participant's behaviour to ensure they felt safe.

The following sections cover in greater detail the three key precautionary measures taken by the researcher when conducting her interviews. These include (a) gaining informed consent, (b) ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and (c) informing participants of risk of harm.

### ***3.5.1 Informing parents and participants***

A document outlining the research procedure and ethical considerations was given to both parents and pupils at a research presentation (Appendix 4) or posted home to those who were unable to attend (this was the case for three parents). The purpose of the presentation was to inform pupils and their parents about the benefits of participating in the study. Nonetheless, the researcher entertained the possibility that some parents or pupils might experience anxieties which they may not feel comfortable expressing within the group situation. Hence the researcher aimed to eliminate all anxieties through providing reassurance at every step of the process and answering questions with care and pedagogy. Furthermore, the researcher hoped that the contact information available would help put parents' anxieties at ease. The researcher found that the audience was particularly receptive to her own story about having a disability. This was a useful opportunity for the researcher to familiarise herself with the pupils and to build common ground.

#### **Informed Consent**

Both participant and parent/caregiver read and signed the informed consent form together as the participants were all under the age of 18 (Appendix 6). The researcher also reiterated the information from the informed consent form to ensure that both participants and parents/caregivers were clear about the research aims (Appendix 5) and procedures prior to signing the form. Parents and pupils received a handout which summarised the research (Appendix 7). They had the opportunity to re-read the agreement in their own time and to raise any necessary questions.

#### **Ensuring Anonymity**

The researcher informed all participants that their identities would be anonymous during the write up of the research, and that the recordings would be stored in a lockable cabinet to eliminate access by anyone but the researcher. Any descriptions or personal details which the researcher felt could lead to the identification of any of the participants were not included in the final report.

### Ensuring Confidentiality

The researcher informed the participants that their views and opinions would remain strictly confidential and duly confined to the research. All participants' names were anonymised using names and all traces of location details were removed. Furthermore, the researcher informed participants that other records such as consent forms and hand written notes taken during interviews would be stored in a lockable cabinet in order to avoid disclosure. The researchers notified all participants and parents that she would return to the SLC to arrange a feedback session to share the findings of the current research. This would also enable an opportunity for parents and pupils to ask questions regarding the research findings.

### Risk of Harm

Information pertaining to protection from harm was duly included in the consent form. Some of the questions asked during the interview process may have touched upon sensitive issues and the researcher informed participants that they were not obliged to answer these if they felt uncomfortable in doing so. The researcher acknowledged that the participants who took part in the research were vulnerable because of their language difficulties. The research posed no unforeseen threats to the safety of the researcher or participants. No participant became distressed during their interviews.

## **3.6 The stages of Data Collection**

As mentioned previously this study aims to gather rich, qualitative interview-based data in the hope that analysis of this data might yield possible deeper insightful meaning (Burns, 2000).

### **3.6.1 Research Design**

During the initial stages of the research design, it was important to decide how best to gather these views given there are a number of approaches to studying emotional and social wellbeing. The researcher will now present a rationale for choosing the qualitative method including the structure of the selected interview approach.

### **3.6.2 Rationale for choosing semi-structured interview approach**

There are broadly three main types of interview approaches which vary in terms of structure –these are; structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Robson, 2002; Punch, 2005).

Now, structured interviews rely on pre-written questions, usually with pre-set response categories and the same questions are asked in the same order, in an attempt to standardise them (Punch, 2005). This form of interview was deemed inappropriate due to the exploratory requirements of this current research. Since the researcher has adopted a social constructionist perspective, the overall purpose of the interview approach is to search for complex meanings, by eliciting adolescents' views using 'broad and general' questions (Creswell, 2009, p.8):

“The more open-ended the questioning, the better as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings”. (p.8, *ibid*)

Closed questioning approaches therefore present serious limitations in attempting to elicit views and construct meanings. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, are not much more helpful in that they rely on non-standardised, open ended questions which can vary depending on the individual interviews. Indeed, and following the planning meeting with the Head of SLC, it became apparent that unstructured interviews would be inappropriate, given the very nature of

adolescents' SLCI. The researcher deliberated that an unstructured format might curtail or impair the adolescent's ability to volunteer information independently. By process of elimination, the researcher opted for the semi-structured interviewing approach, which relies on pre-determined questions asked in different ways depending on the context of the interview (Robson, 2002). Based on the interview process, questions were adapted accordingly in response to the individual interview held with adolescents.

The interview process was structured as a series of two sessions of one hour each for all adolescents sampled. The researcher was careful to think about the pace of the interview questions when interviewing the adolescents given their SLCI. Their SLCI may have caused difficulties being able to express themselves as freely as they would have liked. Taking this difficulty into account, the researcher decided two interviews would develop a trusting relationship between the researcher and participant and enable adolescents to develop their confidence during the interviewing process. The researcher also made the decision to devise structured prompts to give adolescents a rest from talking and to be comfortable as possible during the interviewing process:

1. In Interview 1, each participant completed an "all about me" brainstorm poster. This is a form of a mind map designed to "break the ice" and put the participant at ease and allow them to creatively express themselves through drawing pictures, talking or writing things down. These included sharing their opinions of what their interests and hobbies were and other factors that related to describing themselves as a person.
2. In Interview 1 and 2, each participant completed a self reported questionnaire called the 'Adolescent Wellbeing Scale' devised by Birleson (1980) (see Appendix 9). This was also designed as a structured prompt to 'break up' the interviewing process and to give the participant a rest from talking. The researcher used the structured prompts as a tool to ensure participants were at ease and comfortable throughout the process.

To ease the adolescents into the interviewing process, the questions in the first interview were relatively broad, whereas in the second interview these became

more specific as a greater emphasis was placed on the adolescent's individual experiences. Of course, convening a second interview with the participants, allowed the researcher time to consider the information obtained during the first interviews and help to gain a deeper understanding of the specific areas discussed by the adolescents.

The process of open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain a clearer overview of how adolescents with SLCI perceived their experiences of education, and more importantly, focus on specific issues raised by the adolescents themselves. A list of semi-structured questions designed by the researcher (see Appendix 7) included broad, open-ended questions such as:

- *'What do you like most about school?'*
- *'What about lessons? Are there any you like? Why?'*
- *'How would you describe the Speech and Language Centre?'*

Throughout the interview process the researcher referred to the interview questions (Appendix 7) in both interviews but she also developed questions based on the outcome of interview 1. During the pilot interview, some changes were made to the interview questions. For instance, the researcher referred the SLC as the speech and language unit which was not understood by the participant so this was changed to the correct terminology of Speech and Language Centre. Secondly, the term "ethnicity" was not understood on the student information sheet that was conducted during the first interview. This was rephrased to "where do you come from? What is your family background?" The researcher debriefed the adolescents at the end of each interview and reminded them of the contact details should they want to get in touch (Appendix 9).

### **3.6.3 Overall comments from the researcher**

The researcher felt that a quantitative approach would not elicit the richness and depth that the research questions demanded, therefore a qualitative methodology was deemed more appropriate. Typically, qualitative research is subjective and

socially constructed and relies on the researcher being continually reflexive (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). Thus, the qualitative approach “fits” better with social constructionism given the emphasis is on ‘words’ as data rather than numbers. As such, qualitative data analysis allows for the capturing of complex meaning as emphasised by Robson (2002).

To summarise, the researcher decided to develop semi-structured interviews with adolescents using a small sample to allow for enriched data. Further to this point, the researcher chose to carry out two interviews with each participant to ensure there were maximum opportunities to explore the research questions, particularly in the second interview. The researcher decided against a formal structured interview approach given this might be somewhat rigid and prevent opportunities for interacting which is invaluable to the current research. Similarly, a highly unstructured approach would be unfeasible because it is unfocused. Accordingly, the researcher decided to use a semi-structured approach as this would ground the interview and ensure that it remained on topic while allowing both interviewer and participant to be flexible. To summarise, the researcher aimed to explore the views of adolescents with SLCI and choosing interviews as the methodology provided ‘a very good way of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality’ (Punch, 2005, p.168).

#### ***3.6.4 The procedure of the interview methodology***

The interviews took place in individual rooms within the SLC. The researcher chose to interview in the school setting given that these were more familiar to the sampled adolescents as they have regular access to the SLC. The researcher rejected the idea of interviewing at the adolescents’ homes given the distractions that could arise.

The researcher used a Dictaphone to record the interviews as this would increase the descriptive validity of the research, so that the researcher had access to an

accurate record of what the adolescents said. This also provided a way of increasing familiarity and engagement with the material, as the researcher was able to listen repeatedly to the recordings. The researcher made brief notes at the end of each interview to derive as much information as possible. An agency transcribed the interviews and the researcher reviewed the transcriptions thoroughly (see example of transcription in Appendix 10). The complete transcriptions are provided on a disc (Appendix 11).

### 3.6.5 The Process of Data Collection

Table 3.3 presents an overview of the data collection and analysis procedures which clarifies the steps undertaken.

Table 3.3. An overview of the data collection and analysis procedures

Steps	Process undertaken
1	A research proposal and ethics form was submitted to the University of East London (UEL) outlining the proposed research questions and intended research design (October 2010)
2	Ethical clearance was agreed by the UEL Ethics Committee (April 2011)
3	The researcher began the planning of the research with the Head of the SLC (See Appendix 1 for timeline of events) (May 2011)
4	Information regarding the research were dispatched to staff and pupils to inform and promote the research (May 2011)
5	An information presentation session was held for parents, pupils and staff where consent forms for the research was also explained (June 2011)
6	Data collection: interviews were carried out with all participants (June 2011)

7	Staff were informed that the data would be analysed and that the researcher would carry out a follow up visit to present the findings and provide opportunities for staff, parents and pupils to ask questions regarding the current study (July 2011-October 2011)
8	Transcribing of all interviews took place by a professional agency (September 2011)
9	All transcriptions followed a thematic analysis process for analysis and exploration of findings (January 2012)

The next section provides an analysis of the data gathering and how the recording process took place.

### 3.7 Data analysis

The data collected from the individual interviews was analysed using a thematic approach with each data set (interview transcriptions) analysed independently. Broadly speaking, thematic analysis involves the search for themes or patterns which are present within a data set (Gomm, 2008). The qualitative nature of this research meant that it was highly appropriate to subject the data to some form of interpretation, with a focus on eliciting general themes for exploration (Creswell, 2009). The researcher chose to use thematic analysis as it offered a range of benefits and met the requirements of the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) posit the view that: "...thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality". (p.81)

Thematic analysis allowed examination of what 'reality' existed for the participants and a consideration of why this was the case. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline several advantages of thematic analysis. These include the flexibility as well as the simplicity of the approach as well as the potential for the production of rich and detailed analysis. One of the disadvantages of using thematic analysis is that the

approach offers limited opportunities for interpretation, particularly if it is not used alongside existing research or theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Linked to this, they argue that a disadvantage can exist with regard to the weakness of the analysis, however they maintain that this actually more to do with the *analyst* rather than the *analysis*. Therefore based on Braun and Clarke's paper, the researcher aimed to maximise rigour in order to produce a detailed and coherent analysis. She maintained this through transparency in keeping a reflexive journal to remind her of the focus of the research. Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that the more rigorous and transparent the researcher is in detailing the processes followed, the less likely the analysis will be weak.

The initial stage of the analysis was both inductive and deductive; as the interviews were coded using pre-existing categories stemming from previous research. Such coding or analysis is considered "theory driven" and Braun and Clarke (2006) state that when data is viewed in relation to previous research or indeed the researcher's prior interests, the analysis stage is more deductive. Following this, a generation of "data driven" codes emerged from the data set rather than pre-existing research, which therefore made the study more inductive. As the study progressed, the researcher was searching both the existence of *known* themes but also looking for *new* themes which might provide a context for the existing themes. Thus thematic analysis offered a way of exploring the data set both inductively and deductively. This approach has shown to enhance rigour in analysis if used carefully (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The difficulty found with qualitative research is the issues with replication. Therefore, for the purpose of transparency, it is necessary to be very clear about the decisions the researcher made regarding the analysis of the data.

### **3.8 Interpretation of data collected**

The researcher reviewed all transcriptions and coded these into possible themes by hand which enabled the researcher to immerse herself in the data. The

researcher recorded codes across the data set in the margins of the transcripts and then attempted to identify themes which also included sub themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher then highlighted the codes on the participants' transcripts (for example 'homework was boring'). These were then clustered together to form key sub-themes ('attitude towards work) and then clustered again further to form core themes ('reflections on educational experiences, achievements and goals'). These provided exploratory and descriptive analyses.

The transcripts were analysed using an approach known as inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As stated earlier, the researcher did not want to ignore important themes outside and thus coded for unknown themes where themes emerged from the researcher's interaction with the data (inductive, bottom-up approach). The researcher drew up a summary table that included the codes, themes and sub-themes with reference to quotes. This provided evidence and support for the cluster areas identified.

The analysis of data broadly followed the six 'phases' methodology proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Table 3.4 provides a detailed description of the specific steps taken during the analysis of the data. The process was not always linear and therefore needed checking and clarification which meant the researcher re-visited the stages regularly.

Table 3.4: Step-by-step process of thematic analysis (taken from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase of Analysis	Tasks performed
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**Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data**

Transcription of field notes.

Notations were made throughout the process to record initial thoughts about the data.

Repeated reading of the transcripts and initial consideration of potential themes, meanings and patterns in the data.

Ideas were logged in the researcher's reflective journal.

**Phase 2: Generating initial codes**

Initial reading of transcripts to code as much of the data as possible.

An inductive approach was used initially as the first X codes.

Additional codes were derived by the data and noted by hand on the transcriptions, thus using a deductive approach.

Additional thoughts were recorded about possible themes and potential groupings of the initial codes.

**Phase 3: Searching for themes**

The codes were then reviewed and grouped into potential categories and initial themes.

The data was continually reviewed and referred to throughout the process.

#### Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Potential themes were mapped out to see if they fit with the data.

Some themes were discarded altogether, others were combined and others still were divided.

The researcher asked a colleague to review the codes and themes.

Data extracts were retrieved for each potential core theme to see if they formed a 'coherent pattern' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.91).

Themes and the example extracts were then considered in relation to the entire data set to ensure that the themes provided an accurate reflection or representation of the data.

The original data was re-read in relation to the proposed themes and previously un-coded items were placed into themes where appropriate.

Sub-themes were considered and established in some instances.

After repeated reviews of the entire data set, a thematic map was created.

<p><b>Phase 5: Defining and naming themes</b></p>	<p>Each theme was examined individually in relation to the extracts to establish what the theme aimed to capture.</p> <p>Initial notes were made for each theme to summarise what it represented.</p> <p>Each theme was described in one sentence to check it contained a manageable amount of information.</p> <p>Initial names were created for the themes, with a focus on short, succinct titles.</p>
<p><b>Phase 6: Producing the report</b></p>	<p>A table of extracts was produced to visually illustrate the key concepts within each theme,</p> <p>The thematic maps will be detailed in Chapter Four.</p>

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data

As discussed earlier (5.6.2) the researcher recorded the transcriptions through use of a Dictaphone. The researcher read and re-read the transcriptions until she was familiar with the content. The text for the analysis constituted the interview transcriptions together which were on average 17-28 pages long.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

The researcher developed 103 initial codes where 5 core themes emerged and further sub-themes emerged within each one of the core themes. In total, there were 23 sub-themes. The researcher coded using a 'data driven' approach which

enabled the data to produce themes. Sometimes during the process, the researcher coded several times within a data extract. For instance, in table 3.5 provides an example of a data extract from an interview transcription (see Appendix 12 for description of codes).

Table 3.5: Example of codes with transcription extract

Transcription of Interview Data Transcription	Codes
<i>“Because they haven’t got the speech and language and I feel that peoples getting more help and getting out of...getting better but all my friends outside the School they try to help me to do my work and that lot ‘cause they want me to get out of the Centre and I don’t want to be in the Centre all my life so I want to get better”.</i>	92
	80
	51
	50
	27
	18
	9
(Lines 533-536)	

The researcher referred to the list of codes (Appendix 12) as each interview transcription was analysed. For instance, the numbers above, refer to the following codes listed in table 3.6:

Table 3.6: Example of codes and their description

Codes	Description of codes
92	Understanding of peers’ perceptions of SLCI

80	Poor self-esteem, complex emotional feelings as a result of disability
51	Mainstream friends' supportive group
50	Mainstream friends' perceptions of SLC
27	The challenges associated to attending the SLC
18	Identifying dislikes in the Centre
9	Value placed on support given in the SLC and mainstream school from TAs

### Phase 3: Searching for themes

Following the initial coding of the data and the subsequent checking of codes, the researcher attempted to group the codes into initial core themes through grouping them based on similarities they shared. Once this was completed, the researcher presented a visual map of the codes listed under initial ideas for themes. An example of this is presented in Table 3.7, with the code number placed in brackets and the theme seen in bold type:

Table 3.7: Example of theme and associated codes

<b>Initial Theme: Reflections, Thoughts and Understanding of the SLC</b>
<b><u>Initial Codes</u></b>
The positive aspects to the SLC, benefits of the SLC – emotional and academic support (16)
The challenges associated to attending the SLC (27)
Progress from attending the SLC: attainment and success (28)
Personal identity and sense of belonging within the SLC (32)
Sense of belonging in the SLC as a result of friendship groups (36)

Codes that did not relate to the SLCI were placed in the miscellaneous category until the researcher thoroughly re-read the transcriptions to identify whether there was a place for these codes. If there was not a place for these, then these codes were discarded.

#### Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Data extracts were considered in relation to each theme and changes were made when necessary. For example 'Understanding of the SLC' was split initially into 23 sub-themes and then became revised to 5 sub-themes. The researcher created a thematic map (Figure 7) to illustrate the themes and sub-themes generated from each data set. At this point, the researcher enlisted the help of a colleague to check that the codes fitted within each of the themes. The researcher listed the codes and the additional coder was asked to indicate which theme each code

belonged to. The researcher engaged in a discussion where discrepancies were found which resulted in the adjustment of several codes until a level of agreement was achieved.

The researcher's research journal is linked closely with a paper-trail which documented all stages of the analysis based on a complete set of coded transcripts. In addition, descriptions of the development of the themes and interpretations were also included. In addition, credibility and reliability checking was carried out to increase the validity of the data analysis and research as a whole. This involved both an academic supervisor and a peer researcher analysing a sample of the transcripts to ensure that the emerging themes corresponded with those that I had identified.

Willig (2008) claimed that qualitative research is often criticised as it is less concerned with aspects of reliability as opposed to quantitative research. Willig (2008) noted the reason for this is that qualitative research explores a particular, possibly unique phenomenon or experience in great detail and therefore it does not aim to measure a particular attribute in large numbers of the population. On the other hand, some researchers (Silverman, 1993) emphasized that if qualitative methods were applied appropriately they ought to generate results that are reliable.

Specifically, the same data when collected and analysed by two different researches would yield the same result. The reliability issues within this research were addressed through inter-rater reliability.

Assessing inter-rater reliability, whereby data (transcripts) are independently

coded or analysed and the results are compared for agreement, is a recognised process in qualitative research (Willig, 2008). Inter-rater reliability checks were used within this research to promote the reliability and validity of the research itself. The following processes were carried out:

- A peer researcher read through a section of a transcript while listening to the recorded interview to ensure that the transcript corresponded to what was said during the interview. The peer researcher confirmed that my transcripts were accurate.
- The reliability issues within this research were addressed through triangulation. An academic tutor and a peer researcher analysed the same extract of a transcript. This was to ensure that the emerging themes corresponded with those that I identified and could be linked back to the text. There was agreement between the academic tutor and peer researcher that the themes identified connected to the text.

Both my academic supervisor and peer researcher concluded that they could understand my identified themes and associate them to the transcript.

There are many critics that are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Other researchers question whether trustworthiness can ever be truly established within qualitative research (Sparkes, 2001). However within this research, the methodology allowed for detailed, accurate accounts, systemic and in depth analysis and reflective practice to occur. I considered issues of validity, quality and reliability prior to and in the process of conducting this research. Therefore, it could be argued that such ways of working allowed me to

provide a valid and trustworthy account of the adolescents' experiences of their SLCI.

Once the themes were established and appeared to 'fit' the data, the researcher made certain not to continually re-edit them or over-analyse them as she was made aware by Braun and Clarke (2006):

“...after a few editing turns, any further work is usually unnecessary refinement- similar to rearranging the hundreds and thousands on an already nicely decorated cake.” (p.92)

#### Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Individual themes were then considered and the researcher re-read the data set to ensure that the themes were coherent and just. At this stage, the researcher was immersed in the data. Each theme had their 'final title' which provided sufficient information to inform the reader of what the theme represented.

#### Phase 6: Producing the report

The interview transcriptions were then re-read and colour coded by the researcher to identify the themes and relevant extracts which contributed to the presentation of findings in Chapter Four. A count of the occurrence of each theme was recorded for each interview transcription (Table 3.8). The table below provides an overview of the prevalence of each core theme in accordance to the frequency count of the number of times each theme occurs across the interviews.

Table 3.8: Frequency count of themes evident across participants' interview data

Participant Name	Theme 1: Reflections on Educational experiences, achievements and goals	Theme 2: Role of the Teaching Assistant (TA)	Theme 3: Understanding of the SLC	Theme 4: Friendships	Theme 5: Perceptions of having an SLCI
John	58	16	47	48	50
Steven	45	23	36	7	44
Paul	33	2	36	43	72
Daniel	30	5	24	25	75
Neil	29	13	38	8	44
Chantell	30	20	37	13	53
Beth	33	40	41	32	109
<b>Totals</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>447</b>

### 3.9 Reliability and Validity

As noted in section 3.3 within a social constructionist paradigm there is no 'one' truth but multiple truths, reflecting the position that there as many realities as there are individuals. Therefore, the pertinence of this finding is predicated on the most accurate depiction of what the participants perceive to be the 'truth' or their reality.

The researcher implemented several measures to ensure as much rigour as possible in the current study. The researcher paid close attention to Yardley's

(2000) work on characteristics of good quality research. The first characteristic Yardley identified was the 'sensitivity to context' which related to the theoretical grounding, links to literature and the socio-cultural context of the research. The researcher aimed to ensure that the current research 'fit' within existing literature in the area of adolescents' experiences of SLCI. The use of a 'Weight of Evidence' measure (Gough, 2007) enhanced the transparency of the researcher's decision making process during the Literature Review (section 2.3.1) including how the researcher ensured validity of the research.

The researcher considered data interpretation by consulting with a research professional within the University of East London in order to gain advice and support on how to code and theme the data across the data set. It was appropriate to ensure that trustworthiness of the data during the data collection stage by asking adolescents themselves if the researcher interpreted the information they shared accurately. Questions were used throughout the interviews to check the adolescents' views such as, 'I understand you feel... because...Is this correct?' (Rogers, 1951). This reduced the chance of inaccurate interpretations and strengthened the validity of the research.

The continuous engagement with the SLC and commitment to develop competency in the data collection and analysis procedures provided further evidence for the rigorous nature of this research. Given that the researcher engaged with the data analysis by hand meant there was no room for technical error, only researcher error. The researcher addressed this through continual process of reading, re-reading and checking the data until no more could be gained from the analysis.

Yardley (2000) identified the final characteristic identified as a way of measuring the 'quality' of qualitative research. From the outset, the researcher aimed to ensure that the research had an impact on professional practice. Indeed, the overarching outcome for the research was to produce findings to key stakeholders relating to the views of adolescents with SLCI about what works for them including

the successive factors that promote wellbeing.

### 3.10 Reflexivity

*“We do not ‘store’ experience as data, like a computer: we story it”  
(Winter, 1988, p.235)*

Social constructionism focuses on the contextualisation of research and considers the relationship between the researcher and the participant (Cahill, 2008). In the context of the current research, it was important for the researcher to be aware of her own thoughts and ideas from the outset, and make this explicit. There are two types of reflexivity: epistemological and personal (Willig, 2008). The researcher was of course aware of her own bias given she would bring her own beliefs and views to the research. Nonetheless, the researcher acknowledged her views were pivotal given the qualitative design of the methodology which relied upon research interpretation. To manage this, the researcher used a reflexive journal which aimed to ensure transparency with regard to personal views and decisions during the data collection and interpretation. Reflexivity is pro-active as its emphasis is on providing practitioners with devices to improve and develop communication skills in interactions with other people. According to Schon (1983, 1987):

“[...] the actions of the practitioners and the context in which they occur are foremost, whereas reflexivity involves an interaction between the practitioner and the environment that influences the form of the reflexive process” (p.2, Schon, 2007).

#### **3.10.1 Epistemological Reflexivity**

Epistemological reflexivity refers to the researcher’s reflection on her constructions of the world. This engages the researcher to think about how the research questions were constructed; how the design could have ‘constructed’ the data and

how the researcher interpreted the findings. The researcher is aware that some of her thoughts and ideas fit closely with social constructivism. This approach suggested that meaning does not exist in its own right but individuals construct them as they interact with one other. Social constructivists in particular, focus on how individual makes sense of the world around them. This approach is known as interpretivism which indicates a focus on how the world is interpreted by those within it (Robson, 2011).

The researcher has focused on looking at how the social context in particular has shaped the individual behaviour of the adolescent with SLCI. The researcher aimed to be as objective as possible but acknowledged that her own interpretation (in terms of interpreting the findings) may somewhat be subjective as a result of her own personal experiences.

When applying this epistemological perspective to the research, the researcher focussed on how adolescents with SLCI applied perspective to their experiences (for instance their disability and impact of their disability within school) whilst taking into account the broader social context (peer groups, the SLC and the mainstream school). Furthermore, the researcher explored how this impacted on the interviewees' answers bearing in mind the other 'limits' of reality such as possible subjectivism and factors that may have shaped perceptions of education and their SLCI.

### ***3.10.2 Personal Reflexivity***

Personal Reflexivity enables the researcher to reflect upon her own experiences, values, interests, beliefs, aims in life and social identities and to understand how these may have shaped or impacted upon the research. Conversely, this type of reflexivity also involves thinking about how the process of the research may in turn influence the researcher both personally and professionally.

A reflexive approach to the research was undertaken where the researcher used a reflexive journal (see Appendix 13 for example of extracts) throughout the research

process. This journal enabled the researcher to maintain transparency as well as to explore the impact of critical self-reflection. Critical self-reflection is a way of considering the ethics of the power-knowledge relationship with participants. The researcher recorded her reflections as well as her ideas throughout the research which allowed her to be critical. Mruck and Breuer state the importance of self reflections during the process of research. Furthermore Ahern (1999) comments how the reflexive journal is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity as the researcher examines their own “personal assumptions and goals” and clarify “individual belief systems and subjectivities” (Mruck and Breuer (2003), cited in Russell & Kelly, 2002, p.2).

To conclude, this chapter has provided an overview of the research methodology and a series of justifications for the approaches used. The researcher has listed a proposed outline for the research and laid out a summary of the aims, objectives and research questions. In addition, this chapter introduced the thematic analysis methodology and held a brief yet critical discussions on its merits, caveats and limitations. In the next chapter, the researcher will explore the findings of the thematic analysis and link these to the four key areas found in the Literature Review. Additionally the researcher will address the three research questions accordingly as well as highlight any additional findings.

# CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The researcher presented the findings of the thematic analysis according to the core themes and the sub-themes. This chapter will produce the analysis of the key findings which are discussed in Chapter Five and are answered accordingly to the research questions. As acknowledged in Chapter Three, the researcher followed the step-by-step procedure for thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The sixth and final stage of the analysis of the interviews involved writing a detailed analysis of each of the core themes and their associated sub-themes. This included consideration of how the themes related to each other and to the data as a whole. The evidence to support the themes are illustrated with data extracts from the interviews.

For each of the five core themes, a thematic map is provided. Each core theme was divided into several sub-themes. An analysis and interpretation of each core theme and sub-theme is illustrated with data extracts. The thematic maps are diagrams of the core themes and the constituent sub-themes found in the data set. The shape or size of the boxes in each diagram has no relevance.

From the thematic analysis, the researcher listed the core themes and sub-themes following the initial codes (see Appendix 12). This initial thematic map presented an overview of the core themes and sub-themes. During the next stage, the researcher explored the relationship between the codes and themes including the main overarching themes and sub-themes within them. During this process, some of the initial codes formed core themes whilst other became sub-themes and some were discarded.

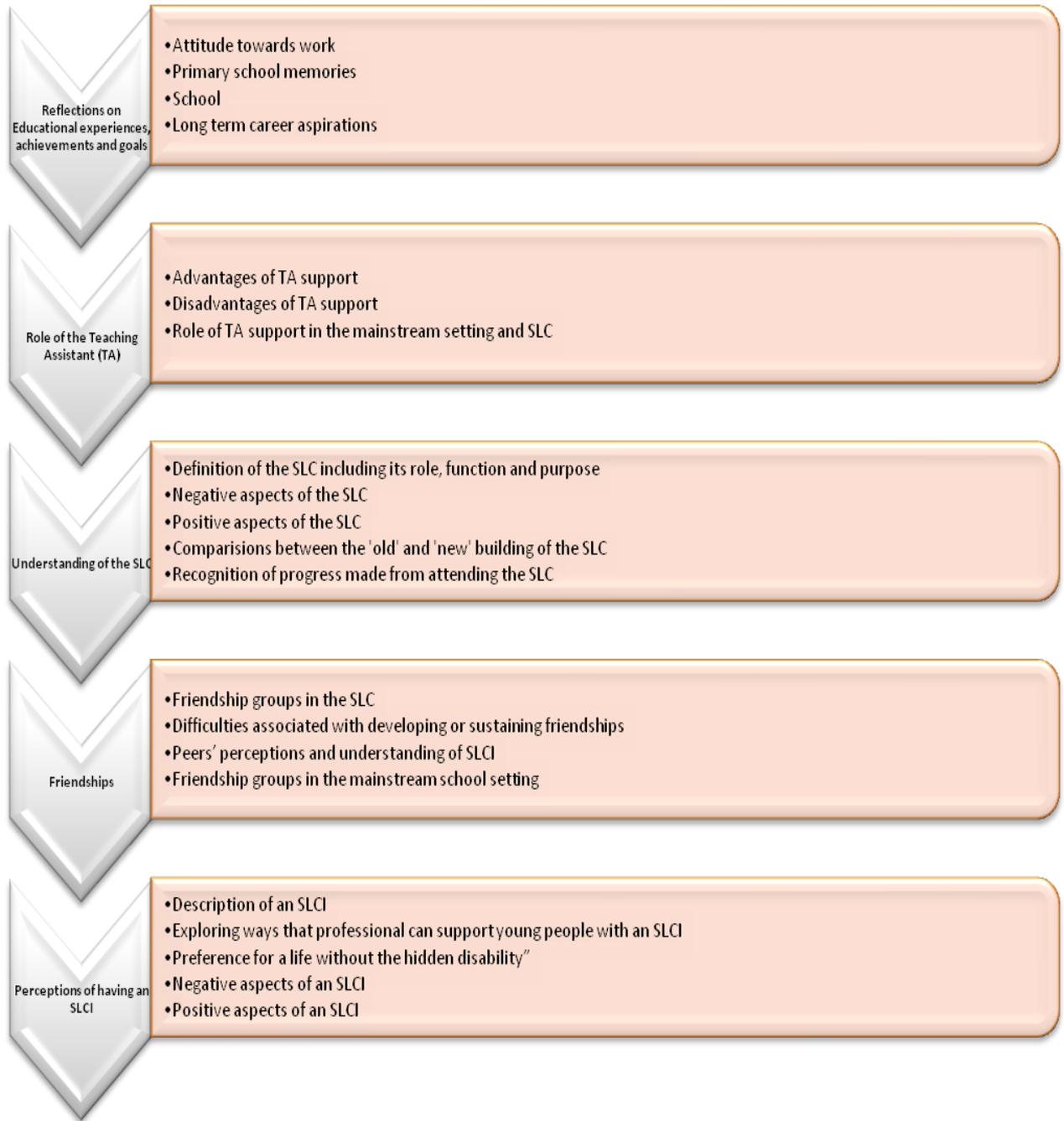
## 4.1 A presentation of the five core themes

A summary of the five core themes produced by the analysis is presented in table 4.1 below. Overall, the five core themes examined the views of adolescents with SLCI, what their views were on inclusion and highlighted what the key factors were that enabled positive wellbeing. Subsequently, adolescents talked openly about the things that were not going well for them and some even went as far to talk about how things could be improved. Some of the crucial themes that emerged centred on the role of the TA, the presence of the SLC, and the importance of friendships.

Table 4.1: Summary of the Core Themes identified

<b>Core Themes</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Reflections on Educational experiences, personal achievements and goals</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Role of the TA</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Understanding of the SLC</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Friendships</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Perceptions of having an SLCI</b>

**Figure 7: Thematic map of core themes and sub-themes generated from the interview data**



The thematic analysis from the interview transcriptions initially generated 103 codes in the initial stage. From these codes, 7 core themes were derived with 97 sub-themes. As part of a later analysis, 5 core themes remained with 23 sub-themes (Figure 7).

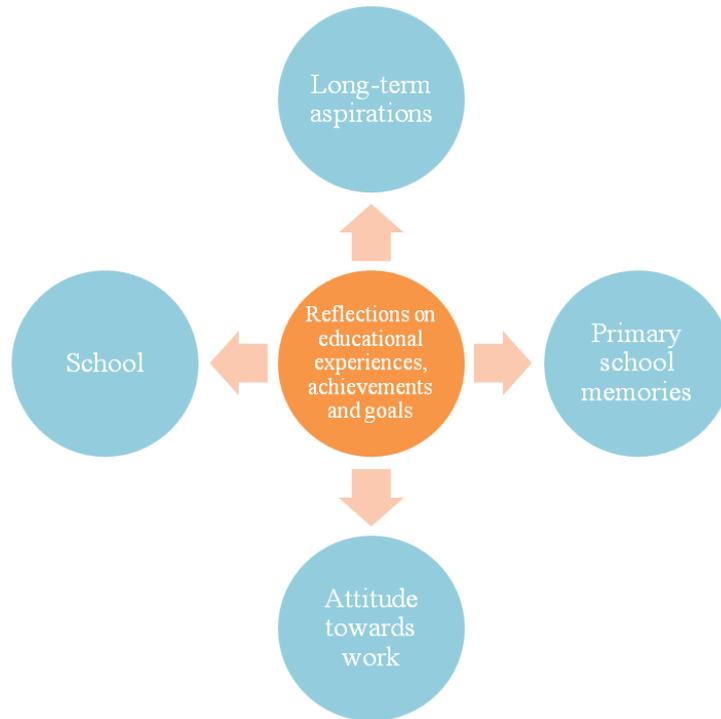
## 4.2 The core themes

Five core themes were found within the analysis and these will be discussed in detail below with quotes as data extracts from adolescents to illustrate the themes. Some extracts demonstrated an overlap across several themes. The adolescents' responses from the interviews were not altered. Therefore any grammatical or unusual wording is an accurate reflection of what the participants said. The researcher chose extracts based on relevance to the core theme and sub-theme. An example transcription is available (Appendix 10) and a full copy of the remaining interview transcriptions is available on disc (Appendix 11). In this section, the researcher has considered each of the five core themes and their sub-themes with evidence from the interviews. A thematic map for each core theme is illustrated followed by exploration of each sub-theme.

### ***4.2.1 Core Theme One: Reflections on educational experiences, achievements and goals***

The analysis of the interviews determined that all of the adolescents reflected on their educational experiences, their achievements and their goals and this was decided to be core theme one. Figure 8 reflected the sub-themes that constituted the core theme. This core theme was evident across all the interviews with adolescents, with 258 examples counted.

**Figure 8: Core theme one**



#### **4.2.2 Sub-theme one: Primary school memories**

The first sub-theme derived from the thematic analysis of the interview transcriptions related to the emphasis adolescents placed on their experiences of primary school. The theme was evident across all seven interviews and whilst there was variation in the way that the adolescents perceived primary school experiences, as they all made comments about the primary school being a positive experience where the work was easier. A majority of the sample reflected that friendships made in primary school stayed with them in secondary school and that primary school made it much easier to make friends that enabled strong friendships in the secondary school settings.

All participants except one shared that they felt primary school was much easier because the work was not as hard and it was much more fun. Interestingly, all adolescents reported that they felt it was harder now being in secondary school to ask for help given the class sizes are much larger. From the thematic analysis, adolescents reported their difficulties in asking for help in a typical classroom environment. One adolescent shared that he had more friends at primary school because it was much easier to make friends as there were people similar to himself in terms of his impairment. This view was also consistent with half the sample who felt more comfortable with making friends in primary school as they had difficulties too themselves. One adolescent, Daniel shared that on an academic level, he has struggled being at secondary school and for him that was the most noticeable change from primary school.

#### **4.2.3 Sub-theme two: Attitude towards work**

The researcher asked adolescents how they knew that they were doing well at school and what this looked like. Paul commented on the positive impact of the support he received but also his own personal motivations that have helped him to succeed and foster a positive attitude to school work:

*Ummm...well with a...not really 'cause...because in some lessons there are some things that I learned and how to do and I sort of developed on that in School and worked it from them and got it done. Errr...Positive thinking errr...hard work and getting on with the work that you've been set (Lines 620-625).*

All adolescents reflected the importance of education and provided a rationale for “working hard”. It was important to have strong work ethics and there was a universally shared view about willingness to do well. Although they varied in the emphasis of working hard, they all reflected on wanting to do well in school. As Paul mentioned, to have “positive thinking” enabled the willingness and drive to

want to do well. The researcher wondered if this was a result of the high input adolescents received from the SLC which facilitated this motivation, drive and confidence to thrive.

#### **4.2.3.1 Sub-theme three: School**

The researcher asked adolescents about what their perfect day at school would look like in order to understand from the views of adolescents what were important key factors to a good day at school.

##### **Paul**

*Oh on a happy day being with the friends that I know very well, having a good lesson that I got a lot of information out of...at the end of the day as just thinking that was a really good day (Lines 138-141).*

##### **Beth**

*'Cause like we can do stuff and it's not like that hard in Drama or Music and... Ummm...I like like getting into group and getting our own songs, making our own songs and that up (Lines 66-69).*

Overall, all adolescents expressed their interests in subjects that were practical based including Construction, Art and Drama. One participant, Beth said that she liked Drama because it wasn't hard. Evidently subjects chosen are decided partly on whether there is enjoyment as well as whether it is a manageable subject for the adolescent. In addition, the findings demonstrated a link to attitude to work where adolescents attached importance to learning and feeling like they took something away from the lesson. Furthermore, being with friends was an important factor to being happy at school. For the adolescents in the sample, this contributed to feeling a sense of belonging by being with the people they liked and spending time with them.

#### 4.2.3.2 **Sub-theme four: Long-term aspirations**

The adolescents in the current sample openly shared their views about school including their aspirations for the future. The researcher appropriately asked adolescents what their best hopes were for their future. All adolescents were readily able to answer this question producing clear goals and objectives. The researcher has enlisted three examples.

##### **John**

*You need a good education for GCSEs to get a really good job....I don't know, I could work at my dad's shop.....Yes, or I could work at Scottsdale's...It's a Garden Centre.....Well probably get married, have children (Lines 512-525).*

##### **Steven**

*Ummm...I want to be a carpenter...Like my Dad.....Mmmm....putting things together like carpentry and joinery and all that...I don't know...(Lines 464-474).*

##### **Beth**

*It's just like I can... 'cause I want to be a Teacher...Yes and...ummm... 'cause I said to my Mum if I can't learn now I'm not going to get to be a Teacher 'cause I won't know what to do and that lot so...yes...Ummm... 'cause... 'cause I've got a speech and language problem and like I want to...I know everything about it so I think I want to be like a Teacher or that so...I can help people like me..(Lines 115-125).*

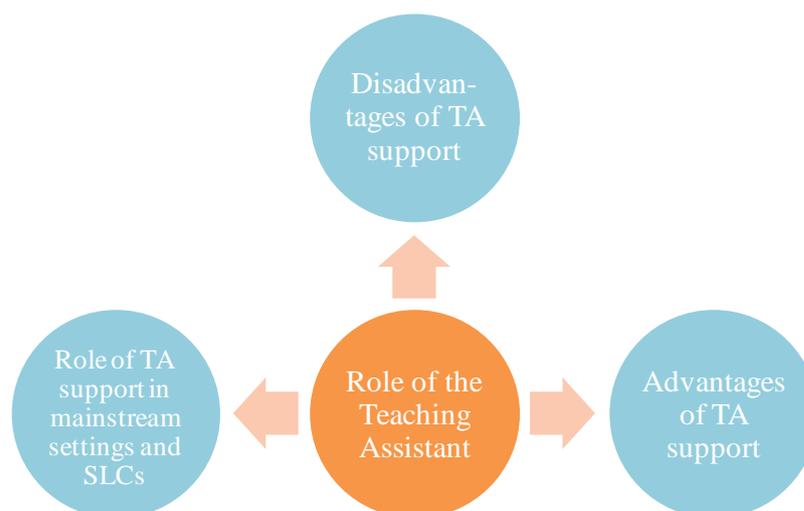
Three out of six adolescents highlighted that they wanted to follow their parents' footsteps in terms of the career choice they wanted to make. Overall a majority of the adolescents selected career choices that were very practical based which is indicative of the courses they have chosen to study and enjoy. Interestingly Beth reported that she wanted to become a teacher to help others with SLCl. This was a positive reflection of responding to the experiences of a hidden disability given parts of her own personal experiences have not been positive. For Beth, her

hopes to reframe her situation was to be in a position to help others as she commented that she knew what it was like. All adolescents spoke confidently about future aspirations and they identified quite clearly, what their hopes were for the future. For some of the adolescents, they shared how they were going to achieve their goals whilst others talked about not knowing yet but they had made conscious decisions about what they would like to do.

Many of the adolescents talked about the areas they disliked most about school which was the homework as some of the adolescents reflected it was hard to learn in the mainstream classroom because it was always harder to concentrate. For others, wider learning problems were not a concern and they viewed their problem as an isolated SLCI issue. In particular Daniel shared how he felt the mainstream classroom was noisy and it was always difficult to ask for support. Additionally, John and Paul expressed how they preferred to work in the SLC because they were surrounded by people who wanted to do well and for them it was reassuring knowing that there was staff there readily available to support them.

#### 4.2.4 Core Theme Two: Role of the TA

Figure 9: Core theme two



#### **4.2.4.1 Sub-theme one: Advantages of TA support**

Teaching Assistants (TA) were a commonly talked theme throughout the interviews and in particular, the TA's role within the SLC as well as the mainstream school setting. Interestingly, from the analysis, the identified key factors that enabled wellbeing was through receiving support, especially from the TAs and their role of providing "good support". Adolescents talked about how the TA's personal qualities were important. In essence, it was important for them to have TAs who cared about them, who had a positive attitude and spent time listening, talking and getting to know them. Amanda opened up in the second interview and commented on how valuable TA support was:

*It's really hard because like most of the stuff we don't understand at all. It just you know can become a blur.....Like Geography we do stuff about like the world and that we have to do the map but I'm not...some people don't know where it is on the map so the...so the... so the...ummm...T... helper helps us. She will break it down and go through it slowly then ummm I understand it better (Lines 230-235).*

Furthermore, Amanda talked about how the TAs often helped her to "calm down" and they "knew how to speak" to her.

*Ummm...like if I get in a big mood with someone Miss will just tell...tell me to sit down and talk to her Miss. They make me calm down so I can t... talk about my issues (Lines 267-269).*

#### **4.2.4.2 Sub-theme two: Role of TA support in the mainstream setting and SLC**

When asked to expand on the role of the TA, communication skills featured prominently – the ability to listen and talk with them was important. Adolescents

valued the TAs who helped them with their communication skills. For instance, Amanda added that the TAs knew how to speak to her in a way that helped her to talk slowly so she did not stammer so much. Alongside communication was a key theme of independence. Adolescents repeatedly reported the need for support and encouragement to develop skills to complete tasks themselves, and to not have tasks done for them. They were clear that they all had different needs and TAs needed to be aware and prepared to get to know them as individuals. As Beth commented on her views and experiences of working with the TAs:

*It's a bad thing at the time because the TAs used to like helping us all the time and don't ask us what we think (Lines 390-391).*

For many, it was especially important that TAs understood their underlying difficulty and its potential impact, particularly for those with “hidden” difficulties.

Overall, adolescents talked passionately about those people who made a difference in their daily lives with a majority of adolescents reflecting on positive experiences. They felt it was easy to recognise those who had passion for their job and wanted to make a difference. Some of the adolescents talked about the negative impact that TAs had as they felt they didn't always have the right skills to support them. All adolescents however talked about how class teachers in the mainstream needed further guidance in helping people with SLCI as they felt this was not managed well.

#### **4.2.4.3 Sub-theme two: Disadvantages of TA support**

Two out of seven adolescents, namely the girls, shared their experiences of where they have felt TA support had not been what they expected and they reflected on when it has not been available to them and how this was particularly stressful given this was seen as a factor that was impeding on their learning. For instance Beth commented:

*Ummm...because...ummm...because I'm meant to get help but like one of my TAs ask like help the other boy whose not allowed to get help but sometimes she don't get like help me so I'm trying to get done on my own.....and that means I am not learning. I think errr... it makes my speech problems worse cause I am not learning. They just talk at us and don't let us talk and come up with suggestions or answers ourselves... And it is going to be harder when I get older because I won't know how to think for myself! (Lines 108-115).*

Beth went further and commented about how she wanted the support from TAs and more importantly the delivery of the support to be tailored to meet Beth's needs. In particular she commented:

*Yes, but I don't want them to tell me what to do, I want to think by my own and...I want them to ask me proper questions to help me learn proper... I want them ask me...to tell me first and ask me what I think if it's okay or not okay, if it's not okay then I want them to help me to think about different ideas. I want to be challenged not just told (Lines 420-424).*

*I want teachers to let us think about it with the time that we would get. I think they don't do enough of that, they don't give us time. It would be better if sometimes, we work in a group with other children with speech and language difficulties... Then we can work together to see if we can come up with answers ourselves and then work with the TA when we need help (Lines 429-433).*

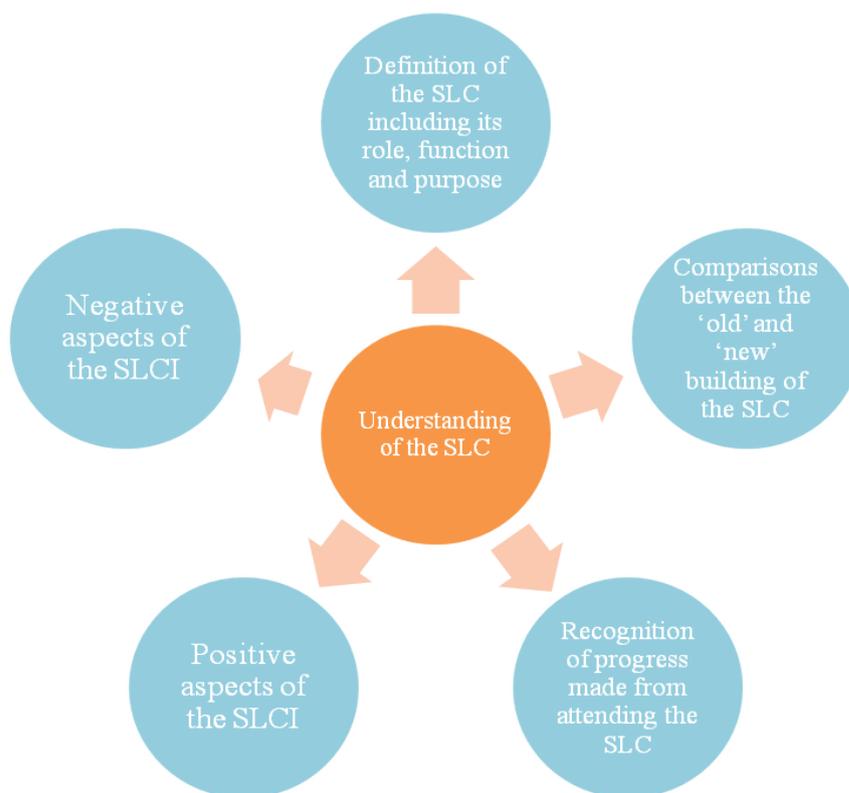
Beth was clear about the difficulties she found in accessing TA support. However, she was articulate in expressing her views in how she wanted to access support.

#### **4.2.5 Core Theme Three: Understanding of the SLC**

As detailed in table 3.8, the theme 'Understanding of the SLC' was raised 259 times which made it the third highest occurring theme in the interviews. Thus given a portion of the qualitative data was categorised as relating to the 'Understanding of the SLC', subsequent thematic analysis identified this as a core theme. Furthermore in relation to this core theme was the 'Role of the TA' which adolescents rated in terms of the support they received within the SLC. In

particular, the role of friendships played an important role in the lives of adolescents in the SLC; as discussed earlier, sharing an impairment has brought strong friendships together as well as the similar work ethics. These factors combined were captured within the sub-theme of 'positive aspects of the SLC'.

**Figure 10: Core theme three**



**4.2.5.1 Sub-theme one: Definition of the SLC, including its role, function and purpose**

All adolescents demonstrated their awareness of what the SLC represented for them. They were able to provide reasons for their attendance to the SLC including the purpose for attending. Although some of the adolescents described their impairment differently (for instance “speaking disorder”, “language disability”), they all described the positive impact the SLC had for them. For some of the

adolescents, the SLC was a “safe place” that allowed them be themselves. However, one adolescent went further and demonstrated how the SLC allowed him to be confident and act as a role model to younger pupils whilst demonstrating a level of responsibility for them. Overall, adolescents reported the SLC as a close knit environment. Below, are extracts that encapsulate the importance of the SLC including its role in promoting resilience and wellbeing.

**Neil**

*I would describe it as fun experience place....because it's... the Teachers that work here, they're really nice and ummm...they give you help and always have a smile when they do that.....I matter and I... it's like I have their attention. Sometimes in the classroom, that is not always ummm possible (Lines 50-60).*

**Amanda**

*Ummm...it...ummm...helps you to speak properly....It's quieter. I like coming here because you see like most of your friends come here... (Lines 189-190) Help me to become confident, like they help me to do something I haven't done before.. I was the first person to read aloud to the whole class (Lines 374-376).*

**Daniel**

*Ummm...that other people understand because they have knowledge more than the teachers in the school...Because they like been working in SLC and they got used to people (Lines 488-490).*

**Paul**

*...they sort of helped my problems and developed on that and I've coped really well and there might be some more problems in the future that they will help me to understand..... (Lines 342-344).*

In the next section, the researcher was keen to highlight what the positive aspects of the SLC were and how this fitted in with what adolescents considered the key factors within the SLC that enabled successful wellbeing.

#### **4.2.5.2 Sub-theme two: Positive aspects of the SLC**

Adolescents announced a range of key factors that contributed to wellbeing. These included the presence of the teaching staff, where 1:1 attention is available which made Neil feel “he mattered”. Furthermore, adolescents demonstrated how they leveraged their own awareness to develop their own resilience skills to manage secondary school life. Adolescents shared concise definite answers about the purpose of the SLC. Collectively, this was to help improve their SLCI difficulties. The researcher explored the theme of the SLC in further detail in the second interviews where the adolescents shared their experiences of the key factors that facilitated wellbeing. The data affirmed that six out seven adolescents would struggle without the presence of the SLC. Paul commented on what he would do if this was the case:

*Ummm...we...well if we all just have to stick together and...errr...find a spot where we could hang out and where the other lot...errr...either don't pick on us or get us involved in something we don't want to be involved in (Lines 671-673).*

#### **Steven**

*...Mmmm ... if we didn't have that then school would be just so much harder (Lines 389-390).*

All the adolescents were able to reflect positively about the SLC in terms of the academic, emotional and social support provided. They stated that the SLC has helped to develop their confidence in an area location that was “safe” and “protective”. As such the SLC seems to be an important feature of the secondary school environment. The adolescents’ strong views about the importance of school work reflected how valuable the support was in the SLC and how a school life without a SLC would be ‘difficult’ and a ‘struggle’.

#### **Paul**

*Well, the fact that...errr...it's like a big catch up lesson.... (Line 133)*

**Amanda**

*Yes, because it helps us a lot so. We come here three times a week. The teachers understand us and know how to deal with our problems....I stammer a lot so they like put me here and help me with that (Lines 212-214).*

**Beth**

*Yes, 'cause I'm more like on my own and 'cause we talk quietly and I get the work in Centre more than I do at other lessons. I can concentrate here and I get help like....(Lines 197-199).*

Some of the striking comments that came out of interviews demonstrated that the pace that TAs took was imperative for the adolescent. This clarified how important the SLC is to them as the environment enabled this to happen. Furthermore, the “safe environment” proved to form a sense of containment for adolescents where individual support was provided.

**4.2.5.3 Sub-theme three: Negative aspects of the SLC**

One out of seven adolescents commented that the SLC was not positive because it did not help Beth to develop her independence skills. Furthermore Beth commented that her friends in the mainstream school perceived the SLC as negative and a barrier for Beth's learning. Beth identified with her friends in the mainstream and felt that her life at school would be improved if she didn't have the SLC as part of it her daily school life. The researcher has described Beth's friendships with others in section 4.3.4. As such Beth commented:

*Because they haven't got the speech and language and I feel that peoples getting more help and getting out of...getting better but all my friends outside the School they try to help me to do my work and that lot 'cause they want me to get out of the Centre and I don't want to be in the Centre all my life so I want to get better... They want me to be away from the Centre so that I can err be with them*

*in school...so I can be independent (Lines 299-304).*

Furthermore, Beth highlighted how her friends from the mainstream school were a “positive influence” as they “discouraged her from attending the SLC”. Beth felt this was important as they encouraged independent skills, something she aspired for.

#### **4.2.5.1 Sub-theme four: Comparisons between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ building of the SLC**

The SLC moved into a brand new state of the art building from the beginning of the data collection. The initial planning meeting with the Head of the SLC took place in the ‘old’ building, a mobile unit. Some of the adolescents shared how being in the new building, they felt they were considered to be important as the school had invested in them. For the adolescents, this contributed to a positive sense of belonging within the school environment.

##### **Paul**

*Well...well when I started in Year 7 there was just that...it was just a small little Centre building but now that they’ve built this, we’ve got a new sort of area to...to work in...it’s more suitable area than just a small spaced Centre (Lines 388-392).*

##### **Neil**

*... as when they were starting to build this...ummm...what I first heard this building was just going to be a 6<sup>th</sup> Form but when I heard there was going to be a Speech and Language Centre in here I was like Wow! Now it’s kinda better cos we’ve got more space to talk and for the rest to play football (Lines 536-539).*

In addition to the above, adolescents regularly talked about how the move to a ‘brand new state of the art building’ was an exciting experience for them they were motivated by this new change which contributed to feeling valued within the school

environment.

#### **4.2.5.2 Sub-theme five: Recognition of progress made from attending the SLC**

Six out of seven adolescents reflected that they had made progress through attending the SLC. They responded positively to the ongoing support they had received and how the support was always personalised to them where they received one to one attention which helped them to manage the academic learning. It appeared that most adolescents relied on the emotional and pastoral support and perceived this as the most important for them in terms of accessing the curriculum including developing a sense of belonging within the SLC.

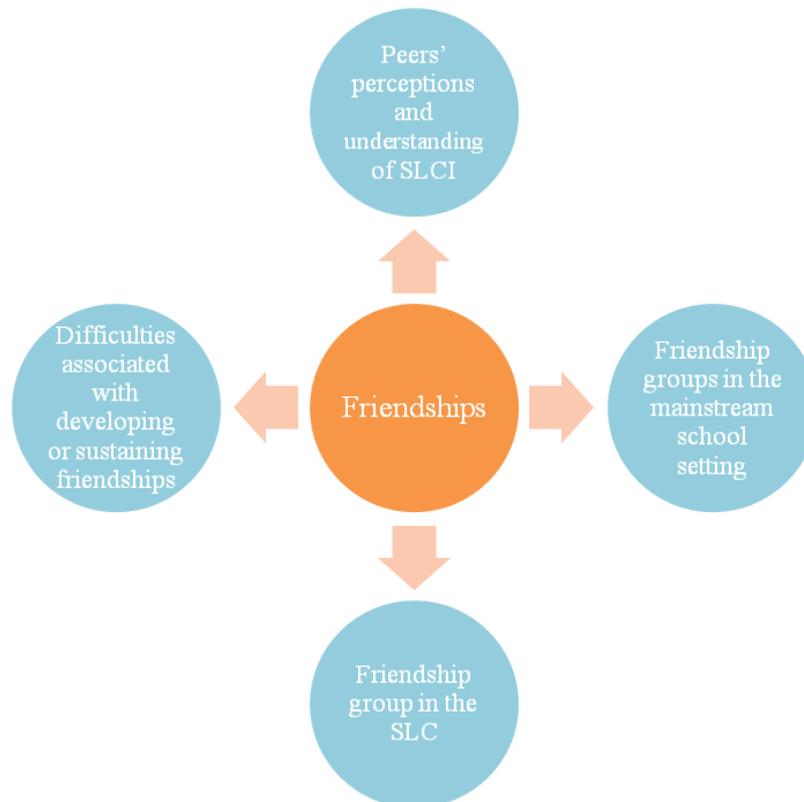
#### **John**

*Yes. I feel like I have got somewhere and now I speak properly most of the time and I can talk to people. Before I couldn't do that but now I can go up to people....Makes me more confident to...Make new friends. By chatting to people...but not always because it can be hard too (Lines 178-181).*

#### 4.2.6 Core Theme Four: Friendships

The core theme 'Friendships' was prevalent within the school and SLC and deemed an essential key factor that contributed to successful wellbeing.

Figure 11: Core theme four



##### 4.2.6.1 Sub-theme one: Friendship groups in the SLC

Some of the adolescents commented earlier about how experiences of primary school helped sustained friendships in secondary school (section 4.3.1). This theme has continued and for some, this provided a rationale as to why for them, their friends remained in the SLC.

## **John**

*I think so, yes...I have more friends in the SLC cause I got sort of the same friends since I've started School. They were with me at primary school too. And they are still my close friends more than other people in the school (Lines 630-632).*

## **Paul**

*Well, from the Centre, the School and the Centre the Schools is just, the main bit, it's just a whole big bunch of people that I don't really know but the Centre is with people that I know and used to know from primary school. And, I just sort of gel with them more here in the Centre than in the main bit of the school cos it's not so loud and it is more chilled here (Lines 254-258).*

### **4.2.6.2 Sub-theme two: Friendship groups in the mainstream school setting**

Particularly salient was how the adolescents described their friendships with people in the mainstream school setting. A strong factor emerged for some, of how friends in the mainstream school were perceived as better friends to have because they did not have a "hidden disability" that got in the way. For them, there was a strong dislike of seeing other people with similar issues to themselves as they were seen not bright or fun to be around. Below Beth commented on why she preferred to be surrounded by her friends in the mainstream school:

*Because when I'm in a group people get...get it and I'll ask them...I'll get more when people tell me what I'm doing, 'cause they know what to do but sometimes I don't so I can ask them but on my own I don't know what to do and there's no-one to ask. I feel more confident them cause I am more comfortable with them because they know what they are doing...(Lines 234-238).*

Contrary to the views above, for two adolescents the mainstream school was

negative in terms of the attitudes and personalities that people held. For example:

**John**

*Well, some of the time, some of the mainstream children are naughty... so I usually ignore them (Lines 619-621).*

**Paul**

*...because if you're sitting next to someone you don't know and you ask and there's no friends sitting beside you and you're wondering what does that mean and then that...they just assume you are really thick and can't do anything...But I have a positive attitude and I just tell them how it is (Lines 154-158)*

**4.2.6.3 Sub-theme three: Difficulties associated with developing or sustaining friendships**

As discussed earlier, two adolescents shared that they favoured friendships of people who attended the mainstream school as they didn't have "speech and language problems". They felt that it was better to be around people who were "normal" meaning without problems. Specifically, Beth shared that her friends in the mainstream were a positive influence on her as they discouraged her from attending the SLC which was a "good thing" because she wanted to develop her independence skills. The remaining adolescents shared that their friends were those who attended the SLC. One of the biggest factors contributing to this was because they were friends in primary school where a language unit existed. Secondly, adolescents shared that it was easier to be friends with people in the SLC as they had similar issues and therefore they understood and they were more likely to share similar interests. Furthermore, some of the adolescents revealed that given their impairment, it was in fact quite challenging to befriend people in the mainstream school.

**John**

*Well the same amount of friends it's kind of hard to make new friends now in*

*secondary school I think.... Because like there was less people at Primary School than at Secondary School so easier to make friends I think... (Lines 96-98).*

For the minority of the sample, their friendship groups outside of the SLC enabled them to do well given it provided them with the sense that they could achieve “normality” and additionally develop the will to “be like them”.

#### **4.2.6.4 Sub-theme four: Peers’ perceptions and understanding of having an SLCI**

Many of the adolescents reflected on friends within the SLC as being different to friends outside the SLC who teased them about their disability. Consequently, this has led to greater difficulty in forming friendships. The actions of others interrupting, shouting and teasing appeared to lead to increased feelings of frustration and anger. Additionally, some of the adolescents reflected on their experiences where they had been negatively portrayed by their peers in the mainstream school as being incompetent and unable to do things that their peers could. This also led to feelings of frustration but for some, they channelled these feelings in a positive manner as Paul commented for instance:

*Well if you’re sitting next to a friend you know and they’ve understood the question and like you haven’t, you just ask them what does that mean and they can...errr...ask them and then they in a simpler way and then you think oh I get it, I understand and then you just...errr...get on with it, ‘cause if you’re sitting next to someone you don’t know and you ask and there’s no friends sitting beside you and you’re wondering what does that mean and then that...they just assume you are really thick and can’t do anything...But I have a positive attitude and I just tell them how it is (Lines 151-158).*

#### 4.2.7 Core Theme Five: Perceptions and experiences of an SLCI

As seen in Figure 12, the core theme 'Perceptions of an SLCI' produced five sub-themes that related to this. This was the most spoken theme across the interview data as illustrated in table 3.8.

**Figure 12: Core theme five**



##### 4.2.7.1 Sub-theme one: Description of an SLCI

Nearly all of the adolescents indicated a clear understanding of an SLCI except for two. Whilst John referred to it as a “speaking disorder”, Neil did not identify with the SLCI term and had his own description of what it was. He commented:

*Ummm...what do you mean by impairment? .....I just don't say stuff correctly and I...Ummm...I'm not sure...made up speech perhaps? Ummm...well basically I don't say stuff correctly and.....I feel actually normal when I say stuff correctly... Ummm...he...I think I would say...I think I will call it language disability. (Lines 157-177).*

#### **4.2.7.2 Sub-theme two: Positive aspects of an SLCI including resilience, self-esteem and confidence**

This sub-theme included a narrative about how the SLCI was perceived and the experiences of having an SLCI. During interview one, John commented that he didn't feel that his impairment had defined him any way as it was a part of him and he did not know any difference. He commented:

*It is alright...I don't mind having a disorder; I just carry on with life (Lines 211).*

Furthermore, the researcher asked the question if you woke up one morning and realised that you no longer had your SLCI, what would that be like for you? Paul immediately commented:

*Pretty dull. Well...errr...with my speech and language impairment it sort of make me meet my...it make meet more friends ...it make me make more friends.....which I was really pleased and...ummm...what else...yes it made me really pleased to have lots of friends and...errr... if I hadn't of met them I probably would have struggled, if I was in Year 10 and I didn't have them I'd be really struggling (Lines 515-527).*

This was proven to be the case for four adolescents whom all talked positively about their experiences of having an SLCI. Moreover, skills like resiliency were evident as a result of their SLCI. Furthermore, Neil talked about what life would be like without an impairment but equally showed how he had a positive mindset to work towards achieving his goals. For instance:

*Errr...well a different thing if you don't have the language disability is like...well you wouldn't...you would speak very well, that's for sure because you*

*wouldn't have any problems and that, that's all I can say. Yeah it would be good but I think I can get there eventually so that's fine (Lines 212-215).*

#### **4.2.7.3 Sub-theme three: Negative aspects of an SLCI including feelings of loneliness, self-esteem and confidence**

Within this core theme, for a small number of the interview sample, there were negative references made regarding the experiences of having an SLCI. Three out of seven adolescents reported negative experiences as a result of their SLCI. This was particularly the case for the female adolescents in the sample. For example Beth commented that she was upset as she felt her impairment was deteriorating:

*Because I'm not learning. 'Cause, I don't know, 'cause I don't get help (Line 177).*

The researcher asked the question 'if you woke up one morning and realised that you no longer had your SLCI, what would that be like for you?' Beth responded:

*Okay, 'cause I know at least I can get what...I'd have more friends and... 'Cause then people...I don't know...'cause like people will think yes I can do it on my own, I don't need the help so it will mean I will be confidence in the class and will be able to chat to whoever without feeling scared or nervous..(Lines 460-464).*

Beth went on further to talk about how her SLCI made her feel lonely and for her it was a daily struggle at school everyday more so because of her low confidence which meant that she was never sure if she had friends or not.

*Mmmm. Just cos having this problem makes me silence. Not easy to open up- I can say it all in my head but I can't get the words out so I feel lonely at school and at home....Yes. I just think that having this problem makes everything harder. It's not easy to talk openly and I just wish I didn't have this problem (Lines 652-656).*

The researcher shared this information with the Head of the SLC as she felt in it

presented as a possible ethical issue since Beth demonstrated some level of “distress”. In Chapter 5, the researcher discussed how her role enabled Beth to “open up” to a level where she felt comfortable to share issues of a sensitive nature. Another adolescent, Daniel, commented on how his SLCI made life difficult at times:

*... Just I get frustrated sometimes cos I can't say the words or get them out. And I don't like it when people don't understand me – that makes me angry (496-498).*

#### **4.2.7.4 Sub-theme four: Preference for a life without the “hidden disability”**

Some of the adolescents commented on how life could look different from a practical sense. For example, Steven commented:

*In some way it'd be easier...I could get things done quicker maybe (Lines 371-375)*

*Errr yes...ummm I'm quite shy so...sometimes I find it hard to talk to people (Lines 380-381)*

Whereas Amanda talked about how her experiences of SLC impacted on her self-image and equally her perception of others thought of her. She commented:

*It would probably look better because like we're not like brainy that much, like we get help with our work most of the time. Yeah it makes us look like we are thick cos we have that help so yeah I would like it more if I didn't have this stammer (Lines 433-436)*

It is interesting to note that the perspectives adolescents' held were similar where there was emphasis about how long it took to do things and how they “appeared” to other people. For example, Amanda reported that “...we are thick cos we have that help” which evidently was similar to the views of five adolescents who shared that school life would be much easier without the presence of the SLCI. The

remaining two adolescents shared that they couldn't imagine a life without it as it was a part of them.

#### **4.2.7.5 Sub-theme five: Exploring ways that professionals can support adolescents with an SLCI**

All adolescents shared openly their thoughts about how their educational experiences could be improved. A majority of the sample reported that it would be useful for the TAs and teachers in the SLC to use their skills to support mainstream teachers. Adolescents felt that they were key professionals who had the knowledge and skills including time and patience. They also talked about how they felt listened where their opinions counted and how they could always have a laugh and be able to relax. One individual shared that the SLC was a “fun learning place”. Adolescents were clear to share with the researcher when exploring how professionals can improve the way they support young people with an SLCI, that whoever worked with them should have the “appropriate professional knowledge” and “know how to deal with people like us” too long. This was seen as a necessity and expectation at the minimum.

The researcher was intrigued by the adolescents' explorations about how professionals could support them and more importantly how this can aid inclusion between the mainstream school and the SLC. The researcher has included excerpts from Steven, Amanda and Beth's interviews help to summarise their hopes and aspirations and how this would enable and empower wellbeing in adolescents with SLCI.

##### **Steven**

*Would be better if professionals did more to talk to people about our problems then people would be more tolerant (Lines 441-442).*

##### **Amanda**

*Like speech and language teachers like Miss X to come in and talk to us all...*

*teachers can help us more because they will have more understanding... (Lines 532-535)*

### **Beth**

*No the SLC and school don't mix and we get to really... It would be a good thing though because you can get more help and people know what you can do... and wouldn't think you were stupid then (Lines 750-752)*

## **4.2.8 Unanticipated Findings**

Whilst this research employed an inductive, data-driven approach to thematic analysis, the researcher did not want to ignore the deductive themes identified as the unanticipated findings.

All adolescents shared their experiences of being a victim of bullying that had took place at some stage during their school history and which took place within the mainstream school, and not the SLC. However, only one adolescent expressed strong emotional feelings about the negative impact it had on her and how it had shaped her outlook of school. Furthermore, Beth reported that she would prefer to be in the SLC more so to avoid people “outside” picking on her. She commented:

*'Cause sometimes I get picked on with my speech language and... Ummm...not that often but sometimes... I feel like it's all my fault I've got a speech language problem... I just walk away and just don't listen and just ummm deal with it myself.*

*...I just feel safe because if anyone can hurt me it's got Teachers there to...(Lines 440-445)*

In addition, as part of the unanticipated findings, two adolescents talked about their home life circumstances. For Beth, she particularly talked about how she would have liked more opportunities to communicate with her parents and felt that her sister took the attention as it was difficult for her given her SLCI. For Neil, he talked about his feelings of loneliness in relation to his mother not living with him

and how it was difficult to manage a relationship with her over the phone as she lived abroad. Although these findings did not relate to the research questions, the researcher did not want to exclude them from the analysis. Interestingly, the adolescents themselves found themselves opening up to the researcher about intimate details of their lives. The interview situation was a positive experience for the adolescent as they felt safe. The researcher referred to the interview questions more rigidly to help the adolescent focus on the purpose of the research.

In Chapter Five, the findings of the thematic analysis are discussed in relation to the existing literature. The researcher has drawn on the evidence in this chapter to formulate a number of key findings which will answer the research questions that guided the current research. Additionally, from a methodological standpoint, the limitations of the findings as well as the implications for further research are included.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This final chapter presents key findings of the study in light of the research questions (devised on page 2) and the core themes (anticipated and unanticipated) that arose from the thematic analysis in chapter 4. In addition, this chapter will reference the research findings of this study to the broader existing literature in the field of psychology. The researcher will also present the limitations of her findings, which will include a section on the researcher's self-reflective practice. This chapter will then conclude with some final thoughts on this study and its implications for both future research and EP practice.

## 5.1 Key findings

The below is a presentation of the key findings as a function of the research questions devised at the beginning of this study (please see Appendix 16 for a summarised version of these findings):

1. *What are adolescents' experiences of having a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI)?*
- 

### **Finding one: a majority of adolescents talk negatively about their SLCI**

The interviews yielded a rich amount of information about the adolescents' perceptions and understanding of their SLCI. As we have already seen, the researcher grouped the responses under the core theme 'perceptions and experiences of an SLCI' (section 4.2.7). It quickly became apparent that the

interview data illustrated an overall negative experience and perception of living with an SLCI.

As part of the interviews, the researcher asked the adolescents individually how they would envisage life without an SLCI (see section 4.2.7.4). The aim of this question was to elicit the adolescents' views on how their experiences of an SLCI impacted on their daily life. Interestingly, the findings demonstrated strong views from two adolescents who could not envisage a life without their impairment. These individuals talked passionately about how their impairment constituted a part of themselves and that they would struggle in school without the presence of the SLC –and more importantly, the friends they have made therein. Nonetheless, the rest of the sample talked about their impairment in more negative and disparaging terms and described how their lives would be easier without it on a practical level.

An interesting observation that emerged from the interviews was that the response to the question on 'life without an SLCI' was gendered; whilst the male adolescents pointed to the perceived practical benefits of a life without an SLCI, their female peers instead put more emphasis on their self-appearance, suggesting that their impairment may lead others to perceive them differently and perhaps more negatively. This contributed to their negative feelings which consequently enabled a poor self-concept (Steinberg and Morris, 2001, section 4.2.7.3). Both Beth and Amanda talked about a preference of a life without a disability. Amanda expressed her relief at the idea of a life without a stammer as she commented "wouldn't look like I am thick". Beth talked about how it made her feel "sad and lonely" and that having communication difficulties meant that she couldn't always express herself to her friends nor did she feel she had the skills to make new friends. This related to Palikara et al's (2009) research that highlighted personal self-worth as a contributing factor to wellbeing.

**Finding two: a minority of adolescents demonstrated a lack of awareness of the term “SLCI”; in some cases they were in denial of their disability.**

The researcher can confirm that a majority of the adolescents sampled were able to describe their SLCI and to describe their impairment and difficulties in a sufficiently detailed manner. For two adolescents, however, they did not recognize the accepted term used to designate their disability (“SLCI”) and insisted in referring to their “impairment” as a “language disability” or a “speaking disorder”. For instance, and further to this point, Neil responded that:

*Ummm...what do you mean by impairment? .....I just don't say stuff correctly and I...Ummm...I'm not sure...made up speech perhaps? Ummm...well basically I don't say stuff correctly and.....I feel actually normal when I say stuff correctly... Ummm...he...I think I would say...I think I will call it language disability (Lines 161-181).*

This excerpt is both interesting and problematic and led to a development and advancement in the researcher’s thought on disability and awareness. Indeed, the author initially felt the adolescent’s response betokened a poor level of self-awareness. It brought into question the pedagogical framework within the SLC and whether these adolescents were party to the decision-making processes concerning their wellbeing. In other words, how could this adolescent be an active ‘part of the pedagogical solution’ if they were not fully aware of their own difficulties? How involved could this particular adolescent be in the very process designed to help him progress within education? How could denial be the starting point to help one overcome one’s impairment?

Upon second thought, however, an alternative and very different picture suggested itself to the author. Far from being a symptom of denial, the adolescent’s response suggested a powerful coping mechanism. Far from holding the adolescent back, his attitude of feigned denial could instead be construed as an empowering strategy to overcome his disability. This interpretation dovetails effectively with one of our key findings whereby a number of adolescents were able to talk positively about their SLCI; the idea that a number of participants had demonstrated resilience in reframing their impairment in a way that was more palatable to

themselves and which they perceived as being more positive. This is a far more encouraging avenue for thought, and also meshes more intimately with the author's social position on disability, whereby it is society's responsibility to change its values, perceptions and practices to remove the barriers to participation for people with disabilities.

**Finding three: the majority of the adolescents with SLCI share a similar work ethic and elaborate common goals to support one another.**

The researcher asked adolescents what a difficult day at school might look like and to give some examples. The majority of the sample reflected on poor work ethics shown by peers in the mainstream school. In particular Paul commented on his perceptions of his mainstream peers:

*Well, either when the annoying people kept on shouting out in the lessons and I wouldn't get anywhere or there was a...the Teacher said they were going to do something...errr...fun and she said that we'll only do it if the class would behave and some people didn't behave and 'cause I was looking really forward to that fun thing and the Teacher said now that you've...errr...ruined it, I'm not going to bother and that got me really annoyed (Lines 175-181).*

As illustrated in chapter four, a majority of adolescents expressed that they found it easier to make friends who also have an SLCI. The researcher hypothesised that adolescents found it harder to develop friendships in mainstream school because they felt more comfortable with people they already knew from their previous years in the primary school language unit. In addition, a theme that came out strongly from the interviews was a shared reluctance and difficulty in befriending peers in the mainstream school who did not take their academic work seriously. These findings underscore the importance of the bonds developed by the adolescents in the SLC and how these bestowed them with a sense of identity (Hogg 1992).

An important learning point that emerged from the core theme 'reflections on educational experiences, personal achievements and goals', was that all

adolescents had a positive attitude towards work. Interestingly, when adolescents talked about subjects they liked, they all openly shared their passion for subjects that were creative and practical for instance, art, drama, music and construction. For example, the latter was a popular subject for the male adolescents and they envisaged it as a potentially fulfilling career choice, also expressing the idea that wished to pursue it as a similar career choice to their fathers. Two adolescents shared their excitement when they recalled their experiences of undertaking a work placement with their fathers. In fact, one of them (John) confided that he was looking forward to working with his father again in the summer holidays.

This emphasis and fondness for practical subjects meant that none of the adolescents expressed a preference for purely 'academic' subjects. A clear trend was that the adolescents chose their preferred subjects in terms of how much enjoyment they provided, perhaps suggesting that they found academic subjects challenging. This trend confirms one of the key findings in Durkin, Simkin, Knox, & Conti-Ramsden (2009), who argued that adolescents with SLI typically underestimate their potential. Indeed, this particular study found that amongst 17 year olds with low examinations scores, those with typical development described themselves as 'not satisfied' with their scores whilst those with SLI described themselves as 'satisfied'. The study found that individuals with SLI have a lower perception of their capabilities and thus places less importance on what they feel they can achieve (Durkin et al, 2009).

## *2. What are the experiences of adolescents with SLCI in education?*

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### **Finding four: some adolescents perceive TA support as a barrier to full integration into the mainstream school environment.**

The findings of the interviews reflected common views regarding the role of the TAs and in particular, on the support provided within the SLC as well as the mainstream school. In particular, the adolescent girls in the sample talked openly about their struggles in working with the TA in the mainstream classroom. The girls

both commented that the presence of the TA impacted on their image within the school settings. In particular, Beth talked negatively about the support received from her TAs as they tend to prevent her from developing her own thinking and independence skills (discussed in section 4.2.4.3). More seriously, Beth felt her relationship with her TA acted as an impediment to her developing friendships – and she shared the distressing idea that her peers befriended her only so that they too could access support in the classroom. This issue emerged recurrently in the interviews and Beth often talked about the TA as a ‘physical’ barrier to her making friends with her peers:

*I mean how I know if they really are my mate or if they just want help. But also I know that some people wouldn't even talk to me cos I have an adult sitting next to me (Lines 497-499).*

The relationship between poor friendships and feelings of loneliness are obvious and well documented –see for example Brendgen, Vitaro & Bukowski (2000). For Beth, the inability to ascertain the authenticity and earnestness of her friendships due to her ‘physical separation’ in the classroom meant that she felt lonely and deprived from the emotional support that she needed from her peers. As we have already seen, the different stages of friendship (discussed in section 2.5.1) considered how important it is for the person to seek emotional support in order to have fulfilling friendships. This is when learning and development of social skills takes place (Hartup, 1996; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Sullivan, 1953).

### **Finding five: a majority of adolescents with SLCI have difficulties relating to their mainstream peers**

The majority of the adolescents reflected difficulties in relating to their peers in the mainstream school. A popular view as to why this was case was, as Daniel put it, due to outright rejection from their peers:

*Ummm...once after School...I gone to the club but the person say can you speak English please... Made me angry but I just walked off... (Lines 465-470).*

A recurring grievance that surfaced in the interviews was that mainstream peers failed to understand their SLCI and made little effort to engage with them. The adolescents pointed to a persistent struggle to interact socially with their mainstream peers, which, in their view, was the reason behind their imperfect inclusion within the mainstream school. Amanda's comment in this regard, makes her feeling plain:

*It's hard because like everyone takes the mickey of out you. Because most of the time I stammer a lot.... (Lines 423-426)...Upset and annoyed all the time because it's not my fault..... (Lines 430-431).*

Some of the adolescents shared slightly different views as to how they perceived their peers in the mainstream school –expressing for example that they were “tolerated” given they temporarily sharing the same class. The researcher also noted that some adolescents felt indignant and were highly critical of their mainstream peers –and in some cases, actively rejected them. This, the researcher noticed, was not always attributed to a knee-jerk, retaliatory reaction to the mainstream peers’ hostility, but was also due to perceived negative characteristics. These are discussed in detailed in chapter four and include perceived poor work ethic and poor attitude. The dominant view that emerged nonetheless was that they felt-underestimated by their peers. Paul's comment in this regard is unequivocal:

*Yes, 'cause sometimes I go like flying with Cadets, now would you see an SLCI person go flying they wouldn't be able to do that. That is what people say, they think that we are stupid and cannot do anything for ourselves (Lines 758-760).*

Importantly, the female adolescents' introspective responses were consistent with the efficacy-based theory of self-esteem, whereby one's own sense of worth correlates positively with fulfilling and 'efficacious' interactions with one's environment (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). As such, it appears quite clearly that their language difficulties and barriers have had a level of interference on their social interactions, leading to adverse consequences on self-esteem (Lindsay et al, 2002). This finding is also consistent with Redmond and Rice's (1998) SAM model

(section 2.7.1), which emphasises that individuals adjust their behaviours according to the social context in which they find themselves, and with Kurdek & Krile (1982), who found that individuals' self-perception is intrinsically linked to the people they interact with.

**Finding six: a majority of adolescents feel that the segregation of the SLC from the mainstream building creates a physical barrier to inclusion**

Most of the adolescents sampled reflected negative views about their perceived inclusion to their school environment. In particular, several adolescents made references to what inclusion meant by linking it to the physical context of the SLC. They made very plain their view that the SLC was separate from the mainstream school, including their playground which is exclusive to the members of the hearing impaired unit. For instance Steven comments that:

*"...the SLC is quite separated even though it is all in the same place!" (Lines 413-414)*

This physical 'segregation' of the SLC from the mainstream school has led to perceived difficulties for the adolescents to express themselves and seek support within the mainstream school environment. Further to this point, Daniel expressed his difficulties in being able to articulate what he wanted in terms of help:

*I shut my eyes. Because if...because a lot of other people saying can I have help and that lot and then it gets harder to ask for it because they take ages to get to you.. Then they don't give you time to explain why err you are stuck. Then I give up asking and just sit there... (Lines 437-442).*

Still the comments made by Steven, Amanda and Beth (4.2.5.5) are helpful ways to explore how wellbeing can be improved by promoting inclusion. These could include opportunities for members of the SLC to share their knowledge and skills with the mainstream school, thereby helping teachers as well as peers to have a

better understanding and awareness of SLCI.

3. *What are the key factors that enable the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI in education?*
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### **Finding seven: for a majority of adolescents sampled, friendships within the SLC played the most important role in fostering their wellbeing**

A majority of the sample reflected positive thoughts about their friendship groups within the SLC and a minority only reported positively on friendship groups within the mainstream school, as anticipated from the preceding findings. In particular the friendship groups within the SLC emerged from earlier time spent in primary school as well as similar shared experiences. Paul summarised how the SLC has facilitated strong friendships:

*...which I was really pleased and...ummm...what else...yes it made me really pleased to have lots of friends and...errr...those would I would be able to talk to you and spend time with my friends 'cause if I didn't have it...errr...if I hadn't of met them I probably would have struggled, if I was in Year 10 and I didn't have them I'd be really struggling..I think I would be struggling because errr...cause sometimes...errr...off School I wouldn't...I'd have to catch up pretty quick for the work I missed (Lines 527-536).*

Overall, the SLC gave the adolescents a strong sense of belonging, and constituted a privileged space where they could connect to others on a social and emotional level. This finding is consistent with Brown (2000), who explains that our social identity and sense of self-worth is predicated on the friendships that we form within our environment. The adolescents suggested that their friendship groups formed on the grounds of similar challenges and interests. This supports the pertinence of the similarity attraction hypothesis, or a dominant theory guiding social psychological research on adolescent friendship which states that affinities are associated with similarities in one or more characteristics (Aboud &

Mendelson, 1996). Close friendship groups develop by mutual preference for particular characteristics, interests and collaborative activities and usually influence each other in the direction of greater similarity (Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

Adolescents depend heavily on their friendship groups through which they can come to better understand themselves and their place in a rapidly expanding social world (Erwin, 1998). This is particularly true for the adolescents in this study, who demonstrated a social identity strongly derived from their membership to the SLC friendship group. This group dynamic is compounded, as anticipated by the preceding findings, by a clear exclusionary logic of “us” and “them”. Group norms, specifying certain rules for how group members should behave, establish a basis for mutual expectations and provide the individual with frames of reference through which the world is interpreted (Brown, 2000). Such norms have clearly helped the adolescents in this study to function more effectively within the peer group and wider school context.

### **Finding eight: adolescents with SLCI perceive the personal qualities of their TAs as a significant contributing factor to their wellbeing**

As seen earlier, a minority of adolescents commented that TA support constituted a physical barrier in their efforts to integrate to their mainstream environment. The majority of the adolescents nonetheless held positive views regarding the role of the TA within the mainstream school and the SLC. Adolescents were keen to comment on their TA’s support both on the academic and emotional level, and to highlight those key characteristics of their TA that they felt had promoted their wellbeing. These included time, pace and –importantly- the enthusiasm they had shown when working with them. Related to this was their sense of humour and their availability:

#### **John**

*Well I love all the...ummm...TAs...‘Cause they give me help doing work, homework, when I’m not sure on something I go and ask and they will help me*

*(Lines 146-149)*

**Steven**

*TAs...ummm... I talk to the Teaching Assistants more because they know me well and I see them more in the SLC too...Errr...easy to get along with...and they're not strict... they more relaxed and give you time to do work and that...(Lines 238-240).*

One adolescent underlined the TAs' deep experience of working with young people with SLCI and argued that they demonstrated a level of patience and pedagogy that was superior to that of teachers in the mainstream school setting. More importantly TAs were praised for their capacity to build relationships and to know everyone on an individual basis.

**Daniel**

*Yes I say the TAs... are better than the school teachers...Because they like been working in SLC and they got used to people (Lines 503-504).*

To summarise, the role of the TAs was an important discussion item across all interviews held with the adolescents. We saw an important facet of this theme in chapter four, where adolescents addressed the importance of the TA input in addressing their emotional needs. Amanda, for instance reported that the TAs knew how to 'handle' her and to keep her feeling calm. Moreover, Steven confirmed that their friendliness always made him feel at ease. In general, TAs were perceived as "nice" and "patient" as they made time to explain the work task as well enable them to feel as valued members of the education community.

**Finding nine: the availability of the SLC (both physically and symbolically) plays an important 'containing' role for the adolescents**

As discussed in finding six, a recurring grievance expressed by all adolescents

pointed towards a daily 'struggle' within the mainstream school due to teachers' lack of understanding of SLCI. Daniel, for example, often felt lost in the mainstream school and reported that his peers' attitude in the mainstream school was poor compared to those within the SLC. In contrast, the adolescents mentioned how the SLC staff were equipped to meet their needs and knew how best to work with them.

For all adolescents interviewed, the SLC acted as a welcome source of containment, and enabled them to feel safe with the knowledge "that teachers were there", according to Beth. The adolescents generally perceived the SLC as a 'warm' and 'friendly' environment due to the availability of staff and their personal qualities. Again, the researcher asked the adolescents to imagine a life without the SLC; this was deemed impossible and a majority of the sample reflected how school life would be a "struggle". As such, six out of seven adolescents elaborated on the positive aspects of the SLC which had consequently helped adolescents to build confidence and self-esteem as well as maintain positive friendships within the SLC.

These findings are exciting and promise insightful learning points for further research and practice. Before we broach a broader discussion, however, we must address some of the limitations and caveats pertaining to this study.

## 5.2 Limitations of the findings

It is important at this stage for the researcher to discuss the limitations of this study. Indeed, it is just as important to determine what conclusions *can* be inferred from this study from those that *cannot* be inferred.

### **5.2.1 Generalisability of the findings**

The current research is small scale and exploratory and does not purport to be representative of the SLCI population as a whole. Furthermore, the study made no attempt to represent gender equally (the ratio of boys to girls was 5:2). The researcher is therefore aware that the present findings require further qualification before generalisations can be attempted. Nonetheless, taken in combination with other small scale studies, the researcher believes that more confident claims on this study's findings could eventually be made. The researcher also believes her working experience across various school contexts lend her a broad perspective upon which recommendations for practice can be based. Finally, it is hoped the detailed picture painted of the school settings in chapter 3 will help readers to make more informed judgements on the applicability of the findings. In the end, there are a number of possible ways in which the knowledge gleaned from this research may help to guide practitioners in promoting and enhancing the key factors that facilitate the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI.

### **5.2.2 Limitations of the methodology**

As discussed in Chapter Three, the researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with adolescents. Given the social constructionist stance of this study, the beliefs and attitudes held by the researcher were important particularly during the interviewing process. The researcher illustrated the stages of data collection (table 3.4) and kept a reflexive journal (Appendix 13) and made notes throughout the research process.

This methodology was not without problems. Firstly, although the interviews provided rich data, it is important to acknowledge that given the nature of the adolescent's SLCI, it was sometimes difficult to engage in the interviewing process. It was not always clear whether the individual was shy or whether their language difficulties prevented them from communicating. In some cases, the

adolescents may have felt it was easier to not give much away out of fear of embarrassment. Still, the researcher tried to eliminate the possibility of this through undertaking two interviews so time was factored into the research process to build a safe and trusting relationship between the researcher and the participant.

Secondly, the researcher found on several occasions that she needed to clarify what the question meant. For instance, during the pilot interview, the term 'ethnicity' was unclear so the researcher edited the question to asking adolescents where they were from instead. Thus, it is possible that the researcher had misconstrued how the adolescents used language to convey their thoughts. The researcher hoped that by building a positive rapport with the adolescents, she would enable them to feel at ease during the interviews –thereby minimising any risk of misunderstandings.

Thirdly, and further to the limitation highlighted above, the researcher was aware that her own attempts to clarify her questions may have prompted the adolescent to produce “misleading” responses. Bearing this in mind –and after a thorough analysis of the pilot interview– the researcher made every effort to improve the process for the subsequent interviews. The improved interview process enabled the researcher to use her sensitivity as well as her own firsthand experience of a disability to respond and engage appropriately to the needs of adolescents.

### ***5.2.3 Using Thematic Analysis***

As highlighted in the methodology (chapter 3), the researcher used thematic analysis as a framework for interpreting the findings from the interviews. The main disadvantage of thematic analysis is that the strength of the analysis is dependent on the researcher who analyses the data. In the current research, the researcher used the 15 point checklist (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as a way of ensuring rigour in the analysis (Appendix 14). For the researcher, the question remains as follows: “would other people make the same interpretation as myself”? Although different

methods were available from the outset, the researcher nonetheless deliberated that the thematic analysis approach was most suited given the exploratory nature of the research. Bias and subjectivity is inherent to psychology, social sciences and humanities in general. The importance is not so much to eschew it altogether, but to be acutely aware of its presence and to flag it earnestly in one's work.

#### ***5.2.4 Possible expectancy effects during the interviews***

Due to ethical considerations, adolescents were informed of the research title including the purpose of the research –namely (a) their views and experiences of their SLCI, (b) the role of the SLC and (c) how their SLCI impacted on their sense of wellbeing. It is therefore plausible that so-called 'expectancy effects' may have occurred as a result of the interview methodology, adolescents adapting their responses to those they felt were 'desired' by the researcher or their school. Moreover, expectancy effects could have taken place during the second interview because these questions were tailored to the individual based on what was shared in the first interview. To counteract this potential effect, some questions (such as 'you mentioned in your first interview that... what was this like for you?') were worded in a way that was open-ended. The aim was to deprive the adolescents of any sense that there might be a 'correct' answer –or at least one that was 'desired' by the researcher.

Some more 'direct' questions were nonetheless deemed necessary, namely those pertaining to perception of peer influence. The researcher was therefore aware that some questions might lead to demand characteristic-type answers from the adolescents. For example, adolescents may have thought that they should answer 'yes' if they felt that this is what was required of them, or 'no' if they did not want to show the researcher that the group had influenced them in any way (social desirability). Research by Cohen, Manion and Lawrence (2007) identified some of the issues involved with interviewing children, which includes establishing trust, finding ways to move beyond the responses they think the interviewer wants to hear and pitching questions at the right level. Throughout the interviews, the

researcher was also aware of possible 'participant effects' but made efforts to mitigate these through the pilot interview, which helped to shape the questions accordingly.

More generally, the researcher made use of different skills to maximise the efficiency of the interview process which included active listening, paraphrasing and being comfortable with silences (Ruane, 2005). This, in addition to the researcher's own experiences, helped her to engage with the adolescents and respond accordingly that led to fruitful interactions during the interview process.

### ***5.2.5 Timetabling of interviews and possible effects on participants***

The researcher scheduled interviews before the summer term to ensure that all adolescents completed interview 1 and 2 before starting school in September 2011. The reasoning behind this was that an interview process straddling two curriculum years (one interview before the summer holidays and one afterwards) could have led to discrepancies in the responses provided –a result of new school-based experiences from moving up an academic year. Making this methodological choice, however, carried other difficulties given that the proximity of the two interviews increased the risk of bias. Half of the sample had both their interviews on the same day, which may have contributed to feelings of tiredness and an increased risk of social desirability effect.

## **5.3 Self-reflexivity**

The reflective journal (Appendix 13) allowed the researcher to continually evaluate the research process from the initial stages to the latter stages which included data gathering and the processes of thematic analysis. In addition to this style of reflections, initial notes were made at key points of the research process including the end of each interview where the researcher talked into the Dictaphone to

reflect on the process (Appendix 15). Reflexivity emphasises the importance of self awareness as a researcher during the research process (Barry, Britten, Barber, Bradley & Stevenson, 1999; Harding 1997). Such awareness is performed through internal dialogues with ourselves and continuous rigorous questioning of “what we know” and “how we know it” as participation takes place in the research (Hertz, 1997).

### **5.3.1 Role of Researcher**

As noted in Chapter Three, the current research was undertaken within a social constructionist framework which demands a highly reflexive approach. As noted in Chapter One, this research was carried out by a TEP as part of her Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology using a practitioner researcher approach that had an impact on the process. An advantage of this approach was that the researcher used her role as a TEP to gain entry into the SLC. The researcher had to create a boundary between her role as a researcher and her role as a TEP which proved to be challenging at times as there were three SENCOs, who were all in charge of different aspects of the school building and often tried to stop the researcher to “talk briefly” about a child they wanted to refer. As a TEP, the researcher had regular supervisions with her supervisor as well as her academic tutor. This provided the researcher with an additional outlet to share research experiences and discuss the process reflectively.

During data collection, the researcher was aware that she introduced herself to participants as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and that the term '*psychologist*' may have initially meant participants felt slightly apprehensive about the research and its purpose. As explained above, the researcher clearly stated her area of interest and the purpose of the research. In addition, the researcher also revealed possible implications for findings and stated that the research would potentially be

published. The researcher's highly perceptive self meant that she was equipped to deal with possible anxieties that may have occurred.

Reviewing the experience of conducting interviews, the researcher reflected on the likelihood that the semi-structured and face-to-face nature of the interviews, combined with her efforts to create a rapport with the participating adolescents and put them at ease, meant that the researcher verbally and non-verbally 'leaked' her own enthusiasm and interest in the topic under discussion. This probably contributed to the respondent bias acknowledged previously. However, the researcher experienced the systematic and repetitive process of thematically analysing the interview data as a way of gaining a clearer perspective on the participant accounts. Through scrutinising and re-reading the transcripts the researcher was able to search for data that was inconsistent with, or contradictory to, their interpretations in order to repeatedly examine those interpretations in light of further evidence.

Furthermore, given the researcher's own experiences of schooling with a disability, she was attuned to the way her presence and attitudes impacted on the data collection and analysis of the research. The researcher took an active reflexive approach to acknowledge the processes undertaken. Thus this research was unique given the researcher's firsthand experiences of life with a disability so therefore she was equipped to respond appropriately during interactions with the adolescents. This was a motivating factor for the adolescents as the researcher believed she made a connection with them and therefore this pre-empted them to take part. At the information presentation session, the researcher shared that she had firsthand experience of a disability that had an impact on the researcher's educational experiences. The researcher took it upon herself to share how valuable this research was in terms of presenting an opportunity for adolescents to be heard and how she would have liked such an opportunity to talk about her experiences. Furthermore, the researcher shared how useful the research could be in terms of sharing adolescents' views on a wider level regarding the "hidden

disability”. This was received well by parents and pupils. This was the added value to the current research which enforced how the researcher’s own skill set enabled her to engage in what was a rich and descriptive research.

The current research findings demonstrate its relevance to the field of educational psychology hence the reason why the researcher has included additional reflections regarding implications for her own professional practice. In a nutshell, the research has addressed on some level “what works for these adolescents” in relation to their experiences of an SLCI in a secondary school setting.

## **5.4 Broader discussion of the current findings**

### **5.4.1 Summary of Key Findings**

The findings in this study illustrate the pertinence of directly eliciting the views of adolescents, as convincingly argued elsewhere in recent research –see for example Lewis et al (2007) and Markham et al (2009) (section 2.4.1) It was particularly striking to note the extent to which, as also argued by both those pieces of research, the adolescents were prompt and open to sharing their views. As highlighted by Markham et al (2009), obtaining the views of young people is fundamental in obtaining genuine reflections on their perceived difficulties. Indeed, the findings in this study provide rich stories, experiences, views and reflections which were not immediately obvious to the researcher.

The researcher believes it is worthwhile to pause on this point. For these ‘unexpected’ narratives, no matter how fascinating, also hint towards a broader pedagogical issue. Indeed, while the adolescents often appeared to conform to classroom expectations and engage in appropriate behaviours, a closer analysis revealed that they held lower expectations for themselves, held low self-esteem and struggled to build meaningful relationships with their mainstream peers. The same idea is developed in Nelson (1991), who highlighted some of the difficulties

inherent to adolescence and commented that “related problems of learning compliance and social adjustment increase, while peer relationships and academic success plummet” (p.75). Another key learning point from this study is that the adolescent’s very efforts to build friendships led them to adjust their behaviours accordingly in social situations which limited their interactions with peers and acted as a barrier to making friends.

#### **5.4.2 Summary of findings in relation to the theoretical frameworks**

The researcher agrees that the findings of the study justify the theoretical approach and SAM and IOSL models chosen. The SAM model states that individuals modify their behaviours in social context as a result of language difficulties. The IOSL model proposed by Bishop (1997) posits that peer rejection can limit opportunities for adolescents to interact socially as a consequence of their language difficulties. Crucially, this study underscored the argument that language difficulties can deter successful interactions in adolescence (Lindsay et al., 2002) Although rejection by peers was not explicitly explored in the current research, the findings nonetheless suggest that the adolescents felt a strong level of frustration when peers (particularly in the mainstream school) showed poor understanding of their SLCI, leading to poor social and emotional wellbeing –a mechanism evidenced both by the models in Redmond and Rice (1998) and Bishop (1997). As seen previously, this was particularly the case for the girls in the current research.

If anything, this study confirmed Gecas & Schwalbe (1983)’s efficacy theory of self-esteem according to which self-esteem is associated with successful interactions. We have also underlined the compensating mechanism, first evidenced by Redmond and Rice’s SAM, where individuals adjust their behaviours in scenarios as their language difficulties preclude them from engaging or initiating meaningful relationships with their peers. We have seen that this is ultimately a self-defeating strategy, in the sense that it widened the divide between the adolescents and their mainstream peers and led them to be tarnished with

negative social characteristics. As the interviews progressed it became increasingly clear that the adolescents adjusted their behaviour when interacting in the mainstream school and held on to the SLC as some kind of institutional compensating mechanism. For the majority, they preferred to be around those in the SLC, because of the factors discussed earlier regarding their SLCI, similar work ethics and strong friendships formed from the primary school unit. Overall, the positive experiences associated within the SLC including the academic and emotional support, the pace of the environment, building friendships and developing self-esteem and confidence were the fundamental key factors to promoting resilience and positive wellbeing.

### ***5.4.3 Reflections of the key findings***

Collectively, a majority of the sample shared the view that members within the educational settings had a responsibility to meet their needs on an individual basis including developing their skills to try different strategies to find out what works best for them. Interestingly, the adolescents also viewed themselves as ‘facilitators’ in that regard –talking about using their experiences to help Year 7s to manage school life, for example. Beth frequently expressed her desire to use her SLCI as a means to help others. Her aspiration to become a teacher was based on her belief that her firsthand experiences of an SLCI would place her in a better position to support children with similar needs. Beth’s views were similar to that of others who also believed that the staff within the SLC was best equipped with the knowledge and skills that could be implemented to advise mainstream teachers of how to address the needs of young people with SLCI. By analysing the effects of social isolation and perceived exclusion within a secondary school environment, this study has shed light on the multi-faceted ways in which friendship groups –or the absence thereof- impact on adolescent’s wellbeing and perceived support. The adolescents’ accounts provided a strong sense of the importance of friends “being around” to share in the highs and lows of school life and to prevent loneliness. Coleman and Hendry (1999) argue that because friendship and acceptance in the peer group are important during adolescence, those who are isolated or rejected

(Bishop, 1997) are at a particular disadvantage and thus need special attention from professionals.

## 5.5 Outcomes of the current research findings

This study suggests the importance of listening to young people with SLI. They have shown the necessity to engage with their communication impairments during their adolescence, or a “crucial phase of life” which “has in turn implications for his or her future developments” (Durkin, 1995; Conti-Ramsden and Lindsay, 2008). The adolescents themselves seem to understand what is at stake, and were only too happy to vocalise their thoughts as to how professionals should support and address their needs.

By virtue of the research design adopted, this study yielded rich and qualitative data from the interviews. It would nonetheless be interesting at this stage to consider alternative research methodologies, including controlled samples so as to enable to make comparisons. It would, for example, be enlightening to analyse the data within pupils’ profiles to measure these against variables for behavioural factors. Language touches upon the realms of emotions, social interaction and behaviour –and it would be interesting to understand the impact of behavioural difficulties stemming from SLCI on the adolescents’ wellbeing.

In addition to expanding the research, the researcher believes it would be worthwhile to explore the views of parents and teachers. Although, parents are close to their children and are likely to identify on an emotional level with their impairment, they are also likely to have strong views (Ware, 2004; see also Goldbart & Marshall, 2011). Should these views be different from those of the adolescents themselves, they would add a different dimension to our understanding of the current findings.

### **5.5.1 Suggestions for the SLC**

There are three key factors the SLC could consider in order to improve the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI:

- Firstly, the SLC should review practices to determine how frequently opportunities are provided for adolescents to partake in decision making processes concerning their SLCI. As Larson and McKinley (1985) highlighted “there can be no ‘hidden agenda’ when providing services for adolescents” (p.72). The findings further point to the importance of school staff recognising the impact of school systems, policies and the environment on the social experiences of adolescents. Ways of facilitating and enhancing (rather than constraining or disrupting) these experiences should be considered. Specifically, it might be useful to expand or modify opportunities for social interaction during the school day and after school to ensure that adolescents have adequate space and time to benefit from social support provided by their peers. In addition, teachers could be encouraged to plan and provide support for group interactions in the classroom through regular use of co-operative small group work and collaborative projects. This would also enable opportunities for inclusion between the mainstream peers and adolescents with an SLCI. Brown (2000) comments that bringing groups together in conditions that involve co-operation increases positivity in attitudes towards peers.
- Secondly, the SLC could explore opportunities to sensitise peers and teachers to the implications of living with an SLCI and to provide guidance to best support individuals with SLCI. As we saw previously in sub-theme ‘comparisons of the old building and the new building’ from core theme three (‘understanding of the SLC’) included the sub-theme of ‘comparisons of the old building to the new building’ the remoteness of the SLC was broadly construed as a barrier to inclusion within the mainstream school environment. This partly explained why the adolescents’ friendships groups were circumscribed to the SLC (Baron & Byrne, 2000). This of course

betokens the self-evident social phenomenon whereby interactions between individuals tend to become increasingly positive if they are brought into regular contact through physical proximity (Zajonc, 1968, in Erwin, 1998). Let us not forget that features of school policy, organisation and environment determine the conditions for social interaction and therefore have an impact on social and emotional wellbeing. Greater opportunities for co-operation and group activities with mainstream peers would necessarily increase the likelihood of positive experiences and therefore promote a positive view of inclusion.

- Thirdly education professionals should capitalise on the emotional and social support provided by naturally occurring friendship groups within school. Findings from the present research indicate that, rather than directly intervening in the dynamics of these groups, professionals would be better advised to offer more general input on communication and social skills which may serve to strengthen the bonds within them. Peers are now widely recognised as a potential ‘educational resource’ (Cotterell, 2007), and peer modelling and coaching could be devised as a way of sharing adolescents’ experiences of positive social interactions with those whose experiences of friendship are more negative or problematic. This, again, would help to develop peers’ awareness and understanding of SLCI and promote positive friendships.

## **5.6 Implications for educational psychology practice**

Fox (2003) asserts that there is a place for evidence based practice and that EPs should use research to inform their work. This is particularly important in more sensitive areas of research, such as ‘vulnerable’ individuals with communication impairments. This section addresses how the findings of the current study could inform EPs in their approach to addressing the needs of adolescents with SLCI.

### **5.6.1 The role of EPs within schools**

What is the role of EPs within secondary schools? EPs typically work using a range of methods (consultation, assessment, intervention and therapeutic skills) to encourage learning and in children and young people (0-19 years) (Gersch, 2004). Furthermore, EPs carry out research and provide training for professionals and teachers within school. In addition, EPs work systemically to review management structures within schools and support policy-making with local authorities (Gersch, 2004).

The findings of this study make a strong case for the intervention of an EP –and this intervention should target both the educational settings and those adolescents with SLCI. The work should focus both on issues and on the delivery of strategies that would work preventatively and reactively. The following are some pointers and thoughts on possible strategies stemming from the findings of this study:

- Within the school environment, EPs have an important role on a systems level where they could focus on the transition stage between primary to secondary school and look at the effectiveness of this process. The research findings suggest that preventative efforts are needed at the start of Year 7, or during transition arrangements, before friendship groups become durably embedded in secondary school. By applying intervention strategies under the helm of the psychological theory of proximity and repeated exposure (Zajonc, 1968, in Erwin, 1998), EPs could increase opportunities for positive interaction between peers and thus facilitate the natural process of friendship formation. This would ensure that fewer pupils become socially isolated.
- As the adolescents expressed in the current research, peers and mainstream teachers need to develop awareness of what an SLCI is and how to support them. The research findings suggest that staff within the SLC should facilitate this process where they need to empower others to support young people with SLCI. This is naturally an agenda on which EPs can work and thrive -through adopting a systems approach and by

partnering with the school and the SLC to engage in inclusion. The findings of this study also illustrate the vital role of the adolescent's context, i.e. the role and institutional characteristics of the SLC. For the EP, their role should consider in ensuring that the educational environment as well as the community environment are more facilitative of the support systems that work well for adolescents.

- EPs should ensure that adolescents' voices are represented and that there is a congruence between what they say and what their views actually are. On this point, Todd (2003) argued that professionals must think about how they communicate the voice of the child so they become involved in decisions about their education. The primary reason for this effort is to also ensure their inclusion to decision-making processes aimed at their wellbeing. In the words of Costley (2000), "we would not think of constructing a case study without collecting the opinions of the adults involved in a situation, so why would we ignore the views of the consumers of education – the children?" (p172) This is particularly relevant for the adolescents in this study, some of whom demonstrated poor awareness / understanding of the diagnosis of their SLCI.
  
- Whilst in theory at least, EPs should already be ascertaining and representing the "voice of the child" for the purposes of writing their statutory assessments (Hardin & Atkinson, 2009), this can sometimes appear to be tokenistic. Alderson (2000, in Harding & Atkinson, 2009) have emphasised the limitations of a brief one-off meeting in enabling effective consultation with children and young people. Similarly, the findings of this study suggest that taking more time and care in everyday practice to treat young people as experts on their own experiences would could convey a deeper commitment to increasing their involvement in the problem solving process. This would clearly help EPs to remove barriers to participation and to think more creatively about solutions to problems (Gray & Wilson, 2004).
  
- The findings of this study also suggest that EPs should be cautious when

making recommendations of interventions in addressing social and emotional aspects of adolescents' wellbeing. Whilst typical interventions might include "circles of friends", "buddy system" or some form of mentoring programme, the EP should instead adopt an approach which capitalises on naturally occurring support that are embedded in the adolescents' social contexts. As such, the EP should focus on the existing strengths and resources that are currently available to the adolescent before intervening with proposed intervention (DeShazer, 1985).

Rothi, Leavey and Best (2008) argue that that EPs represent one of the few professions working at the interface between health and education. Therefore, the overlap that can occur between SLCI and wellbeing should be considered in the developments of both clinical and educational practices (Law and Plunkett, 2009). This would facilitate greater awareness amongst professionals and parents of the importance of young people's needs. It would be of considerable value to develop and evaluate interventions which are directly applicable to the educational context (Law and Plunkett, 2009). Therefore, EPs have an invaluable role to use their position and skills to effectively work with other professionals especially teachers, speech and language therapists and parents to leverage their skills to ensure adolescents' needs are met.

## 5.7 Conclusions

This study aimed to provide a rich and detailed description of adolescents' understanding and experiences of their SLCI. Undertaking an exploratory investigation, it sought to provide answers to research questions looking at (a) how adolescents understand and define their SLCI, (b) what experiences adolescents' with SLCI have of their education environment, and (c) what the key factors are that promote wellbeing for those adolescents living with the impairment. This study offered a novel approach to exploring 'meaning' from an introspective standpoint

and aimed to ascertain difficulties associated with SLCI in relation to the broader experience of adolescence. In summary, the current research explored adolescents with SLCI views concerning their educational experiences, wellbeing, and sources of support including future aspirations.

Interviewing a total of seven students in the SLC in a secondary school, this study used a semi-structured qualitative design in order to explore the proposed research questions and to ensure the consolidation of a rich body of data. Such a design was important in order to gain information about the adolescents' experiences as well as to understand how this vulnerable group perceive themselves, their disability, and their wider school environment.

Importantly, the researcher found that the adolescents and their parents responded positively when she shared her own experiences of living with a hearing impairment. The positive and engaging relationships developed with the adolescents may well have been due to this privileged 'connection'. A similar idea is developed in Cockburn (2009), who ascribes her own fruitful doctoral research to shared experiences with her interviewees.

In any case, and after careful analysis of the interview data via a thematic analysis, this study presented a total of nine key findings that (a) linked adolescents' perception of their impairment with their general sense of inclusion and wellbeing, and (b) demonstrated how those adolescents develop resiliency skills to cope in their mainstream environment. If anything, the findings underscore the importance of listening to young people's 'voices' and of engaging directly with this vulnerable and under-represented age group.

From these conclusions and analyses, this study then structured a series of key recommendations for further research and EP practice. In doing so, it also sought to alert EPs to the knowledge, experience, skills and techniques located within SLCs (and adolescents themselves) that could positively contribute to the development and implementation of intervention strategies. For instance, the high value adolescents place on friendship should clearly be a central consideration by professionals and researchers working with children and young people with SLCI. Conversely, the adolescents' anger towards their mainstream peers' lack of

sensitivity also emerges as an area requiring more research and pedagogy.

To conclude, all adolescents interviewed confessed a strong level of frustration when they felt they were ignored, interrupted or not given enough time to express themselves. This, the researcher believes, indirectly underscored the positive role played by the SLC and its specialised staff, who have a duty to share good practice within the mainstream school to support the needs of adolescents with SLCl. This frustration, however, also demonstrates how important it is to include the views of these adolescents if we really are serious about supporting them. Nonetheless, a majority of the adolescents interviewed spoke positively about their SLCl, thereby demonstrating their endearing yet invisible, resiliency skills. To summarise, in the words of Paul:

*...some people have medications, or impairments, or anything, it just makes them who they are (Lines 747-748)*

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## Appendix 1: Timeline of meetings held with Head of SLC

Date	Plan of Action
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2010	Planning meeting held with SLC and HIU
Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	Ethical Approval gained. Researcher made contact with Head of SLC to set up a planning meeting to discuss the research in detail.
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2011	First meeting with Head of SLC to discuss the plans for the current study
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2011	Researcher to submit summary of research study to the SLC for staff.  Researcher to submit a student friendly version of the research for staff to promote and raise awareness to students attending the SLC.
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Information session to parents and carers and students attending the SLC
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2011	Data Collection: Interviews 1
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2011	Data Collection: Interviews 1
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Data Collection: Interviews 1 and 2
Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Data Collection: Interviews 2
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Data Collection: Interviews 2

At the end of the meeting with the Head, the following actions were agreed:

The researcher was to present permission letters using the school's headed paper as requested by the Head of the SLC. This would be emailed to the Head who would organise posting these through the school which will be paid by the researcher (Appendix 3).

1. The Head distributed the letters by post during the second part of the half term holidays as she felt this would prompt parents in making a decision and students would more likely remember to bring back the reply slips.
3. The researcher emailed the Head a student friendly version (Appendix 2) of the research study to promote and advertise the research prior to the information presentation session (Appendix 5).
4. Following half term, the researcher will make contact with the Head to find out the response rate from parents and students and begin preparations for the presentation.
5. Once a date has been confirmed the researcher will prepare for the information presentation session i.e.powerpoint, refreshments and preparing for delivery and questions.

# Appendix 2: Permission letter to invite parents and pupils to the research presentation

Dear Parent/Carer

## SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESEARCH INFORMATION SESSION

My name is Reena Gogna and I am currently working as a Doctoral Educational Psychologist (in training) at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

As part of my studies, I am planning to undertake a piece of research at the Speech and Language Centre to investigate the views of young people with a speech, language and communication impairment.

**I would like to invite you and your child to attend an information session on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June at 2:00pm in the Speech and Language Centre. The aim of this session will be to explain what the research involves and why it will be valuable. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions and share your views about this research.**

I expect that this meeting will last for approximately one hour, but I really feel that it will be an hour well spent and of great value. Refreshments will be provided.

I would be grateful if you could attend, but if you are unable to for any reason, I would be happy to speak to you by telephone. Please complete the attached reply slip and return it to Ms XXXXXXX in the SLC.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Reena Gogna

Doctoral Educational Psychologist in Training

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PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP TO MS XXXXXXXX IN THE SLC

**NAME OF STUDENT** .....

I am able/not able to attend the Speech and Language Research Meeting at **2:00pm on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011.**

Signed .....

Please return by **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2011.**

# Appendix 3: Ethical Approval

## EXTERNAL AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

[uel.ac.uk/qa](http://uel.ac.uk/qa)

Quality Assurance and Enhancement



MISS REENA GOGNA  
NENE HOUSE  
13-15 GREAT NORTH ROAD  
STIBBINGTON  
PETERBOROUGH  
PE8 6LZ

Date: 13 April 2011

Dear Reena,

<b>Project Title:</b>	<i>What is it like to be an adolescent with a speech, language and communication impairment?</i>
<b>Researcher(s):</b>	<i>Reena Gogna</i>
<b>Supervisor(s):</b>	<i>Mark Fox</i>

I am writing to confirm that the review panel appointed to your application have now granted ethical approval to your research project on behalf of University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

Should any significant adverse events or considerable changes occur in connection with this research project that may consequently alter relevant ethical considerations, this must be reported immediately to UREC. Subsequent to such changes an Ethical Amendment Form should be completed and submitted to UREC.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'UEL Code of Good Practice in Research' ([www.uel.ac.uk/qa/manual/documents/codeofgoodpracticeinresearch.doc](http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/manual/documents/codeofgoodpracticeinresearch.doc)) is adhered to.

Yours sincerely,

Merlin Harries  
University Research Ethics Committee  
Email: [m.harries@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.harries@uel.ac.uk)

Docklands Campus, University Way, London E16 2RD  
Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 3322 Fax: +44 (0)20 8223 3394 MINICOM 020 8223 2853  
Email: [r.carter@uel.ac.uk](mailto:r.carter@uel.ac.uk)



## Appendix 4: Research Presentation

### What is it like to be an Adolescent with a speech, language and communication (SLC) impairment?

*Roena Gogna*

#### Objectives

- To inform you of the purpose of my research
- To highlight the process of this research including the procedures that will take place
- To consider how this research will benefit others
- To answer any questions you may have and to hear your thoughts!

## Purpose of Research

- The purpose of my research is to explore the views of young people who have a speech, language and communication impairment.
- So far, research has demonstrated that there has been very little done on listening to the views of young people.
- In my opinion, I believe this is crucial if we are to make improvements for this under-represented group, we must listen to their views first.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

- Current models of childhood and disability suggest that children have great potential to participate in decisions about their needs and care, if specific methodological challenges are addressed



## Education and Health Policies

### **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2001**

*Children and young people with special educational needs...should, where possible, participate in all the decision-making processes that occur in education...They should feel confident that they will be listened to and that their views are valued.*

### **Every Child Matters 2003**

*Real service improvement is only attainable through involving children and young people and listening to their views.*

### **National Service Framework for Children 2004**

*Standard 3: Children and young people and families receive high quality services which are co-ordinated around their individual and family needs and take account of their views.*

## The Research Question

*This study aims to explore young people's experiences of speech, language, communication impairment to find out what emerges as important for them. What works for this marginalised under-represented group in the research today?*

## Why take part?

- This research will help work towards informing practitioners of a range of children's perspectives and to explore methods that facilitate children's participation in therapy.
- This will also encourage and recognise the importance of listening to children's views about what has worked well for them – their positive experiences and to learn from them in order to make things better for students with a speech, language and communication impairment.

## Project Overview

- The research will follow three stages – the researcher, myself will meet with the participant on an individual basis over three sessions for an hour. These sessions will incorporate an interview like methodology;
- **1<sup>st</sup> Session** - "Getting to know you" – an opportunity for the participant to brainstorm and present an overview of who they are. Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questions will be read by myself and some further questions based on the answers may be asked.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Session** - A semi-structured interview based on the information I have gathered so far and based on the research questions I have listed.

## The Research Questions

*The current research will focus on the following questions;*

- What is an adolescent's understanding of a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI)?
- What are the key factors that enable wellbeing in education (within mainstream school and the SLC)?
- To what extent do adolescents with an SLCI feel they are included within the mainstream setting?

## Ethical Considerations

- **Informed consent**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Right to Withdraw**
- **Protection from Harm**
- **Deception**

The researcher will ensure complete honesty regarding the nature of the research, the intentions and the plans for the outcomes of the research.

## Any Questions?

*Thank you so much for listening to my presentation today. I hope it has been insightful and useful to you. Thank you to all those who will agree to participate in this research. Your contribution to this research is greatly appreciated!*

# Appendix 5: Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form

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Research Title: *What is it like to be an adolescent with a speech, language and communication impairment?* An exploratory study to understand the views of young people with a speech, language and communication impairment

Principal Researcher: Reena Gogna

University: University of East London, School of Psychology

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## 1. Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss anything with me if you have any questions. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask if there are any parts of the information that you do not understand.

## 2. Why is this study being done?

You have been asked to take part in a research study about young people's views about what is it like to have a speech, language, communication impairment.

## 3. What is involved in the study?

If you agree to take part in this research you will participate in three sessions with the researcher which will follow an interview format. We will meet three times for an hour and each session will be recorded. This will allow me to analyse the data in order to answer the research questions.

The first session will be an introductory session where you can tell me more about you and who you are.

The second session will incorporate a questionnaire for you to complete- I will read out the statements and then you can tick the relevant boxes. Based on the questionnaire, I will ask some questions to find out more about your answers.

The third session will incorporate a semi-structured interview where there will be questions for

you to answer but it will focus on you and your experiences of school.

#### 4. What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the Speech and Language Unit. You will also need to make sure that you have permission in advance from class teachers to leave so you are able to participate in this research.

#### 5. What if I want to withdraw or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if they believe that being in the study may cause you harm. For example, if you appear distressed or uncomfortable in any way then the researcher will stop the study for your safety.

#### 6. Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may email me on [rgogna@uel.ac.uk](mailto:rgogna@uel.ac.uk).

#### 7. What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. All records of our work together will be safely locked in a cupboard that only I the researcher can access and furthermore all information that is word processed will be password protected.

It is hoped that this research will be included in forthcoming events and this an important year as there is a focus on speech and language so therefore this research will be very relevant. If the research is used in any way, no personal details will be revealed and all participants will be issued with a pseudonym name to protect their identity. The data will be used for publication but again, you will not be identified in any way. All raw data materials will be destroyed 5 years following completion of the Doctorate.

#### 8. Authorisation Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish. I understand that the data will be kept confidential and may be used in forthcoming events or in a publication.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent form explained/witnessed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 6: Research handout for parents/carers and pupils

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

### 1. Research Project Title

*What is it like to be an adolescent with a speech, language and communication impairment?*

An exploratory study to understand the views of young people with a speech, language and communication (SLC) impairment.

### 2. Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

### 3. What is the purpose of the project?

The research will focus on your experiences of having a diagnosis of a speech, language and communication (SLC) impairment. The research aims to draw out the things that are important for you at school. This research will be useful to help professionals of what young people think of their diagnosis and learn more about their experiences which will help professionals to look how they can improve well being of young people in school.

### 4. Why have I been chosen?

This research is targeted at all students with a speech, language and communication impairment. The purpose is to hear the voices of a group that is under-represented

in the current research today.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.



6. What will happen to me if I take part?

The research will follow three stages - the researcher will meet with you on a one-to-one basis over three sessions for an hour each time. The interview will take place in a room with you and the researcher.

1<sup>st</sup> Session - "Getting to know you" - this will be an opportunity for the researcher to find out more about you. You will get an opportunity to brainstorm through drawing pictures or writing a spider diagram about who you are. The researcher will also ask some questions based on what you have written so they can find out more about you!



2<sup>nd</sup> Session - You will be asked to complete a questionnaire. This questionnaire will have a scale so you can tick the box that applies to you. The researcher will read out 18 statements and you will tick the relevant box. The researcher will then ask some broader questions for you to answer.

3<sup>rd</sup> Session - This is the final part of the research which will consist of the researcher using all the information from the previous two sessions to ask questions about your experiences at school. The researcher will also have some questions listed to ask but this session will give you an opportunity to talk as much as you like about your experiences of school.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Well, the benefits are that you are contributing to a research project that is very relevant and important not just for you, but for your school and for lots of other children and professionals. Through hearing about your experiences, professionals will be in a better position to understand what is working well for you and what things are not working well. This may help towards making your voice heard where it matters!

8. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is disseminated will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.



9. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The research data will be used to contribute to the aim of the study and this will help answer the number of proposed research questions devised or at least contribute in some format. The results will be kept confidential so participants will not be implicated anywhere during the write up of the study. The results may be published and discussed at forthcoming events that the local authority has arranged but all data will be confidential and results will be discussed in general so therefore individual results will not be selected.

10. Who will review the project?

Professionals at the University of East London will be overseeing and reviewing the research. Furthermore the researcher's supervisor within the Local Authority will also view the results of the research.



11. Contact for further information

If there any issues or points you would like to raise with me, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at [r.gogna@uel.ac.uk](mailto:r.gogna@uel.ac.uk).

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for taking part and contributing to this research. It is greatly appreciated and I look forward to working with you!

Reena Gogna (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

# Appendix 7: Interview Questions

## Interview 1

**PROPS: All About me brainstorm and Adolescent Wellbeing Scale questionnaire delivered in Interview 1 or Interview 1 and 2.**

### Personal Information

1. Please state your age in Years \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Please indicate your current Year Group you are in:
    - a) Year 8    b) Year 9    c) Year 10    d) Year 11
  3. Please tell me where you are from?
    1. How long have you been in your current school? Can you tell me about where you were before?
    2. What do you like most about school?
    3. What does a good day at school look like?
    4. What about lessons? Are there any you like? Why?
    5. How would you describe the Speech and Language Centre?
    6. Tell me about yourself? What do you like doing? Hobbies? Who is in your family?
    7. Who are your friends?
    8. What is your understanding of the Speech and Language Centre? Why are you attending the SLC? Tell me more about the SLC?
- Responses from interview 1 will be analysed prior to the second interview and further questions will be asked based around various themes/key areas identified.
  - In Interview 2, questions will be more open-ended e.g. “During interview 1, you spoke about..... could you discuss this in more detail?”

## Interview 2

- 1) You described in your last interview that you first started school at .....primary, then you were at.... and now you are currently attending .....centre. Could you talk about your friendship groups in each of these schools and the unit? Who are your friends?
- 2) You told me what the SLC and how it is used. You shared some interesting comments about how..... can you tell more about this? Is the SLC separate from the school? What are your thoughts about this?
- 3) What would life look like if the SLC did not exist? How do you know that the SLC is helping you? What is it about the SLC that helps?
- 4) How do you perceive your SLCI? What are your thoughts? What would life look like if you didn't have this SLCI?
- 5) What are your best hopes for the future? Do you have any ideas as to what you would like to do when you get older?
- 6) From the first interview, there were discussions about who your friends are. Can you tell me specifically what the behaviour like at school? What is your behaviour like? Do you think the behaviour of the members of your group influence your behaviour at school and the SLC?
- 7) Do you think your friends work hard at school? The SLC? How are they different? Do you think they impact on you in terms of how you work?
- 8) How has school impacted on your academic performance? What factors have contributed to your performance?
- 9) In terms of school staff (i.e. teachers/teaching assistants/midday-assistants etc), how do you get on with them? What is your relationship like between yourself and school staff? Are there any particular teachers that you would like to talk about? How would your current teacher describe you?

# **Appendix 8: Adolescent Well being Scale Questionnaire (Birleson, 1980)**

**(FORM SCANNED AND ATTACHED)**



# Adolescent Wellbeing SCALE

Name of Young Person

---

Date:

---



# Adolescent Wellbeing

## SCALE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11 TO 16

Please tick as appropriate

	Most of the time	sometimes	never
1. I look forward to things as much as I used to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I sleep very well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I feel like crying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I like going out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I feel like leaving home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I get stomach-aches/cramps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I have lots of energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I enjoy my food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I can stick up for myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I think life isn't worth living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I am good at things I do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I enjoy the things I do as much as I used to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I like talking to my friends and family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I have horrible dreams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I feel very lonely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I am easily cheered up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I feel so sad I can hardly bear it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I feel very bored	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ADOLESCENT WELLBEING 1b

## Appendix 9: Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this study.

One of the main aims in this study was to explore your views about what is like to have a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI). Most importantly the aim was to investigate your experiences and explore what you have considered the key factors that have enabled you to do well.

Your contribution to this study is therefore very valuable and very much appreciated. Your responses will be used to help answer the question of *“what it is like to be an adolescent with a speech, language and communication impairment?”*

As a final point, all data collected in this study will be analysed in an aggregated form – your responses will not be singled out; only averaged results will be reported in any future publications. You will remain anonymous.

Thank you again for participating and helping with this study. If you would like more information, or have any further questions about any aspect of this study, then please feel free to contact me at [rgogna@uel.ac.uk](mailto:rgogna@uel.ac.uk).

All the best,

Reena Gogna

## Appendix 10: Example of Transcription for Interview 1 and Interview 2

### Interview 1: Paul

**R Hello Paul.**

P Hello.

**R How are you?**

P I'm fine thank you.

**R Okay, just to remind you, my name's Reena.**

P Yes.

**R Can you tell me what Year group you are in?**

P I'm in Year 10.

**R Where are you from?**

P Well I'm half English, half Australian 'cause my Mum came from Australia and my Dad came from Britain.

**R Okay. Do you remember when I came in on Monday...**

P Yes.

**R ...and I did the research presentation, so just to clarify why we are here today, you're here today because you volunteered to take part in my research. The whole point of it to hear your views regarding school.**

P Yes.

**R ...so I've got a couple of questions and things but really I want you to be as open as you can, relax, you know, its just a friendly conversation but its an opportunity for you to really put your views across as it is helpful to get an insight into what young people's views are.**

P Okay.

**R So lets start with something very relaxed, I'm going to give you a piece of paper, you can write your name in bubble if you want in the middle and I want to either draw pictures or write the word of everything that represents you, so you might want to write who's in your family, what you like doing, all that kind of stuff so if when look at it, then I would know who Paul is, do you think you could do that?**

- P Okay.
- R **Yes, so you can use these felt tips or colour pencils. Would you like a biscuit?**
- P Ummm...what kind are they?
- R **Chocolate cookies.**
- P Ummm...yes please.

**No recording whilst Paul writes/draws for the All About Me task**

- R **Oh so you do Air Cadets after School and Martial Arts?**
- P Yes.
- R **Wow, and in your family you've got your Mum and Dad and Brother and what you like, your X-Box, hanging out with friends and looking after your pets. Okay, that's brilliant so I'm going to keep this here and I'm going to ask you things about that in a minute.**
- P Okay.
- R **So can you tell me how long you've been in your current school?**
- P Well, I've been here since...ummm...at the beginning of Year 7.
- R **Yes and where were you before?**
- P Well...ummm...a Primary School...ummm...I actually went to two Primary Schools, the first one was X Primary School they had sort of like a Speech and Language Centre there...
- R **Okay.**
- P ...yes but the room for the SLC to be in that School was a little bit squashed in but the second X Primary School I went to, which was like a School transfer, I think that was it; there was a lot more room for us there so we went there.
- R **X?**
- P Yes.
- R **Okay, so you liked it better at X?**
- P Yes, 'cause there was a lot more room there than X.
- R **Okay, that's great. Can you tell me what you like most about this School?**

- P Oh...about this School is that they've got nice facilities at the new Construction building and the new 6<sup>th</sup> Form.
- R There is a new 6<sup>th</sup> Form?**
- P Errr...Construction building.
- R Okay, is there anything else that you like?**
- P Well with the Speech and Language impairment...ummm...we get extra support in lessons that we come here we can catch up on work we didn't understand. So, the SLC.
- R Okay, so what is it that you like most about school?**
- P The extra help and that, I think it's good 'cause if you are like ill one day you can catch up on what you missed. So the SLC is really good like that.
- R Okay, that's good and do you think that helps you? That makes you less worried about being away from the School...**
- P Yes.
- R ...because you know you can catch up. Okay, and what about when you're in lessons, do you like it more when you have the support in the Centre or do you like it more when you get the support in the lessons?**
- P Ummm...well I sort of find it both its 'cause as much as they're clear in most of the lessons and yes, you know you normally say I don't understand this and they usually explain it more...
- R Yes.**
- P ...which I find...errr...
- R And that really helps you?**
- P Yes.
- R Yes, that's brilliant, thank you, okay what subjects do you like at School?**
- P Well I like...errr...Maths ...errr...Science and Graphics.
- R Okay, what is it about the subjects that you like, why do you like those subjects?**
- P Well Maths its...well Maths we do sort of tough equations and I'm usually good at solving problems like that and Science it's mostly to do with the practicals.
- R So you enjoy doing practicals?**
- P Yes, and for Graphics...errr...its mostly like drawing and stuff like drawing

houses in one dimension or two dimension.

**R Okay, is there anything else, any other reason why you enjoy your classes?**

P Well the Teachers are friendly and the students, well mostly some of my friends are in some of those classes.

**R Okay. So who are your friends?**

P And its good, nice to be with people that you know than be with people that you're not comfortable with. Mainly people in the SLC, cos they are like me and you know, want to do well.

**R You feel more comfortable with them, the people you know?**

P Yes.

**R So what about the classes where there are not many people that you know, how does that make you feel?**

P Oooh, it gets me a bit...ummm...like 'cause some of the...errr...stupid people, they probably say what does this mean and I think its like one of their stupid questions which they end up laughing at. I just usually ignore them.

**R Is there anything else that makes you uncomfortable?**

P Well, when there's like...errr... the....gets really noisy in there, in the school.

**R You mean it can get noisy in the school? Is this different from the SLC?**

P Yes.

**R Okay, is that difficult for you to be in a class where it's noisy?**

P Yes 'cause those that are messing about it stops the Teacher teaching us what is important...

**R Yes.**

P ...and they're just wasting the Teacher's time.

**R Okay, that's really great, okay, so in your word, how would you describe the Speech and Language Centre? As you know it, what is the Speech and Language Centre, if you had to tell somebody who didn't have a clue?**

P Well, if somebody didn't know what it was I'd just say...errr...it's a place where you can get extra support and...I can't find it now...its where you get extra support and you can catch up on other work you miss or you didn't understand. Well, the fact that...errr...it's like a big catch up lesson....It's sort of like a extra lesson of understanding or if you like revise for an extra test or an exam or anything...

**R Okay, so what would make Paul happy at School? What would School**

**look like for you to have a happy day?**

P Oh on a happy day being with the friends that I know very well, having a good lesson that I got a lot of information out of and just basically having a good time and then going home at the end of the day as just thinking that was a really good day.

**P That's nice and when do you have those days when you say to yourself, that was a really good day, when...what happened when you say that you yourself? What had happened for you to say that?**

P Errr...either if I'd have a Science lesson and I did a really good practical or a Maths lesson when I really...errr...went with the flow of the hard questions and in Construction where I made good progress in finishing something that I started.

**R Okay, why do you say it's...ummm...important to be in classes with people that you know well?**

P Well if you're sitting next to a friend you know and they've understood the question and like you haven't, you just ask them what does that mean and they can...errr...ask them and then they in a simpler way and then you think oh I get it, I understand and then you just...errr...get on with it, 'cause if you're sitting next to someone you don't know and you ask and there's no friends sitting beside you and you're wondering what does that mean and then that...and then you thinking at the end of the day why didn't I ask them 'cause I might have got somewhere.

**R Yes, so do you find that when you're sitting next to people you don't know you're less comfortable about asking for help?**

P Yes.

**R Why are you not so comfortable?**

P Well, its 'cause either they...they're going to respond in a stupid way or they're going to say something stupid.

**R Can you tell me more?**

P Yes well I mean they wouldn't understand my point that I am trying to make and instead say something stupid..

**R Okay, I understand, okay, so what does it...what would a bad day at School look like for you?**

P Well, either when the annoying people kept on shouting out in the lessons and I wouldn't get anywhere or there was a...the Teacher said they were going to do something...errr...fun and she said that we'll only do it if the class would behave and some people didn't behave and 'cause I was looking really forward to that fun thing and the Teacher said now that you've...errr...ruined it, I'm not going to bother and that got me really annoyed.

**R Right, okay, so what is...so what do you dislike most about School? What don't you like about School? What's really not right for you?**

P Well the stupid people, the people who are sort of friendly yes and stupid and...errr...the people that just mess around all the time.

**R Okay, okay, what's your favourite thing to do? What's your favourite thing to do in School?**

P Well, my favourite thing to do in School is...errr...talk with my friends...ummm...

**R When do you do this?**

P Well mostly at break and lunch, 'cause that's pretty much the only time when we have free time to be with our friends and talk about what's just happened in our lessons and...errr...what else, I can't think of anything else.

**R No, that's' alright, that's fine, okay, now what I'm going to do to stop you from...giving your little mouth a break for a little while, I'm going to ask you to just to write your name on here...**

P Okay.

**R ...and just to have a look at these questions, they're like statements and then to tick either most of the time, sometimes or never. If you have any issue with some of the words, just let me know then I can tell you.**

P Okay.

**R Okay, so here's a pen if you can write your name on there.**

P Today's the 22<sup>nd</sup> isn't it?

**R It is, yes.**

**No recording whilst Paul completes the Adolescent Wellbeing Scale questionnaire**

**R Paul, tell me a little bit about how you got into Air Cadets and Martial Arts.**

P Well first off I started with my Martial Arts, I really got into that, I'm a red belt now.

**R A red belt?**

P Yes, my next belt is brown.

**R Oh, you're near the top.**

- P Yes, then brown tag and then deputy black belt and then when I do my black belt grading, then I'll be officially a black belt, I can have my name printed on my black belt.
- R **Really, oh that's exciting.**
- P Yes, my...my Instructor she's got her name on it with a couple of tags and a couple of the other students as well so... trying to get to that level.
- R **Oh, that's brilliant, and how long have you been doing it?**
- P Well, since...errr...7 or 8 I think.
- R **Gosh you've been doing it for a while haven't you?**
- P Yes.
- R **And you really enjoy it, okay, so you do that and you also do Air Cadets?**
- P Yes.
- R **So when did you start Air Cadets?**
- P Well I started...ummm...in the middle of October 'cause they had an opening evening...
- R **Okay.**
- P ...and it was really my Brother that got me into it 'cause he did Air Cadets as well.
- R **Oh really.**
- P Yes and I'm really enjoying it, we go flying...errr....on camps, kayaking and so...
- R **Oh right, you do lots of fun activities then?**
- P Yes.
- R **Apart from doing the activities, do you get to meet other people as well?**
- P Yes, it's a good experience.
- R **Yes.**
- P So...errr...to meet new people at Cadets that have done things and then like you did something similar like that and you can talk about it and you can just make the good conversation and make new friends.
- R **That's really good, okay, can you tell me...ummm...your friends in X, would you say that you have a good bunch of friends here?**
- P Yes, I really have got a good bunch of friends here.

- R Yes, and are they children from the Centre or are they from the School or is it a bit of both?**
- P Well it's sort of more the Centre.
- R Yes, okay, can you tell me a bit more about why you've got more friends in the Centre?**
- P Well, when I first...when I came to...errr...the Centre...errr...first I start off with my friends X and X and X and then later on in the year I sort of developed a friendship with the other people in the Centre.
- R Okay and how are the students different in the Centre from the School?**
- P Well, from the Centre, the School and the Centre the Schools is just, the main bit, it's just a whole big bunch of people that I don't really know but the Centre is with people that I know and used to know.
- R Okay, you used to know people from Primary School?**
- P Yes.
- R Yes, okay, that's great, so within the friendship group in the Centre, is there like a group leader?**
- P Ummm...no not really.
- R No.**
- P I wouldn't say that there was a leader who started the group 'cause then they'd be fighting on who started it we just...we just say we all started this friendship.
- R No, okay, so when thinking about your friends within the Centre, what is their behaviour like in School?**
- P Well my friends behaviour its sort of...errr...good and sometimes a little bad but they do sometimes look at me and say...errr...'cause of some of them...errr...struggle a lot...
- R Yes.**
- P ...I think there was someone at the beginning of Year 10 he was...he didn't really know what he was doing but he came to us for advice and we helped him.
- R Oh that's nice.**
- P Yes.
- R Do you think he's doing much better now?**
- P Yes, his name was...errr...X but he left to another School, I'm not entirely sure why.

- R Okay, okay and do you think the behaviour of other people in your group influences the way you behave in School and at home?**
- P No not really 'cause I still...I still sort of got the same personality I had since Primary School.
- R Yes, okay, and what would your personality be?**
- P Errr...kind, thoughtful...
- R Yes.**
- P ...and cheerful.
- R Yes, that's lovely, okay, when thinking about the other friends, within your group, within the Centre, do you think they work hard in School?**
- P Yes, I think they do...
- R Yes.**
- P ...ummm...I'm mostly not in the same lessons and I hear things that they got on really well so I really think they're getting on really well.
- R And you said earlier that the people that you like the most are the ones that you know who work and sort of work hard and sort of do the work, would that be correct?**
- P Yes, that would be correct.
- R Yes, okay, and how do you think you perform academically? How do you think you do in School?**
- P Well, I think I do pretty good 'cause I'm...I've got a good mark for my Science work and I'm doing good in Maths and I've got a couple of distinctions in my ICT work so...
- R That's fantastic.**
- P Yes, I think I'm getting along really well.
- R It sounds brilliant. Okay, do you think there are certain things that have affected your academic performance that have contributed or, you know, it helped in any way for you to do well?**
- P Ummm...well with a...not really 'cause...because in some lessons there are some things that I learned and how to do and I sort of developed on that in School and worked it from them and got it done.
- R Yes, okay, what about at home, do you get a lot of support at home?**
- P Ummm...yes 'cause with homework that I struggle with, my Brother usually says are you getting on well and sometimes I say yes and sometimes I say no and usually when I say no he helps and my Brother he's...he did A Level

Maths and Physics...

**R Oh wow!**

P ...at Long Road so he's sort of like this super massive physics...

**R Brain.**

P Yes.

**R Wow. So he can really help you out then?**

P Yes.

**R And he does normally when you get stuck.**

P Yes.

**R Oh wow, that's fantastic, they're really hard A Levels to do.**

P Yes.

**R Yes, okay, so what is your understanding of being in the Centre?**

P Well my understanding of the Centre is its where...sorry what was that question again, I forgot.

**R Oh sorry, what is your understanding of being in the Centre, why are you in the Centre?**

P Well...well being in the Centre it means that...it means to me that there's usually...in Primary School when I first had this speech and language impairment I did use to struggle but the Speech and Language Centre they sort of helped my problems and developed on that and I've coped really well and there might be some more problems in the future that they will help me to understand.

**R So you think the Centre's here to help you deal with any problems that you might come up with later on but at the moment, what they do, is they give you that space to go over work that you've not understood and they help you to catch up when you really need to...**

P Yes.

**R ...and things like that and that's, for you, quite important 'cause I get the impression that you want to do very well in School?**

P Yes.

**R Yes, you're an academic, you want to do...you want to achieve and that's fantastic, that's really good, that's a really good trait to have. Okay, in terms of the School staff, School staff meaning Teachers, Teaching Assistants, you know all those people, how do you get on with them?**

- P Well...sorry what was that one again?
- R **Okay, in terms of the School staff, so all the School staff like the Teachers, the Teaching Assistants, the Lunchtime Supervisors, all of those people...**
- P Yes.
- R **...how do you get on with them?**
- P Well I get on pretty well 'cause at the beginning of Year 7 I didn't know any Teachers whatsoever but later in the year I started...errr...to understand their meanings and what they said and their helping and understanding...
- R **That's great.**
- P ...so that got...errr...me and my friends to the next level.
- R **Oh that's good, that's great and is there anyone that you particularly get on really well with and why, why is that?**
- P Ummm...is that Teachers or friends?
- R **Teachers.**
- P Oh Teachers...ummm...I'm not entirely sure at the moment.
- R **Okay, how would your Teacher describe you? If I said to a Teacher can you tell me about Paul Hall, what would they say?**
- P Well, I say that they would be he...I think they would say he...I was hard working, kind and thoughtful.
- R **Oh that's great, okay, and do you think that the Centre and the School is very separate or do you think it's very kind of together?**
- P Well...errr...the Centre and the School I think they have been quite separate its 'cause there's not many people from the main School area that come over here 'cause I really think its more separate 'cause people who are in the Centre they...the sort of some of them will mix with the other people in the main School, but I usually...errr...think that the Centre and the School are a little bit separate.
- R **Okay, so do you think it's got any better or not?**
- P Well...errr...I think it has over the past few years I've been here.
- R **How has it got better?**
- P Well...well when I started in Year 7 there was just that...it was just a small little Centre building but now that they've built this, we've got a new sort of area to...to work in...
- R **Yes.**

- P ...it's more suitable area than just a small spaced Centre.
- R **Okay, so you've gone from a mobile Centre to a state of the art building haven't you, so the fact that it gives you a good working environment, do you think it changes the way you feel about your impairment and coming into here?**
- P Yes, it does change it.
- R **In what way?**
- P Well...
- R **Do you feel like there's of an importance, there's a sense of importance that, you know, the School have thought, yes, we should be giving more so now they've made this beautiful building, do you think that might have come into it a little bit?**
- P Yes, I do think that when they were starting to build this...ummm...what I first heard this building was just going to be a 6<sup>th</sup> Form but when I heard there was going to be a Speech and Language Centre in here I was like Wow!
- R **Really, so you were really impressed?**
- P Yes.
- R **And you're probably very pleased that you can be a part of it for at least...for this year and next year can't you?**
- P Yes.
- R **That's fantastic. Okay, Paul let me just check the time, okay, it's nearly 12:00...**
- P Yes
- R **Yes, so I will see you again later on at 10 past 2 today**
- P Okay.
- R **Is that okay?**
- P Yes that's fine with me.
- R **Yes, so if you can come here, will you be able to find this room?**
- P Yes.
- R **Okay, I just wanted to say thank you very much, I think you've been very, very informative and you've shared lots of interesting things with me. In the next interview, I will pick up on some of the things you have talked about in this interview and just explore that more with you.**
- P Yes. That sounds fine.

- R Are there any other questions for now, are there any questions?**
- P Errr...no.
- R No, so you're good?**
- P Yes.
- R Yes, well thank you very much and I'll see you later on at 10 past 2.**
- P Okay.
- R I'll shake your hand, thank you Paul. Have a good day.**

### **Interview 2: Paul**

- R Did you have a good lunch?**
- P Yes.
- R Yes. Were you outside here?**
- P Yes, I was outside.
- R Yes, so you got to let off some steam.**
- P Yes.
- R So Paul, you know we met earlier on...**
- P Yes.
- R ...and we had our first interview thing together so now we're having the second one and really what I want to do is pick some of the things you said in the first one and sort of get your real thinking about some of the questions that I'm going to put to you.**
- P Okay.
- R Okay, so we'll start with something like...okay so with the Centre you said that in the first interview that there were differences between the Centre and the School. Can you tell me a bit more about that?**
- P Well, the Centre...well ummm...the School is just one big place with different classrooms but the Centre with the Speech and Language Centre and the feeling around the Language Centre is sort of separate from that...They kinda

separate and the SLC has its own building separate from the school.

**R Okay.**

P ...'cause it was designed to get the students, the SLC students and the HLC students some space where they could get away from the clash with the main School bit.

**R Yes, okay and at playtime and lunchtime who are you mostly hanging around with, the people in the Centre or is it over there?**

P Its mostly the people in the Centre.

**R Okay, and do you have friends from all ages or is it certain ages?**

P Well, its sort of like a mix.

**R It's a mix, okay and has it improved now that you've moved from the mobile Centre to here, the friendships and playing and all that kind of stuff, has that improved or is it pretty much the same?**

P Well it has improved 'cause when we were in the Centre over there, we only had a mini space to...for the people to play football and to talk...for them to talk in but now we're over here and we've got the field next door, we've got more space to talk and for the rest to play football.

**R That's good, so you said before that you were really impressed when you learnt that this was going to be the Centre, the Speech and Language Centre, rather than 6<sup>th</sup> Form, how does that make you feel?**

P Yes well I feel proud in a way.

**R What do you think this means for the school? By having this brand new building?**

P Yes. Well I think in a way, it shows how we are being included like in how we are; we also have rights to have the same things you know.

**R Yes, okay and what would you say to a young person who had maybe started School in Year 7 who had a speech and language impairment, what advice would you give them?**

P Well I'd just say to try not to be nervous, just jump in whatever comes at you.

**R That's a really good idea, jump in with whatever comes at you, I like that, I think I'm going to use that one!**

P Okay.

- R ...that's really good, okay, right, okay can you tell me a little bit more about what your impairment was like for you?**
- P Errr...I've never thought like that before. It's always been you know, a part of me and that how I've always seen it... so errr...
- R Okay, that's interesting, that's really good, so you've always grown up with it have you?**
- P Yes.
- R So its always been a part of you?**
- P Yes.
- R Okay, what would life look like if you didn't have it?**
- P Pretty dull.
- R You think it'd be pretty dull? Okay, why is your life more exciting now then with this?**
- P Well...errr...with my speech and language impairment it sort of make me meet my...it make meet more friends...
- R Okay.**
- P ...it make me make more friends...
- R Yes.**
- P ...which I was really pleased and...ummm...what else...yes it made me really pleased to have lots of friends and...errr...those would I would be able to talk to you and spend time with my friends 'cause if I didn't have it...errr...if I hadn't of met them I probably would have struggled, if I was in Year 10 and I didn't have them I'd be really struggling.
- R You'd really be struggling without your friends?**
- P And my speech and language impairment, as well.
- R Yes, you think and how...why would you be struggling?**
- P Well...errr...cause sometimes...errr...off School I wouldn't...I'd have to catch up pretty quick for the work I missed.
- R Okay, and you'd have to do that in your own time, you wouldn't have the support of the Centre.**

P No.

**R Can you tell more about the school staff? How do you get on with them? What is your relationship like between yourself and school staff? Are there any particular teachers that you would like to talk about? How would your current teacher describe you?**

P Mainly the teachers in the SLC cos they know what they are talking about and understand how to help us. I really like all the TAs in the SLC as they are always there to help us and always friendly.

**R And how would your teachers describe you Paul?**

P I think they would say that I am kind, thoughtful and hard working.

**R What is your relationship like with your school teachers?**

P I think it is good, I get on with them. I just get annoyed sometimes in the class when I am with people who don't want to learn then we miss out on fun learning things because of them.

**R Okay, and you said that how the SLC made you make lots of friends then?**

P Well, when I first went to X 'cause that's where the SLC started for me...errr...I was pretty new to it all, a little bit shy and a little bit worried but everyone there just made me feel welcome.

**R Okay that's really good, that's really nice to hear, okay do you think education is important?**

P Yes, I think it is 'cause the whole part of School it gives you the...it makes you realise what your skills are, what you're good at and what you're not so good at so...so you can show later in life what the good part of you is, like it could help you get a job in the future.

**R That's brilliant and what are your hopes for the future? What do you hope for the future for you as you get older?**

P Well...well in the future hopefully I might get a job as a carpenter 'cause...

**R Okay.**

P ...because I'm pretty...'cause in DT we were doing woodwork...

**R Okay.**

P ...yes and last year, in Year 9, I was making this little cat money box out of

wood...

**R Oh right, okay.**

P ...yes and that really made me think, oh that would be really good to do in the future.

**R You like making things?**

P Yes.

**R Like designing and making things so you'd like to be a carpenter?**

P Yes.

**R Okay and do you plan to stay on at School for the 6<sup>th</sup> Form? Are you not sure yet?**

P I'm not entirely sure yet.

**R So you'll see how it goes.**

P Yes.

**R Okay, what other things would you like for the future?**

P Ummm...I'm not entirely sure at the moment, apart from that.

**R Okay, that's fine, so do you think the Centre here, do you think they make many opportunities for mixing with all the other children?**

P Well I think it sort of is a bit..errr...making sure the SLC students err...are fine here and mixing in with the other School students.

**R Okay, so they do do that, okay and when you say the Centre and mixing with like...spending time with the children in the Centre, do you mean just children with the speech and language impairment or as well as the hearing impaired?**

P Well some of the speech and language impairment students do sort of hang out with the other...with the other students...with the hearing impairment students as well.

**R Okay, what about for you?**

P Well...well I sort of do the same as well 'cause there's this person called X, he has a hearing impairment as well and he was in our form in Year 8 and 9 and a bit of Year 10 but he got transferred over to a different form, I'm not entirely sure why but its just he felt he should be in a different form

environment.

**R Okay and is he a friend of yours?**

P Errr...yes.

**R Okay, and would you say he's quite popular in the School...Centre?**

P Errr...Yes.

**R Okay, that's great, if you could have a perfect day at School...**

P Yes.

**R ...what would that look like and what would be different in order for you to have your perfect day at School?**

P Errr...perfect day at School...well...errr...getting to School on time so that I could have an early talk with my friends and being at form in time and hear some like goods news about like a trip or something and errr...then we go to lessons, have some really, really good lessons and then have a really good break...

**R And what does having a good break look like?**

P Errr...what does...talking with...errr...friends and going for a walk and errr...be in time for third lessons.

**R Okay, so its about being punctual, its about having fun with your friends...**

P Yes.

**R ...and having good lessons, so what would a good lesson be, what would that look like?**

P Errr...

**R How will you know that you've had a good lesson?**

P Positive thinking errr...hard work and getting on with the work that you've been set.

**R Brilliant, okay if you had to give advice to the School, like the Teachers and things about say they were getting loads of students coming in Year 7 with speech and language impairment...**

P Yes.

**R ...what advice might you give to them to say what they could be doing**

**and how they could be helping? How could they help young people today who have gone through what you've gone through? Do you have any ideas?**

P Errr...not at the moment, no.

**R No, lets think about some of the difficulties you might have had over the years.**

P Well...well I say if you have any difficulties, any troubles, any worries just come ask us and we might be able to solve the problems...

**R Yes.**

P ...and if you're getting picked on or anything, tell us immediately.

**R Yes, that's good advice actually, so people should just be a bit more open.**

P Yes.

**R Okay, and if you were to say...on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being unhappy and 10 being very happy, how would you...where would you rate yourself in terms of the scale with being in the Centre?**

P 10.

**R You say 10? So the Centre is a place that makes you very happy? How do you know the SLC is helping you?**

P Yes well all the teachers in the SLC, they know us well and help us whenever we need it and they always there.

**R ...And you're quite happy when Teachers come out of the Centre and help you in the class or whether its in the Centre or in the school?**

P Yes.

**R ...and things like that, okay, if there's one thing you could change about the Centre, what would that be?**

P Ummm...I'm not entirely sure.

**R It's a hard question. Lets think of another one...lets go back to there...how do...in your opinion, how can we make it more mixed, would that be a good thing or not a good thing?**

P What the SLC students mixing with the other School students?

**R Yes.**

P Well, yes and no 'cause some of the older students might get along with the...errr...other School students but the younger ones if the older lot...errr...I mean the younger lot here, the older lot might pick on them and the young ones might get upset and...

**R Has that happened, have you seen that happen?**

P Well, once or twice.

**R Do you find yourself being the protector, you try and stick up for them when you see that happening?**

P Errr...yes.

**R What would life look like if the SLC did not exist?**

P Ummm...we...well if we all just have to stick together and...errr...find a spot where we could hang out and where the other lot...errr...either don't pick on us or get us involved in something we don't want to be involved in.

**R So from 1 to 10 again, 1 being not at all, 10 being definitely, how important is having the Centre then?**

P 10.

**R Its so important, so you couldn't imagine a school environment without this Centre?**

P Yes. Because we need that quiet time, in the class it can get noisy and in the SLC, I like working in small groups because I know I'm learning and I like being around my friends because they think like me too.

**R In some schools, they don't have a Centre at all. Children with speech and language impairment are just part of the everyday school environment. So do you feel like the Centre offers you that kind of space, that quiet time, the opportunity to catch up work, that's what you've been telling me today?**

P Yes.

**R And you get to sort of hang out with your friends, you mentioned the words "stupid people" earlier...**

P Yes.

**R ...so you get to be away from that and be around people like yourselves**

**who are hard working and who want to do well?**

P Yes.

**R I think those are the things that are quite important to you, would that be right?**

P Yes, definitely.

**R Yes, and the Centre gives you all of those things, that's great. Let's have a look at your scale that you did its in here, here you've got number 9, sometimes I can stick up for myself, I can stick up for myself sometimes. When are the times you feel its harder to stick up for yourself?**

P Well usually 'cause if I'm on my own and someone just say says something and I just usually say something back but if I'm with someone and then someone else has said something...errr...my other friends will just say something to them. Its sort of, its not me staying silent or speaking its sort of either me speaking or someone else speaking.

**R You mentioned earlier that sometimes you feel lonely. Can you tell more about that?**

P Well sometimes...errr...my friend X 'cause sometimes at the weekend he goes bike riding with his friends and sometimes he falls off and hurts himself but most of the time he's usually ill most of the time and he has been for quite a while.

**R Okay, so he's quite a good friend of yours?**

P Yes, he's X

**R Okay, and does he have a speech and language impairment as well?**

P Yes.

**R And do you often see each other, well usually, outside of School?**

P Errr...well we do inside School but not outside School often.

**R Okay, so at the moment he's having lots of time off School because he's not well?**

P Yes.

**R And that's making you feel quite lonely because he's not around.**

- P Yes, yes but I usually talk to the...errr....other people.
- R **Okay, so you do have other people to talk to but still you miss X a little bit because you haven't seen him for a long period of time?**
- P Yes.
- R **And does he tell you when he's coming back or anything like that?**
- P Errr...well...errr...yes, yes he does.
- R **Yes, okay excellent okay, is there anything that you would like to add about what its like for you to have a speech and language impairment in your view, in your eyes, what its like, is there anything that you want to add to today?**
- P Ummm...
- R **From what you've shared with me so far, you see it as part of you?**
- P Yes, I do, it's positive because I wouldn't have the friends I do and I really like being part of the err SLC.
- R **You feel like its made you who you are today? That you feel like...you said earlier that without it, "I would be struggling..."**
- P Yes.
- R **...if you didn't have access to all these other things.**
- P Yes, 'cause most things...errr...that people have like medications or impairments or anything, it makes them who they are.
- R **Yes, definitely, I really agree with that. I think for me, to have a disability is more like a gift because it makes you work really hard for things, it makes you different from other people...**
- P Yes and...errr...sometimes...errr...people...people in the form say the SLC people...do you think the SLC people can't do a lot outside of School yes but for me 'cause I do Cadets...
- R **And Karate.**
- P Yes.
- R **Martial Arts, sorry.**
- P Yes, 'cause sometimes I go like flying with Cadets, now would you see an SLC...often see an SLC student go flying in a plane.

**R Is that what they say?**

P Yes.

**R How do you respond to that?**

P Well for some people...errr...no but I would say for me, yes.

**R Yes, of course, so you don't limit yourself from anything do you?**

P No.

**R And if people have, you know, they all have that funny question really, are you happy to respond to them and say actually, no, I do do this, I can do that, are you open to people asking these questions about it?**

P Yes.

**R Yes, that's great, so when are you next in Cadets then?**

P Errr...pardon?

**R When are you going to Cadets again?**

P Well...errr...I go twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays...

**R Tuesday and Thursday.**

P Its 7 o'clock to half past nine.

**R Wow, that's late in the evening then.**

P Yes.

**R But you enjoy it don't you and when do you do your Martial Arts?**

P Errr...sometimes I do it once a week or twice a week. I do it...errr...on Wednesday and Friday, I do it. On Wednesday its in the gym.....and Friday's its in X Hill in the Village Hall.

**R Okay, so there's two different places.**

P Yes.

**R So you're very busy then, most nights aren't you?**

P Yes, sometimes...'cause sometimes if like I've had a stressful day or I feel very tired I usually...

**R Have the night off.**

- P Yes.
- R **Yes, I think you're allowed to do that, you're allowed to have a night off when it gets a bit too much. Okay Paul, I'm going to say thank you so much, I think you've been really, really...you've been an interesting person to speak to today, you've given me lots to go on and I think you're actually a positive influence, you're somebody I can see who's managed their impairment really well and you just get on with it and you get on with life because you don't let anything stop you...**
- P Yes,
- R **...and I think that's a good way to be, in fact I think you could be a very positive role model for lots of young people out there...**
- P Okay thanks, I hope I can be,
- R **Yes, you are, you are a really positive role model so I think that young people who might be experiencing the same thing and are struggling to deal with it, I think they would benefit from somebody like you, like a few minutes chat with you, because you really are a positive person and its good to share that, so thank you for today.**
- P Okay.
- R **So that's the end of it so what's going to happen is with the recordings I'm going to play them to myself later and then type it out and then I will take off your name so you're not...so your name's not on it anywhere on it so you can't be identified...**
- P Okay.
- R **...okay and then I will use this later on when I'm trying to analyse and, you know, to write up my thesis, write up my research but after a few weeks, or a few months of writing it up I will destroy all evidence so, you know, all this evidence that you completed. I need it for now while I'm writing up the paper but later on, everything will be destroyed so you don't...you don't have to worry about anybody finding your work or anything like that.**
- P Okay.
- P **...if there's any question or anything bothering you or anything you want to add, then just drop me a line on the paperwork I gave you on Monday which has my email address.**
- P Okay.

**R Is that okay?**

P Yes that's fine.

**R Now I will go through the Debriefing with you (reads out Debriefing sheet to Paul). Do you have any questions Paul?**

P No that's fine miss

**R So thank you so much for giving up your time today, it's been really, really good to see you and yes, so I wish you well.**

P Okay.

**R Okay, I shall see you soon, are you going to go back to your next lesson?**

P Errr...yes.

**R Your last lesson.**

P Yes.

**R Ok take care.**

# **Appendix 11: Electronic disc of all transcriptions**

## Appendix 12: List of codes and description of codes

1. 'Ethnicity' as a term, confusing and not received.
2. Primary- Secondary schools history
3. Subjects liked in current mainstream secondary school
4. Long-term plans for studies
5. Dislike homework
6. Experience of detentions
7. Attitude towards exams
8. Anxieties about exams
9. Anxieties about exam performance
10. Lack of engagement with the researcher
11. What is liked about school?
12. Friendships – description, importance of friends,
13. When does time with friends take place
14. Importance of play times and break times
15. Recalling primary school based memories
16. Perception of work ethics in primary school
17. Influence of peer groups in primary school
18. Social desirability in secondary school
19. Different friendship groups in secondary school
20. Difficulties sustaining friendships/developing friendships
21. Identity- showing similarities to friends in secondary school
22. School environment/impact on friendship groups
23. Preference for the primary school environment
24. Identifying a leader amongst the friendship group
25. Hobbies and interests in school
26. Hobbies and interests outside of school
27. The positive aspects to the SLC, benefits of the SLC – emotional and academic support
28. Role of Teaching Assistants; their purpose, function and usefulness within the classroom and SLC/the work that is carried out – repetition and resources
29. Self-confidence as a result of support offered by Teaching Assistants
30. Identifying friends in the Centre
31. Positive advantages to friendships formed within the Centre
32. Reflecting on the differentiation of friends in the Centre and the mainstream school
33. Identifying dislikes in the Centre
34. Self-confidence as a result of SLC including friendship groups
35. Developing communication skills and listening skills – facilitated by the SLC

36. Using communication skills to approach people and start conversations
37. Struggles to express oneself emotionally
38. Perception and understanding of having an SLCI including description
39. Feelings associated with difficulties in conversations
40. Reasons for attending the SLC
41. Positive attitudes about a SLCI/strong work ethics
42. Family dynamics, relationships, position in the family
43. Relationship to class teachers in the mainstream school
44. Isolation from peers from the mainstream and SLC
45. Feelings of loneliness/impact on self-esteem
46. Resilience – devising strategies to cope with poor self-esteem
47. Anxieties about school
48. The physical context i.e. the space of the new building/comparisons to the old building
49. Attitudes and perceptions about the value of education
50. Boredom of school
51. Long-term career aspirations; links to family careers
52. Inclusion opportunities between the mainstream and SLC, lack of, what it would like, how different things might be
53. Advise to younger people coming into mainstream
54. Building friendships through attendance of social clubs
55. Integration of the mainstream and SLC through use of clubs
56. Difficulties in engaging with peers in the mainstream school
57. Personal qualities: self motivation, drive for success, strong work ethics
58. Work ethics in comparison to the mainstream environment
59. Qualities that make a good teacher
60. Difficulties engaging with mainstream peers – bad behaviour, ‘naughty’, distractions to the learning, feelings of frustrations
61. The challenges associated to attending the SLC
62. Progress from attending the SLC: attainment and success
63. Bullying, victim of bullying and its impact
64. Personal strengths seen as achievement e.g. creative qualities, academic skills
65. Defining the SLC and its purpose
66. Identifying the onset of SLCI, noticeable changes and feelings about this
67. Similarities of difficulties in peers found in the SLC
68. Community cohesion –sharing experiences of similar feelings and thoughts about impairments
69. Personal identity and sense of belonging within the SLC
70. Value placed on support given in the SLC and mainstream school from TAs
71. Family support systems at home/parental influences
72. Hypothesis of life without a SLCI
73. Personal characteristics that are exacerbated by language difficulties

74. Thoughts about school based experiences without the SLC
75. Identifying ways professionals can support young people with SLCI
76. Understanding of peers' perceptions of SLCI
77. Suggestions of how support can be facilitated by teachers including strategies
78. Aspects of "safe environment" found in the SLC
79. How secondary school transition was decided – focus on the provision
80. Lack of self-confidence in the mainstream classroom due to people's lack of understanding of SLCI
81. Feelings of being respected and important as a result of the brand new building
82. Sense of belonging in the SLC as a result of friendship groups
83. Role of "protecting" younger pupils with SLCI within the SLC from mainstream school
84. Lack of confidence in the mainstream classroom, being unable to ask for help
85. Poor attitude towards school
86. Emotional abuse from peers' lack of understanding of SLCI
87. Identifying different types of disabilities, recognition of my hearing aids
88. Re-defining SLCI to language disability
89. Support is not balanced well; too much is not good and too little is not good
90. Lack of opportunities to be independent, to have independent thoughts
91. Lack of opportunities to engage in conversations
92. Poor self-esteem, complex emotional feelings as a result of disability
93. Anxieties about disability getting worse
94. Preference for life without disability-access to more friends
95. Doubts about friendships within mainstream due to access to support
96. Lack of trust in others
97. Dislike about TA support in mainstream class
98. Being misunderstood by teachers and teaching assistants: feelings of frustrations
99. Express of interest of research being shared with Government
100. Lack of TA support in the classroom
101. Mainstream friends' perceptions of SLC
102. Mainstream friends' supportive group

## Appendix 13: Reflexive Journal excerpts

14.09.2010

### Research Proposal discussion at UEL

As I was approached in the circle, it was now my turn to discuss the progress of where I was with my research idea and to what extent had I discussed it with my service. Internally I was feeling much more confident and this was recent as I met with my Area Senior yesterday (14.09.10). I was able to communicate my thoughts about my research idea and simplify it in a much more pragmatic way. GM, my Area Senior helped me do this and after our meeting I felt so relieved. I also received positive feedback from GM as I talked about some of the measures I had taken to further my research interest such as being a member of the panel meetings and attending a deaf and family training course in the upcoming weeks.

*So this is what I put forward to Mark Fox and the group;*

I am interested in looking at emotional resilience in deaf children who are hearing aids users and have spoken language. I am interested in seeing how the hearing impairment as a hidden disability is met in the mainstream and hearing impairment unit settings.

As an exploratory study, I wish to carry out in-depth interviews with 6-8 individuals and derive themes from the interview schedule. I want to find out what has worked for them? What has helped them to achieve? What is it that led to successful transitions in school? Therefore it is an exploratory study to investigate the views of adolescents with a hearing impairment. Using the in depth interview methodology will allow me to unravel themes, find out what has worked? What does it mean to have a hearing impairment? What has led to positive being/feelings?

GM (Area Senior in EPS) was keen for me to adopt an ethnographic/narrative stance to my study whereby I could use the interview materials to reflect on my own experiences. I thought this would be really fascinating as a way forward and my supervisor was receptive to this as she immediately thought of how I could introduce my thesis – which would be because of my own experiences – this is why I have chosen to explore this area.

I had discussed the option of using mixed methods and my approach to doing this in my proposal was to use the pre-measure approach of using the PASS scores

and making comparisons between deaf and hearing pupils. Furthermore I thought about doing the PASS as a post scoring method or a type of emotional resilience questionnaire- this still needed some clarity. However, I was hoping that as I would be a member of the CHSWG, I could get access to demographics and data that would reveal information about the statistics of deaf children/the screening process/the awareness of deafness and the access to support for families as well as schools. This will enable me to present a visual map of the outline of hearing impairment children in XXXX.

### **Where is the Evidence Base?**

RNID – What is told to help and support deaf children? What does the research show? Would the interviewees agree?

**29.09.2010**

Following a planning meeting that took place at XXXX, I found myself to be in a confusing situation with regards to my research. Since my area of interest was within emotional wellbeing and hearing impairment, I decided that this would be a good opportunity to raise it at the planning meeting. The reception I got from PL (who was Head of the Hearing Impairment Unit), was that it was going to be too difficult to undertake my research since the Unit was about to enter many challenges which included a move to a new building; PL was going on leave and she also talked about the fact that the sample size would be very limited as there were not many children I could interview. She also stressed that there wouldn't be enough time for me to undertake my research as students had a busy timetable – I wondered if clarification should have been made on part re: the time I would allocate for undertaking interviews as it wasn't really going to take much time at all from my point of view. However XXXX was very enthusiastic about the idea of working with the speech and language unit instead and undertaking my research there. She also added that she felt that deaf children were in a much stronger position than those who had a speech impediment and they received much more funding to support their needs than the S&L Unit. XXXX, who was head of S&L Unit, was very much disappointed by the level of poor awareness and recognition of those who had a speech and language impairment. She further added that their emotional wellbeing was pivotal but feels that there has been limited awareness for these children's needs. Additionally she talks about her frustrations of only receiving a limited amount of funding which she feels the school has undermined the needs for these children and adds that this may have something to do with

having a hidden disability which can arguably make their lives so much more difficult. She also expressed sadness when she talked about two of her students in the last three years who had committed suicide hence highlighting the lack of awareness of mental health issues for this particular group of children.

This began to make me rethink my research area as I felt one of things that was important for me was finding a niche that was going to particularly need of my involvement and here it was. What was also particularly interesting for me was the area around mental health and this was an area that I was always drawn by so perhaps I could re-direct my focus to looking at in-depth interviews with children in the S&L Unit and explore their views which would also give my research a systemic purpose by highlighting the importance of mental health issues amongst those with a speech and language impediment. Therefore education should focus on increasing awareness of what constitutes as the main issues for adolescents with speech and language impairments in the sense what are the effects on their emotional well being. And how, we can nationally raise awareness of this group of children's needs and support their integration into society.

I left the meeting feeling very confused so I thought the best move forwards was to do some research into this area and arrange to talk with my supervisor/area senior and my personal tutor for guidance.

**Email sent by Laura on 01.10.10 in response to the researcher's.**

*Why don't you simply rethink using same methodology but for different needs?*

*Remember focus on what is the research question and aim of the research– this will help you.*

Okay- well you know of my interest which was hearing impairment and emotional wellbeing - looking at emotional resilience etc through in-depth interviews - undertaking an exploratory study on their views about their experiences etc.

I went to a joint planning meeting with hearing impairment unit and speech and language unit and at the meeting I brought up my research interest to head of HI unit. She was not very receptive to me undertaking research due to the fact that there are going to be some major changes including staff leaving, move to new building, she's taking a year off, and there aren't many children that would make it a representative sample. However she was very interested in my idea and asked

me to think about the Speech and Lang unit since they are so under-represented in terms of awareness. Sarah (head of Speech and Lang) talked to me about her worries in terms of adolescents' emotional well being etc and said it would be so good if I were to consider working within that unit. This has changed things for me but to be honest, I welcome the idea of being presented with something that really needs attention and some things they added were quite significant- for instance - HI children are very represented and gets so much more funding etc - and this isn't the case for those with communication disorders. Sarah also talked about 2 students who had in the last three years committed suicide due to their ability to cope with an impairment that appears a hidden disability.

So what do you think? Should I pursue my research question and instead target the Speech and Language Unit? I would need to think about how I would undertake my methodology and at least there would be a good sample size of 23 children (majority in Year 9-11- which is the age group I wanted to target).

I just really need some guidance! Clearly it is an interesting area - and I'm quite keen to explore something that warrants attention and awareness - this too would add to developing EP practice on a much more systemic level.

Help!

Reena

## **October – November 2011**

### **Meetings with SS**

Following a successful meeting with the Head of the SLC, I could see her passion and enthusiasm for me to carry out research within the SLC. It was clear that they were kept hidden and received less attention than the hearing impaired unit. Therefore I realised that there was an important need for me to carry out research in order to publicise to the wider school about what works in the SLC.

### **What is the point of this Research?**

In undertaking this research, I believe it will help better the professionals' knowledge in how to deal with the vulnerable group of individuals- how they can

support the adolescents with this hidden disability in the most effective way. By listening to the views of children, can we really get a realistic and informative view of what and how they need to be supported. I also believe that these young adolescents will reject some of the proposed ideas of how to be supported.

### **June 2011-July 2011**

Qualitative research “involves the creation and ongoing renegotiations of relationships” (Lamhor & Mattingly, 2001, p.147) between the researcher and participant. The current study was an opportunity to discuss the impact of participants’ school life and their life at home since these experiences are most significant during the adolescent stage and ones that I could identify with and struggled with. I realised during the course of the interviews just how difficult it might have been to sit in front of the researcher and talk about things. In fact as the researcher, I began to recall some of my own, more difficult memories of how I felt alone during secondary school. For me, it had never been more important to do this piece of research because I didn’t get to use my voice. In fact, no one asked me what I thought. Just because I was seen as someone who was doing well and performing well, didn’t mean that I was not struggling in other areas that were not visible to the school staff or even my parents. As the data collection stage went on, I realise the importance of this study was huge and I really hoped that I grasped the participants’ views.

### **20.06.11 Research Presentation**

As I arrived to the Speech and Language Unit, it was exciting to see the new building. It was a hot summer day and there was a happy atmosphere amongst the staff and students who were mostly sitting outside eating their lunch. I arrived to learn that there were going to be a few parents that were unable to attend. It was nearing 2 o’ clock, and I was beginning to panic as there were not many people there. I learnt that this could be a result of traffic as I was too stuck in it. In end, there were 4 parents who turned up with their child. The parents were very responsive to the research presentation. At the end of the presentation I gave 10-15 minutes for the parents and students to talk amongst themselves. They also had access to the participant information sheet and the slideshow. I felt relieved as parents asked questions as this made me feel they were listening and were interested. One parent asked me about the thesis when it was finished and how he would like to read the final product. I suggested the possibility of running a presentation about my thesis to share findings. Everyone was receptive to this. Following the time given for the parents and students to talk, they all agreed to participate in the research. I was pleased about this and parents were very vocal

about how happy they were about a piece of research that was going to explore young people's views.

I felt we had made progress today and already lined up some dates for this week to carry out the pilot study and up to 3 participant interviews. I also had phone numbers of parents who sent their apologies. SG and I agreed that I would call them tonight and then she would distribute the forms to students and hopefully if they agree to take part in the research, they will return the consent forms by Friday.

- See email sent to SG for updates on phone calls made.

## Appendix 14: 15 point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis (produced by Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Stage	Criteria
1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail and the transcripts have been checked again against the recordings for accuracy.
2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach) but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive.
7	Data have been analysed/interpreted, made sense of rather than just paraphrased.
8	Analysis and data match each other/ the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
9	Analysis tells a convincing and well organised story about the data and topic.
10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly
12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
13	There is a good fit between what you claim to do, and what you show you have done, i.e. described method and reported analysis are consistent.
14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process themes do not just 'emerge'.

# Appendix 15: Dictaphone Reflections of the interviews

## Interviews with John

I just wanted to talk about a few issues that I encountered with this pilot study. 45 minutes is far too long for a child with a speech and language impairment. It is clear that it is far too long as the participant struggled and there were uncomfortable silences so I will be shortening the interview to 30-35 minutes with 5 minutes leeway on each side should the participant need more or less time. I also learned that 3 interviews were not necessary so all interviews will take place twice per participant.

As a researcher it is really important for me to hone in on the areas that I wish to explore with the participants. From the pilot study, I found it helpful to introduce a number of things for the participant to do which helps break the interview down and put less strain on talking so much. In breaking up the interview sessions, it enabled me to develop and hone in on areas for exploration in order to make the most of the interview session.

John struggled greatly during the interviews but was very explicit that the Centre in the beginning was difficult to be in but over time with the progress he made, it has become a place that he loves. John was passionate as he talked about his friends who all resided in the Centre. He felt very comfortable and at ease talking about them. He also added that being part of his School the mainstream students can be incredibly naughty. The word “naughty” was expressed in a way that they could be quite loud, boisterous, and disruptive. Within the Centre, John does not feel that this is the case. John was not able to tell him about his long term goals and what his hopes are for the future but he did say that he would like to work for his dad in his dad’s sportswear shop. He quite likes to garden too so he’s thinking of working in a Gardening Centre. Nonetheless, he’s very exciting about coming back to School in September to start his A Levels. It is clear that clear themes around friendships, wellbeing and inclusion were raised during these interviews and I hope as a researcher that I convey this through analysing the findings.

## **Interviews with Steven**

I remembered Steven well and his parents from the information presentation I delivered in the SLC. Steven came across very bright, slightly shy but quite articulate. During the interviews, he was very sweet and polite. He spoke highly of the support he received within the SLC especially the good relationships with Teaching Assistants. This came out to be quite a strong theme, and one that I must draw upon when analysing the findings. He had not felt really any major differences even with a sibling at home purely because he's a very academic boy. So therefore he has always been very confidence. Parents are very supportive, at the research presentation they were very onboard and were quite interested in finding out the thesis results and I shared that I would disseminate findings in the summer term.

I had hoped that Steven would be more open but he admitted himself that he was "shy" so perhaps this should be factored. He seemed very focus and had clear defined plans about what he wanted to do.

## **Interviews with Amanda**

Amanda was very bubbly and chatty. She was very intuitive and wanted to know more about my experiences as she saw that I wore hearing aids. She said it would be worse to be deaf than to have a stammer. I think she was referring the vanity aspect of it. She appeared very popular as her phone kept going off but she politely switched it off. She was very vocal in talking about what worked and what didn't and how school could be better. Some of the findings from the interviews should include a focus on her thoughts about how school can be improved.

## **Interviews with Neil**

I think he struggled with the interviews, as it was difficult to get a real perspective. I don't know whether this is due to cultural differences as he's from France but I think most of his other issue was around the fact that his Mother is no longer at home and he felt very lonely and sad that she was not there. It is very clear that the Speech and Language Centre is an awesome place for him and without it, it would be very, very difficult. He talked about how it would be a struggle and everything would just take longer and it would just be really hard. However I did

feel that the interviews were used as an outlet for Neil to vent his feelings of feeling lost without his mother and I wondered if the SLC played an even bigger role for him given that there were constant people around him who provided him with a substitute for support, emotionally.

### **Interviews with Daniel**

Interview completed...interview one completed with Daniel, Year 7. I think that was quite a difficult session given that he is only a Year 7 and perhaps was feeling very shy and nervous and not able to give me very much. I also think he's a young child who has a difficult home life and therefore is very hesitant in opening up. This really does implicate the level of emotional impact on a young person in expressing themselves.

During the second interview, it was very difficult to engage with Daniel as he sometimes chose to give me one worded answers or silences. David did fill me in on his difficult home life where he is no longer cared for by his mother and now lives with his brother who has a 1 bedroom flat with his girlfriend. So his current home life is chaotic and the family are seeking support to move into a bigger place.

Therefore, he does have a very complex emotional need and is not so forthcoming but I remember from the research presentation he was in he was very energetic and really looked up to his brother and saw him as his idol. In contrast to today where he looked very glum and very down and David shared that he does have very down days so I can imagine that he is processing a lot of very emotional feelings at the moment due to the nature of the severity of his mother's health problems including the fact that the Father has abandoned the family some years ago. I think the presence of his brother helps him to feel safe and more relaxed because his mood in today's interview was very different from the day I met him at the research presentation.

### **Interviews with Paul**

That was Paul. I think it was a very positive interview, he has a very positive reflection of his impairment and clearly could be seen as a positive role model for younger pupils. He does believe that without the Centre he would be really

struggling so the Centre is fundamentally very important to him. I believe that there is a divide but it's a necessary divide in order to give young people the real chance to express themselves and to learn and cope and manage their daily environment. That was the view of Paul who also felt that the people in the mainstream school had a different attitude that was not similar to people of the SLC. According to Paul, people in the SLC took their learning seriously and he found it frustrating in classes where people just messed around.

### **Interviews with Beth**

That was the end of interview two for Beth. She is a very, very expressive young lady who has very mixed views about the Centre and the role of the Centre. There's clearly anxieties about being part of a Centre which has a negative perception to the views of other people in the School.

She feels that TA support is badly utilised and once it is utilised, it is not used in the right way in the sense that too much help is being provided where there is less about questioning the children instead about their views or their understanding of the work. She feels this is a real worry, especially when going into Higher Education or College.

Beth also expressed her emotional desire to have more interaction with her parents at home. She feels there is a real lack of it which is contributing to her feelings, very lonely and feeling quite very sad which is all tied in with her speech and language problems.

## Appendix 16: Summary of the key research findings

1. *What is an adolescent's understanding of a speech, language and communication impairment (SLCI)?*

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**Finding one:** a majority of adolescents talk positively about their SLCI

**Finding two:** a minority of adolescents demonstrate a lack of awareness of the term "SLCI". In some cases they were in denial of their disability.

**Finding three:** adolescents with SLCI share a similar work ethic and elaborate common goals to support one another.

2. *To what extent do adolescents with an SLCI feel they are included within the mainstream setting?*

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**Finding four:** some adolescents perceive TA support as a barrier to full integration into the mainstream school environment.

**Finding five:** a majority of adolescents with SLCI have difficulties relating to their mainstream peers

**Finding six:** a majority of adolescents feel that the segregation of the SLC from the mainstream building creates a physical barrier to inclusion

3. *What are the key factors that enable the wellbeing of adolescents with SLCI in education?*

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**Finding seven:** for a majority of adolescents sampled, friendships within the SLC played the most important role in fostering their wellbeing

**Finding eight:** adolescents with SLCI perceive the personal qualities of their TAs as a significant contributing factor to their inclusion and wellbeing

**Finding nine:** the availability of the SLC (both physically and symbolically) plays an important 'containing' role for the adolescents

## Appendix 17: Further breakdown of key words developed by Sharyne McLeod

The researcher has included key terms taken from Sharynne McLeod (2011, p.27)

Overarching area	Terminology relating to delay, disorder, difficulty, impairment, and/or need in children	Affiliated terminology
Speech	Speech sound disorder, speech impairment, phonological impairment, childhood apraxia of speech (CAS), developmental (verbal) dyspraxia, dysarthria, lisp	Articulation, phonetics, phonology, prosody, intelligibility, phoniatrics
Language	Specific language impairment (SLI), expressive language delay/disorder, receptive language delay/disorder, aphasia (previously used for children, now typically reserved for use to describe the speech of adults after a stroke)	Vocabulary (semantics), grammar (morphology), syntax discourse, linguistics, pragmatics, logopedica
Voice	Dysphonia, voice disorder, vocal nodules, vocal pathology, psychogenic voice disorders	Phonation
Fluency	Stuttering, stammering, cluttering, dysfluency	Fluency
Hearing	Deaf, hearing loss, hearing impairment, hard of hearing	
Communication	Alternative and augmentative communication (AAC), complex communication needs	