

**A Participatory Research Project Exploring Young People's Views of an  
Employability Course Designed for those with Special Educational Needs**

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## Abstract

This participatory action research project explored young people's (YP) experience of a Supported Internship Programme (SIP) at a Further Education College (FE). **Methods:** Four co-researchers aged 18-25 who were currently attending an SIP at a FE college in an inner London borough took part (via video conferencing). The co-researchers chose to take part in interviews and create presentations of photos they took in college in order to share their views. Interview questions generated with co-researchers influenced the primary research question: What do YP want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic? The researcher used inductive thematic analysis to generate themes which were discussed with co-researchers. Findings were shared with the co-researchers' classmates and teachers. Co-researchers provided feedback on the project. **Findings:** co-researchers' experiences of the SIP met the psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness and also supported resilience. Lockdown periods limited co-researchers' opportunities to meet their psychological needs. **Implications:** Public health policy around the Covid-19 pandemic may have had a disproportionately negative impact on this group. However, insights into the strengths of the SIP and ideas generated by the coresearchers may guide to ongoing support for YP with SEND. This research examined what supports YP with SEND to share their views on what is important to them in their educational experience. It was found use of photo-voice and individual interviews were successful methods. However, more time for co-researchers to develop their own initiatives and projects would be beneficial. Co-researchers were able to provide critical, insightful reflections not only on their own experience but the wider impact of public policy. *Key words: Special Educational Needs and disabilities, SEN, SEND, employability course, supported internship programme, young people, participatory research, participatory action research, Pandemic, Corona-Virus, Lockdown, Further education, Preparing for adulthood, photo-voice.*



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## List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
FE	Further education
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
LD	Learning Difficulties
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SEN	Special educational needs
LDO	Learning disabilities observatory
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
YP	Young people / young person
PRU	Pupil referral unit
HE	Higher education
PHE	Public Health England
SIP	Supported Internship Programme
ICT	Information Communication Technology
RQ	Research question
CYP	Children and young people
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

## **Table of Contents**

i.	Title Page	1
ii.	Abstract	2
iii.	Acknowledgements	3
iv.	List of Abbreviations	4
v.	Table of Contents	5
vi.	List of Tables	14
vii.	List of Figures	15
viii.	List of Appendices	17

### **1. Introduction 19**

1.1.	Chapter Overview	19
1.2.	Terminology	20
1.3.	UK Government Policy Around Learning Disability	20
1.4.	Critical Discussion of Government Policy	21
1.5.	Implications of Unemployment for Young People with SEND	22
1.6.	Transition to Post-16 Education for Young People with SEND	23
1.7.	Employability Programmes Specifically for Young People with SEND	23
1.8.	The Social Model of Disability	24
1.9.	Role of Educational Psychology	26
1.10.	Researcher's position	27

### **2. Literature review 29**

2.1.	Chapter Overview	29
2.2.	The Choice of a Hermeneutic Review	29
2.3.	Initial Scoping Review Process	31
2.4.	Summary of Grey Literature on the Experience of Vocational Education for YP with SEND	34

2.5. Summary of the Peer-reviewed Research Findings on the Experience of Vocational Education for YP with SEND	36
2.5.1. Level 1 Vocational Courses at Post-16 Settings	36
2.5.2. Vocational Education as an Alternative Mainstream Post-14 Secondary Education	37
2.5.3. Transition to Post-16 for YP at a Specialist Secondary School for Students with SEND	39
2.5.4. Provision for Students with SEND in FE	39
2.5.5. YP with SEND's views on Health Care	40
2.6. Critical Assessment of Initial Scoping Review	40
2.7. Explanation of Key Theoretical Frameworks Arising from Initial Scoping Review	43
2.7.1. Bourdieu's Theories	43
2.7.2. Social Capital	44
2.7.3. Exosystemic perspective	45
2.7.4. Self-efficacy and self-determination	45
2.8. Research problem questions arising from critical assessment	46
2.9. Literature Searches for Participatory and Participatory Action Research With People with SEND and or LD and YP with SEND's Educational Experiences	47
2.9.1. Experience of Learners with SEND in Mainstream Secondary Schools	47
2.9.2. Participatory Research with YP with SEND in Educational Contexts	49
2.9.3. Participatory Research with Adults and YP identified as having LD or Disabilities in Community Contexts	50
2.9.4. Mutual Support and Self-Advocacy	52
2.10. Argument for current research project	54

### **3. Methodology 56**

#### 3.1. Chapter Overview 56

#### 3.2. Research Paradigm 56

##### 3.2.1. The Ontological and Epistemological Position 56

##### 3.2.2. Reflexivity 58

##### 3.2.3. Aims and Purpose 60

##### 3.2.4. Research Questions 61

#### 3.3. Justification of the Methodology 61

##### 3.3.1. Participatory Research 61

##### 3.3.2. Focus Groups 67

##### 3.3.3. Interviews 68

##### 3.3.4. Use of Video Conferencing 69

###### 3.3.4.1. The Role of Online Communication in Providing Services to YP 69

###### 3.3.4.2. Video Conferencing in Research with YP 69

###### 3.3.4.3. Strategies for Effective Use of Video Conferencing Applied in this Research 71

##### 3.3.5. Use of Visual Methods 71

###### 3.3.5.1. Photo-voice 72

###### 3.3.5.2. Collage or Drawing the Ideal College 72

#### 3.4. Consideration of Strategies for Data Analysis 72

##### 3.4.1. Qualitative Analyses 72

##### 3.4.2. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) 73

##### 3.4.3. Narrative Analysis 73

##### 3.4.4. Constructivist Grounded Theory 74

3.4.5. Thematic Analysis	74
3.5. Method in Current Research	76
3.5.1. Co-researchers and Recruitment	76
3.5.2. Ethical Considerations	76
3.5.2.1. Protection from Harm, Duty of Care and Special Consideration of Vulnerable Persons	76
3.5.2.2. Anonymity and Confidentiality	77
3.5.2.3. Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw	78
3.6. Phases of the Research Process and Procedures	78
3.7. Data Analysis	81
3.7.1. Transcription	81
3.7.2. Coding	81
3.7.3. Generating Themes	81
3.7.4. Generating “Ideas for Change”	82
3.8. Assessing the Quality of the Research	82
3.8.1. Credibility	82
3.8.2. Transferability	82
3.8.3. Dependability	83
3.8.4. Confirmability	83
3.9. Chapter Summary	83
<b>4. Findings</b>	<b>84</b>
4.1. Chapter Overview	85
4.2. Part 1: Research Question 1: What do Young People want their Teachers to Know about their Experience on a SIP During a Pandemic?	85

- 4.2.1. Master Theme1: Working Towards Independence 86
  - 4.2.1.1. Theme 1.1: Leave College and Get a Job 87
  - 4.2.1.2. Theme 1.2 Not Being Reliant on Other People 87
  - 4.2.1.3. Theme 1.3 If Resources are Adapted, I Don't Need to Ask for Help 87
  - 4.2.1.4. Theme 1.4 Job Coach Leaves us to it 88
  - 4.2.1.5. Theme 1.5 Overcoming Challenges at Work: Calm Myself Down 89
  - 4.2.1.6. Theme 1.6 Independent Travel: It was a Bit Scary but I Managed 90
  - 4.2.1.7. Theme 1.7 I Know What Kind of Work I Want to do 91
  - 4.2.1.8. Theme 1.8 Staff Accept Your Decisions 91
  - 4.2.1.9. Theme 1.9 Work and Helping Others Makes me Feel Proud 91
  - 4.2.1.10. Theme 1.10 It Would be Best if we had Training First 93
  - 4.2.1.11. Summary of Master Theme1: Working towards Independence 93
- 4.3. Master Theme 2 Being at Home, in Lockdown, is Boring: I'd Rather do Something 93
- 4.4. Master Theme 3 Online Learning 95
  - 4.4.1. Theme 3.1 It's too Hard to get into it, it Tires you out : log-in, Session Length and Sensory Impairments 95
  - 4.4.2. Theme 3.2 I Always Have Someone in the Background Talking 97
  - 4.4.3. Theme 3.3 Talking to Friends Online 97
  - 4.4.4. Summary of Master Theme3, Online Learning 97
- 4.5. Master Theme4 : Face to Face Relationships for Wellbeing 98
  - 4.5.1. Theme 4.1: Importance of Friends at College and Placements 98
    - 4.5.1.1. Subtheme 4.1.1 Spending Time with my Friends 99
    - 4.5.1.2. Subtheme 4.1.2 I Miss my Friends During Lockdown 99
    - 4.5.1.3. Subtheme 4.1.3 Making New Friends 100

4.5.1.4.	Subtheme 4.1.3 Conflict and Drama Between Peers	102
4.5.2.	Theme 4.2 Importance of Relationships with Staff at College	102
4.5.2.1.	Subtheme 4.2.1 I'll Miss all my Teachers When I Leave College	102
4.5.2.2.	Subtheme 4.2.2 Staff are Helpful (Emotional and Practical Support)	103
4.5.2.3.	Subtheme 4.2.3 Staff can Make a Space at College Welcoming or Unwelcoming	103
4.5.3.	Summary of Master Theme4, Face-to-Face Relationships for Wellbeing	104
4.6.	Master Theme 5: Safe and Comfortable College Environment	104
4.6.1.	Theme 5.1: I Enjoy the Food and Facilities	105
4.6.2.	Theme 5.2: We Have a Quiet Room to do our Work	105
4.6.3.	Theme 5.3: Canteen: too Noisy and too Crowded	105
4.6.4.	Theme 5.4: Security Guards Make me Feel Safe but I Worry About the Virus Spreading	106
4.6.5.	Theme 5.5: I Don't Like Wearing a Mask	106
4.6.6.	Summary of Master Theme5: Safe and Comfortable College Environment	107
4.7.	Master Theme6: Other Negative Impacts of the Pandemic	107
4.7.1.	Theme 6.1 People Dying	108
4.7.2.	Theme 6.2 If English is not your First Language, you may not get the Grades you Deserved	108
4.7.3.	Theme 6.3: I Don't Think the Government Care About what the Individuals have to say	109
4.7.4.	Summary of Master Theme6: Other Negative Impacts of the Pandemic	110
4.8.	Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy	110



- 4.8.1. Theme 7.1 Making Others Aware About my Visual Impairment and the Barriers that I Face 111
- 4.8.2. Theme 7.2 If you've got a Learning Difficulty or a Disability, Activities Need to Match your Needs 112
- 4.8.3. Summary of Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy 113
- 4.9. Master Theme8, Resilience : we Have to Carry on 113
  - 4.9.1. Theme 8.1 That's When Lockdown Will be Finished 114
  - 4.9.2. Theme 8.2 How are we Supposed to Have Resilience, in Ourselves, when Covid-19 is just Taking Every Single Luxury That we Ever had? 114
  - 4.9.3. Summary of Master Theme8: Resilience: we Have to Carry on 115
- 4.10. Summary of Findings in Part 1 115
- 4.11. Next Steps and Feedback to the Course Leaders 118
- 4.12. Plans we Would Like to Make 118
  - 4.12.1. Planning a Reunion 118
  - 4.12.2. Events to Enjoy in Person 119
- 4.13. Part 2: "What Supports YP with SEND to Share their Views on what's Important to them in their Educational Experience?" 121
- 4.14. Master Theme1 (RQ2): Choice of Methods 122
  - 4.14.1. Theme 1.1 Photo-voice was Enjoyed 123
  - 4.14.2. Theme 1.2 Preference for Individual Interview or Small Group Work 123
  - 4.14.3. Theme 1.3 Time to Share 123
  - 4.14.4. Summary of Master Theme1 (RQ2): Choice of Methods 124
- 4.15. Master Theme2 (RQ2): Having my Views Heard 125
  - 4.15.1. Theme 2.1 Flexibility 125

- 4.15.2. Theme 2.2 Opportunity to Re-visit Themes 126
  - 4.15.2.1. Theme 2.2.1 Second Turn on a Theme 126
  - 4.15.2.2. Theme 2.2.2 Confirming Themes Using Same Language 126
- 4.15.3. Summary of Master Theme2 (RQ2): Having my Views Heard 127
- 4.16. Master Theme3: Researcher's Interview Style 128
  - 4.16.1. Theme 3.1 Researcher Empathising and Sharing own Experiences 128
  - 4.16.2. Theme 3.2 Researcher Sharing Knowledge and Expertise 129
  - 4.16.3. Theme 3.3 Areas for Improvement 130
    - 4.16.3.1. Subtheme 3.3.1 Pace and Volume of Information 130
    - 4.16.3.2. Subtheme 3.3.2 Inclusion 132
  - 4.16.4. Summary of Master Theme3: Researcher's Interview Style 132
- 4.17. Summary of key Findings in part 2 133
- 4.18. Chapter 4 Summary 134

## **5. Chapter 5: Discussion 136**

- 5.1. Chapter Overview 136
- 5.2. Discussion of the Findings 136
  - 5.2.1. Co-researchers' views their SIP
    - 5.2.1.1. Practical Experiences of Work 137
    - 5.2.1.2. Practical Experiences of Travel 138
    - 5.2.1.3. Bridging and Bonding Opportunities 138
    - 5.2.1.4. Relationships with Staff 139
    - 5.2.1.5. Adaptation of Resources 140
    - 5.2.1.6. Possible Bullying or Discrimination on Placement 141
  - 5.2.2. Self-determination Theory 141
  - 5.2.3. Online Learning for YP with SEND 143

5.2.3.1.	Digital Access	144
5.2.3.2.	Online Learning and Social Life	144
5.2.3.3.	Online Learning and Equal Opportunities	145
5.2.4.	Advocacy and Self-Advocacy	146
5.2.5.	Resilience	147
5.2.6.	Co-researchers Response to the “Exosystem” (Government Policy and Media)	150
5.3.	Strengths and Limitations of the Method	150
5.3.1.	Photo-voice	151
5.3.2.	Data Analysis	151
5.3.3.	Co-researchers Role in Discussion Chapter	152
5.3.4.	Suggestions for Developments of the Research Process	153
5.3.5.	Reflexivity	154
5.4.	Dissemination of the Findings	156
5.5.	Implications of the Research	157
5.5.1.	Implications for SIPs	157
5.5.2.	Implications for Educational Psychologists	157
5.5.3.	Implications for Future College Closures or Quarantine Periods for YP with SEND	159
5.5.4.	Implications for Adulthood Services for People with LD	160
5.6.	Unique Contribution of the Research	161
5.7.	Suggestions for Further Research	162
5.8.	Conclusion	163
6.	References	165
7.	Appendices	171

**List of Tables**

Table 1 Levels of Participation in Research 60

Table 3 Outline of the Project 77

Table 3 Phases of Data Collection 83

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Hermeneutic Literature Review Process 30

Figure 2 PRISMA Diagram to Illustrate Initial Scoping Review Process 33

Figure 3 Diagram to show Participatory Action Research Process (Burstein et al., 2005) 64

Figure 4 Diagram to show the Research Process and Levels of Participation at Each Stage 65

Figure 5 Thematic Map to Summarise Master Themes Generated in Response to Research Question 1 84

Figure 6 Thematic map of Master Theme1: Working Towards Independence 85

Figure 7 Thematic map of Master Rheme 2: Being at Home, in Lockdown, is Boring: I'd Rather do Something 92

Figure 8 Thematic Map of Master Theme3: Online Learning 94

Figure 9 Thematic Map of Master Theme4: Face to Face Relationships for Wellbeing 97

Figure 10 Thematic Map of Master Theme5 Safe and Comfortable College Environment 103

Figure 11 Thematic Map of Master Theme6: Other Negative Impacts of the Pandemic 106

Figure 12 Thematic Map of Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy 109

Figure 13 Thematic Map of Master Theme8: Resilience: we Have to Carry on 112

Figure 14 Thematic Map of Findings from Research Question 1 115

Figure 15 Thematic Map to Summarise Master Themes Generated in Response to Research Question 2 (RQ2) 120

Figure 16 Thematic Map of Master Theme1(RQ2): Choice of Methods 121

Figure 17 Thematic Map of Master Theme2(RQ2): Having my Views Heard 124

Figure 18 Thematic Map of Master Theme3(RQ2): Researcher's Interview Style 127

Figure 19 Thematic Map of Findings from Research Question 2 132

Figure 20 Resiliency Framework 148

## **List of Appendices**

### **1. Appendix A: Details of Literature Searches 171**

- 1.1. Table A1 Initial Scoping Review, Part 1 171
- 1.2. Table A2 Initial Scoping Review, Part 2 173
- 1.3. Table A3 Articles Found via Hand Search of Citations (Backward) 174
- 1.4. Table A4 Articles found via Socpus Forward Citation Search 174
- 1.5. Table A5i Articles Found via Search of Grey Literature 174
- 1.6. Table A5ii: Articles Found via Suggested Article on White Rose Database 175
- 1.7. Table A6i Details of Articles Selected in Initial Scoping Review of Peer-reviewed Literature 176
- 1.8. Table A6ii Details of Articles Selected in Initial Scoping Review of Grey Literature 180
- 1.9. Table A7 Exploratory Search for YP with SEND's Views and Participatory Research 183
- 1.10. Table A8 Snowballing from Introductory Texts 185
- 1.11. Table A9 Details of Articles Selected in Exploratory Search for YP with SEND's views and Participatory Research 185

### **2. Appendix B: Materials Used With and Generated by Co-researchers 189**

- 2.1. Introductory Power-point 189
- 2.2. Methods Choice Session 191
- 2.3. Methods Planning Session 193
- 2.4. Interview Questions Generated by Co-researchers 194
- 2.5. Evaluation Interview Prompts 194

### **3. Appendix C: Data Analysis Examples 195**

- 3.1. Example Full Coded Transcript (to be removed after viva examination) 196
- 3.2. Table C2: Example of Codes Associated with Theme 200
- 4. Appendix D: Ethical Approval and Documentation 201**
  - 4.1. Student's Information Letter/ Consent Form 201
  - 4.2. Parent's Information Letter/ Consent Form 204
  - 4.3. Debriefing Letter 208
  - 4.4. UEL Ethical Approval 211
- 5. Appendix E: Research Data Management Plan 214



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This introductory chapter starts with a note on the terminology used. The chapter will then outline the importance of research into employability courses designed for young people (YP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This chapter demonstrates that YP with SEND are often placed on such courses by professionals. This chapter provides evidence that although government policy sets out to support YP with SEND to gain employment, unemployment remains high in this group. Furthermore, only a fraction of those who receive SEND support in education continue to receive support in adulthood. Government policy also set out to end the social exclusion of adults with LD. However, research demonstrates problems with the transition to adulthood for YP with SEND, including the negative impact of unemployment and social exclusion.

Social exclusion is a major cause of poor mental and physical health outcomes for YP with SEND after they leave school. This chapter introduces the social model of disability and the work of disability rights activists which provides further justification for the centring of YPs views through the use of a participatory research method. It is argued the disability rights movement is more important than ever at the time of a national health crisis and public policy that has the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities. The author argues that YP can and must be involved in the research process and given the opportunity to share their views in order for professionals to gain a better understanding of what supports their wellbeing in transition to adulthood. Furthermore, gathering YP's views may help professionals identify the changes and developments to courses that are wanted by YP with SEND and what works well for YP with SEND as part of their college experience. The research took place just after and during periods of "lockdown", (public health policy put in place to control the spread of Covid-19, requiring the public to stay at home where possible)

and therefore provides insight into YP with SEND's experience of college at this unique time, including remote online learning.

## **1.2 Terminology**

The terms “learning difficulties” (LD) and “Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)” are used in this thesis. In the author's view it may be difficult in many cases to determine whether “learning difficulties” experienced in an educational setting will lead to “learning disabilities” that impact negatively on independence and employment in adulthood. This will depend in many cases on the opportunities a young person has to develop their skills, motivation and confidence in their abilities and the availability of employment, housing and community support. In all cases, the extent to which an individual's learning difficulties or physical disabilities, be they mild or more profound, have a negative impact on their quality of life will be largely determined by their experiences in society (see social model of disability section below). However, to gain insight into previous research and government policy the term “learning disability” is also discussed.

According to the UK government, an individual can be described as having a learning disability when they have “A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with; A reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning); which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.” (Department of Health, 2001, p.14). It is noted that learning difficulties is a more general term used in educational contexts. An individual may have learning difficulties which do not have the impacts on independence or social functioning which would lead to a diagnosis of learning disability (Department of Health, 2001).

## **1.3 UK Government Policy and Learning Disability**

The 2001 Government White Paper entitled “Valuing people: a new strategy for learning disability in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” set out strategies and initiatives across a wide range of

areas including education, health, housing and employment that aimed to support people with learning disabilities to have more control over their own lives and to end the social exclusion of this group (Department of Health, 2001). Furthermore, it has been argued that the UK has made progress over the last 40 years in terms of inclusion for children with SEND in education (Porter & Lacey, 2004). Children assessed as having more complex learning difficulties have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which must take into account the views of YP and / or their families (Department for Education, 2015a).

Both the SEND code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015a) and the White Paper (Department of Health, 2001) emphasised education's role in supporting YP to gain employment after leaving full-time education. The 14-19 education policy also has a focus on employability, with the expectation that students not following the traditional academic pathway will receive education towards employability at further education (FE) colleges (Department for Education, 2015b).

#### **1.4 Critical Discussion of Government Policy**

A report by the Public Health England (PHE) Learning Disabilities Observatory (LDO) estimates that 2.5% of children in the education system have a learning disability while only 0.6% of adults aged between 20 and 29 access a service for people with learning difficulties (Hatton, Glover, Emerson, & Brown, 2016). The report acknowledges the low uptake of specialist services by people with LD and suggests this is partly explained by two factors. Firstly, the threshold for receiving services is higher in adulthood than childhood. Secondly, an individual's need for support may be less when they leave education settings (Hatton et al., 2016). However, inclusion in employment is low, with only 6% of adults with learning disabilities employed, according to the data available to PHE via local councils (Hatton et al., 2016).

The 2001 White Paper suggested that many people with learning difficulties had not received enough training and support to gain employment (Department of Health, 2001). Since statistics reported by PHE LDO in 2016 suggest there is no improvement in employment levels for people with learning difficulties since 2001, preparation for employment may still be an issue for this group. An alternative explanation is that preparation for employment has improved but the job market has become more competitive. Although the Equality Act ("Equality Act," 2010) requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities, it is unclear how much progress workplaces have made towards inclusivity for people with LD, given the statistics on low levels of employment for this group.

PHE LDO acknowledged a third reason for the low uptake of support in this group: the stigma of self-identifying with a learning difficulty in order to receive support (Hatton et al., 2016). If this is the case, it suggests YP's experience of education and/or society has left them uncomfortable with the learning disability label or unclear about how to access support. It is not inevitable that a person with learning disability should feel shame or low self-esteem, rather this is a result of their interaction with others, such as parents, professionals and wider society (Reeve, 2004).

### **1.5 Implications of Unemployment for Young People With SEND**

Lack of employment can mean a lack of meaningful activity after young people leave school which is associated with social isolation, mental health problems and negative health outcomes for those with LD (Young-Southward, Cooper, & Philo, 2017) and these issues could also be impacting those with LD who are not considered to have a learning disability. However, those YP who gained employment seemed to have better wellbeing after leaving school (Young-Southward et al., 2017) which may be because employment is one possible way for an individual to experience both meaningful activity and social connection. Young-

Southward et al (2017) concluded that many of the difficulties experienced by YP after transition were caused by society's failure to include them not by problems within the individuals. Therefore, the author sees reason to be critical of government policy, which despite positive intentions set out in the 2001 White Paper, still fails, 20 years on, to create the opportunities that YP with learning difficulties need to enable full inclusion and participation in wider society.

### **1.6 Transition to Post-16 Education for YP with SEND**

It has been suggested that better transition planning is needed for YP with SEND when they leave school (Young-Southward et al., 2017). Person centred planning is one method of supporting transitions which has support from the SEND code of practice (Department for Education, 2015a). However, research indicates that continued education at college is normally seen as the most viable option for YP with SEND by professionals even when it is not the first choice of the YP and or their family (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). In the UK most YP of 16 have the opportunity to choose A levels or a vocational qualification in an area of interest to themselves. On the other hand, YP with SEND may be more likely to be placed on a course on the basis that it is seen as suitable and able to meet their needs by professionals (Atkins, 2010; Elson, 2011).

### **1.7 Employability Programmes Specifically for YP with SEND**

Employability programmes specifically for YP with SEND are available at schools and Post-16 colleges across the country. This includes programmes specifically aimed at YP with severe, moderate and mild learning difficulties and conditions that impact on learning such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). A goal of these programmes is to help prepare students for employment, independence or another course. However, it has been suggested unsupported employment may not be a realistic option for some students with SEND (Black & Lawson, 2017). Evaluation of the courses carried out by the companies producing them

suggest they raise self-esteem by emphasis on individual progress (Asset skills, 2010) and a similar emphasis on individual progress and raising self-esteem seems to be present in UK secondary schools for students with SEND (Benjamin, 2003).

Some researchers have questioned the quality of the provision available at FE colleges for YP with SEND (Wright, 2006) but few have looked to explore the views of the students themselves in this context. A literature review (see chapter 2) revealed research into post-16 programmes specifically designed for YP with SEND is limited. Furthermore, there is little research that actively involves YP with SEND and looks for ways to support them in giving their views. The author did not identify any previous examples of participatory research with YP with SEND that sought the YPs views on their experience of an employability course designed for YP with SEND. This project therefore makes a unique contribution to the literature.

### **1.8 The Social Model of Disability**

In the social model of disability, “disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society.” (p. 14 , Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). Disability rights activists have built on the work of the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, to include all forms of discrimination against all disabled people. A social model approach can shift the focus away from pathologising individuals and towards the processes in society that lead to exclusion, in order to remove these barriers (Goodley, Armstrong, Sutherland, & Laurie, 2003).

There has been debate among people with disabilities and their parents over language used: “person first” or “disability first” (Bywaters, Ali, Fazil, Wallace, & Singh, 2003; Kossyvaki, 2018). In the UK, the 2001 White Paper emphasises person first language (using the phrase “people with learning disabilities”) (Porter & Lacey, 2004).

Charlton (1998) argues that people with “socially defined functional limitations” are labelled as disabled by society, regardless of how they see reality, disability is therefore a social construction. For example, although some individuals who are deaf do not consider themselves as disabled, they cannot escape the disability label imposed by others (p.8 Charlton, 1998). A focus group participant who was profoundly deaf noted she did not consider herself as disabled as she did not need daily care and the view was shared by some others with disabilities in the study in which only half of participants with medically defined disabilities identified as disabled (Woodfield, Grewal, Joy, Lewis, & Swales, 2002). What is defined as a disability or illness may vary across culture and time and have different meanings to different individuals. Similarly, those with learning difficulties may not consider themselves as disabled (Chappell, Goodley, & Lawthom, 2001) but may have been given this label by others.

Governments in some parts of the world, such as the UK and USA have moved away from placement of people with LD in institutional settings and towards inclusion of people with LD in education and the community (Porter & Lacey, 2004). The UK government white paper “Valuing people” (Department of health 2001) was written in consultation with people with learning difficulties unlike previous policy (Porter & Lacey, 2004). However, a lack of understanding, exclusion and bullying are still experienced by this group (Burstein, Bryan, & Chao, 2005; Choma & Ochocka, 2005). It has been argued that the experience of having a disability can have a negative psycho-emotional impact which can in itself become a barrier to inclusion in society and opportunities (Reeve, 2004). For example, some research indicates that YP who are excluded from mainstream settings when they struggle to meet the educational or social demands of these settings experience stigma or feelings of failure (Brown & Galeas, 2011).

“Neurodiversity” is a new term that calls for human differences such as ASD, Dyslexia and ADHD to be accepted and celebrated rather than pathologised as problems or medical conditions (Singer, 2016). The term emerged from the work of a researcher who is herself on the autistic spectrum in conjunction with other neurodivergent adults (Singer, 2016). Increasingly, the views of people with what might be described as SEN in a UK school setting (such as ASD) are recognised in academia. However, we still hear little from those who struggle to access the academic world because of their learning difficulties (A. Chappell, 2000; Kossovaki, 2018). The experiences of neurodivergent individuals who took part in higher education (HE) may not represent the experiences of those who were either not able to, or chose not to do so. Therefore, this project aimed to actively involve YP with SEND who are accessing employability training as opposed to HE.

### **1.9 Role of Educational Psychology**

One of the Educational Psychologist’s (EP’s) roles is to contribute to the EHCP of every child who is identified as having SEND, that are seen as likely to result in a long term need for additional educational or training support. EPs are the professionals who aim for a holistic understanding of a child’s educational or training needs and often have a role in ensuring a child or young person’s view is taken into account. However, EPs may be involved in providing assessments very early in children’s lives, and they are typically less involved in YP’s transitions to adulthood. This may be linked to the fact there is a statutory duty for EPs to be involved in the initial assessments for EHCPs, but no statutory duty to be involved in transition to adulthood or college for YP with EHCPs. EPs may therefore typically have more experience working with younger children and with the planning of school-based support than they do in supporting YP with transitions to adulthood.

EPs are often asked for their professional opinions on the severity and complexity of children’s needs and to make predictions about how they will progress. Some researchers



argue that the medical model of disability is still predominant (Kossyvaki, 2018) and this is reflected in the EHCP process. Other EPs argue they support the social model of disability by using the assessment process as an opportunity to outline the environmental adaptations needed to support access to education. The author approached this research with an interest in how professionals might better support YP with SEND in FE but found YP keen to share stories of their own agency and their own critical insights demonstrating how EP work with YP should be approached differently from work with younger children. For example, when working with YP, EPs can draw upon the YP's expertise on their own lives.

The author is aware of a need to be critical of current practice and the processes which disempower and alienate some members of our society and the need to actively involve YP with SEND in decisions around their support and education (Williams, Billington, Goodley, & Corcoran, 2016). Therefore, for this author, an opportunity to conduct research must be informed by the disability rights movement and the social model of disability and must be an opportunity to facilitate the views of YP with learning difficulties being heard and an opportunity to explore what approaches work for EPs who are working with YP.

### **1.10 Researcher's Position**

The author's interest in YP with SEND comes in part from her own experience as a teacher in a post-16 college. Part of her role was supporting students to make decisions about which courses to take at college and their next steps after college. Before her role as a teacher the author worked in a school for students with SEND. The author has often reflected on the choices available to students who cannot access the mainstream qualifications. The author has also become aware, through her studies and personal observations, of the continued discrimination against individuals with LD or other types of neurodiversity, leading her to question what more can be done to end discrimination and whether the current government policy is fundamentally discriminatory. Furthermore, the author has noticed that

opportunities to gain YP with SENDs' views and insights are often missed in research which may be linked to prejudice against this group.

The aim of this project was to facilitate an opportunity for young people with SEND to contribute to the research base to generate ideas for change that may have a local impact, on the student's own course, and a wider impact on specialist courses for YP with SEND at post-16. Furthermore, the learning from what is successful for YP with SEND at college may inform services for adults with LD who have left education. This project also investigated the process of gaining YP's views which could help inform EP's practise with this group. The YP also had a role in shaping the research question which allowed them to discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their college experience.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **2.1 Chapter 2 Overview**

As discussed in Chapter 1, Post-16 employability courses designed for YP with SEND are often the next step for YP leaving secondary school who have been identified as having SEND requiring an EHCP. These courses are supported by government policy which aims to address the high level of unemployment in this group. However, as identified in the following hermeneutic literature review (which included scoping reviews), little research has been done on the YP's views and experiences of these courses.

This chapter discusses the research identified in a hermeneutic review, conducted to support the author in deepening her knowledge (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014) of what is known about post-16 provision for YP with SEND, what is known about YP with SEND's experience of education and how researchers have facilitated the involvement of YP with SEND and adults identified as having LD in research. This literature review helps the author to establish a unique contribution to the research and influenced the methodology used in the current research (see chapter 3).

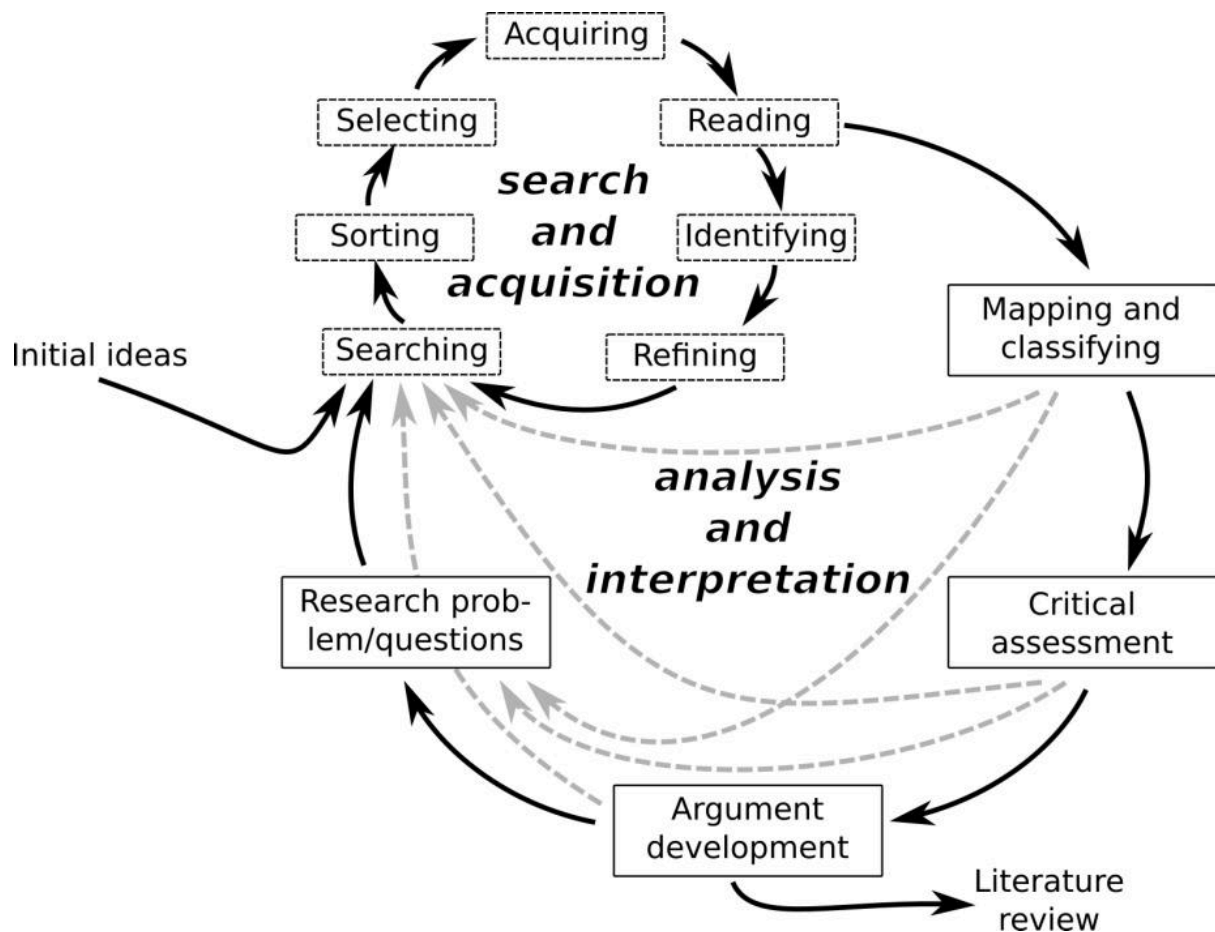
### **2.2 The Choice of a Hermeneutic Review**

Boell et al (2014) discuss a philosophical basis for the hermeneutic framework to literature review, they argue that readers interpret texts from the standpoint of their own social-cultural context (Gadamer, 1976). This has been the author's experience in interpreting texts found in database searches. The author brings an understanding based on personal experience in the field of education and her prior knowledge. This stance is in line with a social constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995). Reading of individual texts contributes further understanding to the topic as a whole which in turn influences understanding of individual texts (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). It is the author's view that researcher bias cannot

be avoided but can be discussed openly in order to be better understood (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014).

**Figure 1**

*Hermeneutic Literature Review Process*



*Note:* Diagram: (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014)

Figure 1 illustrates the hermeneutic literature review process. In the present literature review, the initial scoping reviews (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) represent the "inner circle". Critical assessment of the literature led to further cycles requiring searching, sorting, selecting and acquiring. Reading led to identification of further texts and a shift from broad

introductory texts to texts with specific relevance to the context of the current research (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014).

A hermeneutic literature review which included scoping reviews was seen as suitable as this research has a participatory design and thus did not have a clearly defined research question and methodology at the outset. Initial searches suggested relatively little research exploration of the topic. Therefore, the author used a scoping review process as a starting point to the hermeneutic review to explore related contexts and emerging themes, rather than the more specific research question originally identified (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Scoping reviews can also identify gaps in the literature which justify further research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

### **2.3 Initial Scoping Review Process**

The databases, search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria used in the scoping review are documented in Appendix A. This scoping review follows the stages set out by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) including identifying the research question, potentially relevant studies and selection of relevant studies for inclusion in the review. Throughout the literature search, research was excluded if it was not available in English. The author only included research from peer reviewed academic journals and peer reviewed books citing academic literature in the literature review. This helped to ensure a baseline quality and reliability of the research. To establish that her research represented a unique contribution to the literature and gain further background knowledge of the topic the author also conducted a scoping review of grey literature. Research papers from the year 2000 onwards were included, as older papers may not reflect the current political context following the key White Paper, "Valuing People" (Department of Health, 2001).

The initial search looked narrowly for the views of YP on specialist SEND employability courses at post-16 colleges, attempting to answer the question: "What is known

about young people's views of their experiences of an employability course designed for those with SEND in the UK?" A search of relevant databases (see Table A1 in Appendix A) was carried out with this question in mind. This resulted in 6 papers initially and 2 papers were selected after exclusion of papers published before 2000 and those focused broadly on funding in the FE sector. Search terms were then added to extend the search (see Appendix A, Table A2). The author read titles and abstracts in order to identify any papers that referenced students with SEND in the context of FE, this resulted in four further papers (after exclusion of one paper published before 2000). The research question was therefore adapted to "What is known about young people with SEND's experiences of vocational education and or post-16 education in the UK?"

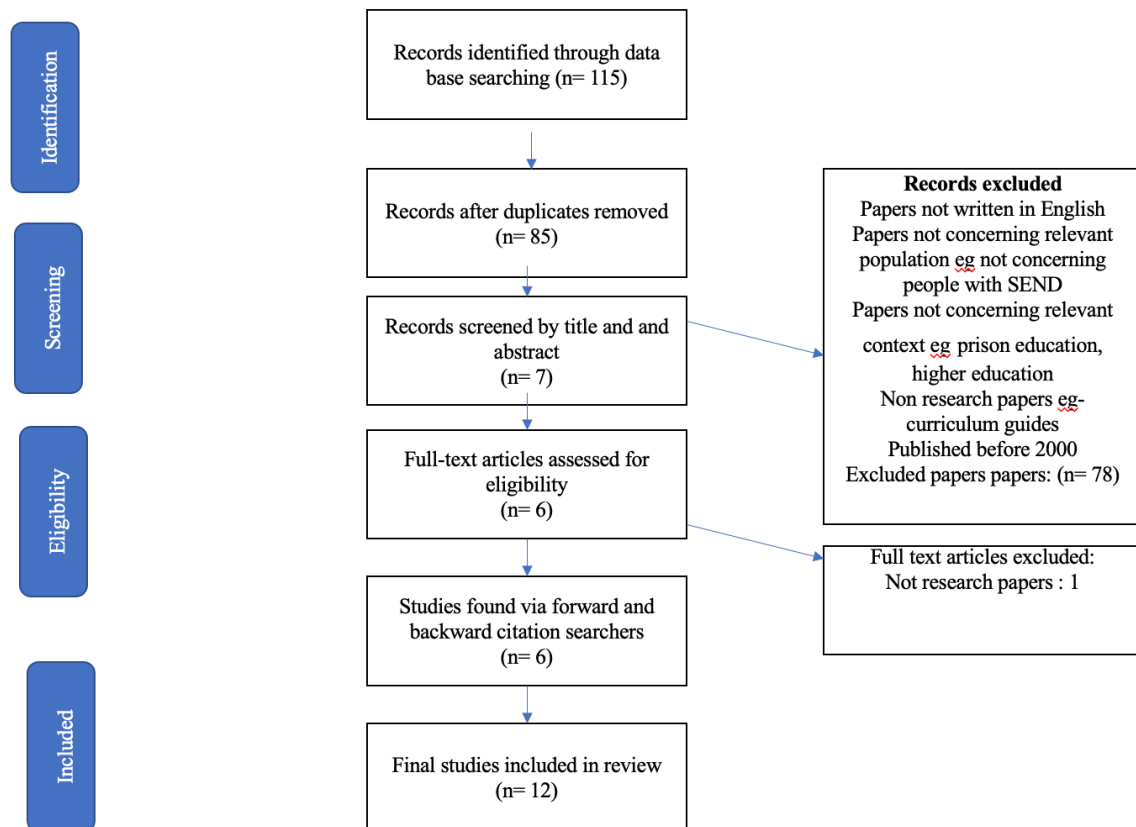
The author identified four additional papers through hand search of citations in identified papers (see Appendix A, Table A3). Papers citing Wright (2006) were identified as this paper called for research into students' experiences of specialist SEN post 16 provision in the UK, resulting in 2 further papers (see Appendix A, Table A4).

When broader search terms were introduced a number of irrelevant papers were found. Papers were deemed irrelevant on the basis of context (for example some research took place in prisons and some in higher education (HE) settings) and population (some research focused on students or staff in professional training). However, this literature search revealed there was research into students' experiences of contexts that related closely to post-16 SEND employability courses. Contexts that related closely to SEND employability courses included: students approaching the transition to such courses from special schools (Elson, 2011), research with students with SEND who had attended Level 1 vocational courses, (these courses are not specifically created for young people with SEND, however a large proportion of the cohort had SEND (Cornish, 2017;2018;2019;Atkins, 2010)) and alternative vocational pathways (in which a large proportion of the cohort had SEND)

(Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2005; Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2003). Due to the lack of literature on student's experiences of specialist SEND employability courses, the author explored existing research on students' experiences of these related educational contexts. The researcher also considered the discourse of academics and teachers around post-16 provision for YP with SEND. The initial scoping review process is summarised in figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*PRISMA Diagram to Illustrate Initial Scoping Review Process*



*Note:* Diagram structure from (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009)

The author was unable to find any research that had gained the views of students who were currently enrolled on, or had recent experience of, specialist SEND employability courses in the UK through searches of academic databases of published research. However,

when the search terms mentioned above were used in a database of unpublished theses (see Appendix A, Table A5i), seven papers exploring the views of students with SEND in, or about to transition to, FE were found (see Table A6ii Appendix A for a summary of the papers identified). Research on the impact of employability courses for YP with SEND in FE was identified through a google search (see Appendix A, Table A5i). These papers are discussed separately from the main literature review (see section 2.4).

## **2.4 Summary of Grey Literature on the Experience of Vocational Education for YP with SEND**

Eight papers considered relevant to the research question were found through a search of the grey literature. Seven papers were doctoral theses, and one was research carried out by a company (Asset Skills). All of the doctoral thesis identified used qualitative methods. Six papers (Esbrand, 2016; Lawson, 2018; Bell, 2015; Hickey, 2016; Heslop 2018; Forster, 2012). gained the views of YP with SEND currently attending FE college. One paper was considered relevant as it addressed students with SEND planning for their FE transition (Tyson, 2011).

All the doctoral theses identified used semi-structured interviews, all gathered the views of YP, and some also gathered views of parents and professionals. Thematic analysis and IPA were used for analysis in these papers.

Relationships with peers were identified as important in some studies (Bell, 2015; Hickey, 2016) and positive relationships with teachers were also identified (Lawson, 2018). A common theme among the studies was the YP's lack of involvement in decision making and lack of choice in FE for YP with SEND (Esbrand, 2016; Lawson, 2018; Bell, 2015). Many of the authors made links to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) in discussion of their findings (Lawson, 2018; Heslop 2018) which supported exploration of



YP's individual experiences. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory was also considered relevant in considering the systems around YP and the constraints and opportunities created by these (Tyson, 2011).

The only research that directly addressed students' experiences of specialist employability courses for those with SEND in the UK was carried out by Asset Skills, the organisation for employability for the network of Sector Skills Councils which approves all generic employability qualifications. However, the article states that the organisation were "tasked to produce case studies to reflect the impact of generic employability qualifications." (p.5, Asset Skills, 2010) The assumption is that these courses have a positive impact and there was no implication that both the strengths and weaknesses of the courses would be explored. Comments from staff and students reported students' confidence developing as a result of the course, particularly when they were given the opportunity to work in the community, and staff believe this led to employment in some cases, but little data is given to support these statements. The researcher did not accept the research from Asset Skills as fully reliable as it was not peer reviewed and came from a position of confirmation and positive bias, seeking "success stories" rather than a balanced view (AssetSkills, 2010).

All the research described in this section sought out YPs views, none of the studies indicated that YP were involved in the generation of the research questions, interview questions or methods. It is interesting to note that although authors raised concerns about YPs experiences of "disempowerment" (Heslop, 2018) and "passivity" (Esbrand 2016; Lawson 2018) none seemed to consider the research process itself as an opportunity for YP to take a more active role in decision making. A discrepancy between the YP's views and the views of their parents and professionals was often observed (Tyson, 2011) which indicates the importance of gaining YP's views directly.

## **2.5 Summary of the Peer-reviewed Research Findings on the Experience of Vocational Education for YP with SEND**

A table summarising the selected papers can be found in Appendix A, Table A6i. An analysis of the relevant articles, based on thematic areas identified, is provided below.

### ***2.5.1 Level 1 Vocational Courses at Post-16 Settings***

Level 1 courses can offer a choice of vocational fields, and a potential to move on to Level 2 and Level 3 courses (Level 3 courses representing an equivalent to an A level qualification). Generic Level 1 courses are also offered to provide a reintroduction to education. Four research papers that considered students' experiences of Level 1 courses at FE colleges were identified in this scoping review. These papers considered the students' aspirations and found them often aspiring to more professional careers in their fields of study or hoping that the course would be a steppingstone to a specific vocational pathway (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017, 2018, 2019). Students were keenly aware of the need for GCSEs for progression in their vocation of interest (as vocational courses and apprenticeships alike demanded GCSE qualifications) and therefore hoped for academic support in order to gain these qualifications (Cornish, 2017, 2018, 2019). However, many students became disillusioned with their Level 1 courses, some dropping out and others showing disengaged behaviour (such as poor attendance). In some cases, students were simply placed on a course with vacancies or a generic skills course rather than a course that held interest for them (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017).

Atkins (2010) argued that young people were "sold" Level 1 courses on a dishonest premise that the qualifications gained would lead to high paid work, when in fact, Level 1 qualifications are worth very little on the job market (Atkins, 2010; Wolf, 2011). Students were not always given the opportunity to retake GCSEs (Cornish, 2017) which might have given them access to more "valuable" qualifications, in their views. Therefore, students and

teachers sensed that much of the course content was time filling (Cornish, 2018). Cornish (2018) concluded that the “skills to succeed” course at one college led to the construction of negative learning identities among its students – through tutors’ attitudes, barriers to progress and a lack of challenging or meaningful work.

Overall, researchers argued that Level 1 courses were designed to support students in obtaining low-skilled work rather than supporting students’ own aspirations (Cornish, 2018; Atkins, 2010). Furthermore, returners to education on a generic skills course were “othered” and socially excluded from the rest of the college. As a way forward, Cornish suggests that part of the solution lies in greater student voice and collaboration between students, tutors and management (Cornish, 2018).

### ***2.5.2 Vocational Education as an Alternative to Mainstream Post-14 Secondary Education***

Vocational education pathways have also been seen as an alternative for post-14 students for whom placements at mainstream secondary schools have broken down due to exclusion, disaffection or non-attendance and others who schools felt would benefit from vocational training (Attwood et al., 2005). 40% of the students that took part in research into vocational education as an alternative pathway were identified as having SEN by their secondary schools (Attwood et al., 2005). Students with moderate learning difficulties are more likely to be excluded from school (Hatton, Glover, Emerson, & Brown, 2016) so the authors believe this trend is likely in any cohort of excluded pupils. All of the students placed on the programme due to its perceived suitability, rather than exclusion, had learning difficulties. Students with statements of SEN around behavioural difficulties, many of whom had been excluded, had a good likelihood of completing the vocational course. However, none of the students with a statement of SEN relating to learning difficulties completed the course (Attwood et al., 2005). There were only 3 such students in this study so conclusions need to be tentative. However, this suggests these students would have benefitted from a

more specialist programme, more able to cater to their individual learning needs or support from staff with knowledge of SEN on the course. It is also possible that some other aspect of the experience contributed to them being unable to complete the course.

Students tended to be more satisfied with their relationships with college tutors than they had been with their teachers at school and tended to prefer the more practical curriculum (Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2005). Vocational outcomes seemed to provide long-term motivation for the students which was similar to the views of young people on Level 1 vocational courses who hoped their qualifications would lead to professional work (Atkins, 2010). In some cases, students reported a commitment to the course but were not able to match this in their behaviour and were therefore perceived as lacking motivation by the staff.

However, such vocational placements are now limited to one day a week at Key Stage 4 as a result of the Wolf report (Wolf, 2011), which led to changes in post-16 education (Department for Education, 2015). Furthermore, students under 19 without passing GCSEs in English and Maths must continue with these subjects at post-16 as a result of this report (Department for Education, 2015).

A vocational pathway as a post-14 alternative may have been successful for some students (Attwood et al., 2003) as it allowed for the possibility of the emergence of a new successful learner identity in a new context (as opposed to the construction of a negative learner identity which occurred on the Level 1 course (Cornish, 2017). The Wolf report highlights the importance of English and Maths for progression in the workplace (Wolf, 2011) but may neglect to explore the impact of continuing with these subjects on some students' learning identity and motivation, particularly when there is no immediate possibility of retaking GCSEs at college (Cornish, 2018).

### ***2.5.3 Transition to Post-16 for YP at a Specialist Secondary School for Students with SEND***

A case study at a specialist secondary school for children with SEND found that the most common post-16 destination for the students was the SEND provision at the local FE college (Elson, 2011). Students reported feeling well prepared for the next step and their aspirations which were mainly for practical jobs. However, while the students were generally positive about their next steps, teachers expressed a degree of regret that some students weren't able to progress onto a mainstream vocational course due to the academic requirements of the course, when they had the practical and social skills. The more complex the student's needs, the fewer options they had (Elson, 2011). Thus, although staff were keen to involve students in decisions about their next steps, the process lost meaning as there were very few options. Staff perceived the most successful outcome was a return to mainstream education (Elson, 2011).

### ***2.5.4 Provision for Students with SEND in FE***

Both Wright (2006) and Spenceley (2012) discuss their view of the post-16 provision for young people with SEND at FE colleges from the perspective of their direct experience as professionals within the field of Special Education and the views of other professionals. They both note that although young people with SEND are welcomed into FE colleges, those with more complex needs are "hidden" in that they are taking part in a separate curriculum in a separate space. Students with SEND on specialist courses are "invisible" to the wider college community but under constant "surveillance" by the professionals. This makes it difficult for students to build relationships with peers in the wider college community (Spenceley, 2012). For those with more complex educational needs the programmes may be well resourced in

financial terms but the students on them lacked access to the opportunity to develop social capital through bridging (Spenceley, 2012; Wright, 2006).

Wright (2006) was also critical of the lack of ICT learning opportunities for YP on SEND courses in FE. However, this situation may have changed since 2006. An e-learning environment designed for students with SEND on vocational courses has been successfully trailed, suggesting ICT can support the practical learning experiences of YP with SEND (Starcic & Niskala, 2010).

#### ***2.5.5 YP with SEND's Views on Health Care***

Dovey-Pearce et al. (2012) differed from the other researchers identified in this review as they attempted to engage young people and staff in the research process. Participants took part in focus group activities to explore their views on health care and the researchers' analysis of the output of the group was taken back to the participants and informed work with subsequent groups. The focus group may have increased YP's confidence to share their views. For example, the researchers quote a YP building on another YP's point.

YP with SEND raised their experiences at mainstream and specialist settings, recalling the opportunities and barriers to participation they had experienced. In particular, opportunities for participation in an educational context led to confidence to speak up in a medical context. However, the YP's comments also indicated a lack of confidence in speaking to medical professionals (Dovey-Pearce et al., 2012).

### **2.6 Critical Assessment of Initial Scoping Review**

Critical researchers such as Atkins (2010) did not acknowledge the potential benefits for YP taking part in a college course such as the opportunity to further develop life skills such as organisation, literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, going to college may give young people

the opportunity to meet people and make friends as well as be in a safe environment where their wellbeing is monitored with potential to access pastoral support. These benefits of FE placement for YP with SEND are described in the grey literature. Atkins (2010) disregards care work and shop work as “menial” without acknowledging that some people may find meaning and satisfaction in these fields. Although Atkins (2010) does not present a viable alternative to the current post-16 education system, she proposes both teachers and students should be encouraged to think critically and challenge the structures in society that perpetuate disadvantage. This is in line with Self-Advocacy and the disability rights movement (Goodley, 2005) and the suggestion that education has the potential to support people to challenge social inequality (Riddell, 2001).

Atkins (2010) also fails to acknowledge that some vocational courses, such as health and social care, have modules on government policy and equality and diversity (Pearson Education, 2016) which might make students more aware of their rights than traditional subject courses. For young people, being taught explicitly about their rights in the workplace may help prevent exploitation when they join the workforce.

Cornish (2017,2018) does not report her methods of analysis of the data collected and demonstrates little transparency and hence potential bias in her selection of quotes- for example providing little detail on benefits mentioned by students and selecting quotes to illustrate systemic problems. The students are framed as powerless in a system that works against them. However, there is little exploration of the possibilities for change within the system or what students do value. Students were often open to extending their time in education but concerned about the financial burden of education post-19 (Cornish, 2018) which suggests a level of engagement and commitment to learning not fully explored in this research. Teachers were positioned as holding students back, there is no exploration of the ways in which teachers supported students or the ways in which students support each other.

Overall, it is not clear if the students themselves benefited from their participation in the research into Level 1 courses . (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Attwood et al (2005) go some way to acknowledge the external factors that impacted students' ability to complete the course but when students had more complex learning difficulties, the problem was placed within them without the possibility of them receiving more support to remain on the course being considered. Students were seen to leave the vocational course due to being overwhelmed with challenges within and outside it (Attwood et al., 2005) rather than as actively rejecting the course which Atkins perceived as the reason for drop out in her research (Atkins, 2010). It is hard to say if this difference in interpretation lies in the researcher's stance – broadly supportive or critical of the provision -or in differences in the perceived value of the course by the students.

Overall, research into “What is known about young people with SEND's experiences of vocational education and or post-16 education in the UK?” is, for the most part critical of the provision available. There were concerns around course content, qualifications gained, negative learning identities and the separateness of specialist courses from the rest of the college. On the other hand, for students with a history of exclusion from school, vocational courses could lead to more positive learner identities. The grey literature suggests that specialist SEND courses could provide opportunities for participation in the community and that students experienced support from friends and tutors at college. However, similar to the published literature, the grey literature raised concerns about YP's participation in decisions that impacted their lives. Furthermore, many studies in both the grey and published literature found students aspiring to career goals but unsure if their educational pathway would make these possible. The author identified that little research into students' experience of vocational courses designed specifically for those with SEND has been conducted.



## **2.7 Explanation of Key Theoretical Frameworks Arising From Initial Scoping Review**

The initial scoping reviews led to the identification of key theoretical frameworks: Bourdieu's theories, social capital, the eco-systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), self-efficacy and self-determination which were cited in the literature identified.

### **2.7.1 Bourdieu's Theories**

Bourdieu's concepts have been influential in the field of sociology in the UK as they provide a way of understanding the individual in the context of their immediate environment and wider society (Thatcher, Burke, Abra, & Ingram, 2015). Bourdieu's work seeks to "illuminate why people act as they do and what potential space for transformation exists" (Fowler, 1996). Bourdieu saw family and education systems as highly influential to each individual's norms, values and disposition, which he termed "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1977).

Bourdieu theorised that an individual's aspirations and trajectory in life would be influenced by both their habitus and their capital (Thatcher et al., 2015). An individual may have different types of capital and capital may be gained through educational experiences. Qualifications gained in work may lead to financial rewards and economic capital and families with economic capital may finance educational opportunities. However, other forms of capital are important in access to opportunities. Human capital represents skills and qualifications an individual might possess, and government policy often sees education as raising the nation's human capital. Social capital refers to the people whom individuals have a social connection to and their ability to use these connections (Burke, 2015). Young people often find work in this way, with easier access to the professional world through personal connections (Burke, 2015). Cultural capital is harder to define, as it is concerned with an individual's comfort in certain social realms related to class status. Class is not clearly defined or easily measured (Burke, 2015) but is linked to educational outcomes (Blandford, 2017). Therefore, education has the potential to raise economic, human, social and cultural

capital. Bourdieu (1990) also explored the concept of reproduction in education, which referred to the way in which education systems reproduce the existing power relationships in society, for the most part ensuring that individuals remain in the social positions they were born into, often resulting in the maintenance of deprivation, a position supported by the more recent work of critical researchers in post-16 education (Atkins, 2010; Cornish, 2017, 2018, 2019). A criticism of pre-vocational FE (Cornish, 2018) and FE provision specifically designed for YP with SEND (Spenceley, 2012) is that both types of provision limit YP's opportunity to develop human, cultural and social capital.

Fouler (1996) describes Bourdieu's criticism of interviews: they tend to lead to participants describing experience in a way that corresponds to "prevailing orthodoxies". Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) argued the researcher also has a habitus and will interpret their findings from their own subjective perspective. However, there is little exploration of this idea from the authors who present critical accounts of pre-vocational education, based on interviews with staff and YP (Cornish, 2018; Spenceley, 2012).

### ***2.7.2 Social Capital***

Putnam (2000) notes that the concept of social capital has been independently arrived at by several theorists and can be closely linked to the concept of community. Putnam (2000) describes how social capital can be built in two ways. Bonding is a process involving building close relationships with similar people, which tends to reinforce exclusive identities. Bridging is a more inclusive process where bonds are formed with those from different groups allowing for social links between diverse social groups. "Strong ties" represent our closest relationships which may be important in providing emotional support. However, "weak ties" or more casual relationships are more likely to provide new opportunities, not already known in our inner circle. Bridging is particularly important in giving opportunity to those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Putnam, 2000). It has been argued that

neither specialist SEND courses nor pre-vocational courses aimed at returners to education provide good opportunities for bridging (Cornish, 2017; Spenceley, 2012). More broadly, it has been suggested that a focus on capitalism, or economic activity can limit social capital in society (Riddell, 2001).

### ***2.7.3 Exosystemic Perspective***

Putman (2000) presents evidence of the importance of social capital as it links to parental participation in, and YPs commitment to, education. This theory is compatible with an exosystemic perspective proposed by Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Featherstone, 2017). Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that an individual's most immediate environment or "microsystem" such as their personal relationships would be influenced by the wider "mesosystem" such as their school or neighbourhood. The "exosystem" such as government policy and media and the "macrosystem" relating to widely held cultural beliefs and norms. Attwood et al (2003, 2005) touch on the microsystem when they consider the role of parental support and relationships with staff in young people's success in education, whereas Cornish (2017, 2018, 2019) is more focused on the mesosystem and ecosystem when she considers the role of the college's policies and government policy.

### ***2.7.4 Self-efficacy and Self-determination***

The young people's personal goals and motivations have been touched upon in a number of the studies identified in the initial scoping review of published literature (Atkins, 2010; Attwood et al., 2005; Cornish, 2017; Elson, 2011). However, most consider the young people's goals in the context of the "exosystem" and "macrosystem". Attwood (2003, 2005) showed some concern with how individual differences, as well as social context, might influence outcomes for YP. Citing Solomon & Rogers (2001), Attwood (2003) introduced the role of personal agency in students' motivation and engagement with education. Solomon and

Rodgers (2001) describe self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) as an individual's belief in his/her ability to influence a situation which includes knowing what to do and having the ability to do it. Thus, self-efficacy may be reduced by a lack of knowledge and a lack of confidence. For example, Akins (2010) argued that students were given poor careers guidance (Atkins, 2010) which might reduce their self-efficacy in pursuing educational goals.

Research has suggested self-efficacy tended to be domain specific, for example in the context of a PRU general attempts to raise self-esteem may be less helpful to students than specific support in key academic areas (Solomon & Rogers, 2001), which is similar to the conclusion drawn by Cornish (2019) who was concerned that an emphasis on welfare was detrimental to learning of academic skills.

Self-determination is a broader concept related to self-efficacy that describes 'a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behaviour' (p.2 Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998). Self-determination theory suggests that psychological development can occur when an individual's needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are met (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theory relates to Attwood et al's (2003, 2005) finding that students felt relationships with their tutors were highly important (relatedness) and may have found their skills better suited to the practical course (competence).

## **2.8 Research Problem questions arising from critical assessment**

In most of the papers identified in this review, the methods used to gather the views of YP tended to be briefly stated (see Table A6, Appendix A) and there was little reflection on social desirability influencing the participants' responses or power dynamics between the researcher and participants having an influence. In all but one study (Dovey-Pearce et al., 2012) there is a lack of input into the research design by young people with SEND. In other papers, the views of young people were not sought. However, professionals reflecting on the

provision for young people with SEND at post-16 have called for research that gains the YP's views. Therefore, critical assessment led to the need for further searching to gain more insight into the experience of YP with SEND in education. Research taking a participatory approach with co-researchers with LD or SEND was also sought out.

## **2.9 Literature Searches for Participatory and Participatory Action Research With People with SEND and or LD and YP with SEND's Educational Experiences**

The researcher conducted a series of database searches for participatory research and participatory action research carried out in partnership with people with SEND (See Table A7, Appendix A). Due to the large number of papers arising from initial searches, introductory texts were read first. Further papers were selected on the basis of involving the participation of young people with SEND or adults identified as having learning difficulties (see Table A8, Appendix A). Research papers exploring the experiences of YP with SEND in education were also read. Research taking a participatory approach with adults were selected on the basis of relevance to the theoretical issues identified and relevant contexts such as adults with LD in supported work contexts. (Selected papers are summarised in Table A9, Appendix A)

### ***2.9.1 Experience of Learners with SEND in Mainstream Secondary Schools***

Benjamin (2003) explored the major discourses at a comprehensive school and found that the dominant discourse was that "success" was achieving A\*-C GCSE grades. However, the students with SEN were encouraged to focus on personal improvement, which teachers believed would foster self-esteem (Benjamin, 2003) which mirrors the rhetoric around SEND employability courses which suggests learners' opportunity for personal progress leads to the development of self-esteem (AssetSkills, 2010). Although Benjamin's research is 17 years old, students may still see personal progress as a "consolation prize" as GCSE results must be

achieved to access both academic and vocational courses in post-16 education (Cornish, 2017).

For many of the students in Benjamin's research (2003), relationships with peers seemed to loom larger than the possibility of personal progress. For example, one student faced a dilemma when given the opportunity to move to a higher group, away from her friendship group, which she judged may not be "worth it" for the slim chance of achieving a C grade (Benjamin, 2003). Similarly, students in a SEN class at a school in Finland were interested in joining the mainstream classes to gain access to higher level courses but were reluctant to leave their friendship group in the SEN class to do this. One student felt so much stigma attached to being in the SEN group, that he thought he would need to change school in order to go to mainstream classes (Riitaoja, Helakorpi, & Holm, 2019). In both cases, teachers were quite supportive about students joining the mainstream or "higher" lessons but did not take the young people's concerns about the social implications of the move seriously. The problem was placed within student, framed as them having "low self-esteem" (Riitaoja, Helakorpi, & Holm, 2019).

Bunn and Boesley (2019) noted a discrepancy between students' and teachers' priorities for successful transition from primary to secondary school, the former focused on social and emotional aspects and the latter concerned with educational attainment. In all three studies (Benjamin, 2003; Bunn & Boesley, 2019; Riitaoja, Helakorpi, & Holm, 2019) students raise concern about their peer relationships, in terms of being isolated or teased. Furthermore, the school system can also play a role in isolating students with SEN (Benjamin, 2003; Riitaoja et al., 2019) which mirrors professionals' comments on SEND provision at FE (Spenceley, 2012).

Benjamin (2003), while speaking of the school's discourse that some students are "really disabled" includes no statements from the student with more complex SEND in her

research paper. The behaviour of one such student “Cassandra” is observed and commented on by both her peers and the researcher but there is no sense of Cassandra’s own perspectives. The researcher positions the student with a statement of SEN exactly as her peers do, as a victim of an inadequate system in need of help. Cassandra’s behaviours are not perceived as a conscious act of rebellion, the assumption that Cassandra’s “low ability” explains her behaviour.

### ***2.9.2 Participatory Research with YP with SEND in Educational Contexts***

Some researchers have aimed to involve students with SEND much more actively by using methods that break down the power difference between researcher and student. One approach is to use playful, creative methods such as involving groups of students in creating roleplays, artworks and games (Greenstein, 2014). Greenstein (2014) noted how students may express divergent views but will also acknowledge each other’s points and come to agreements, thus generating new meanings and possibilities for change.

In another example, YP who had been placed in a specialist provision (due to learning or behavioural difficulties) participated in a collaborative research project between university-based researchers and student-researchers (Brown & Galeas, 2011). However, there were occasions in which the university researcher took control of the project. For example, when some of the students did not want to be associated with a certain peer, the researcher did not allow the exclusion of that young person to take place. On occasion the university-researcher consulted the student group but ultimately made the decision. Furthermore, when university-researchers found the student-researchers struggling to acknowledge the label of “learning difficulties” which they often felt had been imposed on them by others, university-based researchers seemed to actively encourage the young people to engage with these labels in order to challenge them.

The researcher noted the young people were sometimes resistant to playing a role in decision making (Brown & Galeas, 2011). An alternative interpretation of the students' reactions to being given a role in decision making may be that they were aware of not *really* being in control of this project and sometimes rejected playing along with the fallacy that they were. However, it seemed that student-researchers had more opportunity to be actively involved in their learning than they had previously in this project and benefited from this experience.

As it stands research with people with LD relies on support from those without similar difficulties. These “supporters” may believe themselves to be allies acting in the best interests of those with disabilities but there remains a risk of these “allies” imposing their own ideologies in the process and ultimately giving the implicit message to those they work with that they hold the power (Dorozenko, Bishop, & Roberts, 2016). However, particularly when working with YP, taking their ideas seriously and involving them may be a beneficial steppingstone towards independence and the YP may be happy for the researcher to use their expertise in organising the project and having a “final say” on some of the decisions. The researcher should perhaps aim to be open about this from the start.

### ***2.9.3 Participatory Research with Adults and YP identified as having LD or Disabilities in Community Contexts***

Researchers investigated a supported volunteering programme for adults with a range of disabilities, including those identified as having LD (Choma & Ochocka, 2005). Although volunteers reported many positive aspects to their experience including an opportunity to be a part of and make a meaningful contribution to the community, they also reported experiences of stigma and discrimination. The opportunity to volunteer did not boost confidence when the work given was felt to be significantly below the volunteers' skill level. This was similar to the issues encountered by some students on pre-vocational courses described earlier in this



chapter (Cornish, 2018). There seemed to be a conflict in some cases between what volunteers saw themselves as capable of and what employers perceived their capability to be - again, similar to the conflict between students who believed they could retake GCSEs and teachers who believed otherwise (Cornish, 2017).

The volunteers in this project were supported by coaches. Coaches reported an increase in understanding of people with disabilities and some started to develop an emotional connection with the volunteer they worked with. This seemed to present an opportunity for bridging (Putnam, 2000). However, the employers seemed to need more training in inclusive practice (Choma & Ochocka, 2005). This led the researchers to note the importance of feedback from service users to ensure such projects are empowering experiences that do not simply reinforce inequalities (Choma & Ochocka, 2005).

Other researchers (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013a) worked with a group of adults identified as having LD to explore how aspects of their community and home environments (group homes) impacted on their self-determination. Co-researchers had the opportunity to take photographs of their environments and analyse these in a group. The possibilities for action in this project led to empowerment for the co-researchers who had the experience of self-efficacy and affirmation from the group as part of the project. Co-researchers had the opportunity to be critical of their environment, with this awareness being a step towards positive change (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013).

A group of young people with special health needs participated in an action research project exploring their own self-determination goals and their shared goal of independent access to public spaces (Burstein, Bryan, & Chao, 2005). The individual data collection prompted an inward reflection for some young people while others lacked engagement with tracking and graphing of their personal goal. The researcher commented on the “less quantifiable” aspects of the research: the group gave YP the confidence to pursue their

independence goals where family members may have been anxious about allowing them to take control. The group also proved to be a space for the YP to share their experiences of discrimination from teachers and peers and to discuss and challenge aspects of the disabling environment. Bunn and Boesley (2019) also noted that group discussion was an important aspect of their intervention which supported children with SEN to feel more confident about their transition to secondary school (Bunn & Boesley, 2019) and provided a theoretical basis to this observation which may also apply to the self-determination study. Facilitated group discussion presented an opportunity for learning through self-reflection and external discussion (Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1985).

A participatory project exploring young people's feedback on their experience with EPs revealed that the process was particularly important, in terms of the YP feeling respected and listened to by the EP. The young people had the opportunity to create a video to share with EPs and the opportunity to receive feedback from the EPs. The YP's video prompted EPs to reflect, potentially informing their practice with other young people (Giles & Rowley, 2020).

#### ***2.9.4 Mutual support and Self-Advocacy***

For YP with special health needs (Burstein et al., 2005) and adults identified as having LD (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013a) participation in an action research project could be seen as an example of "empowerment through participation" described by Keyes and Brandon (2012) as part of a model of mutual support they developed through participatory research. The researchers explored projects where people with learning difficulties were working together and the emphasis on mutual support emerged from the co-researchers with learning difficulties. Mutual support occurred in response to individual needs but also in the context of overcoming a challenge for the group.

The role of non-disabled allies was also considered, and it was acknowledged that “support” could be both empowering and disempowering (Keyes & Brandon, 2012). This links to findings from research on supported volunteering which found that where coaching support was generally seen as positive, where employers failed to give responsibilities or meaningful work to volunteers the effect was disempowering. One way in which allies provided empowering support was in facilitating peer support (Keyes & Brandon, 2012). This explains how participatory research projects provide an opportunity for mutual support as well as an opportunity to work as a team.

Another example of groups of adults identified as having learning difficulties working together is in Self-Advocacy groups. Adults’ experiences of these groups have been explored through a narrative approach (Goodley, Armstrong, Sutherland, & Laurie, 2003). The researchers identified that “support” from professionals was empowering when it enabled the adult with learning difficulties to take an active role in the solution to a problem. This links to how self-efficacy might be supported through access to support with personally solving a problem. The opportunity to build relationships with peers was again a key aspect of the experience for participants in the groups.

Self-Advocacy groups **not** facilitated by a professional presented an opportunity to escape “surveillance” and control (Goodley et al., 2003). Exploration of Self-Advocacy groups found that resilience could be found both in the context of receiving empowering support and in the resistance to oppression. Self-organised Self-Advocacy groups had the potential to enhance quality of life, both in the process and the outcomes of the groups working together, whereas too much professional involvement might stifle the group with an overly directive focus on service evaluation (Goodley, 2005).

## 2.10 Argument for Current Research Project

Overall, opportunity to take on research responsibilities (with support where needed) has proved to be an empowering experience for adults and young people identified as having LD or SEND in a number of studies (Choma & Ochocka, 2005; Burstein et al., 2005; Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013). Peer support is particularly valued and non-disabled supporters can facilitate this mutual support on occasions (Keyes & Brandon, 2012). However, adults with learning difficulties may simply need the space and time to self-organise and it could be argued there are risks inherent in too much professional involvement in this process (Goodley, 2005). Similarly, some researchers have attempted to explore children with SEND's view through less structured, more playful sessions which allow more freedom for the children to set the agenda (Greenstein, 2014).

Access to group or peer support is a key factor in enabling self-determination and reduction of the negative impact of stigma (Burstein et al., 2005; Goodley, 2005). A small number of qualitative studies have suggested students with SEND in mainstream secondary settings often value their membership to a group of peers and show concerns about leaving this group to pursue educational opportunities (Benjamin, 2003; Riitaoja et al., 2019). The published research into student experiences at post-16 tended not to explore the role of peer relationships, rather they tended to make the implicit assumption that relationships developed with the context of a Level 1 or SEND group may not be valuable to students as they would not represent “bridging” connections with higher status groups. Grey literature that accessed YP views placed considerably more emphasis on the role of friendship in YP with SEND's experience of FE college.

While research into post-16 provision for “low achievers” and specialist provision for students with SEND generally focused on systemic barriers to achievement and social inclusion for these learners, researchers that worked alongside adults and YP with SEND

tended to have a more obvious positive impact on those involved and led to more practical solutions and opportunities for change. Ironically, those that referenced Bourdieu in their discussions tended not to provide young people with “possibilities for transformation”, rather YP’s voice was somewhat used to lend support to the researcher’s agenda.

The following methodology chapter will explain how the current study aimed to incorporate participatory elements to allow the YP to shape the research agenda alongside the researcher. Very little research has been published directly addressing the research question “What is known about young people’s views of their experiences of an employability course designed for those with SEND in the UK?”. The author has experienced both critical accounts of post-16 education and possibilities for what the students may gain from these courses. Therefore, it is hoped that the author will learn from the YP, positioning them as experts in their experience of their course while bringing insights into a range of possible tools for analysis and some understanding of the political context of the research. Furthermore, this review has shed light on the stigma faced by YP with learning difficulties and the implicit assumptions of researchers and professionals which seem to emerge unintentionally in their interpretations of their observations or interviews with YP with SEND.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter starts by justifying the author's ontological position, with reference to alternative positions. The author then outlines the aims and purpose of this research project. A description of the aims of participatory research follows, with a discussion of the extent to which the current research can meet these aims. The strengths and limitations of existing research with people with SEND using a participatory approach are discussed. Use of a mixed methods approach, using a combination of group work for planning the research, individual interviews and student presentations of their photo-voice project is justified. Research regarding strengths and limitations of the use of technology to make remote research possible is also explored, before justifying the choice of data analysis method, with an emphasis on transparency and the participation of the co-researchers in a member checking process.

Last, the procedures followed in this research are described, including the recruitment of co-researchers, ensuring high standards of ethical practice and the methods used to collect and analyse the data in order to generate and answer the research questions.

### 3.2 Research Paradigm

#### *3.2.1 Ontological and Epistemological Position*

Although discussions of ontology may seem somewhat abstract and philosophical, they are in fact fundamental to the day to day practice of educational psychologists and our impact on those we work with (Corcoran, 2017). The author feels it is important to understand her own ontological position and to take a critical stance to ensure both her day-to-day work as an EP and her input into academic research is in the best interests of those she works with. The author aims to work towards ending discriminatory practices and widening opportunities for all. Furthermore, it is a requirement of the HCPC and the British

Psychological Society Code of Ethics that psychologists practice in an anti-discriminatory manner (HCPC, 2016; BPS, 2018).

The realist stance proposes that language merely describes the realities that exist externally in the world and that the aim of research is therefore to describe or explain aspects of the world with the assumption that there is one correct interpretation or accurate explanation (Corcoran, 2017). While this may be an appropriate stance in natural sciences, the researcher believed this stance is less valid in social sciences. While the nature of chemical bonds and gravitational forces may be unchanged throughout history and across cultures, human experiences are influenced by the culture in which they inhabit and the language used by others to define them, humans cannot escape or exist outside of these cultural constructions. The relativist position is that we cannot make any statements without engaging with the pre-existing language system and that our moral position is also defined relative to cultural norms and is therefore changing across place and time (Corcoran, 2017).

Furthermore, each individual's reality, although influenced by a shared culture and language, is unique to them. Therefore, this researcher is opposed to a realist stance. This research takes a relativist position appreciating that different interpretations of reality are valid. Therefore, the agreement of the co-researchers themselves that their view has been represented is sought throughout the research while triangulation via another stakeholders view point is not included.

This research takes a social constructionist stance, in line with the social model of disability which argues disability is a social construction (Charlton, 1998)(see chapter 1). Social constructionism is opposed to the positivist stance which states it is possible to observe the world without bias. A social constructionist position is a more useful one to take when dealing with the social world and interaction between people and in exploring the social model of disability. The categories we place human beings into are based on

interactions between people and their meanings intertwined with a cultural frame of reference and historical context (Burr, 2003). Therefore, the diagnostic labels which may have been applied to the co-researchers in this study were not recorded and were only discussed if brought up by the co-researchers themselves.

This research can be described as critical because it does take a stance on discrimination. The author believes that when it comes to ideologies that would promote harm to individuals or groups it is necessary to take a stance. Social constructionist theory recognises the role of power in society and how it allows groups of people to be treated (Burr, 2003). It is possible to take a relativist position, while still acknowledging the importance of the perceived social “reality” and history on people’s experience (Corcoran, 2017). For example, psychologists’ “knowledge” around intelligence, which grew out of a history of standardised education systems leading to standardised testing, has an impact on people’s lives that is not always positive. In order to have a positive impact on people’s lives, psychologists need to remain critical of systems and labels that might have negative impact and be mindful of using language and approaches that allow the possibility of positive change and respect individuals’ choices (Corcoran, 2017).

### *3.2.2 Reflexivity*

Reflexivity is defined as “a process of critical reflection both on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated.” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004 p.274). In other words, the author reflected on her own actions and every decision made throughout the research. Although a plan for how ethical considerations were to be addressed was submitted for approval before the research commenced, it was not enough for researcher to simply follow procedures as new and unpredictable scenarios arise in each interaction (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). This is especially true in participatory research which cannot be planned in detail in advance. “Respect for participants” is a useful



guiding principal but exactly what this means in practise is at the researcher's discretion (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). For example, is it more respectful to stick closely to the planned interview questions or explore a new issue a participant raises?

In order to be reflexive the author must acknowledge her own experiences and biases and the understandings of the world she brings to the research. Moreover, as this research explores YP's experiences of education, it is necessary for the researcher to consider her own experiences of education.

The author's education took place in diverse inner London state schools up to the age of 18 and was in that way similar to most of the co-researchers. However, the author differs from the co-researchers in that she is part of a white British, non-practising Christian, family. This means the author did not directly experience the negative impacts of racism and/or islamophobia which may have been experienced by co-researchers who were all from Ethnic backgrounds which are minority groups in the UK. Some participants were also Muslim, a minority religion in the UK. Parents of the co-researchers in this project may have experienced discriminatory attitudes from professionals in the past, including assumptions by professionals, based on their ethnicity, about how they view their children's difficulties (Bywaters, Ali, Fazil, Wallace, & Singh, 2003) which may have impacted on co-researchers who may also have experienced racism and/or Islamophobia. In line with the author's responsibility to practice in an anti-discriminatory manner it is important for the author to engage with and listen to the co-researcher's experiences of discrimination, rather than avoid this issue if it was raised (Sue, 2015).

The London borough in which the research was conducted has a high level of poverty among its young people (Elahi, Khan, & Ali, 2016). The author has come from an affluent background and not experienced financial hardship which may have been experienced by

some of the co-researchers, alongside their SEN and membership to racial and or religious groups that may experience discrimination. Professionals working with individuals that experience multiple factors of vulnerability to discrimination should be particularly mindful of these experiences, which means developing an “inequalities imagination” (Hart, Hall, & Henwood, 2003). “Inequalities imagination” involves both an awareness of largescale statistical research into inequalities and the impact of professionals’ interactions with clients on their experiences (Hart et al., 2003).

### ***3.2.4 Aims and purposes***

This research aimed to be transformative, to directly address inequality and the history of exclusion of people with learning difficulties from positions of power and society as a whole (Mertens, 2009). The author aimed to involve young people with SEND as co-researchers in the research process by giving choice over the methods to be used and the questions to be asked as well as a role in validating the outcome of analysis. There were some limitations to the possibility of emancipatory research or fully participatory research due to the time constraints for both the researcher and co-researchers in this study.

The aim of the research was not only to gain the views of young people with experience of SEND employability courses but also to promote Self-Advocacy in this group. The group had the opportunity to share their views with those in positions of power at their college.

The research was both exploratory and emancipatory. Exploratory as there is no set hypothesis to be tested and emancipatory as the aim was to empower the group by promoting Self-Advocacy and mutual support. Empowerment can be a problematic construct as it implies the powerful, in this case the researcher, giving power to the less powerful, in this case the young people, which reinforces the existing power structure, in this case the less powerful position of the young people (Goodley, 2005). This is why a group discussion was

the starting point of this research as this allowed more potential for mutual support (Keyes & Brandon, 2012) among the young people, allowing for less dependence on the researcher.

### ***3.2.4 Research Questions***

The original research question “What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs?” was refined in response to planning sessions with the co-researchers who wanted to discuss their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic taking place at the time of the research. The researcher agreed that the impacts of the pandemic could not be ignored or set aside as it represented an important factor influencing the young people’s experience. Furthermore, the co-researchers tended to refer to themselves as students on the “supported internship programme” so the name of the course was used instead on the more generic “course designed for those with Special Educational Needs”. The research question was therefore amended to “What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience of a Supported Internship Programme during a Pandemic?” to reflect the co-researcher’s interests and the unique context of the project. The researcher was also interested in the secondary research question: What supports young people with SEND to share their views on what’s important to them in their educational experience?

## **3.3 Justification of the Methodology**

### ***3.3.1 Participatory research***

This research aimed to meet the first three criteria for emancipatory research, (Chappell, 2000), in that the young people had the opportunity to be co-researchers, the researcher was reflexive (see Reflexivity section above) and it was hoped the co-researchers would benefit from the research. Furthermore, commitment to the social model of disability is the ideological position underpinning the research in emancipatory research (Chappell, 2000). A strength of participatory research is that it explores local knowledge and perceptions with a

flexible approach (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Biggs (Biggs, 1989) outlines different levels of participation which are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Levels of Participation in Research*

<b>Level of participation</b>	<b>What is involved</b>
Contractual	People are contracted into the project
Consultative	People are asked for their opinions on the researcher's decisions
Collaborative	Researchers and local people work together on projects designed, initiated and managed by researchers
Collegiate	Researchers work together as colleagues with different skills, the local people have control over the process and mutual learning occurs

The reality is that participatory research is rarely “collegiate” and often involves the researcher taking the lead in analysis and representation of the findings (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). The current research could be described as consultative at some stages, in that the researcher sought the opinions of the co-researchers, and collaborative at other stages (see figure 3.2). Although the research did not fully meet criteria for collegiate research it aimed to allow opportunities for mutual learning between co-participants and researcher (see Discussion chapter).

In this research there was a good level of potential for direct benefit to the participants as there was an opportunity for co-researchers to feedback to their tutors who may act on the feedback in time for the cohort to benefit. However, the researcher had little control on the extent to which feedback was acted on.

This research did not meet all the criteria for emancipatory research. As a doctoral project this research was not commissioned by an organisation of disabled people nor will the researcher be directly accountable to such an organisation which would be an ideal scenario

(Zarb, 1992). The current research was limited in flexibility as it had to be completed in a strict time frame both because it was a doctoral research project and because the time commitment for co-researchers must be agreed in advance and submitted for ethical approval. The process of ethical approval designed for more traditional research methods also put some limit on the extent to which the co-researchers could decide the research questions as the themes needed to be approved in advance, in this case the researcher submitted example questions and topics to the university and local authority ethics panel with a focus on the young people's experience of their employability course.

The research meets the criteria for participatory research in that, although the researcher has identified the issue, this was shared with the group who then worked in partnership with the researcher to explore the issue. Participatory research may be seen as a way of research that is moving towards the aims of emancipatory research, which is more practical in the current research context (Chappell, 2000).

For people with learning difficulties, researchers without these difficulties may play an important role in facilitating and writing up the study. There are many academics with physical and sensory disabilities who hold both a personal and academic commitment to social change. However, those with learning difficulties are often excluded from the academic world, access to this world generally depends on development of skills at a certain level and the ability to use these skills without support (Chappell, 2000).

An Inclusive Research Network (IRN), run by the Centre for Disability Studies in Australia has been established (Riches & O'Brien, 2017). In the IRN, adults with physical and learning disabilities work alongside university researchers and supporters on an ongoing basis allowing active involvement at every stage of research. The group can decide on the topic, design and research questions of the project together and the university researchers then submit this to the university ethics panel. However, co-researchers with physical and

learning disabilities in the IRN felt less involved in the publication stage of the research (Riches & O'Brien, 2017). Co-researchers in the IRN requested their real names to be included in the publication and for a video they created to be publicly shared (Riches & O'Brien, 2017). In the IRN, the phrase "nothing about us, without us" (Charlton, 1998) represented a shared understanding between researchers and co-researchers in a way that discussions of ontology may not, as this language is quite exclusive to the academic research community. Furthermore, an opportunity to build relationships and social ties over an extended period of time was highly valued by the co-researchers in the IRN (Riches & O'Brien, 2017).

Unfortunately, time was much more limited in the current study, where the researcher took the lead on some aspects, to reduce the time commitment to both the researcher and the co-researchers. The researcher introduced a limited range of possible research methods to the group, based on her examination of what had been successful in previous research with young people and adults with learning difficulties (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013a; Borrett & Rowley, 2020; Greenstein, 2014) (see Use of Visual Approaches section below). Data collection, via the group's chosen methods, then occurred (see Procedure section for details). The resulting data was analysed by the researcher. Validation of the main researcher's thematic analysis was checked by the co-researchers at the coding and themes stages (see Data Analysis section).

The researcher was not able to give the co-researchers more extensive training that could make it possible for the young people to conduct research without support from the researcher. The current research therefore presented young people with SEND with an opportunity for some involvement in the research process and some learning about research methods, but there were barriers to full participation at every stage.

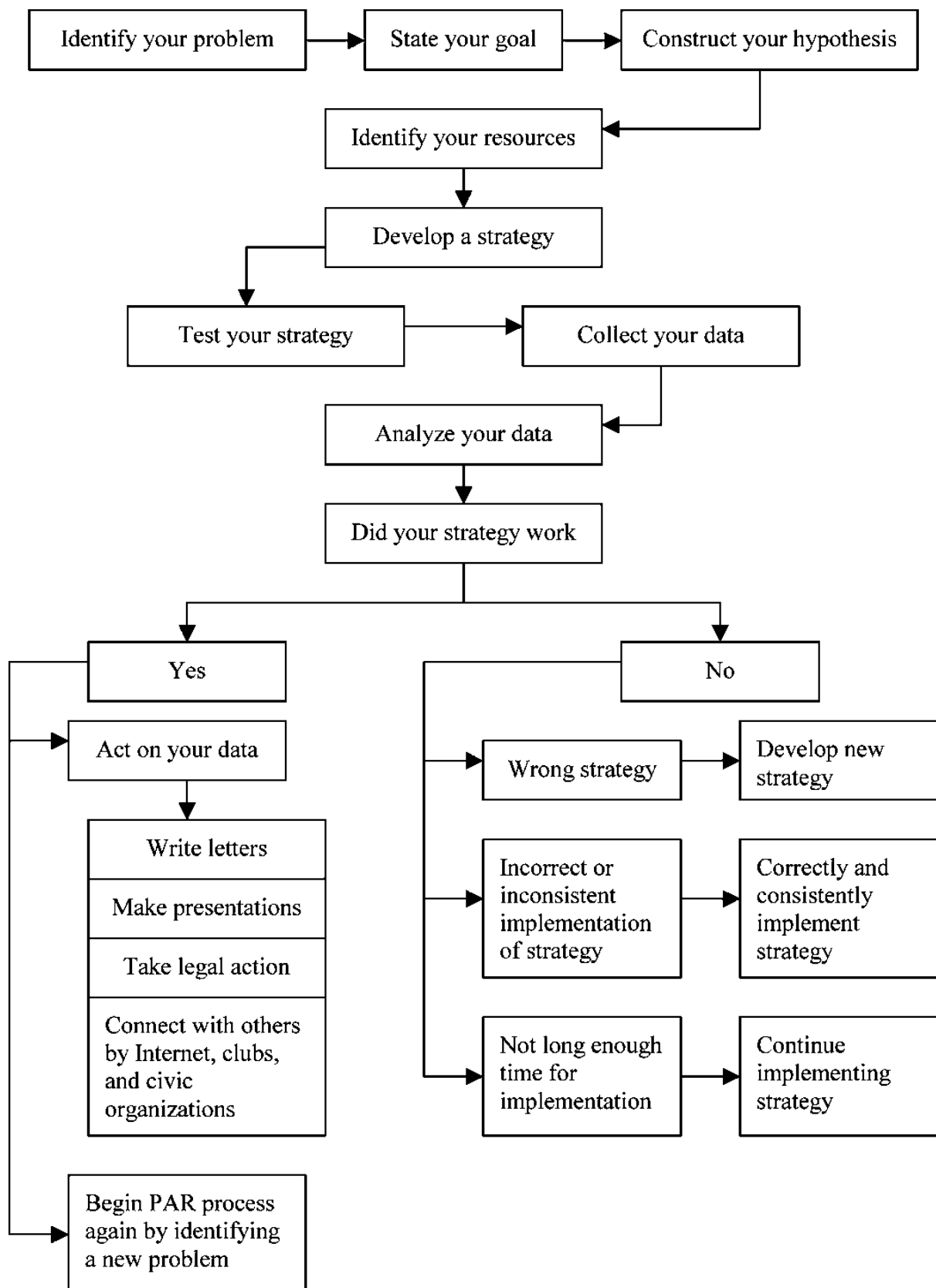
Freire proposes a model of education where student and teacher learn from each other and in the process both are thinking actively rather than the teacher simply transferring information (Freire, 1972). This kind of dynamic is more difficult to achieve in the current school system, where learning objectives are set in advance and teachers plan what is to be learned in advance and it is assumed teachers hold knowledge to pass on to students rather than vice versa. Participatory research may be an opportunity for co-researchers and researcher to experience a more interactive dynamic where both university researcher and co-researcher hold knowledge and where both decide together what knowledge to seek (Kagan & Burton, 2000).

Participatory research has potential to improve our understanding of the barriers that currently limit opportunities for some members of society and the possibilities for change (Kagan & Burton, 2000). Freire suggests that “Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.” (Freire, 1972). Thus, the opportunity for co-researchers to reflect on their own experience brings with it the opportunities for action leading to positive change, the researcher facilitated action by facilitating this process and the process of sharing what is learned with those in positions of power.

Some researchers suggest “participatory research” is not in itself a method of research (Parker, 2005), rather it is an “organising orientation” that can incorporate other qualitative and quantitative methods (Kagan & Burton, 2000). However, others take a more structured approach and favorable view. The framework shown in Figure 3 was used by researchers working with a group of young people with Special Health Needs in the USA (Burstein, Bryan, & Chao, 2005). Burstein et al. (2005) supported YP to create individual independence goals and monitor their own progress as well as working on a group project to address an issue of concern to all members of the group.

**Figure 3**

*Diagram to show Participatory Action Research Process (Burstein et al., 2005)*

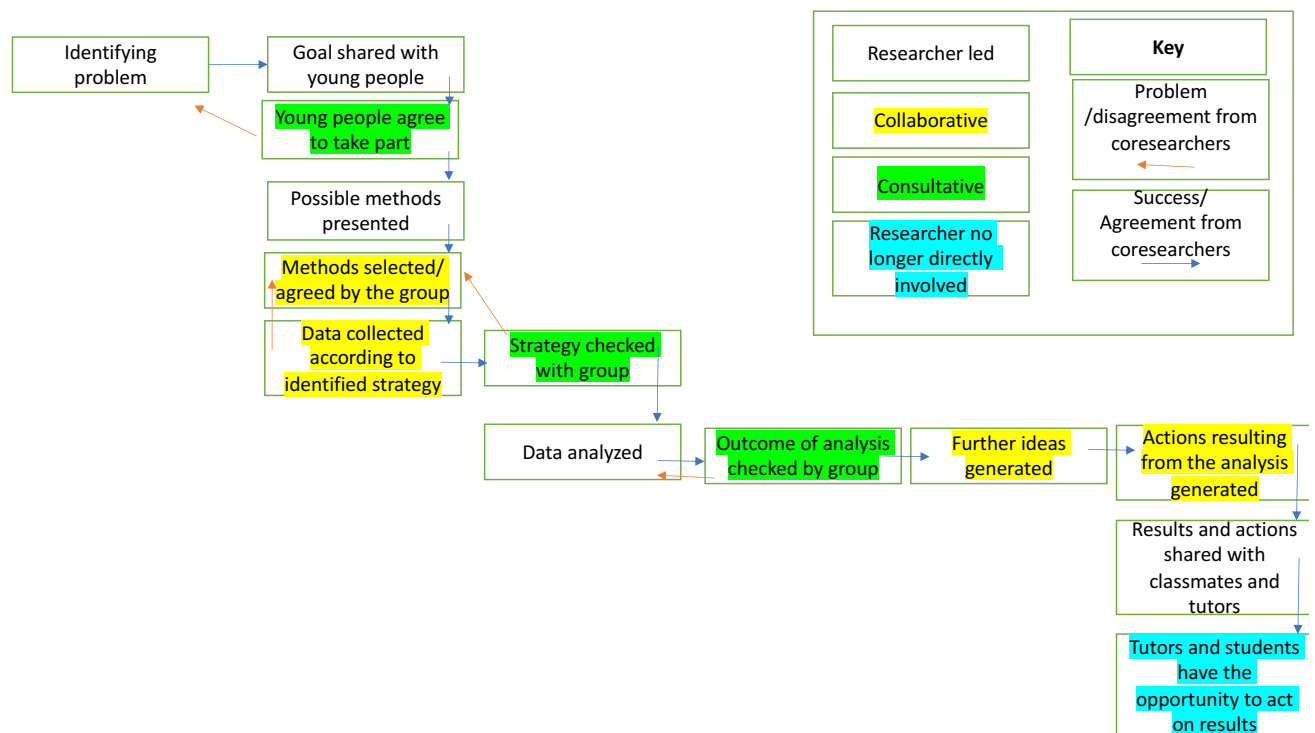




The author used a similar framework, outlined in Figure 4, taking the lead on some aspects and collaborating with co-researchers on other aspects. Throughout the process there was some flexibility and a possibility of returning to an earlier stage if needed.

**Figure 4**

*Diagram to show the Research Process and Levels of Participation at Each Stage*



### 3.3.2 Focus groups

Previous research has suggested that focus groups are a good forum for individuals with learning difficulties to share their view (Gates & Waight, 2007) and opportunities to develop a trusting relationship with the researcher are important (Correia, Seabra-Santos, Campos Pinto, & Brown, 2017). Groupwork was therefore chosen by the author as a starting

point to this research but co-researchers also had the opportunity to take part in individual interviews, or produce other artifacts to share their views. The researcher was aware that the starting point of the research may set the tone as the co-researchers may regard the researcher as having expertise and are likely to “go along with” her choice. Group work was initially seen as preferable as it may provide co-researchers within the group to take on leadership roles and more opportunity to develop the social ties that have been valued by co-researchers in previous research (Riches & O’Brien, 2017; Fullana, Pallisera, Català, & Puyalto, 2017). The researcher’s initial assumption was that in any group there may be tensions or individuals who prefer not to communicate in this context, so the option of alternatives to group work were important. In this research, one co-researcher in particular was keen to work individually with the main researcher. The co-researcher later explained that her memory and processing difficulties could make group work difficult (see Research Question 2, Findings chapter).

### ***3.3.3 Interviews***

The author was mindful of being in a position of power as a researcher working with YP with SEN and had the necessary previous experience to do this (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The fact that co-researchers had generated the questions themselves was positive in several respects. It resulted in familiarity with the questions and accessible language being used. Some questions were closed and could result in short answers, but this may have been more accessible for some participants – giving them choice over giving a short or elaborated answer. A semi-structured interview format also allowed opportunity for clarification from either party and an opportunity for the researcher to provide some containment if there was any distress observed (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The researcher took an empathic approach, showing agreement, sharing some personal experiences and answering questions posted by the co-researchers to promote reciprocity and improve the quality of the data (Oakley, 2016).

Co-researchers used a small private “pod” room in college to speak to the researcher via Microsoft Teams on a mobile phone or lap-top while a teaching assistant waited outside. This allowed a comfortable space for co-researchers to express themselves (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

### ***3.3.4 Use of Video Conferencing***

Video conferencing was used throughout the research process due to restrictions in place to prevent the transmission of Covid-19. The Microsoft Teams video conferencing application was used. The researcher spoke to the whole group via a big screen in the classroom and to individuals via the teacher’s work phone. The researcher had visited the college for a brief meeting with the lead teacher supporting the project prior to the Covid-19 pandemic but had not met any of the co-researchers or had a tour of the college before starting the research.

#### **3.3.4.1 The Role of Online Communication in Providing Services to YP.**

School staff and researchers alike have tended to see the benefits of online communication as mainly practical, such as increasing access for service users in remote locations (Fairweather, Lincoln, & Ramsden, 2016; Hennigan & Goss, 2016). More recently, online communication has allowed for research to continue while “social distancing” measures help prevent the spread of disease. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in video-calling technology being used more widely than ever before, for people of all ages in both personal and professional contexts. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to learning going online in the face of school closure.

#### **3.3.4.2 Video Conferencing in Research with YP.**

The author identified little research into the role of video conferencing in research with and education for YP with SEND specifically.

It has been proposed that in person interviews allow the development of rapport between researcher and participant which helps the participant to feel comfortable in sharing their personal story and understanding between participant and researcher is also seen to be facilitated (Weller, 2015). Research that set out to explore the implications of video-calling on rapport with young people in a research context found that the majority of participants were satisfied with the video encounter and found it a comfortable experience (Weller, 2015). The YP described some benefits to remote video over in-person research interviews, stating that they felt less pressurised in the former. For the YP the in-person home visit felt more “professional” while the video-call felt more like a conversation with a peer (Weller, 2015). The YP’s comments suggest the power imbalance between the researcher and the YP may be less salient in the video-chat context. Overall, the researcher regarded remote video interviews as different, but not necessarily worse than in-person ones, provided technical issues were minimal (Weller, 2015).

The suggestion that YP may show a greater preference for online communication than adults is supported by a survey that indicated young people aged 16-25 are twice as likely as adults to state a preference for online counselling (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2014). Furthermore, given the choice of face to face or remote interview (via phone or remote video link) all the YP who participated in research on the impact of continence problems chose a remote interview (Whale, Cramer, & Joinson, 2018). This suggests that YP may actually prefer online communication when sensitive topics are being discussed. However, this research was conducted with young people who do not have SEND may not be representative of those with SEND as this group can have limited access to technology and communication or learning difficulties may be a barrier to the use of technology. Previous research indicated YP being fairly comfortable with video-chat due to their experience of using it with friends, however this experience may not be shared by all YP

with SEND or YP whose families face financial hardship and therefore lack the equipment or internet access to engage in video-chat.

Overall, the researcher felt that video conferencing was a feasible method for the current research. However, rapport building was key to success in gaining YP's views and the researcher actively planned to build rapport with each group member.

#### **3.3.4.3 Strategies for Effective use of Video Conferencing Applied in this Research.**

Weller (2015) compared the dialog in-person and video interviews, she found that confirming that the video link is working well can disrupt the initial greeting. The researcher argues the initial greeting is part of a process of building rapport which has an impact on "participant's perceptions of their worth and the researcher's general interest in their lives, as well as, degrees of understanding and empathy." (Weller, 2015). The relationship between researcher and participants has been found to be an important factor in research with people with learning difficulties (Correia et al., 2017) . Therefore, in the current research, the researcher decided to have a maximum of four young people in each online group session so there was time to acknowledge and greet everyone without the process being laborious and time consuming.

#### **3.3.5 Use of Visual Methods**

The advantage of visual methods is that they do not depend on literacy and may be accessible to those with language or memory difficulties. The visual artifacts produced can provide a prompt for discussion and an opportunity for reflection.

##### **3.3.5.1 Photo-voice.**

Previous research with adults with learning difficulties has found "photo-voice" to be a key research tool as it gives co-researchers autonomy in what they choose to photograph and leads to a visual prompt for use in discussion (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013b; Kaplan,

Lewis, & Mumba, 2007). Photography projects have been found to support students to represent their own perspectives (Kaplan, Miles, & Howes, 2011). Taking photographs of their environment allowed co-researchers to reflect on the changes they would like to see in their home environment and local community leading to possibilities for action (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013a).

### **3.3.5.2 Collage or drawing the ideal college.**

In order to provide choice to the young people, other visual methods were also suggested. Collages have been used successfully with returners to education, some of whom had SEN (Borrett & Rowley, 2020) and drawing their ideal school has been used with younger students with SEN (Greenstein, 2014).

## **3.4 Consideration of Strategies for Data Analysis**

### ***3.4.1 Qualitative Analyses***

This research took a qualitative approach to analysis as the researcher was interested in gaining an in depth understanding of the views of a small group of young people and in gaining insight into their experience of the research process. The research took a critical stance and therefore rejected the use of standardised measures or a set of questions that were predefined by the researcher. It has been argued that in emancipatory participatory action research, neither the methods nor the research questions can be pre-determined rather it must be left open to the co-researcher's involvement and direction (Parker, 2005). However, since participatory action research is not in itself a method, the researcher needed to incorporate some method of data collection and analysis. The researcher aimed to reject methods that took the power to analyse the results away from the co-researchers by placing the researcher in an expert role in such a way that the product of the analysis is not accessible to the co-researchers. The researcher considered a range of possible methods before deciding on an

Inductive Thematic Analysis. The researcher's arguments for rejecting other methods are detailed below.

### ***3.4.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)***

A criticism of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is that it makes the assumption a participant's words represent their personal "truth" rather than seeing a participant's words as a story told in the context of a certain audience, in this case the researcher (Parker, 2005). In IPA, the researcher's focus on finding intentions behind what is said is a focus on inner thoughts that may again fail to acknowledge the social context of the participants words (Parker, 2005). In this case simply exploring co-researchers' individual experiences without combining them in a process of analysis may miss an opportunity for a collective understanding to grow among the group of co-researchers and for the group to challenge or support each other's ideas.

### ***3.4.3 Narrative analysis***

Narrative analysis leads to an opportunity for individual's stories to be understood as stories rather than facts and as such, open to different and potentially more empowering, interpretations (Parker, 2005). The narrative approach is compatible with a social constructionist stance as it acknowledges that our understanding of reality as human beings is based on our narratives and any external "realities" are open to different interpretations (Hiles & Čermák 2010). Narrative approaches therefore have the potential to be emancipatory in challenging existing contexts and structures of power. However, this approach may not be ideal for the current research for several reasons. Firstly, it may rely on co-researchers with SEND producing quite extensive narratives. The analysis is somewhat abstract which may lead to the researcher taking the lead. The researcher risked misinterpreting the narrative and not being challenged by the co-researchers. The more abstract nature of the analysis and its links to advanced understandings of literature and language may have exacerbated a power

imbalance between the researcher and the co-researchers, as the researcher had more extensive experience of academic literature than the co-researchers.

#### ***3.4.4 Constructivist Grounded Theory***

Constructivist grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2014) are considered useful in studies exploring young people's perception of their experience as the method may have supported the researcher to analyse data alongside data collection allowing them to be flexible and adapt to the young people's needs as well as checking the emerging categories with the young people (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017; Caslin, 2019).

In grounded theory, the aim is to avoid predetermined assumptions based on the researcher's knowledge of the previous literature. This is in line with the aims of a critical approach which aims to avoid reiteration of previously established "knowledge" and instead explore possibilities for positive change.

Using grounded theory method of analysis seemed to present the opportunity to explore the issues that are important to the group with an open mind. However, a grounded theory method would have worked towards the production of a theory which may not be the most useful outcome in this study which aimed to gain young people's views and generate practical ideas for change which could be implemented to benefit the young people.

#### ***3.4.5 Thematic Analysis***

The researcher conducted an inductive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) of all the interview and presentation transcripts. Inductive Thematic analysis was selected as it was a way of staying close to the original data and using co-researcher's words as much as possible. It was important that the outcomes of the analysis remained accessible to the co-researchers. For this reason, a fairly long list of themes and subthemes was generated in order that co-researchers could clearly see their contributions in the themes generated. Similarly, the method itself was straightforward to explain to co-researchers. The researcher explained



the coding process to the co-researchers in terms of “creating a summary of what you said”

An individual summary, which related to the main codes identified in each interview was presented to each co-researcher for checking. This was explained to the co-researcher, for example:

P- I just wanted to speak to you very quickly just to check with you about what we spoke about last time

M- yeah

P- what I did is I wrote it all down, I made a quick summary

M- yeah

P- so I just wanted to check with you whether I’ve got everything correct (Lines 3-8, transcript of summary checking interview with Mo)

After coding the transcripts (see Coding section) the researcher identified themes and sub themes (see Generating Themes section) which were also checked with all co-researchers. The author explained the themes are based on the analysis of the whole group’s data for example:

Great, so you remember last week, how I spoke to you about, how I was going to put all the information together, um kind of summarise and change the wording a little bit. So, in research that’s something we do, we come up with something called themes, based on everything we’ve learned. So, um, if I just quickly show you, the themes that I came up with, I know you were a bit concerned about it being anonymous and things so I thought if I show you first, I can just check with you that it’s ok. And if you want anything taken out or something like that. (Lines 53-59, Themes checking interview with Amina, transcript)

Thus, both the process and the outcome of inductive thematic analysis were possible to briefly explain to the co-researchers despite their lack of experience with research methods

which allowed this aspect of the research to be more transparent and for consultation to occur. One co-researcher also engaged in collaboration when she felt themes and sub themes could be added to.

### **3.5 Method in Current Research**

#### ***3.5.1 Co-researchers and Recruitment***

Co-researchers were young people aged between 18-25 who were currently attending a Supported Internship Programme (SIP), an employability course for young people with SEND at a further education college. Co-researchers also acted as participants in some phases of the research. The term co-researcher is used throughout this thesis. The author deliberately avoided specifying any specific diagnosis but wanted to recruit groups that already existed as a group or where there was potential for continuation of the group after the project. The researcher requested the college to give all members of one class the opportunity to take part. Five students opted in initially. One student took part in the planning phase but then dropped out due to work experience commitments. The remaining four students took part in all stages of the research. Other students in the class took part in some similar activities inspired by the research, such as the photo-voice activity, but the researcher had no further contact with these students.

#### ***3.5.2 Ethical Considerations***

##### **3.5.2.1 Protection from Harm, Duty of Care and Special Consideration of Vulnerable Persons.**

In order to conduct the literature review for this thesis the researcher engaged with the label of learning difficulties. However, this label was avoided in recruitment documents, the term “special educational needs and disabilities” was used (see recruitment documents in Appendix D). The researcher has recruited participants who have attended specialist SEN courses with the assumption that only those with more significant difficulties will attend

these courses. In other words, those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia who can access mainstream courses are not included.

Discussions about education and employment had the potential to provoke anxiety and distress in young people. Since sessions took place over a number of weeks the researcher had the opportunity to monitor the wellbeing of the young people. The researcher was in a position to refer students to appropriate services – such as CAMHS or the safeguarding team at their college or the local authority, where more support was needed as well as adapt the methodology of the study to cater to the young people’s needs.

Sessions took place during Friday afternoon pastoral sessions, in which students not taking part were engaged in similar activities to students taking part in the project. Thus, the students did not miss any input towards their English and Maths qualifications or any work experience opportunities to take part. Due to the cancellation of some work experiences as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic students had more time than usual in pastoral sessions.

### **3.5.2.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality.**

A data protection plan was submitted to the university before the research commenced outlining how the data would be saved securely to ensure confidentiality (see Appendix E).

Pseudonyms were used in the thesis and any resulting publications, the name of the college and the London borough were not included to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This avoided the possibility of individuals being identifiable or of negative “press” for the organisation providing the course. If the establishment wished to use any quotes as positive “press” for their website they were asked to gain permission from the quoted individual before doing this.

On the other hand, where co-researchers wished to be named for the purposes of dissemination following completion of the research such as presenting findings to the local authority or creating documents as part of the project, they had this opportunity.

### **3.5.2.3 Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw.**

The SIP students were invited to the initial research meeting where the researcher explained the purpose of the research (see Appendix B). The teacher also made it clear that participation was voluntary at this point. A letter was sent home to inform parents the research was taking place (see Appendix D). Interested members of the class took part in a 15 minute introduction session where the researcher introduced herself and the project via Microsoft Teams, shown on a screen in the classroom. Those interested in taking part after the initial introduction session took part in an informed consent session (see Appendix B). (see Introduction and Consent section).

Co-researchers were reminded of their right to withdraw at the start of each session. Co-researchers also had the option to stop attending sessions but keep their contributions (or data) in the study, nonetheless no student chose to do this.

## **3.6 Phases of the Research Process and Procedures**

A participatory action research method was used in this study. By involving the young people as co-researchers it was hoped that the data was as authentic as possible. Co-researchers had a choice in the methods used and thus the opportunity to use methods they felt comfortable with. Ongoing contact with the researcher provided more opportunity for transparency as the co-researchers had opportunities to reflect on what had been communicated. Co-researchers had the opportunity to lend further support to initial ideas or change and develop these ideas. An outline of the project is given in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Outline of the project*

Week	Co-researcher activity, facilitated by the researcher
Pre-project	<p><b>Researcher introduction to the project (15 min)</b></p> <p>The researcher introduced herself and briefly explained the aims of the research to the group. (see Appendix B)</p>
1a	<p><b>Introduction and consent (20min)</b></p> <p>The researcher re-introduced herself and explained the aims of the research to the group. The researcher explained that she would like the group to help her plan the research and explore the best ways to gain their views. The researcher showed the accessible consent form (see Appendix D) on screen and read it out loud. The researcher then answered questions from the students. The researcher then left the meeting and gave the students some time with their teacher to decide whether to take part. Students wishing to take part signed the consent form and joined the next session.</p>
1b	<p><b>Methods Choice session (30min)</b></p> <p>After consenting to take part in the study, co-researchers met as a group.</p> <p>The researcher gave a short presentation to briefly explain why the research was carried out and introduce possible research methods: interviews, focus groups and creative methods:</p> <p>“draw your ideal college”  “take some photos around college and talk about them (photovoice)”  “collage – use magazines / the internet to find images to share your thoughts”  “other ideas?”</p> <p>(see Appendix B)</p> <p>Each member of the group had the opportunity to decide to talk to the researcher on their own or as a group and choose which creative method to use.</p>
2	<p><b>Methods planning session (30 min)</b></p> <p>In the next session the group generated interview questions (see Appendix B) in a group session supported by the teacher and guided by the researcher (who joined the group via Microsoft Teams).</p> <p>In this session the researcher also explained the photovoice method in more detail and introduced ethical guidelines around taking photos. For example, photos of students would not be included and any members of staff to be photographed would give consent. It was agreed the researcher would draft consent forms for this purpose to be printed by the teacher (see Appendix B).</p>
3	<p><b>Data collection</b></p> <p><i><b>Initial Interviews (15- 45 minutes each)</b></i></p> <p>During the interviews, students sat in a private room with a teaching assistant sitting outside and spoke to the researcher via the Microsoft Teams on a college phone or laptop. The researcher asked the co-researchers the questions they had</p>

	<p>generated, with additional explanation or prompting where needed. The interviews were semi-structured as the researcher asked some additional follow up questions. Two students chose to be interviewed on their own and two chose to be in the room together, but answered questions individually. All interviews were recorded (sound only) and transcribed by the researcher.</p> <p><b><i>Photo-voice (5-10 minute presentations)</i></b></p> <p>Three co-researchers decided to take part in the “photo-voice” activity. Other students in the class who were not involved in the project also took part in this activity. The students took photos in and around their college to demonstrate their likes and dislikes in college and put the photos into power-point presentations. This process was supported by college staff, the researcher was not present. The students then gave a presentation, using the power-points they created, followed by questions, to their whole class. The researcher, teacher and other students took part in the questions after the presentations. The researcher recorded (sound only) and transcribed these presentations and the question and answer sessions.</p> <p><b><i>Follow up interviews: individual summaries (15 mins)</i></b></p> <p>The researcher created a summary of each interview based on the codes generated from the transcript of the full interview. The researcher read each individual co-researcher a summary of their interview, to check agreement. The researcher also used this opportunity to explain the next stage of the process.</p>
4	<p><b><i>Member checking themes (20- 40mins)</i></b></p> <p>The researcher read the themes and ideas for change out loud to co-researchers, giving an opportunity for further feedback. Three co-researchers took part in this session together and one requested an individual meeting to discuss themes. The researcher shared her thoughts on possible conclusions such as the link to resilience, with the co-researchers. These sessions were recorded and transcribed.</p>
5	<p><b><i>Sharing the findings (20mins)</i></b></p> <p>This session took place during the national lockdown and the co-researchers, college staff and other students in the class joined the session via Microsoft Teams from home. The researcher outlined the research process and the themes generated by the group with an opportunity for questions and comments.</p>
6	<p><b><i>Project evaluation and debriefing (20mins)</i></b></p> <p>This session took place during the national lockdown and the co-researchers, college staff and other students in the class joined the session via Microsoft Teams from home. Three co-researchers and two members of staff joined the first meeting. An additional meeting was scheduled to allow a co-researcher who was ill during the first meeting to take part, supported by a member of staff.</p> <p>The researcher carried out a brief semi-structured interview (see Appendix B) to gain feedback on the project process and explained the contents of the debriefing letter (Appendix D) which was emailed to all co-researchers.</p>

### 3.7 Data Analysis

#### 3.7.1 Transcription

Orthographic transcription was carried out by the researcher for use in analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This method was selected to capture the co-researchers voice and minimise further interpretation from the researcher (see sample in Appendix 2.10).

### **3.7.2 Coding**

Coding began after the initial interviews had been carried out and transcribed. The researcher had become familiar with the transcripts in the process of transcription and re-reading and took notes on any observations at this stage (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The researcher used a complete coding approach, coding any aspects of data that may relate to the main research question. The researcher mainly focused on semantic codes in order that the resulting themes would be recognisable to the co-researchers. The researcher refined some of the initial codes to make them as concise as possible. Transcript text relating to each code was highlighted and codes were added as comments in a Microsoft Word document (see example in Appendix C)

### **3.7.3 Generating Themes**

Codes were sorted into groups via a cut and paste process, based on similarity and topics addressed. Initially these were broad and conveyed little additional meaning such as “college” “work placement” “pandemic”. The researcher was mindful that themes should not relate directly to interview questions but rather be “central organising constructs” (Clarke & Braun, 2013) relating to the research question and looked for latent themes across these the topic areas. Codes were then sorted into these themes. Some codes became sub-themes while others were consolidated into Master themes. Where possible, the same or similar wording to that used by the co-researchers was used. Where terms that were new to some of the co-researchers such as “resilience” were used, these were explained by the researcher in the feedback sessions (see example of codes sorted into themes in Appendix C).

### **3.7.4 Generating “Ideas for change”**

Ideas for changes were generated by the researcher based on the themes generated after analysis of the data, linking to aspects of college co-researchers would like to change and aspects they considered important. The ideas for change were also shared with co-researchers and added to in the themes feedback session.

### **3.8 Assessing the Quality of the Research**

An important aim of this research was to generate knowledge about young people's experience that could have an impact on practise at their own colleges and more widely. For this to happen, it was important that findings were trustworthy (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The criteria proposed by Guba and Lincon (1989) to assess trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) are widely accepted for use in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

#### ***3.8.1 Credibility***

Credibility represents the extent to which the researcher's representation of the views of the individuals taking part in the study is recognisable to those taking part. In this research, the main researcher's representation of the co-researchers views was checked at two stages, both in sharing individual summaries with the young people and in sharing the themes with the co-researchers. This also gave the co-researchers multiple opportunities to share their views and an opportunity to change their minds. Furthermore, at the end of the project the young people were asked if they felt they had had the opportunity to share their view.

#### ***3.8.2 Transferability***

The findings of the research represent a small group of young people in a unique situation and context. The researcher aims to provide a thick description which would allow those reading the research to make judgements on the transferability of the research to other contexts (Nowell et al., 2017). At a local level, the experiences of the co-researchers in the project are likely to be representative of at least some of the other students on their course



and be a good starting point for teachers' and course leaders' discussions with the whole group.

### ***3.8.3 Dependability***

The research aims to be dependable in that it follows a clearly documented process (Nowell et al., 2017). However, the process was designed to be flexible to promote the involvement of the young people and allow for some choice around involvement at each stage so may not be replicable with another group.

### ***3.8.4 Confirmability***

Confirmability is achieved when it can be demonstrated that the research findings are clearly derived from the data. This requires credibility, transferability and dependability are all achieved (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Nowell et al., 2017). In this project the researcher aimed to document the process and procedure throughout. As previously stated, decisions were made with co-researchers in mind with a focus on transparency and accessibility. The researcher sought as much consultation and collaboration as possible in the context of the limited time frame and need to work remotely. This ongoing engagement with the co-researchers increases the researcher's confidence that the findings are representative of the views the co-researchers chose to share (the data).

## **3.9 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher justified the research paradigm and the use of a participatory research approach involving group work, interviews and photovoice. Inductive thematic analysis was selected as the analytic method most conducive to producing findings that would be recognisable to the co-researchers. This was essential to the purpose of the research in finding out what young people on a supported internship course wanted others to know and in line with a social constructionist ontology.

## Chapter 4 : Findings

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the findings from two thematic analyses (Clarke & Braun, 2013) that were conducted to answer the primary and secondary research questions. The Primary Research question: *What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?* was explored using data from data collection phases one, two and three (see Table 3) and developed by the researcher in conjunction with co-researchers in phase 4. Part 1 of this chapter presents the master themes and subthemes generated, supported by extracts from the transcripts of interviews with the co-researchers. Part 1 concludes with a summary based on the thematic map created by the researcher and a list of “changes we would like to see” which was developed in conjunction with co-researchers, as a response to the findings.

The findings from a second thematic analysis, conducted to answer the secondary research question: *What supports young people with SEND to share their views on what’s important to them in their educational experience?* which included data from all phases of data collection (see Table 3), is presented in Part 2 of this chapter.

**Table 3**

*Phases of data collection*

Phase	Description
1	Initial interviews (co-researchers answered questions they had generated in the planning session)
2	Summary check-in interviews
3	Photo-voice presentations
4	Themes feedback sessions
5	Evaluation and feedback sessions

## 4.2 Part 1: Research Question 1: What do Young People want their Teachers to Know about their Experience on a SIP During a Pandemic?

**Figure 5**

*Thematic Map to Summarise Master Themes Generated in Response to Research Question 1*

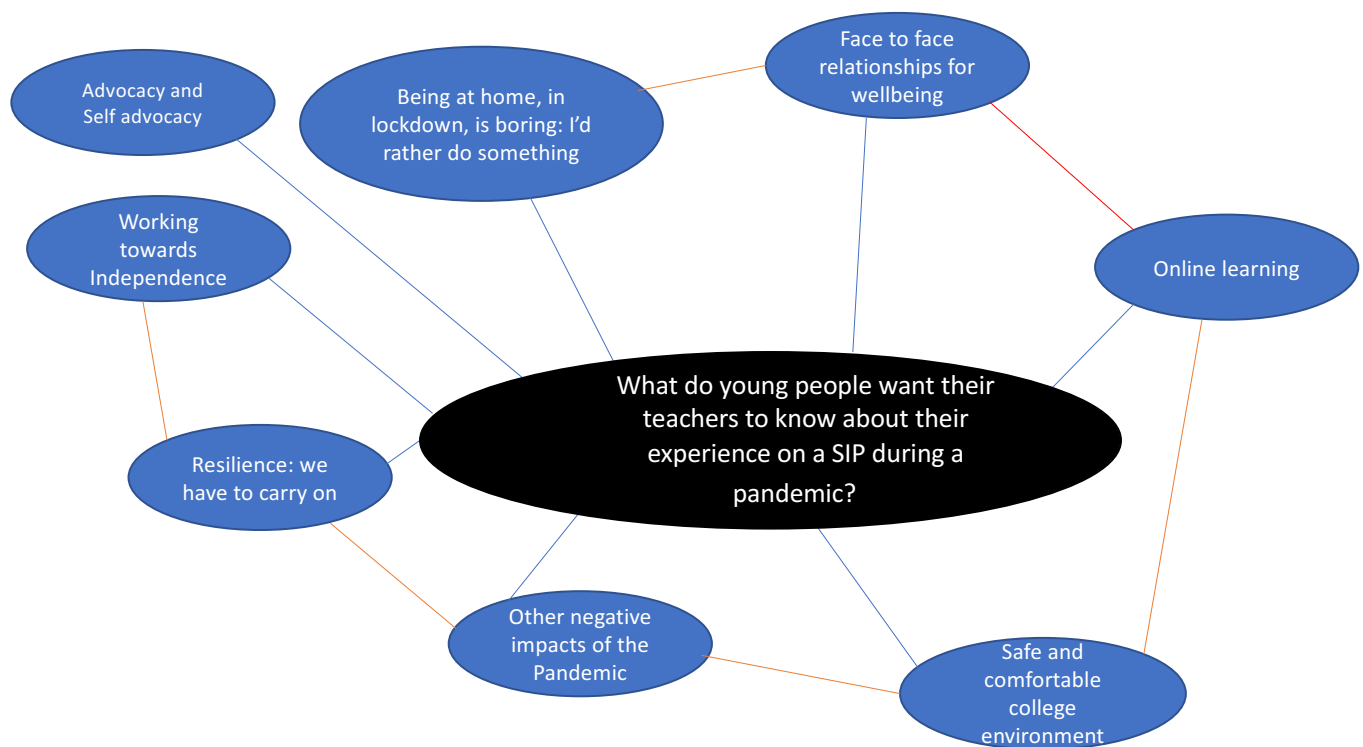


Figure 5 summarises the eight master themes generated from inductive thematic analysis of data from data collection phases one, two and three (see Table 3) and developed by the author in conjunction with co-researchers in phase 4. The master themes and related themes and subthemes are outlined in detail in this section. The themes titles are based closely on direct quotes from the co-researchers and convey what they felt it was important to share about their course, college and experience of the pandemic. This supported co-researchers with SEN to feel their views had been heard (see Part 2) and the generation of practical ideas for change (see section 4.11 Next steps and feedback to the course leaders).

The views of all co-researchers are represented here, but it should be noted views were not always shared by all. However, all agreed that the impacted of the Pandemic had been negative. The co-researchers were disappointed to miss out on experiences such as going to work placements and the face-to-face relationships that were normally part of college life.

#### 4.2.1 Master Theme1: Working towards independence

**Figure 6**

*Thematic map of Master Theme1: Working Towards Independence*

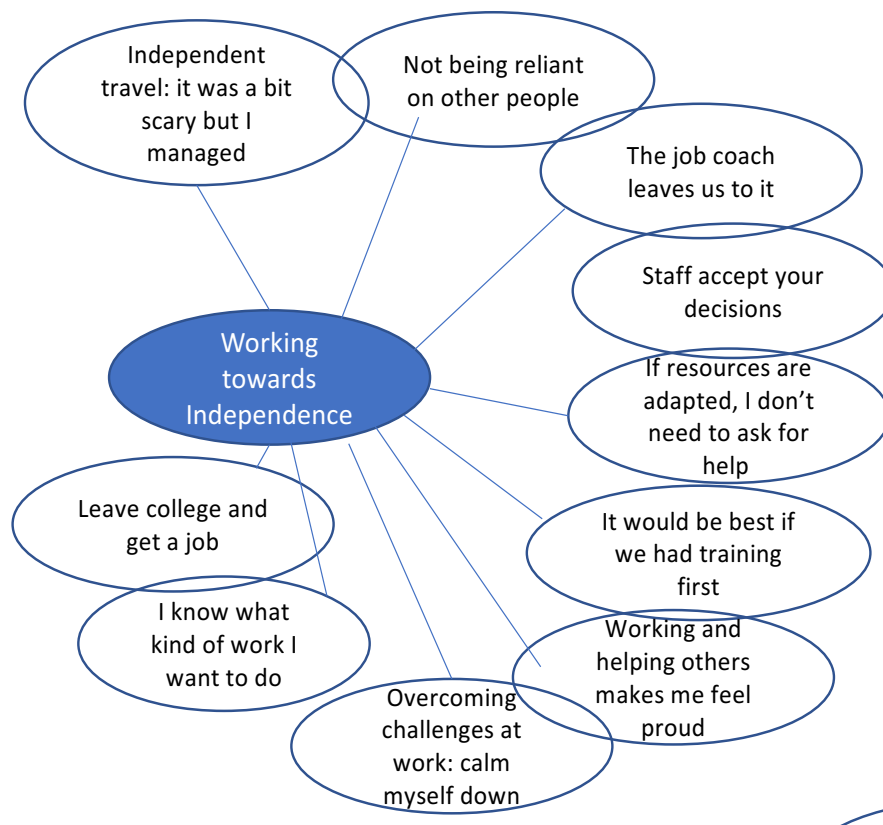


Figure 6 summarises Master Theme1: Working towards Independence. The co-researchers explained the roles they took on and how they overcame challenges independently through opportunities for practical experiences such as travelling to work placements and carrying out work. The co-researchers spoke about support being withdrawn to allow independence and non-directive support being provided. Co-researchers took pride

in their independent roles and achievements on the course. Co-researchers expressed individuality in terms of the types of work they were interested in doing but shared the aspiration of getting a job.

#### **4.2.1.1 Theme 1.1: Leave college and get a job.**

This theme mainly emerged from initial interviews with the co-researchers. All of the co-researchers mentioned “getting a job” as a main aim of the course. This led to the code “The aim of college is to find a (paid) job” which appeared several times across the data, for example appearing five times in Amina’s initial interview and at least once in all initial interviews.

P- why do some people have to repeat a year?

F- so they can find a job (Lines 40-41, Fatima initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.2 Theme 1.2 Not being reliant on other people.**

Amina went on to elaborate on what getting a job would mean to her in terms of not being reliant on other people:

A- Leave college and get a job, where I will be earning, and I can buy things I want

P- yeah

A- instead of being reliant on other people, for example family (Lines 72-74, Amina initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.3 Theme 1.3 If resources are adapted, I don’t need to ask for help.**

Amina expressed frustration over times when resources (such as worksheets) were not adapted, (for example, enlarged) this resulted in making it difficult for her to be independent in lessons. In the extract below, Amina said she *has to* ask someone for help. Amina seemed to be implying she would rather not have to ask and therefore be dependent on someone else, which links to her earlier comments about not being reliant on others.

A- So when the text is small I can't see it, so I will need to ask them. I will need to ask a friend or a classmate. I get into that cycle a lot where, if it's small, I will generally need to ask someone like, you know, can I borrow your work sheet? Because it's small and I can't see it

P- so do you ask-

A-for example today, the booklet was so small and I had to literally ask someone else for their worksheet to see the answers they wrote down. (Lines 21-26, Amina initial interview transcript)

Amina also made the following statement in reference to her teachers, to explain that she feels it is the teacher's responsibly to ensure her work is enlarged: "So generally I'm under your care so, so it's your responsibility to make sure that my work gets enlarged," (Lines 38-39, Amina initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.4 Theme 1.4 Job coach leaves us to it**

When asked "What does the job coach do?" co-researchers emphasised that although the job coach provides some initial support, they are able to work independently. The job coach's role seemed to involve supporting students to prepare for and settle into placements. This was illustrated by Amina who shared "for the first couple of weeks they will make sure that you're ok in the workplace and when you feel comfortable that's when they leave you to it," (Lines 223-224, Amina initial interview transcript) and James who stated:

J- oh the job coach? She just leave us to clean the table and come back down and see us how we're doing

P- so she kind of leaves you to it?

J- yeah, she goes upstairs to her office on her computer and things

P- Ok, so she only gives some help if you need it otherwise, she just lets you kind of get on with it?

J- get on, get on with it (Lines 80-86, James initial interview transcript)

All co-researchers described a positive relationship with job coaches. For example, James states: “we got on and cha, we get on alright (Lines 88, James initial interview transcript). However, when asked about what job coaches do, the co-researchers spoke about themselves doing the work and how they personally overcame challenges (see Theme 1.5) rather than describing what a job coach did to support them. Amina describes emotional support from job coaches, they will “just be there” and “respect or decisions” rather than actively intervene if there is a problem(see Theme 1.8). This theme therefore falls within Master Theme 1: *Working towards independence*. It seemed co-researchers wanted to emphasise their own competence in their work.

#### **4.2.1.5 Theme 1.5 Overcoming challenges at work: calm myself down.**

James explained how he coped with challenges at work such as rudeness from students at the college where he worked. When I explored what had happened, James was keen to tell me how he coped rather than telling me how a member of staff had supported him or giving more details of the incident.

J- I found my work placement good, I like it, it’s good, but I find, people can get rude to me, I didn’t shout I just tell the staff member, calm myself down

P- so, you’ve mentioned people, some people were rude to you on your work placement? Is that right?

J- yeah, cos I didn’t react (Lines 64-68, James initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.6 Theme 1.6 Independent travel: It was a bit scary but I managed.**

Fatima spoke about the importance of the location of the placements, about how some had been far away. Her comment, “it was a bit scary but I managed” demonstrates growth and transformation and an increase in confidence. Reference to developing the confidence to travel appears three times in her interview. Fatima later comments that her mother would prefer her to have a placement a short walk from home, demonstrating how the course provided an opportunity to develop travel skills she might not otherwise have had.

P- ... so with the work placement, how did you find a work placement?

F- it's really easy to get there cos I take the train to (location) and then I get another train to (location) and get off at (location) (Lines 88-90, Fatima initial interview transcript)

P- and you travel there on your own?

F- yes

P- how do you find that?

F- it was a bit scary but I managed

P- yeah, does it feel a bit less scary now you've had more practise?

F- yeah (Lines 94-99, Fatima initial interview transcript)

Mo also comments on developing the confidence to travel independently.

P- so you haven't been to the work placement yet so it's a bit of a hard question, but do you think the work placement is going to make you more confident?

M- yeah

P –why do you think that?

M- because, they are gonna help me with how to get there and what to do like if they can help you, yeah (Lines 71-76, Mo initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.7 Theme 1.7 I Know what kind of work I want to do.**



All co-researchers shared thoughts on work preferences, in terms of types of work and tasks at work. For example:

P- hmm, umm, so what was your work placement like?

F- its um, I have to do the same job every single day so I get a bit bored of doing it

P- mmm, so what's the job you do every day?

F- I clean the table and sweep the floor

P- umm, hmm, so would you like it if it was a bit more varied then? More different things to do?

F- so I like working with little kids, like in a school (Lines 100-106, Fatima initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.8 Theme 1.8 Staff accept your decisions.**

With reference to job coaches, Amina spoke about how her decisions were respected and she felt accepted. It seemed from this that non-directional listening support was appreciated, as it promoted autonomy.

If there's a concern, if you're worried about something they will just be there like – they won't judge you, like they will be there just to listen, they won't judge you or perceive you in a way. They accept your decisions at the end of the day. (Lines 235-237 Amina initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.9 Theme 1.9 Work and helping others makes me feel proud.**

The co-researchers spoke about the range of roles and responsibilities they had had on different work placements, suggesting they took pride in their work. One co-researcher named this specifically:

P- mm, umhmm, umm, do you feel, does going a work placement make you feel more confident?

J- yeah it makes me feel proud

P- hmm? why does it make you feel proud?

J- cos, I see, I like working, cleaning the tables (Lines 64-68, James initial interview transcript)

Fatima also implied she was proud of raising money for charity:

P- umm, for example, I think when we were planning we spoke a little bit about - you did some raising money for charity?

F- yeah we did children in need,

P- ummhmm

F- and, we did, um like a poster, online and we sold like cupcakes in the pop up shop down stairs

P- mmm, ok. And how was that?

F- it was really good

P- you enjoyed that?

F- yeah

P- what did you enjoy about it?

F- I liked it how we raised so much money (Lines 26-37, Fatima initial interview transcript)

Fatima also spoke about some of her responsibilities at home, for example she shared, “Sometimes I go out for a walk with my mum, because she’s not well and the doctor says she needs to walk.” (Lines 182-183, Fatima initial interview transcript)

#### **4.2.1.10 Theme 1.10 It would be best if we had training first.**

This theme was added as a result of a discussion with Amina about the initial themes generated. Amina wanted to emphasise the importance of having sufficient training to carry out a role independently.

A- when we get an experience at a workplace, we take on a task, we never had that experience before of handling data on a computer.

P- umm hmm

A- It would be best if we had a training first and then we were given the task. That would make sense. (Lines 119-123, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### **4.2.1.11 Summary of Master Theme 1: Working towards Independence.**

Overall, although co-researchers expressed that support was useful at times, they were keen to emphasise their competence and successes in work placements, travel and college life. Practical experiences of independence seemed to have built confidence and some co-researchers emphasised a desire not to need to rely on others.

#### **4.3 Master Theme 2: Being at home, in lockdown, is boring: I'd rather do something**

##### **Figure 7**

*Thematic map of Master Theme 2: Being at home, in lockdown, is boring: I'd rather do something*

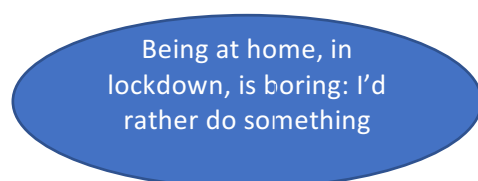


Figure 7 illustrates Master Theme2: Being at home (lockdown) is boring: I'd rather do something. The co-researchers mentioned work placements being delayed or no longer possible due to covid-19 as well as college-based and other leisure activities being cancelled

or not available. Two co-researchers specifically mentioned boredom at home during lockdown, boredom was strongly linked to not seeing friends (see Master Theme4: Face to face relationships for wellbeing) but also linked to a lack of other activities, particularly in the first lockdown period. For example, two extracts from Fatima's interview illustrated how she felt she had little to do as college didn't provide activities.

P- um, ok so how did you find the lockdown?

F- it boring

P- hmm, boring?

F- I have to sit at home doing nothing all day (Lines 45-48, Fatima initial interview transcript)

P- How was working at home?

F- we did like packs in college and since like the pandemic and Covid started, I stopped doing it

P- so you stopped doing the packs?

F- yeah

P – umm, did you do any college work at home?

F- no, they didn't give us any (Lines 54-60, Fatima initial interview transcript)

Furthermore, Amina raises a similar issue in the following quotes: “Generally I'd say we were bored during lockdown, we had to request for homeworks.” (Lines 134-135, Amina initial interview transcript). Amina also spoke about eagerness to be spending time on work placements “I'm not complaining but I'd rather do something other than being at home” (Lines 186, Amina initial interview transcript).

#### **4.4 Master Theme 3: Online learning**

#### **Figure 8**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme3: Online learning*

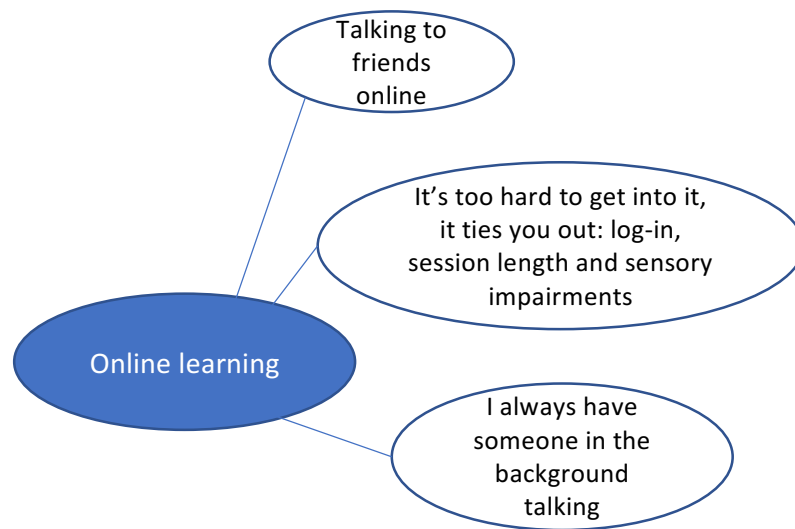


Figure 8 summarises Master Theme3: Online learning. One of the main issues with online learning in the context of lockdown and quarantine periods was the lack of face-to-face interaction with friends and teachers (see Master Theme4: importance of face-to-face relationships). Additionally, a separate theme was created to illustrate other issues with online learning which linked to sensory impairments, learning difficulties and the lack of suitable learning spaces for co-researchers at home. However, communication technology also offered some benefits such as an opportunity to keep in touch with friends.

**4.4.1 Theme 3.1: It's too hard to get into it, it tires you out : log-in, session length and sensory impairments**

Amina was able to explain some challenges with online learning as follows:

My lockdown was pretty tough. Because, in a way it is tough because you have to work from home. And with me, in terms of my visual impairment, is always going to be on Teams or going to be on zoom and they say you can always turn the camera

off but with me that just doesn't sit too well with me, because I generally, even if I turn off my camera and I have to see that person for two and a half hours which is really daunting for me. So anyone who's got a condition, a medical condition or a sensory condition, it doesn't really sit well with them. It really doesn't.

Because it's pretty, it tires you out, in a way, it tires you out of seeing someone, for two and a half, for two hours maximum. (Lines 78-84 Amina initial interview transcript)

The extract below illustrates how Mo had difficulty with logging into college systems and remote communication in general.

P – did you have use Teams at all for college?

M- no, I don't it's too hard to get into it, so yeah

P- hmm, well I guess you are using it right now because we are talking over Teams , but is it hard to use from your own computer?

M- yeah

P- yeah, can be tricky?

M- yeah

P- well that's something perhaps, would you like to practise that in college in case you need to do that again?

M-yeah

P - Which do you prefer – online or face to face?

M –face to face

P – mmm

M- because when we do online, online will be too hard, to like hear. And face to face its easy, I talk on, like face to face (Lines 28-42 Mo initial interview transcript)

Mo later did join Microsoft Teams sessions from home, with support from a family member. In the evaluation sessions, tutors expressed how young people on the SIP had made huge progress in using the Microsoft Teams technology.

#### ***4.4.2 Theme 3.2: I always have someone in the background talking***

Another difficulty facing co-researchers undertaking online learning was that some co-researchers did not have a quiet space at home, which made it difficult to participate fully in Microsoft Teams meetings and online sessions. Amina explained the issue as follows:

Because at home when I'm stuck at home for 14 days or, I don't have any college, I have team meetings on the Teams, I can't really hear myself because at home I always have someone in the background talking. When you're at home you can't really focus when you've got a team meeting, on zoom. (Lines 185-188, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.4.3 Theme 3.3 Talking to friends online***

Two co-researchers mentioned speaking to friends online, therefore applications such as Microsoft Teams may have been a way for some young people to maintain relationships. For example, Amina shared “You’re going be checking emails, talking on the phone, talking to friends online.” (Line 185, Amina initial interview transcript)

#### ***4.4.4 Summary of Master Theme 3 Online learning***

Online learning became a significant part of the SIPs curriculum due to the government imposed “lockdown” period. This gave YP on the SIPs course opportunities to develop skills in using the software needed. However, remote learning clearly presented an additional barrier to learning for some YP with SEND. YP with sensory impairments and communication difficulties perceived this type of learning as more difficult or more tiring. Online learning was also challenging for YP who did not have access to a quiet space at home.

#### 4.5 Master Theme4: Face to face relationships for wellbeing

**Figure 9**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme4: Face to Face Relationships for Wellbeing*

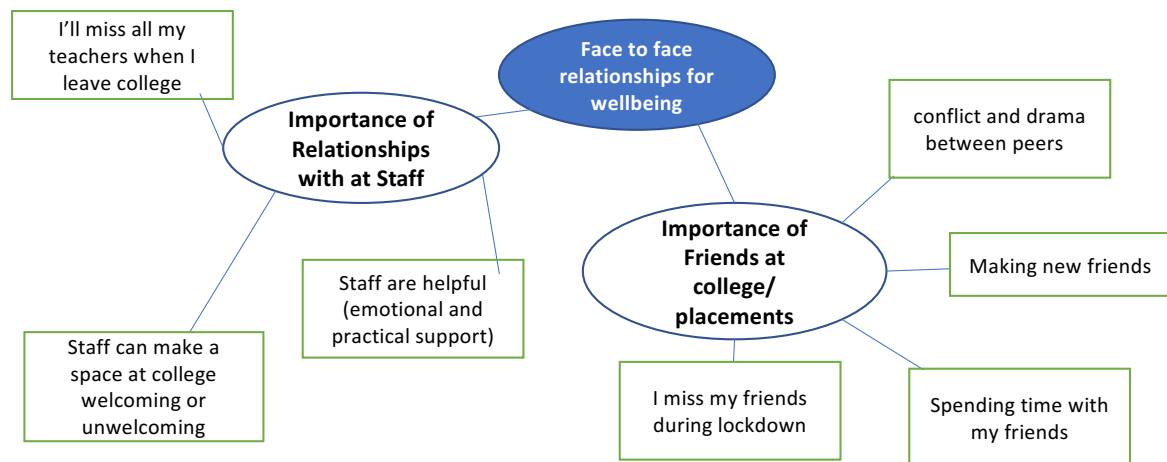


Figure 9 summarises Master Theme4: Face to face relationships for wellbeing. Co-researchers frequently expressed that in-person relationships with both friends and teachers were important to mental health and wellbeing. For example, for one co-researcher, although keeping in touch with friends via phone or videocall is mentioned, it is clear that this does not provide a substitute for meeting in person.

A-being a topic that many of us feel scared or petrified of actually saying but mental health does get impacted. Due to the Covid.

P- hmm,umm

A-generally in lockdowns you feel lonely, generally you don't have anybody to talk to like, in person.

P- umm, hmm, yeah,



A-I speak to family but-

P- nice to speak to your friends as well

A- at college we speak to our friends or speak to teachers.

P-yeah, that's important as well. (Lines 342-351, Amina themes discussion)

#### ***4.5.1 Theme 4.1: Importance of friends at college and placements***

Although some interview questions specifically referenced friendships, friendships with peers also came up in response to many other questions. The co-researchers both experienced missing their friends during the lockdown and anticipated missing friends after leaving college.

##### **4.5.1.1 Subtheme 4.1.1 Spending time with my friends.**

Co-researchers mentioned being with friends as an aspect of college they enjoyed. For example Amina shared “after pandemic I was really excited to go back. Just to catch up with friends,” (Line 122, Amina initial interview). Furthermore, James mentioned his friends as part of his presentation:

T- what else do you like at college?

J- spending time with my friends (Line 15-16 James presentation transcript)

##### **4.5.1.2 Subtheme 4.1.2 I Miss my friends during lockdown.**

Following on from the positive feelings about the experience of friendships at college expressed in subtheme 4.1.1, there was strong agreement among co-researchers that friends were missed during lockdown, leading to boredom, stress and loneliness. This was also a major reason that face-to-face learning was considered preferable to online.

P- ok, what kind of effect has the pandemic has on your SIPs course?

F- Um not able to go college and not seeing your friends

P- mmm, and what was that like?

F- it was boring (Lines 84-87, Fatima initial interview transcript)

P- um, which do you prefer – online or face-to-face?

J- Face-to-face, cos I miss my friends and stuff

(Lines 52-53 James initial interview transcript)

I will say [Lockdown] it's stressful because, I didn't get to see my friends for a very long time, (Lines 121-122 Amina initial interview transcript)

In real life, I'd rather speak to someone in real life and face-to-face, rather than have them quarantining at home, calling them on my personal phone (Lines 231-232, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### **4.5.1.3 Subtheme 4.1.3 Making new friends.**

The extracts below illustrate how Amina felt she had built relationships at college and on placement over time. Amina valued opportunities to meet new people and explained how the experience had built her confidence. Amina later commented on how lack of opportunity to socialise due to government “lockdown” restrictions could have an impact on her confidence and that of her peers (See comments in “changes we would like to see” section, lines 435-450 Amina themes discussion transcript).

P- mentioned this a little bit already, but did you make new friends at the placement?

A- yes, I have

P - at college?

A- yes, I made plenty at college. I thought to myself, when I first started at college I thought to myself- I don't know anybody. Some were school friends, I knew them from before. With me, it takes time for me as a person, it takes time for me to go and

generally open myself up, it generally just takes time. If I know someone I'll go up and say hi. If I don't know them then- that's when I don't feel comfortable at all  
(Lines 249-256 Amina initial interview transcript)

P- does going to the work placement make you more confident?

A- yes. It does. Because you're meeting new people, you're making new friends, every single day

P- mm, um, did you ever feel nervous about going on the job placement?

A-I did, I did feel nervous, because I didn't know anybody but once you have that connection and that bond with someone then you overcome your nervousness (*Lines 241-245 Amina initial interview transcript*)

Fatima also mentions making new friends on her placement:

P- yeah. So did you make new friends on any of your placements?

F- I did, in XXXX there's two girls that speak the same language as me,

P- oh, ok.

F- so they speak, they speak Bengali, so I made friends there (*Lines 163-166, Fatima initial interview transcript*)

#### **4.5.1.4 Subtheme 4.3 Conflict and drama between peers.**

Fatima emphasises the importance of relationships at college and feelings of discomfort when relationships are strained.

P Ummhmm (...) ok. Is there anything you dislike about your course?

F- I don't like conflict

P- ummm, yeah

F- drama in the college, it upsets me

P – so you mean when someone has an argument or something like that, people fall out?

F- yes (Lines 18-23, Fatima initial interview transcript)

#### ***4.5.2 Theme 4.2 Importance of relationships with staff at college***

Throughout the research, relationships with staff were clearly valued which was expressed in terms of face-to-face interaction with teachers being missed during lockdown periods and young people anticipating missing teachers after leaving college. Co-researchers identified emotional support, practical support and staff being helpful and approachable as important aspects of their experience.

##### **4.5.2.1 Subtheme 4.2.1 I'll miss all my teachers when I leave college.**

James and other co-researchers expressed positive feelings about their teachers often, demonstrating how much teachers were valued. This was often expressed in terms of missing teachers:

P- hmm, what's making you feel nervous [about leaving college] if you don't mind my asking?

J- to miss all my teachers when I leave college in July (Lines 105-106 James initial interview transcript)

##### **4.5.2.2 Subtheme 4.2.2 Staff are helpful (emotional and practical support).**

Co-researcher's often expressed confidence that staff would be helpful as well as seeming happy to approach staff. Mo expresses this when asked about the "learning zone"

area in the college, as part of his photo presentation. Co-researchers generally spoke about receiving this help face-to-face, rather than remotely.

M- um, because if we go the learning zone, they [staff] gonna help us, if we need help like with our work. If we have got homework for example, they help us, they will be kind, really helpful. (Lines 21-22 Mo presentation transcript)

P- umm, umm hmm, some people also spoke about, um, relationships with staff at college are important

A- yes. They are. So say for example if you've got a worry or concern, you can go and explain your worry or concern.

P- yeah

A- so your stuck with work, at least in person you could actually say to your teachers like, sir, you know the work that you've given me during quarantine? I did not get it. (Lines 253-260, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### **4.5.2.3 Subtheme 4.2.5: Staff can make a space at college welcoming or unwelcoming.**

In the photo-voice presentation, Mo made reference to non-teaching staff at college and their impact on his experience of the environment. Mo shared “I like Costa because I like they sell drinks and snacks and the staff are polite and kind.” (Lines 1-2, Mo presentation transcript) and “Dislike the XXX restaurant because the staff there is strict.” (Lines 4-5, Mo presentation transcript)

#### ***4.5.3 Summary of Master Theme 4, Face-to-face relationships for wellbeing***

The co-researchers contrasted time spent away from college during “lockdown” periods with their experience in college. “Lockdown” periods were described as lonely and stressful, and this was attributed in part to the fact it was not possible to socialize with friends. Co-researchers also seemed to find it easier to access support from staff in a face-to-face context. Although relationships with peers, and some environments at college, could be sources of stress there were generally positive accounts of relationships with peers and staff at college suggesting relationships experienced at college promoted wellbeing.

#### 4.6 Master Theme5: Safe and comfortable college environment

**Figure 10**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme5: Safe and comfortable college environment*

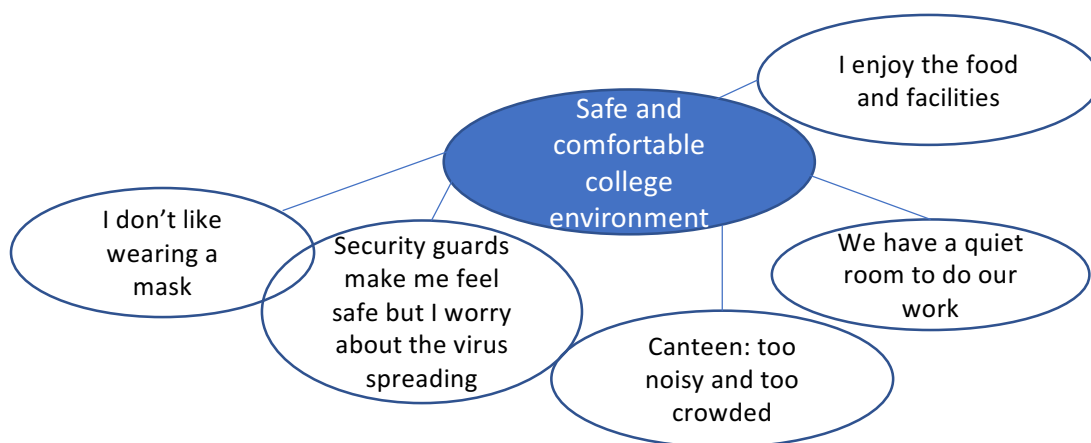


Figure 10 summarises Master Theme5: Safe and comfortable college environment in which co-researchers spoke about what made college a safe and comfortable place to be. The word comfortable took into account positive comments about the food and facilities as well as negative attitudes to overcrowding. The issue of safety seemed more pressing in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

##### 4.6.1 Theme 5.1: I enjoy the food and facilities

In their photo-voice presentations, co-researchers mentioned that they liked the food and the facilities in college. (See above, lines 1-2, Mo presentation transcript). Fatima mentioned “we have printers, so we can print our work. I like the printing machine which helps me to print all my work” (Lines 7-8, Fatima presentation transcript). James shared “I enjoy the food at college” (Line 1, James presentation transcript).

#### ***4.6.2 Theme 5.2: We have a quiet room to do our work***

Co-researchers expressed that quiet spaces in college were important for focus and generally preferred. For example, “We also have a quiet room to do our work.” (Line 10, Fatima presentation transcript)

The importance of quiet learning spaces was also apparent for Amina, who described her difficulties with working at home in a busy environment (see “Online learning” section “Theme 3.2: lack of quiet space for online meetings at home” above.)

#### ***4.6.3 Theme 5.3: Canteen: too noisy and too crowded***

James and Fatima agreed that the canteen was too crowded, this is something James also mentioned in his individual interview. The co-researchers showed strong agreement with this theme in the themes feedback meeting.

J- what don't you like about the canteen?

F- because it's too noisy and it's too crowded

J- yes

F- you have no space to sit!

J- true

(Line 24-28, Fatima presentation transcript)

#### ***4.6.4 Theme 5.4: Security guards make me feel safe but I worry about the virus spreading***

The importance of security guards was mentioned by the co-researchers in their presentations, for example “The security are nice they make me feel safe” (Line 2, James presentation transcript)

The additional safety measures in place in college linked to Covid-19 were mentioned by several of the co-researchers, with some showing concern about the difficulty implementing the safety rules in the college environment, which is illustrated in the extract below:

J- people getting close to each others, they are not keeping 2 metres apart. I feel worried

T- right so, how do you feel when people are near you?

J- they might spread the virus more

T - that’s true, what can we do to change that? To make it better?

J- get the tape on the floor, and signs (lines 8-12, James presentation transcript)

#### ***4.6.5 Theme 5.5: I don’t like wearing a mask.***

All the co-researchers were aware of the risks of Covid and saw the importance of safety measures. However, they also shared feelings of physical discomfort around wearing a mask in particular, for example: “I don’t like wearing a mask. I go Arabic school with my mum and I have to wear it. I like the ones that you can breathe in but I don’t like the other one you can’t breathe inside.” (Lines 75-76 Fatima initial interview).

#### ***4.6.6 Summary of Master Theme 5: Safe and comfortable college environment***

Co-researchers shared both their likes and dislikes regarding the physical environment of college, which included sensory experiences such as noise. The college offered quiet



learning environments and useful facilities and co-researchers generally find the space safe and welcoming. However, crowded spaces were disliked and the Covid-19 pandemic brought additional concerns about crowding such as the danger of the virus spreading.

#### 4.7 Master Theme 6: Other negative impacts of the pandemic

**Figure 11**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme6: Other Negative Impacts of the Pandemic*

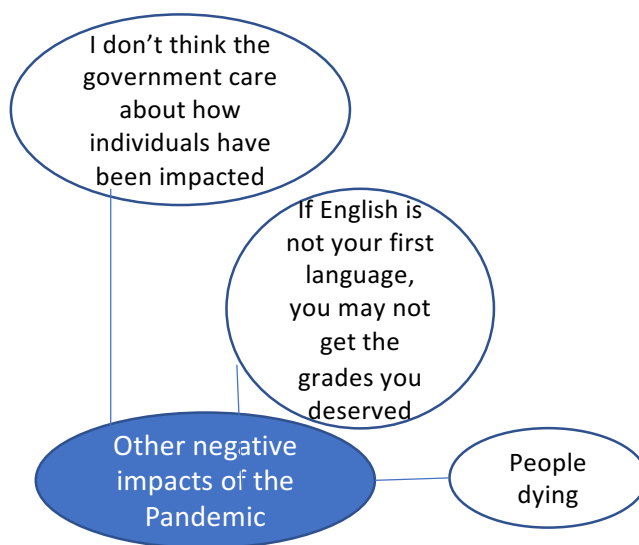


Figure 11 summarises Master Theme6: Other negative impacts of the pandemic. The pandemic had impacted every aspect of the co-researchers lives, causing them to miss college and resulting in changes within the college which co-researchers observed as part of their photo-voice projects (see, Master Theme5: Importance of the college as a safe and comfortable place to be). However, co-researchers were also aware of the wider impacts of the pandemic and some wanted to discuss these wider impacts as well as their own

experience. Some co-researchers shared feelings of distress while others expressed anger at the government's response and support for vulnerable groups.

#### ***4.7.1 Theme 6.1 People dying***

The co-researchers demonstrated awareness and concern about people dying as a result of the pandemic, which may have linked to their concerns over safety in college. The co-researchers convey that the number of people dying during the pandemic is causing them personal distress. For example, Mo shared: "it's so hard, people dying and, they are trying to find a cure to fix that" (line 17, Mo initial interview transcript).

James also expressed his concerns: "I found it annoying, people keep dying every day, these people ain't ready to die yet cos, not good." (line 59-60 James initial interview transcript)

#### ***4.7.2 Theme 6.2 If English is not your first language, you may not get the grades you deserved***

Amina chooses to answer a slightly different question to the one posed, about her experience working from home, to share her views on education for young people more widely. She raises concerns about students with English as an additional language in particular and there is a sense that the loss will impact the future, as well as the present with the phrase "*how the current pandemic ruined our future. It kind of has, taken away our future because, I will say taken away our future*".

P- so you talked, mentioned a little bit already about how was working from home?

Anything else about working from home that you wanted to mention?

A-umm, its not the same. Like –generally like- your meeting people face to face and this time around it has to be from home. I was watching a documentary actually and it said, how the current pandemic ruined our future. It kind of has, taken away our future because, I will say taken away our future because with the documentary it's

self, it mentioned about how students, like A level students, they did not get the predicted grades that they wanted. A teachers probably did not mark the exam papers right so- Generally if you come from an immigrant, migrate from another country and English is not your first language which is understandable you thought that you would get As but you get Bs and Cs so it doesn't make sense. (Lines 88-97, Amina initial interview transcript)

#### ***4.7.3 Theme 6.3: I don't think the government care about what the individuals have to say***

Throughout the project, Amina questioned and expressed dissatisfaction with the government's response to the Pandemic questioning the rules and lack of support for the impact on mental health, as illustrated in the extract bellow.

A-I wanted a winter package and it still hasn't even been done

P- yeah

A-I blame to government for that.

P- yeah. Yeah, so-

A- they always talk about the case rising and things like that but generally I don't think they even care about what the individuals really have to say about how they've been impacted due to the Covid-19. They only care about how the NHS is vulnerable.

But we are vulnerable. (Line 358-365 Amina themes discussion transcript)

Mistrust in the government was also expressed by another co-researcher in his response to this subtheme.

P -hmm, mmm. Some people spoke about how they weren't too happy with Government and what they were doing

J- yeah. They are not telling the truth. (Lines 80-82 James and Mo themes feedback interview transcript)

#### 4.7.4 Summary of Master Theme 6: Other negative impacts of the pandemic

This theme illustrates the co-researchers had been following the national impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some co-researchers expressed distress at the loss of life caused by the virus while others were concerned about the wider impacts, such as increasing inequalities in education, as students are denied opportunities such as their exams. The handling of the crisis by the government and the government's transparency is questioned and it is implied the needs the co-researchers are considered in the public health policy.

#### 4.8 Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy

**Figure 12**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy*



Figure 12 summarises Master Theme 7: Advocacy and Self-advocacy. Self-Advocacy has been defined as speaking up for one's self and one's rights as a person (Goodley, 2000). All of the co-researchers in this project could be seen as self-advocates as they spoke about

what was important to them. Amina was particularly interested in raising awareness about her medical condition and had a strong sense of her rights. Amina's comments suggested that she was interested in being an advocate for others with disabilities.

***4.8.1 Theme 7.1 Making others aware about my visual impairment and the barriers that I face***

Amina showed an interest in raising awareness about her medical condition and helping others in her volunteer work. For example, Amina shared, "I did leaders in the community where I worked as well, for volunteering, where I educate young individuals like myself where its ok to talk about your condition and making others aware that are not aware." (Lines 156-158, Amina initial interview transcript). Amina also shared an idea for a presentation she would like to give to her class as follows:

A-yeah, umm, so, present like, do like a power-point or word document about my visual impairment and the barriers that I face

P- umm, hmm

A-and how I will overcome them, and advice to another student regarding about if they got a visual impairment what should they do

P- ok

A- if they was in the same position I was in 5 years time

P- ok, ok

A-and um. I actually done it

P- that sounds, that sounds really interesting

A- So, um, I would like to present it to the class (Lines 3-13, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.8.2 Theme 7.2 If you've got a learning difficulty or a disability, activities need to match your Needs***

Amina demonstrated awareness of her right to access to adaptations to meet her needs. For example, Amina spoke about her expectation that teachers should adapt resources to meet her needs and the need for activities to be adapted to suit young people with SEN. For example, she mentioned, “generally I'm under your [teachers] care so, so it's your responsibility to make sure that my work gets enlarged,” (Lines 157-158, Amina initial interview transcript). Amina raised the issue of adaptation of activities again in her second interview.

P- so it's basically saying its important, taking part in lots of activities, inside and outside college, for wellbeing

A-hmm, like I kind of said before, it needs to really match your needs. Like sometimes, how do I put this? It needs to match your needs like sometimes you, say for example if you've got a learning difficulty or a disability, that can actually, put you off of doing any tasks.

P-Hmmm?

A-Like, Say for example, if I was in a larger group of, if I was in a larger group with someone, and we were in a group and I had to share my ideas, like, it sometimes, it takes me a long time to actually process the information that was given to me. (Lines 136-145, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.8.3 Summary of Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy***

Amina demonstrated passion for advocacy and Self-Advocacy in two ways. Firstly, Amina wanted to raise awareness about her condition in a range of ways. Secondly, Amina was aware that herself and others had a right to adaptations to the environment to promote access to activities and inclusion. Amina spoke not only about her own medical condition and learning needs (self-advocacy) but also about the needs of other with both similar and different needs to herself (advocacy).

#### 4.9 Master Theme 8, Resilience: we have to carry on

**Figure 13**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme 8: Resilience: we have to carry on*

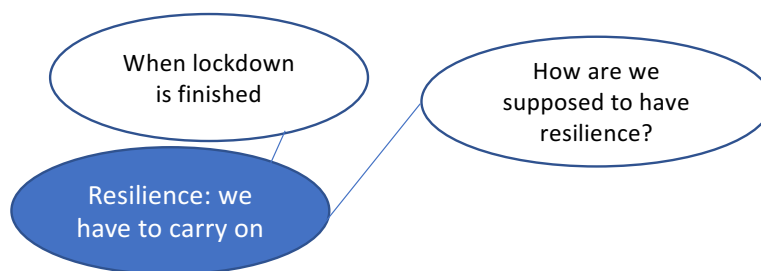


Figure 13 summarises Master Theme8: Resilience: *we have to carry on*. Throughout their interviews, co-researchers expressed challenges and distress resulting from the pandemic but also a sense of hope and a drive to carry on. The theme of resilience could be seen to run throughout the co-researchers reports of their experience as they speak about overcoming fears, taking on challenges or in just carrying on with work that is sometimes boring or online learning they found difficult to engage with. Amina made this point elegantly when she said, “Sometimes it doesn’t make sense to us but we have to carry on. Life carries on.” (Lines 124-125 Amina initial interview transcript)

##### 4.9.1 Theme 8.1 That’s when lockdown will be finished

One way in which the co-researchers coped was by thinking ahead to the end of the current lockdown/ Pandemic. This was expressed in talking about the end of the current lockdown and plans for when lockdown restrictions were lifted.

J- it's going to end on the second of December that's when lockdown will be finished

P- yeah this, this one hopefully will end then, yeah I'm looking forward to that as well

J- so will that mean we see our friends and family? Is that possible? See our friends (Lines 29-31 James initial interview transcript)

P- find a cure to fix that? Yeah I agree with you. I think the good thing is that they find a vaccine now and they found some medicines to stop people from dying, so at least the scientists have made a bit of progress on that

M- hopefully, hopefully, hopefully it should go (Lines 18-20, Mo initial interview transcript)

#### ***4.9.2 Theme 8.2 How are we supposed to have resilience, in ourselves, when Covid-19 is just taking every single luxury that we ever had?***

In response to the researcher's choice of "resilience" as a theme, Amina made an important point about the fact that much of what supports resilience isn't possible right now, due to government restrictions in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

P- yeah so, this also came through in talking about resilience? Which is just coping, because, this is a really hard time, but I think you and the other students as well are coping well.

A- how are we supposed to have resilience when covid-19 is going around?



P- sorry, can you say that again?

A- how are we supposed to have resilience, in ourselves, when Covid-19 is just taking every single luxury that we ever had?

P- yes. You're right, because of Covid-19-

A- We cannot even go to places!

P- yeah

A-that we actually want to go to. Like let alone a music festival. Can't even enjoy ourselves like we have done, like we have done when Covid 19 happened. (Lines 372-383 Amina themes discussion transcript)

This links back to much of what Amina spoke about in her first interview, where she talks about missing the activities she used to enjoy, which are no longer possible due to the pandemic. Other researchers also mentioned cancelled activities due to the pandemic.

#### ***4.9.3 Summary of Master Theme 8: Resilience: we have to carry on***

Co-researchers spoke about looking forward to the end of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions, often expressing hope alongside distress (see Master Theme 6) and loneliness (see Master Theme4). In this way co-researchers expressed resilience alongside the challenges posed by the pandemic. On the other hand, in theme 8.2 a co-researcher also challenges the notion of resilience, pointing out that much of what supports resilience isn't possible during "lockdown" periods.

#### **4.10 Summary of Findings in Part 1**

**Figure 14**

*Thematic map of findings from research question 1*

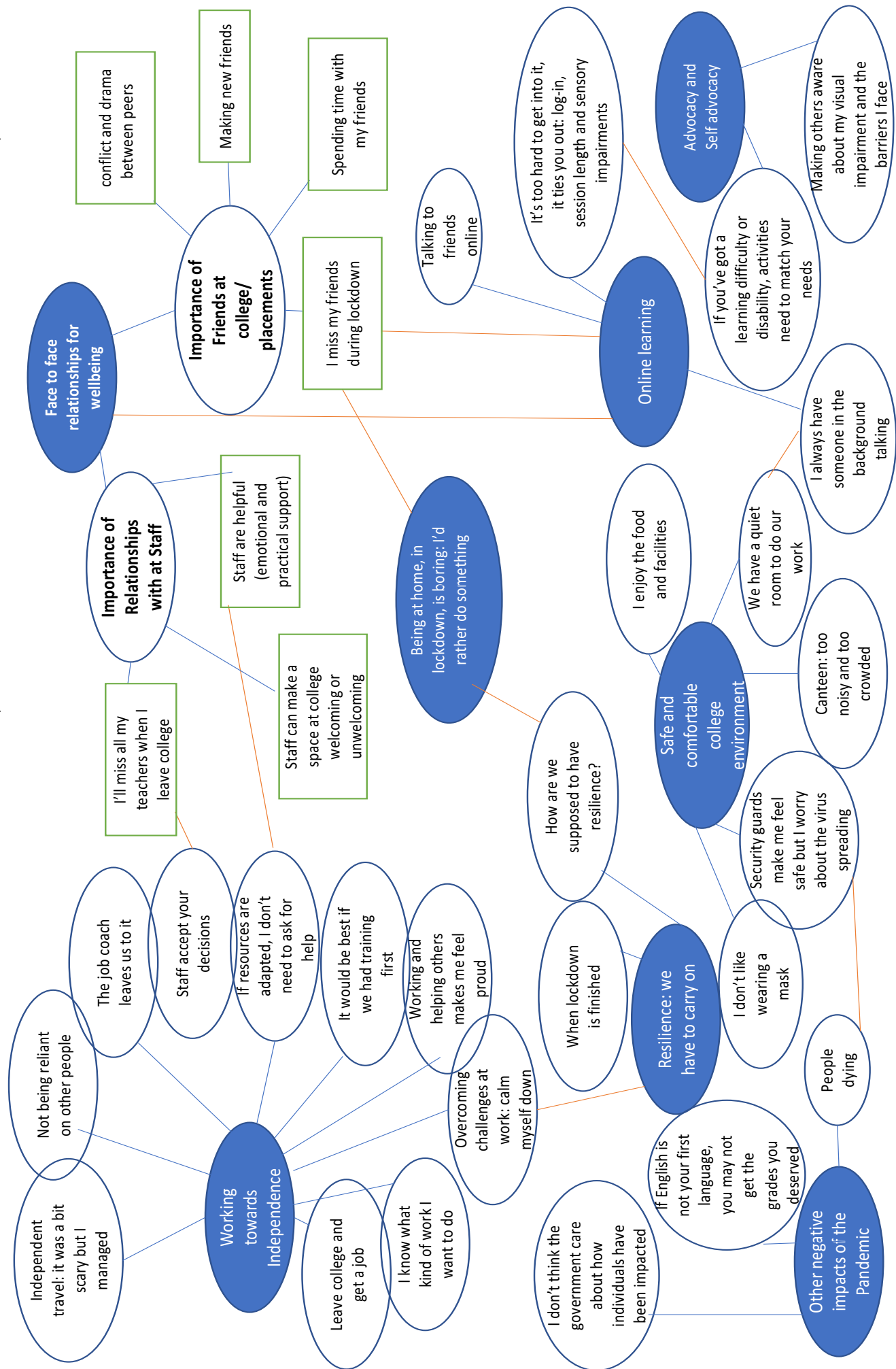


Figure 14 summarises the themes generated in Part 1 of this chapter exploring *What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?* Master themes are shown in blue ovals and subthemes are shown in white. Blue lines link Master themes to subthemes while red lines indicate connections across themes. For example, “people dying” a theme of “wider issues linked to pandemic” is linked to the “importance of safety” a theme of “safe and comfortable college environment”. Similarly, co-researchers spoke about issues with online learning in terms of access and their special educational needs. However, the bigger issue with the lockdown and resulting emphasis on online learning appeared to be the overall lack of social contact, the loss of the day to day in person interactions that were so important in providing emotional and practical support.

Co-researchers spoke about building confidence through real world, practical experiences of work, travel and meeting new people which were also not possible in the lockdown context. Co-researchers were keen to demonstrate their independence and share their aspirations. Furthermore, co-researchers showed concern beyond themselves in their concerns about the impact of the pandemic and their desire to support others through sharing their experience. Despite the challenge posed by the remote delivery of the project itself, co-researchers showed great ability to reflect on their experiences and continue to learn new skills in the Covid context. The theme of resilience could be seen throughout the interviews with co-researchers, through overcoming anxieties and challenges on work placements to coping with the boredom and isolation experienced during “lockdown” periods. Although a co-researcher also raised the important point, that so much of what supports resilience isn’t possible at the moment, as being with friends and engaging in many of our hobbies and interests isn’t possible.

After exploring the co-researchers views on and experiences of their SIP before and during the Pandemic it was clear, alongside much positive feedback, there were some

changes the co-researchers would like to see. The process of generating a list of ideas for change and plans for the future is detailed in the next section of this chapter.

#### **4.11 Next Steps and Feedback to the Course Leaders**

A list of “Changes we would like to see” emerged from the co-researcher’s comments on dislikes or concerns at college and their challenging experiences of lockdown. The researcher drafted a list of changes based on her reading of the transcripts and her initial themes. The ideas for changes were then developed to include “plans we would like to make” in discussion with the co-researchers during the themes feedback session. The ideas for change are listed below.

- All resources adapted to meet students’ special educational needs in advance of the lessons
- Brail around the college
- Support with access to the online learning
- Changes to the sessions: some Microsoft Teams sessions to be replaced by phone sessions
- Improved wheel-chair access around college such as ramps and automatic doors
- More places to sit at lunchtime
- Better layout of the canteen
- Staff to support students to be more mindful of social distancing

#### **4.12 Plans we Would Like to Make**

##### ***4.12.1 Planning a reunion***

The researcher came up with the idea of “planning a reunion” in response to the co-researchers’ comments about the importance of their relationships with both peers and teachers at college. This idea was met with enthusiasm from the co-researchers.

P- I’m thinking about if we had a re-union or something in another year’s time?

A- yes. Have a reunion like, a catch up basically like, I haven’t seen you in a very long time! Could we catch up, if we had the chance? (Lines 501-504 Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.12.2 Events to enjoy in person***

The idea of planning an event was generated in collaboration with a co-researcher. The suggestion of “More to do during lockdown” was the researcher’s response to co-researchers’ comments about experiencing boredom in the first lockdown due to lack of activities (see section 4.4.1, Theme 2.1). The suggestion of “more to do” was somewhat vague and the researcher had the initial lack of home learning activities in mind originally. However, Amina is very clear here that she wants to attend in person events again. Such events were not legal at the time of the interview, but the researcher suggested the possibility of planning an event which could take place when restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic were lifted. Amina is enthusiastic about this possibility.

P- Um, hmm. More to do during lockdown?

A - During lockdown? What do you mean?

P- so if there’s a lockdown, um, having some activities to do, even during the lockdown.

A – attending events.

P- umm hmm

A- something we can actually go and enjoy. I'm sure everyone would actually want events in life. Something they can enjoy, instead of being too scared to be at home during lockdown,

P- umm,

A - I'm sure. Our self-esteem and our confidence is knocked down when there is a quarantine or lockdown restrictions in place by the government

P- yeah. I wonder if it's worth planning some events for spring or summer when things are gonna be better because we will all have had the vaccine?

A-Yes

P – that could be? Maybe that could be a compromise

A – some activities that we all enjoy like music and arts (lines 435-450 Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### 4.13 Part 2: “What supports YP with SEND to share their views on what’s important to them in their educational experience?”

**Figure 15**

*Thematic Map to Summarise Master Themes Generated in Response to Research Question 2 (RQ2)*

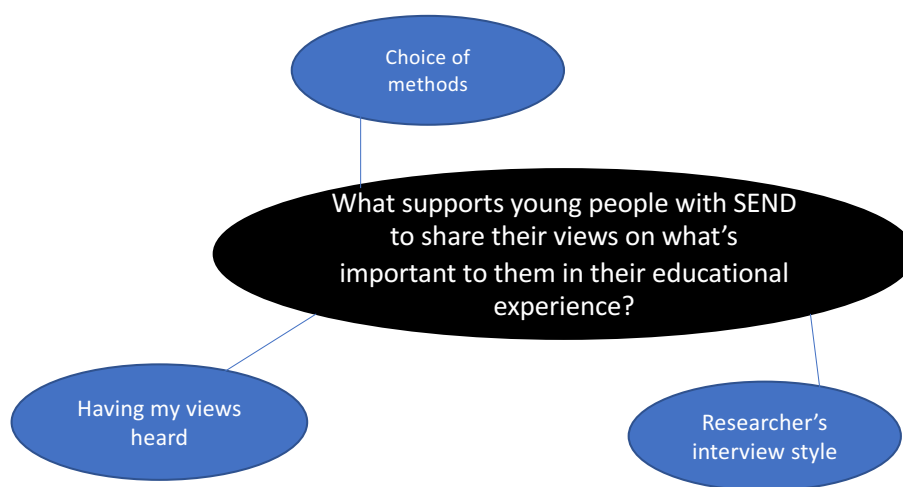


Figure 15 summarises the Master themes generated in response to Research Question 2. The researcher re-visited the data using a selective coding approach, looking specifically for co-researchers’ feedback to the researcher on the research process. The researcher looked for examples of her own use of empathetic interviewing (Oakley, 2016) and the impact of this.

Feedback was explicitly sought by the researcher in the final feedback, evaluation and debriefing meeting (Phase 5) but was also offered by co-researchers at other points in the research. The researcher also noted occasions where little feedback was gained from co-researchers, suggesting limited involvement in the process. Analysis of the data led to three Master themes: choice of methods, having my views heard and the researcher’s interview

style. Feedback on the process was largely positive but the researcher also identified areas for improvement.

#### 4.14 Master Theme1 (RQ2): Choice of methods

**Figure 16**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme 1(RQ2): Choice of Methods*

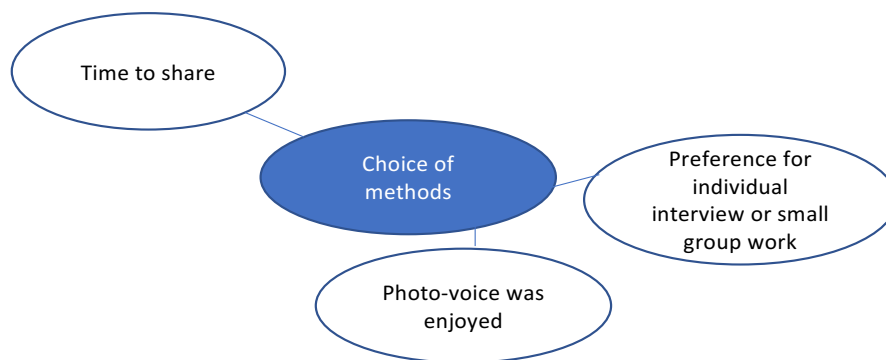


Figure 16 summarises Master Theme1(RQ2): Choice of methods. Co-researchers were given a choice of methods (see chapter 2) to share their views, including the use of drawing, collage, photo-voice, group or individual interviews. This Master Theme summarises co-researcher's feedback on the methods they selected.

##### **4.14.1 Theme 1.1 Photo-voice was enjoyed**

Three out of four co-researchers fed back that they enjoyed taking photos around the college, as illustrated in the extract below. For Mo in particular the chance to take photos and create a presentation seemed to support him in sharing his view. It seemed that walking around college and being in different spaces supported Mo to reflect on how these spaces and people made him feel and why as demonstrated in his comments (see Staff can make a space at college welcoming or unwelcoming, Lines 4-5, Mo presentation transcript)

P- what did you like about being part of the project? Was there anything (laugh)

F- probably, taking pictures of the college



P- yeah? James and Mo did you have, did you agree with that or anything different?

J- I liked to take the picture, in the library and the computers as well

P. -ok, and Mo?

M – taking pictures around the college and, where we eat and yeah ( Lines 8 -14, evaluation and debrief interview transcript)

#### ***4.14.2 Theme 1.2 Preference for individual interview or small group work***

During the planning session, two co-researchers chose to be interviewed individually and two chose to work as a pair, but answered questions separately. One co-researcher gave positive feedback about the one-to-one interview experience. While others reflected in retrospect, they might have liked to be interviewed alone.

T- did you enjoy doing your chat with Penelope, Fatima?

F- yes

T- yeah you did didn't you?

F-it was really fun (Lines 43-46 group evaluation and debrief interview transcript)

Amina explained how working in large groups could be difficult to manage due to her special educational needs.

So say for example you're in the small group, its fine but, when you're in a large group, say for example you're in a team of people that you don't know. For example, thinking back. You have never worked with. You're put in a group and your given a task of topics to talk about, and everybody has said something and it comes to me to say something and I'm clueless of what to say because the information that they already said has gone out of my head. (Lines 156- 161 Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.14.3 Theme 1.3 Time to share***

Some co-researchers expressed that they would have liked to have more time to share their views in this project, while others expressed that they had had enough time but would be happy to spend more time on the project at a later date. The fact that co-researchers would have liked more time also indicates positive feelings about the project.

T1- would you have liked it [your interview] to have been longer?

F- I wouldn't mind if it had been a bit longer (Lines 47-48 group evaluation and debrief interview transcript)

P- did you feel like, was the project too long? Or too short? Or about right?

A- About right

P- yeah. You felt like you had about the right amount of time to speak basically?

(pause) Yeah? Because I think you, yeah, we ended up having a slightly longer conversation actually then some of the other people, some of the other people said they wanted more time but I think, because we spoke for a little longer, possibly, you had enough time?

A- So then if we do get the opportunity to do another project with you, we can find a way of actually extending it

P- mmm, so are you saying if there was another similar project you'd be interested in doing more? In the future?

A-Yes (lines 95-105, Amina evaluation and debrief interview transcript)

#### ***4.14.4 Summary of Master Theme1 (RQ2): Choice of methods***

Overall, co-researchers report satisfaction with the methods they choose (photo-voice and individual interview). However, some co-researchers would have liked more time to

share their views. A co-researcher's suggestion that the project could be extended also demonstrates a good level of engagement with an interest in the project.

#### 4.15 Master Theme2 (RQ2): Having my views heard

**Figure 17**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme2(RQ2): Having my Views Heard*

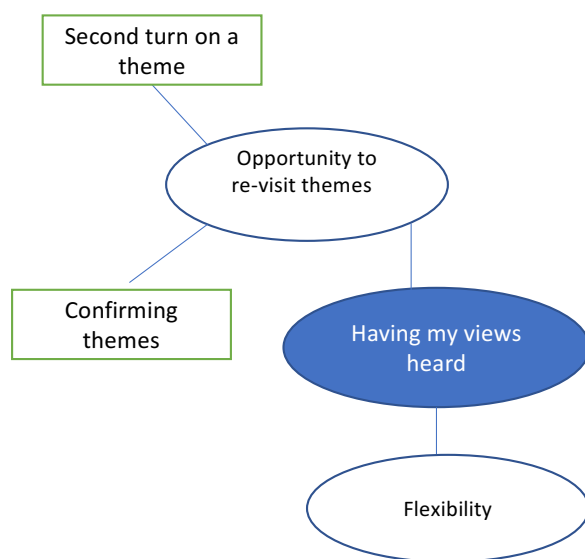


Figure 17 summarises Master Theme2(RQ2): Having my views heard. In the evaluation/ feedback session co-researchers expressed that they felt they had the opportunity to express themselves. For example, Amina shared, “Because my course it, it finishes July the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Obviously like, I want to make sure that I can share like, the journey so far.” (Lines 46-47 Amina evaluation and debrief interview transcript)

##### 4.15.1 Theme 2.1 Flexibility

A degree of flexibility about what the focus of the project was seemed to allow the co-researchers to share what the most important issues for them were as well as providing feedback on the course itself. For example, Amina reflects that what she most wanted to share was her views on the impact of the pandemic on young people. This was something the

whole group was interested in which was reflected in the list of interview questions they generated (see appendix 2.4), and resulted in a change to the research question (see chapter 3).

P- so for instance, what did you, is there anything you enjoyed about the research?

A – sharing my ideas about how, how young individuals cope during the current

Pandemic that's going on (Lines 4-6 Amina evaluation and debrief interview transcript)

#### ***4.15.2 Theme 2.2 Opportunity to re-visit themes***

In phase 4 of the data collection process, the researcher presented the themes derived from phases 1 to 3. Although originally planned to be a member checking process to validate themes, the researcher found the process could also be an opportunity for further development of ideas in some cases.

##### ***4.15.2.1 Theme 2.2.1 Second turn on a theme***

It was found that given the opportunity to return to the same topics raised in the initial interview, Amina had further thoughts and reflections to share on many of the points. Furthermore, non-verbal prompts and the space to continue to speak was helpful. (See theme 7.2, right to adaptations for access, Lines 136-145, Amina themes discussion transcript, above)

##### ***4.15.2.2 Theme 2.2.2 Confirming themes using same language***

This extract demonstrates strong agreement with some of the subthemes generated in the feedback sessions, particularly when co-researchers' own language was closely mirrored.

P-Being at home during the lockdown is boring

F- yeah it's true! (Lines 20-21 Fatima themes feedback interview transcript)

P- Being at home (because of the lockdown) is boring

J- (laughs) yeah, I can't see my friends (Lines 41-42 James and Mo themes feedback interview transcript)

The feedback process also gave co-researchers the opportunity to agree or disagree with their peers' ideas.

P- some people mentioned online learning can be difficult when home is quite busy and loud?

F- no

P- ok, so that's not for everyone, some people, because everyone's home is different, (Lines 28-31 Fatima themes feedback interview transcript)

See Research question 1, Theme 6.3: *Unhappy with Government response to pandemic* (Lines 80-82 James and Mo themes feedback interview transcript), above.

#### **4.15.3 Summary of Master Theme2 (RQ2): Having my views heard**

Master Theme2 (RQ2): Having my views heard develops the previous finding in Master Theme1, RQ2 that time is needed to support the sharing of views. Master Theme2 (RQ2) demonstrated that having time to re-visit themes was an important opportunity for co-researchers to develop their ideas. Furthermore, the use of co-researchers' language in this process promoted engagement and understanding. The author's flexibility allowed for the co-researcher's ideas to be explored in greater depth which seemed to result in satisfaction for the co-researchers at the end of the project.

#### **4.16 Master Theme3: Researcher's interview style**

**Figure 18**

*Thematic Map of Master Theme3(RQ2): Researcher's interview style*

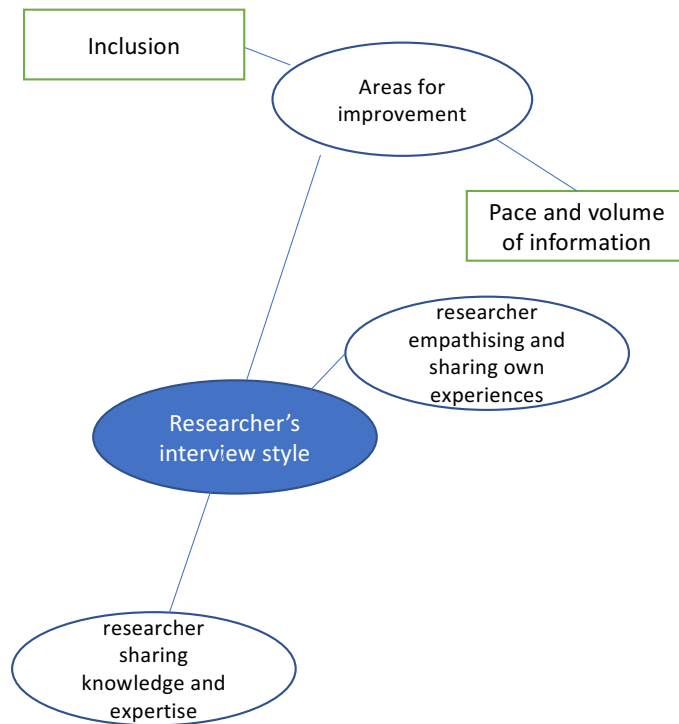


Figure 18 summarises Master Theme3(RQ2): Researcher's interview style.

The researcher used an empathic interview style, aiming for reciprocity (Oakley, 2016) to create a comfortable atmosphere for co-researchers to share their views.

#### ***4.16.1 Theme 3.1 Researcher empathising and sharing own experiences***

The extract bellow illustrates an occasion where the author shares her own experiences, which may result in the co-researcher feeling understood and expressing more of their own thoughts.

A- and they mention about background noise - I can't really do anything about background noises in my household because everyone literally has to be in the room,

everyone had to use the living to either watch tv or watch something on the computer so it really difficult for me to say for them to leave the room

P- yeah, yeah

A- they have to use the room for something

P- that makes sense, that makes sense

A- or to even eat a meal

P- that does make sense to me because, I live by myself at the moment so it's easier for me because there's nobody making noise in my flat. So, when before I lived with my friend, he tells me all the time, be quiet, close the door! So, living by yourself is a little bit easier in that way!

A- you have no privacy! your privacy gets invaded. You know, that's the word I'm looking for it's always invaded. (Lines 208-221 Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.16.2 Theme 3.2 Researcher sharing knowledge and expertise***

Amina sought advice and support from the researcher on giving her presentation, demonstrated in the extract bellow. Throughout the interviews, it was not uncommon for the co-researchers to seek the advice or opinion of the researcher.

A- I've already done but how, it's 10 minutes of a presentation, but how will I know that 10 minutes will be over when I've actually mentioned all of the

P- umm, what I normally do when I'm doing a presentation, is I normally practice it and I normally time it, like I time it on my phone or something like that so that when I practice it, then I kind of know how long it's going to be. You can also record it, when you practice it and see how long it is?

A- ok

P- so that's something that I sometimes do, if I want to check like, the length

A-(teacher) can time it right?

P- yeah she can, another thing you could ask her to like, is give you a warning when there's 2 minutes left so you know you have to finish

A-yeah, cos I don't really have a smart phone which would actually tell me the time

P- ok,

A- is isn't it daunting for you?

P sorry?

A- isn't it doing 10 minutes public speaking daunting for you?

P- it is a bit daunting but in my job I've had lots of practice, so I'll say practice just makes it easier, so for my course I have to do lots of presentations, it's always a bit daunting, or sometimes for job interview you have to do it as well so. It is daunting but I find it easier now because I've had lots of practice (Lines 16-35, Amina themes discussion transcript)

#### ***4.16.3 Theme 3.3 Areas for improvement***

As well as noticing approaches to gaining young people's views that seemed to work well, the researcher also received some feedback from co-researchers about how she could improve. At times feedback was not given but the researcher acknowledged either in the moment, or afterwards that she had not created enough space for the co-researchers' input.

##### **4.16.3.1 Subtheme 3.3.1 Pace and volume of information.**

In this example the researcher gives a lot of information quickly, and the co-researcher requests that she slow down to give her the opportunity to respond and clarify.



P- so then we had, Taking pride in roles and responsibilities. So, basically, lots of people spoke about what their different roles and responsibilities were.

There was taking pride in roles and responsibilities in work. Some people spoke about roles and responsibilities they have in their family. Some people spoke about taking pride in raising money for charity and Taking pride volunteer roles.

A- you know for each one, can you ask me the question and then, I'll say, what I need to say?

P- Oh yes, sorry so, yeah, shall I go back a little bit?

A- cos these are other people's ok, yes?

P- yeah, yeah, so some of it might be other people's opinions, so if you don't think that you agree with all of that's ok, because some of it might be someone else's opinion

A- um, ok

P – um, but if you want to have any comment that's fine as well

A-ok

P- yeah

A- can you ask me the question?

P- yeah, so there's Taking pride in roles and responsibilities

A- yeah so can you elaborate? (Lines 82-98, Amina themes discussion)

Other co-researchers tended to listen and not request the researcher slow down, however the researcher was conscious of giving large chunks of information without much

feedback at times. On one occasion, the researcher spoke for 22 lines without co-researcher input, giving brief pauses for comment but continuing when there was no response.

#### **4.16.3.2 Theme 3.3.2 Inclusion.**

Another reflection from the researcher was that during the themes feedback session with Mo and James there are relatively long periods where Mo doesn't contribute, so it is unclear if he agrees with the themes or understands the discussion at times.

The author missed what might have been an opportunity for further insights and input from the co-researchers by moving too quickly through themes and sub themes, without leaving enough space for comment at times and at other times not doing enough to ensure inclusion.

#### ***4.16.4 Summary of Master Theme 3: Researcher's interview style***

Master Theme3: Researcher's Interview Style, provided an opportunity for the author to reflect on her role as interviewer. The author identified several examples of the use of empathic interview style, which seemed to have a positive impact on co-researchers promoting reciprocity and rapport. As mentioned in theme 1, co-researchers shared that interviews were a positive experience. However, the researcher also identified times where the pace and volume of information she gave became a barrier to the participation of the co-researchers. Furthermore, individual interviews might have given co-researchers more opportunity to share their views than group sessions where some engaged more than others.

#### 4.17 Summary of Findings in Part 2

**Figure 19**

*Thematic Map of Findings from Research Question 2*

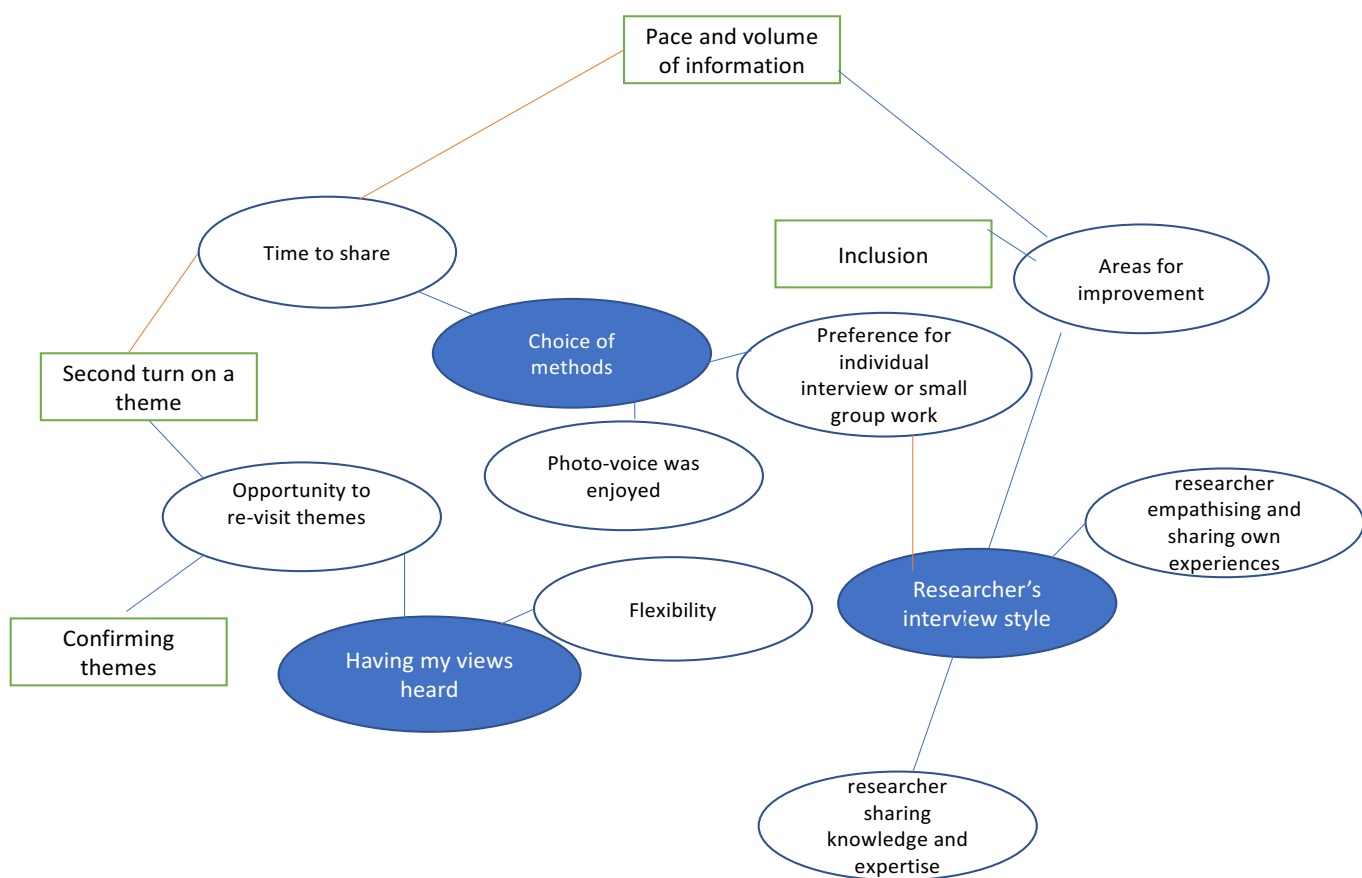


Figure 19 summarises the themes generated in Part 2 of this project, exploring: What supports young people with SEND to share their views on what's important to them in their educational experience? Master themes are shown in blue ovals and themes are shown in white ovals, the green rectangles represent the subthemes. Blue lines link Master themes to

themes and subthemes while red lines indicate connections across themes. Overall, giving the co-researchers the opportunity to choose methods worked well as they fed back that they had enjoyed the photo-voice and interview methods. It seemed that by involving co-researchers in generating interview questions and responding by adapting the research question worked well. The opportunity to re-visit themes and check summaries may have supported the young people in feeling their views were heard and gave the researcher confidence she had represented the co-researchers' views. For one co-researcher, revisiting the themes provided an opportunity for new ideas to be generated. On reflection, the researcher notes this opportunity may have been missed with other co-researchers due to the pace of her delivery of information. Furthermore, co-researchers' feedback that they would have been happy to spend more time on the project.

#### **4.18 Chapter 4 Summary**

In part 1, this chapter presented the findings from an inductive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) to answer the research question “What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?”. This analysis was initially based on the first 3 research phases and was developed in phase 4 in conjunction with the co-researchers. This process demonstrated the co-researchers' agreement with the themes and resulted in some new sub-themes emerging. The eight Master themes represent key findings of the research while subthemes illustrate specific points made by the co-researchers. These findings allowed the researcher to extract “changes we would like to see” directly from the co-researchers' comments and generate new ideas to discuss with the co-researchers before feeding back to staff.

In part 2, this chapter presented the findings of a second thematic analysis of all the data with reference to the secondary research question “What supports young people with

SEND to share their views on what's important to them in their educational experience?"

using both inductive and deductive thematic analysis which resulted in three Master themes.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings presented in this chapter in relation to the literature identified in Chapter 2 and consider new relevant theoretical frameworks in light of the findings. Finally, the strengths and limitations of this project will also be discussed in chapter 5, with reference to the secondary research question.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

The chapter starts with a discussion of the findings reported in Chapter 4, Part 1. The initial aim of this project was to explore students' views of their SIP in order to identify strengths and areas for development for the programme and to understand which aspects were important to the young people. Due to the context and participatory nature of the project, issues around the impact of the Pandemic on the co-researchers lives and their views on wider issues were also explored. Research question 1 : “What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience on a SIP during a pandemic?” is explored in the discussion of the findings section of this chapter.

This chapter then discusses the strengths and limitations of the methods selected and suggestions for developments of the process with reference to findings from research question two, “What supports young people with SEND to share their views on what’s important to them in their educational experience?”.

The author then reflects on her learning and development through the research process in a section on reflexivity. The dissemination of the findings is outlined. The implications of the research is discussed in terms of development of the SIP, educational psychology practice, college closures and quarantine periods for YP, and adulthood services for people with LD. The author then considers suggestions for further research in light of the findings of this project. This chapter ends with a conclusion.

### **5.2 Discussion of the Findings**

#### ***5.2.1 Co-researchers' views on their SIP***

As outlined below, co-researchers identified many strengths of their SIP. Practical experiences of work and travel were particularly important as these give young people the opportunity to work towards independence and employment. Equally important were the

social opportunities associated with college and work placements. The findings discussed below also illustrate the views of co-researchers informed by their experience of missing out on aspects of their college and work experience as a result of the pandemic.

#### **5.2.1.1 Practical Experiences of Work.**

Similar to previous findings (Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2005) with YP on vocational courses, there was positive feedback from co-researchers about practical experiences which prepared them for work. Co-researchers spoke about developing confidence through opportunities to work in the community (Choma & Ochocka, 2005). The importance of work experience is emphasised in the SEND code of practice (Department for Education, 2015a).

As in previous research with YP on vocational courses (Atkins, 2010; Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2005), co-researchers spoke about the outcome of finding a job as a key motivation (see theme 1.1: Leave college and get a job). However, while Atkins (2010) was critical of courses that prepared young people for “menial” work, in this research, young people’s feelings about repetitive work, such work as cleaning, varied. Some co-researchers reported enjoying work and others finding it boring at times (see theme 1.9 and theme 1.7). However, even young people who mentioned that the work could be boring were very positive about their work placements. This may have been because the alternative to working, being at home, was not only boring (see theme 4.3) but also limited opportunity for social interaction and building confidence (see Master Theme4).

Work experience has been demonstrated to build educational resilience through experiences of success and competency (Borrett & Rowley, 2020). Furthermore, previous literature indicates that young people with learning difficulties who are included in the work place after leaving school have better outcomes in terms of their health, wellbeing and social connections than those that were unemployed (Young-Southward et al., 2017). In previous

research, some young people's mental health and relationships with family suffered greatly through lack of activities and social connections outside the home after leaving school (Young-Southward et al., 2017). In this project, co-researchers reported boredom (see subtheme 4.3) and loneliness as a result of being at home during lockdown periods (see Master Theme4). A psychological explanation for some of the strengths of the SIP, (as is was before the pandemic) and the negative impacts of lockdown is considered in terms of self-determination theory (see Self-determination theory, section 5.2.4).

#### **5.2.1.2 Practical Experiences of Travel.**

The opportunity for independent travel to work placements was mentioned by more than one co-researcher (see theme 1.6). Co-researchers explained that they had developed confidence through independent travel. In previous research, college courses had not provided young people with an opportunity to develop travel skills; however, paid employment did, and young people reported that this opportunity had developed their confidence (Young-Southward et al., 2017). Furthermore, previous research indicates lack of opportunity to develop the skills to use public transport before transition to adulthood can lead to isolation for adults with LD as they are unable to travel to maintain friendships (Young-Southward et al., 2017). Independent travel training is required in the SEND code of practice (Department for Education, 2015a).

#### **5.2.1.3 Bridging and Bonding Opportunities.**

Working in the community did seem to present opportunities for bridging (Putnam, 2000) demonstrated by subtheme 4.1.3 in which co-researchers speak about making friends on placement. This contrasts with the perception of other researchers, who suggested opportunities for bridging were not available to students on specialist SEN courses (Spenceley, 2012). However, the courses described by other researchers may not have had a significant work experience element. Work placements may have also provided an



opportunity for co-researchers to develop social capital (Thatcher, Burke, Abra, & Ingram, 2015) which may lead to paid work opportunities. However, further research would be needed to establish the extent to which social connections made on placements led to work.

College presented an important opportunity for bonding (Putnam, 2000). Co-researchers expressed positive feelings about being with friends which were clearly important to their wellbeing (see Theme 4.1). These friendships seemed to provide the type of mutual support described by Keyes and Brandon (2012). However, co-researchers did not seem to need mutual support to share their views and were confident in one to one interviews with the researcher.

#### **5.2.1.4 Relationships with Staff.**

Co-researchers were positive about their relationships with staff at college, a finding reported elsewhere for students on vocational courses (Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2005). Although unlike previous research, it is unclear whether co-researchers' relationships in college were better, worse or similar to their experiences in previous educational settings, as no comparisons were made. Co-researchers indicated they valued their teachers in subtheme 4.2.1, I'll miss all my teachers when I leave college. This bond may have been more apparent to co-researchers who had already experienced missing teachers during periods of college closure and quarantine caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In subtheme 4.2.2 it was clear that co-researchers had experienced both practical and emotional support from staff at college. However, co-researchers seemed to appreciate having support as and when they sought it out and a degree of independence and space at other times, indicated by theme 1.4: job coach leaves us to it. Furthermore, Co-researchers also commented on staff being non-judgmental and accepting of their decisions in theme 1.8. The staff at the college seemed to be striking an effective balance between being available and approachable to the students while allowing their independence to flourish. Co-

researchers' comments around relationships with staff also related to the coping aspect of the resilient therapy framework (Hart, Blincow, & Thomas, 2007) (see resilience section).

Theme 4.2.3, Staff can make a space at college welcoming or unwelcoming, indicated that the general politeness and friendliness of all staff, including non-teaching staff, was appreciated by the co-researchers. General friendliness and approachableness of staff may have supported the co-researchers sense of belonging which is also part of the resilient therapy framework (Hart et al., 2007). (see resilience section below).

#### **5.2.1.5 Adaptation of Resources.**

Co-researchers were very positive about college and the SIP overall. However, one complaint was expressed in Theme 1.3: Amina, a co-researcher with a visual impairment, explained she often finds worksheets are not enlarged to support her to access them which means she has to ask a peer what to do. The co-researcher also linked her sensory impairment to difficulty with online learning via video conferences. The lack of accessible resources was also a problem recently reported by students with a visual impairment in HE, who have found it harder to address the problem in the context of online learning (Wilson, Conway, Martin, & Turner, 2020). The issue relates to the social model of disability (Charlton, 1998; Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976) as an adaptation to the environment could prevent the disabling impact of an impairment.

Amina expressed feelings of loneliness when at home during lockdown which were also shared by professionals with sensory impairments, who were struggling to access online meetings (Wilson et al., 2020). Thus, being required to attend an online meeting that is difficult to hear or see may add to a sense of isolation and loneliness for an individual with a sensory impairment where those without such difficulties may be gaining more social support from participation in online meetings.

### ***5.2.1.6 Possible Bullying or Discrimination on Placement***

For the most part, co-researchers reported positive experiences of relationships at college and on placements. There was little sense that co-researchers on the SIP felt “othered”, as other literature has suggested students on generic employability courses may feel (Cornish, 2018). Co-researchers experienced college as a safe and comfortable place to be (see Master Theme 5) and spoke about positive relationships in college (see Master Theme4). However, one co-researcher, James, did mention possible bullying or exclusion on the placement and the need to focus on work rather than engage with others (see theme 1.5). This relates to concerns about being isolated or teased raised by both adults and YP with SEND in previous literature (Benjamin, 2003; Bunn & Boesley, 2019; Choma & Ochocka, 2005; Young-Southward et al., 2017).

The theme title “Overcoming challenges at work: Calm myself down” was chosen due to the co-researcher’s desire to focus on how he had coped with the situation rather than focus on the perpetrators or frame himself as a victim. James shared “I didn’t shout I just tell the staff member, calm myself down” (Line 65, James initial interview transcript) which relates to the coping aspect of the resilient therapy framework (Hart et al., 2007) (see resilience section below). The co-researchers experience with coping with a challenging situation himself also relates to the Master Theme “working towards independence”. Furthermore, research into Self-Advocacy groups for adults with LD argues that resilience can be found in the context of resisting oppression (Goodley, 2005) which is what James may be doing when he continues working in the face of possible discrimination or harassment.

### ***5.2.2 Self-Determination Theory***

The two largest master themes arising from what co-researchers chose to share, are unsurprising with regard to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which proposes autonomy, competence and relatedness are universal, innate human needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In

Master Theme 4 : Face to face relationships for wellbeing, co-researchers indicated that both college and placements provided an opportunity to experience relatedness, a core psychological need essential for wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The negative psychological consequences of needs going unmet described by the co-researchers are predicted by STD. (see sub-theme 4.1.2: I miss my friends during lockdown)

In Master Theme1, co-researchers describe competence in terms of theme 1.4 “the job coach leaves us to it”, theme 1.9: work and helping others makes me feel proud and theme 1.10: it would be best if we had the training first.

The opportunity to work and travel independently relate to the experience of autonomy. However, it should be noted that “independence” and autonomy do not have the same meaning. While independence may simply refer to an ability to do something without reliance on others autonomy relates to an experience of freedom (Deci & Ryan, 2000). During lockdown periods, co-researchers experienced a lack of freedom which gave rise to frustration and stress. (see subtheme 8.2 Much of what supports resilience isn’t possible right now.) This led one of the co-researchers, Amina, to draw a similar conclusion to the one posed by STD: that psychological needs must be met in order for wellbeing and for psychological growth to occur. “I’m sure our self-esteems and our confidence is knocked down when there is a quarantine or lockdown restrictions in place by the government” (Lines 444-445, Amina themes discussion transcript).

The co-researchers may have been at different stages in their journeys towards independence. However, for all, lockdown seemed to mean a temporary halt to this journey with new restrictions on autonomy resulting in frustration and perhaps a fear of moving backwards in the journey.

### ***5.2.3 Online Learning for YP with SEND***

Government policy made children and young people with an EHCP among those eligible to attend school or college during “lockdown” periods (Department of Education, 2021). However, the co-researchers in this project stayed at home and took part in online learning during these periods (which is unsurprising, given that although around 20% of children and young people were eligible to attend school during lockdown periods, in reality, only 2% attended initially, this figure gradually rising to 10%. (Davies, Atkins, Guerin, Sodhi, & Pope, 2020).)

In theme 3.1, co-researchers suggested that SEN such as sensory impairments were a further barrier to online learning. This is supported by evidence collected via questionnaires carried out by the National Association of Disability Practitioners and Office for Students which found students with visual or hearing impairments reported facing serious challenges with online learning for university and further education courses (Barber, 2021; Wilson et al., 2020). Furthermore, neurodiverse young people in HE reported difficulty with the multi-tasking needed to access online sessions (Wilson et al., 2020).

It is noted that the college were doing the best they could under the most challenging of circumstances, balancing safety concerns and YP’s educational needs. However, the need for time for the college to adjust to the very quick transition to online learning may have been part of the reason that co-researchers experienced boredom in the first national “lockdown” period (see Master Theme 2). SIP staff reported that they were able to develop a much more comprehensive online learning programme in subsequent “lockdown” periods. Research in HE has found that the need for a very rapid shift to online learning has meant that the needs of disabled students were not properly considered (Barber, 2021).

The government’s requirements for schools and colleges were increased in terms of the number of hours of learning activities provided in the second period of school and college

closure (Department for Education, 2021). However, these measures did little address the co-researchers' concerns around online and home learning such as "digital access" and social life, described below.

#### **5.2.3.1 Digital Access.**

The practical difficulties reported by co-researchers in theme 3.2 around lack of a quiet space for online learning were also shared with 30% of students in HE around the country (Barber, 2021) linking to the wider issue of digital access which includes access to appropriate hardware, software, robust technical infrastructure, reliable internet access, a trained teacher as well as a suitable study space (Barber, 2021).

Government guidance (Department for Education, 2021) at the time of writing, takes into account the issue of digital access for school children by stating that CYP who do not have a suitable learning environment at home, such as a quiet place study, can be classed as "vulnerable" and continue to attend an education setting during the "lockdown" period. However, this does not resolve the problem because, as noted above, the provision of a school or college placement is often not taken up. Furthermore, CYP who are shielding due to health concerns may not be able to come in to school or college.

#### **5.2.3.2 Online Learning and Social Life.**

There was little literature available on YP with SEN's experience with video conferencing technology (see chapter 3). This project found some co-researchers were using applications such as Microsoft Teams to keep in touch with friends and many students developing new skills in learning to use these applications (see Master Theme3: Online learning). It has been suggested that a potential benefit of education moving online is that it equips young people with technical skills that may be useful in the workplace (Barber, 2021).

However, feedback on online learning and communication was generally negative with a clear preference for face to face interaction. The context of "lockdown" making video

or phone calling the only option for communication with those outside one's own household is likely to have a significant impact on YP's feelings about the technology. Indeed, the question: "do you like roast beef?" Is different from "would you like roast beef for every single meal?". Therefore, research citing YP's preference for online communication (see chapter 3) that occurred before their experience of periods of "lockdown" and/ or quarantine required by public health policy around the Covid-19 pandemic, may not be applicable in the current context.

Co-researchers' attitudes to online learning contrast slightly with online survey findings from HE students, which show some groups of HE students with disabilities are more optimistic about the possibilities for online learning, in particular ways in which online learning could be more flexible and more in the control of the learner (Barber, 2021). Furthermore, HE students with disabilities were less likely to feel that social interaction could not be replicated online (58 per cent compared with 70 per cent who are not disabled). However, the majority of both groups still felt that face to face opportunities were important for social interaction. Respondents to an online survey may be biased towards those who enjoy spending time online. It should be noted that students with disabilities in HE may have experienced social exclusion before the Pandemic, further complicating the results (Barber, 2021). The Master Theme4 "Face to face interactions for wellbeing" illustrates the importance of relationships experienced at college and on placements to the co-researchers in this project and provided opportunities for bonding and bridging (see section bonding and bridging above).

### **5.2.3.3 Online Learning and Equal Opportunities.**

Previous researchers have suggested some of the provision available for YP with SEND (Spenceley, 2012) and YP without GCSE qualifications (Cornish, 2017) contributes to what Bourdieu (1990) described as reproduction in education (the ways in which education

systems reproduce the existing power relationships in society). A criticism of pre-vocational further education (Cornish, 2018) and FE provision for young people with SEND (Spenceley, 2012) is that both types of provision limit young people's opportunity to develop human, cultural and social capital. Co-researchers' reflections on their SIP do not seem to support this position (see the co-researchers' views on their strengths of their SIP section above). However, it could be argued that the online only curriculum would have this impact as it would not provide the opportunities for developing social capital afforded by work placements. An online curriculum may also make learning in academic subjects more challenging for some YP with SEN, limiting human capital development. Differences in digital access may have the impact of exacerbating existing educational inequalities linked to differences in economic circumstances. This is of particular concern in an inner London local authority where child poverty and over-crowded housing are common (Elahi, Khan, & All, 2016). The co-researchers expressed the importance of quiet space for learning at college (see theme 5.2) which was not accessible to all during "lockdown" periods.

#### ***5.2.4 Advocacy and Self-Advocacy***

Master Theme7: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy demonstrated how a co-researcher wished to advocate for herself and others through raising awareness and highlighting the importance of adaptations to activities to make them accessible. It has been argued that the SEND code of practice places EPs as advocates for CYP and suggests this can be done through EPs empowering CYP to advocate for themselves (Fox, 2015). In this project, the EP was able to provide some support for Self-Advocacy by offering expertise and advice (see RQ2, theme 3.2).

Atkins (2010) proposed both teachers and students should be encouraged to engage in critical thinking around the structures in society that perpetuate disadvantage but does not give a clear indication of how this should be done. Participatory action research projects with



YP with SEND may provide an opportunity for the development of critical thinking in both YP and professionals. However, Goodley et al (2003) has concerns about the role of professionals in the Self-Advocacy movement limiting the potential of Self-Advocacy groups for adults with LD. On the other hand, if YP with SEND are supported to develop critical thinking, reflection and research skills by professionals this may enable YP with SEN to take a lead role in Self-Advocacy groups when they are adults.

### **5.2.5 Resilience**

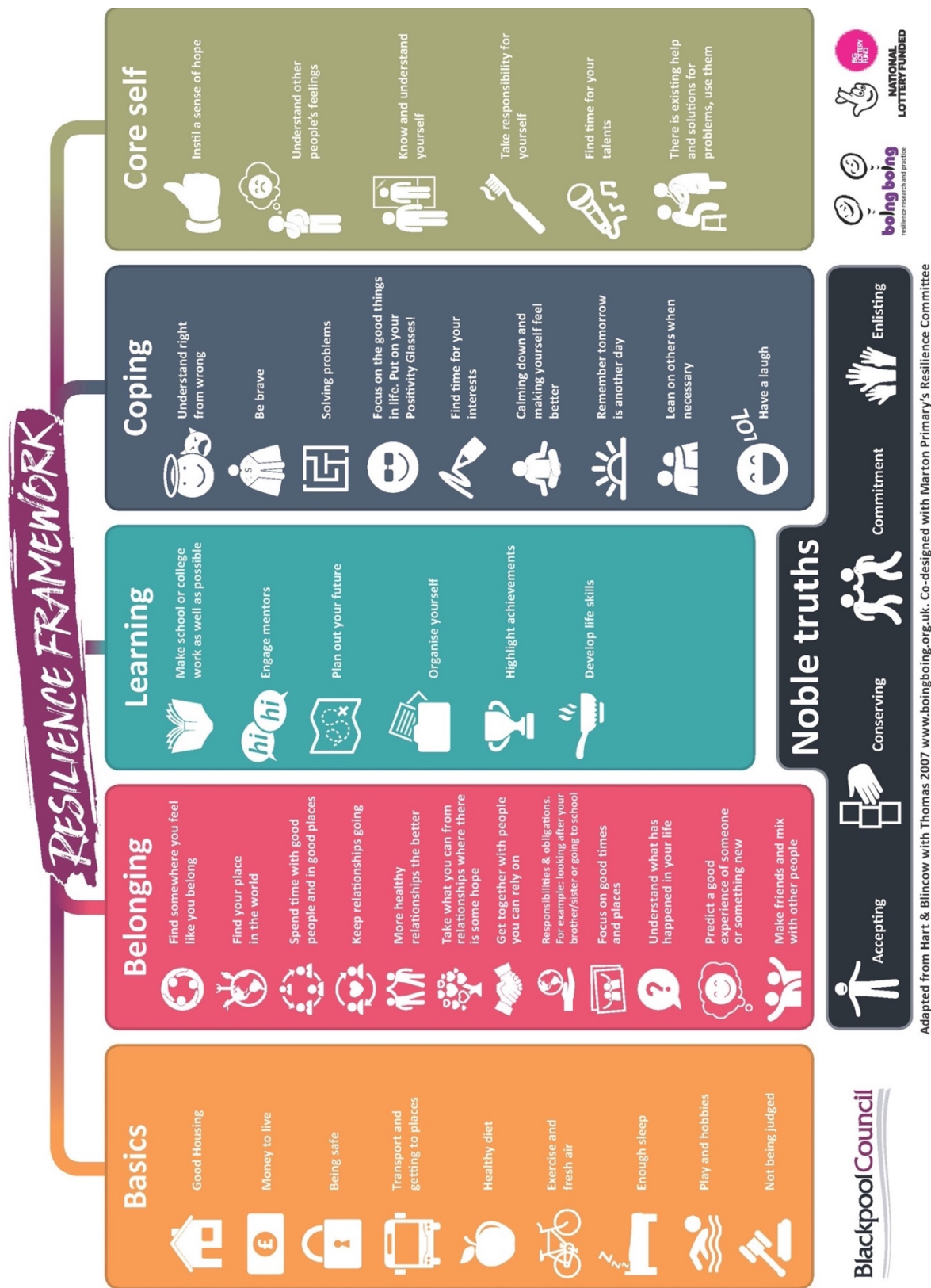
Master Theme 8: Resilience: We have to carry on, was chosen to represent the co-researchers' drive and determination to continue in the face of the adverse circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges they faced. Comments made by co-researchers on the theme of resilience related to the resilient therapy framework (Hart et al., 2007). For example, theme 8.1 "That's when lockdown will be finished" illustrated how co-researchers were looking ahead to the end of restrictions relating to the "remember tomorrow is another day" aspect of "coping" in the framework (see figure 20).

Co-researchers also make reference to several aspects of belonging at college in Master Theme 4, such as making new friends and healthy relationships. Aspects of "coping" were also mentioned in Master Theme 4 such as receiving emotional support from staff.

Theme 5.1: *I enjoy the food and facilities* and theme 5.4: *Security guards make me feel safe but I worry about the virus spreading* relate the "basics" aspect of the framework. Theme 5.4 demonstrates how the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on a co-researcher's feeling of safety at college while other co-researchers spoke about liking to see new safety measures in place at college. Co-researchers' anxiety about Covid-19 pandemic was likely to be linked to their understanding that people were dying because of the virus (theme 6.1).

Amina rightly challenges the concept of resilience in theme 8.2 “How are we supposed to have resilience, in ourselves, when Covid-19 is just taking every luxury we ever had?”. Amina’s point that hobbies and activities she enjoys aren’t possible relates to “find time for your talents” in the “core self” section of the framework and “find time for your interests” in the “coping” section. Aspects of belonging and coping mentioned above in Master Theme4 are also very limited in the “lockdown” context, when neither college or placements can be accessed face to face. Finally, even when co-researchers were able to come in to college, some of the “basics”, such as “being safe” were compromised due to worry about the virus.

It seemed that, the college offered a context for resilience (Goodley, 2005) but limited access for co-researchers during lockdown periods impacted this. The researcher hopes that participation in the research project may have supported some aspects of resilience by giving the co-researchers an opportunity for reflection, relating to the “know yourself” aspect of “core self”. Opportunities for the group to hear each others’ views also relates to “understanding others’ perspectives”. In terms of the “learning” strand of the framework, co-researchers took the opportunity to share their achievements and engage with the researcher as mentor if they chose to.

**Figure 20***Resiliency Framework*

*Note: adapted from (Hart et al., 2007) Co-designed with Marton Primary's resilience committee,*

*published by Boingboing (© Resilience framework, 2021)*

### ***5.2.6 Co-researchers Response to the “Exosystem” (Government Policy and Media)***

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that an individual’s thoughts and behaviour were influenced by the “exosystem” such as government policy and media, as well as by their immediate environment. While all co-researchers were concerned about the direct impacts of the pandemic, such as people dying of Covid-19 (see theme 6.1), one co-researcher, Amina, was concerned about the wider impacts of lockdown measures such as on mental health and on equal opportunities. Amina argued that groups already facing disadvantage, such as those with English as an additional language, may be further disadvantaged by missing schooling and exams (see theme 6.2) and that mental health for vulnerable people was of particular concern during winter months (see theme 6.3). Amina demonstrated what has been described as an inequalities imagination (Hart, Hall, & Henwood, 2003) which may have been influenced by her unique perspective as a person from a minority group, with SEND, who was also experiencing problems with digital access. It could be argued that policy makers and helping professionals have something to learn from Amina whose insights may support others to develop an inequalities imagination.

### **5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Method**

This project represents a small sample of YP based in inner London with a range of SEND and diverse ethnic backgrounds. However, many of the findings from the group are mirrored in recent research with much larger samples as noted above. However, there are also differences between the findings of this research and some larger studies of HE students, for instance HE students with disabilities saw more potential benefits of online learning. The next section explores the strengths and limitations of the methods used in this research and the possible impact on the findings. This section builds on Part 2 of the Findings chapter

which explores the Research Question 2: “What supports young people with SEND to share their views on what’s important to them in their educational experience?”

### **5.3.1 *Photo-voice***

Co-researchers took part in a photo-voice activity which involved photographing their likes and dislikes around college. However, use of photo-voice in this project differed from its use by previous researchers (Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013) in that there was no group analysis session. In this project co-researchers made presentations to share with their class, their teacher and the researcher. Presentations were followed by an opportunity for classmates, the teacher or the researcher to ask questions. The presence of classmates and the teacher may have impacted on what co-researchers chose to share in this session. For example, it may have discouraged criticism of teachers or reports of bullying.

The researcher had little involvement in production of the presentations and the extent to which college staff shaped or influenced these is unclear. The validity of the presentations as a data source could therefore be questioned. However, when questioned, the co-researchers justified their views clearly suggesting the views shared in photo-voice presentations were their own.

Co-researchers reported enjoying Photo-voice (see RQ2 theme 1.1 Photo-voice was enjoyed) which was one of several methods co-researchers had the opportunity to choose from, suggesting giving the co-researchers a choice was an effective way to select an engaging method.

### **5.3.2 *Data Analysis***

Data analysis took an inductive approach to thematic analysis with the aim of being more inclusive and representative. For example, co-researchers were not familiar with psychological theory known by the researcher so might not have recognised their own view in themes relating to these theories. However, the researcher did choose to introduce some

vocabulary not known to some of the co-researchers (resilience, advocacy and self-advocacy) and this was explained to the co-researchers in the feedback sessions. It could be argued that the inductive approach could be biased to the researcher's own interests (Clarke & Braun, 2013). In this case the researcher was also experiencing negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, possibly influencing her interpretation of the co-researchers' words or selecting the views of like-minded co-researchers for emphasis. Therefore, the researcher recognised that the findings are a co-construction influenced by her own world view and what co-researchers chose to share. Findings therefore represent one of many possible interpretations of the data.

Sharing the draft themes with the co-researchers provided an opportunity for them to confirm or question the researcher's choices (see RQ2 Theme 2.2 Opportunity to re-visit themes). However, the researcher acknowledges this process was not as effective as it might have been with some co-researchers (see RQ2 theme 3.3 Areas for improvement.) which impacts on the validity of the findings as only some of the co-researchers had a meaningful opportunity to comment on all themes.

### ***5.3.3 Co-researchers Role in Discussion Chapter***

This discussion chapter has been written without the co-researchers and there is a degree of interpretation of the co-researchers' statements. Themes were linked back to previous research and psychological theory. The researcher aimed to include co-researchers' views in the discussion but would ideally discuss the links to psychological theory with them. This may have been fruitful as discussion of the psychological concept of resilience with a co-researcher provided further insights.

#### ***5.3.4 Suggestions for Developments of the Research Process***

In this project, co-researchers chose to largely contribute separately, through individual interviews. However, the presentation of photo-voice projects and the feedback on themes allowed opportunity for co-researchers to listen to and give feedback on each others' ideas. It is the researcher's view that more such opportunities would have been valuable based on previous research (Keyes & Brandon, 2012). Opportunity to work as a group may have allowed for more mutual support and the co-researchers continuing to develop ideas among themselves after the project. On the other hand, it was important to respect the co-researchers' desire to share their individual stories.

Furthermore, students participated in consent and planning phases of the project as a group. This was important as there was an opportunity for mutual support for the decision *not* to take part (taken by several in the class.) The remote delivery made the group sessions more difficult for the author to facilitate as it was difficult to hear co-researchers' comments. This mode of delivery also made it more difficult for the author to provide visual support for communication as the co-researchers often communicated through the Microsoft Teams application on a mobile phone, with a small screen. In future research the option to work with YP in person should be available.

This research did not involve co-researchers in the analysis of findings, rather they checked the author's findings. A development of the process might be providing more training in the analysis process and involving one or more co-researcher more extensively in the process. This was seen as too difficult to facilitate in the context of remote delivery due to the limitations described above.

Despite the limitations of remote communication, it should be noted that co-researchers were able to express complex ideas and reflections through this medium. It is possible that speaking to the researcher via video call was less intimidating than a face to face

conversation and that the interview felt more like speaking to a peer than a formal interview (Weller, 2015). An empathetic, informal interview style also worked well (Oakley, 2016). Therefore, in future research an option to take part remotely via video or phone call should be available.

Co-researchers shared that they would have liked more time to share their views or that they would be interested in extending the project (see RQ2 theme 1.3). Therefore, future research may plan to allow for more time and development for participatory projects this would also allow for the project to include more of the co-researchers' initiatives such as the presentation Amina wanted to share.

### **5.3.5 Reflexivity**

This section is written in first person to reflect the personal nature of the reflective process. As a helping professional I approached this project keen to learn how professionals might better support YP with SEN. However, it seemed that co-researchers wanted to express their independence and their own ways of coping throughout the process. As mentioned above (see relationships with staff section) although co-researchers appreciated and clearly benefitted from support from staff they wanted to share their experiences in terms of their own choices and actions.

I was struck by the fact that co-researchers commented on, and had insights about the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic not only on themselves, but also on others. I was impressed by the co-researchers' comments showing insight into both psychology and politics. I was conscious that the original aims of my project – to gain the views of YP on their SIPs course, did not fully encompass all that co-researchers wanted to share and compromised by exploring both views of the pandemic and the SIPs course, led by interview questions generated by the co-researchers.



Other researchers have commented that co-researchers competence in contributing to research can be much greater than expected and can be “instrumental in dismantling many of our own stereotypical assumptions regarding the competence of our co-researchers.”

(Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013a, p.9). I found that leading this project had a transformative impact on me as a professional. It has previously been found that participatory research with young people also has an impact on the professionals involved, giving them new knowledge and a desire to integrate youth voice into their professional practice (Kennedy, 2018).

I entered the research process with the mindset that YP with SEN were experts on their own experience and did not consider the possibility of co-researchers offering critical insights such as that posed by Amina in our discussion of resilience (see theme 8.2) and criticism of government policy (see theme 6.2 and 6.3). It is concerning that some research fails to gather views of young people with SEND and adults with LD, on the grounds that it was too difficult or time consuming (Power, 2013). Critical reflections are often only offered by professionals rather than YP with SEN or adults with LD. Even studies that gain the views of the service users often only provide the opportunity for comment on their personal experience (Dovey-Pearce et al., 2012; Young-Southward et al., 2017) rather than their views on wider systems, issues and government.

Due to the unforeseen circumstance of the research which occurred during government restrictions on social interactions, I was experiencing some of the same issues as the co-researchers. For example, I was not seeing my friends at university and taking part in online learning myself. The difficulty of sharing a small space with others in “lockdown” periods was also one that I personally experienced. This led me to reflect on ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) and to what extent sharing my experience was ethical. I concluded that some sharing of my experience, if prompted by what the co-researchers offered, was appropriate as it led to a more reciprocal conversation and a more genuine

expression of empathy (Oakley, 2016). Sharing my own experience seemed to have the impact of helping the co-researchers feel heard and perhaps lessening the power imbalance between us (see chapter 4, RQ2 Theme 3.1).

Oakley (2016) also argues it is appropriate for the researcher to share their views or advice when asked to by a participant and this occurred in many of my interviews, again supporting a reciprocal conversation. When a co-researcher, Amina, brought her own idea for a presentation to the researcher and asked for advice on delivering the presentation, this also presented an opportunity to work in a collegiate way (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995) in which Amina brought her ideas and I brought my experience of presenting. (see chapter 4, RQ2, Theme 3.2)

#### **5.4 Dissemination of the Findings**

Initial themes and “ideas for change” were shared by the researcher in a video conference meeting that included the co-researchers, other students on the SIP, teachers, teaching assistants and the programme head. The researcher briefly described the research process and read out the list of findings. There was then an opportunity for questions. The initial findings were also emailed to the programme lead. The researcher plans to create an accessible summary sheet designed for the co-researchers in this project and share this with them in a face to face meeting to take place in the summer term (if government guidelines allow).

Findings will also be shared with the local authority EPS and at the University of East London research presentation day. The researcher will seek to publish the findings in an academic journal on completion of the thesis.

## 5.5 Implications of the Research

### 5.5.1 *Implications for SIPs*

Co-researchers were positive about the work experience element of their programme and seemed to be developing not only practical work skills but experiencing the psychological benefits of having opportunities for competency, autonomy and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, some co-researchers reports suggested the development of social capital (Thatcher et al., 2015) was possible on placements.

The co-researchers sometimes expressed desire to do work more related to their specific vocational interests, so opportunities for this might be incorporated into the programme. However, it is noted that the college normally try to accommodate student's work interests as much as possible. Unsurprisingly, work placements were limited in the context of the national "lockdown", staff on furlough and limitations on numbers of staff related to "Covid safe" guidelines.

The SEND code of practice (Department for Education, 2015a) recommends work experience, but workplaces do not have a legal obligation or government incentives to provide work experience. Staff on the SIP must build relationships with potential work experience providers and persuade them on the benefits of taking part, a process that has become more difficult in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. It seems the YP's right to work experience, as part of their SEN programme, was not prioritised by government in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Co-researchers gave positive feedback about the support they received on the SIP. While some felt ready to move on from this supported context others felt more anxious about the move. A way of maintaining some elements of support the course provided, such as support from a job-coach, after leaving the course may be helpful for some young people.

Some co-researchers were able to keep in touch via technology and were confident in their ability to maintain contact after the course. Other co-researchers might benefit from more support to maintain the networks established at college after leaving. Staff may facilitate this through reunion or alumni events (see chapter 4, “Plans we would like to make”).

Students may have benefited from the additional opportunities to develop ICT as a result of the online curriculum. However, the online only curriculum limited social opportunities therefore use of ICT alongside practical experiences and face to face interaction may be ideal. Furthermore, e-learning environments designed for YP with SEND might be considered to support access for some students (Starcic & Niskala, 2010). However, the disadvantage of using software designed for students with SEND is that this may not allow for development of skills in the software that is more widely used in the workplace.

### ***5.5.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists***

At the time of writing the UK has been presented with the government’s plan to ease restrictions put in place to reduce the spread of Covid-19. It is the author’s view that EPs should be mindful of the potentially greater negative impact of lockdown measures on CYP who were lacking digital access, and for whom sensory impairments or neurodiversity made online learning less accessible. Although both CYP with SEN and CYP without a suitable home-learning space were exempt from the expectation they should learn from home by the government, the reality found the majority of CYP in these groups not accessing face to face provision for most of the “lockdown” periods. EPs may have a role in using organisational change approaches to facilitate improvements for students and staff with disabilities. EPs may also have an important role in facilitating organisations to reflect on their experience of the Covid-19 pandemic and what can be learned from the experience.

Staying at home may present a particular challenge for YP with SEN who are preparing for adulthood as these YP have missed opportunities to experience supported independence. This research suggests government policy aiming to preserve public health by preventing the spread of Covid-19, is likely to have exacerbated existing inequalities for YP with SEN outlined in the introduction of this thesis. EPs might support schools, colleges, YP and their families in understanding the environmental and situational factors that have impacted YP with SEND's academic progress and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic. EPs may suggest supporting YP by actively involving them in shaping their own curriculum and opportunities such as by giving YP a role in planning events and reunions (see section 4.11.1 Plans we would like to make, in Chapter 4) .

Questions around what YP likes and dislikes about their courses and the feedback they would give to staff should perhaps be a routine part of EP involvement with YP. Those with language or communication difficulties may be supported to reflect via the photo-voice method. The opportunity to self-advocate and provide guidance to other YP also seems to be a powerful tool in helping YP understand and communicate their needs. There is perhaps more potential for peer support to be facilitated among YP with SEN rather than an emphasis only on professional support. Both friendships and relationships with staff were considered important to the co-researchers in this project, but friendships with peers are perhaps more sustainable as students transition into adulthood; video conferencing and other technology has the potential to support this by helping YP stay in touch.

This project has highlighted the importance of adapting classroom and online learning resources to cater to students' sensory impairments, as failure to do so not only impacts access to learning but may also have a negative psychological impact by reducing the YP's experience of autonomy and competence as well as potentially impacting relatedness as the YP may feel let down by the teachers responsible or isolated from the group. This supports

the notion that negative psychological impacts of disability are often avoidable with environmental adaptations (Reeve, 2004).

### ***5.5.3 Implications for Future College Closures or Quarantine Periods for YP with SEND***

This project illustrated the challenges of adapting a SIP for home learning. The government took into account potential issues with online learning for those with SEND by allowing them to attend in person. However, as demonstrated, this did not resolve the issue. This leads us to question whether more should have been done to ensure YP with SEND were able to come to college or whether it was right for parents of these YP to make the choice. Alternative options, such as Covid-safe individual study spaces to facilitate access to online sessions or the avoidance of school closure altogether through enhanced safety measures, might also have been considered.

### ***5.5.4 Implications for Adulthood Services for People with LD***

The co-researchers appeared to benefit from a sense of belonging in the college context while work placements provided an opportunity for community access and making new connections for some. Inclusion in the community and belonging have been stated as important aims of public policy for adults with LD when they leave education (Power, 2013). However, it has been argued that supporting and facilitating integration into support networks in the community is a complex process (Power, 2013).

The emphasis on adults with LD forming relationships with those without LD is questionable. Similar to the criticism that specialist SEND courses in post-16 colleges do not provide opportunities to make connections outside the SEN group (Spenceley, 2012), emphasis on community inclusion can devalue the importance of mutual support (Keyes & Brandon, 2012) within the disabled community and the possibility of individuals in disabled community groups supporting each other in Self-Advocacy (Goodley, 2005). This research indicates that both community inclusion and friendships with peers are important to YP with

SEND. Most importantly, YP with SEN and adults with LD should themselves be consulted, both as individuals and as groups, on what kind of support they want and need. Would they prefer to spend more time in “mainstream” settings or more time in groups specifically for those with LD?

Strengths of the SIP identified in this project could provide a framework for ongoing support for those that need it. However, it should be noted that some co-researchers did express a desire to become more independent. For example, in theme 1.2 Not being reliant on other people. Amina also stated “I just want to get a job and get out of here, that’s my motive” (Lines 70, Amina initial interview transcript) in reference to repeating a year due to the time missed during the March 2020 lockdown. Although there was broad agreement that the aim of college was to find a job, (theme 1.1 leave college and get a job), the readiness to move on expressed by Amina did not seem to be shared by the other co-researchers so was not part of the theme. It is mentioned here in relation to a finding from previous literature about college often being offered as a next step (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014) but the transition to adulthood being more challenging, especially when work opportunities are not available (Young-Southward et al., 2017). More research is needed into what supports YP with SEN to gain and maintain paid employment and ways in which the government might enable this as this is many YP’s aspiration. However, it is vital the contexts that allow for social support and a sense of belonging are still available for YP with SEND after they leave college.

## **5.6 Unique Contribution of the Research**

This project offered a unique contribution to the literature, in part because of the context of the pandemic. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that an individual’s most immediate environment or “microsystem” such as their personal relationships would be influenced by the wider “mesosystem”, such as their college and the “exosystem”, such as government policy and media. The sudden and dramatic change caused by the Covid-19

pandemic which has dominated the media and resulted in rapid policy change influenced the co-researchers in different ways. All experienced a negative impact and loss of college and work-placement activities. However, for some there was anxiety and a desire to follow rules whereas for others there was a sense of anger at the loss of autonomy. The loss of access to college for periods of time seemed to aid reflection on what was important to the co-researchers.

The flexibility of this project meant that it gave some space for co-researchers to express criticisms of government policy and views on wider issues. This opportunity is somewhat rare for YP with SEN who are often left out of research altogether or limited to providing feedback only on their personal experience.

The researcher is not aware of other participatory research with young people with SEN delivered via Microsoft Teams at the time of writing. This seemed to be a viable method which may be useful in future research.

### **5.7 Suggestions for Further Research**

There were many issues raised by individual co-researchers in this study that could have been explored in more depth, such as:

- The impact of stigma or discrimination on the experience of YP on SIPs.
- The role of parents in the lives of YP on SIPs
- How co-researchers felt the SIP compared to previous educational experiences.
- How co-researchers came to the SIP and to what extent they felt they had chosen the SIP
- The impact of having EAL for YP on SIPs
- The impact of the closure of public study spaces, such as libraries on YP with SEND



These issues may not have been explored due to the interview questions generated by the co-researchers being more focused on the “here and now” and perhaps because of the pressing issue of the Covid-19 pandemic dominating both co-researchers and author’s thoughts.

A longitudinal study to track the outcomes for YP who attend a SIP would be useful to explore if such courses lead to paid or volunteer job roles for YP and to what extent young people believe, in retrospect, the course was valuable. It would be useful to explore in what ways workplaces could adapt to support the inclusion of people with SEN in the workplace. Finally, the feasibility and impact of aspects of the SIP being continued for those young people who will need ongoing support to access work opportunities in the community could be explored.

Another area for further research relates to the question: what builds and supports abilities in self advocacy? One co-researcher, Amina, demonstrated a particular interest and ability for self-advocacy. It would be useful to explore what experiences and opportunities had supported YP with a strength in self-advocacy, so that more YP with SEN might access these.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

The practical experiences that provided an opportunity for autonomy, competence and relatedness were among the most important elements of the SIP for the co-researchers in this study. The opportunity the SIP provided for both bonding with friends and bridging in terms of meeting new people were also important elements that were difficult to replicate with the online curriculum. This project itself may also have been limited by the need for remote delivery but still provided an important opportunity for YP to share their views. The research took place in the unique context of the Covid-19 pandemic which may have led to reflections and understandings of what mattered most to the YP which might have been different under

“normal” circumstances. Most evident was the co-researchers’ desire to be active, independent community members rather than be “stuck at home”.

While the whole nation, including the author, temporarily sacrifice freedoms in order to control the spread of Covid-19, the author holds an awareness that while she returns to face to face work and an active social life in the future, young people with SEN are at risk of continued exclusion from the wider community when they complete their college courses (or if parents continue to ask them to stay at home to be safe) in a tough economic climate where jobs may be scarce.

In the education sector, lack of adequate adaptations to support access to curriculum for students with SEND is an ongoing problem and similar issues occur in the workplace. Action is needed to ensure ongoing support for YP with SEN to take active roles in the community and to maintain the support networks and relationships they have developed at college which support resilience (Hart et al., 2007). This may also prevent some of the negative outcomes observed when individuals’ psychological needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence are not met (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, public health policies aimed at controlling Covid-19 may have had a disproportionately negative impact on YP with SEN who normally benefit from a practical course and may find aspects of online learning challenging.

Finally, YP with SEN have insights and views beyond their personal experiences and value the opportunity to be heard. For the researcher, the experience of leading a participatory project with YP with SEND was a transformative process, inspiring her to continue to seek opportunities to promote and facilitate participatory action research, pupil voice and Self-Advocacy for this group.

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## Appendix A

### Details of Literature Searches

**Table A1**

*Initial Scoping Review, Part 1*

The author read titles and abstracts of papers generated by database in order to establish whether inclusion or exclusion criteria were met.

Date	Database	Search terms	Number of results	Inclusion/ Exclusion criteria	Resulting articles
11.18.20	British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, APA PsycInfo	('employability course' OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course") AND (send or special educational needs or learning difficulties)	1	Inclusion: research involving young people with SEND in further education, research or transition to adulthood for YP with SEND, Published after 2000  Exclusion: research or prison education, higher education, curriculum guides for general life skills/ home economics courses, Published before 2000	None
11.8.20	British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, APA PsycInfo	('employability course' OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course")	63	Inclusion: research involving young people with SEND in further education, research or transition to adulthood for YP with SEND, Published after 2000  Exclusion: research on prison education, higher education, curriculum guides for general life skills/ home economics courses	None
11.8.20	British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, APA PsycInfo	Supported internship	4	Inclusion: research involving young people with SEND  Exclusion: higher education internships	Young people with special needs supported through new internships. 1("Young people with special needs supported through new internships.," 2012) – <i>article excluded after reading as it is not a research paper or commentary on provision</i>
13.8.20	Scopus	('employability course' OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course") AND (SEND or "special educational	0	Inclusion: research involving young people with SEND in further education, research on transition to adulthood for YP with SEND Published after 2000	None

		needs” or “learning difficulties”)		Exclusion: research or prison education, higher education, curriculum guides for general life skills/ home economics courses	
13.8.20	Scopus	(‘employability course" OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course")	26	<p>Inclusion: hand search for research involving YP with SEND</p> <p>Exclusion: or prison education, higher education, curriculum guides for general life skills/ home economics courses</p> <p>Published before 2000</p>	<p>Student welfare: complexity, dilemmas and contradictions (Cornish, 2019)</p> <p>Young people (13 to 21) with disabilities in transition from childhood to adulthood: An exploratory, qualitative study of their developmental experiences and health care needs (Dovey-Pearce et al., 2012)</p>

**Table A2***Initial Scoping Review, Part 2*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Database</b>	<b>Search terms</b>	<b>Number of results</b>	<b>Inclusion/Exclusion criteria</b>	<b>Resulting articles</b>
14.8.16	Scopus	( "employability course" OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course" OR "vocational course" ) AND ( "SEND" OR "learning difficulties" OR "post-16" OR "special educational needs" )	14	<p><b>Inclusion:</b></p> <p>Any article with reference to SEND in abstract, reference to students unable to access mainstream provision ref to students who had not gained GCSEs</p> <p><b>Exclusion:</b> focus on level 3 courses, no ref to collage / school-based course</p>	<p>Cornish, C. (2017). Case study: Level 1 Skills to Succeed (S2S) students and the gatekeeping function of GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) at an FE college.</p> <p>Cornish, C. (2018). 'Keep them students busy': 'warehoused' or taught skills to achieve? (Starcic &amp; Niskala, 2010)</p> <p>Attwood, G., Croll, P., &amp; Hamilton, J. (2005). Recovering potential: Factors associated with success in engaging challenging students with alternative pre-16 provision.</p> <p>Starcic, A. I., &amp; Niskala, M. (2010). Vocational students with severe learning difficulties learning on the Internet.</p>
14.8.20	British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, APA PsycInfo	( "employability course" OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course" OR "vocational course" ) AND ( "SEND" OR "learning difficulties" OR "post-16" OR "special educational needs" )	7	<p><b>Inclusion:</b></p> <p>Any article with reference to SEND in abstract, reference to students unable to access mainstream provision ref to students who had not gained GCSEs</p> <p><b>Article not identified in previous search</b></p> <p><b>Exclusion:</b> Vocational courses with no ref to post 16 or SEND</p>	None

**Table A3***Articles Found via Hand Search of Citations (Backward)*

Article found via data base search	Article found through citation search
(Starcic & Niskala, 2010)	(Wright, 2006)
(Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2005)	(Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2003)
(Cornish, 2017)	(Wolf, 2011)
(Cornish, 2018)	(Atkins, 2010)

**Table A4***Articles Found via Socpus Forward Citation Search*

Article found via data base search	Article found through citation search
(Wright, 2006)	(Elson, 2011) (Spenceley, 2012)

**Table A5i***Articles Found via Search of Grey Literature*

Date	Database/ source	Search terms	Number of results	Inclusion/ Exclusion criteria	Resulting articles
2.7.21	Google search	"The impact of employability qualifications"	1	Inclusion: information of employability courses for YP with SEND in the UK	Asset Skills, 2010
2.7.21	EThOS (British library e-theses online service)	("employability course" OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course" OR "vocational course") AND ("SEND" OR "learning difficulties" OR "post-16" OR "special educational needs")	0	SEND in abstract, reference to students unable to access mainstream provision ref to students who had not gained GCSEs, reference to further education or transition to adulthood  Exclusion: focus on level 3 courses, no ref to collage / school-based course, published before the year 2000	

	White Rose eTheses online  (This repository gives access to theses awarded by the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York.)	("employability course" OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course" OR "vocational course") AND ("SEND" OR "learning difficulties" OR "post-16" OR "special educational needs")	41	Any article with reference to SEND in abstract, reference to students unable to access mainstream provision ref to students who had not gained GCSEs, reference to further education or transition to adulthood  Exclusion: focus on level 3 courses, no ref to collage / school-based course, published before the year 2000	Young people with special educational needs' experiences of school and the transition to adulthood(Forster, 2012)
	White Rose eTheses online  (This repository gives access to theses awarded by the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York.)	("employability course" OR "life skills course" OR "preparing for adulthood course") AND (SEND or "special educational needs" or "learning difficulties")	61	Any article with reference to SEND in abstract, reference to students unable to access mainstream provision ref to students who had not gained GCSEs, reference to further education or transition to adulthood  Exclusion: focus on level 3 courses, no ref to collage / school-based course, published before the year 2000	Pushed out From 'pushed out' to re-engaged A grounded theory study into the experiences of young people who chose to transition to a 14 to 16 college (Heslop, 2018)

**Table A5ii**

*Articles Found via Suggested Article on White Rose Database*

Article found in database	Article suggested by White Rose eTheses database
From 'pushed out' to re-engaged A grounded theory study into the experiences of young people who chose to transition to a 14 to 16 college (Heslop, 2018)	The initial experiences of young people with severe learning difficulties transitioning from post-16 school to a FE college (Hickey, 2016)

The initial experiences of young people with severe learning difficulties transitioning from post-16 school to a FE college (Hickey, 2016)	The Issues for Young People Post 16 with Additional Needs in College - A Mixed Methods Study (Bell, 2015)
The Issues for Young People Post 16 with Additional Needs in College - A Mixed Methods Study (Bell, 2015)	How do young people with special educational needs experience transition from special school to further education? (Lawson, 2018)  An exploration of the transition planning experiences of young people with additional educational needs in a mainstream context, as they consider their post-16 plans (Tyson, 2011)
An exploration of the transition planning experiences of young people with additional educational needs in a mainstream context, as they consider their post-16 plans (Tyson, 2011)	You can't always be at school, you need to move on: A multi-perspective study exploring the experiences of young people with learning difficulties and their parents during post-school transition (Esbrand, 2016)

**Table A6i**

*Details of Articles Selected in Initial Scoping Review of Peer-reviewed Literature*

Author and year	Location	Aims	Setting	Population	Methodology/ analysis	Main findings	Theoretical basis
(Atkins, 2010) 1	UK	Explore gap between policy discourse and reality of vocational education for young people	FE college	Level 1 FE students	Mixed including interviews with students	Young people had high aspirations for employment but their course did not support these well	Bourdieu – reproduction in education. Social justice
(Cornish, 2018) 2	UK	Explore impact of Raising of Participation Age students who were previously NEET (not in education, employment or training)	FE college	Level 1 FE students	Case study Mixed including interviews with students and staff, observations in class	The environment for learning was unproductive, leading to students' negative learning identities	Bourdieu- symbolic violence Social justice
(Attwood et al., 2005) 3	UK	Explore the impact post-14 vocational pathways for students	FE college	Mixed including LD/ excluded 14+	Case study: Questionnaires College records Interviews with students and staff	Some young people at high risk of dropout completed the courses successfully. Those with a	None cited

						history of benefited	
(Attwood, Croll, & Hamilton, 2003) 4	UK	Post-14 students in vocational education	FE college	Young people who had disengaged from the school system and have now re-engaged with education through attendance at an FE college	Interviews with young people	Relationships with staff were cited as both reason for failure at previous school and success at college. students motivated by possibility for success and new learning identity.	Self-identity, agency Self-efficacy
(Elson, 2011) 5	UK	Explore the post-16 destinations of young people at a specialist secondary school for SEND, and staff and YPs views on this.	Specialist secondary school for SEND	Students with a range of SEND	Case study Mixed including interviews with staff and students, data on destinations of students	Choices were limited for young people, especially those with complex needs or ASD. Young people felt prepared for the next step.	None cited
(Wright, 2006) 6	UK	Reflect on the post-16 provision for young people with SEND at FE	FE college	SEND students in FE	Interviews with practitioners and literature review	Provision for YP with complex SEND, such as SLD is poorly focused and can lead to social exclusion	Humanism, phenomenology
(Spenceley, 2012) 7	UK	Reflect experiences of working with YP with SEND in the FE sector in the context of theory	FE college	SEND students in FE	Reflection on professional experience	Specialist provision for YP with SEND often segregated them from the rest of the college, limiting opportunities	Bourdieu and Foucault.
(Cornish, 2017) 8	UK	Explore students experience on a generic employability course targeted at	FE	Level 1 (skills to succeed course) students	Case study-mixed methods	Placement on the course provided few opportunities for academic success, which frustrated students	Bourdieu

		returners to education and those without qualifications					
(Dovey-Pearce et al., 2012) 9	UK	Explore factors significant to young people with disabilities, in transition to adulthood and their health care requirements.  Explore the process of enabling participation in research.	School for CYP with physical disabilities, a higher education college providing a life-skills course for YP with SEND	Young people with SEND	Participatory elements to design  Interviews, focus groups, interviews supported by visuals  Contextual narrative analysis	Positive experiences of participation linked to young people's confidence in self advocacy for their health care	Narrative theory  Self- identity Emerging adulthood: A theory of development  Self-determination
(Cornish, 2019) 10	UK	Explore the impact of welfare focus on Level 1 courses	FE college	Level 1 learners and staff	Case study including Interview and observation	Lessons often disrupted to allow staff to meet pastoral needs led to reduced opportunities for academic learning	Bourdieu
(Wolf, 2011)	UK	Provide recommendations for vocational education for 14-19 year olds to help ensure they can access the labour market	Schools and FE colleges	All students	Qualitative data tracking student destinations / pathways post-14	Many low-level vocational or pre-vocational training programmes provide students with little or no advantage, English and maths are the most useful skills	None cited
Starcic, A. I., & Niskala, M. (2010)	Finland, Lithuania and Hungary	Evaluation of an e-learning environment for students with SEND for	Vocational courses in special vocational schools	Students with serve learning difficulties	Questionnaire given to teachers of students with SEND	The e-learning environment supported collaboration between teachers, parents and students. The	None cited



		students with server learning difficulty				e-learning environment supported individualised learning opportunities and digital literacy	
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Table A6ii *Details of Articles Selected in Initial Scoping Review of Grey Literature*

Author and year	Location	Aims	Setting	Population	Methodology/ analysis	Main findings	Theoretical basis
(Hickey, 2016)	UK	To explore initial experiences of young people with severe learning difficulties transitioning from post-16 school to a FE college	FE college	YP with severe LD	Individual case study, semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis	Supportive factors: friendship at college  YP positive about the opportunities for learning, social life, independence and autonomy.  Facilitating their transition: support from families and college staff.  YP experienced a sense of loss and missed their friends from school.	Fundamental human needs (belonging) (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954)  Bronfenbrenner's eco-system model (1979)
(Bell, 2015)	UK	To explore the Issues for Young People Post 16 with Additional Needs in College	FE college	young people aged 16 to 25 with additional needs	Mixed methods exploratory research questionnaires (to parents and staff members) Semi-structured interviews (with young people aged 16 to 25)	Peer relationships:  many young people indicated they have difficulties in this area.  Issues with family and more intimate relationships influenced the young people emotionally	Life stages (Erikson, 1968) (Marcia, 1980).  Brain development (Blakemore, 2007; Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006)

						<p>Support networks: families, tutors, friends and themselves.</p> <p>A lack of choice in courses available at college (focus on English and maths)</p>	
( <i>Asset Skills</i> , 2010)	UK	Evaluation of employability qualifications for YP with SEND	FE colleges / schools	Staff and students of employability course for YP with SEND	Case study including interview and questionnaire	Students gained confidence and some gained opportunity for employment	None cited
(Lawson, 2018)	UK	To explore how YP with special educational needs experience transition from special school to further education	FE colleges	YP with SEND	semi structured interviews analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.	<p>YP's perceived teachers treated them as adults, providing support and a safe space.</p> <p>YP had limited opportunities to engage in decision-making regarding college options when leaving school</p> <p>and a sense of sharing an experience as well as feelings of separation</p>	<p>Belonging, (Prince &amp; Hadwin, 2013, p. 238)</p> <p>Psychological needs theories (Griffin &amp; Tyrrell, 2003; Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1961; Rogers, 2000).</p> <p>Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci &amp; Ryan, 2002).</p>

(Tyson, 2011)	UK	An exploration of the transition planning experiences of young people with additional educational needs in a mainstream context, as they consider their post-16 plans	Mainstream secondary school	YP with additional needs  Staff involved in transition	semi structured interviews analysed using Thematic Analysis.	Professional roles: multi-professional approach, role of the Connexions PA  Influences: Family and community, statutory procedures  Individuality of the pupil: The vulnerability of SEN pupils Variation in SEN pupil profiles, needs and experiences.  A gap between YPs description of experience and staffs reports about the service	Bronfenbrenner "s (1979 & 2001) ecological systems theory
(Esbrand, 2016)		To explore the experiences of young people with learning difficulties and their parents during post-school transition	FE college	young people with moderate learning difficulties and their parents	Semi- structured interviews, IPA	Adjusting to Change; YP were excited about the change but had feelings of loss for previous school  Involvement and Support; YP and parents had mixed views on transitions options available and their involvement in the process  Moving Towards Adulthood:	Psychoanalytic concepts of loss " (Rycroft, 1995, pp.105-106)  Psychoanalytic theory of attachment and loss (Bowlby, 1980)

						YP hoped to gain employment	
(Heslop, 2018)	UK	To explore the experiences of previously “disengaged” young people who chose to transition to a 14 to 16 college	FE college	students who made “non-traditional” transitions to FE college	a focus group, semi-structured interviews, grounded theory	disempowerment and disengagement, agency through self-determination and re-empowerment.	self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Pierson et al, 2008) and bioecological systems (Trainor et al, 2008). The concepts of bounded agency (Evans, 2007) and ‘critical moments’ (Thomson et al, 2002)
(Forster, 2012)	UK	To explore YP with special educational needs' experiences of school and the transition to adulthood	Mainstream schools	YP with “hidden” SEND  YP on school years 10 and 11  And aged 18 -20	two life history interviews with a sample of young people and their parents	For some previous negative experiences of education had a negative impact. for other FE provided opportunity to build on strengths.  Some YP had concerns their aspirations weren't achievable  Learning support sometimes separated YP from the mainstream	Social model of disability

**Table A7***Exploratory Search for YP with SEND's Views and Participatory Research*

Date	Database	Search terms	Number of results	Exclusion criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Resulting resources
8.6.20	Psych info	<p>“Participatory action research” AND (“special education” OR “special needs” OR “disabilities”)</p> <p><b>Age:</b></p> <p><u>adulthood (18 yrs &amp; older...</u></p> <p><u>adolescence (13-17 yrs)</u></p>	15	<p>research with parents, younger pupils, research not concerning YP</p> <p>Research on access/inclusion</p> <p>PAR with professionals</p> <p>Research on physical health matters such as obesity</p>	<p>Research with young people with SEND</p> <p>Peer reviewed academic journal or reviewed book</p>	<p>Promoting Self-Determination Skills Among Youth with Special Health Needs Using Participatory Action Research. (Burstein, Bryan, &amp; Chao, 2005)</p> <p>Supported volunteering: A community approach for people with complex needs. (Choma &amp; Ochocka, 2005)</p> <p>Confronting 'limit situations' in a youth/adult educational research collaborative. (Brown &amp; Galeas, 2011)</p>
8.6.20	Psych info	<p>participatory research AND (special educational needs or SEND or learning difficulties)</p>	20	<p>Research with education professionals</p> <p>Book reviews</p>	<p>Research with young people or adults with SEND</p> <p>Research on participatory research with adults with SEND</p>	<p>Students negotiating the borders between general and special education classes: An ethnographic and participatory research study. (Riitaoja, Helakorpi, &amp; Holm, 2019)</p> <p>Adult interactive style intervention and participatory research designs in autism: Bridging the gap between academic research and practice. (Kossyvaki, 2018)</p> <p>Emergence of participatory methodology in learning difficulty research: Understanding the context. (Chappell, 2000)</p> <p>Rights to research: Utilising the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as an inclusive participatory action research tool. (Ollerton &amp; Horsfall, 2013) 3</p>

						<p>Mutual support: A model of participatory support by and for people with learning difficulties. (Keyes &amp; Brandon, 2012)</p> <p>Researching learning difficulties: A guide for practitioners. (Porter &amp; Lacey, 2004)</p> <p>Images and the ethics of inclusion and exclusion: Learning through participatory photography in education. (Kaplan, Miles, &amp; Howes, 2011)</p> <p>Picturing global educational inclusion? Looking and thinking across students' photographs from the UK, Zambia and Indonesia. (Kaplan, Lewis, &amp; Mumba, 2007)</p>
18.9.20	British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, APA PsycInfo	("participatory action research" or "participatory research") AND("SEND" OR "learning difficulties" OR "post-16" OR "special educational needs" )	180	<p>Research with adults, professionals</p> <p>Research conducted before 2000</p>	<p>Research with young people with SEND in educational contexts in the UK</p> <p>A sample of papers exploring reflective practise in the process of research with people with learning difficulties</p>	<p>(Bunn &amp; Boesley, 2019)</p> <p>(Giles &amp; Rowley, 2020)</p> <p>(Greenstein, 2014)</p>

**Table A8***Snowballing from Introductory Texts*

Introductory text found in database search	Text found in citation search
Researching learning difficulties: A guide for practitioners. (Porter & Lacey, 2004)	(Department of Health, 2001) White Paper: Valuing People  (Goodley, 2000)  What counts as success? Comp school (Benjamin, 2003)  (Goodley, Armstrong, Sutherland, & Laurie, 2003)  (Riddell, 2001)
Adult interactive style intervention and participatory research designs in autism: Bridging the gap between academic research and practice. (Kossyvaki, 2018)	(Reeve, 2004)
(Riddell, 2001)	(Putnam, 2000)

**Table A9***Details of Articles Selected in Exploratory Search for YP with SEND's views and Participatory Research*

Author and year	Location	Aims	Setting	Population	Methodology/ analysis	Main findings	Theoretic al basis
(Benjamin, 2003)	UK	Explore the influence of government policy on dominant discourses of success	Secondary girls school	Students with SEN	Ethnography Observation, interview	dominant discourse was that success was achieving A*-C GCSE grades. The students unable to reach these grades had different responses to the dominant discourse were reluctant to leave their friendship group (in the lower maths class) to join a higher group	Discourse analysis

(Riitaoja, Helakorpi, & Holm, 2019)	Finland	explore how policies of inclusion are implemented in a school with separated special educational needs (SEN) and general education (GE) classes.	Comprehensive secondary school	Lower school Students in SEN class	ethnographic study	Students interested in joining the mainstream classes were reluctant to leave their friendship group (in the SEN class) students felt stigma attached to SEN group	
(Bunn & Boesley, 2019)	UK	Design and implement a transition support group for students with SEN	primary (year 6 ) and secondary school (year 7)	Year 6 and 7 students with SEN	Action research	discrepancy between students' and teachers' priorities for successful transition, the intervention designed with involvement of young people was successful	Self determination Mediated learning social constructionism
(Greenstein, 2014)	UK	Gain student views on school through play based methods	Secondary school	Students from SEN unit	Student led creative play based methods, including role play and art	Play based method supported expression without as much reliance on language and reduced the power imbalance between researcher and participants	Critical pedagogy and critical disability studies
(Brown & Galeas, 2011)	USA	create a collaborative learning dynamic with equality between the students and the researchers to give students voice and agency	Specialist high school provision for students with SEN and SEMH needs	Students approach the end of high school	Participatory research, including focus groups students' poetry and student led teacher training	young people were sometimes resistant to playing a role in decision making but some found the experience raised confidence	Liberation pedagogy (Freire, 1970)



(Choma & Ochocka, 2005)	Canada	Evaluation of a supported volunteering programme	volunteering programme	adults with a range of disabilities, volunteer coaches and work providers	Participatory research, including focus groups and interview	Volunteers and coaches reported an opportunity to be a part of, and make a meaningful contribution to, the community  reported experiences of stigma and discrimination.	n/a
(Ollerton & Horsfall, 2013b)	Australia	Actively involve adults with disabilities in disability rights research	Group home for adults	adults identified as having learning difficulties	Participatory action research, including focus groups and photo voice	Experiences of empowerment, self-efficacy and affirmation from the group for Co-researchers	Self-determination, self efficacy
(Burstein et al., 2005)	USA	Prompting self determination through participatory action research	High school	High school students with special health needs	Participatory action research, including individual data collection and focus groups	individual data collection prompted an inward reflection. The group gave young people the confidence to pursue their independence goals and a chance to share experience of discrimination	Self determination
(Wallace & Giles, 2019)	UK	Explore young people's views experience with educational psychologists (EP) and EP response to this	Youth forum group	Young people with SEN	Participatory research, including video production and focus group	EPs valued the young people's feedback via the film. Young people valued being respected and listened to by EPs	Empowerment, Self-Advocacy
(Keyes & Brandon, 2012)	UK	Develop a model of mutual support informed by understandings of adults with LD	Community groups for adults with LD	Adults with LD	Participatory research, narratives of individuals	Adults with LD described benefiting from mutual support in the context of community groups	Empowerment, self-advocacy

(Goodley et al., 2003)	UK		Self advocacy groups	Adults with LD	Personal narrative analysis ethnographic	Self advocacy is significant in the lives of people with LD	Resilience, social model of disability, self advocacy, relational nature of LD
(Goodley, 2005)	UK	Consider the relationship between the self advocacy movement and LD policy	Self advocacy groups	Adults with LD	Observation of self advocacy groups Ethnographic and narrative	Lived reality must be considered in exploration of empowerment	Resilience, social model of disability, self advocacy, relational nature of LD


## Appendix B

### Materials Used With and Generated by Co-researchers

#### 2.1 Introductory Power-point

About me..


- My name is Penelope Edwards
- I come from London
- What's important to me?



1

All about me!


- I am at studying at the University of East London.



2

My job

- I am training to be an **Educational Psychologist**



- Help make things better for children and young people at school
- Help young people prepare for adulthood
- Help adults that work with young people

3


My job

**Research**

- Find out what's important to young people
- Find out what young people need
- Find out what helps young people


**Publication**

- Share this with people that are involved in helping young people



4

My research



I would like some of you to help me with my research

I would like to find out about your views on your course at New city college

We can plan together how to do the research

5

Why do I need your help?

- I know about doing research
- You know about what its like doing your course at college
- We can work together!

- If you want to take part
- You can think about it this week and decide next week.
- You can talk to your teacher about it

6

## Sessions

*If you take part you will...*

1. Consent to take part / planning
2. Planning what we do (methods)
3. Sharing your views
4. Look at what we found out together. Decide what to share.
5. We tell your teachers what we found out
6. Evaluation – tell me what you liked or disliked about the project



1

## Ideas - methods



2

## Questions

3

## Thanks for listening!

- Please bring in your **form** if you want to take part
- I've asked your parents to sign so that they know you are doing the project
- You can tell your parents, your teacher or me if you don't want to do it




4

## 2.2 Methods Choice Session

2/1/21

**My research**

- Find out what's important to young people
- Find out what young people need
- Find out what helps young people





1

**Sessions**

*If you take part you will...*

1. Consent to take part ✓
  1. Start planning
2. Planning what we do / sharing your views
3. Sharing your views
4. Look at what we found out together. Decide what to share.
5. We tell your teachers what we found out
6. Evaluation – tell me what you liked or disliked about the project


2

**Key words**

- **Co-researcher** – helping the researcher
- **Participant** – sharing their ideas
- In this project you can be both co-researchers and participants
- You can decide to stop at any time



3

- One way that researchers find out new things is by **asking questions** and **listening**



4


**Ideas - methods**

Talk about it in small groups


*Focus group (5-10)*

*Group interview (2-4)*



5

**Ideas - methods**



Talk to me on your own

*Individual interview*

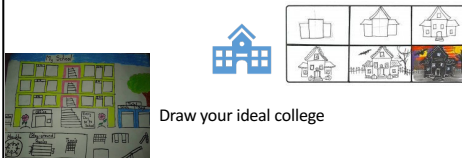
6

2/1/21

- There's also some more creative methods ...

1

### Ideas - methods




Draw your ideal college

2

### Ideas- methods


- Take some photos around the college and talk about them
- Photovoice



3

### Ideas – methods

- Collage
- Use magazines/ the internet to find images to share your thoughts




4

- Any other ideas?

5

### Ideas - methods



Talk about it in small groups    Talk to me on your own    Draw your ideal school    Take photos to show what's important to you and tell me about them    Make a collage    Your idea?

I don't want to

6

## 2.3 Methods Planning Session


2/1/21

*Last week...*  
 Session 1: consent  
 Session 2: planning  
*Today*  
**Session 3: collecting data**

1

**Recap – last week**  
 WE...

- Read/listened to the consent form
- Signed the **consent form** if you wanted to take part
- Reminder: you can stop at any time
- You can take a break at any time
- We planned the **methods** (what we will do)



2

**We decided:**

Some people wanted to


- Talk about it to small groups
- Talk to me on your own
- Create your ideal school
- Take photos to show what important to you and tell me about them
- Make a collage
- Your idea?
- I don't want to

Others wanted to

3

**Interview questions**

- I want to find out about your views on your course at college. What questions should I ask you?




4

**Taking photos to share your views**

**What will we take photos of?**

- Things we like in college
- Things we dislike in college
- Things we would like to change about the college
- You can take up to 10 photos
- You will choose 2 photos to show the group and talk about
- Don't tell your partner what to choose because it should be their choice
- Help your partner take photos safely and respectfully.



5

**Taking photos safely and respectfully**


We are using the teacher's work phone

We can take photos of ...

- ✓ The building
- ✓ The classrooms / other spaces in the building
- ✓ Nature –trees, plants, wildlife
- ✓ Photos of staff – but **only** if they give permission. Give them time to read and sign the consent form.

**NO**

- Photos of students



6

## 2.4 Interview Questions Generated by Co-researchers

1. What course are you studying?
2. What do you like about your course?
3. What do you dislike about your course?
4. What kind of activities did you do at college? For example do you raise money for charity?
5. Some people have to repeat a year... why do you have a second year on SIPs?
6. How was your lockdown?
7. How was working at home?
8. What was it like using Teams ?
9. Which do you prefer – online or face to face?
10. How do you feel about the current pandemic?
11. What has the pandemic done to SIPs?
12. How did you find a work placement?
13. What was your work placement like?
14. How did you feel about your work placement?
15. What does a job coach do?
16. Does your job coach understand you
17. Did your job coach make you feel safe?
18. Does going a work placement make you more confident?
19. Do you feel nervous going to your job placement?
20. Do you make new friends at placement, college or outside?
21. Do you feel excited to leave college?
22. Who supports you at college?
23. What are your hobbies and interests?
24. Is there anything else you want to mention ?

## 2.5 Evaluation Interview Prompts

What did you like about the project?

Did you get the chance to share your views on your course?

Did you have enough time to share your view?

Prompt: did you have About the right amount of time, not enough time, too much time.

Did you dislike anything?

Would you change anything about the project?



## Appendix C

### Data Analysis Examples

#### 3.1 Example Full Coded Transcript Table C1

##### *Notation Used in Transcripts*

Feature	Notation
Penelope (Researcher)	P
Fatima (co-researcher)	F
Detail omitted to maintain anonymity	XXXX
Pause	(...)
Emphasis on word	<u>Underlined</u>

*Note:* (Adapted from Clarke & Braun, 2013)

1. P- Before we start, it just need to mention that although we're having this conversation privately,
2. if you tell me anything that worries me or that I'm concerned about, then I would have to speak
3. to someone else about that with XXX or one of the other teachers, so that's just safeguarding,
4. but otherwise, this is just conversation between us and when I come to write about this, then I
5. can change your name, does that make sense?
6. F- yeah
7. P –so last week we came up with questions together as a group and those are the questions I
8. have to ask you now in our interview
9. F- ok
10. P- so the first one is, what course are you studying?
11. F- supported internship
12. P- um, hmm, what do you like about your course?
13. F- I like going to my work placement
14. P- oh, ok. What is your work placement?
15. F- I work in XXX college in XXXX
16. P – oh, ok, what are you doing in XXX college?
17. F- I clean the table and sweep the floor.
18. P Ummhmm (...) ok. Is there anything you dislike about your course?
19. F- I don't like conflict
20. P- ummm, yeah
21. F- drama in the college, it upsets me
22. P – so you mean when someone has an argument or something like that, people fall out?
23. F- yes
24. P- yeah, um , ok, so What kind of activities did do you at college?
25. F- umm, like, what do you mean?
26. P- umm, for example, I think when we were planning we spoke a little bit about - you did
27. some raising money for charity?
28. F- yeah we did children in need,
29. P- ummhmm
30. F- and, we did, um like a poster, online and we sold like cupcakes in the pop up shop down
31. stairs
32. P- mmm, ok. And how was that?
33. F- it was really good
34. P- you enjoyed that?
35. F- yeah
36. P- what did you enjoy about it?
37. F- I liked it how we raised much money
38. P- yeah that sounds like something to be really proud of raising a lot of money for charity. So
39. I found out last week, some people have to repeat a year on SIPs... I'm wondering why do
40. some people have to repeat a year?

**Commented [PE1]:** Liking the work placement

**Commented [PE2]:** Roles and responsibilities on work placements: cleaning

**Commented [PE3]:** Dislikes at college : conflict

**Commented [PE4]:** Dislikes at college : conflict

**Commented [PE5]:** Desire to raise/give money for charity activities at college: raising money for charity

41. F- so they can find a job
42. P – so they would get a chance to do their job, ummhhh, did you have to repeat a year? Or is this your first year?
43. F- it's my last year
44. P- um, ok so how did you find the lockdown?
45. F- it boring
46. P- hmm, boring?
47. F- I have to sit at home doing nothing all day. Apart from spending time with my mum and
48. my brother
49. P- ummhhh, how old is your brother?
50. F- 19
51. P- hmm and how old are you if you don't mind me asking?
52. F- 22
53. P- um, How was working at home?
54. F- we did like packs in college and since like the pandemic and covid started, I stopped doing
55. it
56. P- so you stopped doing the packs?
57. F- yeah
58. P – umm, did you do any college work at home?
59. F- no, they didn't give us any
60. P- ok, so you didn't have a lot to do during the lockdown? yeah Umm, did you use teams at
61. all during the lockdown?
62. F- err, yeah to speak to Amina\*
63. P- oh, ok, what was it like using teams?
64. F- it was good, I spoke to her yesterday.
65. P – mmm so it's a nice way to keep in touch with your friends
66. F- yeah
67. P – umm, so which do you prefer doing things online or face to face?
68. F- doing things online
69. P- oh you like doing things online? So why do you like doing things online?
70. F- I don't like showing my face to people
71. P- ok- what in real life?
72. F- yeah
73. P – ahh, ok. Um, How do you feel about the current pandemic?
74. F- I don't like wearing a mask. I go Arabic school with my mum and I have to wear it. I like
75. the ones that you can breath in but I don't like the other one you cant breathe inside
76. P- ummm, so it's sometimes hard to breathe in your mask, where did you mention you go
77. with your mum sorry I didn't hear that
78. F- I go Arabic school

**Commented [PE1]:** The aim of college is to find a (paid) job

**Commented [PE2]:** Being at home (because if the lockdown) is boring

**Commented [PE3]:** college didn't give us much to do during lockdown

**Commented [PE4]:** Using the computer / phone to keep in touch with friends

**Commented [PE5]:** Preference for doing things online

**Commented [PE6]:** Dislike: wearing a mask my culture

79. P- oh Arabic school

80. F- I go just for weekends for 3 hours

81. P- mmm, umm, and what are you doing at Arabic school

82. F- we do like Islamic things there

**Commented [PE1]:** life outside college: my culture

83. P- ok, what kind of effect has the pandemic has on your SIPs course?

84. F- Um not able to go college and not seeing your friends

**Commented [PE2]:** Can't see friends during lockdown cant come to college

85. P- mmm, and what was that like?

86. F- it was boring

**Commented [PE3]:** Being at home (because if the lockdown) is boring

87. P- boring, yeah, I understand that. (...) so with the work placement, how did you find a work

88. placement?

89. F- its really easy to get there cos I take the train to XXXX and then I get another train to XXXX

90. and get off at XXXX

91. P- um, hmm,

92. F- I just work two days only, I just work Tuesdays and Wednesdays

93. P- and you travel there on your own?

94. F- yes

95. P- how do you find that?

96. F- it was a bit scary but I managed

97. P- yeah, does it feel a bit less scary now you've had more practise?

98. F- yeah

**Commented [PE4]:** Independent travel is important to developing confidence

99. P- hmm, umm, so what was your work placement like?

100. F- its um, I have to do the same job every single day so I get a bit bored of doing it

**Commented [PE5]:** Work can be repetative which is boring

101. P- mmm, so what's the job you do every day?

102. F- I clean the table and sweep the floor

**Commented [PE6]:** Roles and responsibilities on work placements: cleaning

103. P- umm, hmm, so would you like it if it was a bit more varied then? More different

104. things to do?

105. F- so I like working with little kids, like in a school

**Commented [PE7]:** preferred work: with children

106. P- mmm

107. F- but cos of Covid, they couldn't find any like schools for me to do it

**Commented [PE8]:** Limitations to work options due to covid

108. P- mmm

109. F- and my mum wants me to do it like somewhere near my home

**Commented [PE9]:** Parent preference for nearby workplace

110. P- hmm, ok, why does your mum want you to be a bit nearer your home?

111. F- because my old primary is like 5 minutes walk from me, there's another primary

112. in where I live. She wants me to work there. And I did my work experience there as

113. primary school?
114. F- yeah like nursery
115. P- or nurse, which type of age group of children do you like working with the most?
116. F- you know like, year 1 year 2, year 5 and year 6
117. P- so you don't mind which age like all the primary age?
118. F- yeah
119. P- so that's your preference but for now your kind of making do with the cleaning job?
120. F- yeah
121. P- hmm. What does your job coach do?
122. F- they help us to find a job. Cos I used to work in XXXX in subway
123. P- ummhhh
124. F- it was a bit too far for me. So I take the bus and then I take the train and then I take the bus. So it's quite a long way to go. I don't like working there, it's too far.
127. P- anything else you didn't like about it or was it just the distance?
128. F- the distance
129. P- is that something you told the job coach about and they helped you change to a different placement?
130. F- what happened was my mum, speaks Bengali, and I have to explain to her like for school, you need like qualifications and you need like level 1 level 2 qualification and
133. yeah, my friend was like you can take level 1 child care and then I spoke to my mum
134. and she was like 'you can't do it, you're on SIPs'
135. P - mmm
136. F- so I decided not to do level 1 childcare
137. P- so that's something you were thinking about doing but in the end you carried on with SIPs instead?
138. F- yeah
140. P- ok. Umm, so, what, does your job coach understand you?
141. F- Yeah
142. P- and does your job coach make you feel safe?
143. F- yeah they do
144. P- um, did you feel, going a work placement made you more confident?
145. F- yes
146. P- and why, why do you think that was?

**Commented [PE1]:** Preferred work: with children

**Commented [PE2]:** Limitations to work options due to covid

**Commented [PE3]:** Job coach:  
Practical support role: finding a job

**Commented [PE4]:** Importance of the location of the placement (not too far)

**Commented [PE5]:** Preferred work: with children  
my home language  
Need to explain the school system parent  
Barriers to choice: parent/ education system?

**Commented [PE6]:** Job coach supportive/ caring/  
emotional support

**Commented [PE7]:** Job coach: helping us feel safe

147F- because my placement its quite easy to get there. And so last time I left the	Commented [PE1]: Independent travel is important to developing our confidence
148house	
149too early and i got there too <u>early</u> . My placement starts at 10 and I finish at	
150130 but	Commented [PE2]: Independent travel is important to developing our confidence
150after I have my lunch I go home	
151P- umm hmm. erm, did you ever feel nervous going to your job placement?	
152F- yeah, when I first started going to (far away placement) it felt a bit it was	Commented [PE3]: Roles and responsibilities on work placements: food prep
153quite	
153daunting, because it was a bit far and like, um, I have to, like, make the sauces	
154and	Commented [PE4]: Work can be varied which makes it more interesting
154do like the fruit veg it was more variety I do like different things there	
155P – so would you say the placement at subway was a bit far away bit is was a	
156bit	Commented [PE5]: preferred work: with children
156more interesting the XXX college because it was more varied?	
157F- yeah	
158P- hmm, ok, yeah I see, I see yeah. But your favourite placement was in the	Commented [PE6]: Work placement is an opportunity to meet new people/ make friends my home language
159primary	
159school?	
160F- yeah	Commented [PE7]: College gives an opportunity to make new friends
161P- yeah. So did you make new friends on any of your placements?	
162F- I did, in XXXX there's two girls that speak the same language as me,	
163P- oh, ok.	Commented [PE8]: Friends will be missed when I leave college
164F- so they speak, they speak Bengali, so I made friends there	
165P- oh, that's a nice thing to have in common with someone speaking the same	
166language. And what about making friends in college?	Commented [PE9]: Unsure about leaving college
167F- yeah I have friends in college.	
168P-um, Do you feel excited to leave college?	
169F- no.	Commented [PE10]: Support from teachers support from mentors
170P- ok, no so why not?	
171F- I'll miss my friends	
172P- so if you have the choice would you stay at college for longer?	Commented [PE11]: Able to ask for help from college staff
173F- maybe	
174P- hmm, umm, who supports you at college?	
175F- my teachers and my mentors.	Commented [PE12]: Spending time with family
176P- hmm, and how do they support you?	
177F- they help me, if I'm stuck or anything, I tell them to help me.	
178P- um, hmm, what are <u>your</u> hobbies and interests?	Commented [PE13]: hobbies and interests
179F- I like spending time with my family, watching Holly Oaks and EastEnders. I	
180like	
180using my laptop and my phone. Sometimes I go out for a walk with my mum,	Commented [PE14]: Helping my family members
181because she's not well and the doctor says she needs to walk.	
182P- yeah, it's good to get out for a walk when you've been inside a lot.	
183Well, that's	
183great! Thank you for answering all those questions. For me to find out	
184a abit more	
184about your placements and other things you were thinking of doing.	
185Um, is there	
185anything else you want to mention?	
186F- no.	
187P- no. Well, thank you for speaking to me, this is going to be useful	
188information.	
188What I'm going to do is write down everything that you've said and	
189then I'm gonna	
189quick summary, maybe next week speak to you quickly again just to	
190check that I've	
190understood what you were saying and got the key points right. Does	
191that sound ok?	
191F- yes	
192P- great! Well, thanks so much.	

**Table C2***Example of Codes Associated with Theme*

<b>Master Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Sub-sub theme</b>	<b>Related codes</b>
Importance of in person relationships for wellbeing	Importance of Relationships with peers at college for wellbeing	Value the opportunity to be with friends at college	<p>Friends will be missed when I leave college*</p> <p>College is a place where I can see friends</p>
		Value the opportunity to make friends at college	College gives an opportunity to make new friends
		Can't see friends during lockdown (causing stress)	Can't see friends during lockdown (causing stress)

## Appendix D

### Ethical Approval and Documentation

#### 4.1 Student's Information Letter/ Consent Form

##### Young Person's Information letter

**Title: “A Participatory Research Project exploring Young people’s views of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs.”**

**Research Question: What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience of an employability course?**

You are being asked if you would like to take part in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what taking part would involve. Please read or listen to the following information carefully.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Penelope Edwards. I am a student at the University of East London. I am studying so that I can become an Educational Psychologist. An Educational Psychologist is someone who is interested in how young people learn. An Educational Psychologist helps children and young people at school or college.



#### **What is the research?**

Research means finding out new things. I want to find out about what it's like for young people on an employability course. I want to know what you like about the course and what would make it even better. I will ask you to help choose how we do the research.

My university has checked my research is safe and respectful to the people taking part.

### **Why have you been asked to take part?**

I would like to work with students who have been on employability course for young people with Special Educational needs.

You can say “no” if you don’t want to take part.

### **What will you be doing if you take part?**

If you agree to take part you will be asked to:

- Come to some **online workshops** with me and some other young people.
  1. I will teach you about some research methods (ways of doing research).
  2. You will have a choice in how you would like to take part.
  3. You may choose to talk about your courses as a group, or on your own or use pictures and drawing to share your ideas.
- The sessions will last 30-45 minutes
- You can choose to take part in up to 6 sessions with me, the researcher
- The online workshop will happen during your **Friday afternoon lesson**.
- You can share your work with your teachers if you want to.
- **You can stop taking part in sessions at any time if you want to.**
- The sessions will be recorded (sound only) and transcribed (written up) by the researcher

If you take part, you are helping me to understand more about what young people want. This could help your teachers make your course better. This could help XXX improve their services for young people. This could help me learn how best to help young people share their views. You might help others in your class to take part.

You may learn some new skills. You will learn about research methods. You may develop your ICT skills. You may get to know the other students in your class better. I hope you will benefit by taking part.

### **Your taking part will be safe and confidential (private)**

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times.

- Your name will be taken out, so when other people look at the research they won’t know what you said.



- You do not have to answer all the questions.
- **You can stop at any time**
- The voice recordings will be deleted when I finish my work.

### **What will happen to the information that you provide?**

The findings from the research will be presented to a group of trainee educational psychologists and tutors. The findings from the research will be shared with the Educational Psychology service at Tower Hamlets. The research may be published in a journal (anyone can read this).

No information that identifies you specifically will be shared. I will change any names and remove any identifying information you mention.

*If you tell me anything that concerns us about your safety or someone else's safety I will share this with the person in charge of safe-guarding at your college or the XXX safeguarding team.*

### **What if you want to stop taking part?**

You are free to **stop taking part** at any time. You don't have to say why you don't want to take part. You won't be in any trouble.

You might choose to come to some sessions but not take part in all the sessions. That's fine, just let me (the researcher), your parent or a teacher at your college know.

If you don't want the things you said (your ideas) to be included in the research, email me or let a parent or teacher know as soon as possible before 14th December 2020.

### **Contact Details**

If you would like to know more send me an email or ask your teacher or parent to send me an email. If you do not want to email me you can also email my supervisor (my boss) Helena Bunn or contact my university.

Penelope Edwards [u1825075@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1825075@uel.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor:  
Helena Bunn School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane,  
London E15 4LZ,

Email: [H.Bunn@uel.ac.uk](mailto:H.Bunn@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: [t.lomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:t.lomas@uel.ac.uk))

#### **4.2 Parent's Information Letter/ Consent Form**



#### **PARENT INFORMATION LETTER**

**Title: A Participatory Research Project exploring Young people's views of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs.**

**Research Question: What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs?**

Your son/ daughter is being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree to them participating it is important that you understand the aims of the study and what your son/daughter's participation would involve. I am seeking your consent to ensure your son/daughters safety. It is important you are aware that your son/ daughter is taking part in online video-meetings as part of the project. It is important you are aware of the project as although the research is unlikely to cause any distress, your son/ daughter may come to you if they have any concerns and they may need your support to complain or withdraw from the study if this is the case. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **Who am I?**

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and I am studying for a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology. As part of my studies I am hoping to conduct research with young people.

#### **What is the research?**

I am conducting research into the experiences of education for young people who have been placed on an Employability course designed for young people with Special Educational Needs.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at the University of East London. (This means that the research follows the standard of research

ethics set by the British Psychological Society.) and the XXX local authority ethics committee.

### **Why has your son/daughter been asked to participate?**

Your son/ daughter will be invited to participate in my research on the basis that they have experience of an employability course for young people aged 16 -25 with Special Educational Needs. I am hoping to invite a small group of young people to join the project. Parents will give consent before the students are approached for their consent.

### **What will your son/ daughter's participation involve?**

If you agree to your son/daughter participating in the project they will first be given an overview of the project plans and aims and will be asked if they would like to take part in an online session, supported by a member of college staff. Students that wish to participate will take part in an introductory session facilitated by their teacher and the researcher. If students would like to take part they will be involved in a series of up to 5, 30 to 45 minute sessions facilitated by myself, a Trainee Educational Psychologist. These sessions will take place online via the Microsoft Teams application (which can be accessed on a smart phone or laptop) and happen during the Friday afternoon lessons at college. Teachers will arrange alternative activities for any students that do not wish to take part.

The sessions will give students the opportunity to help design the research, share their views, reflect on the findings and share the findings with professionals who work with young people SEND. Finally, students will have the opportunity to evaluate their experience of the project.

The young people will be reminded that they are free to stop taking part in sessions at any time throughout the process.

Some of the sessions will be recorded (sound only) and transcribed (written up) by the researcher.

I will not be able to pay your son/ daughter for participating in my research, but their participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic. Your son or daughter will also benefit by having the opportunity to learn about research methods and develop presentation, communication and evaluation skills. I will aim to make the sessions interesting and enjoyable for the group, giving them the chance to share their ideas and build on their sense of community.

### **Taking part will be safe and confidential**

Your son/ daughters' privacy and safety will be respected at all times.

- Participants will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research.
- Participants do not have to answer all questions asked of them and can stop their participation at any time

- The voice recordings will be deleted after transcription

### **What will happen to the information that your son/daughter provides?**

The findings from the research will be presented to a group of trainee educational psychologists and tutors and to the Educational Psychology service.

No information that identifies the college or the students specifically will be shared. All identifying information (such as participants names) will be stored securely and deleted at the end of the project (on or before 01.07.21)

The researcher will change any names and remove any identifying information mentioned by the young people as part of the process of transcribing the voice recordings. The voice recordings will be deleted after transcription has taken place (on or before 01.07.21). The anonymised transcriptions will be saved securely and deleted on or before July 2026.

Consent forms including the names and contact details of the participants will be scanned and saved securely. Only the researcher (Penelope Edwards) will have access. Staff at the college will also know which students are taking part. The paper forms will be shredded immediately after scanning, within one week. These forms will be permanently deleted from the drive at the end of the research (on or before July 2021).

*If your son/ daughter tells me anything that concerns me about his/her safety or wellbeing or someone else's safety I will share this with the person in charge of safe-guarding at the school and XXX safeguarding team if appropriate.*

### **What if your son/daughter wants to withdraw from the project?**

Your son/daughter is free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if they withdraw I would reserve the right to use material that your son/ daughter provides up until the point of my analysis of the data. If your son/ daughter wishes to be removed from the study you can contact me on his/her behalf or he/she can contact me directly or via email as soon as possible, before the 14.12.20. (Staff at the college can also support you or your son/ daughter to do this)

### **Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Penelope Edwards [u1825075@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1825075@uel.ac.uk).

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Helena Bunn School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,  
Email: [H.Bunn@uel.ac.uk](mailto:H.Bunn@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.  
(Email: t.lomas@uel.ac.uk)



## **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

### **Consent to participate in a research study**

#### **A Participatory Research Project exploring Young people's views of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs.**

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what my son/ daughter's participation will involve.

I understand that my son/daughter's involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to my son/ daughter participating in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that my son/ daughter has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to themselves and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should my son/ daughter withdraw the researcher reserves the right to use their anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant (student)'s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Parent's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Parent's Signature

..... Date: .....

Researcher's Name : PENELOPE EDWARDS Researcher's Signature:

.....Date: .....

#### 4.3 Debriefing Letter



### **PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER**

Thank you for participating in my participatory research project exploring young people's views of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs. This letter offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

#### **What will happen to the information that you have provided?**

The following steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the data you have provided.

I will store your contact details on a secure drive at my university and delete them on or before 1.7.21. I will delete the audio recordings at this time.

When I write up (transcribe) the audio recordings I will remove any information that could identify you. That means your real name, the college and the borough name are not included. These transcripts will be saved securely for up to 5 years.

Some of the things you and other students shared (Extracts from the transcripts) will be included in my thesis and may be included in a published article in an academic journal.

If you don't want me to use this information in my research, let me know and your information will be withdrawn from the research. If you wish to remove your data from the study, contact the researchers via email as soon as possible, before 1.2.21.

### **What if something bad has happened or you feel bad after taking part?**

I have tried to ensure **nothing bad will happen and that you don't feel bad after taking part**. If you feel you would like to talk to someone about anything that upsets or worries you after taking part you may find these services helpful.

If you would like more information on what support is available in the local area you can contact the (XXXXX) **Young people's Advice Centre**

(contact details omitted)

If you would like more opportunities to share your views on services and to meet other young people with SEND you may be interested in taking part in the youth forum. See the flyer attached to this form.

You can call **the Samaritans** at any time to talk about anything that upsets or worries you. You can call 116 123 to talk to a trained volunteer.

You are also very welcome to contact me or my supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

### **Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Penelope Edwards [u1825075@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1825075@uel.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Helena Bunn School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,  
Email: [H.Bunn@uel.ac.uk](mailto:H.Bunn@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.  
(Email: [t.lomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:t.lomas@uel.ac.uk))

#### 4.4 UEL Ethical Approval

### School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

## NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

### For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

**REVIEWER:** Martin Willis

**SUPERVISOR:** Janet Rowley

**STUDENT:** Penelope Edwards

**Course:** Professional Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology

**Title of proposed study:** A Participatory Research Project exploring Young people's views of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs

#### DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.



2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

#### **DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY**

*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

**APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES**

#### **Minor amendments required (for reviewer):**

Please proofread the documents to be used with participants and college (invitation letters etc) and correct errors (e.g. "If you agree to participate your son/ daughter first be given an overview" is problematic because (i) parents are being asked to consent to their son/daughter's participation not their own and (ii) there seems to be a word missing between "daughter" and "first" – there are other errors like this throughout the appended documents).

#### **Major amendments required (for reviewer):**

#### **Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (for students):**

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name (*Typed name to act as signature*): Penelope Edwards  
 Student number:

Date: 28.3.20

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

### **ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER** (*for reviewer*)

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

**Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment**

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐

HIGH

**Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.**

☐

MEDIUM (**Please approve but with appropriate recommendations**)

☒

LOW

**Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).**

**Reviewer** (*Typed name to act as signature*): Martin Willis

**Date:** 28/02/20

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee*

### **RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:**

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UEL's Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

## **Appendix E**

### **Research Data Management Plan**

#### **UEL Data Management Plan: Full**

For review and feedback please send to: [researchdata@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchdata@uel.ac.uk)

**If you are bidding for funding from an external body, complete the Data Management Plan required by the funder (if specified).**

Research data is defined as information or material captured or created during the course of research, and which underpins, tests, or validates the content of the final research output. The nature of it can vary greatly according to discipline. It is often empirical or statistical, but also includes material such as drafts, prototypes, and multimedia objects that underpin creative or 'non-traditional' outputs. Research data is often digital, but includes a wide range of paper-based and other physical objects.



#### **Administrative Data**

Penelope Edwards

PI/Researcher

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2314-5590>

PI/Researcher ID (e.g. ORCiD)

[U1825075@uel.ac.uk](mailto:U1825075@uel.ac.uk)

PI/Researcher email

**Title:** A Participatory Research Project exploring Young people's views of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs.

**What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience of an employability course designed for those with Special Educational Needs?**

Research Title

**Amended title:**

**What do young people want their teachers to know about their experience of a Supported Internship Programme during a Pandemic?**

Project ID

N/A

Research Duration

proposed end date of April 2021

Research Description

Many young people with Learning Difficulties or Special Educational Needs (SEN) significant enough to require Educational Health and Care Plans are placed on employability programmes at colleges throughout the UK. These courses are supported by government policy which aims to address the high level of unemployment in this group. However, little research has been done that involves the young people, asking them what they would like to share about their experience of the course.

The proposed research aims to involve up to 3 groups of young people aged 18-25 who are currently attending or have experience of, a SEN employability course at college as co-researchers. The young people will have a say in the methods used and the questions asked and may choose focus groups, interviews, drawings or collages to help them express their views. The research will take place over 5 sessions with the young people facilitated by the researcher (remotely over Microsoft Teams ) which will give

the young people the opportunity to evaluate the research process and the researcher's conclusions throughout. The process will also allow the researcher to explore the secondary research question: what supports young people with SEN to share their views on their educational experience?

Funder	N/A – part of professional doctorate
Grant Reference Number (Post-award)	N/A
Date of first version (of DMP)	3.1.2020
Date of last update (of DMP)	24.09.2020 v.2 updated to reflect change in data collection methodology
Related Policies	<a href="#">UEL's Research Data Management Policy</a> <a href="#">UEL Data Backup Policy</a>
Does this research follow on from previous research? If so, provide details	N/A

## Data Collection

What data will you collect or create?	Up to 3 groups of up to 10 Young people aged 18-25 who have been identified as having Special educational needs, who are enrolled in or have experience of an employability programme at college will be co-researchers in this project. They may take part in up to 5 sessions which may include interviews or focus groups or drawing activities facilitated by the researcher (over Microsoft Teams ) Sessions will be 30-45 minutes long and semi-structured. Planning notes will be made during planning sessions and these will be saved securely. Data collection sessions will be audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Data will be anonymised at the point of transcription. Each participant will be given a pseudonym and all identifiable
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information (e.g. names, schools, locations, identifiable scenarios) anonymised in the transcripts.

Personal data will be collected on consent forms (names) and prior to the sessions (email address and/or telephone number for purposes of arranging discussions with the researcher, via the researcher's UEL email address). No sensitive data will be collected. No further data will be created in the process of analysing the transcripts.

After transcription it will not be possible to re-identify participants.

Photographs of participants drawings or choice of images may be taken. Names or identifying information will be covered before the photograph is taken. The researcher may take the photo via a screen shot, this image will be saved in a password protected file in *UEL OneDrive for business* and deleted from the researchers personal computer straight after the Teams meeting. The participants may take a photo on their phone and send directly to the researchers university email address.

Audio recordings will be .mp3 files.

Photographs will be .jpg files

Transcriptions will be .docx files

Consent forms will be .pdf files

Approximately 0.005 GB of data will be collected

Sessions will be recorded on a dedicated Dictaphone and then saved to a password protected file on the *UEL Onedrive for business*.

How will the data be collected or created?

Audio files of interviews will be transcribed on the researcher's personal computer via a word document in the *UEL Onedrive for business* an online Word document. After transcription audiofiles will be saved in a password protected folder on UEL Onedrive for business.

## Documentation and Metadata

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

Participant information sheets, consent forms, list of guide interview questions and debrief sheet. Audio files and transcripts of interviews. Photographs of drawings.

## Ethics and Intellectual Property

How will you manage any ethical issues?

- Written consent will be obtained from the students involved and their parents.
- Participants will be advised of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time without being obliged to provide a reason. This will be made clear to participants on the information sheets and consent forms. If a participant decides to withdraw from the study, they will be informed their contribution (e.g. any audio recordings and interview transcripts) will be removed and confidentially destroyed, up until the point where the data has been analysed. I will notify participants that this will not be possible after 20.8.20, or 3 weeks after their participation is finished.
- In case of emotional distress during or following the sessions, contact details of a relevant support organisation will be made available in a debrief letter. If participants appear distressed during the sessions they will be offered a break or the option to end the interview. Any safe-guarding concerns will be reported to the safeguarding officer at the student's college.
- Transcription will be undertaken only by the researcher to protect confidentiality of participants.
- Participants will be anonymised during transcription to protect confidentiality.

Agreement will be made that no names will be used or any other identifiable information including schools or local authorities.

N/A

How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights issues?

## Storage and Backup

Consent forms will be scanned uploaded to a password protected file in the UEL H: Drive. Paper versions will then be destroyed. The college will send home paper copies with the students and send a photo to the researcher's UEL email. In some cases the college staff or youth worker will email consent forms to parents who will return these to the researcher via her UEL email.

How will the data be stored and backed up during the research?

Audio recordings will initially be saved on the researchers dedicated personal Dictaphone. The file will then be transferred onto a file to *-one drive for Business* in which is password protected and be permanently deleted from the Dictaphone.

Each audio file will be named with date of the session and initials of the participants in that session.

Consent forms and audio files will be kept in separate, password protected files.

Transcripts will be saved to the *UEL OneDrive for Business* system as word documents. Each participant will be attributed a pseudonym. Transcription files will be named with the pseudonyms.

A list with pseudonyms and real first names will be saved on a separate encrypted file in UEL OneDrive for business drive which is password protected.



Consent forms with identifying information will be backed up on the *UEL OneDrive in a password protected file*

*Transcripts will be stored on UEL OneDrive for Business.*

Once the anonymised transcripts data has been backed up on UEL servers it will be deleted on completion of the doctorate.

All study data on the university computer systems will be erased once the thesis has been examined and passed.

How will you manage access and security?

The researcher will transcribe all sessions (removing identifiable information in the process) and only the researcher, supervisor and examiners will have access to the transcripts.

Recordings from the Dictaphone will be uploaded onto the researcher's password protected UEL OneDrive within 7 days after the session has ended. Recordings will then be deleted from the device. After transcription Audio files will be saved in a separate folder on the UEL OneDrive and titled as follows: 'Participant initials: Date of session'

The Dictaphone and any physical data containing identifiable information will be stored in lockable storage

## Data Sharing

How will you share the data?

Anonymised transcripts will be shared with the research supervisor via UEL email. File names will be participant pseudonyms.

Extracts of transcripts will be provided in the final research and any subsequent publications. Identifiable information will not be included in these extracts.

Anonymised transcripts will be deposited via the UEL repository and reviewed after 5 years for future research/ publication purposes. Consent forms will inform participants that I intend to deposit and archive data on a repository

Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

## Selection and Preservation

	Audio recordings and electronic copies of consent forms will be kept until the thesis has been examined and passed. They will then be erased from both the and UEL servers.
Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?	Transcripts will be erased from the personal <i>UEL OneDrive for Business</i> once the thesis has been examined and passed. The researcher will request that the transcripts are erased from UEL data repository after 5 years as this will allow time for future research/ publication purposes.
What is the long-term preservation plan for the data?	The researcher will keep a copy of the transcripts on a secure encrypted USB drive and delete these within 5 years of completion of the doctorate.

## Responsibilities and Resources

Who will be responsible for data management?	Penelope Edwards
What resources will you require to deliver your plan?	N/A

## Review

Contact [researchdata@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchdata@uel.ac.uk) re deposit of data

Date: 24/09/2020

Penny Jackson  
Research Data Management Officer