How do Nurture Group Practitioners deliver the social and emotional wellbeing curriculum?

Philippa Busch
University of East London

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

April 2017

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how Nurture Group Practitioners deliver the social and emotional wellbeing curriculum. To do this the content of the curriculum, how it was targeted and how progress was measured were explored. The research was conducted due to a gap in the literature regarding exactly what is done to support children with the development of their social and emotional wellbeing.

Qualitative exploratory research was conducted with nine Nurture Group Practitioners form the Greater London area. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews which were analysed using thematic analysis.

The research indicated that the needs of the children were assessed and addressed constantly. The curriculum consisted firstly of the development of intra-personal skills, followed by inter-personal skills. There was a clear priority given to the processes of the Nurture Group, how children learn and that they experience the expectations from others. The expectations were transparent and clear, presented in a structured yet personalised manner. Relationships were important, valued and maintained. Targets were specific for each individual child alongside group expectations and there was a dynamic approach in all aspects of what was being addressed and with what method. Nurture Group Practitioners held a common understanding of child development and behaviourist theories. They were receptive and responsive to the needs of the child and all forms of communication.

The research discussed common elements of the curriculum addressed in a consistent yet flexible framework, with a large degree of individualisation for each child. All opportunities were taken to teach the targeted skills as they naturally arose throughout the day. The dynamic approach and clear focus on processes supported the learning and outcomes for the children. Practical implications and future research questions are discussed.

Declaration

Student Declaration Form

Student Name:	**Philippa Busch**
Student Number:	**U1430387**
Sponsoring Establishment:	**University of East London**
Degree for which thesis submitted:	**Professional Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology**

Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards:
(* Please complete/ delete as appropriate)

	* I declare that while registered as a research degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution

Material submitted for another award:
(* Please complete/ delete as appropriate)

	* I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award

Ethical Approval
(*Please delete as appropriate)

either	* I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within the thesis.

Signature of student _____

Date_____

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Four: Results

Chapter Five: Discussion

Tables

Figures

Abbreviations

NG - Nurture Group

SEW - social and emotional wellbeing

NICE - National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

SEN - Special Educational Needs

DfE - Department for Education

SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

C&YP - children and young people

NGN - Nurture Group Network

NCB - National Children's Bureau

ECM - Every Child Matters

NGP - Nurture Group Practitioner

CBT - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

SFTBT - Solution Focused Brief Therapy

SDQ - Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire

SEB - social, emotional and behavioural

TA - Thematic Analysis

SENCo - Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

EP - Educational Psychologist

EPS - Educational Psychology Service

HCPC - Health and Care Professions Council

BPS - British Psychological Society

UEL - University of East London

P# - Participant #

MS - mainstream

ZPD - Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview of chapter

This thesis presents research exploring the social and emotional wellbeing curriculum delivered in Nurture Groups (NGs). Thus, this chapter introduces the topic of social and emotional wellbeing (SEW) within educational settings. The national and local contexts are discussed with reference to the role of the school within this field. The researcher's position is discussed and a rationale for the research is explained.

1.2 Social and emotional wellbeing

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance for schools (2013) regarding children's SEW states that SEW creates the foundations for healthy behaviours and educational attainment. It also helps prevent behavioural and mental health problems. NICE use the following definitions that are relevant to this research:

- Emotional wellbeing – this includes being happy and confident and not anxious or depressed.
- Psychological wellbeing – this includes the ability to be autonomous, to problem-solve, manage emotions, experience empathy, be resilient and attentive.
- Social wellbeing – this includes having good relationships with others and not having behavioural problems, that is, not being disruptive, violent or a bully.

Across the UK, SEW is increasingly being highlighted in school systems, with serious concerns for the children and young people. There has been a rise in reports in the media, and people's awareness is increasing. With more frequent reports on an ever increasing media platform, public bodies, parents and children themselves are more tuned in to aspects of emotional wellbeing and how issues in this area are addressed.

Last year alone 5,800 pupils were permanently excluded from state funded primary, secondary and special schools, with a further 302,980 pupils

receiving a fixed period exclusion (DfE, 2016). Of these pupils, over half of them were identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN). Pupils with SEN support were seven times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those pupils with no SEN. Although the incidents have reduced slightly over the past ten years, this is still a large number of children and young people being failed by the education system. In primary schools (aged 5-11 years), 91% of the permanent exclusions were a result of disruptive behaviour, threatening behaviour or assault (DfE, 2016).

Cooper & Whitebread (2007) found that there are increasing levels of stress and insecurity in children, with 78% of looked after children having behavioural or emotional problems (Sempik, Ward & Darker 2008). Bennathan (1997, p.23) states that "it is unclear to what extent the problems are being exacerbated by lower teacher tolerance for whatever reason, or indeed being exaggerated by increased union and press publicity". Causes are debatable, but the fact is that the number of children and young people identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and requiring additional support to access education, is increasing. It is also more at the forefront in recent legislation, with one of the four key areas set out in the new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice being solely attributed to "social, mental and emotional health" (SEND, 2014).

Hutchings (2015) states that students' social and emotional wellbeing has suffered in recent years. Hutchings attributes this to an increase in pressure faced by students, as well as wide-sweeping changes in legislation, resulting in schools and teachers facing higher demands to sustain and improve exam results.

Children and young people (C&YP) in England are ranked as some of the least happy in the world (The Children's Society, 2015). The impact on the SEW of C&YP has resulted in an increase pupils suffering from panic attacks and self-harming, particularly in primary schools (Richardson, 2015a). For older students, ChildLine has reported an increase of over 200% in 2013-2014 from students about exam stress, compared to the previous year (Adams, 2015). This has led to many schools feeling ill-equipped to help these students. It has

been reported that some schools have resorted to calling emergency services due to a lack of viable alternatives (Richardson, 2015b). The number of permanent exclusions in primary schools is increasing, with a rise of 13.9% between 2012 and 2013 due to aggressive and/or disruptive behaviour (Garner, 2013).

The cost of exclusion is more than just the financial one to the school, who can be fined up to £4000 for excluding a pupil (Evans, 2012). Being excluded from school is likely to affect the student psychologically, as well as impact on society. Research suggests a link between being excluded and academic under-achievement, reduced ambition, homelessness (Eastman, 2011) as well as criminally offending later in life (Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Poreous &Tarling, 2001).

Weare (2015) found that there was a strong evidence base supporting the positive implications of increased social and emotional wellbeing both short and long term. For the pupils, not only did their wellbeing increase, but so too did their academic learning, motivation and connectedness with learning. There was a noted decrease in risky behaviour (for example, impulsiveness, violence, drug use). Staff benefitted from increased wellbeing and teaching ability, alongside a reduction in stress and absence from work. The development of SEW impacts on wellbeing throughout life and has been shown to prevent and reduce mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and stress in the future. Behaviour throughout the school improved, as did the attitudes of children and staff with regard to SEW and mental health. This report highlighted the benefits of adopting a whole school approach resulting in wider reaching positive outcomes for those involved.

Greenburg et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis to explore social and emotional learning and the school based programmes. A meta-analysis examined the effectiveness of SEW programmes and their outcomes, indicating that interventions can have a profound positive impact on a number of different outcomes, very similar to Weare's (2015) research.

Schools are in a privileged position; they are where children first learn to negotiate social aspects of life and relationships with other adults and peers. Schools play a central part in children's lives, and as such they do more than just teach the core curriculum, they support children to be contributing citizens, teaching them how to interact with others in diverse situations and behave responsibly and respectfully towards others (Greenberg et al., 2003). If pupils in schools learn social and emotional literacy behaviours, this allows the learning environment to be more conducive and cooperative to learning, leading onto more economic gains for society in general (Greenberg et al., 2003).

When researching the various aspects of SEW, there was limited evidence regarding established interventions addressing such needs. There was also some confusion in the literature regarding terminology and what researchers were actually measuring or reporting on (involving resilience, social literacy, grit, mindset etc.). A repeated finding was that of Nurture Groups being a successful, well established intervention, addressing social and emotional needs over a fixed time period. NGs had repeatedly reintegrated pupils successfully back into mainstream classes and increased the child's academic performance by focussing on the SEW needs first.

1.3 Nurture Groups

In 1969, an Educational Psychologist identified a number of children with issues in school due to factors outside of the school environment. Marjorie Boxall concluded that social and emotional issues impacted on education and learning capability. More importantly Boxall suggested that if these needs were addressed, improvements could be made and the child would overcome these barriers. This led Boxall to develop NGs.

A 'classic' NG is staffed by a teacher and one support staff who are consistent with routines and boundaries. Between 8 and 12 pupils are placed in this class. These students remain firmly a member of their mainstream class, staying in mainstream for assemblies, registration and some aspects of the curriculum, with their class teacher holding responsibility for their overall

learning (Nurture Group Network, NGN, 2015).   The room is carefully designed to emulate home and school features, allowing children to be taught a balance of curriculum based structured lessons whilst simultaneously experiencing secure relationships and developing their own social and emotional functioning in a safe space (NGN, 2015). This balance aims to increase the child's trust in adults and their self-esteem. NGs are staffed by two members of staff, traditionally a teacher and a teaching assistant. The two staff are always present in the room, and they model learning behaviours, cooperation and positive social interactions (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). The staff set out an explicit and predictable routine including nurture breakfasts, curriculum based activities, group tasks, play and teacher interactions. They give the children only the amount of choices they can easily manage and make them explicitly aware of the rules and boundaries, being under close but positive control (Bennathan, 1997). They work in the NG for most lessons for up to a 4 term period before returning full time to their original class. The aim is to provide an educational bridge to permanent reintegration into mainstream schooling by offering opportunities to replace missed early nurturing experiences, through immersing the child in warm and accepting environments, helping to develop positive relationships (Kibble, 2015). NGs do not intend to disrupt or entangle with the parent/child relationship but to enable a positive attachment to the school (Kibble, 2015).

Nurture Groups are developed around six key principles of nurture (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006).   These principles draw on various psychological theories, including Skinner's (1953) approach to behaviourism and Bowlby's attachment theory (1969):

1.   Children's learning is understood developmentally
2.   The classroom offers a safe base
3.   The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem
4.   Language is a vital means of communication
5.   All behaviour is communication
6.   The importance of transition in children's lives

1.4 Legislation and context

SEW is being able to manage emotions, relationships, and being happy within oneself; through this process there is an underlying issue of recognising when support is needed and when mental health issues arise. There are many examples of organisations trying to support these key issues, The National Children's Bureau (NCB) published a framework for schools (Stirling & Emery, 2015) to promote SEW and recognise the early onset of mental health issues affecting young people. Effective approaches include consideration to staff training and their own mental health alongside whole school approaches and robust policy development to support the school. The aim is to develop schools and classrooms that build a sense of connectedness and engagement in learning for the pupils. It is advised that this is done as a community, bringing together staff, parent and pupil voices and allowing each to be heard.

The Good Childhood Report (2016) is the fifth in-depth study of its kind, looking at children's wellbeing. The most recent report found that there is a growing gap between girls and boys in their happiness; girls are getting less and less happy over time. Younger boys are more likely than girls to be unhappy, particularly with their school work; in primary school, however, by the age of 14 this is reversed. This may go some way to explaining the staggering difference between genders in NG provisions, as NG provisions typically have more boys. Despite this, evidence suggests that regardless of gender, the intervention is still successful. This consideration may also impact on the approach needed in secondary settings, as the underlying causes may present themselves differently in girls and boys.

All schools have had to hold a behaviour management policy since 1997. Since the introduction of Every Child Matters (ECM, 2003) it has been policy that schools should take responsibility for children's emotional well-being both proactively and reactively, supporting those in difficulty. Initiatives have been set up to target mental health in schools; research concluded that the highest quality evidence consisted of programmes adopted by the whole school

on several levels, including teacher, parent and child involvement (Hughes &
Schlosser, 2014).

NGs were recommended in the Warnock Report (1978) and furthermore
acknowledged by the Department for Education and Skills (1997) as an
effective early intervention promoting reintegration to mainstream classes.
Ofsted (2011) produced a report highlighting evidence and outcomes,
concluding that NGs significantly modified pupils' behaviour and improved social
and emotional development. The report also found that NGs gave more
support to parents, accelerated academic progress, consistently increased
attendance and enabled pupils to return to mainstream classes. Further
outcomes were found to include an overarching improvement in school staff's
understanding and practice towards all levels of social, emotional and
behavioural difficulties. Bennathan (1997) suggests the value of inclusive
approaches to SEN, meeting the majority of children's needs in a mainstream
setting is key. This is still very much the focus of recent legislation; NG
provisions meet this criteria easily.

More recent legislation from The Children and Families Act (2014)
signifies the importance of the SEW of pupils by identifying it as one of four key
areas where children may need support;
- Learning and cognition
- Sensory and physical needs
- Communication and interaction
- Social, emotional and mental health

Given current legislation, there is now, more than ever, a need to
highlight the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils. It is necessary to identify
successful work (like that in NG settings), but in understanding how and why
this is, professionals would be enabled to transfer this knowledge and apply it to
further reaching work. In understanding the effective tools utilised behind the
successful outcomes, Educational Psychologists and Nurture Group
Practitioners (NGPs) could apply these techniques to a wider population with
success. NG settings could share best practice and be more consciously aware

of what they are doing that supports the children, so they can do it more purposefully. Whole schools may benefit from adopting the skills used in the smaller settings and making every class a nurturing class to some extent, enabling all teaching staff to be aware of these skills and the effect of these on children's SEW.

Once identified, the key aspects of exactly what is being taught (and how) in NGs could be applied to enhance NG provision's outcomes. This could be achieved through developing a curriculum of the identified target lessons and methods of how these are taught, thus enabling a more concrete application of the skills used already. As NGs are set in a mainstream context, these skills may then be applicable to the same population of children outside the NG setting. This population may be in a setting where a NG is not available, the school feel unable to justify an intensive intervention, or they may not reach particular thresholds, but would benefit from this style of support. NGs have already been identified as having further reaching positive effects on whole schools and there is now a movement of 'nurturing schools' who adopt the principles of nurture for all children in the school.

Birch (2016) gathered data from six NGs in one local authority. The results suggested that there was a broad range of practice in terms of NG delivery; however, there appeared to be a strong consensus between NG staff about the components of an 'ideal' NG. This may be due to a constraint of resources but it could also be as a result of the informal nature of the setting and lack of defined curriculum. Through a systematic review of interventions aimed at promoting mental wellbeing, Adir, Killoran, Janmohamed and Stewart-Brown (2007) found that the studies that included both parent and classroom elements were the most effective. They concluded that overall there was good evidence that interventions that included supporting the teacher, pupil and parent over a prolonged period of time were most effective.

Research suggests that by addressing social and emotional needs at an early stage, academic results increase and members are able to catch up with work when they were initially behind (Reynolds, Kearney & MacKay, 2009). There is limited research into how this works and what techniques are utilised in

the teaching. In a meta-analysis conducted by Bennet (2015, p.8), she states: "While many studies have demonstrated that NGs have had a positive impact on a variety of aspects on the school and pupils, there was very little information in regard to the particular conditions that would explain what make NGs successful."

1.5 Gaps in the research

There are clear gaps in the research about what exactly makes NGs successful. The researcher believes the qualities of the NG staff and the SEW support provided by them are important factors in the success and intends to explore this. This study aims to identify what areas of SEW development are addressed and how this is done. This will be done through qualitative data collection, asking the NG practitioners directly what they hold as important in their NG and how they address this. Looking at this practice-based evidence will allow identification of key themes and strategies.

The information gathered may be applicable to the whole school population, as NGs are set in a mainstream context and evidence already supports the ongoing impact reaching beyond the NG. Having a NG within a mainstream school benefits staff's development, as well as the pupils' development in school and at home (Binnie & Allen 2008; Sanders 2007). It is the researcher's intention to find these successful elements and arrange them in an accessible way to all schools, thus having a wider impact and meeting the needs of children who do not necessarily reach the threshold for intensive intervention. All children in schools may benefit from these strategies, and staff will also benefit in their understanding of behavioural issues through understanding the social and emotional development of their pupils.

1.6 Local context

The Local Authority in which the research was initiated had an interest in SEW because other research projects had recently been conducted regarding mental health issues. These included exploring views around self-harm and

post-16 support in the Educational Psychology Service. There were a number of NGs in the local area, although these were dwindling; and though they had successful outcomes, schools did not see the NGs as a priority and moved the staff to support in other areas. The Local Authority had encountered various critical incidents that appeared to stem from underlying social and emotional wellbeing issues and wished to explore this further. There were a number of concerns reported around children that did not meet thresholds for intensive or direct intervention but needed support at that time, with limited capacity or evidence-based interventions to act on these concerns.

1.7 Researcher's position

The researcher's interest in social and emotional wellbeing can be traced to their own experiences of working in educational settings and observing the impact that can be seen when a trusting relationship is made between a pupil and a secure attachment figure in the setting. The researcher became aware of NGs when researching interventions for children with SEW difficulties and more recently became aware of the success of these groups while studying on the Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology programme. The researcher was struck by the lack of specific information regarding how NGs were successful and the lack of guidance for all support staff on how best to support the emotional development of children.

1.8 Relevance and impact of research

The importance of identifying discreet techniques of how successful evidence-based interventions work is key to recognising the potential of future successful interventions, alongside increasing the impact of existing ones. The research aims to identify what social and emotional curriculum is being used and to share it more formally and consistently across NGs nationwide. There is scope for this research to be generalisable to the same population in different settings, so children and young people presenting with social and emotional difficulties in schools could benefit from a specified curriculum for the area.

Suggestions on how to teach the curriculum may also be helpful. For example, if NG practitioners are drawing on techniques associated with mindfulness or cognitive behavioural approaches in a naturalistic environment (opposed to counselling or formal Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, CBT, sessions for example), there are opportunities for the development of cost-effective, wide-reaching strategies and interventions to be accessible to more children. NGs are already in a mainstream context and successfully integrate pupils back into mainstream. Part-time NGs are also significantly beneficial (Hughes and Schlosser, 2014), and action at policy level has positive impacts on pupils also. This all supports that the transfer of the identified skills and themes in this research project may benefit a larger number of children and young people in whole school settings.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the research topic by defining social and emotional wellbeing and outlining the history, development and theory of NGs. The national and local contexts were examined with relation to the need to consider SEW in the current climate. Finally, the researcher identified their position, and the rationale for the current research was presented. The next chapter will outline the current literature on the area of study, identifying the process of the systematic literature review carried out and the critical analysis of the research in this area. The chapter is concluded by stating the aims of the research and outlining the research questions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Overview of chapter

This chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of NGs and reviews the literature relevant to the focus of the research. Firstly, it will explore the theoretical underpinnings and justifications of NGs. It will then look at the national and local context of the importance of this research area. The chapter will then describe the search techniques and inclusion/exclusion criteria to obtain current research on the area of interest. The literature review will also consider the strengths and difficulties identified in the current research methods. Finally, the chapter will identify gaps in the research and demonstrate justification for the current research.

2.2 Theoretical standpoint

Boxall created Nurture Groups in response to a population of children presenting with similar needs. These needs appeared to be derived from a lack of exposure to early childhood experiences critical to early development. This impacted on the children's social skills and ability to develop meaningful positive relationships with adults, which Boxall believed impacted negatively on the children's ability to learn and interact in a school environment. The main theoretical standing of Nurture Groups is rooted firmly in Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), where the 'internal working model' was derived to explore how a child pictures themselves in relation to a primary caregiver.

Boxall (2002) viewed a child's behaviour as a product of their environment and not defined by inborn characteristics, as children who do not have nurturing environments may display social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bennathan, 1997). NGs, therefore, were designed by Boxall specifically to benefit pupils who have not had their early learning needs sufficiently met. NGs are easily understood through sociocultural theory of learning, classically developed by Vygotsky (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007) who also depicts psychology as a developmental process. Developmental

Psychology corresponds with Bowlby's account of attachment disorders and the inappropriate behaviours relating to issues in this area.

Children who demonstrate social, emotional and behavioural difficulties often behave below the developmentally appropriate stage. Applying Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, NGs aim to help children progress to a stage of social competence, allowing them to feel safe, secure and loved. It is acknowledged that this competence is required for successful learning in a primary school setting. To do this, the child needs to go through a nurturing process that is essential for healthy psychological development and a prerequisite skill for academic readiness.

NG practice has been heavily influenced by Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), which states that attachments formed in early childhood are essential to developing learning skills and metacognition. Skills developed through the attachment process include calming, attainment and regulation of emotion (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Interaction with significant others allows the child to establish his or herself as a distinct individual; however, when these nurturing relationships are missed or distorted, the child fails to develop these skills (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, Bell & Stanton 1971). NGs aim to enable these fundamental relationships to develop, so that academic and social learning can take place. This is also suggested by Geddes (2006) who found that children who have not had a supportive attachment during early childhood appear to have low self-esteem and lack of trust in others.

If a child has had a loving and secure attachment with a continuous and constant primary caregiver, an internal working model is argued to be 'securely attached'. This security offers a sense of stability for the child. Attachment theory suggests that it is the quality of these early, secure attachments that provide a 'safe base', developed through the primary caregiver. The idea of NGs is to provide a 'safe base' associated within school. The set-up of a NG is organised in a conducive manner to easily establish this safe base. This is done through carefully planned integration of the home and school environment, both physically (dining table and sofa, alongside school desks and chairs) and

emotionally (with attuned nurturing skills and classroom expectations balanced and explained).

Along with behaviourist theories, the NG provides an opportunity for 'outbursts' of behaviour to be addressed at a developmentally appropriate level for the child, as well as in a way that allows the child to recognise the undesirable nature of their behaviour without feeling personally rejected. This can be a difficult aspect to manage, but recognising behaviour as a form of communication increases understanding from the NG practitioner. This enables the practitioner to know how to best support the child individually. These secure bases and attachments allow the formation of trust and honesty in relationships, which in turn generates ways to emotionally support children and young people.

Although attachment theory is the most commonly cited and appropriate to NGs, it does not necessarily fit perfectly. Boxall's theoretical framework does not completely complement purist attachment theory. Bani (2011) noted that attachment theory does not support the notion that missed early experiences can be overcome with a school-based intervention. Boxall places a great deal of trust in this area, believing that it will have a profound and positive impact. Attachment theory does not necessarily support the notion that direct teaching of these skills is effective or possible. Bowlby (1969; 1973) focusses on the early attachments and recognises a 'critical' period of before three years of age; however, Boxall's theories are formatted through the context of primary school and thus older age ranges. Furthermore, these interventions have been supported in secondary school age with research suggesting they are still effective with the older age range (although not as significantly as with primary aged students).

Bowlby and Ainsworth appeared to note greater impacts of loss and separation on the child, impacting their internal working model. Although Boxall did not underestimate the impact of this, she does allow a more fluid understanding. She suggests that this can be addressed through intervention and secure bases in other areas to support the inner working model of the child.

2.3 Research evidence meta-analysis

There is a strong evidence base for NGs being effective, demonstrated through increasing scores on Boxall Profile measures (Mackay, Reynolds & Kearney, 2010), as well as other qualitative (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; O'Connor and Colwell, 2002) and quantitative data (Cooper and Whitebread 2007; Reynolds *et al* 2009; Sanders, 2007) supporting positive change for participants in NGs.   Bennett's meta-review of NG literature (2015) found that 62 evaluative, quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies, evidenced NG's ability to increase social, emotional and behavioural development in children of both primary and secondary age. Bennett also found a positive impact on home-school relationships, this is addressed through several routes, be it the attitudes of the children, the reassurance felt by the parents or the teacher's developed understanding of the needs (Sanders, 2007). Although there are a number of studies using various methodologies, there is a heavy reliance on using the Boxall Profile as a measure. Although it is useful, the impact of such results must be interpreted with some caution, as Boxall invented NG practice and the measure it so heavily relies upon to prove its success. Recently, research has been using alternative/additional methods of standardised scores, such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) and there is more qualitative data gathered. This describes a richer picture although many of these involve smaller sample sizes.

2.3.1 Variant Groups

Cooper and Whitbread (2007) identified four variations of NGs. The first is the 'classic Boxall NG' abiding to all requirements with the original model established by Boxall (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000). The second is 'new variant NGs', which hold the same underlying principles, yet environmental features or structures differ. NGs, for example may serve a number of schools from one borough or may have different time restrictions to the original groups. The third Cooper and Whitbread labeled as 'groups informed by NG principles'. These vary greatly and have distanced themselves from the original principles. For

example they may operate in addition to a mainstream curriculum as an extra-curricular choice or youth club, not involving a qualified teacher or teaching assistant. The fourth are 'aberrant NGs', which undermine, contrast or warp the core values and ideologies of the classic NG. These groups tend to aim for control and containment as opposed to nurturing and engagement.

Although Hughes and Schlosser (2014) found that there did not appear to be significant differences between part time or 'classic' NGs in terms of effectiveness, an overwhelming proportion of the research tends not to define the participating NG provision in enough detail to clarify the intensity or accuracy of the provision. It is also questionable whether variant provisions can be compared to each other, due to their differing levels of intensity, training and possibly aberrant underlying principles.

Evidence supporting the effectiveness of part time nurture groups is provided by Scott & Lee (2009). Some findings suggest that a longer exposure to the SEW curriculum would benefit older pupils, due to previously challenging behaviours becoming entrenched (Doyle, 2004). Binnie and Allen (2008) found when attending a part time NG that there were significant improvements in the child's progress across all measures. This study did not have a control group, so it is not certain what other variables may have impacted on these findings.

Applying nurturing principles (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006) has shown progress across school settings and variations of intensity of exposure. There is strong evidence to suggest that the whole school environment benefits from NGs (Lucas 1999; Reynolds et al 2009; Sanders 2007; Scott and Lee 2009), but little to suggest how. Cooper & Whitebread (2007) found that schools with NGs achieve significantly higher gains for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, for both pupils in the nurture group and in the mainstream setting. Binnie and Allen (2008) suggested having a NG in a mainstream school context increased the effectiveness of that school in dealing with the SEW of all pupils. Doyle (2001) suggests that this is due to an increase in the dialogue addressing SEW needs. Binnie and Allen (2008) noted better general behaviour management across the school; this may be due to staff training and a whole school readiness to approach these challenges. Cooper

and Tiknaz (2005) found that NGs contributed to the whole school environment through creating calmer classrooms and empowering teachers to meet the needs of children. The ownership of the provision by the entire school and staff gave support to the NG staff and children, whilst avoiding the isolation of the NG staff and enabling an integrated class into the infrastructure of the school system (Bennathan, 1997).

Scott and Lee (2009) note that the younger the age group in the intervention, the bigger the impact. Their research suggests that although there is a trend of improvement, the significance levels decrease with the increasing age of the group. Studies suggest that NGs in secondary schools are successful and have a significant impact; yet, whilst improvements are still evident, their impact is not as great as the early years' interventions.

2.3.2 Limitations

A dominant limitation in the research regarding NGs is that of what is reported as being a NG. With the variant groups and the lack of a compulsory regulatory body, NGs are vulnerable to being labeled as such, but not being comparable to the core principles.

An area for consideration is the impact age has on the effectiveness of NG provisions. A contentious area in the research as variant groups have expanded the initial age range to impact on secondary school children. The research in this area is limited as the NGs for this age range have not been established for as long as their primary counterpart; however the initial findings from Sanders (2007) and Scott and Lee (2009) suggest that there is less impact on secondary aged pupils than primary. More recent unpublished research from the NGN contradicts this, finding that the secondary age pupils have greater gains in their Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). A number of meta-reviews have shown that social and emotional learning interventions are effective from nursery to secondary school (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015), however more research is needed to determine to what effect.

Due to the vulnerability of the pupils identified for NG provisions, it can be suggested that this intervention is not solitary and is often concurrent with other interventions, which can be mutually beneficial. Social care for example or looked after children may have actions or interventions from other professionals, increasing their SEW, independent of the NG setting. Children who have had traumatic childhoods, who may be refugees for example may have ongoing support with their English and this may also have an impact on their SEW. It is difficult to isolate the effects of these multi-agency situations, although this multi component approach is evidenced to have the most significant results (Cooper & Tiknaz 2005).

An absence of a control group and a lack of comparison against different psychosocial interventions are consistent shortcomings of existing research. Bennathan (1997) reported of an unintentional control group, where 24 children had been identified for a NG but due to funding cuts the NG did't start. Following this, 20 of those children participated in follow up data, documenting that nearly half of them went on to have a statement of special educational needs including 35 percent needing to enter a special school placement. This data is also supported by the fact that on average 65% of permanent or fixed term exclusions are C&YP who have SEN, for behavioural reasons. This further emphasises the need for social, emotional and behavioural (SEB) interventions in modern day educational settings.

2.4 Research evidence systematic review

To explore how NGs increase the SEW of the children involved, a critical analysis of existing research focusing on how NGs deliver their SEW curriculum was conducted. In particular, the review focuses on articles that highlighted what was done in practice and not evaluative studies. There are a high number of papers evaluating if NG's are successful and, if so, to what extent. This is not what this research project is focusing on. There is an assumption here that NGs are successful and are responsible for a positive change in a child's ability to remain in a mainstream class and to learn

effectively in that environment. This research is exploring how these changes are produced, what the staff do to achieve it, and what the staff that carry out this job feel is important in that transformation. Research based upon clear criteria was included and then critically analysed to develop an understanding of what the current research suggests, looking at the tools and skills required to increase their social and emotional wellbeing.

<u>Data Base Search:</u>

The search engine EBSCOHOST was chosen to aid with systemic key word searches. Databases searched included PsychInfo, PsycArticles, Education Research Complete and Academic Search Complete. The search specified that the articles needed to be scholarly and peer reviewed. Four systematic searches were conducted using various key terms identified in Table 2.1 with results exclusively from peer reviewed journals.

Table 2.1 - Database search

Search date	16/08/2016
Database searched	• EBSCO (PsycINFO)
Key words	'Nurture Group' AND 'Practice' AND 'Social and Emotional'.
Results	N = 20

Search date	16/08/2016
Database searched	• EBSCO (PsycINFO)
Key words	'Nurture Group' AND 'curriculum'
Results	N = 18

Search date	16/08/2016
Database searched	• EBSCO (PsycINFO)
Key words	'Nurture Group' AND 'techniques' OR 'methods'

Results	N = 7

Search date	16/08/2016
Database search	• EBSCO (PsycINFO)
Key words	'Nurture Group' AND 'methods'
Results	N = 19

The systematic search generated 66 articles. The titles and abstracts of these articles were read and the researcher developed exclusion criteria noted, with the process of refinement explained in Figure 2.1.

The inclusion criteria demand that the articles appear in peer reviewed journals. They also need to be published in the last 15 years to capture relevant and up-to-date information whilst still acknowledging there is limited research on this specific topic within NGs. The papers also needed to have a topic of 'education', as the term 'NG' can be more widely used in a manner inconsistent with the topic of discussion.

The exclusion criteria consisted of four criteria, ensuring the research was conducted within (and relevant to) the UK population. Papers that had a sole focus on evaluating NG's impact were excluded due to previously made assumptions as discussed above. All critical analysis included NG settings (not religious organisations or business settings for example). Finally, all selected papers needed to be focusing on the SEW curriculum for the said NG, so, for example, papers focusing on parental engagement were excluded.

Exclusion criteria:
1. Not about NGs
2. Non UK
3. Evaluative outcomes
4. Not focused on the SEW curriculum

Removal of duplications in the search results allowed 48 different papers to be identified. The application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria narrowed the search results from 48 to six, allowing the resulting papers to directly focus on what was done in the NG and not just the evaluation of outcomes. In addition to the systemic search, a hand search was conducted using various relevant texts, books and online search engines.

Figure 2.1 Exclusion Criteria Flow Chart
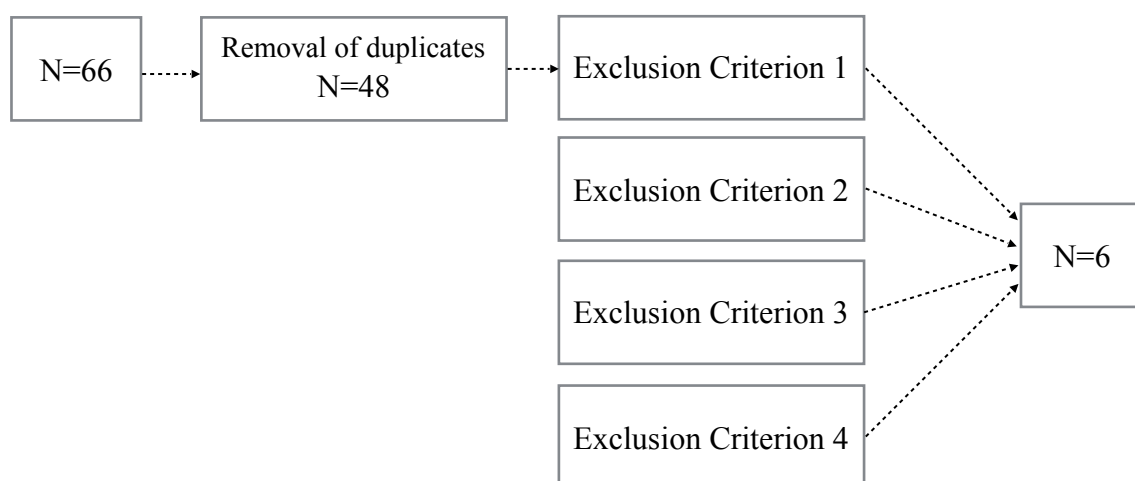
Table 2.2 - Systematic literature review findings in reverse chronological order:

Bani, M. (2011) The Use and Frequency of Verbal and Non-Verbal Praise in Nurture Groups. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties* Vol 16(1) pp.47-67.
Garner, J. and Thomas, M. (2011) The Role and Contribution of Nurture Groups in Secondary Schools: Perceptions of Children, Parents and Staff. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, Vol 16(2), pp. 207-224. Publisher: Taylor & Francis.
Cooper, P. and Tiknaz, Y. (2005) Progress and Challenge in Nurture Groups: Evidence from Three Case Studies. *British Journal of Special Education Vol 32(4) pp.211-222.*
Doyle, R. (2004) A Social Development Curriculum: Applying Nurture Group Principles and Practices to Support Socially and Emotionally Vulnerable Children Within Mainstream Classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education Vol 31(1) pp.24-30.*
Doyle, R. (2003) Developing the Nurturing School: Spreading Nurture Group Principles and Practices into Mainstream Classrooms. Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties Vol 8(4) pp.252-266.

Colwell, J. and O'Connor, T. (2003) Understanding Nurturing Practices - A Comparison of the Use of Strategies Likely to Enhance Self Esteem in Nurture Groups and Normal Classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education.* Vol 30(3), pp.119-124.

2.5 Critical analysis of literature

There is a wealth of research demonstrating the positive effects of NG attendance at various levels of intensity. There is, however, limited research looking at the day-to-day practice of a NG identifying what factors contribute to the effectiveness. The following critique will initially present the two descriptive accounts from Doyle (2003, 2004) and move on to analyse the more complex methodologies around language and verbal praise in various settings. This will then move onto the more holistic approaches of Garner and Thomas (2011) and Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) who have a higher volume of data from a wider variety of NG settings.

Doyle (2003) gives a descriptive account of setting up a NG in a primary school. Doyle noted a number of children's needs were not being met in the mainstream classrooms. Some of these children faced exclusion owing to their extreme behaviour and disaffection, very similar to Boxall's observations. Doyle felt that the whole school had a responsibility to alter the negative spiral these children became part of. Doyle suggested that a way of doing this was to constantly model positive interactions throughout the day. In this study, there was a 100% success rate for reintegrating children to their mainstream classes. There is not, however, a follow up study exploring if this remained the case over time, nor is there experimental data.

With regard to specific techniques, this article suggests that NGs have a significant focus on the importance of the relationships between the child and the adult, helping the child to develop a sense of self. The role of the NG is to encourage the engagement of pupils in a developmentally appropriate curriculum whilst also recognising the individual's needs to experience positive interactions, successful tasks and increased self-esteem. This outline depicts the priorities necessary for NG practitioners to target.

NGs model the interactive process between child and primary carer in a structure commensurate with the developmental level of the child. Activities are developmentally appropriate for each child, with predictable routines and regular consolidation of previous skills. Through satisfaction and approval the child feels that the relationship with the adult allows them to strengthen their attachment with them. It is felt that NGs have a consistent approach, opportunities for self-esteem to develop and encourage a capacity to learn. Evidence would suggest that the whole school needs to take a pastoral supporting role (Doyle, 2003). Doyle (2003) talks about strategies that can be utilised to support the development of the child but considering the highlighted importance on the relationship with the teacher, there is little to aid teachers in how to do this.

Doyle (2004) attempts to use a previously designed 'reintegration scale', initially developed to establish when a child is ready to leave NG and return to a mainstream class, as a curriculum basis for mainstream classes. Although this descriptive account highlights some benefits, there is little evidence put forward from the article. There is a brief description of two case studies: one of which was reintegrating from NG back to his mainstream class; and one child who was identified as needing the NG intervention but permission was withheld from parents to do this. These examples do not transfer the techniques used in NG to a mainstream setting as the children were in a NG setting. Further experimental evidence exploring the effects of this on children who do not have anything to do with the NG would strengthen the effectiveness of the technique.

Colwell and O'Connor (2003) state that the evidence base continues to support NG's effectiveness and cost-efficiency in aiding children with SEB difficulties to remain in mainstream school. Their research found a significant difference between the communications of a NG practitioner and a mainstream class teacher. The NG practitioners had more positive verbal and nonverbal communications, which is likely to have had an effect on enhancing the self-esteem of pupils. This research was produced through one researcher observing four NGs and four mainstream classes in one borough (a total of eight observations) involving children aged five to seven years.

The researchers stated that they aimed to be a 'non-participant observer' but that this was not always possible in a NG environment; however, they do not record information on the extent of this or possible implications. This may have had a large impact on the data due to its subjective data collection methods. It reports that 50% of statements from class teachers reflect behaviour that may enhance self-esteem where this increased to 87% in NG practitioner's statements. These results may be skewed as the needs of a mainstream class and those of NG children are different. If a class teacher addressed only the NG children they may have used more positive language than when addressing a whole class, to balance needs.

The researchers also fail to state if participants were aware of what was being measured. If a class teacher knew someone was observing and counting their statements, then they may adapt their behaviour. Someone else being present in the room might increase the positive language subconsciously, or consciously, of either of the two groups.

Colwell and O'Conner also found that NG practitioners used a significantly higher proportion of positive non-verbal behaviour, conveying feelings of warmth and acceptance amongst the children. This non-verbal behaviour may be presented more clearly in a NG environment as there are fewer children and clearer messages reaching those involved.
This study measures 'self-esteem enhancing strategies' (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003, pp.119) by observing the frequency and incidence of teaching styles. It would have been interesting to coincide these measures with actual measures of individual self-esteem of those children involved.

Bani (2011) looked at the use of verbal and non-verbal praise in NGs. The researcher observed for one hour in four different NGs in one Local Authority borough, recording the incidence and frequency of verbal and non-verbal praise. Through the use of a pilot study, Bani identified 10 non-verbal behaviours and 3 subcategories of verbal praise. The research identified that staff in NGs have a higher frequency of specific verbal praise than nonspecific or non-verbal praise. It also demonstrated that the children responded most

positively to non-verbal praise by continuing the desired appropriate behaviour. All eye contact would not necessarily be considered as non-verbal praise for example. This raises a number of considerations:

1. The teacher may intend their behaviour in one way
2. The recipient may interpret it differently
3. Subtle forms of non-verbal praise may be missed
4. The observer may misread either of the two participants' intentions/ responses

The fact that there is only one observer weakens the observation schedule, and the lack of explicit detail regarding the 'role of the researcher' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) further questions the impact of an observer and the record of the observation. This is due to interpretations, subjectivity and participation levels all impacting on the record of the observation. The time periods are limited and, similarly to Colwell and O'Conner's study, there is no measurement of self-esteem of the participants, so many assumptions may have been made.

Bani makes a clear connection between the use of verbal praise (being 67% of all praise recorded) being difficult when the relationship between SEN and language needs are considered. As the prevalence of language needs increases with SEB difficulties, reliance on the use of language to praise children may be less effective. Visual cues may be more easily understood or noticed; however, non-verbal praise only accounts for one third of the praise recorded in this research. Bani also suggests that non-verbal praise is often reciprocated with a non-verbal response, with smiling being the most common. It is thought that the praise induces pleasant feelings that the child can attribute to their own behaviour, consequently increasing the self-esteem of that child.

Bani also noted that 65% of children did not respond in any way to non-specific verbal praise. This could be due to language barriers or because the child has a negative sense of self, which in turn may elicit feelings of low self-worth. This means that the praise is not considered to be true or about the child; however, as the children were not approached about any of their feelings with

regard to this, they may have reacted internally as opposed to having an external visible reaction.

When the incidence and frequency of non-verbal and verbal praise were plotted against the time of the observation, the researcher discovered that the rate of praise was high at the start of the observation, but decreased in the middle, and picked up a little at the end. There may be many reasons for this, one of which is that the teachers changed their initial responses at the start of the class as they were aware of the observer and the focus of the study. This may have been subconscious, and as the lesson settled, the teacher returned to their standard procedures. The reduction in praise could be explained through observer bias where participants (both staff and children) change their individual behaviours as they know they are being watched. While this study is robust, its weakness is its subjective nature and that it does little to look at the effect of praise on children's self-esteem over time.

Garner and Thomas (2011) conducted focus groups with staff and parents, and individual interviews with children who attend a NG to establish the role and contribution of NGs in secondary school specifically. The research identified that 'staff characteristics were crucial to the success of the NG', identifying that NG staff need to 'support the ethos, be committed, tolerant, strong and patient' (pp. 221). These qualities are necessary on top of being able to develop and maintain relationships based on 'respect and equality, regardless of the child's resulting behaviour' (pp.221). These skills were derived through thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups; however, of the particularly small sample size (N=3), one NG only met once a week and only one of the NGs had a qualified teacher in it; therefore, stricter inclusion criteria may have given a richer picture.

The NG's in this study had to have been up and running for a minimum of a year, although more information on how long they had been running would have been helpful as research suggests those established for at least two years are significantly more effective (Cooper & Whitbread, 2007).

Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) looked at challenges and progress in NGs through the use of three case studies. This is an in-depth study that used mixed methods. The quantitative data was gathered through Goodman's Strength and Difficulty questionnaires on entry and exit to the group, and Boxall profiles were also completed termly throughout the intervention. There were a small number of schools participating (N=3); however, there is a wealth of data as it was a longitudinal study over 3 years with 21 school staff interviewed on multiple occasions, and the researchers also conducted over 40 hours of observations. The research highlighted differences in the NG staff's conceptualisations of 'progress'. Success was not equated with progress but more to do with the staff's beliefs about the pupils' needs and if they were met. NG staff felt there were many contributing factors to the success of a NG.

• Balanced group composition

• Peer relations

• Individual staff skills and qualities

• Quality of interactions amongst NG staff

• Quality of interactions between NG staff and pupils

• Head teacher support

(Cooper and Tiknaz 2005)

This corresponds with Cooper's previous research (Cooper & Whitbread, 2007), which identified variables contributing to a NG's success, particularly the group composition; however, quality of interactions are more represented in the more recent findings.

Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) highlight processes of teaching derived from interviewing NG staff. They suggest that staff aim for a transactional style as opposed to directional style of teaching. Instead of relying on manipulation of behaviour through the use of punishment and reward strategies (typically seen in mainstream classes), a focus should be on a process of 'joint exploration and negotiation' (pp. 215). This draws more attention to the relationship and quality of interactions needed between staff and pupils. The research suggests that in NGs, children are not viewed as passive recipients of a fixed plan, but co-constructors of their own learning and teaching needs. The researchers also

accentuate the function of NGs as being the removal of social and emotional barriers that prevent engagement and learning.

There are small pockets of useful information looking at specific techniques used in NGs. There is, however, little to pull this information together or give practitioners access to evidence-based strategies that promote the SEW curriculum or its delivery. There appears to be a need for a cross-sectional study to identify how NG practitioners are doing this in successful NGs. Relaying that information across settings could enhance practice and enable more nurturing policies across the school environment, not specifically in a NG. The more recent research brings to the forefront the interactions and relationships held with (and between) the NG staff. There is little known about the skills the staff use to effectively teach the children. There is no research identifying how the relationships in the NG are developed, nor why they are so beneficial to the development of the child. Identifying more about the relationships held within these settings and identifying what aspects of which are useful, planned or intuitive would further aid other practitioners to use the same skills to support the children and young people.

2.6 Aims of the research

The research examined suggests that by addressing the social and emotional needs at an early stage, academic results increase, and members are able to catch up with work when they were initially behind (Reynolds, Kearney & MacKay, 2009). There is limited research into how this works and what techniques are utilised in the teaching. In a meta-analysis conducted by Bennet (2015, p.8), she states:

"While many studies have demonstrated that NGs have had a positive impact on a variety of aspects on the school and pupils, there was very little information in regard to the particular conditions that would explain what make NGs successful."

There are clear gaps in the research about what exactly makes NGs successful. The researcher believes the qualities of the NG staff and the SEW

support provided by them are important factors in the success and intends to explore this. This study aims to identify exactly what areas of SEW development are addressed and how this is done. This will be done through qualitative data collection, asking the NG practitioners directly what they hold as important in their NGs and how they address this. Looking at this practice based evidence will allow identification of key themes and strategies.

The information gathered may be applicable to the whole school population, as NGs are set in a mainstream context and evidence already supports the ongoing impact reaching beyond the NG. Having a NG within a mainstream school benefits staff's development, the pupils' development in school and at home (Binnie and Allen 2008; Sanders 2007). It is the intention to find these successful elements and arrange them in an accessible way to all schools, thus having a wider impact and meeting the needs of children who do not necessarily reach the threshold for intensive intervention. All children in schools may benefit from these strategies, and staff will also benefit in their understanding of behavioural issues through understanding the social and emotional development of their pupils.

The purpose of this study is to explore what is being taught around social and emotional wellbeing in a NG setting. It will explore how this is being taught by asking the staff explicitly what they do, how they do it, and what skills are needed to do this.

The importance of identifying discreet techniques underlying how successful evidence based interventions work is key to recognising the potential of future successful interventions, alongside increasing the impact of existing ones. The research aims to identify what social and emotional curriculum is being used, and to share it more formally and consistently across NGs nationwide. There is scope for this research to be generalisable to the same population in different settings, so children and young people presenting with social and emotional difficulties in schools could benefit from a specified curriculum for the area. Suggestions on how to teach the curriculum may also be helpful. For example, if NG practitioners are drawing on techniques associated with mindfulness (Langer, 1989) or CBT (Hughes, 2008) in a

naturalistic environment (opposed to counselling or formal CBT sessions for example), there are opportunities for the development of cost-effective, wide-reaching strategies and interventions to be accessible to more children. NGs are already in a mainstream context, and they successfully integrate pupils back into mainstream. Part time NGs are also significantly beneficial; and action at policy level has positive impacts on pupils. This all supports that the transfer of the identified skills and themes in this research project may benefit a larger number of children and young people.

Therefore, the research questions have been designed to look in depth at some of the areas missing in the current research, whilst also taking into consideration Cooper and Tiknaz's (2005) variables that contribute to successful NGs. The review of literature highlights the need for an overarching viewpoint of the NG practitioner to identify what SEW is targeted and how this is decided. There is also a need to examine the relationships in the NG and what makes them so critical to its success, to find out what skills are used and how these relationships are developed. This is done with a view to exploring the replicability of these in other NGs and educational settings.

2.7 Research Questions

This research will focus on the central question:

"How do Nurture Group practitioners deliver their social and emotional wellbeing curriculum?"

In order to answer this, the following subquestions are necessary to capture the information required:

- What does the curriculum consist of?
- What is the rationale for the approach, including the theoretical underpinnings?
- How is it delivered?

- What are the skills required for the NG practitioners to deliver the curriculum effectively?
- How is it different from the mainstream approach (in their view)?
- How is the child's development and progress measured?

2.8 Summary of Chapter

This chapter explored the theoretical underpinnings of NGs and reviewed the literature relevant to the title of the research, the theoretical underpinnings and justifications of NGs. The chapter described the search techniques and inclusion/exclusion criteria used to obtain the most relevant research on the area of interest. The literature review then considered the strengths and difficulties identified in the current research. Finally, the chapter noted any gaps in the literature and demonstrated justification for the current research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Overview of chapter

In this chapter the ontological and epistemological positions are introduced, followed by a descriptive account of the data gathering strategies used to conduct this research. This will also include how the epistemological position influenced the methodology. The approach to data analysis is described with a clear justification for the design of the research. The ethical considerations made will be discussed to ensure the quality and validity of this research.

3.2 Ontology

In conducting a research project we aim to answer a question. In order to find something out, the researcher needs to decide on how something is represented in reality (the ontology) as this will have an impact on what the researcher can know (the epistemology), further impacting on how the researcher conducts the research (the methodology) (Willig, 2009). Scott (2014) suggests that the researcher's interpretation of what is worth knowing, and how to collect the knowable and then interpret it, is fundamental in understanding research and its limitations.

Paradigms help us to understand world view points. Each has philosophical assumptions that guide the researcher to what can be known, how this can be known, and which methodological stance would support this understanding. There is a continuum of stances, ranging from positivism, through post-positivism, critical realist to constructionist.

Positivism suggests there is one truth. This truth can be discovered and this would be done using quantitative methods. Constructivism suggests that there can be multiple truths and shared understandings through culture and language (Willig, 2013). These truths can be sought through qualitative

methods, understanding that one person's construction may be different but still valid against another possibly opposing view.

This research is conducted from a constructivist approach. This is complementary to the qualitative methodology used and acknowledges the impact the researcher has on the research itself. Through reflexive thinking the researcher can understand that some limitations of the results lie in the fact that through asking a subjective opinion, the researcher is reporting their own interpretation of the answer. The constructivist paradigm allows the researcher to access this information and note their own impact upon it. The research acknowledges that this is the opinion of one person at one moment in time, which may change in the future. Using semi-structured interviews allows these 'opinions' to be gathered and analysed.

The development of qualitative methods of inquiry in the Educational Psychology setting demonstrates the emergent trend towards interpretivist research paradigms, moving away from the more traditional and medical model of a positivist stand point (Coolican, 2004). Historically, research conducted was supported by the positivist paradigm, which argues that there is one reality and this exists regardless of the researcher; there is one truth which is real and measurable.

In contrast, constructivism suggests that reality is subjectively and individually constructed; there can be shared realities and socially constructed ones. Essentially, each person is unique, each individual interpreting and giving meaning to the same event differently. This idea also allows the researcher to acknowledge that not only are there multiple realities, but also that the researcher's interpretation of these is also subjective. The researcher believes in multiple realities, each one valid and true, albeit through interpretation (in this case, from the researcher, different ones may be perceived as more dominant, relevant or plausible than others). The aim of the researcher is to understand these multiple constructions (Mertens, 2015). To enable this, thematic analysis is utilised to find common themes generated from these multiple constructions.

3.3 Purpose of research

The purpose of this study was to identify what was being taught around social and emotional wellbeing in a NG setting. It explored how this was being taught by asking the staff explicitly what they do, how they do it and what skills are needed to do this.

The central research question was:

"How do nurture group practitioners deliver their social and emotional wellbeing curriculum?"

with sub-questions being:
- What does the curriculum consist of?
- What is the rationale for the approach, including the theoretical underpinnings?
- How is it delivered?
- What are the skills required for the NG practitioner to deliver the curriculum?
- How is it different from the mainstream approach (in their view)?
- How are the child's development and progress measured?

This research was exploratory in nature. The literature review highlighted a lack of research into successful practice that develops a child's social and emotional wellbeing. Information gained about what is done and how this is achieved may be used in other settings and by a variety of stakeholders. The information could be used to inform future interventions to increase SEW, as well as to highlight the personal qualities held by those most successful at supporting this population.

3.4 Research design

The research design involves qualitative strategies that complement the constructivist epistemological standpoint. In believing that each person's view is valid and true, even if it is not the same reality for everyone, it allows the

researcher to gather the opinions of the people that are doing the teaching and analyse what is done in practice. In this way the researcher can see as 'fact' what is reported to be done and look for common themes. With a purely qualitative design, the researcher aims to understand people's experiences and the meaning they place on those experiences (Willig 2009).

Creswell (2012) suggests that theories are not usually tested, but a concept is explored to gain a deeper understanding in qualitative research. To do this, research questions are used instead of hypotheses, meaning that statistical analysis is not appropriate, and a more open-ended stance is required.

Braun and Clarke (2006) explore the use of Thematic Analysis (TA) in qualitative research. They put forward a framework to structure TA and enable it to be used in its own right, as previously it was utilised as part of a process in other analytic approaches used with qualitative data sets (Boyatzis, 1998). The reporting of previous research using TA has many gaps and failed to be explicit about the process; however, this has improved in recent years, particularly as more researchers are following clear quality guidelines on qualitative data analysis. Braun and Clarke suggest that there are particular choices that need to be made before and during TA. Initially, there are considerations around the researcher's epistemological position. TA can be used across a range of epistemological and theoretical positions. In this case, TA complements the social constructionist stance as it allows for flexible and useful analysis with theoretical freedom, resulting in a "rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp.78). Braun and Clarke's stages allow the researcher an active role, and thus decisions and choices must be made. This is due to the flexibility that TA enables researchers to use; however, this also entails responsibility in reporting exactly how these decisions were made and the impact of such. It is also important to consider the researcher's own assumptions in these active choices. It is through the interpretation of the data that themes are generated and this is implicitly dependent on the researcher's own understanding and predisposed choices.

The aim of this research was to identify common themes regarding how NG practitioners deliver their social and emotional curriculum. This was completed through answering the research questions and subquestions. With the lack of paper evidence or structure, and each NG doing it differently, the researcher wanted a full and rich picture of current practice and technique. By identifying and analysing themes using TA, the researcher could examine the ways in which this is done. The researcher's theoretical framework carries with it a set of assumptions made to enable this to happen, as discussed previously. It is with this in mind that the researcher will present the findings through TA about their position in the world view, reality and the NG community. In the results section the researcher outlines what constitutes a 'theme', how its prevalence is measured and presented, along with the inductive and semantic or latent interpretation of the analysis being clearly described.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that there are three levels of questions in TA qualitative research, and a need to be clear about the relationship between the three. Firstly, there is the broad research question and narrower subquestions. Secondly, the interview questions used are what the researcher has put together and the participants have responded to. Thirdly, the coding structure and process of the thematic analysis also requires another level of question and interpretation. It is this multiple layered understanding and interpretation in TA that gives it its depth and full picture, but also what gives it a subjective nature. To limit this as much as possible the researcher will be explicit when writing the results and discussion about the interpretations made, member checks and validity of results.

3.5 Participants

A total sample size of 8-12 interviews was considered to be appropriate, considering the time restrictions to the research, the feasibility and willingness of participants. The researcher felt that this sample size was likely to produce sufficient evidence for thorough analysis. There were 4 practising Nurture Groups that met the 'classical model' as described by Cooper and Whitbread (2007) in the local authority. The schools were posted an introductory letter

(Appendix A) and information leaflet (Appendix B) via an internal mail system in April 2016. This information was also sent to the Headmaster and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) via email. The allocated Educational Psychologist for each school also had a conversation with the SENCo introducing the researcher and the research at a termly meeting, generally conducted in the first 3 weeks of the summer term. The researcher called the schools if there was no response, informing the schools of the research and asking them if they would like to take part. One school in the local authority agreed to participate.

To increase the sample size, an email was sent to all Educational Psychology Services in Greater London via the Principal Educational Psychologist of the original Local Authority, asking for the information to be forwarded to any schools with Nurture Groups in their borough. Also attached to this email were the introduction letter and the information leaflet. This generated contact from four schools, resulting in a further seven participants. Details regarding the school context and age ranges of the pupils who attend the NG provisions are included in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 - Nurture Group and participant information

Participant Number	School	NG structure	Key stage of Pupils in NG	Years NG established	Years on post in NG	Years experience
1	A	Part-time	KS1 and KS2	4	4	12
2	A	Part-time	KS1 and KS2	4	4	9
3	B	Part-time	KS2	6	5	9
4	B	Part-time	KS2	6	5	8
5	C	4.5 days a week	KS1	7	7	7
6	C	4.5 days a week	KS1	7	1	3
7	C	4.5 days a week	KS1	7	1	3
8	D	4 days a week	KS1 and KS2 (two separate NGs)	6	6	17

Participant Number	School	NG structure	Key stage of Pupils in NG	Years NG established	Years on post in NG	Years experience
9	E	4.5 days a week	KS1	4	4	5

Once schools had contacted the researcher to say they were interested in partaking, the researcher communicated via telephone and email to ensure all information was shared. Consent forms were completed (Appendix C) and interview schedules were arranged. At the beginning of each interview the researcher had a script for introductions and ensuring those involved knew exactly what the research was about, the purpose and what it would involve (Appendix D).

Initially the researcher aimed to involve all the participants in 2 stages of data gathering, firstly a Focus Group (with the aim to generate the semi-structured interview schedule as a group), then secondly, private individual interviews. This was not practicably possible due to time constraints and calendar options available for the NGPs.

Selection criteria for the NGs were as follows: staff needed to be actively teaching in a NG presently and for at least a year; the NG must have been in place for 2 years and be of a 'classic' or 'new variant' (Cooper & Whitbread, 2007) nature.

Consent

Information was gathered before the semi-structured interview to ascertain the structure of the NG provision and the experience of the staff, ensuring they met the inclusion criteria of a classic or part-time NG that had been established for a minimum of 2 years. This was done through informal conversations with each staff member or using professional email accounts.

The researcher conducted all interviews on the individual school premises in a quiet, private room. Each interview was recorded on a

dictaphone; all participants gave specific consent for this with information of how the data was stored being discussed beforehand.

To generate a quality driven interview schedule, the researcher contacted key specialists and critical friends to take part in a group discussion using focus group techniques; although, the group discussion did not meet criteria to be a 'Focus Group' (Krueger & Casey, 2015) as there was a total of four members. The role of a 'critical friend' was first introduced in 1975 by Stenhouse with a dual purpose of not only facilitating the progress of the research but to aid in the reflective capacity of the researcher (Kember et al, 1997). These members were professionals who had an active interest and role in Nurture Groups in the original Local Authority, including the lead NG trainer for the borough, a link EP for all NGs, a NG Practitioner and the researcher. The researcher had prompt questions for use, although the flow of the discussion was structured on the research question and subquestions. The key specialists and critical friends were approached via email or a face-to-face discussion, and all received information leaflets, introductory letters and consent forms. A time was scheduled to have a group discussion in a private room at the Civic Offices of the Local Authority.

3.6 Data Gathering

Robson (2002) proposes that the depth of the response sought by the researcher influences the type of interview chosen as these impact on the data gathered. Semi-structured interviews are a more flexible design and can allow the researcher to gather "rich and highly illuminating material" (Robson, 2002, p. 273). In this case, the aim is to do exactly that, therefore semi-structured interviews were agreed. The epistemological position of the researcher is supported through this research technique, acknowledging multiple constructs and realities, yet identifying common elements. This enables the researcher to gather systematically multiple perspectives within the shared construction of NGs.

3.7 Procedure

Ethical approval was sought through the university (Appendix E). Once gained, the researcher contacted key professionals who had an interest in NGs. This was done though conversation, email and phone discussions. Initially, an information letter was sent inviting them to join a discussion, and to take a role of 'critical friend' to develop a suitable interview schedule. The researcher approached six participants by email, gaining three responses from those who could attend the discussion group on the specified date.

During this time information leaflets were also circulated via post and email to schools in the local authority that had a NG. Some schools had 'NG Clubs', which were not included in this research project. The allocated EP for each school also held a discussion during termly planning meetings to facilitate contacts and interest in the research.

The discussion group was held using the research questions as a brief outline for the structure of this discussion. The critical friends were asked how the researcher could get the most data from the interviews. This discussion group contributed to the wording of each question in the interview schedule and highlighted the need to ask specifically for case examples. Another aspect of the questions developed during this process was to enquire about two different examples of the same situation. The discussion group generated this idea as it was felt that this was a supportive way to get full and rich examples from the participants. The members of the discussion group wondered if there was a different approach to different individuals within the NG setting and, if so, if this impacted on what was delivered or how the curriculum was approached.

The discussion group was recorded on a video to enable the researcher to accurately reflect and record the suggestions. During the discussion group the researcher also made notes regarding the suggestions, which were then drafted into a preliminary interview schedule after the discussion group (Appendix F). This preliminary interview schedule was then shown to members of the discussion group individually to request feedback. Amendments were

made and suggestions considered with the researcher completing the final interview schedule.

With regard to schools participating in the study, there was only one reply from the four NGs in the borough. Following this, the Principal Educational Psychologist circulated an email to all EPS's in London asking them to pass on the information to schools with classic NGs in other London boroughs. This generated six more schools willing to take part; however, two of them did not meet the inclusion criteria of 'classic' or 'new variant' NGs. There were nine interviews from five different schools in total. Interviews were arranged via telephone conversation or professional email accounts at mutually convenient times on the school premises and in a private room.

All participants had received the information leaflet and consent letter prior to the interview. This was also given to them at the start of the interview and the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, with contact details given should they wish to contact after the event. A short introductory script was followed at the beginning of each interview. All interviews were recorded with a dictaphone, which was directly communicated to all participants prior to recording, with information included on the consent form, requiring a separate signature to draw their attention to this point, and was reiterated verbally before recording commenced.

A pilot interview was scheduled by the researcher and a NGP from the home Local Authority. The main development to come from this exercise was the order in which the schedule was formatted as a prompt for the researcher and with a view to making it easier for the conversation to flow. The researcher wanted to ensure the last question left the interviewee feeling positive and then gave the opportunity for them to add anything else they thought was appropriate. It was not thought that this change warranted the first data set to be excluded from the process as semi-structured interviews are carried out with flexibility in every case. As there were no changes to the wording of the questions or content of the interview schedule, this data was felt to be appropriate and useful and thus was included in the final analysis. Due to administrative ease, this interview was labelled 'Interview 9'.

Figure 3.1 Procedural Flow Chart
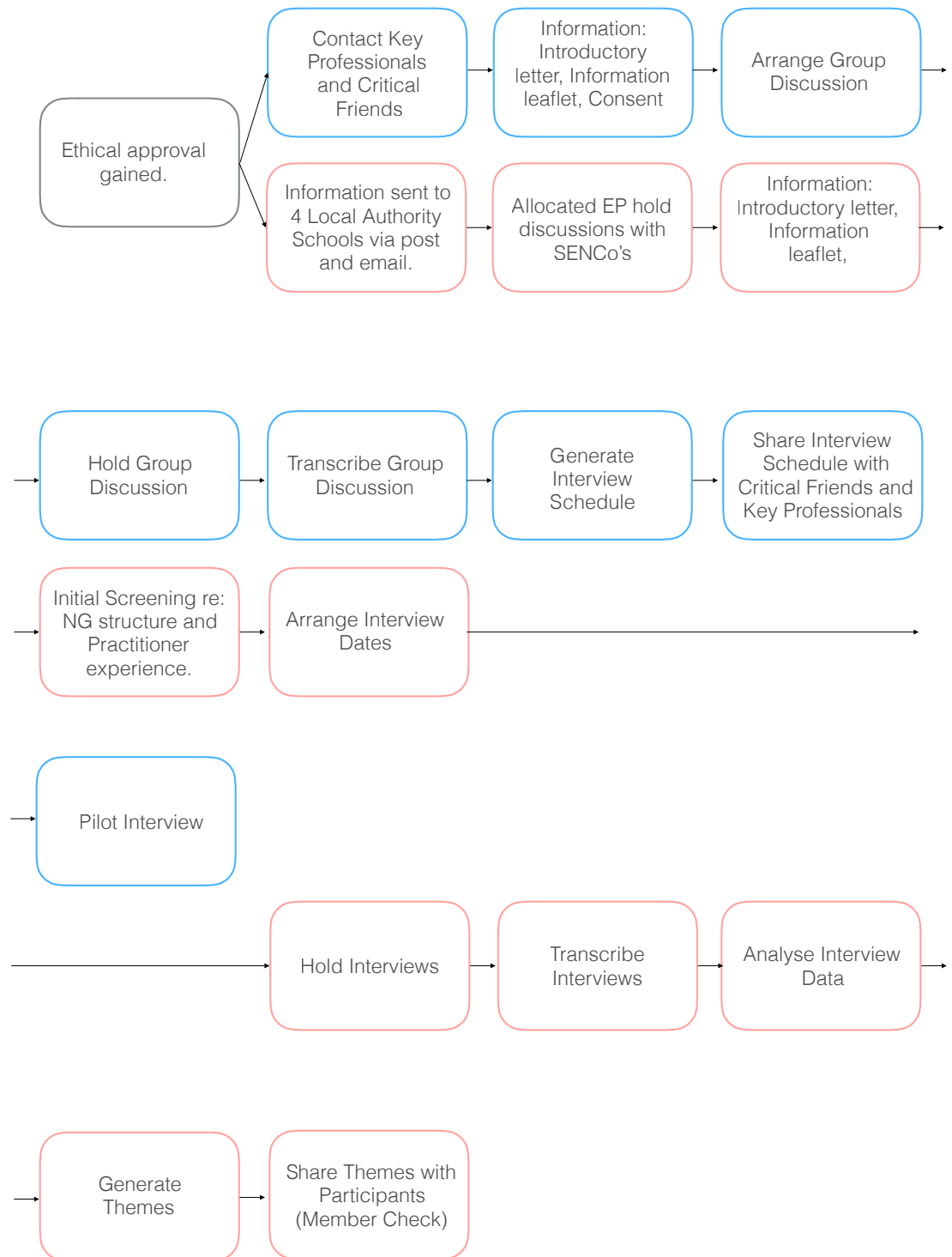
All interview recordings were transcribed on a private, password protected computer and stored according to the set parameters meeting data protection expectations. The signed consent forms were stored in a secure

locked file. Anonymity was ensured and all identifiable data was removed from this publication. The schools were labelled as A-E and participants were allocated a number instead of using their name.

3.8 Selection Procedures

Figure 3.1 above, shows the procedural flowchart on Page 42.

3.9 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a process of encoding qualitative data through identifying and analysing patterns across a set of data (Braun & Clarke 2006). This enabled the researcher to develop a thick description of the data gathered and allowed it to be easily understood by other NG practitioners. Whilst the researcher's viewpoint is that of constructivist, this data analysis technique supports this stance and enables a common understanding to procure from the individual data sets. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the need to ensure quality driven analysis through using a six step structure to aid in replication and generalisation of the findings. Following this systematic approach allowed a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the data gathered.

Thematic analysis can be used in either an inductive or deductive manner. Deductive TA is guided by existing theoretical models and these concepts are actively sought in the data analysis process. Inductive TA generates an analysis using the data first and allowing the data not to be limited to, or mapped onto, existing theory, but for theories and ideas to come up through the data analysis process. The inductive process was felt to provide a richer picture for this research. It enabled the researcher not to be led by previous research but to look for common themes from the data itself. The analysis is interpretive and as such is still influenced by the researcher's own epistemological position and previous experiences; however, it was felt that the data should lead the generated themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) outline a process for conducting TA, the process progressing through a total of six stages. These steps were followed and are outlined in Table 3.2 below.

43

Table 3.2 - Thematic Analysis Process - Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

Phase	
1	Familiarise yourself with your data
2	Generate initial codes
3	Searching for themes
4	Reviewing themes
5	Defining and naming themes
6	Producing the report

Braun and Clarke (2006) also developed a checklist for ensuring good TA as outlined in Appendix G, which have been carefully considered in relation to this research.

3.10 Quality

The data gathered through these interviews were thematically analysed and any key themes identified. The results were written into a short report which was shared with the participants, their school and the local authority.

Validity

Guba & Lincoln (1989) set out a parallel list of quality criteria for qualitative research methods, as developed and outlined by Mertens (2015, p. 268):

1. Credibility
2. Transferability
3. Dependability
4. Confirmability

This suggested list of criteria is used for judging quality in qualitative research as the traditional components for ensuring quality in quantitative data

are not applicable. Instead of internal and external validity for example, Guba and Lincoln speak of credibility and transferability.

Credibility

Cho & Trent (2006) describe credibility as similar to validity in quantitative research. The discussion group schedule and interview schedule/questions were all developed with the aim of eliciting a rich and in-depth picture of the situation to enable accurate analysis of data. The process of the discussion group informing the interview schedule also aimed to ensure there is a correspondence between the ways the participants perceive constructs and how the researcher will interpret them, as they can be discussed in a shared experience. The researcher tried to generate and maintain rapport with all participants and schools, aiming to reduce any barriers of trust and uncertainty. The researcher had given contact details also to gain trust and be available to answer questions as they arise.

During TA the researcher attended a TA group within the university of study to hold constructive discussions with colleagues about TA and identify any themes that have not yet emerged. Coding was also discussed during the transcription phase to increase the 'consistency and cohesion of the analysis' (Smith, 2015, p.263) at peer and academic supervision groups. Descriptive validity was sought through audio-taping the interviews and videotaping the discussion group. Transcription is verbatim, accurate and consistent (Robson, 2002).

Transferability

Transferability echoes external validity in quantitative research (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The researcher aimed to give enough information regarding detail of the 'context' being researched; time, place, demographic, culture etc. of the schools involved, whilst ensuring the participants were not able to be individually identified. This allowed readers of the research to make their own judgements based on similarities and differences when comparing the research to their own situation. This will enhance the theoretical transferability to other study methods. The time needed for transcribing and using thematic analysis does, however, limit the sample size to enable feasibility of the

research; therefore, the transferability to populations outside of this study needs to be treated with caution. The 'thick description' (Mertens, 2015, p.271) sought from the qualitative design of the research aims to increase the transferability of the study, along with the multiple cases of NGs approached to partake in the research aimed to triangulate the data.

<u>Dependability</u>

The researcher also ensured progressive subjectivity by keeping a reflective diary for the research period. This aided in monitoring the developing constructs and drawing attention and awareness to personal biases. This helped the researcher keep an actively open mind whilst documenting changes and holding an awareness of their logic and position. The diary also acted as a reflexive tool to aid in interpretation and to limit bias. It drew attention to the impact the researcher had on the process, data and interpretation, and was achieved by consistent entries and challenging ideas and assumptions held by the researcher.

<u>Confirmability</u>

Confirmability is important, particularly when using thematic analysis; this is due to the subjective nature of interpretation. The researcher detailed logical steps used to interpret the data. The research diary also aided in the understanding of this, recording explicitly why decisions have been made or modified regarding the research throughout the whole process and especially during data analysis. The researcher was also part of a support group at the university to get peers to review transcripts and discuss if the conclusions determined were supported by the data.

3.11 Ethical considerations

It is important to acknowledge the need for all research to consider and be bound by ethical codes of practice. Robson (2002) suggests that it is the responsibility of the researcher to design the study in a way that protects and safeguards participants. This research followed British Psychology Society (BPS, 2009) Code of Ethics and Conduct, Health and Care Professions Council

(HCPC) guidance on Conduct and Ethics for students (2012) and University of East London's (UEL) good practice in research guidelines (UEL, 2015).

All participating schools, nurture groups and staff were made aware of the purpose of the research through information leaflets prior to engagement. This was consolidated in the consent letter (Appendix C) and reiterated again before the discussion group / interviews commenced. The letters of consent detailed at length how data will be collected, stored and deleted. It also stated how the data will be used and shared, ensuring anonymity to participants. The letter also included information about how and when the participant can withdraw consent before the data is analysed. It also stated how the participant could contact the researcher or the supervising director of studies.

The researcher also ensured that the participants were not identifiable from the data. The researcher is aware that there are only five schools taking place in the study and will not name them on any documentation. Participant names were swapped with numbers so no personal information was identifiable. Signed consent forms were kept in a locked file. All transcripts were stored in an encrypted file on a non-shared, password protected private computer.

To further look after the interests and safety of the participants, interviews were conducted in quiet, private areas pre-arranged and agreed with the researcher and participant together. The aim of this was to reduce disruption and to encourage the participants to feel comfortable in sharing their information throughout the research process. The researcher planned to allocate time to discuss any emotive issues or sensitive situations with the participant after (or during) the interview as deemed appropriate. The researcher was also aware of resources available to signpost participants to if it was necessary. Although the researcher was aware of the risk of participants feeling potentially vulnerable, the risk was deemed low and this was not necessary in any of the interviews, as no participants became upset, distressed or required the offered support.

3.12 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the ontological and epistemological positions and gave a descriptive account of the data gathering strategies used to conduct this research, exploring how the epistemological position influenced the methodology. The approach to data analysis was described and the chapter outlined a clear justification for the design of the research. The ethical considerations made were discussed and the strategies used to ensure the quality and validity of this research were explained.

Chapter 4 - Findings

4.1 Overview of chapter

The previous chapter looked at the process by which the data was collected, including the research design, methodology and data collection. This chapter will look in detail at the findings of the research after such analytic procedures were followed.

4.2 Final Thematic Map

The findings from the thematic analysis identified 5 core themes, 12 themes and 8 sub-themes. The thematic map was developed over a number of stages, taking codes and grouping them in different ways. The development of the coding and thematic map is demonstrated in Appendix I and J. A final thematic map, which illustrates these themes and the relationships between them, is shown in Figure 4.1 (on page 50). These findings are discussed through presenting each core theme as an individual thematic map. The four core themes identified were: staff's understanding of and approach to child development; process-focused teaching; skills needed to live in society; difficulty in evidencing impact and outcomes. These core themes are discussed in turn below with supporting extracts of data used to demonstrate the themes and their relationships.

An important feature of the data in all areas is the fact that it is a constant process, meaning it is continuous over a period of time. This is repetitive throughout all the themes and sub-themes and a dominant feature of the data.

"It happens throughout the day: everything, every single moment. It's like your brain is geared to kind of address and talk about the social and emotional aspects of anything that's happening. As it comes up. It's a constant thing." *Participant 5 (P5) lines 230-237.*

While there is some common ground between constancy and consistency, they are two distinguished elements in this analysis. The approach is consistent: it is the same regardless of the situation; it is predictable; the

49

Figure 4.1 - Final Thematic Map

Constant

How to live in society
- Intrapersonal skills
  - Engagement with learning
  - Emotional regulation
  - Confidence
- Interpersonal skills
  - Communication
  - Group interactions
  - Co-construction

Balancing routine vs flexibility

Difficulty evidencing impact/ outcome

Process Focused
- Transparency and clarity
- Form and maintain relationships
- Modelling
- Dynamic
- Individual

Child Development[1]
- Invest over time
- Responsive and receptive
- Understanding and link wider context
- Function / analysis behaviour
- Qualities and skills needed
  - Confidence / resilience
  - Personal qualities

Overarching Feature
Core Theme
Theme
Sub-theme

(1) Full description of the 'Child Development' theme is: An acute awareness, theoretical understanding and application of how children develop.

environment and staff are reliable and the routines support the consistency of doing the same thing each time a matter arises; however, the dominant feature in this analysis is constancy. This is where planning is done on a continuous basis: the curriculum is shaped and moulded to the ongoing situations arising; and staff are adapting at every moment to address the needs that emerge from the daily environment. Assessments of the children's needs and progress are perpetual and dynamic, being seen in all environments and at all times. The dynamic nature of NGs and the all-encompassing environment change and adapt to the needs of the children at that moment in time.

4.3 Core Theme 1: Process-focused priority given to both teaching and learning.
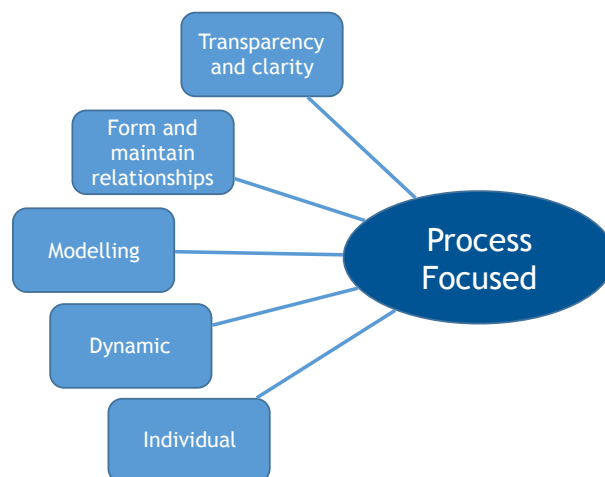
This core theme incorporates all the data regarding processes and the importance of the process. This collection of themes demonstrates some of the priorities in a NG setting and how they are different from mainstream settings. It includes five themes: transparency, clarity and predictability of all situations, expectations and processes; forming and maintaining relationships; modelling, demonstrated across peers, staff and situations; adaptations for all individuals; dynamic processes involving multiple strategies utilised at different times for different individuals.

> *"It's not always the end result. Just do your best. All the way through you are saying 'that's really good' and trying to keep them ticking along…"*
> *P9, lines 61-63.*

Theme 1.1 - Transparency, clarity and predictability of all situations, expectations and processes

This theme was generated due to the clear and concise manner in which the NG setting gave the children information, with regard to all aspects of their learning. Participants reported a key system was talking through what happens when it arises. Staff would clearly state the choices the children have, looking at each of the consequences of those choices.

> *"We say to them, 'right, you need to follow instructions,' and we do say to them, 'right, if you are going to be silly then you can't do it.' And after a while, because we follow through, which again these children don't always have, they know that if they don't do it the right way they won't enjoy the fun, and other people will." P1, lines 178-181.*

The children are regularly reminded of the purpose of their presence at the NG and what is expected of them.

> *"…being very clear with them about what the expectation is so we're very open … and very open about when they're getting things right or very open about when they're actually, or you know what, 'I expected you to be doing a bit better now because I've been giving you support and putting these things in place.'" P5, lines 117-120*

It appears that knowing what to expect, understanding the reasons for this and knowing what to expect in different circumstances contribute to the overall progress of the child's development. One way to do this that was identified through the analysis was through the routines of the day and the systematic processes.

> *"[the children] know what I am going to say, or they hear what we say to the other children, so when their turn comes, they know what to expect in a way. Erm, and it's really nice, if not always successful because sometimes their reaction is just to lash out and become aggressive or destructive or whatever; but at least they know that they are going to go*

through the process of us asking and offering options." P5, lines 281-286.

This clarity allows the children to know what to expect and to understand what the consequences will be, reiterating the choices they have. It also allows for the positivity to continue in a routine manner. As the child develops trust in the reasons and processes they are exposed to, along with the tasks they are asked to do, they understand that the staff are asking reasonable things of them, that they will be supported and they can achieve or reach the explicit expectations. The tasks will have a predictable nature in them, as they are ensured to be achievable, allowing the child to trust in their own ability and lessen fears of engaging with learning tasks. The environment is also predictable, allowing the child to make informed decisions on how to act and what to do.

"Then obviously we are going to focus more on that, but you've got to break those down so that it's achievable. The targets are going to be achievable or you defeat your own purpose." P6, lines 69-71.

This clarity and transparency is supported frequently through visual aids. These visual supports may be behaviour charts, displays on the wall, progress recorded through photographic evidence, certificates or contracts. This is also supported through the process of modelling, the experience that the children can see what happens when another child breaks a rule, and the knowledge that the same thing will happen to them should they choose to do that. Modelling is discussed as a separate theme, although it does have an indirect relationship with this.

"…when they are coming to nurture, we have targets for the children over on the wall, we remind them of their targets." P2, lines 88-89.

"So constantly using them as the role models and saying how well they had done and any work they do, 'fantastic, let's put it up on the board and we take loads of pictures.'" P1, lines 486-488.

The theme of transparency, clarity and predictability is therefore identified through the explicit links that were made for the children, as they were unable to do this themselves internally when they started at the NG provision. According

to staff, the clear and transparent rules, presented in a routine and predictable format, ensure that the children understand their environment and can feel more secure, limiting potential anxieties of previous settings and experiences.

<u>Theme 1.2 - Form and maintain relationships</u>

"It always came back to relationships." P8, line 210.

This theme encapsulates relationships, not only with the staff and the child, but the child with their peers, the relationships over time and how these are generalised to different environments. It depicts how these relationships are formed and maintained as well as the impact of these relationships on the child, both immediately and over time.

"It's all about trust. The whole point of attachment is that there is no trust. So, without trust, you've got nothing. And that trust is not just built up over a period of time. It has to be re-established on almost a daily basis with lots of them, I find." P8, lines 125-127.

There was a sense that the children may not have experienced positive relationships with adults or class teachers previously, and the participants saw this as an opportunity to show the child how positive and wide reaching relationships can be.

"…lots of children who come here haven't really built that kind of a relationship with an adult in the classroom…" P9, lines 241-242.

Another aspect of these relationships is the secure nature of them. It was stated a number of times that with the relationship with a NG practitioner, there are clear boundaries, but if mistakes happen then the relationship is still there and maintained.

"She is not going to judge you; she is not going to think you are bad; she is not going to tell you off even if you are disappointed in yourself; … and that's the relationship a nurture teacher has. And I think a classroom teacher has to discipline you. Your mum or your dad, or your parent or foster carer, they have all got their rules and they will tell you off if you

break them. But in here we can be upset with your behaviour, but we wouldn't ... you are not in trouble." P3, lines 403-408.

There was also a sense of maintaining the relationship not only across time, but environment.

"That we are always here for them, they can come back. The door is not shut, we are here." P4, lines 250-251.

"When you start getting a child actually to say hello to you in the corridor and not just in nurture group it's like, 'fantastic', or they want to come up to you in the playground, or when you're walking down the corridor again they want to tell you something, which they would not have done before, that to me is a sign that we are on the right track." P1, lines 623-626.

This theme summarises the many nuances of relationships, the high degree of complexity in everyday relationships between staff, peers, parents, schools and communities. It addresses the need for constancy in relationships, which can be repaired and developed. It also touches on the difficulties in these relationships in an educational system that does not tailor itself to the importance or impact of these.

Theme 1.3 - Modelling demonstrated across peers, staff and situations

"… a lot of the time you are constantly modelling what you want things to be, and again you are modelling, like, healthy human interactions." P5, lines 315-316.

This theme represents the vast array of modelling that is used to support the children's learning. The modelling is constant: in the first instance, the two staff members are modelling interactions with each other, modelling disagreements, how to communicate, respect opinions and differences and have a positive relationship with each other.

"… got to be all the same values you are talking about with the children: the not-talking-over-one-another, the eye contact, just having fun. That is crucial. If you have a good sense of humour as well because the children are watching that relationship and you are role models for them as well, and you're modelling how it should be." P9, lines 409-412.

"There is a definite promotion of each other as adults, and we take it in turns to lead. I think that we just try to have a bit of banter with each other, and I think it is really healthy for them to see how adults can relate in a positive way." P7, lines 178-180.

Staff are also modelling how a child and adult should interact appropriately.

"… when you do something right, I am going to provide an example of what a grown-up should react to you like, what a grown-up's response should be like, or if you are not doing something right or you are being violent or whatever, I am going to show you exactly what a proper grown-up, no, what a grown-up's proper reaction should be. I may raise my voice and raise my eyebrows, and this is going to change and you will know I am not happy; but I will not scream and shout nor will I ignore you and pretend that it's not happening." P5, lines 304-309.

"I think the way they see us interact is very important. Particularly when its compared to their previous experience of how they say other adults interact at home." P7, lines 170-171.

As stated in a previous theme of transparency, clarity and predictability, staff also used the other children to model situations between themselves. For example, by showing one child how to do something, the other children are also exposed to this.

"We use the other children as models, you know. We will say something like, 'if you are not sure of the rules, look at so and so,' they do it beautifully. And of course, that other person is like, 'oh yes.' So it's not us. 'So don't forget! If you're not sure, it's that person to look at if you want to know how to do it.' So the other kids know too." P1, lines 182-185.

"Try to promote how they relate to each other." P7, line 159.

The staff also model the values held by the NG; for example, they invite other staff in; all visitors are welcomed and accepted. New pupils are asked to make their own placemat, ensuring they have the opportunity to be included, feel welcome and part of the group.

"Then obviously we were eating, modelling how we eat and modelling good conversation during the mealtime. Then we would have a couple of people who were tidying up and washing up." P8, lines 20-22.

"We are very inclusive, like, if anyone comes through the door, we say 'hello' to everyone. Everyone is welcome and we have adults, like their teachers, come to tea to show off their skills of being able to lay a table or pass round the food." P1, lines 57-60.

Modelling across staff, peers and situations not only supports the visible teaching, the secure relationships with persons and tasks, but it also epitomises the need for constancy.

Theme 1.4 - Adaptations for all individuals

This core theme demonstrates all the individualised factors that come together to support the children. There was a definite sense of individuality in each child's targets, how these were identified and addressed. It also impacted on the expectations from the staff for the child, acknowledging that each child will react differently, and how to manage that on an individual level and as a group.

Each child's targets were identified specifically for that child, targets were individual and personalised. The assessment process for this was managed over a period of time, consulting other professional and dynamic assessments during both the NG placement and mainstream class.

> *"It just depends what their needs are really. And it is so important, and it's nice because it's a small group that we can actually get to the crux of the problem." P6, lines 112-114.*

> *"And they have targets of their own; each child has a target of their own." P1, line 88.*

Analysis of the data suggested that staff responded differently to each individual child, taking into account many factors on how and why they do this. In a later theme, the balance of individual responses and the possible conflict of consistency is discussed.

> *"It depends. Sometimes we will just carry on as normal; depends on the child. Some children are quite happy. Some children you just know they might not want to talk about it." P1, lines 329-330.*

> *"Somebody might take 6 sessions; somebody might take 12 sessions. You know it is individual and you have to feel that you have secured them enough to go out into the big wide world." P3, lines 518-520.*

Another aspect apparent through this theme is the impact of each individual on the group. On a more practical level, trying to address such different and complex needs with a personalised curriculum can be difficult to manage.

> *"If their needs are completely different, what we might do is work one-to-one with them, so have two members of staff work with them on their own individualised programme" P5, lines 63-65.*

> *"You can see that they are individuals as much as they are in a group." P1, lines 346-347.*

Analysis also revealed that individualised responses were evident from the NGPs for each child. NGPs also adapted their response for the individual circumstances surrounding the child at any one moment, be it mood, time of day, circumstances at home, experiences at lunch time etc.

> *"You have got to understand them and what their needs are. And every child who walks through that door has a different need and you can't label them with anything because you don't know what they have gone through. We know the basic reason, but we don't know what happened to that child that night or what happened to them this morning: were they late, were they rushing?" P4, lines 180-184.*

The complexity of managing individual needs in a group consisting entirely of children with equally complex and diverse needs is evident. The necessity for individualised teaching and learning is sustainable, in part due to the environmental factors that allow this (such as a larger ratio of staff to children; more time given to allow space for this needs to be addressed). This environment also depicts the skills needed for such groups to work successfully, and it may be a meaningful way for those in the group to understand individual needs and how to adapt in group situations, the skills necessary for mainstream education.

Theme 1.5 - Dynamic processes involving multiple strategies utilised at different times for different individuals

The core theme of process-focused approaches prioritised the need and importance of the processes used. This theme involving the dynamic approach depicts the dynamic nature of all the processes in NG settings; not only are processes valued and important, but they are ever changing and adaptable. Analysis showed that participants would change their approach, change their choices, use different strategies etc. depending on the individual, situation, group or day. The dynamic process is one of constant change, activity or progress.

The dynamic approach involves flexibility, changing the plans and responding to situations. It also includes thinking about individual targets. Participants reported that this impacted on what was done in any single session.

> *"That's why we stopped doing dates. There's no dates up there (on visual timetable) because the child you have gone (planned) around who is significant to that session is not in, and you know what, we are so in tune and we have done it for so many years, I can quickly get a sheet and say, 'do you know what, we are doing three wishes today; we are doing three wishes of what we would take to a desert island' or, so we know so many things because we have done it, like we are going to do a 'selfie' today." P3, lines 608-613.*

> *"So we might just change it and don't do the focus activity that day, if they just want to stay and talk." P4, lines 99-100.*

> *"I guess actually adapting, I didn't realise, but it does happen a lot." P7 line 44.*

Analysis showed that there may also need to be changes or adaptations across the group, if new members are enlisted, particularly mid-term.

> *"There's a lot of fluidity in who comes in and when. So you can have, like, mid-term you can have a new child starting so you have to allocate time for their settling in but also for the other children to kind of settle in with that person in the classroom, and for us I suppose to get used to how we deal with the new dynamics." P5, lines 133-137.*

Further analysis demonstrated that the groupings were also affected, requiring staff to be dynamic in their groupings or planned activities, as mood or situations that demand changes to maintain success or achievements could arise.

"I think within an individual session we would be on plan half the time maybe … two thirds of the time if you were lucky. And some days you weren't on plan at all; you were nowhere near it because you were responding to some sort of emotional outburst, or you're dealing with somebody [who] was in a very bad place and they needed that time. And therefore the other person had to fill in and do what they had to do." P8, lines 53-57

"At the moment, we know that those children that are supposed to work together will not be successful so we need to change it." P6, lines 48-50.

"So sometimes it is very; having to adapt because we realise the importance of actually sharing that." P7, lines 34-35.

This theme also involved the idea of multiple strategies, which were selected dependent on the whole circumstance at any given moment. The identified strategy was selected after a process of assessments of a multitude of continuously fluctuating circumstances. These strategies were being assessed as they were happening and adapted as necessary, on the basis of the professional judgements of the NGPs. This theme can indirectly link to the skills of staff required to be able to manage this cohort of demands.

4.4 Core Theme 2: How to live and function in society
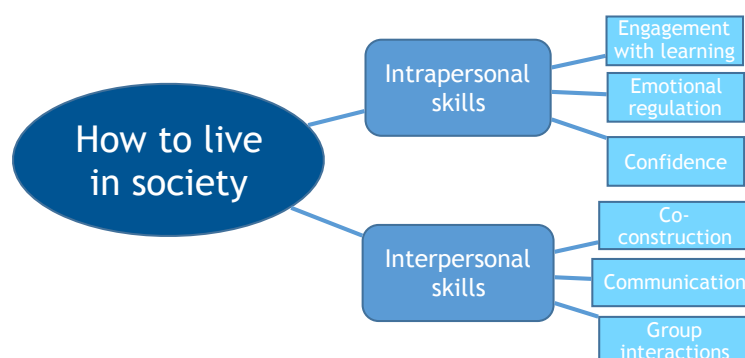
This core theme involves two themes and six sub-themes. The two themes are separated due to the differentiation between intra-personal skills and inter-personal skills. Through analysis it was evident that the skills the children needed to learn followed two distinct patterns, the ones they needed to learn within themselves compared with the skills in how to hold relationships

and interact with other people. The intra-personal skills theme has three sub-themes: engagement with learning; emotional regulation; self esteem and confidence. The inter-personal theme also has three sub-themes: communication; co-construction of expectations and consequences; group interactions.

Theme 2.1: Intra-personal skills

This theme consists of three sub-themes, these are: engagement with learning; emotional regulation; development of self-esteem and confidence.

> *"It was just playing; she learned to play and relax, and knowing people wanted to hear her, wanting to know what she had to say." P1, lines 560-561.*

Sub-theme 2.1.1: Readiness to engage in a classroom or group environment

The analysis suggested that there was a need for the children who attended the NG to learn how to sit, listen and be ready to learn. The child needed support to tune into the teacher and listen to instructions, and support to carry these out independently.

> *"They need … to have those strategies to cope and then be able to see and listen and take the information in, and be able to progress academically." P6, lines 227-230.*

These basic skills were missing from the NG cohorts. Participants felt that until these were addressed, learning in a larger classroom environment would not be successful. There was also a sense of children wanting to engage in their learning when their time at NG had been completed.

> *"We have some children, and the biggest thing of all is that they will finally go back to class and they will sit in the middle of the carpet, whereas before they would have tried to disappear under a table or not want to be in the classroom; and there they are sitting in the middle of the carpet putting up their hand." P1, lines 62-63.*

"It was lovely to see because he was engaged for half an hour. He was putting his hand up; before, he was throwing tables, kicking chairs, shouting out, touching the white board" P9, lines 653-655.

This theme suggests that the child needs prerequisite skills in order to access mainstream education successfully. These skills suggest an internal model of working for a child to be ready, willing and able to engage with learning. They need to be able to sit and attend to a task, do independent tasks, focus on work presented etc.

Sub-theme 2.1.2: Emotional regulation

This sub-theme depicts the need for the children to learn to recognise and to manage their emotions and behaviour independently and within themselves. This is distinct from the theme above as this requires emotional literacy and self regulation, whereas the above theme requires concentration and attending behaviours. Analysis suggests that to learn self-regulation staff initially normalise emotions and respond to any emotion that happens at any given point. If one child is celebrating a positive behaviour recognition reward, for example, it is necessary for the other children to understand that they did not receive the reward. Initially the child's understanding of what is fair may be challenged, but an appreciation develops of what each person deserves and how to achieve that. The necessity to manage emotions around 'not winning' is also evident here. An appropriate response from the NGPs is key here to understand and develop the child's emotional literacy, acknowledging the child's struggle with this emotion and supporting the understanding and individual response to this. That it is a complex situation with many emotions to manage.

"Socially, … I think you do a lot without even realising you are doing it; again you are not going into group and think, 'oh we are doing social and emotional today,' but we do lots of work on feelings…" P9, lines 172-174.

A repeated feature of the data in this theme was emotionally coaching the children by asking reflective questions and not necessarily giving direct instructions. Normalising emotions was suggested to support the children to be able to manage these emotions and ask questions such as, 'what would you do differently next time?'.

"'It's ok to feel like that - we are not robots.' I mean, I've used that a lot, 'well, yeah, ok, you were angry; we are angry; we are human; we do do that.' It's about how you choose what you are going to choose to do from that, how you are going to be able to cope with that, what can you do, and talk to them about strategies, maybe, or what would be the best choice. And looking at once they are calm, looking at what should they have done, ask them, 'what could you have done that was different, then?' 'What would have helped you?' There are a lot of conversations that go on." P6, lines 347-353.

Another aspect of this theme was to give the children the language skills to talk about their emotions, possibly through commenting on the emotions they may be displaying at the time.

"Acknowledge the way they are feeling and make them understand that you do get them. Or being brave enough to say, 'you're going to get really cross with this in a moment aren't you?' And they might not like you saying that, but deep down they are then taking in: 'Oh ok, she does understand where I'm coming from, that that was really difficult for me, and for verbalising it.'" P6, lines 341-344.

Sub-theme 2.1.3: Self-esteem and self-confidence

Analysis found there was a repeated theme around the need to build confidence and self-esteem. The participants tended to identify that the children in their NG settings either presented as extrovert or introvert but these were both seen as necessary strategies the child had learned to compensate for their low self-esteem and self-confidence. Both externalised behaviour sets (introvert and extrovert) could be addressed using similar techniques to increase the self-esteem.

"We look at really the main need, then we look if we can address all of them. The biggest, when you put it all together, it is low self-esteem, really low self-esteem which will kick off a load of different [further behaviours], worried, scared, anxiety." P3, lines 54-56.

"I don't want to keep banging on about self-esteem, but quite often they come and they haven't had the skills so far; they just haven't had the skills to be able to maintain a level of work." P6, lines 199-201.

There is an appreciation from the staff that the children may have been in negative cycles thus far in their education, with repeated unsuccessful experiences that impact on the child's self-concept and self-esteem. There were multiple strategies noted regarding how staff addressed these self-esteem issues. Common examples were that there was less pressure in the NG environment (possibly because of the clear and explicit expectations), the maintained achievability and the inclusive approach of the setting.

> *"It's freedom for them and they don't realise we are doing all these things. We are securing them emotionally and we are boosting their self esteem, calming them down and stopping them doing angry things, but it's no pressure." P4, lines 409-412.*

The theme of self-esteem and confidence appeared to be an important factor and potentially an underlying cause for other symptoms shown by the NG cohorts. It is difficult to conclude causation between all the interlinked factors, but the analysis showed a repeated perceived importance of self-esteem as a main need for the children. It was also identified throughout the analysis as something the NG had a positive impact upon.

Theme 2.2: Inter-personal skills

There appeared to be a need to teach the children explicitly how to interact with others. There was a marked difference between the intra-personal skills and inter-personal skills. The inter-personal skills were needed to help the children interact with others as is necessary to function in society.   These clear expectations were planned into the children's targets and group activities alongside other individual targets. This theme consists of three sub-themes: communication; co-construction of expectations and consequences; group interactions. The children needed to learn how to relate themselves to others, learning to understand different perspectives for example.

> *"Some children want to be first because they don't have that control at home, or they feel they don't, or in school sometimes. So we say to them, "'it is alright not to have control' or 'it is acceptable not to be first, you can be last and you will still be fine.' For these little ones there is a*

lot of things people take for granted but they find very difficult." P1, lines
109-113.

Sub-theme 2.2.1: Communication

This sub-theme incorporates communication; however, in the data, communication is spoken about in many different contexts. There are the communication skills required by the child to function in a group and get their messages across. This also impacts on their understanding of language.

There was also a focus on non-verbal communication, teaching the children how to do it, how to recognise it in others and how to process that information.

"It's a lot of eye contact; it's a lot of facial things." P9, lines 417-418.

"So to say: manners; how to interact socially; not to be so shy; to be more confident within themselves; and teamwork. Social skills as well: interacting with each other; gain confidence; and how to relax." P2, lines 290-292.

The staff communicate with each other, families and the school as a whole to determine the best approach, target or measure for the children. These communication skills are modelled throughout the environment.

"The minute they come through the door, you are reading their face. You are gauging what are the problems. You are looking for the signs for people to be. You are talking about the feelings. You're saying, 'it's okay to be angry', and also, 'well done with the sharing', so everything is about communication" P9, lines 266-269.

Another way of communication, described by the majority of participants, was sharing positive reward strategies with the class teachers who could give the child a certificate, for example, to take back to NG and send it home, sharing the positive changes with all involved. This would also tune the adults in to the child's positive behaviours.

"We have a little bear called 'X' and if you are '[pupil] of the Week', you can take X back to the classroom with your photo and a little sunbeam. And you get a little certificate that tells the teacher, or your mum or dad, what you have done positively." P1, lines 494-497.

Communication was apparent in many forms and with numerous advantages described by the participants. These skills related to communication in all areas, including communicating one's own feelings and learning to respond to communication attempts. Communication is a complex skill that requires not only expressive techniques, but also understanding what you hear and how to respond. Communication can also revolve around sharing of information and strategies with a wider support network, which came through the analysis and each participant remarked on the necessity of this.

Sub-theme 2.2.2: Co-construction of expectations and consequences

There seems to be mutual respect and an expectation that the staff and children are both valued. One way this is communicated is through children being involved in their own target-setting, or talking through and agreeing action plans together with staff.

"There are three targets that the children are working on that we sit down together and decide what we are going to have." P6, lines 65-66.

"So he wanted his target to be, 'I am not going to fight in the playground.' So separately we went through, 'So what can we do? What will stop you fighting in the playground? What can you do?' We talked about it a lot and by the end of the term he actually came and said he has had no reports from the playground or at lunchtime to say he has had any fights at all." P4, lines 60-64.

The collaboration continues as a group when the children support each other and construct group rules together or explore other choices available to them.

"They are so honest. 'Well, Miss, I did this, I threw the chair because.' … And then we look at how and why and what could we have done. And then, as they come together, they start actually questioning each other: 'Well, why did you do that? Why didn't you take…?' And it's that little debate of what you could have done." P3, lines 120-124.

Another way this is communicated is that the child feels heard and valued. Part of this co-construction is that the child's voice is listened to. It is not about giving direct instructions; it is about collaboration and working things out together in a supportive and guiding manner.

> *"Listen. Lots of adults don't listen. They don't listen. You think you do but you don't. You don't listen to what it is they have got to tell you."* P3, lines 440-441.

> *"For a lot of these children, that's the biggest thing: that people do actually want them to talk; at the right time and to actually have a voice."* P1, lines 565-566.

> *"You have got to have an understanding, but also I think the ratio of adults to children allows you to have a different approach to that because you have got the time to sit and talk to the child, and reason with the child, and talk about how they are feeling and what is expected; whereas, when even if there is two adults in the mainstream class of 30, it's just not feasible, is it?"* P6, lines 212-215.

This sub-theme talks about the collaborations between pupils and staff. It acknowledges that with the right balance of guidance, communication and co-construction, problem solving becomes easier and this is modelled throughout all interactions with the children. The children then learn to use these skills independently in the small group, and later generalise this to a larger group.

Sub-theme 2.2.3: Group interactions

> *"I think it's, yeah, about how can you be, how can you find joy in being with other people, and how can you eventually transfer that from a small group, or from a one-to-one with a teacher, to a small group, to that big group."* P5, lines 469-471.

This sub-theme noted the necessity of interacting with others and adhering to group norms in any environment to function in society. This need can initially be around self-regulation, but with added complexity of situations, there is a distinct development of this skill to include the need to regulate in response to others, which can be difficult.

"Particularly if they are struggling with what they are doing, is to acknowledge the fact that we understand that they are having difficulty with this and also to try and get them to look at another person's point of view, with the empathy or how would that person feel, or put them in another position, like the opposite position to them." P6, lines 57-60.

Analysis also identified the need for the children to recognise and acknowledge the impact they have on those around them.

"It is about providing the words for them about emotions and feelings and behaviours, and talking a lot about the impact of our behaviour on others." P5, lines 451-452.

"Without that early learning, being able to play with your peers, being able to share and listen, they can't access the curriculum. It's like anything - if you don't have a foundation, you can't build a house. And that's how I think of nurture group: we are the foundation - and for them to progress and … get as much out of their schooling as they can, they need that foundation." P1, lines 600-604.

There was a clear need to be able to get along with others and to be part of a group. This was identified as a key skill that needed to be addressed in NG settings. In life there is a need to be around others and understand that all individuals affect the dynamics of those around them. This needed to be moulded to be positive, reflective and meaningful, as children who come into NG have often had a big impact on the environment they have left and the one they enter. This sub-theme allows the impact of the individual to be recognised and the impact of others to be recognised on the individual also.

4.5 Core Theme 3: An acute awareness, theoretical understanding and application of how children develop.

This core theme consists of five themes and two sub-themes. The five themes are: investing over time; responsive and receptive; understanding the needs of the child and link to wider context; function and analysis of behaviour; staff qualities needed to support this understanding. This final theme has two sub-themes: confidence to use multiple strategies, professional judgement and resilience; personal characteristics of staff.
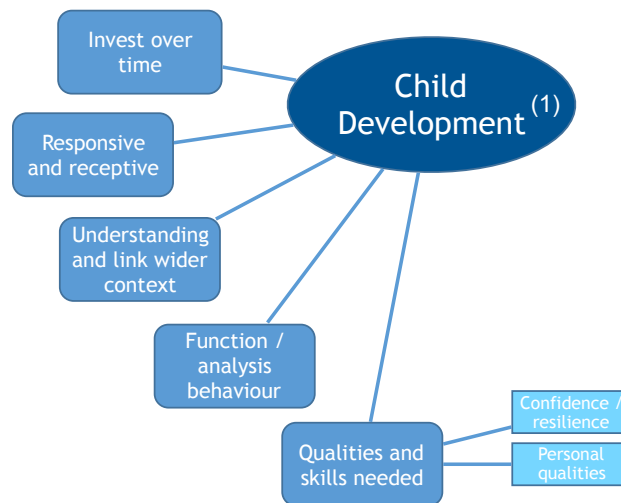
(1) Full description of the 'Child Development' theme is: An acute awareness, theoretical understanding and application of how children develop.

Theme 3.1: Approach to children and willingness to invest in children over time

This theme represents the participants' ideas of needing to value and invest in children. All participants reported that there was a need to value children and actively to seek the child's opinion and listen to it. Whilst most participants appreciated that environmental factors contributed to this process, as NG settings tend to have a much higher ratio of staff to children, and more time or flexibility to do this, there was a theme of mutual respect.

> "You have got to have an understanding, but also I think the ratio of adults to children allows you to have a different approach to [mainstream] because you have got the time to sit and talk to the child, and reason with the child, and talk about how they are feeling and what is expected; whereas, when even if there is two adults in the mainstream class of 30, it's just not feasible, is it?" P6, lines 212-215.

> "And when you talk to him, and he has been really open some days, it has taken the whole day to find out what was wrong with him [in] the morning. But it's getting a shorter period now because we are checking when he comes in and we discuss it there and then." P9, lines 581-583.

Analysis also showed that this approach needs an underlying appreciation of how children learn and what is required to support this, along with realistic time frames.

> *"Need to be repeated a lot in order to have a lot of contextual conversation and discussion about particular feelings, and nuances or variations of particular feelings, so that you get beyond sad, which is what you always get, isn't it? So to get from angry to frustrated requires a bit of teasing out; to embed the difference between angry and frustrated probably requires going back to it four, five, six, seven times before they really get that and have got it, you know? It's so that they understood it, but it's been internalised and they can then apply it accurately." P8, lines 315-321.*

An important distinction in this theme is the staff's approach to the child and their attitude in the setting, to be curious and genuine. They have an understanding of individual differences and a reflective nature of the impact interactions will have.

> *"…most of all, curiosity and interest in that child and in those children. And if you don't have that, get out of the room quick! You are in the wrong place." P8, lines 296-298.*

> *"To do nurture, you have to have background knowledge of children. And also, please don't dislike children, because all children come in shapes and sizes and they have got all behaviour and … however frustrating that behaviour is, there is a reason behind that behaviour…. And if you can manage that without being cross, angry, … have the patience and see the hurt instead of the behaviour and see the cry for help instead of the cry for attention. And if you can see all that then you are the right person for a Nurture Group." P3, lines 631-639.*

Therefore this theme epitomises the value staff give to children, the willingness to engage with and influence their experiences for the better, and the necessity of small steps to achieve this. It acknowledges the impact their own interactions will have over a longer time period.

Theme 3.2: Responsive and receptive to the child and the environment

Through the examination of the data, it was identified that there was a need for staff to have a sense of initiative and respond to situations without relying on prompts or discussion with others. Participants reported that staff needed to 'read situations', picking up on and responding to subtle communication cues. Body language was another area that staff needed to be attuned to, not only for general cues but for small differences in what would be considered typical body language for a specific child. This area also involved a sense of risk assessment with regard to the whole group and individual responses within that.

> *"They should be able to read the situation and know what to do, and be confident enough to do it without someone else saying, 'can you go and do that?' They have to be confident enough to do that themselves." P1, lines 403-405.*

> *"Yeah, sometimes there are big things taking place in the group you know that are nothing to do with the national curriculum or whatever. And you just have to address them." P5, lines 249-251.*

> *"you are always trying to reflect what you should have done." P9, line 176.*

Analysis also found that participants had a sense of being attuned to the children, other staff and situations. It was felt amongst participants that this was a skill that could not be taught, and was a necessary prerequisite skill staff needed to frequently utilise.

> *"I think you have got to be tuned into the body language, haven't you? As some people don't see that …" P9, lines 287-288.*

All participants spoke about the need to consider the first reaction to a situation and approach situations calmly, with the goal to actively de-escalating situations.

> *"I think really I just care about the child. I am not looking to be in control…. You have to be realistic with what you're saying to de-escalate things and I have seen many adults escalate the child when that child is angry. And just by that first word and, 'what's the matter with you?', the child is even more angry and they have come this close to ... And then it's so rude, and he's exploded and you have made that worse because if you had just softened your voice and said, 'what's the matter?' or 'I see*

there is something troubling you' or 'can I help you?', that would just diffuse the whole thing, and that sums up in here and that's what we do." P9, lines 288-298.

"…how they can change from being settled to a bit more agitated and we have to take that into account. And we allow maybe more time and, yeah, choosing more activities that are not necessarily more structured, but you allow more of yourself to be with them." P5, lines 140-143.

This theme describes the need for staff to be receptive and attuned, not only to the children, but also to the relationships present and to the situation including group dynamics and subtle emotions. This is also related to the staff's initial response to these experiences. This needs to be calm, sensitive and calculated, given the many possible strategies and the individual nature of each child's needs.

Theme 3.3: Understanding the needs of the child and linking this to a wider context

Through thorough analysis, it was identified that participants felt that NGPs must have an understanding of why children needed NGs, an appreciation of what early years development had been missed and how this impacted on the child individually.

"It gives them, like, a chance; … and to fill in those gaps if they haven't had the nurturing at home, if they have had a really tricky start in life, and being loving with them, obviously in a professional way; they do need that intimacy; they do need that bond with other adults to know that they can be loved and they can be missed." P6, lines 369-374.

Another aspect key to this theme are the links to home and the impact of all the active systems around the child. There is a necessity to have a clear understanding that the child has developed these behavioural strategies due to their past experiences. The gaps in early years development are there because of various external systems working and linking around the child. The analysis suggested that an appreciation of this wider context was important for an appreciation of the child's needs and how to address them.

"I think we need to be careful to kind of not put the problem within the child, so, you know, they need to find enjoyment. So it doesn't matter what work home does, or what work school does - they know how to find the joy. They know how to do it, so now they need to do it." P5, lines 481-484.

Understanding the impact of other, wider contexts impacting on the child is necessary to relate and appreciate how the child is feeling and what they are trying to achieve. The ways in which the children communicate their needs may be frustrating and destructive. Participants noted that NGPs need to have a basic understanding and be able to demonstrate empathy with the children in the setting. All participants demonstrated, or named, empathy during the interview.

"There would be no point coming to the kids and saying, 'do this, do that,' you have to have empathy and understanding towards the children." P2, lines 200-201.

"I think most of the time I have quite a good, kind of, grasp of what is going on in their heads, but sometimes you just ask them." P5, lines 549-551

Participant 9 spoke about the need for an understanding of the wider context, and linked this empathy to sharing that understanding with other staff members.

"I think if that one boy was sorted in the morning, and you listen to him and he feels safe, he's not going to spoil anything. He should be your priority. He is the one who is going to cause [disruption] ... So I said, 'if you got up in the morning and your wife had pulled you out of bed; you'd had a massive argument before you come in; and you hadn't had a cup of tea; you hadn't had a slice of toast; you had given your wife a lift to the station and she is moaning all morning, all morning, all morning; then you come into school, how are you actually going to feel?'… And we are expecting him to sit, to tick this little box to say he's done his maths assessment, but he's actually not going to be able to focus on any maths because he's angry, he's upset, he's scared and he's hungry, and he's thirsty and he may be freezing cold because he hasn't been given a jumper. Now I think that is our role; that is what we should be looking at." P9, lines 630-645.

It was key that staff could identify these needs and also link them to early years development, as well as understanding the gaps in the child's skills that

may have been prevalent due to the child's missed early experiences. Staff then needed to use this information to adapt existing strategies to be most successful and appropriate for the individual. This was also demonstrated through participants distinguishing between developmentally appropriate behaviours and chronologically appropriate behaviours. Staff often found it helpful to address early needs in the same ways that other children at that developmental stage would typically learn to deal with this. This results in children not having a societal construct of what is deemed 'age appropriate' inflicted upon or limiting their learning.

Theme 3.4: Function and analysis of behaviour

There were a large proportion of data points related to examples of 'noticing' behaviours, assessing the function of these behaviours, then adapting resources and plans to meet the very individual needs identified through this process. The overall theme of behaviour analysis was identified due to the comments regarding 'seeing past the behaviour' and understanding that the child is displaying the behaviour because it had previously been a useful strategy for them. The need for staff to unpick this and get to the underlying issues is key to meaningful and longer lasting outcomes for the child. The analysis identified an underlying reference to behaviourism from all participants although this did not appear a conscious decision, but an understanding of the situation.

> *"… well, firstly, if it's a boy I am one to one with, I think, 'ok what's kicked him off?' or 'why is he doing it?' You know something has started him off…" P2, lines 370-372.*

> *"…you need to think about at what point did this behaviour start to change. Is there a trigger? Did something happen that might not necessarily be obvious? … with the children who come to have bad behaviour, they don't have the vocabulary to actually voice what the problem is, so they act it out instead." P1, lines 432-437*

This theme is distinct from the previous theme of 'understanding the needs of the child and linking these to the wider context', as the one above is related to family life and early experiences. In contrast, this theme of behaviour

analysis is interested in the behaviour demonstrated by the child and what the child is trying to achieve from this. It has an understanding that behaviour is a form of communication, and as NGPs their role is to decipher what the child is trying to communicate.

> *"I think, to work here is having that heart to think, 'ok the problems I am seeing aren't the actual problems.' The problems are the core stuff. What's going on inside." P7, lines 290-291.*

Theme 3.5: Qualities staff required to support the overarching understanding and approach to children in NG settings

This theme centres on the understanding of the type of person that could deal with and engage with typically disruptive or disengaged children and young people. There was a wide consensus in the data that NGPs all needed particular skills for the intervention to be successful. Not only were skills necessary, but personal qualities that cannot be taught were identified as integral to the success of a group.

This theme categorises what participants felt were necessary personal qualities required for NGPs. A repeated feature of the data here was a natural desire to like children and appreciate engagement with the children in the setting. This theme is supported through two sub-themes: confidence to use multiple strategies, professional judgement and resilience; personal characteristics of staff.

Sub-theme 3.5.1: Confidence to use multiple strategies, professional judgement and resilience

This theme identifies the use of multiple strategies, and staff having the confidence to acknowledge when one strategy was not working and trying a new one.

> *"You really aren't coping; let's just try something new here. Let's change tack. Let's go more positive routes and do something new." P7, lines 375-376.*

This requires a sense of confidence in your ability and a bank of strategies to try, adapt or build on.

> *"We'll try a few different activities and see what happened … see whether it worked, see what the problems were. Sometimes it would be a dynamic problem with other children or another child. Sometimes it would just be, 'this is boring and I don't want to do this'. So I think that was quite ad hoc I think." P8, lines 255-258.*

> *"No matter how many strategies, you have never got the whole answer; you have never got an answer for every single child. You learn that along the way. And if it works for him, it won't work for her, and it might not today … I think you have to take the whole big picture." P9, lines 349-352.*

There was also a sense of professional resilience needed to continue with trying these strategies, and to respond to the negative behaviours staff can be exposed to.

> *"Even our children that sometimes say awful things to us or be aggressive with us, I kind of know that they know that we really love and we are really rooting for them." P7, lines 139-140.*

This theme draws together the staff's required ability to manage a multifaceted approach and maintain professional boundaries in an emotionally challenging role. Staff need to hold professional resilience due to the demographic of the children in the setting and the continuous re-assessment of child, need and progress.

Sub-theme 3.5.2: Personal characteristics of staff

All participants were asked: if they could have a new member of staff, what that member of staff needed to possess. There was no noted desire for qualifications or experience as such, but a list of personal characteristics became apparent. These characteristics were initially those related to working with children in general.

"…you have got to be interested in the children. Foremost, the children are there for you to look after, to be with, to emotionally, socially develop them as children." P4, lines 218-219.

"Understanding the children I guess, having patience, and wanting them to be happy …" P6, lines 419-420.

"Like, the love for children and the desire to help and all that; erm, and you kind of have to be very secure in yourself, of who you are as a grown up and as a practitioner." P5, lines 352-354.

A key aspect of these characters was patience. All participants felt that patience was a big factor in this environment.

"I think patience is a must." P6, line 185.

Throughout the interviews, staff demonstrated empathy. Although not every participant named the skill, it *was* demonstrated. Participant 2 for example, when speaking about relaxation and asking a child to shut their eyes, said:

"…you don't know what goes on in these children's heads, and they don't like shutting their eyes. To lay down and shut their eyes, it would terrify some of them so just put your hands there." P2, lines 294-296.

"You may never know what is going on; you may never find out, you know. But I always think, 'if I had to look back, at least I had that haven when it was really bad,' you know, and or it could be that I just couldn't manage class, it could be something simple. That coming in every day to do something that I found too difficult to do, even the differentiated work was too difficult to do, it's somewhere where I could just breathe, where I can relax, because whatever I am given in the focused activity, I am never not going to be able to do it." P3, line 456-462.

It was also noted that staff need to be secure within themselves as they are faced with challenging situations; they are key adult figures central to a number of vulnerable children's lives. Whilst there were many characteristics mentioned, the three main points from the analysis were patience, liking children and security within themselves.

4.6 Core theme 4: Difficulty evidencing impact or outcomes

Difficulty evidencing impact/ outcome

This core theme consists of a single core theme, depicting the difficulty of evidencing impact and outcomes in a NG setting. The analysis of data presented the fact that given the procedures and flexibility used constantly throughout the day, measuring and recording impact was difficult. Whilst most NGPs had daily records and regular discussions with each other regarding development and progress, the appeared to be a lack of formal data recorded to evidence such claims.

Given the details and complexities discussed, there was an evident difficulty in measuring the impact of the interventions; furthermore, there is difficulty in attributing the impact to one specific thing when the holistic environment can coincide with many other interventions.

> *"We want to show the progress of the children, but we are looking at their social and emotional progress more … to be able for them to be able to access and then show their academic progress because you can't have one without the other. They need to be able to cope with maybe not knowing how to do something, and have those strategies to cope and then be able to see and listen and take the information in, and be able to progress academically." P6, lines 225-230.*

> *"I suppose what you want to do is build that trust that becomes transferrable so that they learn to be able to trust other people. But in this situation, it's kind of like we were building up, maybe it's like damage limitation to keep them as comfortable and as safe and as happy as they can be in this year before they go." P8, lines 141-144.*

The analysis suggested that a key aspect of the role of a NGP was to notice things. This was to notice how the child was, to read situations, to notice progress, to notice that the child was smiling more or approached tasks differently. This links with observable changes, as noticing these small steps in

a daily environment is difficult but key to recognising the impact the intervention is having.

Participant 3 was talking about a young boy who did 'no work' in class and did not care what the consequences were of that; however, in NG she had taken some photographs recently and put a few together, noticing that:

> *"That little boy I just showed you - if you look, [he is] doing his work. He had done nothing, absolutely nothing and whatever she [class teacher] did - detention - didn't matter, he didn't care. But these are, right, ok, finishing Maths and English work, you know." P3, lines 232-235.*

This 'noticing' was also related to the ability to notice and pick up on behaviour changes and progress.

> "We noticed when they come to us, people say they are very angry. Anger was a big thing in the very beginning; everyone was anger, anger, anger. But actually, when you unpick it, you look at it, a lot of the children have got very low self-esteem and we have gone away from that anger and gone to the self-esteem side to try and see if … they are happy within themselves. Are they going to have angry outbursts? Not as much." P4, lines 144-149.

The notion that observable behaviour change is the desired outcome is difficult to standardise or evidence. It also relies on a person to actually observe it. Moving to the social and emotional impact of the intervention also proves difficult.

> *"That goes to the whole evidential requirement of interventions, and to what extent would you have to acknowledge a deeper or new level of trust with a new partner or with a new friend. Would that be measured? Is that something we measure in the real world? No. So maybe that is just a requirement of the intervention that we measure it. I can't see that you can … I haven't got a 'trust-ometer'. I haven't got a 'love-ometer'. I haven't got a 'realiability-ometer' and nor do the kids, do they?" P8, lines 155-160.*

Not only is observable behaviour change seen as a subjective measure, it is difficult to 'count' in the first place, let alone decide what has impacted it and

by how much. This core theme is central to the success of NGs; their priority of process focussed teaching and learning, and their need to provide evidence regarding something that is notoriously difficult to record or measure.

Core theme 5: Balance of consistency and flexibility

Balancing
routine vs
flexibility
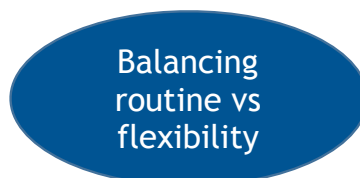
There was a conflicting theme about providing consistency yet entangling that with flexibility to allow individual responses.

> *"Part of it was obviously very attention-seeking behaviour and part of what he wanted was one-to-one attention from an adult. And sometimes he would get that, which is probably not what he needed, but in fact he kind of needed it as well. So it was kind of, in that sense, your classic behaviour management and the nurture requirements of the child are completely at odds with each other." P8, lines 106-110.*

> *"There's no knowing how long that can take sometimes. A child can just sit down at the table, be ready in 2 minutes, and the next could be an hour outside and then an hour. So it just depends on what's happened, so very much changeable. Different child, different day, different circumstance." P6, lines 124-127.*

Another balance was that of the acknowledgement of the language difficulties present, and the need to support a child's language in their own individual way.

> *"You have to have a bit of an idea. It's just a fine balance because you've got to be authoritative but you've got to be flexible because every day is a different day." P6, lines 192-193.*

> *"I think we, we kind of ask, again we are very open and … again you have to find a balance of kind of not putting words in their mouth, but also providing the words for them, in the instances that … because sometimes they can't articulate; they can't put words into what has happened, into how they are feeling. So yeah, you kind of need to find that fine balance there." P5, lines 264-268.*

4.8 Chapter summary

This research intended to explore how Nurture Group Practitioners deliver the social and emotional curriculum. The findings have demonstrated that there are several layers of understanding of what is taught and how, particularly around relationships, depicting the difficulties in evidencing these internalised processes. The thematic analysis highlighted the importance of processes in the teaching of these skills and the priority of long lasting behaviour change, which is observable and difficult to measure. Staff were aware of the needs of the children and had an underlying understanding of child development and how their children's deficits impacted on their learning. The following chapter will discuss these findings in further detail and will aim to link these to current research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter will explore and expand upon the findings reported in Chapter Four using the research questions set out for this research. The findings will be compared and contrasted with the existing literature examined in Chapter Two and in the national context of social and emotional wellbeing in schools. The implications of these findings will be discussed in relation to school settings and for Educational Psychology. The researcher will then consider the limitations of the research and the implications for future research. Self-reflection of the process undertaken to complete the research and learning considerations will be discussed. Conclusions will then be drawn from the research, connecting the research questions, findings and implications.

5.2 Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to identify ways in which Nurture Group Practitioners delivered their social and emotional curriculum. Six subquestions were designed to gather this information:

1. What does the curriculum consist of?
2. What is the rationale for the approach, including the theoretical underpinnings?
3. How is it delivered?
4. What are the skills required for the NG practitioner to effectively deliver the curriculum?
5. How is it different from the mainstream approach (in their view)?
6. How is the child's development and progress measured?

5.2.1 Subquestion One: What does the curriculum consist of?

The analysis highlighted the complexities of what was planned and taught in NG settings. The research demonstrated a necessity of individualised curriculums for each child and the difficulties in measuring targeted attributes. The findings suggested that the targets set for the children are small and defined, generally including the child's perceptions of what they feel the target should be.

Throughout the research process, the researchers' views evolved regarding whether SEW was experienced or taught. With positive and negative experiences moulding a child's self-concept, the researcher initially felt that manipulating positive experiences would hold enough impact to compensate for previous negative experiences. However, the researcher found that, through analysis of the data, these positive experiences needed to be structured and systematic. The child's response to these had to be modelled and supported to allow appropriate regulation and impact to take place. Therefore the researcher felt that learning SEW was a taught aspect of the child's education.

Individual

The curriculum was difficult to define due the constantly changing nature of the targets and the individualisation necessary for each child. In exploring what the curriculum contained, the researcher asked about what kind of things were taught and learned in NGs. These seemed to be very early skills that had not developed, all-round social and emotional intelligence, and wellbeing. This would suggest that the curriculum is not only very person-centred and individual, but also holistic and generalisable to a multitude of wider contexts. The curriculum appeared to be different for each child that entered the setting, with common elements and some similarities in the children's overarching needs, although these were displayed differently with each child. There was, however, a common framework that was used to support each individual need.

The curriculum not only included teaching the skills required in a classroom to engage with learning (such as focus, attention and waiting) but also inter-personal skills and intra-personal skills, as shown in the thematic map with a core theme dedicated to this. The teaching includes allowing the child to feel safe and secure, not only with other adults and peers but with themselves as a person. As noted in the literature review, Ainsworth, Bell and Stanton (1971) suggested that interactions with others allows the child to establish his or herself as a distinct individual.

The researcher feels that identifying themselves as a distinct individual was further developed through the child's understanding of the *impact* and *influence* they can have through being an individual, learning the complexities of relationships, initially the child's relationship with themselves, and then with reference to the people surrounding them. These skills are key to moving forward with development and becoming a contributing member of society.

Intra-personal skills

Intra-personal skills allow a child to draw on effective thought processes and form mental habits to understand and manage their own emotions. This involves recognition of triggers for specific emotions, assessment of likely reactions and preparation of appropriate responses. Through the data analysis, the researcher identified three sub-themes for this area: engagement with learning, emotional regulation, and self-confidence/self-esteem. It was felt that these three internal processes were monitored through observable behaviour changes but were difficult to measure.

The curriculum also addressed self-esteem and self-confidence. Geddes (2006) found that children who had not had a supportive attachment during early childhood had lower self-esteem. This theme was identified and addressed in NG settings. Low self-esteem was also felt to be an underlying factor in many behavioural outbursts, being the basis of challenges between the children. Geddes (2006) also noted the apparent lack of trust in others from the children NGs support. This lack of trust is also the object of teaching, using

84

consistent processes and investing in the relationship over time helps nurture this skill.

Gross (1998) stated that emotional regulation "refers to the processes by which individuals influence which emotion they have, when they have them and how they experience and express these emotions" (p.275). Emotional regulation is not simply a matter of stopping distress or not expressing emotion. It involves many kinds of adjustments to promote the child's adaption to life circumstances, both in the immediate and future situations. Gross (1998) states that there are five stages of the emotion regulatory processes:

1. Situation selection
2. Situation modification
3. Attention deployment
4. Cognitive change
5. Response modulation

Research suggests that strategies used in emotional regulation, such as self-control and coping strategies are associated with attainment and progress (Duckworth et al., 2011), increased physical health and a reduction in symptoms of stress and depression (Moffitt et al., 2011). Gutman and Schoon's (2013) review on non-cognitive skills found that emotional regulation skills, such as coping strategies and self-control are malleable and can be taught and developed, and detrimental strategies (wishful thinking, worry, ignorance) can be reduced. While these skills can be taught, Piquero et al. (2010) found that it is much more difficult to improve skills such as self-control after the age of 10. The skills can still be influenced but there appears to be a critical period where they are developed most effectively. Relating this to children in a NG setting, it is possible that attachment difficulties have an impact on these skills. Cole, Michel and Teti (1994) stated that infants follow the emotional lead of their mother in face-to-face interactions. Children who attend NGs may have, for various reasons, been denied these opportunities through inadequate responsiveness to their early emotional communication and missed this developmental stage of learning emotional regulation. Gross (1998) also noted that there was a risk of going too far one way or the other on emotional

regulation; there needs to be a balance between listening to and silencing emotions. This could possibly relate to the different attachment styles and how these typically present in children (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Emotional regulation (Cole, Michel, & Teti, 1994) was a key aspect of what was being taught throughout NGs. NGPs taught children how to identify their emotions, how to respond to them and how to manage when emotions become overwhelming. They supported the children to become aware of their interpretation of situations and emotions, and their own behaviour patterns. This led to solution-focussed (De Shazer, 1985) discussions regarding 'what would happen differently next time'. This broke the negative cycles the children had become stuck in and aided them in developing their own internal model.

As reported in sub-theme 2.1.1, the children's skills in engaging with the classroom or group environment also contributed to the content of the curriculum. For a child to be successful in an educational setting, they need certain skills to be able to access this. These skills are typically cultivated in the early years of development, but as established earlier, children in NGs generally have gaps in these areas. Looking at these early skills that support children in learning, the field of Applied Behavioural Analysis (Cooper, Heron & Heward, 2006) uses the term 'learning to learn skills' (Webster, 2015). These are a set of what are considered prerequisite skills needed before learning effectively can take place, as outlined in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 - Learning to Learn Skills (Webster, 2015)

Learning to learn skills:	
1	Waiting
2	Sitting
3	Attending to others
4	Changes response based on prompts
5	Following instructions
6	Following group or choral instructions

It appears these behaviours are akin to the needs displayed in the NG setting. If a child cannot wait, then they will not be able to function successfully in a group of 30 children. The analysis had direct examples of the children not being able to 'sit' in the classroom, listen to the teacher or follow instructions.

Inter-personal skills:

Klein, DeRouin and Salas (2006) suggest that inter-personal skills are the skills that support interactions using complex perceptual and cognitive processes, a variety of exchanges (both verbal and non-verbal), social roles, expectations and motivations. Inter-personal skills require the child to have effective communication, empathy, active listening and cultural competence (Skinner, Hyde, McPherson & Simpson, 2016). Given the complexity of social situations, problem-solving skills are required to navigate these and utilise the required responses.

Vlachou and Stavroussi (2016) identify four phases to developing these skills in children; initial assessment of problem solving skills, familiarisation with social problem-solving situations, teaching the social problem-solving steps and facilitating the process of choice making. When these skills are mastered, the child is able to effectively engage in and successfully understand social situations. Good interpersonal skills improve a child's ability to understand appropriate self-behaviour, cope with challenging behaviours, respond appropriately to stress and ambiguity, structure their own social interactions and navigate shared responsibility (Lindsey & Rice, 2015).

To teach these skills effectively, research suggests that they need to be directly targeted, through systematic and structured approaches (Anderson & Kazantzis, 2008) throughout a variety of social settings, both in and out of school (Vlachou & Stavroussi, 2016). Skinner, Hyde, McPherson and Simpson (2016) found small group learning, reflection and feedback were integral to children being able to develop these skills. This can relate directly to the NG environment and the way in which the curriculum is delivered.

Inter-personal skills are seen as those skills required to interact with others on a one-to-one basis and in a group setting. Inter-personal skills allow a child to successfully navigate a shared understanding and adapt their behaviours accordingly. This research identified three key aspects in this area: co-construction, communication and group interactions.

In a NG setting, children and staff work collaboratively to co-construct a shared understanding of the world. An example of this could be regarding meal-time rules and the consequences for abiding by or breaking the rules. A child who is involved in making the rules and consequences is more likely to observe them (DeVries & Zan, 2003). DeVries and Zan (2003) suggest that rule making is part of the overall environment and approach to the class, adding to mutual respect, with a goal of increasing the child's moral and intellectual development. This is heavily influenced by Piaget's work (1936), wherein he suggested that when adult-child relationships interacted with morality, where both were valued, it developed optimal moral and intellectual development for the child. Furthermore, this research concluded that staff actively seek the children's opinions and adapt what they are doing to facilitate the child's views. Gersch, Pratt, Nolan & Hooper (1996) highlighted the importance and benefits of listening to children and the increased engagement this creates. There is a strong evidence base regarding the efficacy of listening to children and hearing their views.

Relationships are key to feeling a sense of connection and belonging (Geddes 2006). The relationship with a key adult in an educational setting and with peers impacts on a child's ability to engage in meaningful learning experiences (Adderley, Hope, Hughes, Jones, Messiou & Shaw, 2015). NG ensure the secure relationship is developed and maintained, allowing children to feel secure and heard. Children then contribute to their environment, the rules, the expectations and so forth. Adderley et al. (2015) concluded that inclusion was not a static position but a 'dynamic process' (p.108) happening throughout relationships and environments.

Recent legislation has given further importance and weight to the voice of the child. There is a clear desire for more person-centred approaches

throughout the educational systems and this is reflected in legislation. The Children and Families Act (2014) and specifically the SEND Code of Practice (2014) has increased the expectations of including the child and family in the decision making process from the start and continually throughout the process.

The staff led in the teaching of co-construction which enabled the child to contribute and hear other people's views. This mediation was offered throughout the day and children were therefore taught to generalise their skills from the beginning. This generalisability appeared to be supported by the constant nature of the curriculum, with all targets being addressed in all situations, interlaced throughout all activities. This co-construction allowed the child to navigate social situation and context at a level they were unable to before.

Communication was referenced many times and in various contexts in the data, and is supported with underlying theories of interpersonal skills in general. It is relevant to the curriculum as the children were taught how to communicate, both expressively and receptively. They were taught how to say what they need to by being provided with language skills matched to their developmental level. They were also taught about non-verbal communication, how to recognise it in themselves and those around them. This included learning what facial expressions may mean or how to use their skills to achieve positive communication. Providing the language skills at a developmentally appropriate level and gradually building up the language demands of the classroom environment (for example, the length and complexity of instructions) supports the child.

Recognising behaviour as a form of communication increases understanding from the NG practitioner and was central in the NGPs approach to their teaching style. The idea of 'figuring out' the problem behind the behaviour was prominent in the data, and so too was the sense of privilege NGPs held regarding being in the position that enabled them to do this. The behaviourist approach supports this understanding of behaviour having a function and a message (Heneker, 2005). Staff have the skills required to decode this and analyse the purpose of the behaviour, moving forward with

ways of manipulating these undesirable behaviours to more appropriate and functional ones.

Children were taught how to get along with other people, how to respond to others' actions and how to be inclusive and supportive of others. Their relationships with other adults and peers were modelled and monitored with intervention where necessary. These skills were easier to develop in the smaller group settings and were maintained after the children left the NG. There appeared to be a sense of generalisability of these relationships back in the classroom once the child had mastered the intra-personal skills. The analysis noted that NGPs taught the child to feel safe, not only providing the safety, but modelling how to respond to that. This focus on relationships supports the curriculum content and is again developed through all the activities presented in the NG environment.

Inter- and Intra-: linear or hierarchical skills?

Through the analysis of the data, the researcher found that once the intra-personal skills had progressed, there was scope to develop the inter-personal skills, along with academic progress. It could be suggested that the intra-personal skills are a prerequisite skill needed to develop the inter-personal ones. This chronological requirement of what type of skill is mastered first would be supported by Maslow's hierarchy of need. Lucas, Insley and Buckland (2006) found that children tended to work and play solitarily in the first instance, then as they had time to work through their needs, they were able to work more collaboratively. This suggests that before the child can progress in further skills, the foundation skills need to be consolidated first. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that the curriculum is constant; the children were always learning and the staff were always focusing on some aspect of targeted teaching, taking all opportunities to develop these skills as they arise. The curriculum consisted of lived experiences and was a practical application of skills. This would suggest that learning with an all-encompassing curriculum would imitate the natural learning environment more substantially and that the relationships between skills acquired are more complex.

Therefore, while individual for each child, the analysis depicted the same curriculum areas being addressed across the NGs. These common elements from collected data are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2   Summary of curriculum areas and content.

Curriculum area:	Content:
Intra-personal skills	engagement with learning
	emotional regulation
	confidence and esteem
Inter-personal skills	communication
	group interaction
Learning to learn skills	attention and listening
	approach to learning

The Boxall Profile is commonly used and was referred to in the data as a tool to support the assessment of the children in NG settings. The Boxall Profile looks at behaviours, and aims to provide a framework for precise assessment of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Boxall, 2002). This does contain a list of behaviours, and breaks them down into helpful categories, as summarised in Appendix H. These curriculum themes could map to the Boxall Profile areas as demonstrated in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 - Summary of curriculum areas cross referenced with Boxall Profile categories.

Curriculum area:	Content:	Boxall Areas
Intra-personal skills	engagement with learning	D, Q, V
	emotional regulation	I, T,
	confidence and esteem	F, J, R, U, W,X
Inter-personal skills	communication	
	group interaction	E, H, I, S, Y, Z
Learning to learn skills	attention and listening	A, B

Curriculum area:	Content:	Boxall Areas
	approach to learning	C, D, G,

One area from the Boxall Profile did not correspond easily with this research. Section G, 'is biddable and accepts restraints' may correspond with the child's approach to learning; alternatively, it may refer to the emotional regulation needed in reparation of situations. In the raw data there were references to 'being held'. This was discussed in the context of the staff's ability to maintain relationships, being non-judgemental, and able to separate the behaviour from the child.

Furthermore, the theme of 'communication' does not appear to be covered in the Boxall Profile. This was a dominant skill that was targeted throughout the NG settings. Potentially, all of the Boxall Profile areas necessitate the child to be able to communicate the skill either verbally or non-verbally (through their observable behaviours and responses).

This comparable process also highlighted that the skills needed for the NGP are very similar to those taught in NGs. The themes of empathy, linking of situations, positive self-esteem and investment over time can be mapped onto the Boxall Profile for skills that the children need. This would further support the prolific use of 'modelling' as a strategy, as the children can see and experience what is expected and emulate this in their own behaviours.

5.2.2 Subquestion Two: What is the rationale for the approach, including the theoretical underpinnings?

Behaviourist versus nurture, conflicting accounts?

In the analysis there was a clear and defined role for behaviourist approaches (Skinner, 1976) in a NG setting. There was an overwhelming understanding from staff regarding behaviour as a communication tool (Ivanov & Werner, 2010). This theme allowed the staff a greater empathy towards the

children, understanding that they are not 'being naughty'; they are trying to tell you something. Staff also felt it was their role to figure this out, and they felt privileged to be trusted (by the child) to do so. These results support the current behaviourist theories (Skinner 1976); however, there was also a theme around 'balance'. This proved difficult for the NGPs to control two conflicting ideas in NGs. For example, there was a balance between being consistent through modelling repeated consequences, yet also allowing for individual circumstances. A key to a successful NG is the structured approach, predictable nature, clear expectations and transparent consequences. There was a need to adapt responses, necessary for each child, time, situation etc. A participant spoke about an example of a child who was regressing in their skills one day, the NGP felt it was in response to the child's mother being in hospital. In these circumstances, the staff adapted the consequences to support the child more and take this into account.

Is this a conflicting theoretical base from behaviourist to nurture? Some may argue that this is so, because to nurture you need to acknowledge all behaviours and have a trusting maintained relationship. If these parameters around consistency are challenged, is this detrimental to the NG approach? This research would suggest that in one way this flexibility of the NGPs' responses provides support to the children. Once the children have learned and accepted the 'circle of safety', knowing the adult as "bigger, stronger, wiser and kind" (Marvin, Cooper, Hoffman & Powell, 2002), they can trust in the adults' decisions even if they differ from previous examples. NGPs appear to provide a framework for the children but they are flexible in their application of this to adapt to what would be most supportive given the individual circumstances. Children could potentially be able to understand over time why the consequences or actions may differ in their degree of severity.

Some staff, particularly those not involved in NGs, may see this as a lack of consequences. This conflicted with the NGPs' account, as some NG staff reported that they felt the NG environment was much more strict than that of mainstream (MS). This could be due to the very clear boundaries and transparent expectations. The expectations are more visible and the children have more scope to understand them as they are co-constructed, visibly

presented, regularly referred to, and enforced. There are clear consequences that are framed in a repetitive and predictable environment so the child understands the risks and can make informed choices with regard to their behaviour.

Attachment theory

Bowlby's attachment theory is widely drawn upon in relation to NG settings. If a child has had a loving and secure attachment with a continuous and constant primary caregiver, an internal working model is argued to be 'securely attached'. The aim of a NG is to provide a 'safe base' associated within school that enables that security to be used as the foundation to the child's development of their internal working model. The set-up of a NG is organised in a conducive manner to easily establish this safe base, including soft furnishings, home corners, and a table at which to share food.

Shaver and McClatchey (2013) reported that skills developed through the attachment process included calming, attainment and regulation of emotion. The current research supported this, as the process of teaching a child to have a secure attachment to adults and the educational setting allows these skills to be targeted.

Nurture

The findings and themes from this research can be easily plotted against the six principles of nurture (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006). Due to the inductive nature of the study, the researcher did not wish to identify these principles at an earlier stage due to the influence this may have had on the analytic process and the interpretation of data.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing.

4. Language is a vital means of communication.
5. All behaviour is communication.
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

(Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006)

The current study does support these notions and has evidenced their presence in the NGs that participated in the research. Throughout the themes from the data, all of the above Principles of Nurture are prevalent and are integral to the success of the NG.

Lucas, et al. (2006) suggested that the nurture (and nurturing) curriculum cover three main topics:

1. Personal, social and emotional development.
2. Communication and language.
3. Motor development and coordination.

Whilst there is evidence to support the first two broad areas, there is little evidence in the current findings to suggest a focus on motor development and coordination. Many of the strategies used were suggestive of a multi-sensory approach and were integrated with gross motor activities; little was mentioned in the way of their coordination. Personal, social and emotional development is a very broad topic, and although a familiar phrase for teaching staff currently, it is not very supportive in understanding exactly what is targeted, nor how. Communication and language were found to be a high priority in the current research, and ways of addressing these were found. The current findings seem to unpick the terminology used and be more descriptive in what is taught to children in NG settings. This could be due to the focus of the current study being on the social and emotional curriculum and not the whole curriculum; however, the researcher feels that if this was a priority for NGPs, it would have been expressed at various points in the interview, for example, when asked about what children learn at NG or what NGs target.

<u>5.2.3 Subquestion Three: How is it delivered?</u>

"No matter how full a reservoir of maxims one may possess, and no matter how good one's sentiments may be, if one has not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to act, one's character may remain entirely unaffected for the better." William James (1843-1910)

The curriculum was found to be delivered using a dynamic approach, utilising skilled practitioners and benefitting from investment over time. There was a priority on processes of learning but not on task orientated practice. There were clear and transparent boundaries and expectations in all areas of the curriculum and how it was delivered. The use of modelling and visual supports were dominant, using a multi-sensory approach to all tasks. The curriculum was individualised for each specific child and their needs. All teaching materials and language were matched to the developmental level of the child, irrespective of their chronological age. All of this was completed alongside the development of secure relationships where behaviour is separated from the child and the trust and mutual respect in the relationship is not at risk.

Anchored Relationships

The literature review suggested that the curriculum needed to be addressed in a way that allowed the child to recognise the undesirable nature of their behaviour without feeling personally rejected. This would support the clear objectives of teaching, but with the added benefit of the attachments formed with staff being protected. The evidence from this research supports that this is happening frequently and also tracks how this is done. Aspects that contribute to this include NGPs addressing any challenges calmly, being able to move on from the undesirable action, and maintaining trust that the relationship is still positive. The child continues to feel a sense of belonging, and the consequences of any undesirable behaviours are dealt with in a concrete manner, externally from the relationship. Reparation to relationships, including peer relationships, are modelled and discussed collaboratively. Thus the child

can still feel part of the group, yet still acknowledging the wrong doing, developing trust and maintaining friendships.   Lucas et al. (2006) found that a key feature of NGPs' relationships with the children was based on a premise of non-judgmental responses. This was identified in one of the themes and would also be appropriate to depict one of the skills required for NGPs.

Wider context

Doyle (2003) felt that the whole school had a responsibility to alter the negative spiral specific children became part of. In the analysis this was not a prominent theme. It could be argued that instead of a whole school approach in this example, it was more about the continuous approach. Having a 'Nurturing School' would support the continuity of the relationships and expectations. Obviously, if this was done as a whole school, this would suggest greater or faster effectiveness, but there is little research to provide evidence for this. Doyle further suggested that a way of altering the negative spiral as a school was to constantly model positive interactions throughout the day. The analysis for this research would support this, as modelling was a large and dominant theme with an indirect relationship to the constant nature of the work carried out.

Lucas et al. (2006) noted that NGPs facilitate discussions regarding out of school topics and try to include parents in their processes. The researcher feels that the current practice goes beyond this, and NGPs are required to link their understanding, situations and the child's responses to many more contexts. The constant and dynamic approach allows the NGP to facilitate linking all the complex systems that contribute to a child's learning and education. This is particularly pertinent with children in a social care setting.

Priority of Processes

In the literature review, it was noted that Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) highlighted a specific style and process of teaching demonstrated by NGPs.

They suggested that staff aimed for a transactional style as opposed to a directional style of teaching. It would be appropriate to relate this to the theme of process-focussed priorities, due to the similarities of these findings. This approach is more about exploring options, choices and consequences in relation to all tasks, in contrast to trying to get a child to state a correct answer or give a particular specified outcome. Not only does this help the child to understand their own thought processes, enabling them to apply this process to other situations (helping with overall generalisation), but it also teaches the children to reason and look for an answer that makes sense. This allows children more flexibility of thought, autonomy, confidence and sense of feeling valued. This co-construction is also highlighted by Cooper and Tiknaz (2005), who stated that focus should be on a process of 'joint exploration and negotiation' (p. 215).

In NGs, the outcomes could be seen as a secondary byproduct to the process in which they originated. The process-focused approach is much more fluid and requires two engaged stakeholders. Whilst a 'place mat' at the table could be seen as an art objective, more value is actually within the presentation and process of the task, the purpose and meaning behind having a placemat. the purpose and value is about the meaning behind it. The placemat is introduced in a certain way, explaining what it represents; it enables the formation of group identity and a sense of belonging (and acceptance) for a child that has previously been excluded from social aspects. It is not about getting the right answer or a grade on a piece of work, it is about the learning behind the piece of work. The application of theory, the way it is found out, the support and encouragement used, fosters a positive sense of self as a learner.

The findings suggest that the curriculum is embedded in the processes it generates. The approach taken by the staff to focus on the processes of learning, addressing issues as they arise and matching the child's developmental stage and acquisition rate, all pull together to enhance the learning environment. The contribution of all aspects of learning, teaching and generalisation work in harmony and are utilised at every opportunity.

Lucas et al. (2006) suggested that processes are integral to forming and maintaining relationships in the nurturing environment and for the child to establish a sense of self. These processes take time, space and resources to ensure they are effective. The authors reported that generally it was felt that the processes and organisation of a NG acted as the curriculum overall.

The acknowledgement of learning being a process allows staff to focus on the next incremental step for each individual child. By definition a process requires a series of actions or steps to achieve an outcome. In the NG setting each step is thought through and planned to enhance the overall experience and learning of the child. The process of learning skills in mathematics is not about remembering key facts, but the underlying concepts that support mathematical knowledge. The same is true of relationships and social and emotional wellbeing.

Dynamic approach

The research suggests that the curriculum is delivered using a more dynamic approach to that typically found in classrooms. Dynamic assessments appear informal in nature and continuous throughout the school day in the NG setting. Dynamic assessment is driven by the Vygotskian (1978) sociocultural theory of learning. It is an approach that aims to understand individual differences and their implications on learning/teaching. It combines intervention, teaching, assessment and learning within one process (Lidz & Gindis, 2003). The researcher suggests that NG practitioners identify the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in each child and mediates the learning to support the child to be as independent as possible in moving to the next level of the ZPD. The scaffolding supporting each child's learning needs to be individually considered. The dynamic approach is also complementary to the process-focussed directive explored above.

With regard to specific techniques, the literature suggested that NGs have a significant emphasis on the importance of the relationships between the child and the adult, helping the child to develop a sense of self. The role of the

NG is to encourage the engagement of pupils in a developmentally appropriate curriculum whilst also recognising the individual's needs to experience positive interactions, successful tasks and increased self-esteem. The analysis provided a platform not only to support these aims but also to identify how this was achieved.

The approach used by the NGPs was one of flexibility that was adapted through professional judgement, giving more freedom to the NGPs to be receptive to the circumstances and responsive to the child's specific needs at a particular time. Plans were apparent but so too was the bank of resources the NGP could draw from to change and react fluidly to the challenges of the day. Flexibility can, however, be a risk that challenges the predictable and certain nature of the child's environment. It could appear to undermine consistency and lead to unfair outcomes. It adds a subjective element to situations that children can find difficult to understand or share. This is where the skills of the practitioner are sought. The practitioner uses their professional judgement, their bank of strategies and their knowledge of the child to react accordingly. The necessity to test these boundaries and find the most supportive and appropriate response to the child requires confidence, experience and attunement.

Collins, Carson and Collins (2016) state that professional judgement is knowing what needs to be done, why it should be done and how to do it, particularly in response to multiple and sometimes conflicting demands. Collins et al. (2016) explain that professional judgement involves a combination of many processes, including reflection, coaching and feedback. Metacognitive skills are central to professional judgement as these aid the development of consolidated learning, reflection and choice of response. Much like NGs, there is a solid evidence base supporting professional judgement and situational demands, and very limited research directed towards how these skills are applied and utilised.

The necessity to address the emotional aspects throughout the day during all learning experiences is supported by neuropsychology. Goswami (2008) stated that "cumulative emotional experience must also play a role in the

efficiency of learning"(p.393). This is because learning is social, and information is processed through parts of the brain that process emotional information. These inherent connections between learning and emotional experiences interfere with a child's learning ability. "This suggests that models of classroom learning must incorporate the emotions in order to better understand the behaviour of learners" (p.393). This is evident in the NG environment, and therefore, as learning integrates these two mechanical aspects of the brain, teaching in a manner that supports both aspects of learning at the same time seems a supportive and logical approach. Furthermore, Goswami suggests that emotional information is not only integrated with cognitive learning but actually prioritised by the brain (due to historic survival instincts) and thus when experiences are aversive, the ability to learn and process information is inhibited.

The research also suggests that once the relationship is secure, the child can trust in the adult to navigate the 'grey areas' where flexibility is necessary. Also, at these times, flexibility is encountered to support the child for their benefit, particularly at times of distress. This could be considered as flexibility within a consistent framework.

Communication and praise

Bani (2011) reported on the use of non-verbal praise, noting the higher frequency in NGPs' use of specific verbal praise compared to non-verbal or nonspecific praise. Specific verbal praise provides a tool for the NGP to communicate an acknowledgment of a discrete behaviour and to share this information. Communication may be most effective through specific verbal praise to label the detail of the behaviour demonstrated. Bani noted that approximately two thirds of children did not respond (visibly) to nonspecific verbal praise, and given some of the learning and processing difficulties these children may have, the clear and precise message specific verbal praise delivers would be more supportive. A criticism here is regarding the typical language difficulties of children in these settings that may inhibit the

101

effectiveness of verbal praise; however, the researcher feels that if the NGP kept their language simple then specific verbal praise may be highly effective.

Colwell and O'Conner (2003) noted that NG practitioners used a significantly higher proportion of positive non-verbal behaviour, conveying feelings of warmth and acceptance amongst the children. While the current research project did not look specifically at nonverbal behaviour, the data does suggest that NGPs used many ways to emanate feelings of warmth and acceptance. This was achieved through their whole demeanour, approach and understanding of the child. It was also noted that NGPs had secure relationships with the children, which would enable them to acknowledge the desired behaviour non-verbally as they would have a higher level of understanding about what would be the most significant and effective form of praise for the child.

Visual support and multi sensory learning

Another common strategy used to deliver the curriculum is the use of visual supports. Research suggests that the co-existence of communication difficulties in children with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties ranges between 55% to 100% (Heneker, 2005). These language difficulties can be exacerbated in times of stress and strategies to support these can considerably deplete with stress. Therefore, the children may respond well to visual supports; this can aid in their internal thinking processes and give a sense of independence and achievement. In identifying the ZPD, the least invasive strategies used by NGP to support a child could often be non-verbal. This could be the use of visual supports, gestures, facial expressions etcetera. Visual supports could be anything from a writing frame (Lewis & Wray, 1997) to a classroom wall display.

NGPs seem to have a natural starting point with any activity that is practical and multi-sensory. Multi-sensory learning is defined as using all modalities of learning (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic), sometimes at the same time (DfES, 2004) and has been shown to be more effective for learning

due to being better at approximating natural (not uni-sensory) environments (Shams & Seitz, 2008). Relating this theory to the practical lessons in NGs, this approach would also complement the dynamic, process-focussed and individual approach, using resources creatively, utilising recent evidence to support these theoretical standpoints.

These ideas seem to reflect the Principles of Learning from Cognitive Neuroscience, as depicted in Table 5.4 (Goswami, 2008). This highlights the parts of the brain that all contribute to learning effectively. It suggests that learning is multi-sensory, social, incremental and experience-based. It states that to learn, traditional cognitive psychology needs to integrate with emotional processes at multiple levels. Finally, there is a principle of life long learning, plasticity and compensation that allows learning to continue, restructure and continually develop depending on individual experiences.

Table 5.4 - Principle of Learning from Neuroscience - adapted from Goswami, (2008)

Principles of learning from cognitive neuroscience	Summary	Priorities in a NG
Learning is incremental and experience based	The brain develops fibre connections to encode each experience that we have into our nervous system. This results in growth of interconnected networks and complex cognitive structures.	Process-focused Individualised Transparent and clear
Learning is multi-sensory	Different neural structures are specialised to encode different kinds of information; yet, all these modalities integrate that information. Learning is encoded cumulatively by large networks of neurons; cell assemblies that have been connected because of prior experiences will continue to be activated even when one modality is absent.	Modelling Dynamic Constant
Brain mechanics of learning extract structure from input	The brain experiences repeated particular sensory information. Common elements are represented more strongly than novel information, which means the brain learns about causal relations.	Dynamic and repetitive Invest over time

Principles of learning from cognitive neuroscience	Summary	Priorities in a NG
Learning is social	Humans have social brains which means that learning when around other people is typically more effective than learning alone. Central elements to this process are language and communication skills.	Responsive and receptive Relationships Inter-personal skills Intra-personal skills
Cortical Learning can be Modulated by Phylogenetically Older Systems	Cortical structures synthesise both cognitive and emotional information when learning, through interactions with areas of the brain typically used for emotional processing.	Balance of routine and flexibility Individual Modelling Process-focused
Learning Shows Life-Long Plasticity and Compensation	Some neural structures are still developing between the ages of 20-30 years. Throughout adult life, fibres continue to be formed as new learning takes place, and experience-dependent plasticity continues to develop.	Constant Invest over time Continual support

The notions in Table 5.4 support the current findings and the overall effectiveness of NG as an intervention. The themes identified support the neuropsychological theories of learning depicted in Table 5.4. One aspect that also supports this is that the learning in NGs appears to be one of a lived experience. The children are in an environment where all the skills they are being taught are being modelled constantly throughout their learning in many different contexts. The only difference between the current research findings and the neuropsychology approach is that the current research identified the necessity of a skilled practitioner to be able to mediate these skills for the child.

Unacknowledged links with established Psychological Tools

To teach emotional regulation NGPs appeared to draw upon traditional Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approaches (Hughes, 2008). These included helping children to become aware of their interpretations and behaviour patterns that can perpetuate a negative cycle. This is done through

breaking issues into smaller parts and changing behaviour or thought patterns once identified as problematic. This relates to the often high levels of anxiety that can be dominant in children with attachment or SEW difficulties. There have been previous studies looking at integrating CBT into behaviour analysis approaches. Parent, Birtwell, Lambright and DuBard (2016) found positive outcomes when integrating the two approaches, resulting in an increase in the use of coping skills, self-advocacy, and social participation for the children involved. Key to this success was thought to be the generalisation skills taught alongside the intervention.

Solution-orientated approaches (De Shazer, 1985) were also utilised, particularly the positive aspects of looking forward to the future, focusing on what has gone well and identifying strengths. There were also various adaptations of scaling used to support the children in their own reflective skills. This again was incorporated in the co-construction of the targets and the regular reviewing of the progress for the children. This reviewing of progress was often referred to as a daily discussion with staff and children, and was recorded in the session notes. Solution focused approaches have been successful when implemented in school settings (Hinchey, 2016) and can be integrated into systemic thinking. Research regarding the use of solution focused approaches in school settings suggests that it may be well suited to school contexts given its time-efficient, goal-directed, and strengths-based behavioural approach (Saleebey, 1996).

The curriculum was delivered in a dynamic manner, using professional flexibility within a consistent framework. Psychological tools were utilised at a systemic level, and modelling was a key tool in developing the child's skills. Transparency, clarity and predictability all contributed to the routine and structured environment, which encased the content of the curriculum. The staff's skills in forming and maintaining relationships were also integral to the way the curriculum was delivered.

"Psychology is a science and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application, by using its originality." William James (1899) p.7

This research suggested that NGPs are highly skilled individuals with specific personal qualities, theoretical understanding and a dynamic approach. The NGPs were adept at utilising these skills and applying them to daily life for children identified with SEW difficulties. The analysis depicted a theme of staff having an acute awareness, theoretical understanding and application of how children develop. Theoretical bases will be further discussed with relation to subquestion five.

Personal qualities

With an initial understanding of the theoretical underpinnings, staff were identified as needing further key skills to ensure a successful NG. There was frequent use of the term 'empathy' in the data. This was related to the understanding of the child's needs and being able to identify with the child about their struggles. This was closely intertwined with the theoretical approach due to the necessity to interpret behaviour as a communication tool and separate the behaviour from the individual child. Staff appreciated that the child had developed strategies to protect and support themselves in their early experiences and that these strategies were no longer successful or useful in the school environment. Empathy also became apparent when talking about the child's early history or home situations. There was some acknowledgment that NGs cannot fix everything but the NGPs held a desire to do everything in their power to aid the children in their NG and influence factors that were in their control.

Another key quality the research identified was patience. This was a key skill for each participant. It was acknowledged that the children needed time to

form relationships and to 'un-learn' strategies that were previously beneficial for them. This patience also related to the tiny steps of progress, with each one being noticed and documented. The fact that a child said 'hello' before he hid under a table is seen as great progress and is celebrated as such. There is a need for staff to remain focussed on positive behaviours, which can be difficult given the level of need of the group as a whole.

Professional resilience was also highlighted in a sub-theme as a necessity due to the continual knock-backs, challenging behaviour and slower rate of progress demonstrated in the NG. With each child requiring a personalised curriculum, in a group of up to 12 children all with a high level of need, day-to-day challenges are inevitable, and can be demoralising for anyone. This professional resilience was also necessary with regard to the flexibility and demand for dynamic approaches. It was important to test new strategies and change ones that were not working, which required the NGP to have finely tuned reflective skills and energy to move forward. There was an ability to interpret an ineffective strategy not as a failure but as more information and evidence in finding out what supports the child. There was also a bank of resources and options available to the NGP to test and adapt (Sonnet, 2008).

Garner and Thomas (2011) highlighted that "staff characteristics were crucial to the success of the NG", identifying that NG staff need to "support the ethos, be committed, tolerant, strong and patient" (p. 221). This corresponds with the current findings from this research that NGPs hold a theoretical understanding, invest over time, are empathetic, professionally resilient and patient. This research, however, identifies further skills needed. Other aspects of staff skills were encapsulated in the theme of being responsive and receptive to the child and situation. There was a recurrent idea of 'noticing', relating to numerous situations. Staff would notice the child's behaviours, notice their progress, notice their mood, and adapt the task as necessary (using their professional judgement). The NGP would pick up on environmental changes, potential tensions that could affect the group dynamics or progress as a whole. They would also be aware of the individual child's responses to the presented tasks, mediating and moderating the task and the offered support. This ensured

that the challenge, learning outcome and achievability were all present and regulated for the specified individual at that time.

Garner and Thomas (2011) also stated that the above qualities are necessary for staff in addition to being able to develop and maintain relationships. They state that the relationships need to be based on "respect and equality, regardless of the child's resulting behaviour" (p.221). The relationships and ability to get along with a child also seemed pertinent to the skills of a NGP. Their apparent approach to children in general (seeking and valuing the child's voice, empathetic, mutually respectful) seemed to be essential in their work. Again, this is built up on the foundations of the theoretical understanding noted previously and the behaviourist notions regarding behaviour as a communication tool.

NGPs reported the undeniable need for the staff members to demonstrate these secure relationships not only with the children but with other members of staff. NGPs needed to work well together and all appeared to have very similar approaches to their work and the children. The staff needed to get on well, particularly with relation to modelling constructive relationships and mediating those of the children. These inter-personal skills were dominant in the NGPs and were also noted as skills needing to be taught to the children in the curriculum.

There was a theme depicting the need for commitment from NGPs, to the approach, the children and the NG. There was the necessity to understand that there is not an immediate solution, and that any benefits will take time to develop and become engrained in the children's lives. There was a commitment to hold the children in mind after they had completed their time in the NG setting and for the secure relationship to be maintained over a long period of time.

NGPs were found to be highly attuned to their environment and to the children in the NG. This enabled the practitioners to adapt the plans for the day, the resources and the language they used at continuous stages in response to what they were assessing at the time. As part of the theoretical understanding,

NGPs were able to make explicit links to wider contexts, be it the family home, historic experiences, current court cases, or anything that may plausibly have an effect on a child's SEW.

There is a potential future research question regarding how the NGPs develop these key skills. The data identifies that supervision was utilised at both a professional and peer level. There were constant discussions and checking in with the other staff members to ensure these skills were present. The constant assessment and review process identified may also support the development as this naturally encourages reflective approaches and practice-based evidence is generated.

Overall, the skills required to be a NGP have been outlined and discussed. There is a dominant theme of being able to form and sustain secure relationships, have a theoretical perspective on child development and an understanding on the implication of this and links to the wider context. The specific skill of analysing behaviour, recognising behaviour patterns and the function of these, understanding where and how this can be influenced and going about that in a calm and progressive manner is imperative.

5.2.5 Subquestion Five: How is it different from the mainstream approach (in their view)?

Participants tended to refer to the obvious environmental differences when asked about this topic. The first one of these was the idea of time; NGs had more time in which to do things with the children. The second was the increased staff to pupil ratio, tending to have two adults with a group of between six and nine children. It is possible that there was an underlying tone of freedom with regard to these differences. NGPs felt that they could allocate more time to situations as they arose, allowing flexibility and control with regard to what was taught, when and how. There were also undertones of having time and space to get to know the child more and thus being able to read and respond to the child in a more targeted fashion.

Participants also held value in sharing their own experiences with the NG and being prepared to get involved 'at the child's level'. The data suggested that NGPs used humour to de-escalate tensions; they tried new strategies where appropriate and were able to respond to the needs of the child. They shared aspects of their personal life with the NG and participated in games and role-play scenarios within the group. These gave rise to notions of mainstream classrooms being restricted in their flexibility due to external pressures of performance indicators.

Traditionally, mainstream classes manipulate behaviour through the use of punishment and reward strategies; however, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) found that NGs have a focus on a process of "joint exploration and negotiation" (p. 215), which contributed to the success of a NG. While behaviourist approaches use reward as a strategy, it appears the discussions and development prior to and after the reward hold just as much, if not more, importance. It is in this area that a traditional class teacher of a group of 30+ children may not be able to spend time reiterating the processes involved.

This does highlight further the contrast of behaviourist approaches conflicting with the flexibility required to individualise responses within the NG. There is potential that, if there is not a whole school ethos or understanding of the NG, mainstream staff could perceive inaction or inconsistency. There has been a tension with some mainstream class teachers regarding the priorities of a NG, thinking that children go there to play games and get away with their behaviour, which is not the aim of a NG.

Another difference highlighted is the difficulty in measuring or evidencing the skills acquired at NG. In mainstream classes there is a very clear cut grade and mark; children are assessed on their academic abilities alone. NGs lack the concrete tools to demonstrate exact measurements of the skills they address, not only to identify the level of need, but also to assess any impact. The Boxall Profile is typically used to identify these gaps in development, however, the analysis also highlighted the frequent use of observation and dynamic assessment. These were then mapped onto the NGPs understanding

of child development and theoretical stand points. These observations and dynamic assessments were continuous throughout the setting. The observations were identified as being recorded in session review paperwork, through daily discussions with staff, however, there was no formal report generated. Is a formal report necessary? While it would support the audit of interventions, the continual nature of these observations would be difficult and time consuming to formalise, particularly considering the amount of intricate detail required.

Cooper & Whitebread (2007) found that there were increasing levels of stress and insecurity in children, with 78% of looked after children having behavioural or emotional problems (Sempik, Ward & Darker, 2008). Teaching the child in a process-focussed approach supported through modelling and scaffolding thought processes enables the child to use these skills independently and in other environments. Children are becoming increasingly stressed, with fewer coping skills and increasing demands. Hutchings (2015) attributes this to an increase in pressure faced by students as well as wide-sweeping changes in legislations, resulting in schools and teachers facing higher demands to sustain and improve exam results. In a mainstream classroom, these issues are not addressed or taught. Focus is solely on academia and grades in core subjects, with 'softer skills' having limited space to develop constructively.

Much of this topic is discussed in other sections of the chapter. This research question was most helpful in the interview process to elicit the views of the participants. The ensuing discussion was more about what NGs do offer; this is very similar to stating the differences between NGs and mainstream. The differences between NGs and mainstream were not a dominant theme in the findings. This could be because of the phrasing and the underlying similarity of the questions. Asking what NGs do and what mainstream does not do is part and parcel of the same entity.

The researcher feels that this question was not as useful in the overall research due to the research being framed in a social constructivist paradigm, a focus on what NGPs actually do in order to replicate this as a more consciously

competent approach. The participants' views were elicited and as only NGPs were interviewed, their knowledge and experience of what happens in a mainstream class in comparison to the NG setting may be limited or skewed. This suggests that if the researcher would like to further investigate this specific research question, including mainstream teachers would be beneficial to the process.

5.2.6 Subquestion Six: How is the child's development and progress measured?

The use of targets is key to the NG curriculum and how it is delivered. Targets are identified for each individual child over a period of time. These are then discussed with professionals and agreed. The targets are addressed specifically through practical learning experiences. The specified targets are prioritised alongside a structured framework of clear expectations, transparency and predictability. The concise movement and mediation of each child through the ZPD supports the consolidation of skills and thought processes. Progress appears to be monitored in two crucial areas, the specific targets and the generic expectations of the group. If a child has a particular difficulty with any aspect of the group expectations, this eventually becomes a specified target.

Each pupil's targets were reviewed at various time frames. There appeared to be four different points the child's target was reviewed:

1. Constantly - A child is with a member of staff in a small group throughout the day. The NGP continually monitors the child and notices aspects of their behaviour that relates to their specific target.
2. Daily - NGPs have daily conversations regarding the sessions: what happened, consequences, impact and so forth. Each shares their relevant observations, taking opportunities to review progress of specific strategies, discuss amendments or possible next steps.

3. Termly - Discussions are held termly (sometimes half-termly) with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo), Educational Psychologist and other relevant stakeholders.

4. Transition and future - NGPs remain mindful of the support they have offered pupils even after the pupil has left the NG. Through this prolonged contact, NGPs can review the child, and respond appropriately. If necessary, the children are always welcome to return to NG for a play session to support other children, to share an achievement or discuss something.

Lucas et al. (2006) highlighted the importance of transition in the young person's life and the need for a planned and systematic reintegration process for the child returning to mainstream. The current research would suggest that this is not the end point for NGPs' involvement with the children. The involvement continues as the child is monitored throughout their school education, and they frequently 'drop in' or re-visit the setting when necessary or as they wish.

The use of observation and checklists are common practice in NG settings. During the termly review, professionals often use tools such as the Boxall Profile, or the SDQ as a monitoring tool. Discussions are held with regard to what targets have been met and to identify the next priority.

There were some remarks from interviews about the difficulties in being able to measure trust, love, security and happiness. The aim of a NG was often seen as allowing the child to reach their potential, or to break through specific barriers to learning. Given the difficulty in measuring these internal states, there is a dependence to derive information about this from observable behaviours.

There was a reliance on observable behaviour as an external indicator of internal processes. There are methods and tools available to support observational validity, one being the possibility of two staff watching the same child and recording the incidence of a specific behaviour, ensuring inter-observer reliability. This is naturally available in the NG setting. A criticism of observational measures is the possibility of the Hawthorne effect (McCambridge, Witton & Elbourne, 2014). The advantage to the NG setting is

that there is not an external observer, but an integrated practitioner who is constantly observing and assessing the child; therefore, the Hawthorne effect is minimised.

Clear measurements could be utilised to record very specific behaviours, for example, how many minutes a child sat at the table for or how many times the child spoke to someone else in a 10 minute controlled time frame. These measurements would not need to be taken continually but in a sampling manner. To establish reliable records of behaviours seen in a classroom environment, Hintze and Matthews (2004) suggested observations of 10-20 minutes in length by trained observers.

The aims of a NG are not to 'cure the child' but to give the child strategies to use and be able to access mainstream education. Bani (2011) noted that attachment theory does not support the notion that missed early experiences can be *overcome* with a school-based intervention. From the analysis, participants expressed a desire to acknowledge that the child will still always tend to have some level of difficulty, but aimed for the intervention to be 'good enough' to help the child achieve the aims of the NG.

Cooper and Tiknaz's research (2005) highlighted differences in the NG staff's conceptualisations of 'progress'. Success was not equated with progress but more to do with the staff's beliefs about the pupils' needs and if they were met. Again, this demonstrates the difficulty in evidencing 'staff's beliefs'. This corroborates the current findings, such as the staff's ability to make professional judgements and the difficulty in formal assessment of internal processes. This reliance on NGP's understanding, dynamic assessment and continuous monitoring is a highly developed skill that would be impractical to record formally in detail. The Boxall Profile is a helpful tool that supports the articulation of any progress. It can measure observable behaviour changes but is still dependent on the NGP to observe, notice and record these.

NGPs could potentially utilise a general behaviour observation form to support the reporting of small changes in patterns of behaviour that culminate in overall behaviour change. A simple tick list or frequency data would support the

evidencing of the skills acquired in NGs. These could be generated through the use of the small targets set for each child. Or it could be a general group behaviour sheet, that is completed through a specified sampling process. For example, while one NGP is leading circle time, the other NGP could be completing a data sheet. The data sheet could gather very simple and fast data regarding, for example, the duration of attention to a task, the number of times the child got out of their seat, the frequency of positive contributions to class discussion. These could be charted or analysed for patterns of progress or change. This would provide less subjective data and would enable the analytic skills of the NGP to be formalised into data to provide evidence of impact and outcome.

5.2.7 Discussion summary

The information detailed in this research project uses rich and vibrant data regarding in-depth discussions about the SEW curriculum. There are many interlinking relationships between the identified field of themes, however, the information can be briefly summarised as in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Summary of Curriculum areas and skills taught.

Curriculum area:	What is taught	how	named strategies	skills needed NGP
Intra-personal skills	Engagement with learning	Achievable tasks, developmentally appropriate, multi-sensory, predictable routine, clear boundaries	Co-constructed targets, routine, how are you circle time using teddy bear, acronyms	Patience, link to wider context, personal skills, functional behaviour analysis,
	Emotional regulation	Reflective questions, address as arise, commentating, modelling, transparent boundaries	CBT, mindfulness, role play, relaxation, puppets, normalise emotions	Professional resilience,

Curriculum area:	What is taught	how	named strategies	skills needed NGP
	Confidence and esteem	Getting to know the child, secure relationship, positive praise, integration/ inclusion, achievability	SFBT, reason to celebrate, strengths based	Patience, noticing, empathy, personal skills
Inter-personal skills	Communication	Modelling, developmentally appropriate	Targets on a star, certificates, coaching conversations	Theoretical understanding
	Group interaction	Modelling, mediation, dynamic approach	Social stories,	Dynamic approach, responsive and receptive
Learning to learn skills	Attention and listening	Specified small targets, time, value voice, seek opinion, modelling	Stickers for cooking activity,	Time and space, behaviour analysis
	Values	Clear expectations,	Reflective questions, all round expectations, modelling inclusivity	Values, approach

5.3 Review of Research Aims

This research aimed to identify ways in which NGPs delivered the social and emotional wellbeing curriculum. Through clear research subquestions and the interview schedule, the researcher identified what the SEW curriculum consisted of, how this was delivered and how it was different for each child. The skills of NGPs were determined alongside the specific ways NGPs address these intrinsic properties and how they influence positive change. The research did identify specific strategies used and overarching common themes between participating NGs. Although this did not develop into a prescribed list of actions, it does highlight the importance of the NGs dynamic approach.

5.4 Implications of the Findings

The importance of identifying discreet techniques of how successful evidence-based interventions work is key to recognising the potential of future successful interventions, alongside increasing the impact of existing ones. The research aimed to identify what social and emotional curriculum is being used and to share it more formally and consistently across NGs nationwide. There is scope for this research to be generalisable to the same population in different settings, so children and young people presenting with social and emotional difficulties in schools could benefit from a specified curriculum for the area. This presents opportunities for the development of cost effective, wide reaching strategies and interventions to be made accessible to more children. NGs are already in a mainstream context and successfully integrate pupils back into mainstream. Part-time NGs are also significantly beneficial, and action at policy level has positive impacts on pupils. This all supports that the transfer of the identified skills and themes in this research project has potential to benefit a larger number of children and young people.

The current literature in this area is sparse and what is available is somewhat outdated, lacking interpretation related to current legislation or government priorities. This research draws on evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence of successful interventions and the wider issues of the social and emotional priorities the government is pursuing as whole. This research has drawn together a number of theoretical bases and compared and contrasted the current findings to more novel and well established theoretical frameworks. Contributing to the current literature, this study also opens opportunities for further development with more specific targets.

Existing programmes of support could utilise the information presented though this research by highlighting the processes and priorities in their setting and making these skills more formally documented. This could raise awareness of the importance and positive influence that teaching staff can have on the lives and experiences of children and young people in education. Lots of settings currently have wrap-around care, consisting of breakfast clubs and after school clubs that could be influenced by the outcomes of this research.

The more time spent separated from key caregivers could elevate the need for a nurturing approach in these settings. A heightened awareness of the implications such approaches can achieve has the potential to impact a large number of children nationwide.

Educational Psychologists are at the forefront and in a privileged position with a view to supporting schools in being aware of and implementing evidence-based, cost-effective strategies. Taking the understanding of theoretical positions, identified staff skills and application of approach, schools could benefit from the advantages of a nurturing curriculum. Educational Psychologists (EPs) have a responsibility to support school staff in the identification of the most vulnerable children and also in supporting the children that do not meet the threshold for intensive intervention. The SEW of children in recent years has declined and is covered in the media repeatedly. There appears to be a number of educational settings requiring and requesting support for these difficulties at a population level; the researcher feels that EPs have a responsibility to support schools with this and would be ideal consultants to support this work going forward.

Further implications for the researcher's own development include suggested strategies talked through with school staff; this would ensure that individual members of staff can feel empowered to make a difference when supporting a child and the knowledge of how one relationship can impact a child's SEW. When consulting with school staff regarding managing behaviours in the classroom, the researcher can refer to the findings and prioritise relationships, consistency and flexibility within a structured framework. Further support can be offered through staff training, regarding not only theoretical view points but also practical strategies taught to whole staff groups and encourage 'nurturing practice' throughout the school environment. Also, during planning meetings, these strategies can be suggested for children who may not meet thresholds or be the priority of the school, but could potentially benefit from these strategies pro-actively.

5.5 Critique of research methodology and design

Due to the large amount of new literature included in the discussion, that was not originally identified through the systematic literature review, this suggests that the initial search terms used in the systematic literature review were too narrow. Whilst there is a high volume of relevant theories, these have not necessarily been related to NG settings previously and therefore with every search term including 'NGs', a wider spectrum of initial research was potentially missed.

The design of the study changed slightly when the initial plan for a Focus Group was not practicably possible. This was meant to be conducted with the NGPs who were going to also be involved with the semi-structured interviews. It was changed to include key professionals (a link Educational Psychologist with NGs, Head of NG Training, and a NGP) in a discussion group. On reflection the originally planned methodology could have been disadvantageous; widening the initial approach to include perspectives form key professionals in the generation of the interview schedule may have contributed to increased breadth and depth of data collected. This was through gaining a wider base of opinions from people involved in the setting up, training and reviewing of NGs, allowing a larger overview of what is done. This change also avoided potential bias and repetition that may have arisen from including the NGPs in both the FG and the semi-structured interviews. The change also enabled more effective use of time for those participating in the research.

5.6 Strengths and Limitations of this Research

This was a small scale study looking at the lived experiences of nine NGPs across five different NG settings in the Greater London areas. The findings of this research study may be generalisable to other NG settings that have been established for more than two years. Given the limited evidence into the exact techniques used, this research can start to build on the practical systems utilised in the NG settings. The identified strategies could be shared with wider NG establishments to enable discussion over perceived intuition and

potential collaboration of practice. This could also be shared as a whole school approach, which would benefit a greater number of children, specifically those without such noticeable needs; every child could benefit from more secure relationships, consistency and effective modelling. This would not be time consuming, nor would it need costly resources compared to virtually all other interventions, particularly around building self-esteem and overall SEW.

A limitation to the research is that the only population involved in the research were the NGPs themselves. Although the researcher externalised the question about qualities needed for staff (through asking about future staff and not necessarily about the person being interviewed specifically), the information gathered is preferential to NGPs. In future research this information could be triangulated through gathering the opinions of other staff or pupils regarding the differences between NGPs and mainstream staff, or information on what makes the NGP a nurturing teacher.

A unique contribution of this research to field and UK research literature was the in-depth analysis of exact techniques used in the NG setting, identifying what systems and strategies are used from the source, and how they develop such positive and meaningful relationships with the children and young people attending the NG setting. The everyday practice in NGs is dissected to establish exactly what is targeted, how it is delivered, and what skills are required to do so. The possible generalisability of the findings is also a strength.

The sampling method could be seen as a limitation to the study, as although many NGs were approached, the responses were self selecting and maybe biased due to this. The methodology employed the use of semi-structured interviews, which enabled the participants to contribute and direct some of the conversation, although the interview schedule was prompted to focus discussions on the research questions. This method elicited rich and detailed data, sufficient to answer the research questions.

Furthermore this research is recognised as a small scale study due to the small sample size which may limit the generalisability of the findings. The ever growing complexities around 'classic' NGs and deviant groups is becoming more difficult to define. This is due to the increased number of settings providing interventions called Nurture Clubs, Nurture Classes, Nurture Rooms and so forth that do not necessarily demonstrate good practice or have an understanding of the underlying principles that are integral to successful outcomes.

5.7 Opportunities for Future Research

Further research would add to understanding how a NG approach of prioritising processes of learning can be related to mainstream classrooms. Further analysis of which specific and individual targets can be identified in whole school populations would also be beneficial for the field. Furthermore, research could add to the evidence base through trying to isolate the identified skills for staff and how these are developed. Research exploring how best to educate and support mainstream school staff to recognise these skills and develop them further to support the children of their class with a nurturing approach would also be helpful. Further research could aim to triangulate the skills of NGPs with other stakeholders in the school, including the pupils themselves. There could be a particular emphasis on secondary education and the application of the current findings in larger secondary schools as a whole pupil population.

5.8 Feedback

The analysis of this research was adapted and summarised into a brief report, shared with the participating schools and the local authority and specifically with the participants, via their professional email accounts. The report was also shared with the Educational Psychology Service at the Local Authority where the research was initiated. Information from the research will be shared with the Nurture Group Network. A presentation of the findings was developed and will be presented at the Nurture Group Network Summer School 2017 to a selection of NGPs nationwide. The researcher intends to write an article based on the findings for the Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties for the summer 2017 edition along with the 2017 annual edition of International Journal of Nurture in Education.

5.9 Ethical Considerations

It is important to acknowledge the need for all research to consider and be bound by ethical codes of practice. Robson (2002) suggests that it is the responsibility of the researcher to design the study in a way that protects and safeguards participants. This research follows the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2009) Code of Ethics and Conduct, HCPC guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students and the University of East London's (UEL) good practice in research guidelines (UEL, 2015).

All participating schools, nurture groups and staff were made aware of the purpose of the research through information leaflets prior to engagement, along with discussion prior to and after the interviews. This was also consolidated in the consent letter (Appendix C). The letters of consent detailed at length how data was to be collected, stored and deleted. It also stated how the data will be used and shared, ensuring anonymity to participants. The letter also included information about how and when the participant could withdraw consent, ensuring all contact details were accessible and correct, including those of the supervising director of studies.

The researcher ensured that the participants were not identifiable from the data. The researcher was aware that there are only five schools taking part in the study and will not name them on any documentations, including all transcripts. Names were swapped with numbers so no personal information was identifiable.

5.10 Reflexivity

As reported in Chapter Three, the researcher kept a reflective diary to aid interpretation and limit bias. Through regular entries in the diary, the researcher was able to document interpretation of the data and progression in thematic analysis. It also aided the development of an understanding of how research is conducted and the implications of this. A key learning point supported through this process was during the analysis of emerging themes. The researcher found it challenging to ensure that the themes were not just a reflection of the questions asked during the interviews. However, there was some recognition that that the questions posed to participants had already had some level of interpretation in the way of considering what to enquire about. The researcher was specifically asking if a particular relationship was 'important and, if so why, or why not?'. The very use of this question can draw the participant's viewpoint to the fact that it might be important as the researcher is asking about it. Through the acknowledgement of hermeneutic loops (Chang, 2010), the researcher is then aware that their findings are an interpretive representation of another person's understanding. This double hermeneutic loop proved difficult in analysing the results so as to not sway themes to represent the questions the research actively chose, but to reflect the answers given.

Throughout the process the researcher accessed academic, peer and professional supervision on a regular and frequent basis. This aided the researcher with the reflective process of research and their own beliefs and world views within it. Experience, guidance and reassurance was sought through formal supervision and recorded in line with the university's procedures. At various stages throughout the research process, supervision was called upon to fit the current need, as recorded in the researcher's reflective diary. Themes

were discussed at length to ensure they were meaningful, as well as to ensure the extracts matched with the analytic claims of the results. The visual representation of the themes was also developed through supervision and a reflective process on whether it was conveying the meaning the researcher held in the same way.

5.11 Conclusions

"The truly ambitious goal for education is to cross and integrate the disciplinary boundaries of biology, culture, cognition, emotion, perception and action. Biological, sensory and neurological influences on learning must become equal partners with social, emotional and cultural influences if we are to have a truly effective discipline of education." Diamond (2007)

This chapter explored the themes identified in Chapter 4 and linked these to the literature review. The researcher also considered further theoretical understandings, comparing and contrasting them to the findings in relation to the research questions. The researcher discussed the implications of the findings in relation to research and specifically the Educational Psychologist's role. Limitations and future research were considered and reported. The self-reflective nature of this research, particularly regarding the research process and the researcher's own interpretation of participants reports, was reflected upon.

This research aimed to explore what was being taught with regard to social and emotional wellbeing in a NG setting. It explored how this is being taught by asking the staff explicitly what they did, how they did it, and what skills were needed to do this.

Analysis indicated that the social and emotional curriculum was embedded within all aspects of the NG day. Children are taught intra-personal skills with regard to internal processing of emotions and responses. These skills are later adapted, and more focus is given to inter-personal skills, getting along with and valuing others. The co-constructed environment and rules along

with the NGP's clear value of children are paramount in supporting the child's social and emotional wellbeing. NGs are process-focussed and prioritise incremental steps in learning to develop mastery of skills. The boundaries and expectations are clear and transparent with a focus on forming and maintaining relationships with staff, peers and the child's own internal working model. Modelling all the desired outcomes is key to generalisation and long lasting impact. NG approaches include a very personalised and tailored curriculum for each pupil, using continuous assessment methods drawn from dynamic approaches to support this. NGPs are highly skilled and experienced in managing continuous assessment and review, holding a solid theoretical understanding and being able to link their hypotheses to wider contexts and complex systems around the child. NGPs are receptive and responsive to the ever changing dynamics and needs of each child. Behaviour is seen as a functional form of communication and is analysed in a continuous manner with systematic and considered responses to each experience.

These findings are consistent with previous research and further develop established ideas around learning and secure relationships. The researcher draws on novel and familiar theoretical standpoints from attachment and neuropsychology to integrate evidence of learning, social and emotional responses and their impact upon each other. Evidence from the research also supports the wider application of the findings to whole school populations, both primary and secondary.

In conclusion, the social and emotional wellbeing curriculum is devised for each individual and delivered in a predictable yet flexible framework. The supportive and enriched environment is constant with specified goals being targeted in all contexts and at all times. This is supported through the focus on processes and incremental learning, scaffolding the child's skills in an achievable yet challenging structure.

References

Adams, R. (2015, May 14). Surge in young people seeking help for exam stress. *The Guardian,* http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/14/calls-to-childline-over-exam-stress-break-records

Adderley, R., Hope, M., Hughes, G., Jones, L., Messiou, K. & Shaw, P. (2015). Exploring inclusive practices in primary schools: focusing on children's voices. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 30(1), 106-121, doi: 10.1080/08856257.2014.964580

Adir, Y., Killoran, A., Janmohamed, K., Stewart-Brown, S. (2007). *Systematic review of the effectiveness of interventions to promote mental wellbeing in children in primary education. Report 1: Universal approaches: non-violence related outcomes.* Retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0024581/.

Ainsworth, M., Bell, S & Stayton, D. (1971). Individual differences in strange-situation behavior of one-year-olds. In H. R. Schaffer (Ed.) *The origins of human social relations* (pp17-58). London and New York: Academic Press.

Ainsworth, M., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. Hillsdale.

Anderson, G. & Kazantzis, N. (2008). Social problem-solving skills training for adults with mild intellectual disability: a multiple case study. *Behaviour Change*, 25(2), 97–108.

Bani, M. (2011). The Use and Frequency of Verbal and Non-Verbal Praise in Nurture Groups. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties* 16(1) 47-67.

Bennathan, M. (1997). Effective Intervention in Primary Schools: What Nurture Groups Achieve. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 2(3), 23-29.

Bennathan, M., & Boxall, M. (1998). *The Boxall Profile: A Guide to Effective Intervention in the Education of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. Maidstone: AWCEBD.

Bennathan, M and Boxall, M (2000). *Effective intervention in Primary Schools: Nurture groups* (2nd ed.) London: Fulton.

Bennett, H. (2015). *Results of the Meta Review on Nurture Groups' effectiveness: How efficient are Nurture Groups? Under what Conditions*

do Nurture Groups work best? Unpublished Paper. Nurture Group
Network.

Berridge, D., Brodie, I., Pitts, J., Porteous, D., & Tarling, R. (2001). *The
independent effects of permanent exclusion from school on the offending
careers of young people.* Research, Development and Statistics
Directorate.

Binnie, L.M., and K. Allen (2008). Whole school support for vulnerable children:
The evaluation of a part-time nurture group. *Emotional and Behavioural
Difficulties, 13*(3) 201–216.

Birch, E (2016). 'You do what you need for your children, don't you?': An
exploration of the current range of practice and priorities of nurture group
staff in a local authority. *Educational and Child Psychology 33*(4)
40-50.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1: Attachment.* London: Hogarth
Press.

Bowlby J (1973). *Separation: Anxiety & Anger. Attachment and Loss* (vol. 2);
London: Hogarth Press.

Boxall, M. (2002). *Nurture Groups in School. Principles and Practice.* London:
Paul Chapman.

Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and
code development.* London, Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology.
Qualitative Research in Psychology 3(2), 77-101.

British Psychological Society, The (BPS). (2009). *Code of Ethics and Conduct.*
Leicester: The British Psychological Society.

Chang, J. (2010). Hermeneutic Inquiry: A Research Approach for Postmodern
Therapists. *Journal of Systemic Therapies 29*(1) 19-32.

Cho, J., & Trent, A. (2006). Validity in qualitative research revisited. *Qualitative
Research 6*: 319-340.

Cole, P., Michel, M., & Teti, L. O. (1994). The Development of Emotion
Regulation and Dysregulation: A Clinical Perspective. *Monographs of the
Society for Research in Child Development, 59*(2/3), 73-100. doi:
10.2307/1166139

Collins, Carson and Collins (2016). Metacognition and Professional Judgment and Decision Making in Coaching: Importance, Application and Evaluation. *International Sport Coaching Journal, 3*, pp.355-361.

Colwell, J. and O'Connor, T. (2003). Understanding Nurturing Practices - A Comparison of the Use of Strategies Likely to Enhance Self Esteem in Nurture Groups and Normal Classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education 30*(3), 119-124.

Coolican, H. (2004). *Research Methods & Statistics in Psychology* (4th ed.) London, Hodder & Stoughton.

Cooper, P. and Tiknaz, Y. (2005). Progress and challenge in Nurture Groups: evidence from three case studies. *British Journal of Special Education, 32*(4), 211–222.

Cooper, P. and Whitebread, D. (2007). The effectiveness of Nurture Groups: Evidence from a National Research Study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties 12*(3), 171-190.

Cooper, P., Arnold, R. and Boyd, E. (2001). The effectiveness of nurture groups: preliminary research findings. *British Journal of Special Education, 28*(4), 160-166.

Cooper, J., Heron, T. & Heward, W. (2006). *Applied behaviour analysis* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational Research*. Boston: Pearson.

De Shazer, S. (1985). *Keys to solutions in brief therapy* New York : Norton.

Department for Education (DfE). (2014). *Children and Families Act.* London: DfE.

Department for Education (2016). *Statistics: exclusions.* Retrieved on April 3, 2017 from https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2014-to-2015.

Department for Education and Skills (1997). *Excellence for all children: meeting special educational needs.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2004). *A framework for understanding dyslexia.* Retrieved on October 2, 2017, from http://www.achieveability.org.uk/ files/1270740075/dfes-framework-for-understanding-dyslexia.pdf.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2003). *Every Child Matters.* Department for Education and Skills. Retrieved on Aril 1, 2015, from

https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/ EveryChildMatters.pdf.

DeVries, R. & Zan, B. (2003). When Children Make Rules: Building classroom relationships. *Educational Leadership 61*(1), 64-67.

Diamond, A. (2007). Interrelated and Interdependent. *Developmental Science, 10*(1), 152–158.

Doyle, R. (2001). Using a readiness scale for reintegrating pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from a Nurture Group into their mainstream classroom – a pilot study*. British Journal of Special Education*, *28*(3), 126-132.

Doyle, R. (2003). Developing the Nurturing School: Spreading Nurture Group Principles and Practices into Mainstream Classrooms. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 8*(4) 252-266.

Doyle, R. (2004). A social development curriculum: applying nurture group principles and practices to support socially and emotionally vulnerable children within mainstream classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education, 31*(1) 24-30.

Duckworth, A., Grant, H., Loew, B., Oettingen, G. & Gollwitzer, P. (2011). Self-regulation strategies improve self-discipline in adolescents: benefits of mental contrasting and implementation intentions. *Educational Psychology. 31*(1), 17–26.

Eastman, A. (2011). No Excuses. *A policy report by the Centre of Social Justice.* Retrieved on December 7, 2015, from http://www.centreforsocial justice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/CSJ_Educational_ Exclusion.pdf.

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2015). *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning.* Retrieved on April 7, 2015, from http:// educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/ toolkit/toolkit-a-z/social-and-emotional-aspects-of-learning/.

Evans, M (2012, April 3). Excluding pupils will cost schools £4000. *The Telegraph.* Published on 13/04/2012 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/ education/9203603/Excluding-pupils-will-cost-schools-4000.html.

Flick, U. (1992). Triangulation Revisited: Strategy of Validation or Alternative? *Journal for the theory of Social Behaviour, 22*, 175-197.

Garner, R. (2013, July 25). Increasing numbers of primary school children permanently excluded over disruptive behaviour. *The Independent.* Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/increasing-numbers-of-primary-school-children-permanently-excluded-over-disruptive-behaviour-8731761.html.

Garner, J. and Thomas, M. (2011). The Role and Contribution of Nurture Groups in Secondary Schools: Perceptions of children, parents and staff. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, *16*(2), 207-224.

Geddes, H. (2006). *Attachment in the Classroom: the links between children's early experience, emotional wellbeing and performance in school*. London: Worth Publishing.

Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: a research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *38*(8), 581-586.

Goswami, G. (2008). Principles of learning, Implications for Teaching: A Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* Vol. 42(3-4).

Greenberg, M.T., Weissberg, R.P., O'Brien, M.U., Zins, J.E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., et al. (2003). "Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning." *American Psychologist, 58*(6-7), 466-474.

Gross, J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology 2*(3) 271-299.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, E. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation.* London: Sage.

Gutman, L. & Schoon, I. (2013). *The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people.* Education Endowment Foundation. Retrieved on April 4, 2017, from http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Non-cognitive_skills_literature_review .pdf retrieved on 10/04/2017.

Health Care Professions Council (2012). *Standards for Conduct, Performance and Ethics.* Retrieved on October 10, 2016, from http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/standardsofconductperformanceandethics/.

Heneker S (2005). Speech and language therapy support for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) a pilot project. *British Journal of Special Education 32*(2), 86-91.

Hesse-Biber, S. and Leavy, P. (2006). *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hinchey, M. (2016). The implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) with at-risk youth in an alternative school environment. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 77*(3) 24-27.

Hintze, J. M., & Matthews, W. J. (2004). The generalisability of systematic direct observations across time and setting: A preliminary investigation of the psycho-metrics of behavioural observation. *School Psychology Review, 33,* 258–270.

Hughes, J. N. (2008). Cognitive Behavior Therapy. *Encyclopedia of Special Education, 450,* 480–482.

Hughes, N. and Schlosser, A. (2014). The effectiveness of nurture groups: a systematic review. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties 19*(4), 386-409.

Hutchings, M. (2015). *Exam Factories. The impact of accountability measures on children and young people*. London: National Union for Teachers.

Ivanov, M. & Werner, P. (2010). Behavioral communication: Individual differences in communication style. *Personality and Individual Differences, 49,* 19–23.

James, W. (1899). *Talks to teacher on Psychology: and to students on some of life's ideals*. New York: H. Holt

Kember, D., Ha, T., Lam, B., Lee, A., NG, S. Yan, L. and Yuk, K. (1997). The diverse role of the critical friend in Supporting Educational Action Research Projects. *Educational Action Research, 5*(3) 463-481.

Kibble, K. (2015). Nurturing Support. SEN Magazine. Retrieved on April 8, 2015 from https://www.senmagazine.co.uk/articles/articles/senarticles/nurturing-support

Klein, C., DeRouin, R. E., & Salas, E. (2006). Uncovering workplace interpersonal skills: A review, framework, and research agenda. In G. P. Hodgkinson & J. K. Ford (Eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (pp. 80–126). New York, NY: Wiley and Sons.

Krueger, R. and Casey, A. (2015). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Langer, E. (1989). *Mindfulness. Reading, MA,* US: Addison-Wesley/Addison Wesley Longman.

Lewis, M. & Wray, D. (1997). *Writing Frames: scaffolding children's non-fiction writing in a range of genres.* Reading and Language Information Centre. Reading: University of Reading.

Lidz, C. & Gindis, B. (2003). Dynamic assessment of the evolving cognitive functions in children. In A. Kazulin, B. Gindis, V. Ageyev, & S. Miller (Eds), *Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context* (pp.99-118). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Linsdey, N. & Rice, M. (2015). Interpersonal Skills and Education in the Traditional and Online Classroom Environments. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 13*(3), 126-136.

Lucas, S. (1999). The Nurturing School: The Impact of Nurture Group Principles and Practice on the whole school. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 4*(3), 14-19.

Lucas,S., Insley, K. & Buckland, G. (2006). *Nurture Group Principles and Curriculum Guidelines Helping Children to Achieve, The Nurture Group Network.* Retrieved on February 15, 2017 from https://nurturegroups.org/ introducing-nurture/ six-principles-nurture.

MacKay, T., Reynolds, S. & Kearney, M. (2010). From attachment to attainment: the impact of nurture groups on academic achievement. *Educational and Child Psychology, 27*(3), 100-110.

Marvin, R., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K & Powell, B. (2002). The Circle of Security project: Attachment-based intervention with caregiver–pre-school child dyads. *Attachment and Human Development, 4*(1) 107–124.

Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–96.

McCambridge, J., Witton, J. & Elbourne, D. (2014). Systematic review of the Hawthorne effect: New concepts are needed to study research participation effects. *J Clin Epidemiol., 67*(3): 267–277. doi: 10.1016/ j.jclinepi.2013.08.015

Mertens, D. (2015). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (4th ed.).* CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Moffitt, T., Arseneault, L., Belsky, D., Dickson, N., Hancox, R., Harrington, H., & Caspi, A. (2011). A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health,

wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*(7), 2693-2698.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2013). *Social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people.* Retrieved on February 17, 2017 from https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/lgb12/chapter/ introduction.

O'Connor, T and Cowell, J. (2002). The effectiveness and rationale of the 'nurture group' approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education. *British Journal of Special Education, 29*(2), 96–100.

Ofsted (2011). *Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach.* Survey report. Retrieved on April 9, 2015 from http:// www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/supporting-children-challenging-behaviour- through-nurture-group-approach.

Parent, V., Birtwell, K., Lambright, N. & DuBard, M (2016). Combining CBT and Behavior-Analytic Approaches to Target Severe Emotion Dysregulation in Verbal Youth with ASD and ID. *Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*(1) 60-82.

Piaget, J. (1936). *Origins of intelligence in the child.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Piquero, A., Jennings, W. & Farrington, D. (2010). On the Malleability of Self–Control: Theoretical and Policy Implications Regarding a General Theory of Crime. *Justice Quarterly*. *27*(6), 803-834.

Reynolds, S., Kearney, M. and MacKay, T. (2009). Nurture Groups: a large – scale, controlled study of effect on development and academic attainment. *British Journal of Special Education, 36* (4) 204 – 212.

Richardson, R. (2015a). Pupils have Sats test panic attacks, says NUT study. BBC news. Retrieved on December 5, 2015 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/ news/education-32174569.

Richardson, R. (2015b). Heads 'Calling 999 over mental health'. BBC NEWS retrieved on December 5, 2015, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ education-34733952.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research. A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner Researches*, (2nd ed.) Blackwell: Oxford.

Saleebey, D. (1996). The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice: Extensions and Cautions. *Social Work, 41*(3) 296-301.

Sanders, Tracy (2007). Helping Children Thrive at School: The Effectiveness of Nurture Groups. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 23(1), 45-61.

Scott, D. (2014). Ontology, Epistemology, Strategy and Method in Educational research: A Critical Realist Approach. *magis, Revisit international de Investigation en Educacion, 7*(14), 29-38. Retrieved from: http// magisinvestigacioneducacion.javeriana.edu.co/

Scott, K. and Lee, A. (2009). Beyond the 'classic' nurture group model: an evaluation of part-time and cross-age nurture groups in a Scottish local authority. *Support for Learning, 24*(1), 5-10.

Sempik, J., Ward, H. & Darker, I. (2008). Emotional and behavioural difficulties of children and young people at entry into care. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 13*(2), 221-233.

Shams, L, & Seitz, A. (2008). *Benefits of multisensory learning.* Cell Press. Retrieved from http://faculty.ucr.edu/~aseitz/pubs/Shams_Seitz08.pdf

Shaver, I. and McClatchey, K. (2013) Assessing effectiveness of nurture groups in Northern Scotland. *Support for Learning, 28*(3) 97-102.

Skinner, B. (1953). *Science and human behavior.* New York: Free Press.

Skinner, BF (1976). *About Behaviorism*. New York: Random House.

Skinner, K., Hyde, S., McPherson, K., & Simpson, M. (2016). Improving students' interpersonal skills through experiential small group learning. *Journal of Learning Design, 9*(1), 21-36. doi:http://dx.doi.org/ 10.5204/jld.v9i1.232

Smith, J. (2015). Qualitative Psychology: *A Practical Guide the Research Methods (*3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Smith, J., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Sonnet, H (2008). Nurturing Success: *How to Create and Run an Effective Nurture Group*. London: LDA.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25. (2014). Retrieved on October 21, 2014 from https://www.gov.uk/government/ uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342440/ SEND_Code_of_Practice_approved_by_Parliament_29.07.14.pdf .

Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An Introduction to curriculum research and development.* London: Heinemann.

Stirling, S. & Emery, H. (2015). *A whole school framework for emotional well being and mental health.* Published by The National Children's Bureau retrieved on April 1, 2017, from https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/ uploads/documents/Policy_docs/Briefings/NCB%20School%20Well %20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Tool%20FINAL.pdf.

The Children's Society (2015) The Good Childhood Report retrieved December 6th, 2015, from https://www.childrens society.org.uk/sites/default/files/ TheGoodChildhoodReport2015.pdf.

University of East London (2015). Code of good practice in research. Retrieved on December 4, 2015, from http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ currentmphilphdstudents/library/.

Vlachou, A. & Stavroussi, P. (2016). Promoting social inclusion: a structured intervention for enhancing interpersonal problem-solving skills in children with mild intellectual disabilities. *Support for Learning 31,* 27–45. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.12112

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warnock, M. (1978). *Warnock Report: Special educational needs.* London: HMSO.

Weare, K. (2015). What works in promoting social and emotional well-being and responding to mental health problems in schools? National Children's Bureau, Partnership for Well-being and Mental Health in Schools retrieved on February 20, 2017, from https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default /files/uploads/documents/Health_wellbeing_docs_ncb_framework_for_ promoting_well-being_and_responding_to_mental_health_in_schools. pdf.

Webster, J. (2015). Learning to Learn Skills - Foundational Skills for Academic Success. Retrieved on October 3, 2017, from https://www.thoughtco.com /learn-foundation-skill-academic-success-3110357.

Willig, C. (2009). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. Second Edition.* Cambridge: Open University Press.

Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology.* Third Edition. Cambridge: Open University Press.

Appendix

Appendix A
Introduction letter to participants and schools

Dear

My name is Philippa Jeavons and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently studying for my Professional Doctorate at University of East London (UEL) and on my second year placement at Bexley. My thesis topic is based around the social and emotional wellbeing curriculum in Nurture Groups.

There is a strong and growing evidence base that Nurture Groups support pupil's social and emotional development. My research in particular is looking at what the Nurture Group staff teach their pupils with regard to their social and emotional development and how they do this. It may not be in a formal document and therefore I wish to talk to the staff directly to see what they do on a day to day basis.

I would be looking to invite key Nurture Group Staff to a focus group involving other Nurture Group staff from the borough to talk about these topics. I would then like to interview each staff member individually to explore what and how they do this. I have prepared the necessary informed consent forms and will follow this letter up with a telephone call to explain a little more about the project and perhaps arrange a time for me to come in and meet with yourself and/or the staff involved in the Nurture Group at your school.

My mobile number is (insert work mobile phone number) and my email address is Philippa.jeavons@bexley.gov.uk. Feel free to drop me a line and we can schedule in a call for me to explain further details.

Kind regards

Appendix B
Information leaflet for participants and schools

STAFF INFO

Philippa Jeavons | University of East London | Trainee Educational Psychologist

Who am I?

What am I doing?

My name is Philippa Jeavons and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently studying at the University of East London, on a 3 year Professional doctorate Programme in Educational and Child Psychology. I am currently placed in Bexley for my final 2 years. As part of my course I am conducting some research.

The process of the research

I will need consent from you and your school for you to participate. I will arrange a Focus Group for 4-8 different NG staff to come together and discuss this topic (2 hrs). From that discussion I will generate some questions. Using these questions, I will interview each staff member individually (1 hr) to get as rich a picture as I can.

Is it confidential?

Yes. Your information will be stored securely, no one will be able to identify who said what from which school. You can withdraw at any stage before data analysis and the data will be deleted after completion of my course.

What am I Looking for?

There is a lot of evidence that Nurture Groups (NGs) are a successful early intervention that supports children with social and emotional difficulties. I would like to talk to key staff members from the four NGs in Bexley to find out how they teach social and emotional aspects of development to their pupils. To do this I need to find out what is taught and how it is taught. I believe the NG staff are highly skilled and would like to identify exactly what skills they have that help the children learn and develop in these areas.

Why?

I want to find out specific details on what and how this is taught as I believe if I can identify the content of the curriculum and the strategies used to teach it, this can be applied to other settings and benefit more children.

What will I do with the information gathered?

Once I have all the information I will look for common themes. I will then write up my research as a thesis for my course. I will also generate a short report which will be shared with the schools that took part, the Local Authority and Nurture Group Network.

Questions?

Please contact me: Philippa.Jeavons@Bexley.gov.uk
Work phone: 07815 708635

Appendix C
Consent form and information

<u>Who am I and what am I doing?</u>
My name is Philippa Jeavons and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently studying at the University of East London, on a 3 year Professional Doctorate training course in Educational and Child Psychology. As part of my course I am conducting some research.

<u>What am I looking at?</u>
There is a lot of evidence to suggest that Nurture Groups (NGs) are a successful early intervention to support children with social and emotional difficulties. I want to talk to staff and find out how they teach social and emotional aspects of development to their pupils. To do this I need to find out what is taught and how. Are there particular skills needed to be a NG practitioner?

<u>What will be involved?</u>
If you chose to take part there will be a group discussion with other NG staff members, lasting between 1-2 hours. This will be in March 2016 before the Easter holidays. There will then be an individual interview in May 2016 which will last approximately 1 hour.

<u>Is it confidential?</u>
Your information will be stored securely and it will not be possible to identify who has said what or which school you attend. The raw information will be kept securely on a password protected private computer and will be destroyed on completion of the course.

<u>What will I do with the information gathered?</u>
Once I have all the information I will look at everyones answers and look for common themes. I will write up the findings in a report and feed this back to everyone who took part. I will also submit the information in the form of a thesis for my course. The information will be shared with the University of East London, the Local Authority and The Nurture Group Network. It may be published in a relevant journal in 2017.

<u>Informed Consent:</u>
It is very important to me that you know exactly what is involved in this research and are happy to participate. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage before the data is analysed. Please feel free to ask any questions.

<u>Contact details:</u>
Work Email - Philippa.Jeavons@Bexley.gov.uk
Work phone number - 07815 708635
Supervising Director of Studies - Tina Rae - Tina6@uel.ac.uk

Title of Study:

How do Nurture Group Practitioners Deliver the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Curriculum?

Researcher:
Philippa Jeavons

Place of Study:
University of East London

Supervising Director of Study:
Tina Rae

Please Initial Each Statement

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | Type to enter text |

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw, without giving reason, before the analysis of data. | Type to enter text |

3. I agree to take part in the above study. | Type to enter text |

4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded. | Type to enter text |

5. I agree to the focus group being video recorded. | Type to enter text |

6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications. | Type to enter text |

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D
Semi-structured interview introduction script

My name is Philippa Jeavons and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently studying at the University of East London, on a 3 year Professional Doctorate training course in Educational and Child Psychology. As part of my course I am conducting some research.

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that Nurture Groups (NGs) are a successful early intervention to support children with social and emotional difficulties. I want to talk to staff and find out how they teach social and emotional aspects of development to their pupils. To do this I need to find out what is taught and how. Are there particular skills needed to be a NG practitioner?

Thank you for choosing to take part in the study, and attending the FG recently. I got a lot of information from those discussions which have generated some more detailed questions I'd like to ask you.

Just to remind you, your information will be stored securely and it will not be possible to identify who has said what or which school you attend. The raw information will be kept securely on a password protected private computer and will be destroyed on completion of the course.

Once I have all the information I will look at everyones answers and look for common themes. I will write up the findings in a report and feed this back to everyone who took part. I will also submit the information in the form of a thesis for my course. The information will be shared with the University of East London, the Local Authority and The Nurture Group Network. It may be published in a relevant journal in 2017.

It is very important to me that you know exactly what is involved in this research and are happy to participate. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage before the data is analysed. Please feel free to ask any questions now, or as we go along.

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this research, your major responsibilities will include attending a small focus group before the Easter holidays and an individual interview just after the Easter holidays. You do not have to participate in this research. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop or withdraw at any stage prior to data analysis.

I am going to ask a few questions now, please tell me as much as you can and feel free to give any examples that help you describe this.

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: Joy Coogan

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

STUDENT: Philippa Jeavons

SUPERVISOR: Tina Rae

Title of proposed study: How do Nurture Group Practitioners Deliver the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Curriculum?

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 <u>BEFORE</u> THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is <u>not</u> required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made <u>before</u> 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

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

Appendix F
Semi-structured interview schedule

<u>Research Question:</u>

"How do Nurture Group practitioners deliver their social and emotional wellbeing curriculum?"

<u>Opening questions:</u>
- Can you tell me about a typical morning in NG? And another one?
- Tell me a bit about your nurture group provision?
  - What children are targeted?

1. <u>What does the curriculum consist of?</u>
- Can you tell me about the planning for the group?
  - Who plans the curriculum for the children?
  - Is there a difference between what is planned and what actually happens? Why?
  - How often are you able to follow the plan?
  - What is the most valuable bit of the plan?
  - Does the plan change depending on the group?
  - Do you plan for individuals or the group?
- What are your social and emotional wellbeing targets/aims and how do you prioritise them?
- Do you teach social and emotional aspects differently? Social? Emotional?
- What are the children learning in NG?

2. <u>How is it delivered?</u>
- If a child comes to NG after a difficult lunch time, what would your response be?
  - Would you do it differently with another child?
- Are relationships important with the children in the NG when delivering the SEW curriculum? Can you give an example?
- How do relationships with other NGP impact on the effectiveness of delivering the SEW?
- What are the priorities to teach in your NG?
- Can you tell me about some strategies you use, like mindfulness, re-framing, coaching, goal setting?

3. <u>What are the skills required to be a NG practitioner?</u>
- If you got someone else to work in the NG with you, what would you be looking for?
  - Could anyone work in a NG or would they need particular qualities?
  - What would you, and what wouldn't you want in a NGP?
- What is it about you that allows you to do that?
- Whats different between you and someone in a mainstream class?

4. <u>How is it different from the mainstream approach (in their view)?</u>

- With regard to social and emotional wellbeing, what are the differences between NG and mainstream?
  - Priorities?
- How do you deal with disengagement?
- Are there different behaviour management strategies?
- What do other members of staff think about the NG?

5. <u>How is the child's development and progress measured?</u>
- Can anyone else see a change in the children who attend the NG?
- What conversations do you have about children's progress?
  - Do you have time to have them and are they recorded anywhere?
- Can you tell me about when you feel the NG had a big impact for a child? Is there one child that sticks out for you?
- Do any children generalise their learning from NG to mainstream?
  - How did they get there?
  - What did you do to enable that?
  - How do you know they made that progress?
  - How was this recorded?
- How do you know when a child is ready to leave?
- What tools do you use to measure progress?

6. <u>What is the rational for the approach, including the theoretical underpinnings?</u>
- How do you know how the children are feeling?
  - How do you teach them to recognise that?
  - How do you measure that?
- Can you tell me about what you think about when a child is behaving badly?
- Can you tell me why you think children need a NG?

Appendix G
Braun and Clarke (2006) quality criteria checklist

A 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

Process	Number	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for accuracy".
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as *active* in the research process; themes do not just emerge".

Appendix H
Summary of Boxall Profile categorisations

	Cluster	Area of need	
Developmental Strand	Organisation of experience:	Give purposeful attention	A
		Participates constructively	B
		Connects up experiences	C
		Shows insightful involvement	D
		Engages cognitively with peers	E
	Internalisation of controls	Is emotionally secure	F
		Is biddable and accepts restraints	G
		Accommodates others	H
		Responds constructively to others	I
		Maintains internalised standards	J
Diagnostic profile	Self-limiting features	Disengaged	Q
		Self negating	R
	Undeveloped behaviour	Makes undifferentiated attachments	S
		Shows inconsequential behaviour	T
		Craves attachment, reassurance	U
	Unsupported development	Avoids/rejects attachment	V
		Has undeveloped insecure sense of self	W
		Shows negativism towards self	X
		Shows negativism towards others	Y
		Wants, grabs, disregarding others	Z

Appendix I

Example of initial coding:

Line Number	Participant 1	Refined Codes
482	Yes, but again, this is all this … if we know they are good at something, we use them as the	build on strengths
483	role model; that's how we do it, like, 'so-and-so can sit beautifully, look at the way she is	use as role model
484	looking at me now! Fantastic listening! Can you tell us what we need to do?'. And they will	specific verbal praise
485	tend to be telling everyone else what they need to be doing and everyone else will be	
486	listening to them and going, 'okay.' So constantly using them as the role models and saying	constant intervention
487	how well they had done and any work they do, 'fantastic! Let's put it up on the board!". And	visual representation of achievements
488	we take loads of pictures of them as well and make a folder for them so that when they, we	positive praise
489	have a graduation. We have got two today, the thing is we try not to have one in year 6 as	belonging
490	it's an important year so we have two year fives and they are graduating today so we have	
491	pictures and a folder and we have a tea party for them. And even things like, we also	
492	celebrate their birthdays as well and give them a card. Just having a card. The kids loving	celebrate
493	just having a card and everyone just saying happy birthday. So it's constantly about them	
494	and about how well they are doing. We have a little bear called X and if you are	celebrate small things
495	[pupil] of the Week, you can take X back to the classroom with your photo and a little	reward strategies
496	sunbeam, and you get a little certificate that tells the teacher or your mum or dad what you	communication home
497	have done positively. The teacher keeps the letter, and the bear stays in the class and the	communicate with class teacher
498	certificate goes back. Now some of these children, they haven't had anything like that and	lack of praise previously

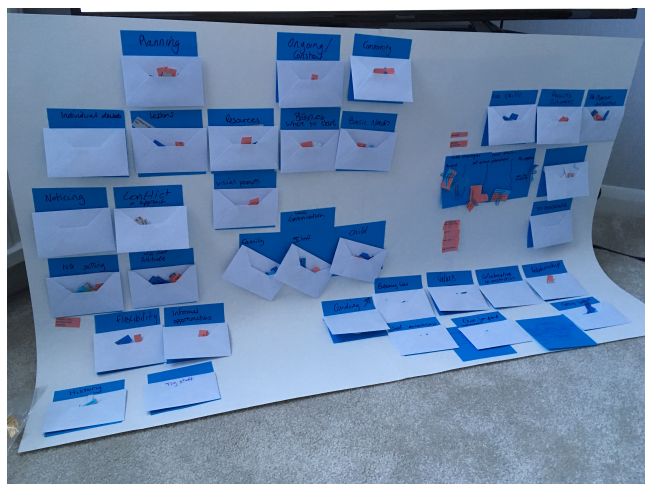**Appendix J**
Development of Thematic Map:
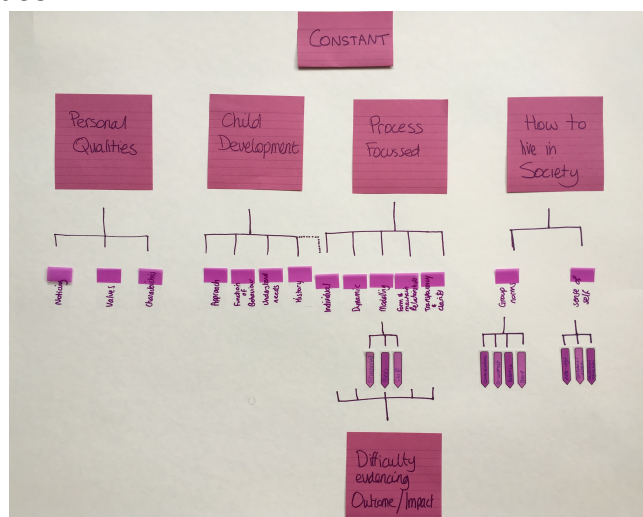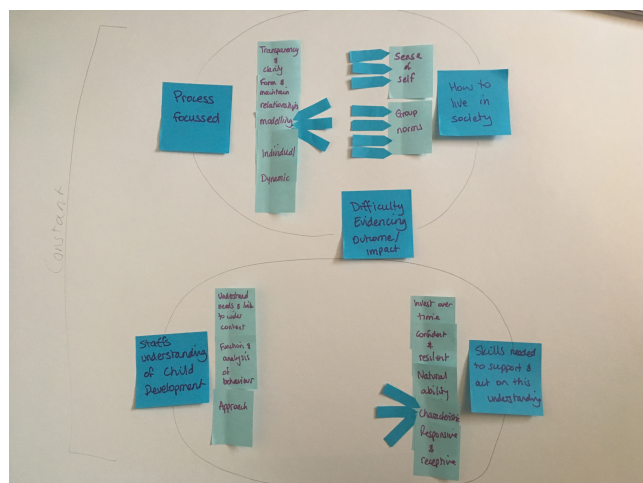
Initial codes:
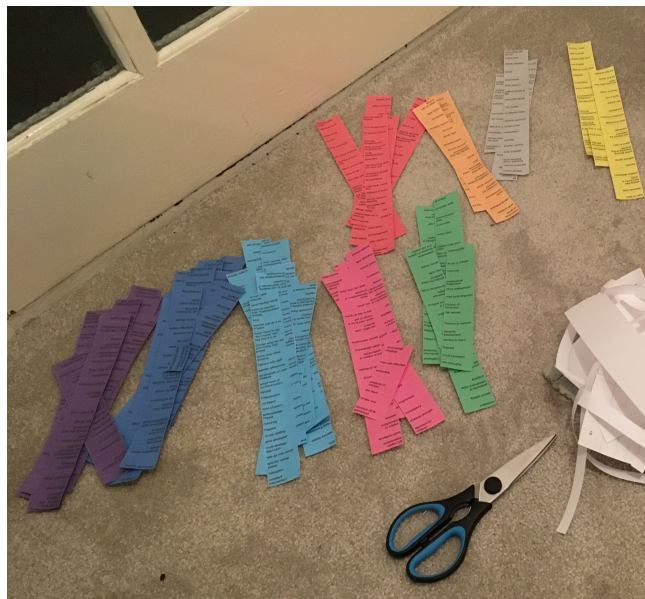
Refining codes:

Refined codes:

Ordered refined codes:

Initial thematic map:

Computed initial thematic map: