An Exploration of the Use of Solution Circles as an Intervention with Secondary School Pupils

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Abstract

Solution Circles is a structured tool for problem solving that has mostly been used with adults as part of peer supervision for school staff, or in educational psychology practice, but there is a scarcity of published research exploring or investigating its use. In particular, there is no available published literature exploring the use of Solution Circles as a weekly intervention with young people. Given that there is a significant focus on schools supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health needs, the research aimed to explore the use of weekly Solution Circle intervention groups across two secondary schools. The mixed methods research, conducted from a pragmatic perspective, involved a total of 36 participants, which included thirty pupil participants – six of whom contributed to a pilot study, two Special Educational Needs Coordinators, and four Solution Circle group Facilitators. Quantitative data indicated that all pupil participants had made progress toward their personalised targets, and 55 per cent of them had either reached or exceeded their expected targets. Inferential statistics conducted on scores of a self-report resilience measure indicated that pupil participants' scores on the Sense of Mastery subscale significantly increased, but scores on the Relatedness subscale, Emotional Reactivity subscale, Resource index and Vulnerability index did not differ significantly. This indicates an increase in pupil participants' optimism, self-efficacy and adaptability. Thematic analysis of qualitative data gathered from focus groups with pupil participants and interviews with Facilitators and Special Educational Needs Coordinators highlighted three overarching themes relating to pupils' experiences of the group, and adults' views on the feasibility of setting up and running the groups. The themes were processes, outcomes and the future. Processes related to practicalities and structures; outcomes related to efficacy, internal resources and external resources; and the future highlighted considerations and ideas for any changes that schools might want to consider for future use of the intervention, and motivation for the school staff and young people to continue using the intervention. The promising findings from this research highlight how future use of Solution Circles groups in schools could be beneficial in increasing confidence, resilience, and providing young people with widened external support systems.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

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List of Abbreviations

EP - Educational Psychologist

SEND - Special educational needs and disabilities

SENCO - Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SEMH - Social, emotional and mental health

TME - Target, Monitoring and Evaluation

SC - Solution Circle

TA - Teaching assistant

CYP – Children and young people

LA – Local authority

ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support Assistant

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat analysis

RSCA - Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents

MAS subscale - Sense of Mastery subscale

REA subscale - Emotional Reactivity subscale

REL subscale - Sense of Relatedness subscale

RES Index - Resource Index

VUL Index - Vulnerability Index

MANOVA - Multivariate Analysis of Variance

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

BPS - British Psychological Society

DECP - Division of Educational and Child Psychology

AEP - Association of Educational Psychologists

DfE - Department for Education

DoH - Department of Health

NICE - National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the current research. The national context and background for the area of research are discussed in section 1.2. In section 1.3, the researcher's position is shared. In section 1.4, the rationale for the research is outlined. Section 1.5 provides a conclusion.

1.2 Context

The context of the research is outlined with reference to local and national areas of focus within education. This relates to the experiences of children and young people (CYP) in school, in relation to implications for their learning, but also their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) development. The governmental agenda is highlighted within this, relating to legislation, policy and government publications that impact on practice in schools and local authorities, and consequently Educational Psychologist (EP) practice. The implications of the current context of SEMH needs in CYP are related to a key area of focus of the current research: resilience.

1.2.1 Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs

SEMH needs is a term defined as an area of special educational needs, first outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice, published by the Department for Education (DfE) (2015). These needs are defined in the Code of Practice as:

> Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder (DfE, 2015, p. 98).

It is well documented that CYP are experiencing heightened SEMH needs, and this is increasingly evident in schools (Coleman, Sykes, & Groom, 2017). There are suggestions that the increase in this need may stem from the pressures that arise in

school, due to the focus on academic attainment (Crowburn & Blow, 2017). This focus is highlighted as being influenced by governmental priorities, which subsequently indirectly affects the wellbeing of CYP (Ward, 2017a). The teaching profession is increasingly highlighted as a stressful and pressurised job, with the suggestion of it being one of the most stressful jobs in Britain (Ward, 2017b). There have been inquiries into the teaching profession in an attempt to reduce the pressures of high workloads, such as a government policy paper outlining intentions to use simpler methods of accountability, reducing the amount of testing at primary schools, and exploring ways of reducing the need for data collection (DfE, 2018b). This was part of a project that also led to the development of a toolkit to aid schools to assess their workloads and take steps to reduce them (DfE, 2018a). Despite this, mental health needs are a prominent area of need for CYP, and schools are held accountable to meet these needs. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) outlines that schools have a responsibility to clearly identify the processes they adopt in order to meet CYPs' needs. They are also legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that CYPs' needs are met to ensure they are able to access education (e.g. Children and Families Act, HM Government, 2014).

Schools are highlighted as settings that are best placed to meet SEMH needs at an early intervention level, as CYP spend the majority of their time there (Coleman, Sykes, & Groom, 2017). The recent government green paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision (DfE & Department of Health [DoH], 2017) highlighted the way in which schools can address these needs. The paper made a suggestion for each school or college to have a Mental Health Lead, which would involve identifying needs, referring to external services, and overseeing whole school approaches to meeting SEMH needs. The green paper also suggests the development of Mental Health Support Teams to work with the Mental Health Leads, an intention to achieve shorter waiting times for mental health support, and improvement of services for young people aged between 16-25. The expectation on schools to meet the SEMH needs of their pupils could lead to feelings of uncertainty amongst school staff, as a lack of targeted mental health training can result in them feeling ill-equipped to support these needs (Armiger, 2019). The green paper highlights how schools are increasingly accountable as the first port of call to meet their students' mental health needs, and highlights the need for schools to receive the support necessary to feel they have resources and tools they can draw upon to try to address this growing area of need.

Due to the aforementioned growing pressure on schools to evidence the impact their teaching is having on their pupils' academic progress, this can mean that the importance of supporting wellbeing can be overshadowed (Crowburn & Blow, 2017). Schools can feel stuck, as the pressure mounts for pupils to make expected levels of academic progress, but their emotional needs are not being addressed and therefore CYP may not be emotionally ready to access learning. This highlights the importance of schools receiving adequate levels of support from professionals equipped to support SEMH needs, in order to empower schools to meet these needs.

1.2.2 The Role of Educational Psychologists

EPs have a key role in supporting CYPs' SEMH (Roffey, 2016). EPs have a unique role in that they can work at various system levels, including individual, group, whole school and organisational levels (Farrell et al., 2006). The application of psychology with a variety of systems can support the wellbeing of CYP both directly and indirectly. This can include providing whole school training, facilitating consultations with CYP, their families and educational setting staff, undertaking research, and engaging in direct work with CYP, either in groups or individually. Direct work can involve delivering, facilitating or overseeing individual or group interventions, aimed at either learning or SEMH needs (Farrell et al., 2006).

The focus of work undertaken by EPs has shifted in philosophy to a paradigm that encompasses different methods of working. A move away from a within child, deficit focused approach has enabled more systemic ways of working (Farrell & Woods, 2015). This enables EPs to work with systems around the CYP to empower them to provide the support necessary to meet CYPs' needs. Additionally, in line with recommendations in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), EP work adopts a child-centred approach, with the voice of the CYP at the centre to enable meaningful and positive ways forward. This includes putting more emphasis on exploring the impact of the environment and systems around the CYP on their holistic development, including social, emotional, and academic development (Farrell & Woods, 2015).

Although EPs appear well placed to support CYPs' mental health, their positioning in government publications may not reflect the potential for their work. For example, the recent government green paper on transforming mental health provision (DfE & DoH, 2017) made reference only once to EPs in their role in supporting CYP mental health,

outlining that the proposed new Mental Health Support Teams can work closely alongside EPs. This point will be revisited in Chapter 5, with regard to implications of the research for EP practice.

1.2.3 Resilience

Resilience is highlighted as a key protective factor for emotional wellbeing (DfE, 2016). For CYP lacking in resilience, this can impact not only on their social and emotional development, but also on their academic progress (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005). Resilience is a broad term that encompasses many elements. It is defined as the ability to 'bounce back' from adversities (Action for Children, 2007). It involves numerous interconnecting elements, including self-esteem, confidence, self-efficacy, flexibility, adaption and social problem solving tactics (Rutter, 1985).

Hart, Blincow and Thomas (2012) developed the Resilience Framework, which further explores the elements that attribute to the development and maintenance of resilience. The framework outlines the key features of resilience as basics, belonging, learning, coping, and core self. The basics include having access to adequate housing, feeling safe and having enough sleep. A feeling of belonging is supported through having responsibilities and maintaining positive relationships. Learning involves developing life skills and having support to plan for future careers. The ability to cope is fostered through using problem solving, being brave and respecting boundaries. The core self is knowing oneself and being optimistic.

The Resilience Framework links to literature on resilience across the various aspects that encompass measures of resilience, such as the Resilience Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA) (Prince-Embury, 2007). The RSCA draws upon various theoretical frameworks related to aspects of resilience. For example, it makes links to the relationship between self-efficacy, developed through the interplay between exposure to various experiences and responses to situations (Bandura, 1993). This relates to the 'core self' factor of the Resilience Framework, as self-efficacy relates to views on one's abilities, which can impact on optimism. A further factor outlined in the theoretical underpinning of the RSCA is the impact of social relationships on resilience and wellbeing, which are described as external buffers. Resilience and wellbeing are identified as being supported through CYP being aware of how and when to seek support from others (e.g., Thompson, Flood & Goodvin, 2006). This highlights the

importance of maintaining positive relationships in supporting resilience, which is another factor outlined in the Resilience Framework as 'belonging'. Finally, the ability to regulate one's emotional responses in light of negative experiences is another factor thought to support the maintenance of resilience (Eisenberg, Champion & Ma, 2004). This relates to the 'coping' factor of the Resilience Framework.

1.3 Researcher's Position

The researcher first became interested in the utilisation of peer support when working as a teaching assistant (TA) on a supply basis. Having the experience of working in numerous schools meant there was the opportunity to see how each school's values and ethos impacted on how they supported CYPs' learning and wellbeing. Of particular interest was how schools drew upon pupils' internal and external resources to enable them to help themselves and others. Additionally, the observed impact of CYP having support from a peer rather than an adult was powerful. The impact of the imbalance of positioning of power when adults were viewed as the expert and source of authority was particularly poignant. This also appeared true for the researcher in both professional and personal capacities, as the noted impact of having peer support from colleagues or friends was significant for the researcher in terms of both wellbeing and professional development. This interest grew to become an area of passion, and went on to underpin the philosophical foundation of the researcher's work as a carer, an assistant EP, and a trainee EP. In the researcher's current practice as a trainee EP, there is a key effort made to activate people to draw upon the resources that they already have, through applying aspects of solution focused theory (e.g., Ajmal, 2001), positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and Rogerian theory (e.g., Rogers, 1951). Central to this combination of psychological theories, for example, is the application of unconditional positive regard, resource activation and working toward solutions, and drawing upon things that are working well during consultation and direct work with CYP. These are approaches that, when complemented by support from external support systems, appear to be able to promote positive outcomes in practice.

Additionally, using structured problem solving approaches during EP group peer supervision sessions has been a significant source of support and professional growth for the researcher. Approaches such as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (Forest, Pearpoint, & O'Brien, 1991), Solution Circles (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996), DeBono's (1999) Thinking Hats, and reflecting teams (Andersen, 1987) have all

been utilised and have helped to make sense of problem situations and gain clarity on how to move forward. Due to the personal benefit the researcher has had of using problem solving techniques with peers as a means of professional support, it was thought that a structured peer support based intervention might also be beneficial for CYP.

1.4 Rationale

Given the current focus on addressing SEMH needs in CYP, and the aforementioned literature surrounding the importance of resilience in meeting these needs, the current research seeks to draw upon peer support to explore the use of an intervention that has the potential scope to increase resilience.

1.4.1 Peer Support

As literature on resilience identifies problem solving skills and social relationships as key protective factors (e.g., Hart, Blincow & Thomas, 2012; Thompson, Flood & Goodvin, 2006), it is therefore important for schools to foster supportive peer relationships in schools (Weare, 2011). Peer support implemented in school settings is defined by Coleman, Sykes and Groom (2017) as CYP helping one another in a structured and planned way. Group interventions that draw upon peer support can have many benefits. For example, they enable group members to learn new skills and apply these across wider systems and contexts, such as across school, home and community systems, enabling support to benefit many people and impact on multiple system levels (Wood, 2016).

Available literature on structured peer support interventions for CYP has focused on providing emotional peer support for CYP with medical needs (e.g., Elafros et al., 2013), CYP whose family members have mental health needs (e.g., Hargreaves, Bond, O'Brien, Forer, & Davies, 2008), or for CYP with Autistic Spectrum Disorder or other special educational needs (e.g., Karoff, Tucker, Alvarez, & Kovacs, 2017). These examples highlight a range of focuses for peer support interventions, and also outline the context in which they are implemented, such as in schools, health settings or in the community.

Coleman, Sykes and Groom (2017) undertook a review of peer support interventions that aimed to support CYPs' positive mental health. The review highlighted the key

factors that supported the efficacy of the interventions. Of note was the importance of schools facilitating the development of positive mental health and wellbeing through the development of positive coping skills within the peer interventions. These skills were highlighted as emotional regulation, problem solving and positive thinking. These skills can be seen in the context of literature on resilience, highlighted earlier in the chapter. Additionally, the importance of external support systems, such as friendships and whole school support were seen as factors that contributed to positive outcomes from peer support interventions, another key factor in resilience literature.

1.4.2 Solution Circles

Solution Circles (SCs) is a method, developed in 1996 by Forrest and Pearpoint, that draws upon peer support in a structured manner. The developers describe SCs as a creative tool for problem solving. The underlying assumption of SCs is that all people, whether within a work place or the community, have the capacity to help others if they are given the opportunity to do so. This is based on a belief that people can do better when they work together (Forrest & Pearpoint, 1996). Although the creators of SCs do not overtly specify that the tool is intended to be used only by adults, the information available on SCs suggests that it is a tool that adults can use to promote inclusion for children (Forrest & Pearpoint, 1996). SCs follow a structure consisting of four stages: description of the problem, brainstorming solutions/idea generation, problem clarification/discussion, and next steps/actions. Each stage lasts for six minutes. Each member of the SC group has a specific role: the problem presenter (the person who brings a problem they want to share), the process facilitator (who is responsible for time-keeping and ensuring the stages are followed), recorder (who records the discussions in pictorial or note form) and the brainstorm team, who suggest ideas and possible solutions.

The creators of SCs do not make explicit links to theoretical underpinnings of the approach, however some of the assumptions and processes of SCs can be linked to psychological processes and theories. For example, Wood (2016) identifies Solution Oriented underpinnings in SCs. Solution Oriented approaches, which originated from Brief Family Therapy work by Steve De Shazer and Insoo Kimg Berg in the US (De Shazer, 1982), are identified by pursuing solutions and focusing on resources rather than on problems or deficits (Ajmal, 2001). This approach is empowering, due to its underlying belief that people are the experts in their own lives. SCs can also be linked to

resilience theories, such as those mentioned in section 1.2.3 (e.g., Hart, Blincow & Thomas, 2012), due to the outline of resilience protective factors as activating external resources and seeking support, which is central to the SC approach.

SCs adopt a circle approach, which is used in a variety of interventions, such as Circle of Friends (Newton, Taylor, & Wilson, 1996), Circle Time (Mosley, 1996), and Circle of Adults (Wilson, & Newton, 2006). Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) highlight some of the psychological processes involved in the circle based problem solving approaches. These include Rogerian principles (Rogers, 1951), narrative approaches (Morgan, 2000), psychodynamic theory (Hanko, 1999), hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969) and social constructionism (Kukla, 2000), which are explored further in Chapter 2.

Circle approaches have many benefits, as outlined by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015). These include the non-hierarchical group structure with a shared focus and purpose, where all group members are of equal value and have the opportunity to feel listened to. Circle approaches evoke a strong sense of group identity, which enables group members to feel safe in order to welcome support, as well as offering it to others. Circle based approaches also encourage collaborative and cooperative problem solving approaches, which can positively impact the group members both within and outside the circle.

1.5 Conclusion

Overall, the current educational context highlights the prevalence of SEMH needs amongst CYP, and the expectation and pressure on schools to meet these needs. The impact of fostering resilience on addressing SEMH needs has been outlined, alongside the potential for EPs to provide the necessary support for schools to feel equipped to implement this support. Given the theoretical and practical advantages of using structured peer support methods of intervention for SEMH needs with CYP in schools, there is scope to broaden the use of SCs beyond the application with adults. Although the tool appears to have been developed to be used with adults, it provides a clear, structured model that, alongside adult support, could be applied with young people. Therefore, this research intends to explore the use of SCs with young people as a structured intervention with an aim to facilitate group problem solving and increase resilience.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Overview

As outlined in Chapter 1, given the current context of mental health needs amongst CYP in the UK, promoting positive mental health within EP practice is a crucial part of the role. These needs can be supported through implementing group peer-based interventions that have a systems influence, through learning new skills and applying these in wider school and community settings to benefit a range of people (Wood, 2016).

The current chapter will systematically explore the evidence base of SCs. Section 2.2 will outline a critical, systematic literature review of the published research, which involved two separate searches, relating to SCs and interventions adopting a 'circle' based approach. The findings from the literature review will then lead to the triangulation and critique of the theoretical frameworks that incorporate the psychological processes and perspectives relating to SCs in section 2.3. Section 2.4 will provide a conclusion of the literature review.

2.2 Systematic Literature Review

2.2.1 Systematic Literature Review Approach

A systematic literature review was completed in order to identify and explore the evidence base underpinning SCs. The systematic review followed the recommendations of Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou (2016) through applying the SALSA framework: systematic approaches to searching, appraisal, synthesis and analysis. Systematic approaches to searching involved outlining search terms, databases used and articles found. The search utilised the following databases: Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), Child Development and Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, PsycARTICLES and PsycINFO. These databases were selected for the search as they contain the journals most relevant to Educational Psychology. Articles that met the inclusion criteria in Table 1 below are included in the review. Snowballing of references in selected articles was also completed in order to explore any further relevant research that was not discovered during the initial searches. Please see Appendix 1 for the literature review summary table, containing all articles reviewed in this section. The systematic approach to appraisal involved reading through each article and noting an overview of details and

critical analysis in the literature review summary table in Appendix 1. Synthesis is demonstrated through Search 1 and 2, where the articles are expanded on within the text of this chapter, providing an in-depth exploration of the aim, method, theoretical background, outcome and critical analysis of each study. Analysis is outlined in the summary sections of Search 1 and 2, and in section 2.3, where the literature reviewed is triangulated in order to critically evaluate the evidence base and compare the research reviewed, as well as explore the theoretical underpinnings of the literature available and how this links to the current study.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Research that was conducted in the UK and published in the English language, in order to review research most relevant and generalisable to UK school systems and EP practice in UK local authorities.	Research conducted outside of the UK.
Research from 1996 and onwards was included, as this was the year in which the approaches explored in the review were first created.	Research prior to 1996.
The purpose of the research must have been exploring or evaluating Solution Circles and 'circle' approaches, in order to be relevant to the current research. Additionally, the approach that was identified as being evaluated or explored must have resembled the original model (in terms of structure and principles), in order to be a valid contribution to the evidence base.	Research that was not explorative or evaluative, or did not resemble the model it identified to be researching.
Research must have focused on working with children and young people in primary and secondary schools, or be specifically linked to the use of Solution Circles and circle approaches in any capacity (i.e. with adults or children).	Research that was conducted in clinical settings, or did not relate to children and young people or Solution Circles/ circle approaches.
Research must have been published in a peer-reviewed journal, in order to identify studies that were rigorous and valid.	Studies or articles that were not published in peer reviewed journals, such as online news articles or book chapters.
Research was included if there was available access to full text articles.	Research that did not have full text access.

Table 1 - Literature Search Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The searches were conducted in two phases, in order to review as much relevant literature as possible. A visual representation of the systematic literature review is demonstrated in Figure 1. The searches were completed using the following search terms:

- Search 1 (specific): 'Solution Circles'
- Search 2 (circle approaches): 'circle approach' and 'interventions' or 'strategies' or 'approaches'
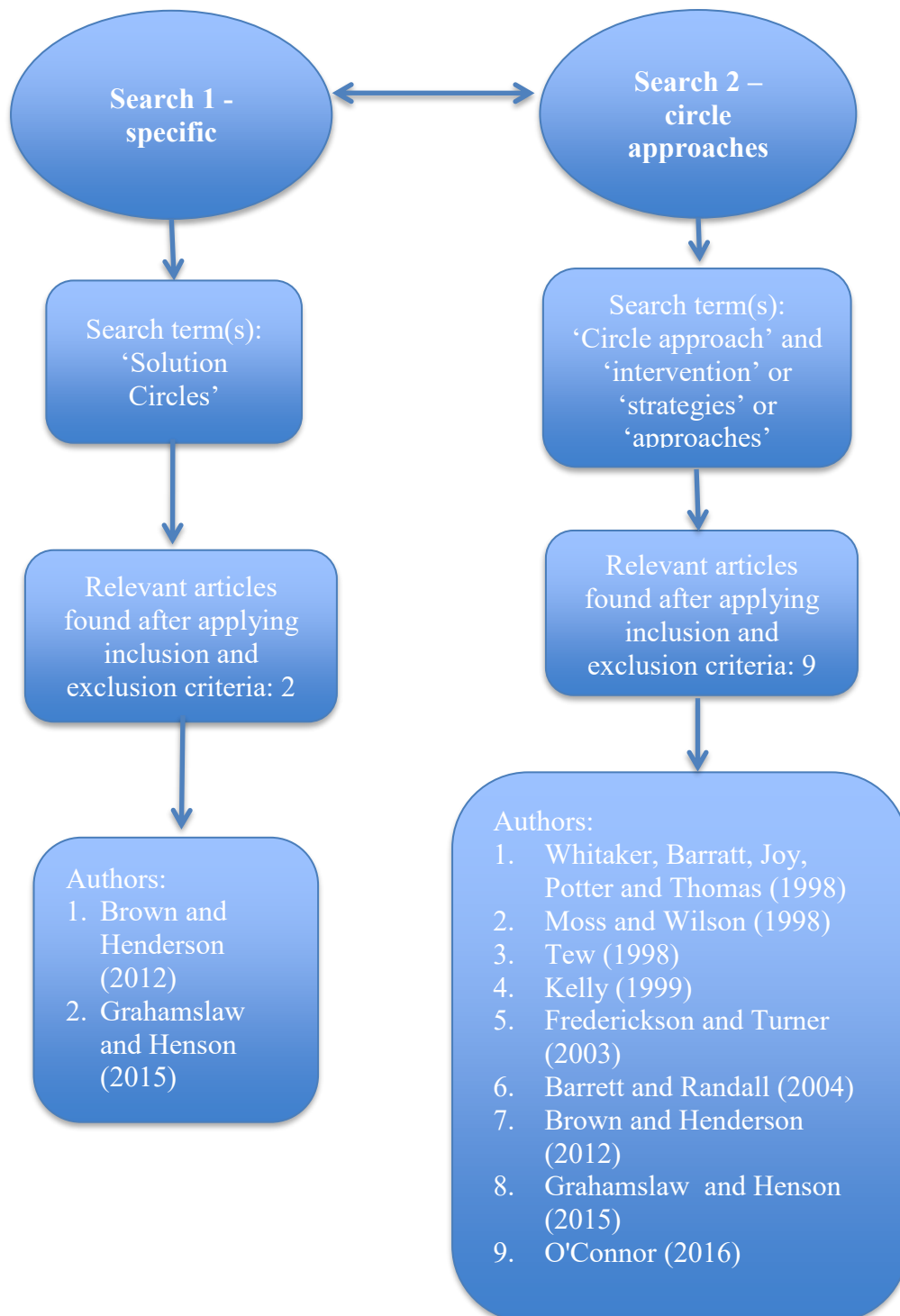
Figure 1 - Systematic Literature Review Procedure

2.2.2 Search 1 - Solution Circles

Search 1 applied a specific search term to ascertain the evidence base for SCs, with both adults and CYP. The search term used was 'Solution Circles'. The search yielded two relevant research papers (after applying the criteria outlined in Table 1), which indicates that there is not yet an established evidence base for SCs. This is not to suggest that there is not presence of further unpublished research or discussions regarding SCs, but these are not included within the scope of this review, as they do not meet the requirements of the criteria. The papers are critically reviewed in detail below.

Brown and Henderson (2012) evaluated the application of SCs in one primary school and one secondary school with teaching staff in Aberdeen. The methodology of the study was qualitative. In the primary school, SCs were used twice to discuss strategies to support children with diagnoses of dyslexia. In the secondary school, SCs were used once, and focused on how to support two specific pupils to engage with particular subjects. In the secondary school, the author of the study, who was working as a trainee EP at the time, facilitated the SC, and an assistant EP adopted the role of the scribe. In the primary school, the head teacher facilitated the two sessions, with support given by the second author – also a trainee EP. It was unclear if training was given to school staff members so they could facilitate sessions without the presence of external professionals. The efficacy of the SCs was evaluated using different methods for the primary and the secondary school. In the secondary school, evaluation was conducted via verbal feedback from the participants by asking them to share their views at the end of each SC session. Overall, the secondary school had indicated that they had found the sessions a positive experience. They praised the structure of the problem solving process, having a record of the ideas discussed, and focusing on positive ideas. The deputy head teacher also reported that they hoped to include SCs in their school's Behaviour Management Policy. In the primary school, the second author gathered data using various methods, including meeting the head teacher to discuss her views of the session, a questionnaire for teachers, and conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis with the teaching staff who took part in the session. From the data gathered, the perceptions of the session were largely positive. SCs were commended for encouraging a collaborative and supportive approach to group working, which allowed for the generation of a wide range of ideas, and where people knew they had opportunities to talk and be listened to. They also praised the approach for encouraging

them to work more systemically and consider exploration of various solutions and strategies.

Some of the issues highlighted by the researchers and participants included the group roles. The facilitator was seen as a key and valuable role, in order to contain the group without being directly involved in the generation of ideas. However, the participants expressed concerns about the role of the recorder/scribe, as they felt that the person undertaking this role had less opportunity to form part of the group. There were also some concerns around feasibility, such as staff capacity and having time to run the sessions. Some participants also expressed concerns about feeling pressure to identify a problem for discussion, and feeling vulnerable as the 'Problem Presenter'. The participants engaged in only three SCs across the two schools, leading to queries about whether the participants could have evaluated the approach as thoroughly as if they had opportunities to use it more frequently. There are also inconsistencies in how the approach was applied and evaluated across the schools, which has implications for means of evaluating the impact of SCs overall. As the groups were facilitated by professionals with different roles, and evaluated using different means, the groups cannot be compared, leading to questionable validity. In terms of impact and future research recommendations, the authors discussed the potential for SCs to be used to facilitate change in schools at various levels, including individual, class and across the whole school. The authors also shared that future research may wish to use the SC approach with pupils in classroom settings, as a means to promote problem solving skills.

Research by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) explored the use of SCs and Circle of Adults in Surrey, for means of comparison. The purpose of the research was to explore the underlying processes of the two approaches and how helpful these processes are in facilitating problem solving in schools. There were 62 SC participants in total, consisting of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and school staff. The participants engaged in a total of ten SC sessions during their supervision, partnership or staff meetings, using an adapted model of SCs. The model is proposed by Rees (2009) to further incorporate Solution Oriented psychology through applying further stages of problem clarification and discussion. The authors highlight, however, that there has not been formal publication of the adapted model. The methodology of the research was qualitative, with open-

ended questionnaires used for means of evaluation. The findings from the data gathered indicated that the participants felt motivated, focused, and valued that they had opportunities to contribute and help others, and share ideas that could be built upon. This resulted in a reframed, more positive view of a problem situation and how to move forwards. The group provided a safe space where problems could be discussed confidentially, and the participants felt they were able to speak without fear of being judged. This finding is somewhat different to the views of the participants in Brown and Henderson's (2012) study, where concerns were shared about the vulnerability of the Problem Presenter. This highlights the importance of the group dynamic, and the relationship between group members prior to joining the group, as well as the establishment of trust and respect through collaboratively developing group rules when the groups form. The key differences between the participants' experiences in the Circle of Adults or SC groups highlighted that those who engaged with SCs commented more on the strategies and solutions offered, whereas the participants in the Circle of Adults groups commented on deepening their understanding of the problem situation. The researchers suggested this to be a factor influenced by the length of the sessions, and the focus of SCs on solution oriented theory.

The researchers themselves highlight some of the limitations of the research. Of note is the fact that the authors, who are EPs, facilitated the sessions and therefore ethical implications of their role as participants and researchers is an important factor to consider. The research did not evaluate the effects of taking part in SCs, although there was in-depth consideration of the experiences of the participants, which is similarly the main aim of the current research. This research raises interesting considerations for the use of SCs more widely through suggesting use outside of school settings, in the community.

2.2.2.1 Conclusions from Search 1

The reviewed literature specifically researching the use of SCs is sparse, with only one of the articles applying the traditional model outlined by the developers Forest and Pearpoint (1996). However, the two articles provide an interesting insight into how SCs have been used with adults in peer support capacities within schools. Theoretical underpinnings and psychological processes involved in SCs were noted in one of the articles, and are explored further in Search 2. The research reviewed focuses on the use of SCs with adults, and highlights possibilities for SCs to be used systemically in wider

contexts. The potential value of using SCs with CYP has also been suggested, which the current research aims to address and explore, with consideration of transference and accessibility of a model initially designed for use with adults (please see section 3.6.2 and 3.6.4 in Chapter 3 for discussion regarding this point). All research conducted on SCs outlines many positive benefits to the approach, including having a clear way forward, strategies to implement, and increasing group cohesiveness. It was noted by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) that SCs provided a valuable idea-generating tool that was quick and concise, but was only used as stand alone sessions in their research. The current research aims to utilise the positive and practical aspects of SCs, but also to extend and expend their value by running sessions on a regular basis as an intervention package with young people.

There are also some key learning opportunities from the available research, such as considering the ethos of the school in which SCs are used and how this may impact on the way in which participants engage with the sessions. This relates to the school allowing time for participants to attend sessions, and for the professional relationships between staff members. For example, it was noted that some participants had concerns around sharing their problems and the potentially vulnerable situation they were in when doing so. This highlights the importance of ensuring that groups are carefully planned; and that the school supports and celebrates an environment where individuals can share problems without fear or concerns of being judged. Additionally, there were interesting points to consider regarding the feasibility of the research, which is relevant to the current research (RQ4). Of note was staff capacity to attend SC sessions and finding time to run the sessions. It is accepted that staff capacity can be a practical challenge in schools, but it is hoped that in the current research timetabling specific times to facilitate the sessions in advance will help protect the time for the groups.

Overall, the scarcity of research on SCs certainly highlights it as an area that warrants further exploration, as will now be discussed in section 2.2.3. The approach has many merits as reported by research participants and therefore these benefits could be extended by involving young people in running groups as a means of empowering them and increasing their skills in problem solving. The current research also offers new opportunities to build capacity in schools, as staff members will take on the role of the adult Facilitator. However, unlike in the aforementioned research, the Facilitators will not adopt the role of the 'expert', but will receive training so they are able to oversee the

process with the young people and provide support if needed, whilst empowering the group members to take ownership of the process. The Facilitators will also then have opportunities to disseminate these skills and apply SCs across the wider school community.

2.2.3 Search 2 - Circle Approaches

Given the limited literature available from Search 1, a second search was completed to review the literature on other interventions that adopt a circle approach. The decision to widen the search was to explore some of the philosophical, psychological and methodological frameworks utilised, and how this may be relevant to the current study. The search terms used were 'circle approach' and 'intervention' or 'strategies' or 'approaches'. The search resulted in nine relevant articles that met the search criteria detailed in Table 1 (and summarised in Appendix 1). Circle approaches within the cited literature below that met the criteria were Circle of Friends, Circle of Adults and Circle Time. The literature reviewed will be discussed separately for each intervention, with an explanation of what the intervention entails, and a critical review of the literature regarding it. Two of the articles were previously discovered during Search 1. One of the articles details the exploration of the use of both SCs and Circle of Adults, so is discussed again with a focus on Circle of Adults. The other article focuses purely on SCs, and therefore is not discussed again in this section.

2.2.3.1 Circle of Friends

The literature search identified a large number of articles on Circle of Friends. Circle of Friends is an intervention, derived from North America and based on work by Pearpoint, Forest and Snow (1992), aimed at promoting inclusion for CYP with SEND in mainstream schools. The approach is outlined as applying social psychology and a systemic approach, which values the importance and impact of peer support (Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996). Taylor (1997) outlines the intervention as involving weekly meetings with between six to eight students, with the child who requires the support referred to as the 'focus child'. Before the group begins, a whole class discussion is held without the focus child present, to discuss their strengths and difficulties. The class are encouraged to empathise with the focus child, and are invited to volunteer to be part of the group. The discussion from this session is then shared with the focus child on the first meeting, and the group work together during each session to collaboratively come up with ideas to support the child. The group members take ownership of certain

strategies to help implement them outside of the group. Each session involves reviewing and discussing progress made over each week and thinking of further practical steps. This approach is similar to SCs in that there is a focus on coming up with solutions to help a particular person. However, each Circle of Friends session focuses on the same person in order to increase their social support and inclusion, whereas SCs allow for the Problem Presenter to change each session if more than one is held, and they can choose to share any problem that is relevant to them.

Whitaker, Barratt, Joy, Potter and Thomas (1998) investigated the use of Circle of Friends with children with autism. This research is now dated, however it is the first research on Circle of Friends, which will be compared with more recent literature. They set up seven circles across mainstream schools and one special school for pupils in years 3 to 10. A member of the Autism Outreach Team within Leicestershire led the initial class discussion and the class teacher was instrumental in selecting the group members from those who volunteered. Evaluative data was collected through questionnaires, and individual and group semi-structured interviews. The data revealed that there were improvements in social integration, anxiety levels, and behaviour for the focus child; and increased levels of empathy, self-esteem, and engagement in discussions for group members. The facilitators reported that they found the experience worthwhile, and were impressed by the skills demonstrated by the children in the group. The circle members themselves reported that they enjoyed helping and learning new skills. The facilitators felt their role could be challenging when wanting to steer the group to ensure the pupils worked constructively, but also empowering them to take ownership of the group process. They highlighted the helpfulness of establishing group rules and allocating roles, a similar process used in the set up of the current research. The facilitators noted that they sometimes had to prompt the children to maintain focus and contribute. The article does not note if this was a concern with a particular age group, but it could be hypothesised that younger group members may have found this more difficult.

Although the research offers a valuable contribution to the evidence base for Circle of Friends, there was a large disparity between the number of circle meetings held in each group, therefore they cannot be accurately compared. There was also no clear explanation of how the data was analysed, which raises issues for replicability. The authors attempted to measure self esteem but only used this measure with participants

from three circle groups, which showed positive effects compared to classmates not involved in the group, however this was only a small sample of the participants. The research provided helpful insight into the practicalities of when to run circle based interventions, as the participants had noted disappointment with missing their lunchtime to attend the group.

Frederickson and Turner (2003) evaluated the use of Circle of Friends with 20 focus children with SEMH difficulties in a primary school across different year groups. There were ten groups set up in the first phase of the research and the other ten were on a waiting list, which acted as a control initially and then engaged in the groups after the first phase had finished. The groups in the first phase were facilitated by educational psychology masters students, who linked up with class teachers and fed back the goals and strategies. The groups in the second phase were facilitated by a variety of professionals: school staff (overseen by an EP), a specialist teacher, and a specialist support assistant. The authors linked the theoretical underpinning of the intervention to the development of social competence by applying Dodge, Pettit, McClasky and Brown's (1986) model of social competence in children, which outlines 5 stages and factors involved in the complex interplay of social skill development. The factors include the social situation, the child's perception and understanding, the child's social behaviour, other children's judgments about the child, and other children's social behaviour. The article noted that the authors are building upon previous work and recommendations by unpublished qualitative research conducted by Taylor and Burden (2000), which provided an insight into the participant's views and impressions of the intervention. They also make reference to previous published qualitative research, which has reportedly provided encouraging outcomes from Circle of Friends (e.g. Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996; Pearpoint, Forest & Snow, 1992; Taylor, 1997). The authors used a plethora of measures, each with the intention of providing information about the various stages of the Dodge, Pettit, McClasky, and Brown (1986) model (please see Appendix 1 for details of measures). The results of the data collected indicated an increase in social integration and acceptance, but no change in students' self-perception. Although, the scores relating to perceptions of learning competence for the students in the control groups were more negative over time than the participants in the intervention groups. There were no other significant effects found on any of the measures. The research had some limitations. For example, the groups in the first and second phase of the research were facilitated by professionals with different job roles,

and therefore different levels of training, skills and experience, which may have affected the outcomes between groups and the validity of the research.

Barrett and Randall (2004) evaluated the use of Circle of Friends using two adapted models of the approach: Model 2 and Model 3. Model 2 does not involve discussing the focus child in their absence, and a whole class discussion is held where everyone is present. Model 3 involved three groups set up within a class to include more than two focus children in a group, without the children knowing they were the focus of the group. In the first group, applying Model 2, the intervention ran for six weeks and was facilitated by the head teacher and a trainee EP. The study was evaluated using a mixed methods approach, including a sociometric questionnaire, another questionnaire and a whole class discussion. The outcomes showed that the intervention had little effect on peer relationships for the focus child. The authors queried whether six weeks was long enough to see changes. They also highlighted the limitations of the head teacher facilitating the sessions, and lack of follow up with the class teacher in order to transfer and reinforce learning from the group into the classroom.

The second group applied Model 3. The three groups, involving all class members, met for six weeks. The intervention was evaluated using My Class Inventory (Fraser, 1982), a questionnaire around social skills (Northumberland County Council Pupil Questionnaire, 2000), and interviews with the children and teachers. The class teacher, the head teacher and the community education worker facilitated the circles, and the school EP was involved in the planning, review and evaluation stages. The staff members reported to value the approach and expressed a wish to use it in the future. The children reportedly increased their perceptions of their social skills, and there were some positive effects on the general perception of the class ethos. There was some indication that the focus children had widened their social circles in school, however overall the intervention was not found to be effective for the most isolated focus child. They queried whether the behaviours discussed in the group were specific enough to be relevant to the needs of the focus child. The authors suggested that again the intervention might have needed to run for longer, to allow for embedding of the systemic approach to see positive effects. Four months after the group, the results were sustained for the pupils who had seen positive effects.

The limitations of this research largely include the ethical considerations, due to the fact that the children identified as the focus for the group were not made aware this was the case. This has implications for informed consent. Additionally, each group was facilitated by professionals in different job roles, affecting the validity of the research. Additionally, it was highlighted that there was a lack of follow up and generalisation between the head teacher and class teacher in study 1, again highlighting the implications for the validity of the research.

O'Connor (2016) conducted a single case study into the effects of Circle of Friends for a ten year old child in a mainstream school with diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. The group ran for three months for twelve sessions, facilitated by the class teacher. Baseline data was collected through observation for three months using STAR (Settings, Triggers, Actions, and Results), based on work by Zarkowska and Clements (1994), to highlight target behaviours. The author also used an adapted version of the Belonging Scales (Fredrickson, Simmonds, Evans & Soulsby, 2007) to measure the focus child's self worth and acceptance pre and post the intervention. The children participating in the group completed the Social Inclusion Survey (Frederickson & Graham, 1999), which explores children's willingness to interact with particular classmates. The results of the intervention indicated that the peers in the Circle of Friends had a better understanding of the focus child, and were more willing to interact with them. Stigma around the differences presented by the focus child was reduced. The focus child also reportedly felt more included socially, had higher self-esteem and a wider social support network, both inside and outside of school.

The author did not outline a detailed discussion of the study, limiting the impact of it for future research considerations, generalisbility or dissemination. Further limitations of the research include the fact that the focus child was receiving ABA and a 'positive reinforcement programme', which may make it difficult to ascertain what contributed to the positive outcomes. Alongside this, the author works with the pupil, although it is unclear in what capacity. In light of this, the researcher may have been invested in the outcome, which highlights the possibility for bias. Finally, the pupils were invited to rate their views of the focus child, which has ethical considerations for potentially negative views being shared about the child without their knowledge.

2.2.3.2 Circle Time

Circle Time is a group intervention used in schools. Mosley's (1996) model of Circle Time is frequently referred to in the reviewed literature below. It incorporates processes and factors that involve encouraging the children and adults to give positive feedback to one another; share positive statements about themselves; provide positive adult attention; and explore systemic issues within school, such as friendships and motivation for learning. The teacher chooses the activities for Circle Time and they are usually centered around common issues that arise within the school and home environment. The intervention allows for children to discuss in a trusted group any issues within agreed rules and structures. Similar to SCs, it allows participants opportunities to share problems and accept advice from peers. However, Circle Time does not always give focus to one particular person for the session, and does not always adhere to a specific structure.

Moss and Wilson (1998), in their role as primary school teachers, conducted a small scale research project implementing Circle Time for seven weeks involving the whole class, with an aim to improve social relationships between year 6 pupils. The authors did not align the research with a philosophical framework, but detailed the practical steps of setting up and delivering Circle Time. The authors drew upon books on Circle Time, particularly Bliss, Robinson and Maines (1995), Moon (1990) and Stanford and Stoate (1990). They planned and delivered sessions focused on: learning about each other, listening, positivity, managing conflict, expressing views and feelings, and differences and similarities. The intervention was evaluated using qualitative and quantitative methods, through discussions between the two authors and with the pupils, a questionnaire, and a sociometric measure (Fredrickson, 1991) used pre and post intervention. The authors noted that the pupils had formed more positive friendships with one another and there were fewer incidents of peer conflict. The pupils also became more actively involved in discussions and seemed more open to working with each other. The answers from the questionnaire indicated that some pupils felt more willing and positive about working with another pupil whom they had not worked with before. The sociometric measure also showed that there were an increased number of children the pupils liked and wanted to work with in the classroom. Overall, the authors highlight the value of Circle Time and acknowledge that it should be used as a preventative measure, embedded in the school curriculum. Similarly with other literature reviewed, a potential limitation of this study is that the authors were

instrumental in evaluating the intervention that they had delivered, and therefore they were potentially biased. The authors also queried the use of the questionnaire they designed and administered, and wondered whether the questions asked were too abstract and therefore not an accurate measure of progress.

Tew (1998) evaluated the use of Mosley's (1996) Circle Time model and strategies with year 7 pupils for nine weeks in a Personal and Social Education (PSE) lesson, compared to another student-centred group intervention delivered by a colleague. Tew argues that there is little acknowledgement of the importance of social and personal education in secondary schools, and there is little support, time, or training given to secondary teachers to provide pastoral support or PSE lessons. The author also highlights Circle Time's underpinnings in humanistic psychology and the work of Rogers (1951), outlining the importance for CYP to be provided with unconditional positive regard and support in learning environments to promote self-concept. The Circle Time group adhered to a structure of a warm up involving a game; rounds, where each circle member was invited to speak; open forum, where young people can share a problem and seek advice and support from the group; celebration, where pupils thanked one another; and closure, which ended with a fun activity. Tew evaluated the sessions using questionnaires and interviews with a selection of participants. The results indicated that students preferred the Circle Time group. They noted that they enjoyed the games, sitting in a circle, learning about how others feel, listening and talking. The participants noted in the questionnaires that they had learnt transferrable skills, and the majority felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. Limitations of the research include how the author attempted to measure the change in relational interactions. This was conducted by asking the pupils how many of the people in the intervention they knew by name, and were asked to write a positive comment next to each name. The validity of this as a measure of relational interactions is questionable, as knowing another person's name does not give any indication of the quality of the relationship.

Kelly (1999) adopted a quasi-experimental design, and applied the Circle Time model suggested by Mosley (1996). Kelly (1999) outlines the theoretical and philosophical underpinning of the research by highlighting the importance of systems work and adopting an ecological approach, to look beyond a within child perspective. They note this is of particular importance where resources in schools are scarce, and impact can be achieved more widely when supporting larger systems and moving away from

individual work. Participants were selected for the intervention using a structured observation schedule by Moss (1996), which identifies behaviours relating to low self-concept. There were 20 focus children selected alongside members of their class. There were two groups involved in the research. Group A was a selected group consisting solely of the targeted children, and Group B involved the whole class. Evaluation was completed by monitoring changes in target behaviours that were applicable for each child, for example interrupting or running away from school. The teachers evaluated the changes in specific behaviours. It was found that targeted children in both groups demonstrated positive changes in their behaviour. Once the circle was established, the children took more ownership of the group and would suggest topics for discussion, and more children raised their problems. One teacher noted that they felt better able to support the children once they knew some of the difficulties they were facing and how they preferred to be helped. The teachers felt that children had increased self-esteem, were more supportive of one another, and more tolerant. The children also came up with positive ideas for the school as a whole, benefiting not just the class but also the wider school system. It was thought that the solution-focused approach helped the children, and increased their locus of control by allowing them to generate their own rules and ideas. The study had some limitations, such as the teacher's role both delivering and evaluating the intervention, which could have been impacted by bias. There was also no overview of the structure of the sessions provided, limiting replication opportunities.

2.2.3.3 Circle of Adults

Circle of Adults was developed by Wilson and Newton (2006), with an aim to support adults working with CYP to reframe their feelings and thoughts about the person and to develop new strategies and approaches to support them. Circle of Adults involves a single 90-minute meeting involving a variety of professionals, which is facilitated by two people. The facilitators require training in the approach. One facilitator records the discussion using visuals and pictures, and the other leads the discussion. The meeting is structured and has ten steps, which the facilitator guides the group through, working towards the joint development of next steps. The steps include: agreeing ground rules; presenting the problem; exploring relationships; considering organisational factors involved in the problem; listening and considering the pupil's voice; revisiting and synthesising what has been discussed so far; collaborative generation of hypotheses; generating strategies that link to the hypotheses; agreeing first steps and agreeing upon a coach to check in with action completion; and finally a summary and feedback from

each group member by sharing a word to represent how each person has found the experience.

Circle of Adults was discussed by Bennett and Monsen (2011) as being rooted in psychodynamic and systemic models (Hanko, 1999), and Person Centered Facilitation (O-Brien & O'Brien, 2002). Psychodynamic perspectives link the influences of unconscious and conscious feelings on the way people respond to certain experiences. Acknowledging this and having support to be more aware of the impact the emotional needs of CYP can have on the adults supporting them is thought to be a useful way in which psychodynamic approaches can be used. Person Centered Facilitation is supported through the joint working of the two facilitators in the sessions to understand and represent the problem using graphic facilitation and the interpersonal skills of the facilitators. Bennett and Monsen (2011) also highlighted that Circle of Adults does not yet have an established evidence base, and critique it for demanding skilled and experienced facilitators to take on the role of the 'expert', and the implications of this for empowering circle members.

Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) addressed Bennett and Monsen's (2011) discussion and attempted to fill the gap in the evidence base for Circle of Adults. They note the theoretical perspectives and psychological processes that are involved in circle based approaches, such as social constructionism (Kukla, 2000), narrative approaches (Morgan, 2000), Rogerian principles (Rogers, 1951), psychodynamic approaches (Hanko, 1999), hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969) and social interactionist theory. 31 participants took part in the Circle of Adults, which was facilitated by two EPs who had received training in the approach. There were four circles completed, and therefore four adults had the opportunity to take on the role of Problem Presenter. The participants completed semi-structured questionnaires at the end of each session, which were analysed using thematic analysis. The participants reported that they felt their contributions in the group were valued. They took on a shared responsibility and engaged in joint problem solving, which allowed for sharing ideas, experiences and knowledge. The participants also valued the ground rules. They acknowledged the value of the facilitator sharing their knowledge and referred to them as the expert professional. The participants noted the helpfulness of the stages involved in the process. They also recognised a change in their view of the children discussed in the circle, and felt more able to empathise with them. Whilst the outcomes of the research

indicate that the participants found it a valuable experience, there was emphasis placed on the significance of the facilitators, referred to as 'experts'. It appears that Circle of Adults positions the facilitators as much more instrumental in the problem solving process than in other circle approaches, where there may be less of a hierarchical structure. The risks of hierarchical structures or adopting an expert model are the implications for capacity building. If group members are dependent on the person who brings the 'expertise' to the situation, it could be that this would limit the group members' sense of ownership, empowerment and engagement.

2.2.3.4 Conclusions from Search 2

Search 2 yielded literature focusing on three other interventions that utilise a circle based approach: Circle of Friends, Circle Time, and Circle of Adults. Each have their own merits and limitations, but all are underpinned by a similar ethos that is present in the philosophy of SCs: that there is power and value in peer support. The articles reviewed in Search 2 have outlined the wealth of theoretical and psychological processes that underpin circle approaches. These varied slightly across approaches, but there were some consistencies, which will be explored further in section 2.3.

There appears to be a more established evidence base for Circle of Friends out of the interventions reviewed, with a mixture of empirical studies and singular case studies. There are links made to social constructivism, systemic theory, social learning theory and social development models (e.g. Dodge, Pettit, McClasky & Brown's model of social competence, 1986). Some authors used the traditional approach, and others used adapted versions after sharing concerns about the ethics of parts of the intervention. It appears that the aim and focus of Circle of Friends is reducing behaviours that are deemed by others to be challenging or undesirable, or increasing pro social behaviours. This was reflected in the methodologies of the studies, where evaluation incorporated mixed methods and systematic observations to identify reductions in target behaviours; sociometric questionnaires were also utilised to identify perceptions of social inclusion. Although the pragmatics of Circle of Friends is similar to SCs in that it draws upon peer support to identify and implement strategies and actions to support a specific person, the focus and aim of the interventions have fundamental differences. Firstly, Circle of Friends aims to promote the social inclusion of a specific child, whereas SCs are flexible and more person-centered through being led by the topic the Problem Presenter

wishes to share. Additionally, Circle of Friends follows a different structure to SCs, which appears to be more flexible and less structured.

Literature focusing on Circle Time outlined theoretical links to systemic work, ecological approaches, and humanistic psychology. In some of the literature, the focus was on addressing the needs of specific children, whereas other researchers took a whole class approach. This outlines the flexibility in which Circle Time can be used, not only in the pragmatics of the size of the group and aim of the sessions, but also in terms of the content and structure. Although this flexibility has its benefits, it can be argued that adopting a structured approach to peer support, as seen in SCs, can provide a more focused, solution-oriented space where change can be facilitated efficiently.

There was a scarcity of research on Circle of Adults discovered through the search, although the identified literature highlighted many of the theoretical underpinnings of the approach. This includes social constructionism (Kukla, 2000), narrative approaches (Morgan, 2000), Rogerian principles (Rogers, 1951), psychodynamic approaches (Hanko, 1999), hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969), social interactionist theory, and Person Centered Facilitation (O-Brien & O'Brien, 2002). The structure of Circle of Adults bears resemblance to SCs, with the additional inclusion of stages to allow for problem exploration and actions to be generated. However, one of the fundamental differences seems to be the emphasis and importance placed on the role of the facilitators. In contrast, SCs empower all members of the group to contribute to and have equal roles in the sessions. Particularly with the current research, there is an aim to ensure that the young people in the SC groups are instrumental in facilitating the sessions together, with the role of the adult facilitator as less of an 'expert' presence. Additionally, Circle of Adults is an intervention that explicitly outlines its intended use for adults, and its increased length and depth of problem solving may suggest that the model is less likely to lend itself to being transferable and accessible to CYP.

Overall, the literature reviewed in Search 2 has provided a valuable insight into the various methodological and psychological approaches applied in interventions using a circle method. The literature has identified many areas of consideration for the current research. This includes the practical elements of the research, including timetabling of interventions, group dynamics, and the ethos of the schools delivering the interventions. Additionally, ethical implications such as ensuring the CYP is fully aware of what their

involvement in the intervention entails (and has consented to this) is a key factor for consideration. The discussion around this issue, particularly in literature on Circle of Friends, highlights the rationale for using SCs over Circle of Friends in the current research in order to adopt a more ethical, systems approach that is similar in philosophy to that highlighted in Circle Time literature (e.g., Kelly, 1999; Tew 1998).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Through reviewing the literature, it appears there are a range of complex and interactive psychological processes that are relevant to SCs. This section will further explore and critique the theoretical interpretation of SCs and circle approaches, and conclude by outlining the theoretical framework to be adopted for the current research.

2.3.1 Solution Circles

The creators of SCs, Forest and Pearpoint, do not explicitly make links to specific psychological theory or theoretical underpinnings of the approach. They outline SCs as an approach to problem solving, which was initially developed to support mainstream schools with inclusion (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). As with other peer support methods of problem solving, the underlying ethos of SCs is that "together we're better" (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996, p.1). This ethos highlights the importance of bringing together members of the community and offering help in order to build capacity systemically. Forest and Pearpoint (1996) highlight that often people tend not to want to ask for help, but that people are always willing to help when the opportunity is given to them. Although there is no clear theoretical alignment suggested by the authors, the approach can be seen to be underpinned by a number of interacting theories, which are discussed in the following section.

2.3.2 Circle Based Approaches

The implementation of circle based approaches has been praised throughout the reviewed literature. Mosley (1996) outlined the power of a circle approach due to its cultural history and symbolisation of unity, power and healing. Bliss, Robinson and Maines (1995) also highlight the use of a circle model as representing a non-hierarchical, unified and co-operative relationship, where everyone has a chance to listen and be listened to. However, there are some critics who question whether circle based approaches always ensure that every participant has a chance to share their views, particularly if they are less confident than their peers (Housego & Burns, 1994). It could

be suggested that this in part depends on the skills of the facilitator to support each member of the circle to feel empowered to speak and be heard. The power of peer-based problem solving has also been outlined in the field of organisational psychology, where it has been noted that the skills and ideas generated through the use of problem solving can then be applied outside of the circle, and impact positively on individuals' creativity and skills (James & Leyden, 2010; Hargadon & Bechkly, 2006). This research is focused on adults, however the concept of generalising learning in interventions is also highlighted in research with CYP. In the context of Circle Time, for example, there are mixed views as to whether the means of practising skills in hypothetical scenarios are applicable for real life situations (e.g., Housego & Burns, 1994). However, many of the circle based approaches reviewed in this chapter, and in particular SCs, have the process of applying skills outside of the circle woven into their structure.

The research outlined in the literature review has uncovered a variety of valuable theoretical and psychological frameworks relating to circle approaches. This includes social constructionism, Rogerian principles relating to humanistic psychology, narrative approaches, psychodynamic approaches and systemic work, ecological approaches, hermeneutics, solution oriented theory, social development models (e.g., Dodge, Pettit, McClasky & Brown, 1986), organisational psychology (e.g., James & Leyden, 2010), and person centered facilitation (O-Brien & O'Brien, 2002). Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) note that social constructionism is relevant to circle approaches due to its assumption that our understanding is shaped through interaction processes between people (Kukla, 2000). Humanistic psychology highlights the importance of unconditional positive regard in promoting positive self-concept (Rogers, 1951). Narrative approaches suggest that individuals make sense of their thoughts through telling stories to others (Morgan, 2000). Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) also highlight the influence of Hanko's approach in pioneering collaborative group problem solving approaches, drawing upon psychodynamic and systemic influences, which make effective use of resources and benefit the group members through the learning of new skills and a deeper understanding of a variety of issues. Ecological systems approaches highlight the importance of working with the systems around the CYP (e.g., Kaser, 1993). Hermeneutics outlines the interpretation of meaning through recognition and understanding of a person's participation in a social context (Palmer, 1969).

2.3.3 Current Research

This combination of psychological processes and application of theoretical frameworks pertain to the potential power that SCs have to allow for application of these concepts in a structured and action focused way, to bring about positive change for young people in secondary schools. In particular, the current research aims to draw specifically upon ecological systems approaches, Rogerian principles and solution oriented approaches. These psychological principles and approaches are thought to be key to the research due to its context and positioning on promoting resilience. Ecological systems theory relates to increasing external support for CYP across multiple systems, a protective factor for resilience (e.g., Thompson, Flood & Goodvin, 2006). This relates to SCs, which aim to increase support across systems through the solution focused group problem solving process, which involves following up on actions outside of the group. Rogerian principles relate to CYP experiencing unconditional positive regard, in order to support their positive self-concept (Rogers, 1951). This relates to the principles of SCs, with the concept of the circle as a symbol of unity and acceptance (Mosley, 1996; Bliss, Robinson & Maines, 1995). Additionally, this applies to the relationship between self-efficacy, optimism and resilience (e.g., Bandura, 1993). Solution oriented approaches highlight the focus on resources rather than deficits, and a belief that people are experts in their own lives (e.g., De Shazer, 1982; Amjal, 2001). This links directly to the process of SCs, where the focus is on drawing upon existing resources to collectively decide upon a positive way forward. This application of problem solving tactics is highlighted as a key factor in resilience (Rutter, 1985).

2.4 Overall Conclusions

This chapter conducted two systematic literature searches in order to explore and critically analyse the existing literature review relating to SCs and circle based approaches. Although the searches conducted did not discover an established evidence base for the impact or feasibility of SCs, there is valuable research on approaches adopting a similar circular approach. As mentioned previously in the chapter, the research has highlighted many important aspects for consideration for the current research, including ethics, practicalities and theoretical frameworks.

Through reviewing the variety of circle based approaches, it seems that SCs provide a middle stance between the potentially deficit focused, within child approach applied in Circle of Friends; and the hierarchical, 'expert' facilitated Circle of Adults. SCs offer a

combination of helpful elements from each approach, such as Circle of Friends' application with CYP, Circle of Adults' problem solving structure, and Circle Time's flexibility around topics for discussion. In doing this, SCs have potential to provide the level of support, group cohesion and acceptance that circle based approaches have to offer, whilst empowering each member of the group to contribute equally and support their peers in a positive, ethical and person-centered way.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, the lack of evidence base and research conducted into SCs provides a positive opportunity to continue to explore this problem solving tool further. The promising impact and experiences it has provided for the limited number of adults who have used it in research, leads to opportunity within the scope of the current research to further explore the value of SCs in a context that appears not to have been explored before: with young people in secondary schools. The potential usefulness of exploring SCs with CYP has been expressed in previous literature by Brown and Henderson (2012), and will be applied with due consideration of ethical and accessibility factors of using an adult-based model with CYP in the current research.

Overall, the current research intends to apply theoretical bases of ecological systems approaches, Rogerian principles and solution oriented approaches, with an aim to address the gap in SC research with CYP and contribute to an emerging evidence base through exploring and evaluating the use of SCs as an intervention with secondary school pupils.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Overview

In this chapter, the methodology of the research will be outlined in detail. In section 3.2, the conceptual framework, including the researcher's philosophical position, will be outlined. Section 3.3 will highlight the aim of the research, and the research questions. Section 3.4 will discuss the purpose of the research. Section 3.5 will explain the research design. Section 3.6 will outline the research procedures. Section 3.7 will discuss the data collection methods. Section 3.8 will discuss data analysis methods. Finally, section 3.9 will outline the ethical considerations.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

3.2.1 Overview

The research adopted a pragmatic research paradigm. The researcher holds the position that the methods adopted for research should be influenced by the question that the research is seeking to answer. Pragmatism was selected as the adopted paradigm due to its useful offering of a middle philosophical and methodological position, which enables researchers a practical method of research enquiry (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This was suited to the researcher's wish not to reduce one's commitment to a single system of reality and philosophy within research. Pragmatists do not intend to find an ultimate truth or reality, but to facilitate problem solving (Powell, 2001) and find out what works, as was the case in this research.

3.2.2 Context

Historically, there has been much unrest and dispute surrounding research paradigms and their philosophical underpinnings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A paradigm could be defined as a model, an overarching structure and philosophical stance, which relates to social structures and phenomena (Kuhn, 1962). This definition relates to ontology: the nature of reality and truth, and epistemology: the way in which we can gain knowledge (Bryman, 2004). These positions relate directly to research, and therefore influence the way in which research is conducted. Consequently, it can be argued that paradigms can restrict intellectual creativity and exploration by focusing only on one method of exploration (Kuhn, 1962). This could be the case for the two prominent paradigms frequently employed in research, and often in contest with one another. On two opposite ends of the research spectrum are quantitative and qualitative

research methods, with ontological positions of post-positivism underpinning the former and relativism underpinning the latter (Moore, 2005). It can be suggested that when these positions are exclusively adopted, science can be limited to specific, static rules, which can be seen as naïve and unviable (Feyerabend, 1975).

3.2.3 Ontological Position

This research could be perceived as being positioned within a critical realist perspective due to some of its similarities with a pragmatic paradigm, such as its rejection of relativist or realist ontology (Cruickshank, 2003), and the applicability to mixed methods research (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). However, critical realism is not thought to be relevant to the current study or the researcher's philosophical stance. Critical realists argue that the world needs to be adequately interpreted in order to create shared knowledge and rational change (Corson, 1991). The researcher does not hold the view that there is an adequate way in which to interpret the world, as it is so complex that seeking to do so can be unnecessarily constrictive. Instead, it is thought to be more helpful where research is concerned to explore the world in a way that makes sense to the questions at hand. Secondly, critical realism is largely concerned with ontology: seeking to understand the mechanisms of knowledge, including the properties that people and societies have that contribute to the accumulation of knowledge (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). The current research is not overly focused on ontology, but rather epistemological considerations of how to go about exploring a topic of interest. Critical realism can be seen as an overly complex philosophy, with multiple definitions and often unnecessarily inaccessible language (Archer et al., 2016; Bagley, Sawyerr, & Abubaker, 2016), and therefore is seen by the researcher as a position that risks clouding the purpose of the research enquiry.

3.2.4 Considerations

Pragmatism can be considered to be an alternative paradigm, which rejects the constraints and suggestions of a forced choice between the two paradigms and allows for the freedom of solving real world, practical research problems (Feilzer, 2009). Pragmatic approaches have risen in popularity and are now commonly used and applied in mixed methods research across various fields within social sciences, including health (Glogowska, 2011) and education (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Although pragmatism has been praised for its usefulness in terms of the practicalities it lends for

research purposes, some researchers may raise questions about the foundations of pragmatism as a philosophical stance (Morgan, 2014). Morgan (2014) explores the work of John Dewey into the philosophical underpinnings of pragmatism, that go beyond the, albeit helpful but perhaps arguably reductionist, concept of pragmatism as purely focused on problem solving. Dewey (1938) suggests that instead of focusing on the nature of truth or reality, a more helpful starting point to research is the point of inquiry. Inquiry is the process of taking action, which is related to social contexts and creates a movement that goes back and forth between beliefs and actions (Dewey, 1938). Therefore, the beliefs that influence actions are related to the decisions that are made in research. In light of this, it is important that pragmatists reflect on their actions and decisions relating to research, by not only focusing on what works, but why it works. Thus, in the current study, the researcher has reflected on methods of inquiry through the use of a research diary, and methodological decisions are explained and justified throughout the thesis.

3.3 Research Aim and Questions

3.3.1 Research Aim

The aim of the research was to explore the use and effectiveness of SCs as an intervention with young people in secondary schools.

3.3.2 Research Questions

The research aimed to answer the following research questions (RQs), displayed in Table 2 below.

Research Question 1	What is the impact of using Solution Circles with young people on helping them to reach their personalised targets? (RQ1)
Research Question 2	What are the effects of using Solution Circles with young people on their resilience? (RQ2)
Research Question 3	What are young people's experiences of being part of a Solution Circle? (RQ3)
Research Question 4	Is it feasible for Solution Circles to be used as an intervention with young people? (RQ4)

Table 2 - Research Questions

Please note, for the purpose of this research, the term 'feasible' relates to its definition of being practical and possible to do something conveniently and easily. Therefore, RQ4 will aim to explore the practicalities involved in setting up and delivering the SC intervention, and how convenient or easy this was to achieve.

3.4 Purpose of Research

The research had more than one purpose. Predominantly, the purpose was exploratory: to explore the experiences of the participants who have been part of the research. This included exploring the pupil participants' feelings around being part of a SC group; their views on what worked well; what didn't work well; and what learning they will take away from the group. This research was predominantly exploratory as there is a gap in the literature on SCs, and the researcher was not aware of any previous use of SCs as an intervention with young people. In addition to this, there was a secondary evaluative purpose of the research: to evaluate whether being part of a SC intervention had facilitated improvement in the participants' resilience scores and achievement of personalised targets using summative and formative evaluation. The purpose of evaluating the SC intervention was to contribute to an emerging evidence base on the value of the approach with this population. This was achieved through identifying whether SCs can be used effectively with young people in secondary schools as an intervention to improve scores on a resilience measure. This was small scale, real-world research exploring the feasibility and usefulness of using SCs with young people, upon which further research can be undertaken.

3.5 Research Design

The research was of mixed methods design. In fitting with the pragmatist paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007), the mixed research method was selected as it was thought to be the best 'fit' in order to answer the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Mixed methods research can be defined as synthesising ideas from qualitative and quantitative research, respecting both viewpoints and seeking a middle ground from which to address research questions as effectively as possible (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Mixed methods approaches allow the researcher to explore alternative perspectives without reducing these perspectives to one single understanding (Mertens, 2015). Although mixed methods approaches have received significant positive support and are increasingly adopted in social science research, they have historically received a number of criticisms. This was outlined in the

incompatibility thesis, which argues that quantitative and qualitative data cannot and should not be mixed (Howe, 1988). In spite of this, it is a method that was deemed the most suitable research design to use in the case of the current research as it allows for a broad, rich amount of data to be collected in order to address the research questions and overall aim of the research as effectively as possible.

3.5.1 Strategy

The mixed method strategy that was employed is a concurrent embedded strategy, which involves simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2009). This method seemed appropriate for the research design, as the two data collection methods were completed simultaneously at the end of the SC intervention. This approach identifies a primary method of data collection that guides the research, alongside a secondary method that often addresses a different research question to the primary method. As the main aim of the research was exploratory, the primary method of data collection was qualitative. The concurrent embedded strategy can provide a broader perspective and deeper understanding of a research problem, through both methods complementing one another by bringing a different perspective, to provide a holistic view of the research problem (Creswell, 2009).

3.5.2 Phases of the Research

Within the aforementioned concurrent embedded strategy adopted, the research design consisted of particular phases of data collection. The research procedure is outlined in section 3.6 below. The phases of the research included:

1. Quantitative phase (to address RQ 1 and 2): collection and analysis of self-report resilience scales and individuals' targets pre and post intervention.
2. Qualitative phase (to address RQ 3 and 4): completion and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with SENCOs and Facilitators, and semi-structured focus groups with pupil participants.

3.6 Research Procedures

Details of research procedures are outlined and discussed below in section 3.6.1. Please see Appendix 2 below for an overview of the research procedures, including timescales.

3.6.1 Recruitment

An email was sent round to prospective secondary schools within the local authority (LA) inviting them to take part in the research. Please see Appendix 3 for a copy of the email. Schools that were interested responded and a meeting was arranged and held between the researcher and the SENCO to further discuss the details of the school's participation in the research. The criterion for the pupil participants (please see Table 4 below for inclusion and exclusion criteria) and the commitment of the Facilitators was discussed, as well as how the school would be supported by the researcher through the duration of the research. The schools that consented to be part of the study filled in a school consent form (please see Appendix 4 for school consent form) and the Facilitators signed a separate consent form (please see Appendix 5 for Facilitator consent form). The information leaflets and consent forms for pupil participants were sent home via school (please see Appendix 6 for pupil participant information leaflets; and Appendix 7 and 8 for parent and pupil participant consent forms).

The decision was made for the researcher to recruit and train Facilitators to deliver the sessions themselves for multiple reasons. Firstly, skilling up school staff empowers the schools to follow up on the approach and they are able to take ownership of using SCs as an intervention if they found it was helpful. Secondly, the Facilitators are best placed to deliver the intervention as they can check in with and follow up with pupil participants during the school week, to ensure that they have as much support as needed freely available. Additionally, having staff members within school facilitate the groups meant that more groups could be included in the research, as if the researcher was facilitating all groups, there would not be capacity for more than one group to be run.

3.6.2 Pilot Study

Before the SC intervention began, a pilot study was completed. The purpose of this was to explore the application of SCs with young people and for the researcher to gain experience in delivering the intervention with this population in order to be able to effectively train and support the Facilitators in running the groups. In addition to this, it allowed for any potential issues with the structure of the sessions to be highlighted and addressed through action points or areas to consider. Prior to the pilot, a discussion took place with the SENCO about who may benefit from being part of the SC pilot. Information sheets and consent forms were sent home via school (see Appendix 9 for pilot information sheet and Appendix 10 for pilot pupil and parent consent forms). The

pilot involved the researcher facilitating one SC session with six Year 11 pupils in one of the participating secondary schools. The SENCO felt that Year 11 pupils would benefit from being part of a one-off session, as they may have wanted to use the session to discuss exams they were currently completing. Although the participants in the intervention groups were younger than those in the pilot and in year groups 7-10, it was felt that it was still appropriate to complete the pilot with an older age group, as the purpose of it was not to check the accessibility, but the process. As SCs have not previously been used in research with CYP, the accessibility of the SCs was checked with the SENCOs and Facilitators of the groups through discussing the whole process of the SC intervention and asking whether they felt it would be accessible to all year groups, or whether any adaptations would need to be made. Both SENCOs and Facilitators shared that the content of the SCs would be accessible for pupils across all year groups.

The process of the SC was explained and the participants were invited to ask any questions. The group volunteered for the specifically assigned roles and the Problem Presenter chose to share an exam related problem. Following the SC, feedback was sought using an informal group discussion using a 'What worked well?/ Even better if..' format. Please see Table 3 below for an overview of the pilot feedback and subsequent action and reflection points.

As a result of the feedback given, the adjustments mentioned above were made and this was fed back to the Facilitators. All participants in the pilot study were given debrief letters (see Appendix 11 for pilot debrief letter) thanking them for their involvement. It was detailed in the letter that although the participants were not going to participate in the intervention groups, they could feedback their views of the session to the SENCO and express an interest in being part of any future groups, should they think it would be helpful.

3.6.3 Preparation

Following the pilot, the researcher delivered training to the Facilitators in both of the schools. Two Facilitators from the same school were trained at the same time. The training lasted approximately one hour. In one of the schools, the SENCO also attended the training. The Facilitators were provided with a manual detailing the process of SCs

What Worked Well?	
Feedback	
The pupils thought the creative solutions were helpful and it gave them ideas that they could apply for themselves.	
The pupils liked having roles as it helped them to focus on a specific task.	
They enjoyed the structure and thinking in a specific way in each of the four stages.	
Even Better if…	
Feedback	**Reflections/ Action Points**
The pupils fed back that they found the first section of six minutes too long, and did not like the silence. They felt it would have been better to move on to the next session if the Problem Presenter had finished speaking.	**Action point:** The Facilitators were informed that the pupils should still be allowed up to six minutes to share their problem, but if they finish speaking and do not want to add anything else, then the group can move on to the next section.
The pupils shared that they felt the Problem Presenter would feel slightly 'singled out' as the only one presenting the problem, and suggested that perhaps the structure could be that everyone in the group would have a chance to share in the same session.	**Reflection:** Although the feedback was valued, the researcher wished to explore the use of SCs in its original form, as identified by the creators (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). However, this feedback was shared with SENCOs and it was suggested that they could explore using SCs more flexibility after the research, based on what the young people wanted.
The pupils fed back that it would be helpful to know before the session that they would have the opportunity to share a problem, so they had a chance to think of an idea before the session.	**Action point:** The researcher shared the purpose and structure of the SCs sessions with the pupil participants before the sessions started, when collecting baseline data. They were encouraged to think of a problem that they would feel comfortable sharing when the groups began. The Facilitators were also asked to remind the pupils after each session to consider whether they would like to be the Problem Presenter the following week, so they could think about what they wanted to share.
The pupils shared concerns about confidentiality, and said they would need to make sure that issues discussed in the group would not be shared outside of the group.	**Action point**: the Facilitators were encouraged to highlight the importance of confidentiality when the group came up with their group rules.
The group shared that it would be helpful to know who would be in the group before the group starts.	**Action point**: When the researcher had the consent forms and names of all pupil participants in the groups, they met together within their groups to complete their baseline assessments. Because of this, the pupil participants were introduced to one another and therefore knew who would be attending the group before it started.
The pupils shared that the sessions would be very helpful for Year 10 pupils, as they shared that the end of Year 10 is a stressful time due to exams.	**Action point**: This was fed back to SENCOs in the schools and Year 10 pupils were invited to join the groups. The schools were also encouraged to consider this for future groups, if they continued to use SCs in their schools.

Table 3 - Pilot Feedback

(please see Appendix 12 for manual) and key points to consider when facilitating the first session, such as reminding participants about safeguarding and setting ground rules. There was also information on what the Facilitators could expect from the researcher, such as on-going support and the opportunity to contact the researcher if any issues arose. The researcher agreed to contact the Facilitators fortnightly via email to check in and see how everything was going. The researcher suggested that the Facilitators could have written vignettes for hypothetical problems that are relatable to young people, so that each participant had a chance to be the Problem Presenter even if they did not want to share a personal problem. The researcher consulted each Facilitator on common issues that can arise for young people in secondary schools and vignettes were written based around the common topics. This included: exam stress, anxiety, friendships, home/parental relationships, experiencing bullying, risky behaviour, parental illness/young carer, and sibling arguments. Please see Appendix 13 for vignettes focused on each of the aforementioned areas.

Following the training, the pupil participants were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy, further explained in section 3.6.4 below, and consent forms were gathered. The researcher then visited the schools to complete baseline Target, Monitoring and Evaluation (TME) target setting, and Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA) self-report assessments, to address RQs 1 and 2. A discussion was had with the pupil participants about the research to give them further opportunities to ask questions. For practical reasons, the participants completed the assessments at the same time, in silence. The baseline assessments took around 15 minutes for each participant to complete. Following completion of baseline assessments, dates were arranged with the SENCO for when the sessions would commence. The dates for each session were booked in advance, so that the researcher could commit to observing some of the sessions for quality assurance. The researcher agreed to observe the first and fourth sessions and dates for these were recorded.

3.6.4 Participants

There were two schools included in the research. Both schools were mainstream secondary schools located in different areas across the same LA. The researcher decided to include more than one school in the research to gain further information on how different schools facilitated the setting up and running of the groups, and how feasible it was for this to occur (addressing RQ 4). The decision to run more than one group in

each school was to give access to the intervention for different age groups and to explore how widely the approach could be used in schools.

In total, there were 36 participants in the research, all of whom were selected using purposive sampling. The method of sampling was purposive as the participants were selected by the researcher, in collaboration with school staff (SENCOs and Facilitators), as they met the inclusion criteria (detailed in Table 4). The participants included pupil participants, who attended the two participating secondary schools. In total, there were 30 pupil participants. Six of the pupil participants participated in one pilot SC session. These six pupils were all in Year 11 at school and were aged between 15-16 years. As mentioned previously, this year group was chosen for the pilot as the SENCO of the school felt it would be most helpful for this age group to have an opportunity to engage in joint problem-solving due to their upcoming exams. As the purpose of the pilot was not to examine the accessibility of the SC, but to explore how young people engaged in the process, it was deemed acceptable to include pupils in the pilot who were older than those participants in the research study. Secondary school aged pupils in key stages three and four were selected as an appropriate age range for participating in the SC group. Consideration of developmental theory proposes that children from the age of 11 onwards are thought to be more able to engage in complex problem solving through hypothesis testing, and thinking in a propositional manner (Keenan, Evans & Crowley, 2016). In addition, the process of SCs was explained to SENCOs and Facilitators in the participating schools and their views were sought on the accessibility of the sessions, and they agreed that it would be accessible to pupils across year groups.

Originally, 24 pupil participants were recruited to take part in the SC intervention sessions, but two participants withdrew from the research. The pupils who continued their involvement in the research were between the ages of 12 to 15 years and were in year groups 7-10. There were seven males and 15 females. The four groups were matched as closely as possible to age ranges. Some of the pupils had special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Additionally, the majority of the pupils either currently or had previously experienced some emotional needs, and had received support from the SENCO, pastoral support or the school safeguarding counsellor. Please see Appendix 14 for a summary of the pupil participant information, including age, gender, year groups, details of SEND, and demographics for each group.

The creators of SCs recommend them to be used with between five to nine people (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). As this research was exploring the use of SCs with young people, it was decided that the groups would aim to have six pupils in each group. Guidance from Reid and Kolvin (1993) is that in therapeutic groups with adolescents (aged 11-15), a group of between six and nine pupils is preferable, as young people may find smaller groups overly intimate, and therefore may feel less likely to share their problems. Although one group ended up with four members, which was fewer group members than recommended by Forest and Pearpoint (1996), it was decided to continue with the group for ethical reasons so that all pupils had the opportunity to share their problems and receive support from their peers and the Facilitator. In addition, for the group to still feasibly be able to run, there needed to be a minimum of three participants, one to be the Problem Presenter, one to be the Timekeeper and one to be the Note Taker. The participants then doubled up on these roles as the Brainstorm Team. The majority of the participants attended most of the sessions, although some participants had poor attendance at school or experienced illness and did not attend all of the sessions. However, all participants had the chance to be a Problem Presenter.

Inclusion Criteria
- Young people in school years 7-11 (aged 12-16).   - Young people who could benefit from the opportunity to share problems with their peers.   - Young people who could benefit from increasing their resilience.   - Young people who could benefit from supporting other peers and would be willing to do so.   - Young people who could benefit from opportunities to increase their social circle.   - Young people who could benefit from increasing their problem solving skills.
Exclusion Criteria
- Young people with speech and language needs or level of SEN that would make the group inaccessible to them.   - Young people who have had previous disagreements and therefore would not want to work together as a group.

Table 4 – Pupil Participant Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

In addition to the pupil participants, there were four Facilitator participants. The Facilitator participants were members of support staff who worked in the two participating schools. In one school, the Facilitators were pastoral support workers, and in the other school they were higher-level teaching assistants. Their role in the research

was to facilitate the SC sessions and provide support to the pupils outside of the sessions, where needed. Additionally, the SENCOs were recruited as participants to gather their views following completion of the SC intervention sessions, to explore the experience of overseeing the set up and implementation of the intervention. The Facilitators' and SENCOs' views were included to help answer RQ4 on the feasibility of using SCs as an intervention.

3.6.5 The Intervention Process

Once consent and baseline assessments had been collected, the sessions began running on the pre-agreed dates. The researcher had agreed with the schools to observe the first and fourth sessions of the SC intervention. The SC groups met for six sessions overall. The purpose of running the group for six sessions is that as there were six participants in each group, each participant would be given the opportunity to be a Problem Presenter on one occasion. Each session lasted around one hour. There was around 10-15 minutes spent on the introduction, 30 minutes on the SC problem solving process, and time at the end to discuss, feedback or unwind after the session. The two schools ran the sessions over slightly different timescales. Due to support staff capacity and upcoming exams, one school ran two sessions in two of the alternate weeks, and one session in the remaining weeks. This was deemed acceptable by the researcher as a pragmatic solution to capacity, and still gave the pupil participants enough time to follow up on their actions (one of the actions agreed during the SC is a step that can be taken within three days).

The SC process was followed in its original form (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). There were specific roles that each group member engaged in. These roles included:
- Problem Presenter: the focus person who shares their problem.
- Process Facilitator: also referred to as the timekeeper.
- Note Taker: records the discussion, ideas and next steps and this is shared with the Problem Presenter at the end of the session to take away.
- Brainstorm Team: the remaining group members who help to come up with creative solutions. The other group members (Process Facilitator and Note Taker) also contribute ideas.

When the roles were identified, the group followed the process using the original model. The steps include:

- Step 1: the Problem Presenter shares their problem, whilst the rest of the group listens. This stage lasts for six minutes. In the original process the group waits in silence until the six minutes passes. In the case of this research, following the feedback from the pilot study, the Problem Presenter was offered to wait until the remaining time finished in case they wanted to add anything else, or they could move on to the next stage so not to sit in silence.

- Step 2: this stage involves the group 'brainstorming' and contributing ideas based on what has been heard. The group cannot ask clarifying questions and the Problem Presenter listens and does not contribute.

- Step 3: the group now have a dialogue and the Problem Presenter can respond to what they have heard, and clarify and explore the problem further. The focus of the discussion is on what is positive and what can be done, not what cannot be done.

- Step 4: the group then comes up with actions. One of the steps must be something that can be done within 24 hours, and the other steps should be acted upon within three days. The Problem Presenter chooses someone to check in with them to see if they have taken the first step.

3.6.5.1 First Solution Circle Session

The researcher was present for the first session in all four groups to observe. The purpose of observing the first session was to answer any questions the Facilitator may have during the session so that any issues could be addressed at the beginning of the intervention. The researcher did not partake in any of the discussion with the participants, and was there primarily as an observer and to answer questions if needed. The researcher also provided feedback to the Facilitators via email after the observations, to provide positive feedback and also highlight any points to consider.

The first session involved the participants getting to know each other. The Facilitator invited each participant to share their name and something about themselves. Following this, the Facilitator explained what they would be doing in each session, and went through the process. Each Facilitator was provided with an A3 laminated flow chart detailing the four stages of the SC (please see Appendix 15 for the flow chart) to display as a guide. After the aim of each session was clear, the Facilitator invited the group to come up with a group name and ground rules. The Facilitator encouraged the participants to come up with their own rules, but was able to prompt them if necessary

(for example, if important rules such as confidentiality were not raised by the group members). The Facilitator gave a reminder about the limits of confidentiality with regard to safeguarding. It was made clear to the participants that if anything was shared that made the Facilitator doubt any of the pupils' safety, they would need to report it and could not keep it a secret. The Facilitator also reassured participants that they were available outside of the group, should any of the pupils have any concerns.

Following this, the Facilitator encouraged the group members to volunteer for the roles. It was explained that the roles would rotate each session, to allow each group member the chance to perform in each role. The vignettes were available for each session and the Problem Presenter could choose one if they did not wish to share a personal problem.

3.6.5.2 Subsequent Sessions

The subsequent sessions followed a structure. Table 5 below outlines the structure that was followed for each of the subsequent sessions:

Step	Description
1	The ground rules were revisited and the group was offered the opportunity to add any others.
2	The previous Problem Presenter shared their experiences of putting their actions into practice.
3	The group members assigned themselves new roles.
4	The Solution Circle process was completed.
5	The group shared a word/feeling to describe the experience.
6	The Problem Presenter took away the notes.
7	The group had an opportunity to unwind before returning to lessons/break or lunchtime.

Table 5 – Structure of Each Solution Circle Session

On the fourth session in all four groups, the researcher was present to observe the session. The purpose of the observation was for quality assurance, to ensure that the Facilitators were following the structure and to give positive and constructive feedback to the Facilitators. The researcher observed the session but did not contribute, unless asked a question by the Facilitator. Following the observation, the researcher gave written feedback to the Facilitators via email. On the final session, the structure

remained the same and the Facilitators checked in with the previous Problem Presenters a few days after the final session to see how things went with following up on their actions.

During the same week as the final session, the researcher returned to the school to collect the outcome assessments and facilitate the focus groups with the pupil participants. Up to two weeks following the final session, the researcher completed the interviews with the Facilitators and SENCOs. Following completion of the data collection, the pupil participants were sent personalised debrief letters (see Appendix 16 for example debrief 'thank you' letter), with feedback that the Facilitator shared with the researcher about the positive contributions each pupil participant had made. The purpose of this was to ensure that participating in the research was a meaningful experience for the pupil participants and they had some feedback on their strengths.

3.7 Data Collection

The data was collected using qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative data was collected using a repeated measures design. This method of data collection sought to answer RQs 1 and 2, by exploring the hypotheses that if the intervention had a positive effect on pupil participants, their scores on the resilience measure will increase, and they will meet or be closer to meeting their personalised targets. The qualitative data sought to answer RQs 3 and 4, by exploring pupils' experiences of being part of the SC group, and exploring the feasibility of running the groups in schools through gathering the views of the SC Facilitators and school SENCOs. The purpose of collecting the quantitative data was to explore the usefulness of quantifying any progress with relation to resilience or personal targets, as well as to explore whether the methods used to evaluate the intervention could be helpful and practical for any future research. The purpose of collecting qualitative data was to gather rich data and allow participants the opportunity to share their views on their experiences. Please see Figure 2 below for a visual representation of the data collection strategy.

| Quantitative baseline measures collected (addressing RQ1 & 2)

RSCA and individual TME target setting | → | Solution Circle groups ran for 6 sessions over 4-6 weeks | → | Quantitative outcome measures collected (addressing RQ 1 & 2)
RSCA and individual TME target review

Qualitative data collected (addressing RQ 3 & 4)
Focus groups exploring the experiences of the Solution Circle group; interviews with Facilitators; interviews with SENCOs |

Figure 2 - Data Collection Strategy

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection

3.7.1.1. Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents

Before the SC intervention began, the participants were asked to fill in the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA) (Prince-Embury, 2007) before the first SC session as a baseline measure. Please see Appendix 17 for a copy of the RSCA. The RSCA is a self-report questionnaire that consists of 64 items looking at three different factors of resilience: Sense of Mastery, Sense of Relatedness and Emotional Reactivity. Sense of Mastery assesses levels of optimism, self-efficacy and adaptability. Sense of Relatedness measures a sense of trust, perceived access to support, comfort with others, and tolerance of differences. Emotional Reactivity encompasses emotional sensitivity, recovery and impairment. The RSCA also provides an overall Resource Index and Vulnerability Index. The Resource Index considers combined scores from Sense of Mastery and Relatedness subscales. The Vulnerability Index considers the discrepancy in Emotional Reactivity and Resource Index Scores. The RSCA was completed again as a post-measure soon after the final SC session. The RSCA took participants around 10 minutes to complete.

The RSCA was chosen as a resilience measure over other measures available as the subscales were felt to be more applicable to the aspects of resilience theory that were relevant to the SC intervention. For example, the Sense of Relatedness subtest specifically explores support systems, which is a factor that SCs aim to foster. Additionally, the RSCA is appropriate to use as a pre and post intervention measure (Prince-Embury, 2011). However, the RSCA consists of quite a large number of items, and although it does not take long for participants to complete, it can risk the young people becoming disengaged and not giving answers that truly reflect their views. The

researcher aimed to reduce this potential risk by stating that support was available to participants whilst they completed the measure if they needed it.

3.7.1.2 Target, Monitoring and Evaluation

The participants were also asked to think about what they would personally like to achieve from being part of the SC, such as feeling more comfortable in a group situation, or increasing problem solving skills, for example. The participants rated their baseline and expected level of where they would like to be at the end of the intervention using Target, Monitoring and Evaluation (TME). Please see Appendix 18 for a copy of the TME form. The purpose of inviting participants to develop their own targets was to bring a participatory element to the research through valuing the participants' differing personal reasons for wanting to be involved in the group. It also added to the exploratory and evaluative nature of the research, as being part of the group may result in different outcomes for the participants other than the resilience aspects measured by the RSCA. The TME took participants around 10 minutes to complete.

The decision was made to use TMEs as they are frequently used in EP practice and are largely positively regarded as a measure to review progress (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai, & Monsen, 2009). In the case of the research, they also allowed for more personalised data to be collected. The potential disadvantage of using TMEs could be that as they are self-report, participants may have felt a requirement to score themselves higher than they truly felt was the case, and therefore this may need to be considered when interpreting the results.

3.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection
3.7.2.1 Focus Groups for Pupil Participants

Soon after the final session (during the same week as the final session but not on the same day), a focus group was held and video recorded for each intervention group. The researcher asked pre-planned questions on participants' experiences of being part of the SC intervention (see Appendix 19 for focus group questions). The focus groups lasted from around 20 to 45 minutes, differing for each group. In two of the focus groups, there was one participant not present due to illness, and the other two groups had all group members present.

3.7.2.2 Facilitator Interviews

In addition to the focus groups with the pupil participants, individual interviews were held and video recorded with the Facilitators to explore their experiences of facilitating the sessions. The interviews were semi-structured (please see Appendix 20 for Facilitator interview questions) and lasted between 15-45 minutes, as the times varied between Facilitators.

3.7.2.3 SENCO Interviews

Individual interviews were also completed and video recorded with the SENCOs of the two participating schools to further explore the experiences of the school being involved with overseeing the selection of participants, set up of the groups and implementation of the intervention. Please see Appendix 21 for SENCO interview questions. The interviews with the SENCOs lasted between 15-25 minutes. All qualitative data was recorded using video recording. The purpose of this was to allow the researcher to see who was talking for transcription purposes.

Focus groups and interviews were used to gather qualitative data as they allow for the collection of a rich picture and in-depth exploration of experiences. As in line with the pragmatic paradigm of the research and using methods most appropriate to answer the research questions, gathering qualitative data was deemed the most effective method to answer RQs 3 and 4. Additionally, the researcher acknowledges the limits of quantitative data as the primary data collection method and therefore a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods seemed the most appropriate. Focus groups were used with pupil participants due to the practical benefits of being able to gather rich data in a short space of time (Smithson, 2007). Focus groups have also been praised for being an effective means of data collection with young people, particularly in a setting where the young people feel comfortable (Ronen, Rosenbaum, Law & Streiner, 2001).

3.8 Data Analysis

Please see Figure 3 below for a visual overview of data analysis processes in relation to answering of research questions. The figure presents the data collection and analysis methods and how these link to specific research questions. The research questions overarch the main aim of the research.
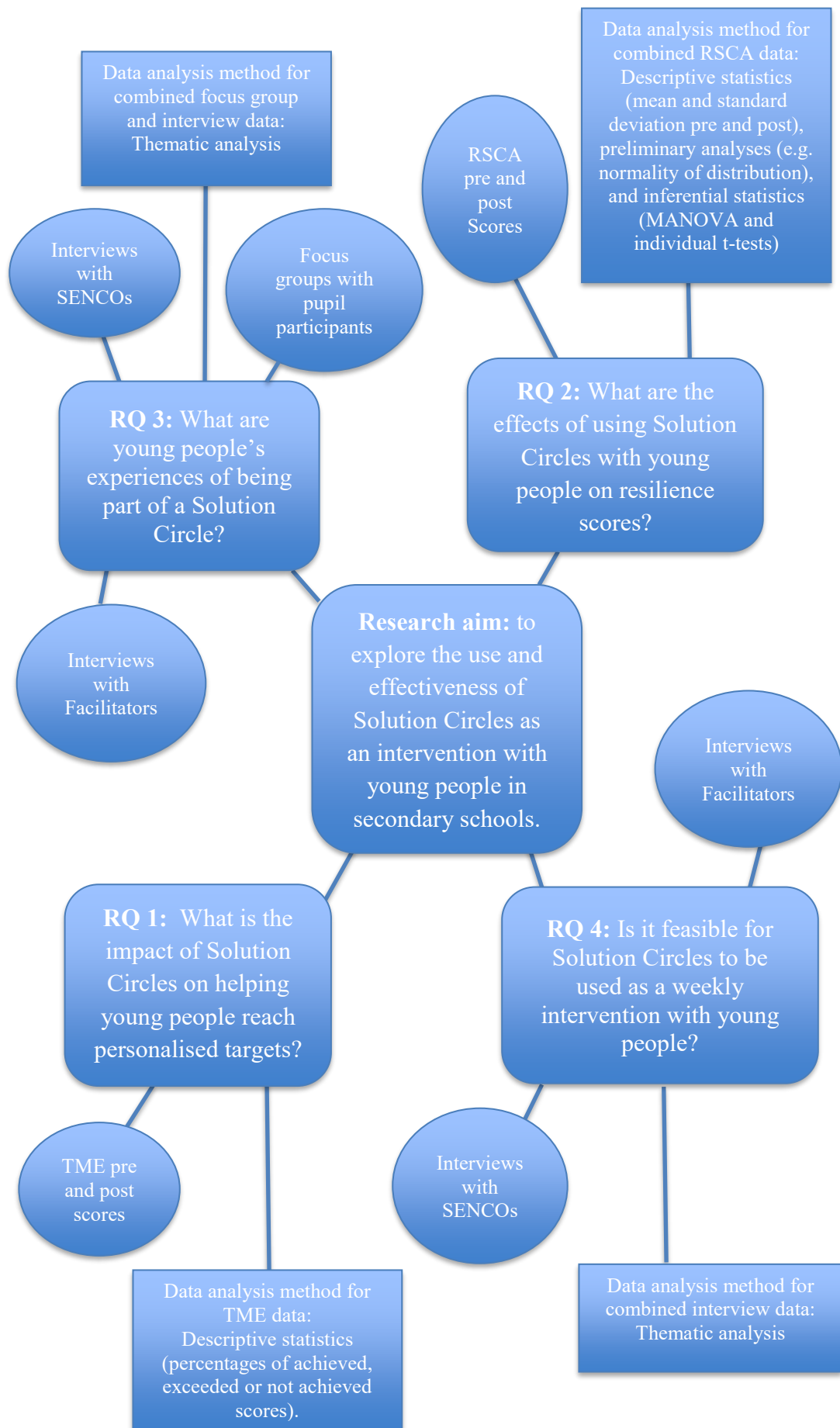
Figure 3 - Data Analysis Processes

The figure shows the following elements connected around a central node:

Research aim: to explore the use and effectiveness of Solution Circles as an intervention with young people in secondary schools.

RQ 1: What is the impact of Solution Circles on helping young people reach personalised targets?
- TME pre and post scores
- Data analysis method for TME data: Descriptive statistics (percentages of achieved, exceeded or not achieved scores).

RQ 2: What are the effects of using Solution Circles with young people on resilience scores?
- RSCA pre and post Scores
- Data analysis method for combined RSCA data: Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation pre and post), preliminary analyses (e.g. normality of distribution), and inferential statistics (MANOVA and individual t-tests)

RQ 3: What are young people's experiences of being part of a Solution Circle?
- Interviews with SENCOs
- Focus groups with pupil participants
- Interviews with Facilitators
- Data analysis method for combined focus group and interview data: Thematic analysis

RQ 4: Is it feasible for Solution Circles to be used as a weekly intervention with young people?
- Interviews with Facilitators
- Interviews with SENCOs
- Data analysis method for combined interview data: Thematic analysis

3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, which aimed to address RQ 1 and 2, descriptive statistics were gathered from the RSCA scores and TME results. This included mean pre and post T-Scores and standard deviations from the RSCA, to explore how many participants saw an increase/decrease (dependent upon which factor) in their T-Scores for each factor: Sense of Mastery, Sense of Relatedness and Emotional Reactivity, Resource Index and Vulnerability Index. The TME achieved scores, in which participants scored themselves out of 10 (with 10 meaning the target is achieved, and 1 meaning the target is not achieved), were also examined to evaluate how many participants increased their scores from their baselines; and whether they met or exceeded their expected outcome score for their personalised targets. The focus of participants' targets was also explored and is outlined in Chapter 4.

Inferential statistics were used to investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference in participants' RSCA T-Scores pre and post intervention. Preliminary analyses were conducted prior to the parametric analyses, to ensure that the data met the assumptions necessary to use parametric testing. Details of the preliminary analyses are outlined in Chapter 4. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used initially to explore the impact of the independent variable (time) on the dependent variables (RSCA subscale T-Scores). Following this, paired-samples t-tests and effect sizes were calculated for each of the subscales. It was not the intention of the research to use an experimental design, as the main purpose of the research was exploratory. Therefore, the quantitative data was collected to evaluate any possible impact of the SC intervention, but also to explore whether the measures used were an appropriate and helpful means of evaluating the intervention, to inform future research. Feedback from the participants on the measures used was gathered in the focus group.

3.8.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data aimed to address RQs 3 and 4, and was collected through a focus group with pupil participants, and interviews with the Facilitators and SENCOs. The focus groups and interviews were semi-structured, and were recorded via video. The researcher transcribed the videos verbatim, and each participant (pupil, SENCO and Facilitator) was given a pseudonym. The combined data was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides a flexible, accessible, and theoretically adaptable approach to qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, thematic

analysis has been criticised as an approach that can be perceived to lack structure and deemed an 'anything goes' method (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2002). To avoid this, the qualitative data was analysed using the clear structure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Please see Table 6 below for a description of the step-by-step process of the thematic analysis. The aim of the thematic analysis was to identify common themes in the views of the participants about being involved in the SC group, to identify what made the group work well, as well as considerations for improvements, addressing RQs 3 and 4. The thematic analysis drew upon both inductive and deductive approaches, a strategy used in previous research and deemed a 'hybrid' approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This involved the researcher initially conducting an inductive, data-driven analysis, in order to provide an in-depth exploration of the data, followed by the application of a deductive approach to link themes to specific research questions. It is argued that drawing inductive themes from the data can be more useful in areas of research that have not previously been explored (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Therefore, in the case of this study it was thought that this would be valuable. However, it can be argued that it is impossible to identify purely data driven themes, as the researcher will have some degree of influence over which themes are identified due to their preconceptions and knowledge. Bauer (2000, cited in Marks & Yardley, 2004) suggests that utilising a purely inductive approach is not always helpful, and that the researcher should consider codes that are generated from the underpinning principles of the researcher, and that link to research questions.

3.8.3 Validity and Reliability

The RSCA (Prince-Embury, 2007) was chosen as the measure for resilience as it has been praised for its appropriate content, which is brief, user friendly and easy to interpret. It identifies factors of resilience that are grounded in theory. It links practically and theoretically to intervention, and has psychometric properties that are reliable and valid enough to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and monitor progress (Prince-Embury, 2011). TME was selected as the method of evaluating participants' individualised targets as it has been praised as useful and practical method of reviewing progress of interventions and is commonly used in EP practice (Connor, 2010).

Stage of Thematic Analysis (based on Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Description
1. Familiarisation: transcribing, re-reading and recording ideas about codes.	The researcher had transcribed the data and therefore was familiar with it. The transcripts were read again to further familiarise and notes were made about potential codes.
2. Initial code generation: beginning to code interesting extracts systematically.	The data was read again and relevant extracts were cut out to generate initial codes. Potential codes and extracts were arranged on a table to have an overview of all of the codes.
3. Looking for themes: arranging codes and extracts into rough, potential themes.	The codes were arranged visually into rough large overarching themes. The codes and extracts were looked through again to check they fit into the theme. Initial sub themes and candidate themes were identified.
4. Revisiting and reviewing the themes	The extracts and codes were revisited to refine subthemes within the overarching themes, and arranged visually. The researcher generated an initial thematic map, and considered whether some of the themes could be refined or combined to create a smaller number of themes.
5. Naming and defining the themes	The themes were refined further and the names of the themes were decided. At this point, the researcher consulted their academic tutor and an educated layperson to check the themes.
6. The thematic analysis report	Outlined in Chapter 5.

Table 6 – Thematic Analysis Process

3.8.4 Qualitative Rigor

Reliability and validity in the qualitative element of data collection was achieved through ensuring qualitative rigor (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). This was sought by establishing trust and confidence in the findings to ensure the study is replicable for future research. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) identify four main elements that are essential for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility, which can also be referred to as testimonial validity, was achieved through checking back with participants to ensure themes were representative of their views. The researcher met with two pupil participants from one school to discuss the themes with them. The researcher also spoke with one of the SENCOs and one of the Facilitator participants. Transferability and

dependability has been achieved through providing a thorough description of the methodology and data analysis to ensure transparency and trustworthiness, as well as to allow further researchers to replicate the method. Confirmability was ensured through ongoing reflexivity from the researcher, which has been achieved through the use of a research diary and being reflective on the researcher's background and potential biases. This was of particular consideration when the researcher was actively involved in meeting with the participants on a number of occasions, such as when training the Facilitators, gathering data and observing the sessions. To ensure any potential bias had not influenced the identification of themes during the thematic analysis, the researcher consulted with an educated layperson and academic tutor to review the coded extracts relating to themes to check for clarity or any discrepancies.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Maintaining ethical practice was at the forefront of the research, with diligent adherence to ethical guidelines, including the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010), BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009), and the University of East London (UEL) Code of Practice for Research Ethics (UEL, 2015). Permission to undertake the research was granted from the University of East London School of Psychology (please see Appendix 22 for the approval letter, and Appendix 23 for the second approval following amendment of interviewing SENCOs).

3.9.1 Informed Consent

All participants signed an informed consent form. For the pupil participants, the pupil and the pupil's parents were asked to sign a consent form (please see Appendix 8 for pupil consent from and Appendix 7 for parent consent form). The school (head teacher and SENCO) and Facilitator participants each signed personalised consent forms, with additional information on what they were consenting to (please see Appendix 4 for school consent form and Appendix 5 for Facilitator consent form). Additionally, the SENCOs signed a separate consent form as they were participants in the research due to their involvement with interviews at the end of the intervention (please see Appendix 24 for SENCO consent form).

In order to gain fully informed consent from participants, information letters were adapted and sent to each participant. The pupil participants and their parents received a young person-friendly leaflet sent home via school (please see Appendix 6); the

Facilitators and the SENCOs had another copy with relevant information about what their participation in the research would involve (see Appendix 25 for Facilitator participant information letter and Appendix 26 for SENCO information letter). The school also had copies of the information letters so they knew what they were consenting to providing as a school. Additionally, further information and the opportunity to ask questions about the schools' involvement in the research was made available during the meetings with the SENCOs.

In order to ensure that the pupil participants involved in the study had given true informed consent, when the researcher met with them to complete their baseline assessments, the researcher explained again what their involvement in the research would include, as well as what would happen with their data, and invited them to ask any questions. Once this discussion had taken place, the researcher asked if they were still happy to take part in the research before completing the baseline assessments.

3.9.2 Right to Withdraw

All participants were informed in writing that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time, and this was also followed up in person when the researcher first had contact with all participants. If pupil participants did not wish to attend a session, they were reminded of their right to withdraw should they wish to, without needing to provide a reason. It was also explained that all participants were free to take part in the SC group but did not have to participate in any data collection, such as the focus groups or questionnaires. All participants who were involved in the research contributed data where possible (two pupil participants were absent from the focus groups due to illness). Participants were informed that if they withdrew from the research once their data had already been scored/ transcribed and entered onto the computer (and therefore anonymised) it would not be able to be identified and withdrawn.

Staff members (the Facilitators and SENCOs) were also reminded that if the pupil participants indicated that they did not wish to attend the group any longer, then they had the right to do so without question and should not be encouraged to change their mind. For the two participants who withdrew from the study, they were sent a debrief letter thanking them for their involvement. One of the pupils attended the first session and then withdrew, and so still received positive feedback on their contributions from

the session they attended. The other participant who withdrew did not attend any of the sessions, and therefore received a general debrief letter without personalised feedback.

3.9.3 Protection From Harm

Before the sessions began and when prospective participants were anonymously discussed, it became clear that some of the participants that the school wanted to attend the group had previously had frequent disagreements with another pupil that they thought would benefit from the group. It was explained that the group needed to be a safe space for all of the pupils in order for them to get the most out of it. Therefore decisions were made with the school to ensure that pupils attending the group did not have any pre-existing disagreements, to ensure as much as possible that the pupils would be protected from the harm of feeling unsafe to share their problems.

As explained in section 3.6.7, when the pupil participants began their first SC session, it was explained that their safety was the most important consideration, and if the Facilitator had concerns about their safety, then they would need to pass on this information. The formation of rules and revisiting them at the beginning of each session also ensured that all group members were aware of the importance of ensuring that the group members respected each other. The Facilitators ensured the protection of the pupil participants by offering further support outside of the sessions if needed. The pupil participants also received information on external support services in their debrief letters, so they could access this if needed.

3.9.4 Anonymity

All participants were not anonymous to the researcher as they were involved with face-to-face meetings for purpose of data collection and observations. The quantitative data also had the participants' names on for identification of pre and post matching purposes. However, once the data was entered onto the computer and participants were given a number, the hard copies of questionnaires were confidentially disposed of. Participants were also filmed for the focus groups and interviews. However, it was made clear to participants that any data collected containing information about their identity would be kept safely. This was achieved through consent, RSCA and TME forms being stored in a locker in the researcher's office – which is not accessible to the public. When the videos were stored on the computer, they were in an encrypted file that only the researcher could access. The transcription of the videos was completed as soon as

possible so the participants' names could be changed. The videos will remain stored in the encrypted file until the thesis write up is completed, in order for the researcher to be able to refer back to if needed. Following this, the videos will be deleted. All participants were made aware of what would happen to their data through information sheets, and consent for videoing was sought again verbally before the focus groups and interviews took place.

3.9.5 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was discussed at the beginning of the first session with the group and was included as one of the staples of the ground rules that the group jointly constructed. The Facilitator stressed the importance of confidentiality and what that meant in the group, for example anything that was discussed in the group should not be discussed outside of the group without permission or agreement. In some cases, there would be a need for topics that were discussed in the group to be shared, for example if the Problem Presenter had to discuss an issue with someone outside of the group as part of their agreed actions. The Facilitator outlined when there would be exceptions to confidentiality, for example if a safeguarding concern arose.

3.9.6 Consideration of Vulnerable Populations

As all pupil participants were under the age of 18, they were considered to be a vulnerable population. SCs appear to be an adult based model, and have not been used with CYP before. Therefore, the possible ethical implications of this were considered through ensuring the intervention was accessible and appropriate for the age group (please see section 3.6.2 and 3.6.4 above for discussion regarding this). Every effort was made to ensure that the participants felt safe to share their problems in the group, should they want to. The participants were given the opportunity to share personal problems, but were not pressured to share anything they did not feel comfortable sharing. This was also ensured through the availability of vignettes, so that pupils who wanted to contribute as a Problem Presenter had the opportunity to do so without sharing anything personal. It was also a priority that the pupils received the most appropriate support both inside and outside of the group. As mentioned previously, the Facilitators were available to provide support outside of the group, and pupil participants were also signposted to external agencies for support in their debrief letters, should they need it. Additionally, safeguarding procedures were also in place in line with school policy and

any issues that arose in which there were concerns were raised using appropriate channels.

Chapter 4 - Findings

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, the findings from the mixed methods data will be outlined and presented in relation to the relevant research questions. Section 4.2.1 will outline the quantitative findings of the individual TME, related to RQ1. Section 4.2.2 will outline the quantitative findings from the RSCA scores, related to RQ2. Section 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 will outline the qualitative findings related to the interviews with SENCOs and Facilitators, and focus groups with pupil participants, relating to RQ3 and RQ4. Finally, Section 4.4 will triangulate the findings from the qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to summarise the findings and address the overall aim of the research.

4.2 Quantitative Analyses

This section will outline the findings from the quantitative analyses, which address RQ1 and RQ2. The data collected to address RQ1 was in the form of TME, and is presented through the use of descriptive statistics. The data collected to address RQ2 utilised the RSCA, and was analysed using inferential statistics.

4.2.1 Research Question 1

TME was utilised to explore RQ1: what is the impact of using Solution Circles with young people on helping them to reach their personalised targets? The areas in which young people set their targets varied between each individual, although there were some common areas. For example, six people had focused their targets on feeling more confident or accepting of themselves. Some were also centred on improving emotional states, such as feeling happier, calm, and less fearful or worried. Please see Table 7 below for an overview of the focus of the participants' targets; and their baseline, expected, and achieved scores.

As can be seen in Table 7, 12 out of 22 of the participants either met or exceeded their expected score. Additionally, all participants had rated themselves as higher on the scale than at baseline. Please see Figure 4 below for visual descriptive statistics, outlining the changes in self reported baseline and review TME scores for each participant. Figure 5 below demonstrates the number of participants who exceeded, achieved, or achieved less than their expected level at review. Please note, numbers that are in bold indicate a score that exceeded the expected score; numbers that are underlined indicate an

achieved score that is the same as the expected score; and a number that is not bold or underlined indicates an achieved score that is less than the expected score.

Participant number	Focus of target	Baseline score /10*	Expected score /10	Achieved score /10
1	Developing confidence	2	**8**	**9**
2	Emotional regulation – feeling less angry and developing problem solving skills	3	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
3	Feeling happier	3	**8**	**9**
4	Making friends	3	**4**	**5**
5	Sharing problems and feelings	3	8	7
6	Forming friendships and supporting others	4	**7**	**8**
7	Being more honest	4	8	6
8	Being more honest and open	2	8	5
9	Developing self-esteem	4	7/8	6
10	Self-acceptance	1	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
11	Feeling socially accepted	2	6	4
12	Developing confidence	3	10	6
13	Developing confidence in talking to others	3	10	7
14	Emotional regulation – remaining calm and panicking less	5	9	8
15	Feeling less fearful of public speaking, being more open about feelings	2	**5**	**7**
16	Share feelings without bottling them up	3	**6**	**7**
17	Passing GCSEs	5	**7**	**8**
18	Feeling comfortable with new people and with self	5	8	6
19	Make new friends easily	2	**5**	**8**
20	Feeling more comfortable talking and sharing feelings with others	3	**9**	**10**
21	To hear and take on others' opinions	4	**7.5**	**9**
22	Feeling less worried about getting told off and leaving mum	3	7.5	8

Table 7 - Participant TME Scores and Focus of Personalised Target

*Please note: the range of scores is 1-10. A score of 1 would indicate not having met the target, and a score of 10 would indicate meeting the target.
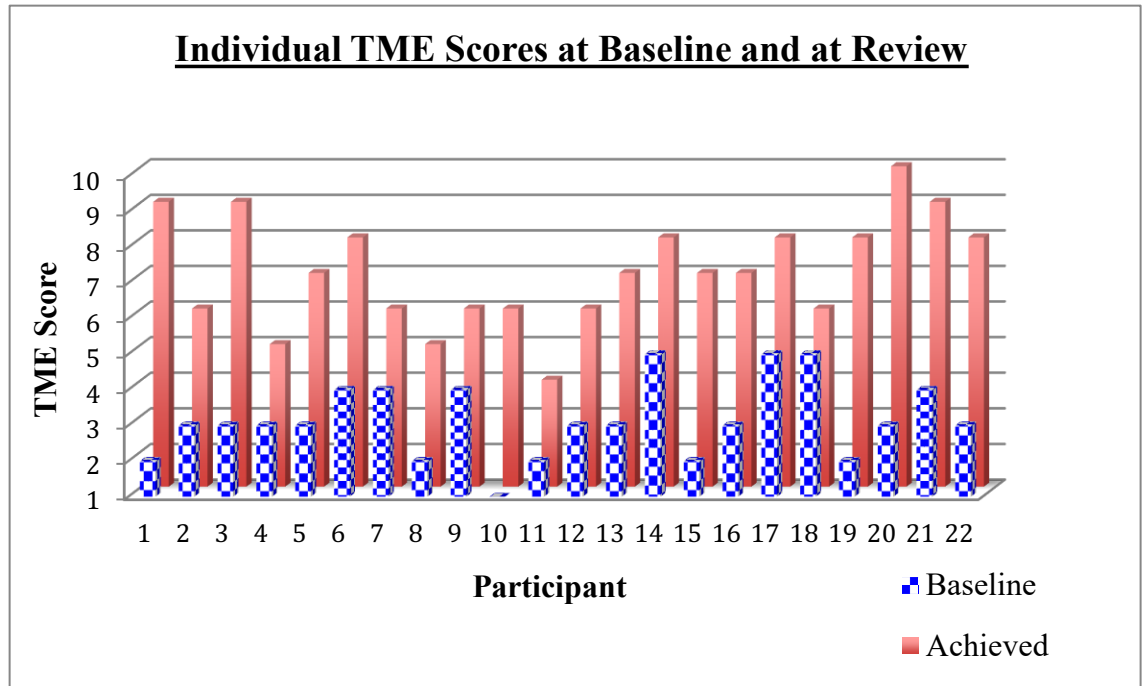
Figure 4 - Individual TME Scores at Baseline and at Review
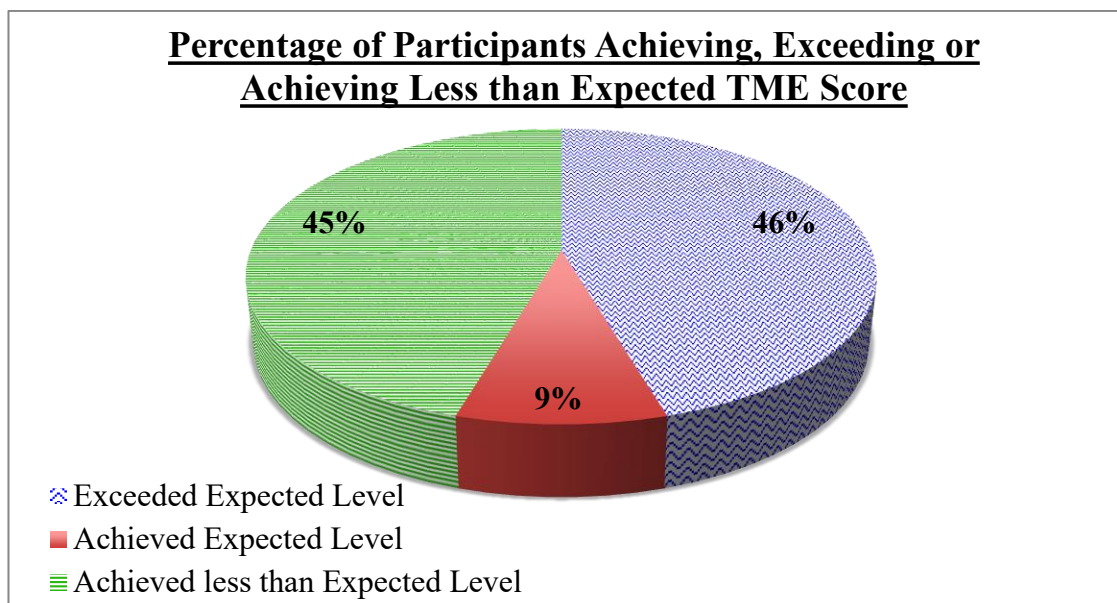
Figure 5 - Percentage of Participants Achieving, Exceeding or Achieving Less than Expected TME Score

4.2.1.1 Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

Overall, the participants set themselves targets that were personal to them and varied in focus between each individual. Over half of the participants either met their target, or exceeded it, whereas 45% of the participants achieved less than their expected levels. All of the participants scored themselves higher than they did at baseline.

4.2.2 Research Question 2

The RSCA was used to explore RQ2: what are the effects of using SCs with young people on their resilience? From the data gathered, descriptive statistics were collected and are detailed in section 4.2.2.1 below. Preliminary analyses were undertaken to ascertain the most appropriate method of data analysis, which are detailed in section 4.2.2.2. Inferential statistics were conducted to investigate whether there were statistically significant differences in RSCA subscale scores following the SC intervention. Details of this are presented in section 4.2.2.3 below. Please see Appendix 27 for raw quantitative data and SPSS output (on CD).

4.2.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The participants' data was combined and the mean and standard deviations for pre and post intervention T-scores for each subscale in the RSCA were generated, and can be seen in Table 8 below. The scores are presented with two decimal places. Please see Appendix 28 for a table containing the possible range of scores for each subtest. Please also see Appendix 29 for score rankings based on T-score ranges. Mean T-scores for each subscale are also displayed visually in Figure 6.

Subscale	Mean T-score Pre	Standard Deviation Pre	Mean T-score Post	Standard Deviation Post
Sense of Mastery (MAS)*	32.32	10.24	36.55	11.19
Sense of Relatedness (REL)*	37.05	9.76	37.09	12.08
Emotional Reactivity (REA)**	58.59	8.10	60.91	9.28
Resource Index (RES)*	33.05	9.75	35.41	11.52
Vulnerability Index (VUL)**	65.41	8.28	65.36	10.87

Table 8 - RSCA Mean T-Scores Pre and Post Solution Circle Intervention

*Please note: an increase in MAS, REL and RES scores indicates an increase in skills related to mastery, relatedness and resourcefulness. Lower scores indicate lower levels of mastery, relatedness and resourcefulness.

**Please note: an increase in REA and VUL scores indicates an increase in emotional reactivity and vulnerability. Higher scores indicate higher levels of emotional reactivity and vulnerability.

RSCA Subscale Mean T Scores Pre and Post Intervention
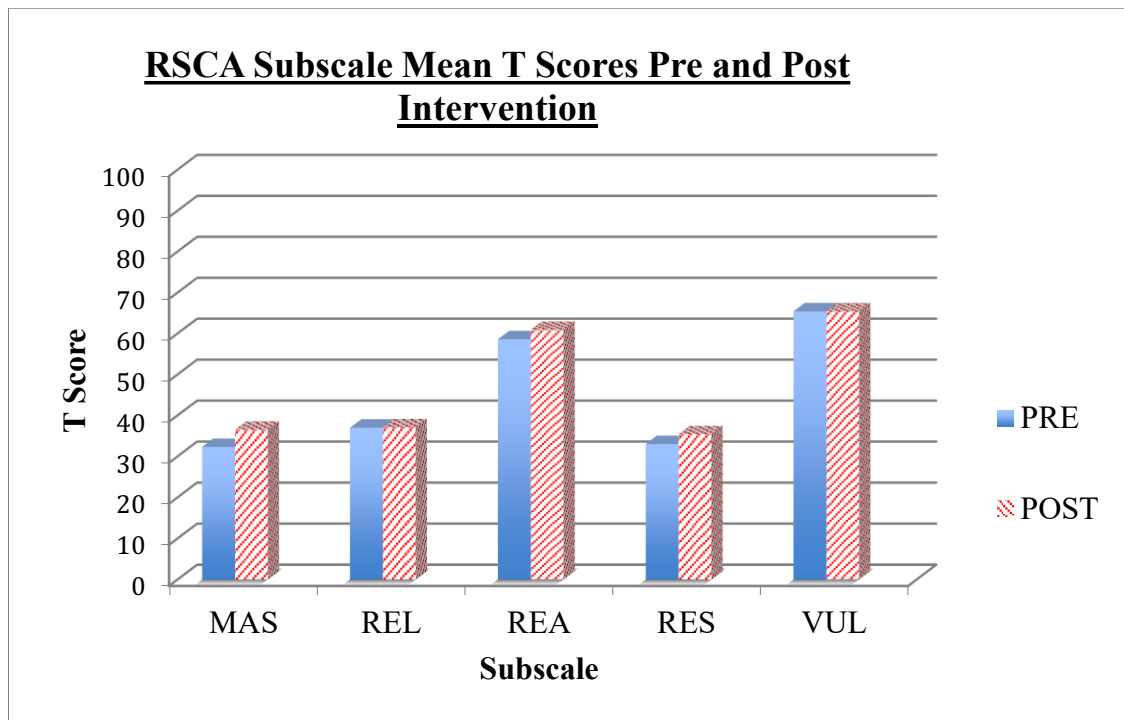
Figure 6 - RSCA Subscale Mean T Scores Pre and Post Intervention

4.2.2.2 Preliminary Analyses

As mentioned in Chapter 3, preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions necessary for conducting parametric analyses. The data met assumptions for level of measurement (i.e. continuous data; Pallant, 2007); size of sample (i.e. recommendation of minimum of 22 participants for repeated measures analyses; Dancy & Reidy, 2004); and normal distribution. The data collected was sourced from the same group due to the repeated measures design, and therefore homogeneity of variance was assumed. The data was explored for normality of distribution through identifying the trimmed mean to ascertain whether any extreme scores had a strong influence on the mean. This was not found to be the case. Additionally, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was non-significant for each subtest, indicating that the data was normally distributed. The data was not obtained through random sampling, and therefore did not meet this assumption. Nor did the data meet the assumption of independence of observations, as the group nature of the intervention means that it cannot be guaranteed that the group members did not influence each other in any way. However, this is real-world, practice based research, and meeting these assumptions in practice is often unachievable (Pallant, 2007). Therefore, parametric techniques were used to analyse the data, with adjustments made to reduce the possibility of a Type 1 error (i.e. falsely rejecting the null hypothesis; Pallant, 2007), which are detailed below in the results.

In order to ensure that it was appropriate to use a MANOVA, the data was checked to ensure it met the additional relevant assumptions. An analysis was conducted to check for univariate outliers (detailed above) and multivariate outliers. Calculating Mahalanobis distances tested for multivariate normality. The Mahalanobis distance value (16.210) was compared against a critical value (20.52). The Mahalanobis distance value was not larger than the critical value, and therefore there were no multivariate outliers found within the data. Scatterplots indicated linearity between each pair of dependent variables. Correlations between the dependent variables (RSCA subscales) were conducted to check for multicollinearity. This indicated that some of the dependent variables (such as RES and MAS) were highly correlated with each other. This was expected as the items in the subscales are related, and the VUL and RES index scores are achieved through combining scores from the other subscales. However, although MAS, REA and REL subscales are related, they present a profile of resilience relating to different skills and beliefs, which is helpful to consider in order to answer RQ2 as thoroughly as possible. It is not possible to combine the scales and obtain an overall resilience score using the RSCA, and therefore it was decided to continue with the MANOVA, and make conservative adjustments when conducting post-hoc tests.

4.2.2.3 Inferential Statistics

The repeated measures MANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in overall subscale scores from time one (prior to the SC intervention) to time two (following the SC intervention): $F (5, 17) = 4.14$, $p = .012$; Wilks' Lambda = .45; partial eta squared = .55 (large effect size, Cohen, 1992). This result warranted further exploration in order to investigate which subscale had contributed to the significant result. Therefore, post-hoc analyses were conducted using five separate repeated measures t-tests for each of the five subscales. A Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01 to reduce the likelihood of a Type 1 error (Pallant, 2007) was applied. Additionally, non-parametric analyses (Wilcoxon's Signed Rank Test) were conducted for each subscale (please see Appendix 27 for SPSS output), which indicated the same findings as the parametric analyses detailed below. The results for each t-test were as follows:

Mastery Subscale:
The paired-samples t-test indicated that there was a significant difference in scores on the Sense of Mastery (MAS) subscale from time one ($M=32.32$, $SD=10.24$) to time two ($M=36.55$, $SD=11.20$), $t (21) = 3.37$, $p<.005$. The mean increase in MAS scores was

4.23 with a 95% confidence interval, which ranged from 6.84 to 1.62. The eta squared statistic (.35) indicated a large effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Relatedness Subscale:

The paired-samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in scores on the Sense of Relatedness (REL) subscale from time one (*M*=37.05, *SD*=9.76) to time two (*M*=37.09, *SD*=12.10), *t* (21) = .033, *p*= .974. The mean increase in REL scores was .04 with a 95% confidence interval, which ranged from 2.92 to 2.83. The eta squared statistic (<.0000) indicated a very small effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Emotional Reactivity Subscale:

The paired-samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in scores on the Emotional Reactivity (REA) subscale from time one (*M*=58.59, *SD*=8.10) to time two (*M*=60.91, *SD*=9.30), *t* (21) = 1.39, *p*= .179 The mean increase in REA scores was 2.32 with a 95% confidence interval, which ranged from 5.78 to 1.15. The eta squared statistic (.08) indicated a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Resource Index Subscale:

The paired-samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in scores on the Resource Index (RES) from time one (*M*=33.05, *SD*=9.75) to time two (*M*=35.41, *SD*=11.52), *t* (21) = 2.27, *p* = .034. The mean increase in RES scores was 2.36 with a 95% confidence interval, which ranged from 4.53 to .20. The eta squared statistic (.20) indicated a large effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Vulnerability Index Subscale:

The paired-samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in scores on the Vulnerability Index (VUL) from time one (*M*=65.41, *SD* 8.28) to time two (*M*=65.36, *SD*=10.87), *t* (21) = .03, *p*= .98. The mean decrease in Vulnerability Index scores was .04 with a 95% confidence interval, which ranged from 3.03 to 3.12. The eta squared statistic (< .0000) indicated a very small effect size (Cohen, 1992).

4.2.2.4 Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

The findings related to RQ2 indicated that there was a significant impact of the SC intervention on increasing young people's Sense of Mastery scores. The mean scores in the Resource Index also increased, with a large effect size, although this was not found

to be statistically significant. The scores on the Emotional Reactivity Subscale increased slightly, with a moderate effect size, although this was not found to be statistically significant. The scores on the Relatedness Subscale and the Vulnerability Index remained similar.

4.2.3 Summary of Quantitative Findings

Overall, the quantitative findings showed that all participants felt they had made progress in their personal areas of development that they had identified as targets. Over half of the participants reported that they had met their expected goal, or exceeded it, with the remaining participants reporting not to have met or exceeded their target. The findings from the RSCA indicated that there was a significant difference in scores pre and post SC intervention in the Sense of Mastery Subscale, which encompasses optimism, self-efficacy and adaptability. Although not statistically significant, there were some other observed differences, with an increase in mean scores for Sense of Relatedness, Emotional Reactivity, and Resource Index subscale scores; and decrease in mean Vulnerability Index subscale scores.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data gathered through the use of focus groups with young people and interviews with SC Facilitators and school SENCOs was transcribed verbatim (please see Appendix 30 for interview transcripts, on CD), combined and analysed using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was conducted by applying the structure suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), and outlined in Table 6 in the previous chapter. Please also see Appendix 31 for photographs of the thematic analysis process. As identified in Chapter 3, the method of the thematic analysis was a hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), which involved the researcher conducting an inductive, data-driven analysis, in order to explore the data as a whole in depth; and then apply a deductive approach to link themes to research questions. Therefore, the themes presented in this section will initially be displayed in the overall thematic map (please see Figure 7), with an indication of the themes that link to RQ3 and RQ4, and will then be explored in further detail to specifically address research questions.

4.3.1 Thematic Map

The findings from the thematic analysis indicated three overarching themes: Processes, Outcomes and The Future. Please see Figure 7 below for the final thematic map outlining the themes and subthemes.
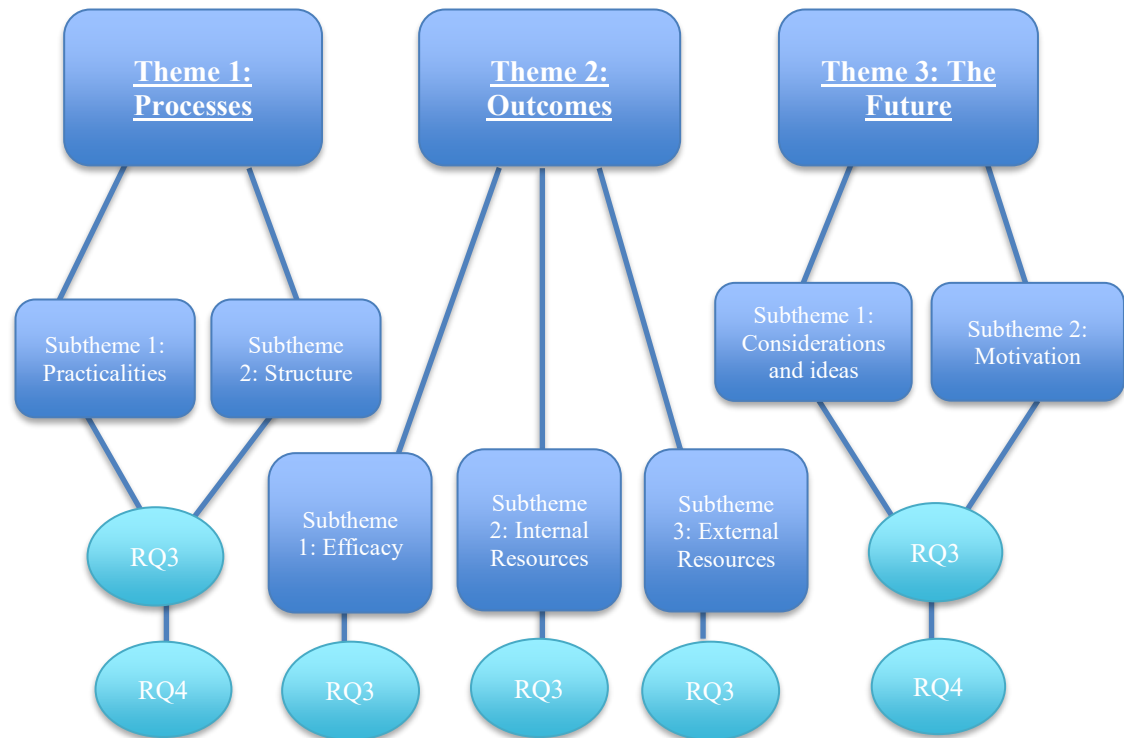
Figure 7 - Final Thematic Map

4.3.2 Research Question 3

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data aimed to address RQ3: what are young people's experiences of being part of a SC? Of the overall themes generated, as outlined in Figure 7, the themes that related to RQ3 were:

- Theme 1: Processes
- Theme 2: Outcomes
- Theme 3: The Future

Within these three overarching themes were subthemes relating to young people's experiences of being part of a SC. In Theme 1, the subthemes were Practicalities and Structure. In Theme 2, the subthemes were Efficacy, Internal Resources and External Resources. In Theme 3, the subthemes were Considerations and Ideas, and Motivation. Please see Appendix 32 for a table containing the themes, subthemes and codes. Please

also see Appendix 33 for the thematic analysis codebook, which also outlines a key for the abbreviations for the names of interviews and focus groups (e.g. SBFG1).

4.3.2.1 Theme 1: Processes

Theme 1 consisted of two subthemes, which outlined the young people's views and experiences of some of the practicalities of being involved in the SC groups, as well as their experiences of the structure of the sessions.

4.3.2.1.1 Subtheme 1: Practicalities

This subtheme highlighted young people's views on the practical elements of being part of the SC group, such as the skills and attributes of the Facilitator:

> ***Kimberly:*** *'...she's very, she's very reassuring'*
>
> ***Bill:*** *'... and very positive, even when there was nothing else we could think of, always positive'*

Some participants noted that they valued the fact they already knew the Facilitator:

> ***Leanne:*** *'...yeah she used to be in all my lessons last year, so she, so she kind of understood in a way, so she knew how I was'*

Some participants had noted the practicalities about missing lessons, or miscommunication about when the group was starting:

> ***Andrew:*** *'...this was going over an English lesson, er which would mean that I'm missing out on a core subject'*
>
> ***Hayley:*** *'I think some people got mixed up with when to come, we were told it was period 3'*

The participants also commented on the group dynamics, for example, individual ages, gender, size of the group, and existing relationships. One group consisted of all females, which they had noted as helpful:

> ***Kimberly:*** *'...I think that's helpful because I think girls have like... relatable kind of problems'*

Participants commented on the size of the group, with most participants who frequently had six group members present for each session, stating it was a good size:

James: '...not too many people that you feel overwhelmed but it's not too little people that there's no one here and no one's paying attention'

However, there was one group who frequently had around three members for each session, who noted that they liked the smaller size of the group, although one participant noted that there were some implications of this:

Jasmine: 'I think it was better with less people'

Bill: '...less ideas, which means everyone has to think harder'

Some participants felt it was better that they did not know the other members in the group before it began:

Leanne: '...it was a lot better because I knew they wouldn't say anything in a way because if we don't know each other well then can't really, nothing to say about each other'

Whereas, others felt it was helpful that they had met before:

Naomi: 'I also think that it's helpful that we have all met each other before we have all spoken and we don't have any hatred towards each other because I think it would have been a lot harder to like share problems if I didn't like any of you because then I would think oh they're going to use this against me'

Some participants noted that they would have felt uneasy if particular young people joined the group who they had previous disagreements with:

Leanne: '...but it depends on what you have in the past so like me and (pupil) have a really bad, we don't get on with each other anymore but we used to and I think I wouldn't have been able to stay in it'

4.3.2.1.2 Subtheme 2: Structure

This subtheme outlined the young people's experiences on the structure of the SC sessions, including following the stages of the SC, and how they engaged with it. Initially, some of the participants felt unsure about the process on the first session:

Hayley: 'I didn't know what we were doing in the first thing so I messed up my thing to talk about'

Although one participant disagreed and felt they understood the process:

>*Isla:* *'I mean I think she explained it fairly well…it's just one of those things that you only understand as you go'*

Some of the participants initially were reluctant to open up and share:

>*Molly:* *'…no one wanted to talk first'*

The participants noted that they felt they had used the SCs to share what they felt were small problems in their lives:

>*Naomi:* *'…I've shared like a very small problem in my life'*

And it appeared that for some, it became easier to share more personal problems as the group formed:

>*Isla:* *'I think at like the very first sessions we were kind of like erm I'm just going to share a minor thing and then as the time progressed people started sharing deeper'*

One participant shared that he enjoyed the structure of the six minute stages, and found it helpful:

>*Bill:* *'the way we did it, the way that you have six minutes to explain, six minutes of thinking of ideas and then another six minutes for sharing the ideas. So it was the way we did it which helped'*

Other participants engaged with the overall structure, but some were frustrated by its rigidity:

>*James:* *'…I wanted to say something else and maybe that something else could have really helped them, but I couldn't quite do that and so it was a bit frustrating because you had so much to say and then you were half way through saying it and then you had to stop because your six minutes were up, it was very, it was quite annoying'*

In particular, participants noted that they felt the first stage of problem presenting was too long:

>*Lissy:* *'six minutes was a bit too long to explain the problem because otherwise there was just like an awkward silence'*

However, some liked having the option to have six minutes if they wanted to use all of the time, and moved on when they were finished talking:

> **Ryan:** *'...you could have the six minutes if you needed it or just like stop it whenever you know, someone's finished talking'*

Additionally, there was a common view that some of the participants wanted longer to discuss the problem as a group:

> **Ryan:** *'...the whole discussion needs to be longer'*

Therefore, some were more flexible with the timings in their groups to suit their needs:

> **Wayne:** *'...because today there's like two cases where we ran out of time and people had to keep going after the time limit'*

The participants noted that they felt security in having rules that they agreed as a group:

> **Jasmine:** *'...yeah it made me feel secure that there was rules'*

The participants also noted the value of people having specific roles:

> **James:** *'...because everyone was in charge of something and they felt like they'd got control and deal with that and they did it effectively rather than having everything to have to deal with and sort out, everyone was given something different to do and they focused on that, and because they were focused on that they could be more effective with how they came across the problem and how they helped the person out and I thought that was really also really good'*

Some participants experienced using the vignettes, and noted that they were helpful to have as a backup that was relatable to their own personal problem, or when they weren't sure how to share a problem:

> **Lissy:** *'...well I used one because it was almost exactly the same as how I actually felt I just didn't know how to put it into words'*

One participant felt developing actions and following up on them was an effective process:

James: '…I think the steps about the 24 hours and the few days and then the long term ones I thought they were really good as well because it set easy milestones that we can achieve and when I did them, everything got ten times better'

4.3.2.2 Summary of Theme 1

Participants reflected on their experiences of being part of the SC, relating to practicalities involving group dynamics and factors, and their experiences of the structure of the SC sessions. Participants noted the importance of the skills of the Facilitator in being positive and kind, and knowing that people in the group liked them and they did not have any previous disagreements. These factors may have contributed to helping the young people feel safe and engage with the process. Although the young people shared that there was some initial reluctance about sharing problems, the participants appeared to engage well with the structure and reported to find it helpful to be flexible with the timings. In particular, the participants noted that planning concrete next steps within an agreed time frame, and knowing how long they had for each section was helpful. They also reflected on practical elements of the group structure and shared thoughtful insights to inform considerations for future groups.

4.3.2.3 Theme 2: Outcomes

Theme 2 consisted of three subthemes that highlighted the outcomes of the experiences of the young people who took part in the SCs, relating to their views on its efficacy as an approach, and the development of internal and external resources.

4.3.2.3.1 Subtheme 1: Efficacy

This subtheme related to the young people's views on the efficacy of SCs, how they recognised and reflected on progress, and how the intervention differed to their expectations. The young people commented on how the suggestions they were given by others, when put into action, were effective:

James: '…when I did them, everything got ten times better, and so it does, it does work because I have improved or helped improve my friend's life permanently because she was at, a lot at risk and now she's better and she's fine and I thank everyone for that'

The participants reflected on the progress they had made, and how things had changed for them. This was related to their review of their personalised targets, or thinking about the experience of being part of the group:

> ***Lydia:*** *'I think with me I didn't progress as much because my problem has been a problem since primary school so I know I wouldn't progress that much but I've progressed a little bit and I know that's helped more than if I was just dealing with it on my own'*

> ***James:*** *'I think the target system like how we put the targets on the scale and stuff, I thought that was really good because that showed me what progress I've made and how I've adapted and how I've changed. Because right now I might not think that I've changed at all, but when you've got it right in front of you it shows you how much you've changed on the scale and how you felt about yourself and now I feel much better about myself'*

4.3.2.3.2 Subtheme 2: Internal Resources

Subtheme 2 was centered on discussion of developing internal resources that the participants had developed through their experience of being part of a SC group. Of particular significance was the participants' perceived increase in confidence:

> ***Nayna:*** *'I've been talking a lot more about my problems, which has resulted in me being more confident in myself'*

The participants also reflected that through their experiences of SCs, they were able to allow themselves to trust others:

> ***James:*** *'...now I've got a place like people like this that I know that I can talk to because I feel like I can be more open about how I feel to other people and to other friends that I might not be as close with but I could be and it opens, it opens your perspective on things that all not all people are bad, not all people are horrible, that there are people like this that you can trust and that are going to be kind and considerate and so they almost give you faith when you didn't have any'*

The participants also noted that they could use the advice they had given to others for themselves:

> ***Lissy: '…****I gave Nayna advice for something and then managed to fix it for myself 'cause I had the same problem'*

The participants reflected on their experiences and how they had developed new skills and learned new things about themselves:

> **Leanne:** *'...you know you learn how to listen and you learn how to wait for them to finish talking about their problem and then you can try and help'*

4.3.2.3.3 Subtheme 3: External Resources

Subtheme 3 highlighted how an outcome of the young people's experiences of being part of the SC groups was an increase in their external resources. Participants highlighted that they had realised they found it difficult to share their feelings with others, and would often keep them to themselves:

> **Lydia:** *'I didn't realise I was so closed off...'*
>
> **Nayna:** *'...I used to bottle everything up and just break down and I haven't done that in months'*

Of particular significance was how the young people reflected that by opening up, they were able to relate to others and understand their situations:

> **Naomi:** *'...some people are sharing the same situations as you and you like some of the time you still feel alone, but then when you hear like what other people are going through then you feel like oh I can relate to that'*

Linked to this, participants noted how they valued having access to different perspectives:

> **Lydia:** *'I think it helps getting different points from different people, like different views on the situation and different solutions to it'*

Participants frequently made reference to feeling they had a much wider support system, with more people to turn to for support:

> **Isla:** *'I think it was really weightlifting to know that you can share and that others are going to be there to listen and you can also get to know the other people in the group'*

Alongside having more peers to talk to, participants also noted that they felt more able to open up to their parents:

> **Anabelle:** *'...I feel like I can talk to family members about likes things as well because I never really told my family much about what was going on like if*

they asked how it's gone I'd just say fine even if I was having a really bad day just because I didn't want them all worrying about me but now I feel like if something does go wrong I know I can talk to them because I know that they'll be there for me'

In addition to the support that the group provided to each other within the sessions, they also noted that they support each other outside of the group:

Bill: *'...and when we saw each other out of the group, we would check to see if everything was ok'*

Alongside noticing and reflecting on the change in their external support systems, the participants also supported their peers through noting and celebrating change in each other:

Lissy: *'I'm so proud of you'*
Ryan: *'you do seem more confident'*

4.3.2.4 Summary of Theme 2

The participants reflected on their experiences of being part of the SC group, and the outcomes that resulted from this. Many of them noted that they felt more confident, and able to trust and talk to a wider range of people about their problems, including their peers and their family members. This highlights the impact on participants' lives at multiple levels.

4.3.2.5 Theme 3: The Future

Theme 3 consisted of two subthemes, focused around young people's ideas and suggested changes for future use of the intervention, and their motivation and feelings around continuing SCs.

4.3.2.5.1 Subtheme 1: Considerations and Ideas

Subtheme 1 highlighted the considerations participants noted they thought might be important for the future use of SCs in schools. For example, some young people mentioned the time of year that the groups run, as some participants felt pressure when following up on their actions and thinking about exams:

Hayley: *'...but maybe where it's not near any major exams'*

However, some also noted that having the support of the group during more stressful times could also be helpful:

> **Isla:** *'...there were things going on that made her really stressed during the mocks so maybe if she could have been able to share it, even if it's just sharing it and getting it off her chest, you still feel better, so even if its during exams, it can still help you'*

Some participants noted that the time of day and the day of the week for the sessions was also an important consideration, although there were some differing opinions:

> **Ryan:** *'I think it being in the morning was ok as if it was in the afternoon I would probably be asleep by now'*
>
> **Nayna:** *'...although I feel like everything happens at break'*
>
> **Sophie:** *'we should have done it on Monday so we can get it done during the week...so then we can talk about it on Monday and then catch up on Friday to see if we've done it'*
>
> **Ryan:** *'I kind of found it kind of like nice cause you know and then even if I did get the advice or whatever you know I wouldn't have to worry about it for the whole weekend'*

One participant had intentions for continuing the use of SCs in an anti-bullying ambassador role, and others had suggestions for how it could be adapted and continued:

> **James:** *'...so to start off with I think I will facilitate it but when people get use to the system then get used to how it works then I'll teach and I can teach other people the other anti-bullying ambassador to do it as well'*
>
> **Nayna:** *'...but maybe even like a little session after school like half an hour after school, on like a Monday or a Wednesday'*

Participants shared their views on how many sessions they thought might be helpful in the future:

> **James:** *'...if we could have more, just more sessions in general so many instead of six weeks maybe twelve'*

Participants also reflected on the way the intervention was evaluated. Some participants found the RSCA and target setting easy:

> **Kyle:** *'...it was quite easy'*

James: '...yeah that's the other thing it was easy for everyone to do'

Whereas others experienced some difficulty with the structure of the RSCA:

Lissy: '...some of them didn't make sense as an answer anyway, it's like you've got to answer that in a sentence to describe what happened'

Some participants also noted that in the future, they would like food available in the sessions:

James: 'I wish we had cake every week'

4.3.2.5.2 Subtheme 2: Motivation

Subtheme 2 outlined participants' feelings around their experiences of being part of the intervention, and how they felt about continuing the group. The participants in particular expressed a keen interest for the group to continue:

Sophie: '...yeah cause I mean like at the beginning we were all like who are these people but now I'm feeling more comfortable so I feel like I want to keep it going now'

Participants also expressed some feelings of uncertainty and worry about the group coming to an end:

Lissy: '...it's a bit worrying now it's going to stop to be honest'
Nayna: '...this needs to carry on'

Alongside this, some participants felt they would really value another opportunity to share a problem:

James: '...everyone has more than one problem they want to share'

4.3.2.6 Summary of Theme 3

The young people outlined their ideas and intentions for continuing the SC groups, with many noting that they were motivated and interested to continue the group as it was, with opportunities to share further problems and attend more sessions. They also noted the potential to offer SCs more widely across the school, to benefit other young people. One participant intended to facilitate the use of SCs themselves in their role as an anti-bullying ambassador. The participants also outlined any future practical considerations they thought were important, such as when in the school year the groups should run,

with some young people noting it was difficult to balance following up on their actions and revising for exams. However, some noted that having access to the group during more stressful times was a positive thing, as they could get the support they needed.

4.3.2.7 Summary of Findings from Research Question 3

Overall, the young people shared their experiences of being part of a SC group as largely positive. Many young people viewed the structure of SCs as positive and containing. They also responded positively to the security of having group rules, and knowing that everyone had a specific role they were responsible for each week. There was some frustration experienced in relation to the timings and structure of the SCs, with some stages, particularly the first stage, seeming too long; and others, particularly the stage for discussion, seeming too short without enough chance to ask questions and hear more information about the problem before the group gives ideas. The participants also noted their experiences of the dynamic and makeup of the groups, indicating that they would not have liked to be in a larger group, and liked being with different year groups. For those who were in a smaller group, this was reported to be a positive experience for them, and they preferred this. Additionally, those who were in a group of all females also noted this as a positive aspect.

The participants noted outcomes that had been a significant change for them, such as feeling more confident, being able to walk into lessons and remain in lessons, talking to new people, trusting others, and opening up to family members at home. Many of the participants noted that they intend to use their new skills and experience to help other people solve problems, and to apply advice to help themselves.

4.3.3 Research Question 4

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data aimed to address RQ4: Is it feasible for SCs to be used as an intervention with young people? Of the overall themes generated, as outlined in Figure 7, the themes that related to RQ4 were:

- Theme 1: Processes
- Theme 3: The Future

Within these two overarching themes were subthemes relating to the feasibility of using SCs with young people. In Theme 1, the subthemes were Practicalities and Structure. In Theme 3, the subthemes were Considerations and Ideas, and Motivation. Please see

Appendix 31 for a table containing the themes, subthemes and codes. Please also see Appendix 32 for the thematic analysis codebook, which also outlines a key for the abbreviations for the names of interviews and focus groups (e.g. SBF1).

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: Processes

Theme 1 consisted of two subthemes that highlighted the feasibility of applying SCs with young people, including the practicalities that surrounded its set up and application, and how young people engaged with it.

4.3.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: Practicalities

This subtheme outlined the perspectives of the Facilitators and SENCOs on the practicalities of setting up and running the SC intervention groups. The participants commented on the selection processes of selecting young people to attend the groups:

> *Stephanie: '...we had a combination of some SEN students and some students who had got particular issues worries concerns, that were a concern to us anyway and needed the opportunity to have, the opportunity to be part of a group and to chat, not just about opening up and sharing their worries, but building those social skills that they actually haven't got'*

The SENCOs commented on the practicalities of organising the intervention within school, with considerations for what might have made it easier:

> *Stephanie: 'Getting it organised was bit of a challenge. That may have been because of running two groups at the same time, it's also the time of the year because of using TAs'*
>
> *Catherine: 'I think if I was to do it again I would put the organisation of it onto the Facilitators, so I think that just from my perspective I was trying to get consent forms and everything else, so probably if I was to do it again I would invite, I'd have that initial meeting with the Facilitators and then pass the whole thing on over to them rather than me trying to do bits and then somebody else trying to do bits'*

The SENCOs shared their considerations and decision making when selecting members of staff to facilitate the groups, and the importance of their skills and availability:

> *Catherine: 'I think we are lucky because we've got two erm very experienced TAs that felt confident to work within a group doing these types of*

interventions. I think it would be quite difficult to just choose anybody to deliver it'

Stephanie: *'...I wanted to choose somebody or two people, that I could use again and again, so they were going to be trained, but I needed them to be reliable and likely to be here if you like, I know that's a practicality but quite important to make use of the fact that you were training them'*

Stephanie: *'...the skills, the people that I chose, erm are very gentle, kind, I mean firm and don't take any messing but they are more understanding, more approachable'*

The SENCO in one school commented on some of the issues with communicating with the young people in order for them to get to the group on time:

Stephanie: *'...getting students to one place at the right time is always a challenge for anybody at any time'*

The Facilitators and SENCOs commented on the support available to them, including the training before the intervention began and the support offered throughout the course of the intervention:

Stephanie: *'they really appreciated your training, you know and that and they felt fully supported through the experience, so I think it was very successful'*

The Facilitators and SENCOs commented on the dynamic of the group, including:

A) Age:

Stephanie: *'the other thing about that was that we had two year groups together. And I did wonder if that would work or not, but it did'*

B) The size of the group:

Janine: *'...smaller, no I don't think it would really work very as well as a smaller, but I think you could add perhaps one or two more perhaps for a larger group, but I don't think you should be too big, because you've got to build that group trust and that relationship'*

C) The individual personalities of the group members:

Janine: '*It was good because I think there were some who were really confident and wanted to speak out, but I think the quieter ones were also really good listeners*'

D) Whether there were existing relationships:

Jane: '*...I think everybody knew everybody a bit, so I think that helped them*'

The SENCO and Facilitator reflected on the lower attendance of one particular group, and the practical implications of this:

Stephanie: '*...the* [group with pupils in years] *7 and 8s didn't turn up so frequently. I don't know why, I really don't know why, they were on board, their parents were on board*'

Jane: '*...would have just been easier with more people and more ideas coming I suppose, but they all had ideas, I mean everyone had a solution or you know an idea to come up with so, it wasn't too constrictive I think not having the whole group*'

4.3.3.1.2 Subtheme 2: Structure

This subtheme outlined the views of the SENCOs and Facilitators on how well the young people engaged with the structure of SCs. Initially, the Facilitators noted that the young people were hesitant about sharing their problems, or were unsure of what to share:

Janine: '*...for quite a while there were two that really didn't know what they were going to share. They were I think they were quite anxious about it, I think they were anxious about being that person being the problem presenter, but when it actually came to it they really excelled and they were really good*'

The Facilitators commented on how the young people understood and engaged with the stages of the process:

Sarah: '*...I think the six minutes actually gives a framework that they understand and they can follow it*'

The Facilitators reflected on what their role entailed during the sessions:

Janine: '*...just to just to make sure they stuck to the what, what steps they needed to stick to, I thought perhaps sometimes when they was like the first part they*

would get a bit stuck and sometimes I would perhaps chip in and say 'is there anything else you want to add?' Just little sort of nudges here and there to say 'well have you thought of....?''

One Facilitator mentioned the value of having the vignettes available to help the young people to open up, and how they related to the vignette they chose:

Dianne: *'...having the vignettes, yeah, as back up yeah [helped the pupils open up more]'*

Dianne: *'...no I think they that may not have mentioned that it was personal them but you got the feeling I got the feeling that it was something to do with them by the way they spoke about it and were able to put more information in, I think yes, yes'*

The Facilitators also reflected on the young people's skills in generating ideas and following up on their actions:

Jane: *'they all had ideas, I mean everyone had a solution or you know an idea to come up with'*

Janine: *'Oh yeah, every week, in fact I got to the point where I never had to say right let's hear, they'd come in and go 'oh we need to follow up miss don't we?' And so they were doing it without me, they were doing it, and so, 'I spoke to so and so, and I did this' and, you know'*

4.3.3.2 Summary of Theme 1

School SENCOs and Facilitators commented on the feasibility of running SCs with young people. They reflected on the organisation and set up of the intervention, including difficulties around implementing interventions at particular times in the school year, where there were exams taking place and therefore the strain this can put on TA time. It was also shared that there were some difficulties with the SENCOs overseeing the organisation of the intervention and it taking a lot of their time. One school also noted some initial difficulty with ensuring that the pupils knew when and where to go for the intervention.

The schools noted the importance of selecting the Facilitators, in terms of their willingness to do it, and their skills and attributes, such as being kind and gentle. SENCOs and Facilitators felt that the training and ongoing support went well, and the

Facilitators also benefited from being able to talk to each other during the intervention. Both SENCOs and Facilitators felt the group size worked, and having two year groups together; although one Facilitator mentioned some concern about having pupils from year 7 with year 9 pupils. The Facilitators noted the importance of the personalities of the members, and how having a group dynamic consisting of some quieter members and more outgoing members worked well. The Facilitators commented on how well the pupils engaged with the structure of the sessions, although some were initially unsure of contributing to discussions and understanding the structure. The Facilitators noted that their role did not require much input, and that the young people eventually took ownership of the process and followed it independently.

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: The Future

Theme 3 consisted of two subthemes that related to the SENCOs' and Facilitators' views on the feasibility to continue the use of SCs with young people, and in other capacities; as well as their motivation to continue using it as a tool.

4.3.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Considerations and Ideas

Subtheme 1 outlined the SENCOs' and Facilitators' views on the feasibility of continuing to use SCs within their schools, and what that might look like. The Facilitators highlighted how being flexible with the structure was helpful, and having time at the end for an informal discussion:

> ***Dianne:*** *'...we did the structure, and then perhaps when we got to the end of it and we couldn't do anything more with that, we thought ok fine well close that book well just have a general chat about things'*

One SENCO discussed the scope for disseminating the use of SCs and following up on the impact:

> ***Stephanie:*** *'...we're also going to get them to do some erm cascading, if we use that word anymore, to the other TAs just to that they know what we've been doing and then probably in time get somebody else to come along on board with it'*
>
> ***Stephanie:*** *'...it would be really good potentially to measure the impact again in a period of time. Erm, I guess it would be good to hold some follow up meetings with them'*

The SENCOs and Facilitators also discussed the feasibility of continuing the use of SCs in their schools and what it might look like:

> **Catherine:** '*I can see that we can use it in many different capacities actually. And the other thing that we want to try to use it as is amongst the staff as well*'
>
> **Janine:** '*I think it could be used for anybody I don't think just for students I think it's something you could use in a team*'

They also discussed practicalities such as when in the school year and school day it would be most feasible to run groups, although it was acknowledged that this could be a challenge at any point:

> **Stephanie:** '*...just not when it hits our heavy time so or in the school not when they're doing mocks and not when they're doing their GCSES but other than that, it's always busy and we have exams in year 10, so I think it's just about looking at the timetable*'

The schools also reflected on the response and feelings about students missing lessons, which was a consideration for timetabling any future groups:

> **Stephanie:** '*...the school itself doesn't like children coming out of lessons, particularly 9 and 10*'

One school reflected that some parents were reluctant for their child to take part, and discussed further contact with parents may be helpful to alleviate any potential concerns:

> **Catherine:** '*...I think two of them were concerned that there was ed psych involvement and maybe it made it seem more official or that their child had got a problem*'
>
> **Catherine:** '*...I wonder whether we need to do, would need to do more work around just around how we frame the initial letter, erm to make it, I just wondered if it looked so official that it may have put some people off*'

4.3.3.3.2 Subtheme 2: Motivation

Subtheme 2 highlighted the SENCO and Facilitators' views as a school on the effectiveness of SCs, and how motivated they were to continue with it. The SENCOs and Facilitators acknowledged the students' wishes to continue the SC groups:

> **Jane:** '*...I think they would have carried on*'

> *Catherine: '...the students themselves have asked us, if we can carry on doing it with them'*

They also noted how the young people engaged with SCs, and its effectiveness, had exceeded their expectations:

> *Sarah: 'It has been even more of a success than I expected'*
>
> *Catherine: '...so we kind of went into it with not many expectations at all, but it's come out as an intervention that we are going to offer as part of our interventions, so it couldn't have been better from our perspective'*

The SENCOs also noted how the school felt about SCs overall:

> *Catherine: '...I think we can we just see the benefit of it as a technique full stop'*

4.3.3.4 Summary of Theme 3

The Facilitators and SENCOs discussed the feasibility of using SCs in their schools in the future. There was agreement that the approach could be used in a variety of contexts and for different purposes, such as with school staff, with year 7s around friendships, or with year 10s around exam revision strategies. There were some concerns around the feasibility of continuing the sessions, relating to pressures on staffing, how the school and some teachers responded to students coming out of lessons, and the time in the school year. There were also considerations for communicating with parents for future groups, and how this could be framed in a way that did not seem too 'official', although this could be attributed to the research context in which the groups were set up. The SENCOs and Facilitators noted how the outcome of running the SCs had exceeded their expectations. They also noted that the students themselves were motivated to continue, and that the Facilitators also felt confident and positive about carrying it on.

4.3.3.5 Summary of Findings from Research Question 4

The school staff (SENCOs and Facilitators) shared their views on the feasibility of using SCs with young people. They expressed some concerns around certain practical elements, such as staffing and pupils missing lessons, but overall noted how the young people engaged in the sessions and structure, and worked together to support one another, with little need for adult prompting. The school staff noted that the outcome of the intervention had exceeded their expectations, and that the impact for young people

and Facilitators had been very positive. Despite some potential practical barriers for continuing using SCs as an intervention with young people, schools overall seemed motivated to do so, and could see the potential of SCs as a universal tool to use in different capacities within the school community.

4.3.4 Summary of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings indicated that the SC groups have made a positive impact for young people, namely through increasing their confidence and widening their support network. The young people valued the structure of the SCs and felt secure in having roles and jointly constructed rules. However, many noted that they would have wanted greater flexibility in the structure of the sessions, particularly with regard to timings. The Facilitators and SENCOs reflected on some of the practical issues with setting up and running the groups, including pupils missing lessons, and the time in the year that the sessions ran. The Facilitators commented on how well the pupils engaged with the sessions once they were feeling more comfortable about sharing their problems, and how they supported each other effectively and independently. The SENCOs and Facilitators also felt that the intervention had exceeded their expectations, and both schools had intentions of continuing the use of SCs, with ideas for the different ways in which it could be used.

4.4 Triangulation and Summary of Findings

This mixed methods research generated findings from both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, seeking to address four related research questions. The findings showed that, following young people's participation in the SC intervention, the majority of the participants had rated themselves as having met or exceeded their personalised TME targets, with all participants making progress on their target from their baseline score. The outcome of the RSCA indicated that the difference in scores on the Sense of Mastery subscale was significantly higher from before the intervention to after the intervention.

The thematic analysis resulted in three overarching themes: Processes, Outcomes and The Future. Within these themes were subthemes relating to Practicalities, Structure, Efficacy, Internal Resources, External Resources, Considerations and Ideas, and Motivation. The Practicalities subtheme highlighted pupil participant, SENCO and Facilitator views on organising, setting up and running the SC groups. The Structure

subtheme highlighted how young people engaged with and understood the structure of the sessions, and outlined practical strengths and potential issues with the SC process. The Efficacy subtheme highlighted pupil participants' views on how well they felt the SCs worked as a process. The Internal and External Resources subthemes highlighted young people's views on how they felt these had changed, such as by feeling more confident, trusting others, and benefiting from a wider support network. The Considerations and Ideas subtheme outlined pupil participant, SENCO and Facilitator views on how SCs could be applied and adapted for use in the future. The Motivation subtheme highlighted how pupil participants, SENCOs and Facilitators valued SCs as a tool for support, and had expressed that they wanted to continue using it in their school communities.

Overall, the findings as a whole indicate that using SCs in schools with young people has been a largely positive experience, and has highlighted many interesting points to consider further for practical applications and future research. The implications of this will be critically discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research. Section 5.2 will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions. Section 5.3 will highlight the implications of the research, making links to implications for schools, EP practice, and for young people. Section 5.4 will outline the limitations of the research. Section 5.5 will discuss the potential of dissemination and future research. Section 5.6 will provide a conclusion.

5.2 Research Questions

This section will discuss the findings of the research in relation to each of the specific research questions, including linking back to previously reviewed literature and psychological theory.

5.2.1 Research Question 1

RQ1 sought to explore the impact of using SCs with young people on helping them to reach their personalised targets, which were set using TME. The findings indicated that 55 percent of the participants reported that they had either met their expected level for their target, or exceeded it. All of the participants had scored themselves higher than their baseline score. The focus of the targets for each individual varied, although there were some similarities (please see Table 7 in Chapter 4 for an overview of the targets). Slightly under a quarter of the participants were hoping to feel an improvement in their feelings of confidence and self-acceptance. Some young people wanted to feel happier, more calm and less fearful and worried. The focus of the targets indicated that some pupils wanted to improve their connectedness with others and also how they connected with and viewed themselves. The focus of the participants' targets relate to key areas of resilience identified in literature, such as self-efficacy, emotional regulation and social relationships (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Eisenberg, Champion & Ma, 2004; Thompson, Flood & Goodvin, 2006; Hart, Blincow & Thomas, 2012), and indicate that young people involved in the group were hoping the intervention would support them in developing this.

Although the majority of the participants either met or exceeded their targets, 45 percent of them did not. There are some considerations for why this might have been. One could be the extent of the area in which the young person wanted to see change, and whether

it is an area that would take longer to see significant change in than over a six-week period. Additionally, it could be considered that the young person's perceptions of their locus of control in regard to their target areas may have influenced how they scored themselves after the intervention. Rotter's (1966) theory on locus of control highlights how a person's engagement and response to a situation can vary on their views on whether the situation is determined by external or internal factors. Literature exploring the concept of locus of control in learning attainment has indicated that some students who have an internal locus of control may be more proactive with their learning, whereas those with an external locus of control may be more passive (Özen Kutanis, Mesci, & Övdür, 2011). In the case of the current research, if the participants had a perceived external locus of control regarding their targets, it could be that they were less likely to feel there was an improvement. This was a point raised by some of the participants during the focus groups, who noted that their problem situations seemed too big to have simple solutions.

Conversely, there were participants who commented on their use of TMEs, and stated that when they reflected on the impact of the SC group on their targets, they may not have felt there was much difference; however when they were able to look on the scale they could see how they had moved forward toward their target. The fact that all participants had scored themselves as higher than their baseline is promising, but also may need to be interpreted with caution. The role of the researcher may have influenced the way in which participants scored their TMEs, as it has been argued that actions or targets that are set visibly to others, can lead to a stronger drive to achieve that target or follow up on the action (Schlenker, Dlugolecki & Doherty, 1994). This was the case in the current research as the researcher had possession of the participants' TMEs, with their permission, to bring back for review at the end of the intervention, therefore the participants were aware that the researcher knew what their targets were. Additionally, it has been suggested that if a review takes place with the person who was present at the setting of the target and involved in delivering or setting up the intervention, and therefore perceived to be invested in the outcome, this can influence how the person rates their progress (Kiresuk, Smith & Cardillo, 1994). However, much like the discussion from Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai, and Monsen (2009) on EPs using TMEs in their casework, it was not pragmatic in the current research for an independent person to collect the outcome measures, and therefore the results may be subject to bias.

5.2.2 Research Question 2

RQ2 aimed to explore the effects of SCs on young people's resilience, as measured using the RSCA. The findings from the MANOVA indicated that the SC intervention had a statistically significant impact on RSCA scores when compared across all subscales. Following further analysis, it was identified that there was a statistically significant increase in young people's scores on the MAS subscale. This subscale encompasses participants' levels of optimism, self-efficacy and adaptability. The author of RSCA notes that the resilience concepts from the MAS subscale are based on research on constructs of self-efficacy. White (1959) provides a description of self-efficacy as an innate concept that CYP develop through an understanding and intrinsically rewarding experience of cause and effect relationships. Bandura (1993) has offered an alternative stance on the development of self-efficacy, and relates it to social learning experiences in a CYP's environment, and the interplay between experiences and the response to ongoing situations. Bandura (1993) argues that these experiences can be explicitly offered to CYP in order to provide them with opportunities to increase their self-efficacy. This relates to the experiences offered by SCs, as their core function is for the group members to offer advice and support to one another, which will be based on their own experiences and learning, to help construct positive experiences for their peers.

The scores on the REL subscale increased slightly with a very small effect size, although this was not statistically significant. The REL subscale encompasses sense of trust, perceived access to support, comfort with others, and tolerance of differences. Literature on social relationships and the impact on resilience identifies relational experiences as external buffers, which suggests that CYP who are able to seek external support when needed, and know they will get help if they ask for it, are protective factors for resilience and wellbeing (Thompson, Flood & Goodvin, 2006). This can also be seen in the context of attachment theory and psychosocial theories of development, where CYP's early attachments to caregivers can be suggested to shape their schemas around relatedness and forming of trust with others (Yates, Egeland & Sroufe, 2003; Erikson, 1963). This is a key component to SCs, where part of its powerfulness is how it encourages group cohesion and provision of external support (Brown & Henderson, 2012). Interestingly, the RSCA did not highlight any significant changes in participants' feelings of relatedness with others, although this was a key theme that arose during the focus groups. It could be queried whether some participants may have been focusing on

their perception of relatedness to those outside of the group, rather than within it. Therefore, if they had positive experiences of relating to group members, this could have highlighted potential shortcomings of others outside of the group when comparing the support offered in SCs.

Although not statistically significant, the mean overall scores on the REA subscale increased slightly, with a moderate effect size. The subscale encompasses sensitivity, recovery and impairment. This subscale assesses the emotional responses that CYP have to negative situations, and their ability to regulate their responses. This is thought to be a key component of resilience as the link between emotional regulation, reactivity and resiliency is suggested in research (e.g. Eisenberg, Champion & Ma, 2004). Prior to the SC intervention, a total of 14 participants' REA scores were in the 'above average' or 'high' range (please see Appendix 28 for RSCA score rankings), indicating this was a prominent area of need before the intervention began. Following the intervention, there were 15 participants whose REA scores fell into the 'above average' or 'high' range, with more participants in the 'high' range post intervention. As it could be hypothesised that SCs have potential to support young people to reduce their emotional reactivity scores, it is important to consider factors for why the increase in scores may have occurred. The young people may have become more aware of their emotional responses to situations due to having time to reflect on situations they were finding difficult and sharing them with their peers. It has also been noted by Sprangers and Hoogstraten (1989) that interventions can affect the participants' understanding of the concept being measured (in this case, emotional reactivity), and therefore influence their perceptions of functioning in this area. There is also the possibility that the participants influenced each other's answers when completing the RSCA. The participants completed the scales in small groups both pre and post intervention, which is deemed acceptable in the administration manual. However, when completing the RSCA post intervention, the young people knew each other more and were occasionally talking during the completion. Although the researcher reminded them that their answers should be their own and they should complete them individually, they could have influenced each other's answers. Finally, it is important to consider wider contextual factors that may have arisen outside of the SC groups that may have had an impact on the outcomes. For example, there may have been significant events that occurred outside of the intervention in some of the young people's lives, unknown to the researcher, which could have influenced their perceptions on their emotional reactivity.

Although not statistically significant, there was an increase in RES Index scores, which had a large effect size. The Resource Index considers the scores on the MAS and REL subscales, and is a subscale identified by the authors for the use of screening. The RES Index takes into account the inter-relational dimensions of resiliency, which include a sense of autonomy and industry, based on secure relationships of trust (Erikson, 1963). These allow the development of strengths from the relationship between the CYP's environment and their response to the environment. As the MAS subscale scores had increased significantly, and the REL scores had increased slightly, albeit not significantly, this will have attributed to the increase in RES scores.

The scores on the VUL Index decreased slightly, with a very small effect size. The VUL Index is calculated by the discrepancy between the REA subscale scores and RES Index scores. This relates to a model suggested by the author that vulnerability can be identified through the discrepancy between a CYP's emotional responses to situations and their perception of their own internal and external resources. The majority of the participants scored in the 'high' range for vulnerability both pre and post the intervention, and therefore as this was highlighted as a prominent area of need for them at the beginning of the intervention, it could be that it was unlikely that this would have reduced significantly over the course of the intervention. Additionally, it could be that the relatively short length of the intervention did not allow for the full potential of the impact on the pupils' REA and RES (and therefore, VUL) scores to be identified.

5.2.3 Research Question 3

RQ3 sought to explore what young people's experiences were of being part of a SC. The views shared during the focus groups identified three common themes that related to the young people's experiences: processes, outcomes and the future.

In the first theme relating to processes, the young people noted that they found the structure of the SCs containing, as they knew how long they had to discuss each topic and knew what would happen next. It has been noted that predictability and structure in interventions can be helpful to reduce anxiety (Grupe & Nitschke, 2013), which may have helped to increase participants' engagement. Additionally, the solution-focused nature of SCs ties in well with the structure and allows the group to work together toward a common goal. The young people engaged positively with the follow up and noted that when following each other's advice, they experienced positive outcomes.

Again, the actions that are agreed are time bound, and the predictability of this may also have been containing for the participants. Some of the young people noted that they would have welcomed more flexibility with the timings of the stages in the SC, particularly with regard to the first step, where the Problem Presenter shares their problem. The Facilitator was told in the training that they could move on to the next step if the pupil was finished talking, after feedback from the pilot study. The participants shared that this was offered to them, however they still found waiting uncomfortable at times. Some noted they would like more time for discussions. This can be something that perhaps in practice could be negotiated with the group through giving an idea of what the problem is and how long might need to be spent discussing it.

It was noted that some young people felt uneasy about engaging with the sessions to start with. Therefore, building upon previous research on SCs where they were used as one off sessions, and applying the structure on a weekly basis, enabled the group to build trust and open up to engage with the structure and contribute more personal problems. The participants also noted that the vignettes were helpful, and it is recommended that this continues to be offered in any future use of SCs with young people, so there is less pressure for them to contribute something personal. Additionally, setting up the structure of the group to ensure that the group rules were developed jointly was an important aspect for participants. The focus on setting group rules and developing the vignettes was a priority for the research, as previous literature on SCs highlighted how some group members felt vulnerable as the Problem Presenter, and felt pressure to come up with a problem to share (Brown & Henderson, 2012). Therefore, the group jointly constructing rules for everyone to agree to and having vignettes to share a hypothetical problem instead of a personal one attempted to alleviate any concerns. This may have helped young people to engage with the process and feel safe to open up, which relates to factors of resilience, including the importance of building trust in order to take risks (Yates, Egeland & Sroufe, 2003).

Theme 2 outlined the outcomes for the pupils. They discussed the efficacy of SCs, and the impact on their external and internal resources. Some of the pupils noted the efficacy of SCs, with particular reference to the suggestions that were given to them and when they followed them up, they felt they worked and improved their situation. Additionally, some participants noted that they were also able to apply their own advice to their own situations, and were able to solve problems for themselves. Some young

people did note however that they were sharing big problems that did not necessarily have an answer or solution, which links to the aforementioned theory of locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Those who did not feel they had any control over their problems that they shared may not have felt as motivated to engage with the actions or next steps suggested. Similarly, those who heard a peer's problem that they felt was not possible to be solved may not have felt as motivated to offer suggestions. It may be helpful for future use of SCs with young people for it to be explained that not all problems shared will necessarily have a clear solution, but the support and ideas offered to alleviate problem situations are valuable. The young people identified other aspects of the efficacy of SCs, including noticeable changes in the way they viewed themselves, such as how confident they were and how they were able to relate to others. Additionally, they commented on the positive changes they had noticed in other members of the group. These changes for group members can be seen in the context of social learning theory, where the young people have had opportunities to learn new skills from each other, and notice their increase in strengths and skills (Bandura, 1993).

The participants also noted changes in their internal resources, such as feelings of social confidence, allowing themselves to trust others, and talk to new people. This can relate to broaden and build theory, where young people in the group experienced positive emotions associated with their increase in internal and external resources, which led to increased positive behaviours and actions and a broadened mindset, such as maintaining positive relationships, exploring situations and enjoying positive experiences (Fredrickson, 2004). This theory relates to resilience, as it encompasses the increase of resources that can be drawn upon in challenging situations to allow young people to cope successfully and optimise their wellbeing. The pupils also noted a significant change in their external resources, including being able to talk to their peers without having to know everything about them, talking to other adults in school and also seeking support from family members where before they felt unable to. This indicates an impact on multiple system levels, and the significance of the interaction between systems in promoting resilience. In line with the theories of resilience outlined in relation to the RSCA, the CYP and their resilience cannot be seen without the context of wider systems. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) highlights how the interactions within different levels of the system impact on the CYP. In the case of the current research, SCs have shown to impact on the way the young people interact with those within the microsystem, specifically family members and their peers. There is also

potential for impact on the mesosystem, which highlights the interaction and links between systems, such as through improved interaction between home and school. If the young people feel more trusting in the adults and peers in school, as well as their parents at home, this can help to improve communication between systems.

The third theme outlined the young people's views on the future use of SCs. All were motivated to continue the groups, and some expressed concerns about the groups stopping. This raised ethical considerations and was followed up by the researcher with the schools to discuss ways in which the support could be ongoing. It was also discussed with the SENCOs and Facilitators in the interviews to consider the future use of the SCs in their schools and what it might look like. In one SC group, the young people began to problem solve themselves about how the group could continue and how they could make it work for them. It will be important for the schools to ensure that support is still available for the young people, particularly as the school had identified them as emotionally vulnerable. Through discussions, it was clear that both schools endeavour to continue the use of SC groups as part of their intervention offer, as well as ensure that support for the group members continues. This will look different in each school, but there were suggestions of a fortnightly check in with group members, offering the group at a different time of the day, and continuing the group as it was using the same structure and timetable. One of the participants also had plans to take ownership of the SC structure and use them in an anti-bullying ambassador role, highlighting how SCs can be used in a variety of contexts in school communities.

The available literature on SCs explored the use of them with adults and raised interesting points for further research, which the current study has explored further. The positive aspects of the SC approach found in previous literature are relevant in the current findings, such as participants feeling they have a clear way forward, with strategies to go away and implement, that led to successful outcomes (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015; Brown & Henderson, 2012). The previous research also noted the impact of the SCs in supporting group cohesiveness. This was also the case in the current research, with the young people noting how they benefited from having support from their peers whom they may not necessarily have approached or sought advice from without the structure of the group. The general ethos underpinning SCs identified from the authors, "together we're better" (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996, p.1), is evident in the young people's experiences of having access to wider external support systems and the

impact of this. This also highlights the efficacy of applied solution oriented theory, a paradigm linked to circle based approaches outlined in the literature review (e.g. De Shazer, 1982; Amjal, 2001), as SCs are focused on generating ideas and structured next steps, a system that the young people noted as helpful in determining clearly what they were to do next, and when.

5.2.4 Research Question 4

RQ4 sought to explore the feasibility of running SC groups in secondary schools with young people. The data gathered revealed two main themes: processes and the future. The feedback from SENCOs and Facilitators around the theme of processes of SCs was largely positive. School staff noted that the young people engaged well in the groups and all had something to contribute. They were impressed by the ideas that the pupils came up with to support their peers, and how they followed through with their actions. It seemed that for some Facilitators, the young people had challenged the adults' assumptions of the capacity and skills the pupils had in higher-level thinking and problem solving. This reframe of the perception of the young people involved in the groups can be beneficial for both the young people and the adults. The Facilitators also noted that they had little need to be involved in the discussions, other than to provide some prompting and move the group along if needed. The fact that there are clear roles and expectations for each of the young people in the group may have helped the group to be self-sufficient. This could be containing and reassuring for future support staff wanting to facilitate SC groups with young people, as they may have concerns that they will be required to provide substantial emotional support for pupils, which can have emotional implications for the adults themselves. However, this research has indicated that these young people have the skills to work together as a team and be mostly autonomous, without the need for frequent adult intervention. This is empowering to young people, as it shows them that they have the skills and resources needed to seek support from the system around them to receive help with their problems.

The second theme, focused on the future, raised a few notes for consideration, which could impact on future use of SCs in school settings. The school staff noted aspects such as time and staffing as some of the barriers to setting up and running the groups. This was a particular issue for one school, as the Facilitators were working in the school as TAs and had full timetables involving supporting a variety of students in lessons and exams. The time in the school year was also a factor as there were exams happening,

which again put a strain on resources and time. In the other school, the role of the Facilitators was slightly different, as the two Facilitators were working as pastoral TAs, who had their own office and worked with students supporting their wellbeing and delivering interventions, therefore their time was more protected. Time in schools for interventions, whether for the children or for the adults, can be difficult to find. There is an increase in governmental pressure in education, particularly with regard to expectations for high levels of academic attainment, in addition to the financial pressures where resources in many schools are stretched (Andrews & Lawrence, 2018). These overall can make it difficult for interventions to be set up, run and continued. In previous literature by Brown and Henderson (2012) on SCs, when used with adults, one of the authors noted the difficulty in finding time for staff members to attend the adult only sessions, indicating a common theme in some of the barriers faced with implementing SCs in schools, whether with young people or adults. However, the time bound and relatively short duration of SCs works in its favour, and it appeared that the impact of the intervention on the young people influenced the motivation for schools to continue its use.

There were also some concerns expressed by subject teachers about the students missing lessons. This is another aspect of intervention work where it is vital for the importance and effectiveness of emotional support for learning to be communicated clearly so that class teachers do not feel concerned about pupils missing lessons. It has been identified that CYPs who require further support to increase their resilience can have difficulties with academic achievement (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005), although this can sometimes be overlooked due to the aforementioned pressures schools are under. Therefore, the effectiveness of social and emotional interventions may be influenced by the ethos of the school, and the amount of emphasis and investment put on meeting CYPs' emotional needs as well as their academic attainment (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE], 2009; Banerjee, Weare & Farr, 2014). The success of interventions may also be partly dependent on parental engagement (e.g., NICE, 2009). The school staff noted that some parents who had been approached about the research had said they did not want their children to take part in the group, and one SENCO thought it might be in part due to the involvement of an EP, and the formality of the sessions being linked to university research. This may not be important for future groups where they are not being set up for research purposes, as the consent letters will be developed by the school rather than a researcher

at university; however it is crucial that the communication with parents is clear and they are offered opportunities to link up with school staff to ask questions.

When reflecting on the future use of SCs in the schools, the school staff shared that they were motivated to continue the use of the intervention in their schools, as they had been surprised by the impact of it for both the Facilitators and the young people. It was noted that the Facilitators felt they had a new tool to use, and the young people had further developed confidence and problem solving skills. Alongside the positive impact of the intervention, it is also relatively low cost. The main cost to the school will be the time of the Facilitator, which is already factored in for schools where there are support staff available who have a role in delivering interventions. Additionally, there are not many resources needed, only some paper to record the ideas for the Problem Presenter to take away and a sheet of paper outlining the different stages as a prompt. The training for Facilitators takes little time, although for future use considerations of costs may be a factor depending on the service delivery model, if the service usually trade training. Facilitators shared that they felt supported through the process, and therefore the role of the EP in checking in with them regularly and keeping communication open is an important factor to continue. It was also noted that as there were two Facilitators in each school, this was helpful as they could support each other. Schools discussed how they could see the value and intended on continuing using SCs in their schools with young people, but also how it could be used more widely across the school community. One Facilitator noted it could be used with school staff, too. A SENCO suggested it could be used with young people to problem solve specific topics that are prevalent in year groups, such as friendship issues with year 7 pupils.

5.3 Implications

The findings from the research have potential implications across various systems. There are implications for schools, including those who took part in the research, who may wish to run SC groups in their schools. There are implications for young people, including those who accessed the group, but also for CYP more generally. There are also implications for EP practice, given the role of the EP in exploring practice based evidence, implementing and supporting the use of intervention in schools, and the role of the EP in setting up SC groups in the current and previous research.

5.3.1 Implications for Schools

The promising findings from the current research have potential implications for the schools that took part in the research, and more widely across other schools. The schools that took part in the research endeavour to continue using SCs as part of their intervention offers, which appears testament to their views on its effectiveness and overall feasibility to set up and run. The schools commented on the diversity of SCs and how they could be used in different ways, to continue to benefit young people but also with adults as has been applied previously in both research and practice. Given the current government priority and discussion of supporting CYPs' mental health in schools (e.g., DfE, 2016; DfE & DoH, 2017), SCs are a tool that can be implemented in schools to promote emotional wellbeing. Alongside the fact this intervention has indicated positive outcomes for pupils, it is also a tool that does not require school staff to have in-depth training in order to facilitate, which is a concern raised by schools around their responsibility to meet the SEMH needs of their pupils (Armiger, 2019).

Research undertaken by Durlak and DuPre (2008) on effective implementation of interventions has highlighted a systems framework that outlines the factors that affect the implementation and outcomes of interventions, which are relevant to the current research. The factors are community factors, provider characteristics, and innovation characteristics, which include the delivery system and the support system. The community factors consider the positioning of the system in the context of local policy, politics and funding. This research has been positioned in the context of the government priority to address SEMH needs in CYP, and the subsequent pressure this has put on schools. This has aided implementation of the intervention within the current research, as the pressure of meeting these needs may have been a motivating factor for schools to implement the intervention. The provider characteristics link to the ethos of the school, including the overall view of self-efficacy and the desire to achieve positive outcomes. This can link to feedback from interviews regarding teachers' views on pupils missing lessons to receive interventions, which may be influenced by their views on the efficacy of interventions. If teachers do not feel interventions will be beneficial to students, this can be a barrier in implementation, as could have been the case in the current research if it was a more significant issue. Additionally, the self-efficacy of the Facilitators is also relevant, as this could have impacted on their engagement with the intervention. Overall, it is thought that both schools involved in the research were motivated for positive outcomes, as they had volunteered to take part in the study. Innovation

characteristics relate to the purpose of the intervention linking with priorities in the school. This again links back to the ethos of the school and their views on prioritising intervention based on the needs of pupils. Within the delivery aspect of the innovation system, Durlak and DuPre (2008) note the importance of capacity within the system to implement interventions. Training, on going support and monitoring are highlighted as factors within the support system aspect of the innovation system. This links to the current study, as there were considerations for capacity due to staffing, although this was ultimately resolved through problem solving with the school and their flexibility in timetabling the sessions around when the Facilitators were available. Additionally, support was offered through the Facilitator training and on going checking in by the researcher. It may have also been helpful that there were two Facilitators in each school as they could offer support to one another.

In light of the factors outlined above, there are a few points for schools to consider. The first is around the practicality of staffing, and ensuring that there are members of school staff who are available, willing and feel confident to take on the role as the Facilitator. Secondly, ensuring clear lines of communication amongst school staff, particularly with the subject teachers, is vital to ensure that the pupils are given permission to leave lessons to attend the groups. It is also important that the teachers see the purpose and potential impact for young people to attend the groups, and how this can impact positively on their learning. Linked to this, is the consideration of how to engage parents with the intervention. Although in the case of this research, the concern raised by some parents about formal EP research involvement may not be relevant for further groups not involved in research purposes, it is still an important aspect for schools to consider when seeking permission from parents for their children to attend SC groups. It could be helpful for schools to offer coffee mornings, follow up phone calls or meetings with parents and young people together to discuss what the SC group can offer. Additionally, schools must consider the dynamics of the group to ensure that all group members feel comfortable with each other and therefore feel safe enough to share their problems. Above all, these aspects can be supported through an embedded, whole school ethos that prioritises the emotional needs of CYP, and how it is vital for these to be addressed in order for them to be expected to access learning. These key learning points from the research have been utilised to create a leaflet for schools, which contains 'top tips' for schools to consider when setting up Solution Circle groups. It is

envisaged that this could be shared by an EP who is working with the school to support them with setting up the intervention. Please see Appendix 34 for the leaflet.

The aforementioned factors highlight considerations of what enables schools to be 'Solution Circle ready'. This in particular relates to careful consideration of the individual differences between the participants, in terms of their needs, personalities and their readiness to access the intervention, as well as how the participants will work together as a group. Additionally, as highlighted from the focus groups, the skills of the facilitator are paramount for ensuring the group members feel comfortable and contained and therefore able to engage with the SCs. Wider school contextual factors can also contribute to a school's SC readiness, as the implementation of SCs as part of an intervention offer needs to fit in with the other interventions or support mechanisms being offered in the school. With all of these issues considered to reduce the impact of any possible barriers, there are many positive implications for schools from this research. The findings have outlined how a relatively low cost, time efficient and solution focused intervention can be feasibly put into place in schools, and how it can make a considerable difference to young people's lives. Given the aforementioned national context and pressure on schools to meet the emotional needs of young people, this provides a tool that schools can explore the use of.

5.3.2 Implications for EPs

The research has outlined the role that EPs can play in supporting the use of SCs in different capacities. It has been observed by the researcher anecdotally that SCs are used by EPs, in the LA in which the research was conducted, regularly with adults. It has also been shared by other EP colleagues in different LAs that SCs are used widely in supervision practice and in casework. However, there is a lack of representation of the use of SCs in literature. EPs are well placed to conduct research and contribute to bodies of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions (Alexander, 2018), and are expected to engage in evidence-based practice as a key part of the role (Frederickson, 2002). Therefore, EPs can have a role in further exploring and evaluating the use of SCs not only with adults, but also with CYP.

Alongside scope for further research, the current study outlines how SCs can be used more widely in EP practice, through EPs delivering training enabling schools to adopt the use of SCs as an intervention with pupils, in classes by teachers to promote learning,

or with school staff. Due to the highlighted psychological mechanisms involved in SCs as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, EPs are well placed to deliver the training and ongoing support for Facilitators as they are able to utilise their skills and knowledge of psychology. The training provided for the Facilitators for the current research was short in duration and does not require time-consuming preparation; therefore it could be feasible for EPs to facilitate the set up of intervention groups across a number of schools. If there were more Facilitators trained in schools by EPs to facilitate SC sessions, there may be consideration for how Facilitators are supported long term if they continue this role. There is scope within schools for the SENCOs to provide ongoing support to Facilitators and oversee the reviewing of the pupils' progress, and they may be best placed for this given their role in overseeing interventions and SEND support. However, it may also be helpful for EPs to continue checking in via email or phone with Facilitators on an agreed basis. There may also be scope for ongoing support from EPs in a similar model of group supervision used with Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), which is delivered every half term and facilitated by an EP. This model has been identified as positive and effective (Osborne, 2012). This could be an important factor in ensuring that schools feel equipped to implement this intervention, as it has been raised that schools can feel they do not have the skills or training to meet CYPs' SEMH needs (Armiger, 2019).

The research also fits with the paradigm shift of EP practice, where less focus is on individual work and deficit focused approaches, and more systems work is undertaken (Farrell & Woods, 2015). SCs have allowed the opportunity to empower CYP to activate their own resources and support one another, rather than having an adult take an 'expert' position through offering advice or managing the group intervention and discussion topics. This ties into EP service delivery models that adopt consultation based approaches, where EPs can utilise their skills in consultation and apply their psychological knowledge to support schools to develop intervention plans that will benefit CYP, and to empower schools to take ownership of this (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai, & Monsen, 2009). This shift helps to put the CYP at the centre, in line with the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). Additionally, the role of the EP in activating the Facilitators to oversee the SC groups also allows EPs to position the Facilitators as the agents of change for the young people, rather than the EP coming in to deliver an intervention. This ties in with the recent green paper on transforming mental health provision, as mentioned in Chapter 1, where it is suggested that EPs can work alongside

Mental Health Support Teams to support schools in promoting students' emotional wellbeing (DfE & DoH, 2017). This could involve EPs disseminating information on interventions and sources of support that can be implemented in schools. As EPs have relationships with schools due to the nature of their work, they are best placed to be able to assist with the training and set up of interventions. Therefore, this research has implications for EPs to continue to support schools to feel skilled and confident in implementing interventions that build upon peer support and promote emotional wellbeing.

5.3.3 Implications for Children and Young People

The research findings indicated that the intervention has potential to support the SEMH needs of CYP within schools, by increasing aspects of their resilience relating to self-efficacy, optimism and adaptability; as well as increasing their internal and external resources, including confidence, ability to trust and connect with others, and increased support from a variety of sources. The findings provide further information on CYPs' resilience and skills, and how they are able to draw upon their internal and external resources in order to help themselves and others.

The young people who participated in the groups outlined the future use of SCs in schools, and they had many ideas of how they could be used and also how they intended to use them. A large proportion of young people noted that they wanted the groups to continue, with some suggested amendments to the structure of the SC and considerations for the time of year that it might be useful to access the intervention. Although some young people made note of difficulties they faced with following up on actions when they were juggling exam preparations, some shared that they found the group a helpful outlet during stressful times. Overall, they had the motivation to continue the groups, indicating their value for the process and the support the group gave them. One young person identified their role as an anti-bullying ambassador, and how they intended to use SCs within their role. This indicates the scope for young people to take ownership of SCs, with adult support and supervision, to apply the approach more widely across the school in order to benefit a broader range of pupils. This could be applied in the context of peer mentoring schemes, or opportunities for young people to co-facilitate SC groups alongside adults.

The young people made reference to concerns about the SC groups coming to an end, and shared that they wanted the group to continue so they could have ongoing access to the support they had found helpful. This highlights some of the ethical considerations for school-based interventions that are time bound. It is not always feasible in schools for interventions to continue indefinitely, and also may not be beneficial as pupils may become disengaged if an intervention becomes too repetitive. However, it is important that young people have opportunities to continue applying their skills outside of the intervention context, in order to generalise and consolidate their learning through active experimentation (Kolb & Fry, 1975). In addition to this, it is important that pupils have some form of continuation of the emotional support that was offered to them in the intervention. The participants discussed different opportunities or ideas for how to have continued access to support if the groups did not continue to run as they had during the research. The young people themselves engaged in problem solving about this, and came up with ideas such as meeting after school, or supporting each other via social media. The importance of continuing access to support systems that form during interventions is a crucial consideration, and will require schools who use SCs in the future to work alongside young people to ensure that it is clearly agreed what this will look like, in order to alleviate any concerns young people may have.

5.4 Limitations

Although there were actions taken throughout the planning and implementation of the research to ensure a robust design and reduce limitations as much as possible, there were still some present. These limitations will be discussed in this section; alongside the potential impact on the current findings and future research.

5.4.1 Outcome Measures

The research utilised self-report measures to address RQ1 and RQ2, which can be seen to have limitations, such as the possible bias of the participant reviewing targets that they have set in the presence of others more positively (Schlenker, Dlugolecki & Doherty, 1994), as could be the case with the TME. Additionally, there is a possibility of response bias in self-report measures, which can occur for a multitude of reasons. This may include social desirability, or misunderstanding how to measure their behaviours (Rosenman, Tennekoon, & Hill, 2011). However, the author of RSCA suggests the usefulness of using self-report measures with young people themselves as opposed to seeking adults' views of their children's needs. This is due to research that

suggests parents can often not report as accurately or sensitively the experiences of the young people, in particular with reference to internalising needs and behaviours (e.g., Berg-Nielsen, Vika & Dahl, 2003). The participants fed back their views on the evaluation tools used for the research, and mostly they felt they were appropriate, and commented that they were straightforward. Some young people noted the value of being able to review their targets and reflect on how much progress they had made. However, some noted that the available answer options on the RSCA were restrictive, as some of the statements were seen as situational and therefore their answer would depend on the situation. This could be a consideration for further research, in order to use a resilience measure that allows for more qualitative answers. In the case of this research, the focus groups allowed for further exploration of these issues.

5.4.2 Inequity Between Groups

Although this was not an intention of the research design, there was an inequity in the sizes of the groups. Three out of four of the groups largely had full attendance, with all six members present for most of the sessions. However, in one of the groups, the attendance was low for every session, resulting in a group of three young people. The young people attending in this group also changed each week. This appeared to be due to a few factors, including illness, difficulties with communication or understanding of when the group was taking place, and pre existing concerns around attendance in general. It was shared by one of the Facilitators that some of the young people who were invited to take part in the group did not attend school regularly, and some of them had previously received a number of fixed term exclusions or were often in 'isolation' within the school. During the interview, the SENCO shared their confusion regarding the lack of attendance in the group, as the parents were keen for their children to attend. This has provided a valuable factor to reflect on for further research when discussing with schools who may be most suitable for the group. Attendance had not been explicitly discussed during initial meetings with SENCOs, so this would be an important aspect to consider in the future.

The feedback from the group members was that they did not feel it had hindered them being in a smaller group, and some of the young people shared that they liked being in a smaller group. However, they did note that it meant they had to think harder when coming up with solutions, as there were fewer members to contribute. The Facilitator also noted the practical difficulties with having a smaller group, such as the pupils

having to double up on roles, and more responsibility to come up with solutions. The lower attendance of the group could have also possibly impacted on the Facilitator's motivation and enthusiasm for the intervention, which may have affected the outcomes for the group members.

5.4.3 Research Design

The research did not have a control group to compare against due to practical reasons relating to time and ethical considerations. Additionally, the research did not adopt an experimental design, as the primary purpose of the research was not evaluative but exploratory. It could be argued that this limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the quantitative data relating to RSCA and TME scores. There is some debate about the use of control groups within social sciences research; with a widely held view that randomised control trials (RCTs) containing control groups are regarded as the highest standard of research (Togerson & Togerson, 2001; Frederickson, 2002). However, others suggest that experimental and control group designs are not practical or ethical for real world research (Taylor & Burden, 2000). For example, research has shown that CYP who are in control groups have less positive outcomes that those who access the intervention groups (Weisz & Weiss, 1993). Additionally, it has been argued that RCTs are often not feasible in EP practice (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen, 2009). Although there is much emphasis on RCTs as the 'gold standard' of evaluative research (e.g., Togerson & Togerson, 2001), it is also suggested that it is important and helpful for all types of research to be conducted within EP practice (Frederickson, 2002). Therefore, future research seeking to purely evaluate the use of SCs may wish to adopt a between-groups experimental design with a control group in order to build a robust evidence base; however it is recommended that practical and ethical factors outlined above are considered.

5.4.4 Credibility Checks

There were some limitations of the methodology relating to the credibility checks undertaken as part of the thematic analysis. As highlighted in Chapter 3, the researcher met with the SENCO, one Facilitator and two young people in one of the participating schools, to share the thematic map and codebook with them as a means of checking whether the identified themes were representative of their views. This process had a number of limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the SENCO identified the pupils who the researcher met with, which could have been impacted by bias. The

pupils involved in the credibility checks were also a small proportion of the overall number of pupil participants, and therefore their views cannot be assumed to be generalisable across all pupil participants. Additionally, although the process enabled the participants the opportunity to share their views on the findings and discuss whether they felt the themes fit with their experiences, they did not challenge the findings and agreed with the themes identified. Their response may need interpreting with caution, as they could have felt unable to share their views honestly in the presence of the researcher. Furthermore, if the themes were suggested not to represent the participants' views, this would have been challenging to address, as the data collected for the purposes of the analysis came from a broad range of participants, who all made their own unique contribution and had their own – sometimes opposing – views on their experiences. Therefore, if the checks resulted in the participants disagreeing with the themes, the researcher may not have been able to make alterations as the themes could have represented other participant's views. In summary, although credibility checks are deemed to be an important part of achieving qualitative rigor in qualitative analysis (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011), they do have some limitations that require consideration.

5.4.5 Role of the Researcher

Although steps were taken to ensure that the role of the researcher had as limited effect on the research as possible, it is acknowledged that it is not possible for bias to be nonexistent where the researcher is involved in the study in some way. The decision to train Facilitators to oversee the SC groups was made as a practical and ethical decision, as it meant that more groups could be set up for the research, but also the researcher would not be a significant part of the intervention. Although the researcher did not facilitate the groups, they were present when observing the sessions and met with the participants to gather data. This had potentially positive and negative implications for the research. This could be considered a positive factor as it meant that the researcher could ensure that the scales used were explained sufficiently and also enabled valuable feedback to be sought directly about participants' views on the measures. Additionally, the researcher facilitating the focus groups meant that the researcher was able to follow up with questions that were relevant to the research, which someone less aware of the research may not have been able to do. Potential barriers of the researcher being involved in data collection are that the participants may have answered questions in the focus groups and self-report measures in a socially desirable manner.

Steps were taken to attempt to alleviate any potential bias. For example, the researcher aimed to achieve reflexivity by keeping a reflective research diary in order to monitor any potential bias and the researcher's response to aspects of the research where the researcher was in contact with participants. The researcher also aimed to ensure qualitative rigor during qualitative analysis (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011), through taking steps as outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.8.4, and adopting a structured approach to thematic analysis by following steps published by Braun and Clarke (2006).

5.5 Dissemination, Follow Up and Future Research

5.5.1 Dissemination

The current research has potential to be disseminated not only in the local context in which it was conducted, but also more widely. The research findings will be shared within the LA in which it was conducted to EPs during one of the continuing professional development (CPD) days, as well as considering wider dissemination to schools, and to professionals working within the LA who are focusing on improving mental health and wellbeing of young people in the county. There is also scope to share the findings from the research with other EPs in the country, through annual conferences such as the BPS Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) conference or the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) conference. It could also be interesting to follow up with the young people involved in the research to explore whether they would like the opportunity to share their experiences of being part of a SC intervention themselves.

5.5.2 Follow Up

The researcher intends to approach the schools that took part in the research in July 2019 to invite them to a meeting to share the findings and follow up on how SCs are used in their schools. The researcher will invite SENCOs, Facilitators and young people to these meetings, to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to share their views. There may also be scope to explore whether the impact of the SCs has been sustained over a longer period of time through meeting with the young people involved in the groups or administering further RSCAs to further explore their views on SCs and the impact on their resilience.

5.5.3 Future Research

There is much potential for this research to be carried forward and explored further to develop an evidence base for SCs. The current research has outlined some promising outcomes for the young people who were part of the groups, which warrants further exploration. The potential powerfulness of the impact of SCs is intriguing, and would benefit from in-depth exploration of the psychological mechanisms underpinning SCs and the impact of these mechanisms on CYP and their SEMH. The four separate groups were not compared in the current research, however through attending each group for observation purposes to support the Facilitators, it was clear there were differences in each group dynamic. Indeed, the Facilitators themselves noted the importance of the dynamics of the group, in terms of age and personality attributes and how this affected the groups. Future research intending to further explore the use of SCs with young people may wish to explore the impact of group dynamics on CYPs' experiences. Within this, there may be scope to widen the application of SCs for CYP of a wider variety of ages, such as primary school pupils. It may also be interesting to explore the impact of SCs when used on a weekly basis for a longer term, as the impact could be more significant if the groups continued for longer. Overall, future research on SCs with young people should consider the importance of facilitating relationship building when compared with adult groups, particularly if SCs are used in one off capacities around problem solving specific issues, for example.

5.6 Conclusions

The aim of the research was to explore the use of SCs with young people in secondary schools. Overall, the exploration of the use of SCs with young people in secondary schools has provided promising outcomes for the people involved in the groups. Of particular note is the increase in sense of mastery aspects of their resilience, indicating an increase in sense of self-efficacy, optimism and adaptability. Additionally, qualitative data allowed for further exploration of the outcomes for young people, and they noted feeling more confident, able to build relationships and trust others, and open up more to their families and others across different systems. The participants engaged well with the structure of the sessions, reflected on multiple benefits including external and internal factors, and noted intent and motivation for being involved in SCs in the future. From the schools' perspective, they reported the benefits that have been observed in their pupils, the practical elements that relate to setting up and running the groups, and their considerations of use of SCs in the future. The feedback from schools

identified some practical elements relating to the feasibility of using SCs with young people as a weekly intervention, including staffing, missing lessons, engaging parents and attendance. However, overall, the feedback indicated relative feasibility of running SCs with CYP in secondary schools. Particular protective factors in enabling the success of the group can be linked to the ethos of the school and the investment they make in interventions.

This research has implications that can span across numerous systems. It has implications for schools, providing another option of group intervention that can be feasibly set up and delivered, which can result in positive outcomes for young people in terms of their resilience and their wellbeing. Additionally, the research has implications for EP practice in terms of further research to contribute to evidence based practice, as well as the role of the EP in supporting schools to set up and deliver SCs across schools. Finally, the implication of the research for CYP is that there is a tool available for them to take ownership of, and for others to see the way in which young people can draw upon their own resources to help themselves and others.

The research has some limitations, which have highlighted considerations for future research. These considerations provide opportunities to build upon the current research and continue to explore the implementation of SCs as a weekly intervention, in order to offer the potential for positive impact found in this instance to benefit CYP more widely.

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Appendix 1 - Literature Review Summary Table

Search 1						
Authors	**Method**	**Purpose/aim**	**Participants**	**Measures**	**Findings**	**Overview of critique**
1) Brown and Henderson (2012)	Qualitative	Exploring use of SCs for problem solving with teaching staff.	Primary school and secondary school staff (number not identified).	Secondary school: Verbal feedback at the end of sessions. Primary school: interview with head teacher; questionnaire for teachers; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.	Secondary school: found structure and recording positive ideas helpful. Primary school: found process collaborative and supportive, helpful for generating more ideas, opportunity to talk and feel heard.	• Lack of consistency of facilitators (e.g. head teacher in one school, EP in another school). • Number of participants not identified. • Inconsistent outcome measures across schools, implication for validity.
2) Grahamslaw and Henson (2015)	Qualitative	Exploring use of SCs and Circle of Adults with school staff.	62 adults in SC group, 31 adults in Circle of Adults group.	Open ended questionnaires.	SC: participants found solutions applicable to other situations and were pleased with amount of strategies and solutions generated. Circle of Adults: increased understanding of focus situation, increased empathy towards pupil discussed in Circle.	• Ethical implications for EPs as role as participants in SCs and researchers. • Role of facilitator in Circle of Adults as 'expert' – implications for positioning of group members.

	Authors	Method	Purpose/aim	Participants	Outcome Measures	Findings	Overview of Critique
					Search 2		
1)	**Whitaker, Barratt, Joy, Potter and Thomas (1998)**	Qualitative	Evaluating the use of Circle of Friends for children and young people with autism.	Seven 'focus children' alongside six-eight children or young people attending each group. Participants were in school years 3 to 10.	Interviews with circle members, the focus child, school staff member who facilitated the group, and the focus child's parents. Questionnaires for circle members.	Improvements in social integration, anxiety and behaviour for focus child. Increase in empathy, self-esteem and engagement for group members. Feedback on helpfulness of rules and roles; role of the adult to prompt focus and contribution.	• Range of number of circle meetings held and therefore cannot be accurately compared. • Issues with replicability – no clear outline of how data was analysed or of questionnaire used.
2)	**Moss and Wilson (1998)**	Mixed methods	Evaluation of the use of Circle Time to improve social relationships between year 6 pupils.	Whole year 6 class (number not identified).	Discussions between the two authors and with the pupils, a questionnaire, and a sociometric measure (Fredrickson, 1991) used pre and post intervention.	Pupils formed more positive friendships and there were less incidents of peer conflict. Pupils were more actively involved in discussions and seemed more open to working with each other, particularly those they hadn't worked with before. The sociometric measure showed an increased number of children the pupils liked and wanted to work with in the classroom.	• Authors evaluated intervention they delivered, potential for bias. • Authors queried whether the questions in the questionnaire were too abstract and not an accurate measure of progress.

3) Tew (1998)	Mixed methods	Comparison of Circle Time intervention in PSE lessons against another student-centered group, with an aim to foster positive peer relationships and positive self-perception.	Year 7 pupils (number not identified).	Questionnaires and interviews with a selection of participants.	Pupils enjoyed the games, sitting in a circle, learning about how others feel, listening and talking. Participants noted that they had learnt transferrable skills, and the majority felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas.	• Author's attempt to measure the change in relational interactions by asking the pupils how many of the people in the intervention they knew by name, and asked to write a positive comment next to each name. Indicates questionable validity of a measure of relational interactions, as knowing another persons' name does not give any indication of the quality of the relationship.
4) Kelly (1999)	Quasi-experimental	Evaluation of use of Circle time to increase self-concept	20 focus children in two groups alongside their peers (number of peers not identified)	Teachers monitored changes in target behaviours.	Positive changes in behaviour for both focus children. Children engaged more with the group and took ownership as it developed, leading to ideas to benefit the class and	• The teacher's role both delivering and evaluating the intervention could have been impacted by bias.

# & Author	Study type	Aim	Participants	Measures	Findings	Limitations
					wider whole school. Teacher felt better able to support the children once they knew the difficulties they were facing and how they preferred to be helped. The teachers felt that children had increased self-esteem, were more supportive of one another, and more tolerant. It was thought that the solution-focused approach helped the children, and increased their locus of control by allowing them to generate their own rules and ideas.	• No overview of the structure of the sessions provided, limiting replication opportunities.
5) **Frederickson and Turner (2003)**	Small scale Randomised Control Trial (RCT)	Evaluation of Circle of Friends to improve inclusion of children with social, emotional and mental health needs.	20 'focus children', and between four to eight pupils in each of the 20 groups.	The Sociometric Rating Scale (Asher & Dodge, 1986), The Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985), The Teacher's Rating Scale of Child's Actual Behavior (Harter, 1985), and a shortened form of My Class Inventory (MCI-SF) (Fraser, 1982; Fraser & Fisher, 1986).	Increase in social integration and acceptance, but no change in students' self-perception. Although, the scores of perceptions of learning competence for the students in the control groups were more negative over time than the participants in the intervention groups.	• The groups in the first and second phase of the research were facilitated by professionals with different job roles, and therefore different levels of training, skills and experience, which may have affected the outcomes and validity.

6)	**Barrett and Randall (2004)**	Mixed methods	Evaluation of use of two adapted models of Circle of Friends to improve peer relationships for focus children.	Study 1: whole class present (with one child as focus child). Study 2: three groups (consisting of whole class) with more than two focus children in the each group.	Study 1: Sociometric questionnaire, questionnaire and whole class discussion. Study 2: My Class Inventory (Fraser, 1982), a questionnaire around social skills (Northumberland County Council Pupil Questionnaire, 2000), and interviews with the children and teachers.	Study 1: little effect on peer relationships for focus child. Study 2: staff members valued the approach. Pupils reported increase in their perceptions of their social skills. Observed positive effects on class ethos. Some indication that some focus children widened their social circles in schools.	• Authors felt interventions needed to run for longer to see effects. • Ethical considerations: pupils not aware they were focus children in study 2. • Difference in facilitators for each study, affecting validity. • Lack of follow up and generalisation between head teacher and class teacher in study 1.
7)	**Brown and Henderson (2012)**	As described above.				
8)	**Grahamslaw and Henson (2015)**	As described above.				

| 9) | **O'Connor (2016)** | Case study | Exploration of Circle of Friends with a child with autism to improve social inclusion and focus child's social understanding. | One 'focus child' plus group members (number not identified). | Observation for three months using STAR (Settings, Triggers, Actions, and Results), based on work by Zarkowska and Clements (1994) to highlight target behaviours. Adapted version of the Belonging Scales (Fredrickson, Simmonds, Evans & Soulsby, 2007) to measure the focus child's self worth and acceptance pre and post the intervention. Social Inclusion Survey (Frederickson and Graham, 1999), which explores classmates' willingness to interact with particular classmates. | Peers in the Circle of Friends had a better understanding of the focus child, and were more willing to interact with them.

Stigma around the differences presented by the focus child was reduced.

The focus child also reportedly felt more included socially, had higher self-esteem and a wider social support network, both inside and outside of school. | Author did not provide a detailed discussion. Child was already receiving ABA and 'positive reinforcement programme' – difficult to ascertain what contributed to positive outcomes. Ethical considerations of asking pupils to rate their views on a classmate. Author works with pupil but is unclear in what capacity. It is not clear how the data was analysed. Researcher was very invested in outcome and completed the observations due to relationship with the child, which highlights possibility for bias. |

Appendix 2 – Research Procedures Including Timescales

Timescale/month	Description of Stages
February 2018	• Ethical approval received.
February- March 2018	• Schools were recruited and meetings with the SENCOs took place to discuss the research and criteria for potential participants.
March 2018	• Consent forms for pupils in pilot gathered. • Pilot completed. • Facilitator training completed.
March-April 2018	• Consent forms for participants were sought and pre intervention scales and personalised targets were completed.
April-May 2018	• The four Solution Circle groups ran 6 sessions, over a time period of 4-6 weeks.
May 2018	• Upon completion of the sessions, focus groups were completed with the groups and were video recorded, for transcription purposes.
May-June 2018	• Semi-structured interviews with the Facilitators were conducted and video recorded. • Further ethical consent was sought to interview the SENCOs.
June-July 2018	• Semi-structured interviews were completed with SENCOS and video recorded.
July-August 2018	• Data analysis was completed.
July 2019	• Follow-up meetings will be held with participating schools to feedback the findings of the research; and to seek feedback on whether the school continues to use SCs, and what this looks like.

Appendix 3 - Research Invitation Email to Schools

Dear…

I hope you are well. I am a second year trainee educational psychologist, working in (local authority). I am in the process of undertaking my doctoral research, and would like to ask if your school would like to be part of it.

I am exploring the use of Solution Circles (a structured tool for problem solving) with young people as a weekly resilience intervention. The weekly intervention would be run over 6-8 weeks, depending on the number of participants in each group. If you were to take part in the research, the school's involvement would include:

·   Freeing up 2 members of support staff for around 1 hour per week to run 2 groups of 6-8 pupils across all key stages. I will provide full training in facilitating Solution Circles to the members of staff, and provide any ongoing support during the course of the intervention.

·   Your support to identify pupils who would benefit from being part of the group. I would also require your support with sending home and collecting information sheets and consent forms.

·   Your support to reserve 2 rooms for each of the groups to be run in each week.

If you decide as a school to be part of the research, you will have trained members of staff who can continue delivering the intervention themselves, or pass on these skills to other colleagues.

Please feel free to contact me for more information. I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Rebecca

Rebecca Elliott
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 4 – School Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

I have the read the information sheet for the participants, relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me. I understand that the school is required to support the researcher through providing members of staff to facilitate the groups and a room to use each week for the groups. I understand that the researcher will provide full training and support to the facilitators.

I understand that the school's involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent for the school to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that the school has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to the school and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should the school withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use the participant's anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

SENCO/Inclusion Manager's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….
SENCO/Inclusion Manager's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………..
Head teacher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….
Head teacher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………..
Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………………..
Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………
Date: …………………..

Appendix 5 – Facilitator Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

**Consent to participate as a facilitator in a
research study**

**An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary
school pupils**

I have the read the information sheet for the facilitator participants, relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that I am consenting to participate in training to facilitate a Solution Circle intervention group on a weekly basis. I understand that I can contact the researcher for support throughout the duration of the research.
I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use the participants' anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Facilitator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………

Facilitator's Signature

………………………………………………………………

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

………………………………………………………………

Date: …………………………………………………..

Appendix 6 – Pupil Participant Information Leaflet

What happens with the data?

- I will video record the focus group so I can see who is talking and write down (transcribe) what is said in our conversations. I will use a different name when I write down what you say, so you will be anonymous.

- Your scores from the questionnaires and your targets will be put into the computer, and then they will be anonymous. After I have put the scores into the computer, the paper questionnaires will be disposed of confidentially.

What if you want to withdraw?

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw I reserve the right to use material that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Thank you!

Thank you very much for considering being part of my research. If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Becky Elliott

Email: u1622738@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Lucy Browne. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: l.browne@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk

Invitation to participate in research

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your taking part would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully with your parent or carer.

Who am I?

My name is Becky Elliott. I am a professional doctorate student at the University of East London and am studying for a professional doctorate in educational and child psychology. As part of my studies I am doing the research you are being invited to take part in. My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

What is the research?

I am carrying out research into using Solution Circles as an intervention with young people in secondary schools. Solution Circles is a structured activity that helps problem solving.

Why have I been asked to take part?

I am looking to involve secondary school pupils who would like the opportunity to support their peers to solve problems together, as well as share their own problems they would like help with. These problems can be about anything that you are happy to share.

What will my participation involve?

You will meet with a member of school staff (the group facilitator) and 5-7 of your peers from your school each week, for around 8 weeks.

On the first session, you will meet with me and the facilitator and can ask any questions you like. I will ask you to fill in a questionnaire and set a target for yourself. This will take about 25 minutes.

You will meet with the group each week and complete a Solution Circle (see the steps on the Solution Circle factsheet). Each member of the group will have a go at taking part in each role. You will have the chance to present a problem to the group.

On the final session, you will meet with me and the facilitator and we will have a celebration. You will receive a thank you letter and then you will be asked to complete the same questionnaire as the first session, and review your targets. This will take about 25 minutes.

Soon after the final session, you might be invited to have an informal chat (focus group) with me and other group members to discuss how the group has gone. This will take about 45 minutes.

Will it be safe and confidential?

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times:

- You do not have to answer all of the questions asked of you, and you can stop your participation in the study at any time. Please note, that if you withdraw from the study once I have begun analysing the data, I will not be able to remove the data as it will be anonymised, so it will not be able to be traced back to you.

- What you share in the group is confidential and any comments you make will remain anonymous. However, if you say something that makes me concerned about your safety, I have to pass this on to an adult.

Appendix 7 – Parent Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Parental consent for their son/daughter's participation in a research study

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which my son/daughter will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my son/daughters involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent for my son/daughter to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that my son/daughter has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to them and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should my son/daughter withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my son/daughter's anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….
Parent/ carer of participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….
Parent/ carer of participant's Signature

………………………………………………………………………………………….
Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….
Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………
Date: …………………..……..

Appendix 8 – Pupil Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………

Participant's Signature

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………..……

Appendix 9 – Pilot Participant Information Sheet

PILOT PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

You are being invited to participate in a pilot for a research study. Before you agree to take part, is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully with your parent/ carer.

Who am I?
My name is Becky Elliott and I am a professional doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a professional doctorate in educational and child psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research pilot you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?
I am carrying out research into using Solution Circles as an intervention with young people in secondary schools. Solution Circles is a structured activity that helps problem solving. Please see the Solution Circles Factsheet attached for more information.
My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?
You have been invited to participate in a pilot for my research. A pilot means a 'test run' for the research. I am doing this so that I can make sure that the process works well, and your feedback will be very valuable in letting me know if I need to make any changes.
You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel pressured.

What will your participation involve?
If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

| Meet with me in school for one meeting, with around 5 of your peers from school. | → | We will complete a Solution Circle session, which will last around 35 minutes. | → | We will discuss as a group: what worked well in the session, and what could be better. | → | I will write down your comments, and use them to make any changes to the | → | You will receive a letter thanking you for taking part in the pilot. |
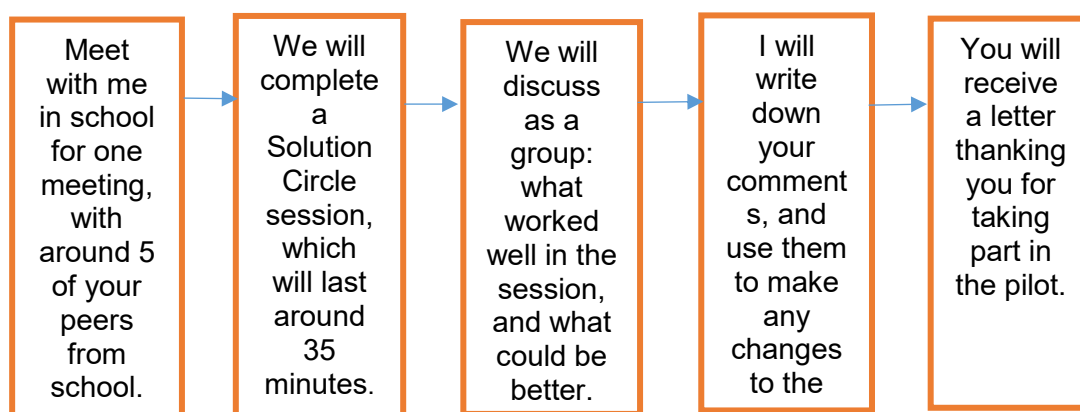
Although you will not be taking part in the weekly sessions, which will happen with another group of pupils after the pilot has happened, you may be able to be part of a group in school in the future, if your school decides to keep it going after the research has finished.

What will happen to the information that you provide?
Your taking part will be safe and confidential, and your privacy and safety will be respected at all times:
- As mentioned above, I will write down your comments from the session, and use them to make any changes for the future sessions.
- Your comments will be made completely anonymous, and will not be able to be traced back to you.

What if you want to withdraw?
You are free to withdraw from the pilot study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw I would reserve the right to use material that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Contact Details
Thank you very much for considering being part of my research. If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Becky Elliott. Email: u1622738@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Lucy Browne. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: L.Browne@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Appendix 10 – Pilot Pupil and Parent Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a pilot for a research study

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above pilot for the research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research pilot have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this pilot, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the pilot study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the pilot study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………..……

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Parental consent for their son/daughter's participation in a pilot for a research study

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above pilot for the research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research pilot have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which my son/daughter will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my son/daughters involvement in this pilot study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the pilot study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent for my son/daughter to participate in the pilot study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that my son/daughter has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to them and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should my son/daughter withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my son/daughter's anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………………….
Parent/carer of participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………………….
Parent/carer of participant's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………….
Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………………..
Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………
Date: ………………..…….

Appendix 11 – Pilot Debrief Letter

Thank you!

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

Dear…..

Thank you very much for taking part in the pilot for my research. I hope that you enjoyed being part of the session. Your valuable contribution and participation has helped me to learn about any changes or things I need to consider when using Solution Circles for my research.

What happens next?
As identified in the Participant Information Sheet you were given before the pilot began, I will now use the information I have gathered from our discussion at the end of the session to make any changes or considerations before I begin my researcher. A member of school staff will be running one or two Solution Circles groups in school for a few weeks, to see if it is helpful for the group members. Although you will not be part of this group, it could be that the members of school staff who help run the groups may decide to carry on running them after the research has finished. If this is the case and you would like to be involved, then you can discuss this with the adults in your school.

Support available
Please ask your parent or member of staff at school to email me on *u1622738@uel.ac.uk* if you have any questions or concerns. Also, if you feel that you would like any support after discussing any of the topics we talked about in the group, then you can contact Childline on 0800 1111 or The Mix on 0808 808 4994 or online. I would also recommend that you talk to a trusted adult, such as your parents/ carers or a member of staff in school.

Thank you again for being part of the pilot study. I wish you all the very best.

Best wishes,

Becky Elliott

Solution Circles

Training for Facilitators

(Adapted from Forest and Pearpoint, 1996, image from www.inclusion.com)

Rebecca Elliott – Trainee Educational Psychologist

Contents

Solution Circles – background

Solution Circles were developed by **Marsha Forest** and **Jack Pearpoint** in 1996. The approach is outlined on the Inclusive Solutions website (inclusive-solutions.com), which is developed by educational psychologists (EPs) and outlines many strategies used by EPs, such as person-centred planning tools and approaches to problem solving.

Solution Circles are described as a **quick** and **powerful** tool to support people to feel **unstuck** from a problem they are having in their work or personal lives. It builds on the positivity of **community support**, with the assumption that any community or work place (or school) have the **willingness and capacity to help** if they are given the opportunity to do so.

Forest and Pearpoint highlight that it is a cultural norm that people are often private about their problems and are not always willing to ask, and that's why it is so important to offer - so that people don't have to do things alone.

The underlying ethos of Solution Circles is that **'together we are better'** (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996).

<u>Setting up the group</u>

What you will need...

- A flipchart and pens
- This manual
- The laminated process and roles (up on the wall - somewhere it is visible)

Things to consider and discuss with the group...

- A reminder of safeguarding – that the group is a safe space to share problems, but if anything comes up where the adult feels concerned about the pupil's safety, it needs to be reported.
- A reminder of the group rules (jointly constructed) so that everyone feels listened to and respected.

Support available...

- Once the groups have started, I will contact you via email fortnightly to check in.
- I will arrange to come along to the 4th session to observe and we can have a discussion afterwards to see how things are going.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to send me an email (practice placement email address) or give me a call (practice placement phone number). My usual working days are Monday-Thursday, but sometimes this changes with university requirements. If I am not available and it is urgent, you can contact my supervisor – (placement supervisor email).

Session Structure

The first session:

The first session may be slightly longer than the other sessions as the group will be getting to know each other.

- Go round the group and ask each group member to introduce themselves and share one thing that is important to them.
- Ask the group to jointly come up with a group name – record on flip chart.
- Ask the group to generate ground rules – record on flip chart paper.
- Share reminder of safeguarding concerns.

Following sessions:

Before the Solution Circle process begins, check in with the previous problem presenter to see how they have got on with their next steps (10 minutes).

Identify who wants to play which role (5 minutes). The roles to be played include:

- Problem Presenter *(focus person)*
- Process Facilitator *(time keeper)*
- Note Taker or Graphic Recorder
- *Amazingly creative* Brainstorm/Thought Shower Team
- As the *Adult Facilitator,* your role will be of *Team Manager* – to oversee the process and provide any support if needed.

Please encourage each team member to experience each role. It is important that each team member has a chance to be a Problem Presenter.

The steps of a Solution Circle

STEP ONE – presenting the problem (6 mins)
The problem presenter has 6 minutes to explain the problem. These 6 minutes must be uninterrupted, and the rest of the group listens in silence. If the problem presenter finishes talking before the 6 minutes finish, the group can move on if the Problem Presenter wants to and has nothing else they want to add.

STEP TWO – creative solutions (6 mins)
This is the time that everyone chimes in with creative ideas and solutions for what they have just heard. It is not a time to ask clarifying questions, but for everyone to have a chance to offer their brilliant ideas. The note taker records the ideas and the facilitator makes sure people follow the process. The problem presenter listens and does not respond.

STEP THREE– dialogue (6 mins)
Now the group has a conversation, which the problem presenter leads. They can explore and clarify the problem further if needed, and respond to the positive points and ideas that the group came up with. It is important that there is only a focus on what can be done, not what can't be done.

STEP FOUR– the first step (6 mins)
The problem presenter and the group decide on first steps, which must be doable within the next 3 days. One step needs to be taken within the first 24 hours – this is critical. The problem presenter chooses a coach from the group to check in with them within 3 days to see if they've taken the first step.
The group does a round of words to describe the experience, which are recorded. The recorder gives the written record to the focus person for them to keep.

Evaluation/feedback

- At the end of the intervention, each pupil will be given a debrief/thank you letter to thank them for their participation in the group and the research. Please can you note three positive things that each pupil has contributed to the group over the 6 weeks, so this can be shared with them in the debrief letter.

- Before the groups begin, I will come in to set targets with the pupils and complete a questionnaire with them. At the end of the 6 week intervention, I will come back and complete the same questionnaire and review their targets.

- I will also run a 45 minute focus group with the pupils to ask them about how it's been taking part in the group.

- I would also like to meet with you for around 30 minutes to find out how the process has been for you. I will contact you before the end of the 6 weeks to get a date booked in.

Thank you for your participation. I hope you find supporting the group a positive experience!

References

Forrest, M., & Pearpoint, J. (1996). *Solution circle: Getting unstuck a creative problem solving tool*. Retrieved from: *http://www.inclusion.com/ttsolutioncircle.html*

Appendix 13 – Solution Circle Vignettes

Solution Circle Vignettes

Please see the below vignettes for hypothetical problems that the group members can use when they are the Problem Presenter, if they feel they do not have/want to share a problem of their own. Please encourage them to share a problem of their own so that they can benefit from the group support, but if they do not want to then these vignettes can be used as an alternative option. The Problem Presenter will read the problem to the group and try to pretend that this is their problem. They can expand or add bits as they wish. When the group comes up with solutions and next steps, these can be discussed at the following session and the group can think about what the outcome may have been for the Problem Presenter if they took the next steps.

Vignette 1: exam stress
I have been finding it really difficult to revise for my exams recently. Every time I go to sit down and try to do some revision, my mind just goes blank and I can't think of a way to get the information to stick in my head. I am so worried that I am going to fail, it is causing me to stay awake at night and worry about not getting the grades I want. I feel like all of my friends are going to get higher marks than me, and that will make me feel really embarrassed. I keep imagining myself on the day we get our results and everyone celebrating except me. I want to train to be a vet when I leave school, so getting good grades is really important.

Vignette 2: anxiety
I have been feeling really anxious and worried for the last year. At first I thought I was just feeling worried because I was finding school work hard, but then I started to feel anxious all the time. I worry about all sorts of things – about people not liking me, about how I look, about what my future is going to be like. It's got to the point where I don't really like coming to school anymore or seeing my friends outside of school. I would really like to feel less anxious and more able to try new things and feel happier in and outside of school, but I don't really know who to talk to about it or how to make myself feel better.

Vignette 3: friendships/bullying
I have been having a real issue with my close friend recently. We have been friends since we were little and have grown up together. Recently, s/he has started to hang around with another group of friends, and s/he behaves really differently around them. I've noticed that the group often bully other people in school, something which we both think is horrible and have always thought so, but s/he doesn't seem to be telling them she thinks it's wrong or trying to make them stop. I feel like I don't really know her/him anymore. I really want us to stay friends but I don't really know how to tell her/him about how I'm feeling. I feel like if we weren't friends anymore I would feel really alone, as s/he is my closest friend in school and I don't talk to many other people.

Vignette 4: home/parental relationships
I've been having a bit of a hard time at home recently. My mum and dad split up a few years ago, which was really difficult. I spend most of my time living with my mum and then see my dad at the weekends, which I really look forward to. However, recently my dad has been behaving strangely and when I asked him about it, he said that he has got a new girlfriend and didn't know how to tell me or my sister. I feel really weird about it, because my mum hasn't got a new boyfriend and I'm worried she will feel upset and

lonely. My dad wants me to meet his new girlfriend next week, and I really don't know how I feel about it. I want to be happy for my dad but it feels weird that he is with someone else who isn't my mum. My sister doesn't care at all and that makes me feel like I'm just being awkward.

Vignette 5: experiencing bullying

I am having a really difficult time at school and at home at the moment as I am being bullied. This has been going on for over a year now, and it's always the same group of people who are targeting me. It started with small comments here and there about my appearance, but now it's become much worse and they are leaving me notes, targeting me in the corridors at school and sending me messages on social media. It is making me feel so down. I have tried to talk to my form tutor and he said he would do something but nothing has happened and it has still carried on. I don't know what to do next, I don't feel like anyone is supporting me.

Vignette 6: friendships/risky behaviour

I am really worried about my friend at the moment. Recently, s/he has started drinking a lot outside of school and spends most weekends drinking so much alcohol that s/he passes out. One night, s/he got so drunk that we had to call her/his mum and s/he ended up going to hospital. S/he keeps lying to her parents about where s/he is going, and keeps saying she is at mine when actually s/he is with a group of boys/girls that s/he is always with. I feel like s/he's putting me in an awkward position because then if her/his mum asks me where s/he is, then I have to lie. I feel like s/he has changed a lot and s/he's putting her/himself in a lot of danger. I don't really know how to talk to her/him about it without making me sound like I'm trying to 'tell her/him off'.

Vignette 7: parental illness/ young carer

My mum has been ill for three years now with cancer. When she was first diagnosed, it was such a horrible time and my dad was so upset. I tried to be there for him to support him and my younger sister. As time has gone on, mum has been in remission twice but sadly she keeps getting ill again. It's really impacting on our family, especially my mum, and I find myself taking it all on and trying to make sure everyone is ok. As my dad is struggling a lot, I do all of the cooking and cleaning at home so that he doesn't have to worry about it. I feel quite exhausted and I find it hard to talk to people about it.

Vignette 8: sibling arguments

I feel like I am constantly arguing with my brother recently. He can be so selfish and is always taking things from my room or kicking me out of the living room. I feel like I can't relax in the house as he is always on my case and I feel like I don't have any of my own space. I have spoken to my dad about it but he doesn't do anything, and I feel like my brother just gets away with it. Our arguments have gotten so bad sometimes that we have hit each other. I feel like I am always the one to apologise afterwards, even when he is the one who hit me first. I really want my dad to tell him to stop acting the way he is and stick up for me, but I feel like whenever I try to tell him he doesn't understand how I feel. I really want to get on with my brother better but I feel like he just doesn't really like me.

Appendix 14 – Pupil Participant Information Summary

Pupil Participant Age Ranges:

Pupil Age Ranges

- Year 7 (12) — 5%
- Year 8 (12-13) — 36%
- Year 9 (13-14) — 18%
- Year 10 (14-15) — 41%
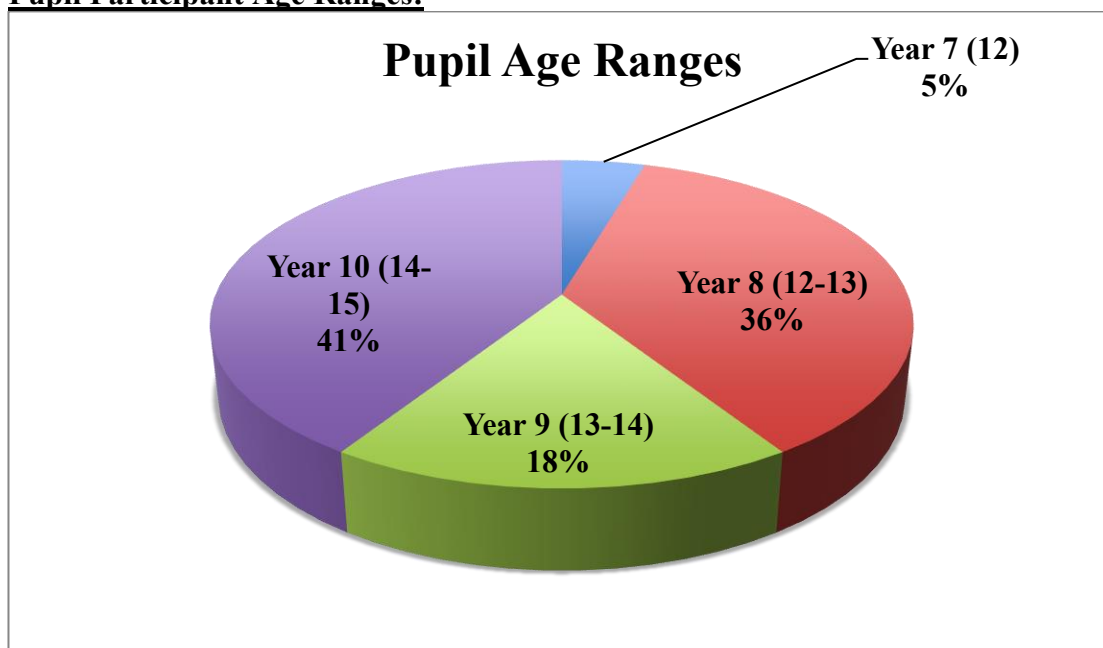
Details of SEND (across groups):

- One pupil with a diagnosis of Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
- One pupil with a diagnosis of Tourette syndrome.
- One pupil with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- One pupil with identified social communication difficulties.
- One pupil with learning difficulties, relating to literacy.

Group Demographics for each Group:

Group 1

Number of females	Number of males	Number of Year 7 pupils	Number of Year 8 pupils	Number of Year 9 pupils	Number of Year 10 pupils
3	1	0	4	0	0

Group 2

Number of females	Number of males	Number of Year 7 pupils	Number of Year 8 pupils	Number of Year 9 pupils	Number of Year 10 pupils
6	0	0	0	0	6

Group 3

Number of females	Number of males	Number of Year 7 pupils	Number of Year 8 pupils	Number of Year 9 pupils	Number of Year 10 pupils
4	2	0	0	3	3

Group 4

Number of females	Number of males	Number of Year 7 pupils	Number of Year 8 pupils	Number of Year 9 pupils	Number of Year 10 pupils
2	4	1	4	1	0

The steps of a Solution Circle

STEP ONE – presenting the problem (6 mins)
The problem presenter has 6 minutes to explain the problem. These 6 minutes must be uninterrupted, and the rest of the group listens in silence. If the problem presenter finishes talking before the 6 minutes finish, the group can move on if the Problem Presenter wants to and has nothing else they want to add.

STEP TWO – creative solutions (6 mins)
This is the time that everyone chimes in with creative ideas and solutions for what they have just heard. It is not a time to ask clarifying questions, but for everyone to have a chance to offer their brilliant ideas. The note taker records the ideas and the facilitator makes sure people follow the process. The problem presenter listens and does not respond.

STEP THREE– dialogue (6 mins)
Now the group has a conversation, which the problem presenter leads. They can explore and clarify the problem further if needed, and respond to the positive points and ideas that the group came up with. It is important that there is only a focus on what can be done, not what can't be done.

STEP FOUR– the first step (6 mins)
The problem presenter and the group decide on first steps, which must be doable within the next 3 days. One step needs to be taken within the first 24 hours – this is critical. The problem presenter chooses a coach from the group to check in with them within 3 days to see if they've taken the first step.
The group does a round of words to describe the experience, which are recorded. The recorder gives the written record to the focus person for them to keep.

Appendix 16 – Example Personalised Debrief Letter

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Thank you letter

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

Dear *(add participant's name)*
Thank you very much for taking part in my research. I hope that you have enjoyed being part of the group. Your valuable contribution and participation has helped me to explore how Solution Circles can be used with young people in secondary schools, and whether it can help young people with their problem solving skills and resilience.

Your strengths
You showed many strengths during your time in the group. (Insert Facilitator's name) shared that you:
- Were great at coming up with positive suggestions
- Listened well to everyone's views
- Were kind and supportive to everyone in the group

What happens next?
As identified in the Participant Information Leaflet you were given before the groups began, I will now use the information I have collected from the focus group, the targets you set and reviewed, and the questionnaire that was filled out to analyse the data. I will do this by putting in all the scores from the questionnaires and targets to see if there has been a difference in your score from before the groups started. I will also type up what was said in the focus group, and see if there are any common themes in your responses. This will help me to understand what it was like for you all to be part of the group, and how it can be improved if it was to be used again. As mentioned in the Participant Information Leaflet, once I have entered the data onto the computer and analysed it, it will be anonymous, so I will not be able to remove your data should you wish to withdraw from the research at this point.

Support available
Please ask your parent or member of staff at school to email me on *u1622738@uel.ac.uk* if you have any questions or concerns. Also, if you feel that you would like any support after discussing some of the topics that were talked about in the group, then you can contact Childline on 0800 1111 or online, or The Mix on 0808 808 4994. I would also recommend that you talk to a trusted adult, such as your parents/ carers or a member of staff in school.

Thank you again for being part of the research. I wish you all the very best.

Best wishes,

Becky Elliott

Appendix 17 – Copy of Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents

Solution Circle Group Personal Target

Name:

Instructions

Please write in the box that says 'My Target' something that you would like to achieve by the end of the group sessions (after 6 weeks). It can be anything you want. In the box that says: 'Descriptor of baseline level (B):' please write down how you are feeling about where you are in terms of meeting your target at the moment. Please give this a score out of 10 (with 1 meaning you haven't achieved your target, and 10 meaning you have achieved your target) by circling the number and writing a 'B' next to it. In the box that says: 'Descriptor of expected level at review (E):' please describe how you would like to feel about your target by the end of the sessions. Please give this a score out of 10 (with 1 meaning you haven't achieved your target, and 10 meaning you have achieved your target) by circling the number and writing an 'E' next to it. When you are finished, I will take the piece of paper away and keep it safely locked in a locker, and bring it back for the final session for review.

When you look at your target to review it, in the box that says 'Descriptor of achieved level at review (A):' please describe how you feel now about meeting your target. Please give this a score out of 10 (with 1 meaning you haven't achieved your target, and 10 meaning you have achieved your target) by circling the number and writing an 'A' next to it.

My Target:									
Rating: 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Descriptor of baseline level (B):

Descriptor of expected level at review (E):

Descriptor of achieved level at review (A):

Appendix 19 – Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. What was it like taking part in the Solution Circle group?

2. What has gone well in the Solution Circle group?
   - Follow up: why do you think that is?
   - Follow up: what has helped it go well?

3. What have you learned about yourself from being part of the Solution Circle group?
   - Follow up: how can you apply this learning in all areas of your life e.g. with your learning, with friends, with family, etc?
   - Follow up: In what way do you think this learning will benefit you?

4. What didn't you like about the Solution Circle group?
   - Follow up: How do you think that has impacted on people's progress and contribution in the group?
   - Do you think Solution Circles groups should be used with other young people?

5. What did you think about the questionnaires and targets that were used?
   - Follow up: can you think of another way we could find out about the impact of being part of the group?

6. Do you have any questions you would like to ask the group about how it has gone?

Appendix 20 – Facilitator Interview Questions

Facilitator interview Questions

1. How has it been facilitating the Solution Circles group?

2. What's helped it go well?

3. What have been some of the challenges? How has this impacted the group?

4. What do you think the impact has been for the young people?

5. How did the young people engage in the process?

6. What impacted the group dynamics?

7. How could Solution Circles be used/skills learned generalised across the school?

Appendix 21 – SENCO Interview Questions

SENCO Interview Questions

1. How has it been running the Solution Circle groups in your school?

2. How did it go with setting it up?

3. How did you find selecting pupils to take part in the groups?

4. What were the barriers of running and setting up the groups in your school?

5. What do you think the benefits have been for the pupils and facilitators?

6. How can you see the school continuing to support the pupils now the groups are finished?

7. How could Solution Circles be used more widely across the school?

8. Is there anything else you would like to feedback?

Appendix 22 – Ethical Approval Letter

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: Melanie Spragg

SUPERVISOR: **Lucy Browne**

STUDENT: Rebecca Elliott

Course: Professional Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology

Title of proposed study: TBC

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 THE RESEARCH COMMENCES</u>** (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)*:

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Major amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

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Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students)*:

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):*
Student number:

Date:

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the <u>researcher</u> to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐
    HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

☐

MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

☐ *LOW*

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

Reviewer *(Dr Melanie Spragg)*:

Date: 14/02/2018

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

Appendix 23 – Amended Ethical Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Mary Spiller (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee).

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

1.   Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
2.   Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3.   When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
4.   Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Mark Finn at m.finn@uel.ac.uk
5.   Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.
6.   Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) <u>added as tracked changes</u>.
2. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s).
For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.
3. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant: Rebecca Elliott
Programme of study: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
Title of research: An Exploration of Solution Circles as an Intervention with Secondary School Pupils
Name of supervisor: Lucy Browne

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
Interviewing Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO)/ Inclusion managers in the two participating schools. The head teachers of the participating schools have agreed with the involvement of the SENCOs with the evaluation.	The SENCOs have been instrumental in organising the timetabling of the support staff who have facilitated the intervention, as well as supporting with the selection of suitable participants for the study. In light of this, their views will provide an important and valuable insight into the feasibility of setting up and delivering the intervention in secondary schools - which will help to answer Research Question Four: is it feasible for Solution Circles to be used as a weekly intervention with young people?

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	x	

Student's signature (please type your name): Rebecca Elliott

Date:18/5/18

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER		
Amendment(s) approved	YES	
Comments Student advises that verbal consent from Head Teachers to involve SENCOs has been obtained in principle and written consent is forthcoming		

Reviewer: Mark Finn

Date: 6/06/18

Appendix 24 – SENCO Consent Form

Consent to participate in a research study

An exploration of the use of Solution Circles as an intervention with secondary school pupils

I have the read the information sheet for the SENCO/Inclusion Manager participants, relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that I am consenting to participate in an interview at the end of the intervention.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use the participants' anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

SENCO's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………….

SENCO's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………

Date: …………………..

Appendix 25 – Facilitator Information Letter

Participant Information Letter for Facilitators

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree to take part, is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Who am I?
My name is Becky Elliott and I am a professional doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a professional doctorate in educational and child psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?
I am conducting research into using Solution Circles as an intervention with young people in secondary schools. Solution Circles is a structured activity that helps problem solving. Please see the Solution Circles Factsheet attached for more information.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?
You have been invited to participate in my research to facilitate the Solution Circle intervention with pupils at your school. The pupils will be in Key Stage 3, and may be across various year groups.
I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect.
You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

What will your participation involve?
If you agree to participate you will be asked to:
- Attend and participate in training on facilitating Solution Circles, which I will provide for you in school.
- Meet with a group of between 6-8 pupils in your school on a weekly basis, for 45 minutes per session.
- Facilitate the Solution Circle intervention sessions weekly for around 8 weeks.
- Record positive contributions that the participants have made at the end of each session, in order to feed this back to the participants at the end of the intervention.
- Seek advice or support from me, as needed.
- Meet with me at the end of the intervention to discuss how it has gone. This discussion will last around 30 minutes, and will be video recorded, for the purposes of transcription.

What will happen to the information that you provide?
Your taking part will be safe and confidential, and your privacy and safety will be respected at all times:

- As mentioned above, I will record our conversation at the end of the intervention, so I can transcribe our conversation and use your feedback in the write up of my research.
- Your comments will be made completely anonymous, and will not be able to be traced back to you.
- The video file of our conversation will be stored safely on a password protected computer. Once the conversation has been transcribed and anonymised, the video file will be deleted.

What if you want to withdraw?
You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw I would reserve the right to use material that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Contact Details
Thank you very much for considering being part of my research. If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Becky Elliott. Email: *u1622738@uel.ac.uk*

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Lucy Browne. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: L.Browne@uel.ac.uk
or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk

Appendix 26 – SENCO Information Letter

Participant Information Letter for SENCOs

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree to take part, is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Who am I?
My name is Becky Elliott and I am a professional doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a professional doctorate in educational and child psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?
I am conducting research into using Solution Circles as an intervention with young people in secondary schools. Solution Circles is a structured activity that helps problem solving. Please see the Solution Circles Factsheet attached for more information.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?
You have been invited to participate in my research to share your experiences as a SENCO/Inclusion Manager on supporting and overseeing the set up, selection of participants and running of the Solution Circles group.

You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

What will your participation involve?
If you agree to participate you will be asked to:
- Meet with me for around 20 minutes at the end of the intervention to discuss your experiences of being part of the research. This discussion will be video recorded, for the purposes of transcription.

What will happen to the information that you provide?
Your taking part will be safe and confidential, and your privacy and safety will be respected at all times:
- As mentioned above, I will record our conversation at the end of the intervention, so I can transcribe our conversation and use your feedback in the write up of my research.
- Your comments will be made completely anonymous, and will not be able to be traced back to you.
- The video file of our conversation will be stored safely on a password protected computer. Once the conversation has been transcribed and anonymised, the video file will be deleted.

What if you want to withdraw?
You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw I would reserve the right to use material that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Contact Details
Thank you very much for considering being part of my research. If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Becky Elliott. Email: *u1622738@uel.ac.uk*

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Lucy Browne. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: L.Browne@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: *m.finn@uel.ac.uk*)

Appendix 27 – Raw Quantitative Data and SPSS Output (CD)

Appendix 28 - Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents Subscale Score Ranges

*Please note: M=male, F=female

Age Range (years) & Gender	Min MAS T score	Max MAS T score	Min REL T score	Max REL T score	Min REA T score	Max REA T score
9-11 M*	<1	74	<1	69	31	89
9-11 F	<1	74	<1	67	30	92
12-14 M	<1	73	<1	70	29	64
12-14 F	<1	71	<1	66	30	64
15-18 M	7	68	7	65	34	89
15-18 F	5	66	0	63	32	94

Age Range (years) & Gender	Min RES T score	Max RES T score	Min VUL T score	Max VUL T score
9-11 M*	10	>90	≤ 20	≥ 83
9-11 F	<10	>90	≤ 19	>90
12-14 M	<10	> 90	≤ 18	≥ 85
12-14 F	<10	>90	≤ 21	≥ 87
15-18 M	<10	>90	≤ 23	≥ 81
15-18 F	<10	>90	≤ 22	≥ 85

Appendix 29 - T Score Rankings for RSCA Subscales

Rankings for Vulnerability and Resource Index

Ranking	T Score Ranges
High	≥60
Above average	55-59
Average	45-54
Below average	41-44
Low	≤40

Please note: Resource Index T scores in the below average or low range indicate low levels of resourcefulness. Vulnerability Index T scores in the high or above average range indicate high levels of vulnerability.

Rankings for Sense of Mastery, Sense of Relatedness and Emotional Reactivity Subscales

Ranking	T Score Ranges
High	≥60
Above average	56-59
Average	46-55
Below average	41-45
Low	≤40

Please note: Sense of Mastery and Sense of Relatedness T scores in the low or below average range indicates low levels of mastery and relatedness. Emotional Reactivity T scores in the high or above average range indicate high levels of emotional reactivity.

School A Facilitator 1 Interview Transcript
(All names have been changed to ensure anonymity)

(General chat before the interview starts)

Researcher: Erm so basically just quite broadly how's it been just overall facilitating the solution circles group?

Jane: It went really well obviously we suffered by not having 6 members, but I think in the end, a couple of the characters who didn't come probably would have spoilt that group. I think maybe the group that we ended up with were a group who could open up to each other, who may not have done had we have had the original people, so.

Researcher: Yeah so having people they felt comfortable with helped?

Jane: Yea, which did mean obviously we didn't have a large group to be able to help with the problems necessarily, that may have suffered because we only had a small group. But I think overall it went really well yeah and they opened up and I thought they were brilliant

Researcher: Yeah? That's great. What sort of things kind of surprised you or you thought you didn't expect?

Jane: Well as I said there were a couple of characters or one of them at least who I knew who I thought wouldn't have been sympathetic completely showed me a different side, she was really open and helpful and I thought that was brilliant because I wouldn't have seen that in her anywhere else. In class she's very you know one of those ones who looks as if she you know wouldn't be friends with people but inside she's obviously not like that at all so it was lovely to see different sides of people for me because I work with a lot of them so I've got something out of it to see that they are really nice students who suffer and can understand other people's problems which is great

Researcher: That's great

Jane: Yeah I thought so

Researcher: What was it about the group that you think helped to kind of to bring out that side of them?

Jane: I think sometimes talking when they realised that others had a very similar problem and they probably didn't know that, I didn't know all or some of the things they came out with so perhaps they all think it's just them got it so they don't share. Whereas as soon as people started to say things, they understood that everyone has a problem, even if it's not their problem, so they felt easy to talk about it. Yeah I thought it went really well
Researcher: That's really good. And what do you thinks helped it go well I know I've kind of asked a bit about that but just maybe in general?

Jane: I think that particular group gelled well. I don't know I think it may have been different have we have had because we did have a boy, but we didn't have a couple of boys that I think would have been a bit more ,would have felt unable to open up. I feel that, although once again it may have been different had they have come to the group. I just felt there was a bit of a connection with them anyway, they did know each other a little bit

Researcher: Oh ok so they knew each other a bit before?

Jane: I think so yeah, I think everybody knew everybody a bit, so I think that helped them, I think so

Researcher: Yeah that's great. And was there anything else that you think helped it go well?

Jane: Erm I don't know I think they quite enjoyed the structure part of it, I think they knew then they only had 6 minutes to talk about things. Maybe that helps doesn't it? If you're like sitting there, although 6 minutes was a long time and they didn't quite realise that until we timed 6 minutes. So I think the lay out so we knew where we had to go next. So whatever happened you knew they were going to stop then and then we'd all get together for the next part. And the ideas came from everybody and yeah I think the timing helped, yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, and did they respond well to the structure?

Jane: I think they did yeah. They were quite quick to pick it up and understand what it was. So if anything, some of the times we didn't need quite the length of time, but it was still nice to have that time where they just have to be just that one person speaking and the others listening and the other way round.

Researcher: Yeah, and did they find that ok with the listening when somebody else was talking?

Jane: I thought they were very good. It was hard sometimes not to you could see they want to come in and you'd go no wait for next time and once they got that they understood they would have their chance to speak I think yeah, yeah they did do very well.

Researcher: Yeah and I guess did the structure help with it being predictable and I guess like you say they knew after the 6 minutes they were going to do that next?

Jane: Yeah and for the first time they were wanting to ask questions in the second part and you'd go no we don't ask questions now you know once they understood that there was a time to do that and you just had to wait for that time, they were really good

Researcher: Oh that's great. I know you've touched on this a bit already, but what have been some of the challenges of facilitating the group?
Jane: The challenges for us were having the whole group obviously, we didn't have a whole group and we have to keep moving rooms but that all worked and everyone was very keen so that helped it go along. And every time we didn't have enough people I'd suggested you know are you still ok to go along cause obviously it puts more pressure on you to do more jobs and they were always very keen to do it. They wanted to do it,

so even though we had problems with numbers I think they were happy with however many were there that week. I mean obviously this week was only two that I felt we couldn't even struggle on and try and do it

Researcher: Yeah because there wouldn't be enough people to do the roles

Jane: Yeah because otherwise you only get one on one sort of thing, but one other session we had, part of the session we had 2 but we did have 3 for a lot of the session so each one they did double up on parts but they did manage so there was a few problems that way

Researcher: Yeah so what do you think the impact would have been, has been off not having the full capacity in the group?

Jane: Well because obviously that meant somebody had to do a problem more than once or take notes more than once maybe, I don't know, I don't know there was a major problem for that because I think they still did what they had to do, yeah no I don't think it was a major problem. It would have just been easier with more people and more ideas coming I suppose, but they all had ideas, I mean everyone had a solution or you know an idea to come up with so, it wasn't too constrictive I think not having the whole group

Researcher: Ok that's great. And what do you think the impact has been for the pupils who are part of the group?

Jane: I think very positive. I've definitely seen and I think I mentioned it in one of the praise of one of the group and it was (pupil) actually who I felt was the outsider of the group if there was an outsider, not because he was a boy just because he wasn't in their classes, but he had a particular problem and one of the other group members saw him outside of school and said 'oh I saw him but I went up spoke to him, checked he was ok', and I thought that was such a positive thing, that even outside of school that they're now saying 'hello are you ok?' Maybe no more than that but they're seeing that sometimes that's all we need to do

Researcher: Yeah just checking in

Jane: Yeah, some of the solutions were maybe just making sure that that person's ok. Because they understood that maybe that day, they'd had a problem in the morning that may have affected their school day. So I think its made them look at everyone and understand that maybe we all come to school sometimes with a problem or upset about something and just saying are you alright? You OK?

Researcher: Oh that's great

Jane: Yeah I think so yeah
Researcher: Is there anything else you think any other impact for the young people?

Jane: I think definitely for that group but I think that will help me as well because working with the majority of them that you could just, we'll have more of an easier relationship because we've had that sort of shared those things and I think they will with each other, yeah I'm hoping so anyway. And with other students who weren't in the group because I think they can see that you know they also have problems and definitely when we were talking in the last session, (pupil) was saying that up until the

group she had problems but she didn't know how to ask for help, but she now feels she could. Or she could say to someone I've got this problem, she feels more confident in being able to do that now, because she's seen sharing isn't people then laughing at you or criticising you. That people genuinely will say oh I'm sorry to hear that, maybe we can help. So I think she's definitely gone away feeling more positive, about asking for help or just sharing, offloading her problems.

Researcher: Yeah, Oh that's brilliant

Jane: Yeah I think that's been really positive

Researcher: Is there anything else you want to add around that question?

Jane: Erm no I don't think so. As I say it's certainly a good idea. It's a shame that we picked a difficult time of year, but then we would have always had a problem I think, perhaps its people isn't it? It's a shame that you can't do it more, because I think sharing problems is a massive thing

Researcher: Yeah so that kind of leads on to one of my questions, so how do you think perhaps this approach or the group skills could be generalised or applied in the school in a wider way?

Jane: It's difficult isn't it because obviously taking them out of school lesson times is not something we can do easily, but maybe if they could meet up at lunchtime or something? I don't know how you could facilitate that to be honest but maybe just, they may now share their ideas with other people.

Researcher: So it may not be in a solution circle type structure?

Jane: No but just maybe yeah it would be difficult to do it you have to as I say you certainly couldn't take them out of lessons to do it but maybe if a group could meet at a lunchtime or something they could go in here or something maybe but its staffing isn't it it's very difficult

Researcher: Yeah and has staffing been one of the challenges?

Jane: Yeah because obviously were leaving lessons aren't we with students who should have support, and one of my lessons one of my students actually kicked off at that lesson because I wasn't there and you know you feel bad about that because obviously yeah it is hard but that's just how it isn't it you do have to leave sometimes and these things happen, yeah it is difficult
Researcher: So we have talked a bit about this but how the young people the pupils kind of engaged in the process and in the structure, and were there any parts that they found difficult?

Jane: Initially I think they did find it difficult not to interrupt or when the problem was being said initially you know they wanted to ask the questions then but once they understood the structure they were much better, obviously initially, and because we kept having different people come at different weeks that also didn't help because we didn't have the same group so one week we had explained it to one person and then the next week it was a new thing for another member so I think we had a longer time and a longer running, but obviously by the time everyone understood the structure everyone

was really good and they were pointing out you know stop, wait a minute you know so they understood, yes.

Researcher: That's great and did they take some ownership of that?

Jane: Yeah they did you know hang on we've only got four minutes wait for the next part you know or whatever, and double checking you know not now we don't discuss it now so yeah they did, they did.

Researcher: That's great. And how much did you find that you needed to help them to think of solutions?

Jane: Probably more than I would have one if we had had a full group obviously because sometimes there was only two others there or you know with the person presenting but not a lot you know I was quite surprised by how good they were at coming up with things, because they had experienced it or knew someone who had. So yeah I was really amazed that they could come up with a lot

Researcher: Yeah oh that's great. Is there anything else you want to share about it, any feedback or perhaps any way you think maybe the structure could change?

Jane: No I think the structure worked well. I think obviously in hindsight perhaps choose students who were here more or whatever that might have been more helpful, and looking at the you know the big characters that you had. Because I think I would have initially knowing that one of them wouldn't have come if you know what I mean and the other one didn't surprise me either so maybe look at the characters first and check their attendance and do they all get on or know I mean they obviously don't necessarily have to be best friends but there were certainly people there who were going to upset the others if they had of come anyway so yeah.

Researcher: No that's a really good point. Is there anything else that you wanted to share?

Jane: No I mean I was quite pleased I was you know initially I was quite concerned because you don't know how these things would run, but they made it easy for me they were very nice and a good group of students and were very positive to help one another which I was really pleased to see, really pleased to see.

Researcher: That's brilliant. And so have you enjoyed being part of it overall?
Jane: Yeah I have, I have. And they I think they would have carried on I think it's quite a nice thing to do isn't it to have a little chat and just see where they are and things but obviously I'll be able to keep up and see them around school and things

Researcher: Yeah and so will you keep providing support?

Jane: Yeah if I see them yeah, so yeah it's been very good. It worked better than I thought you know when you see it you think 'oo how's it going to go?' but in the end no it went really well.

Researcher: That's great, thank you so much.

Appendix 31 – Photographs of Thematic Analysis Process

Stages 1 – 2: familiarisation with the data and generating initial codes

Re-reading cut out extracts and generating codes
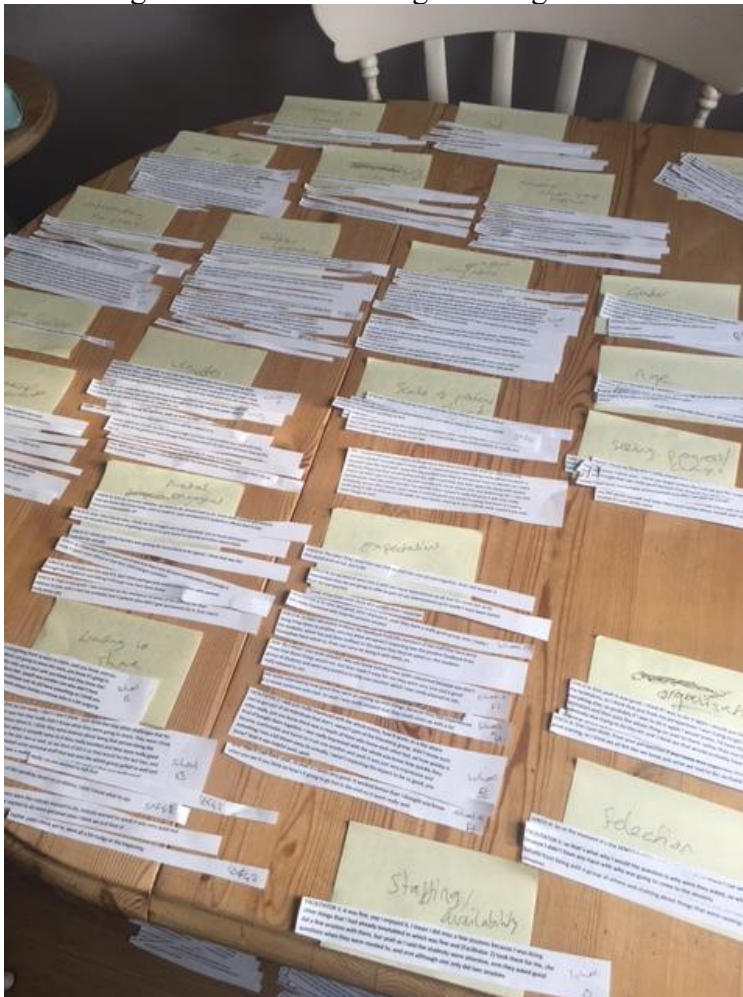
Refining codes

Stage 3: searching for themes

Examining codes to search for themes
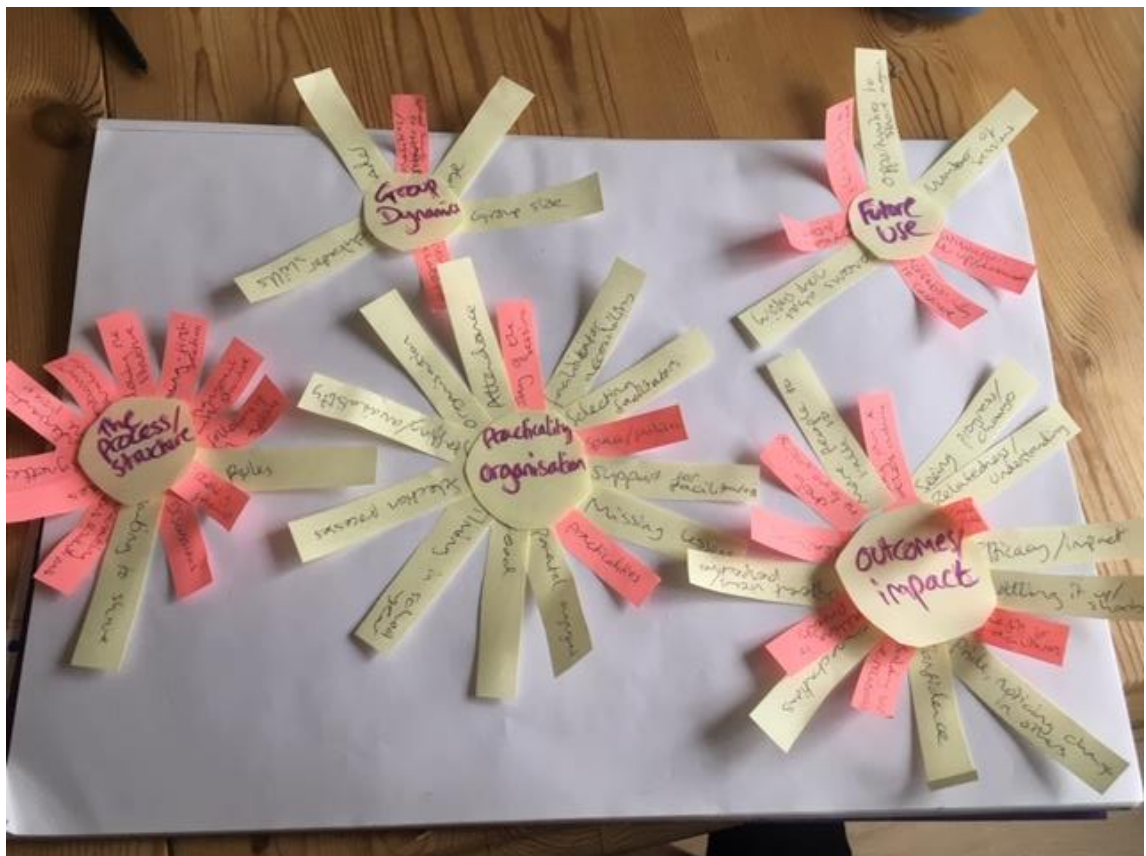
Early emerging potential themes

Stage 4: reviewing themes
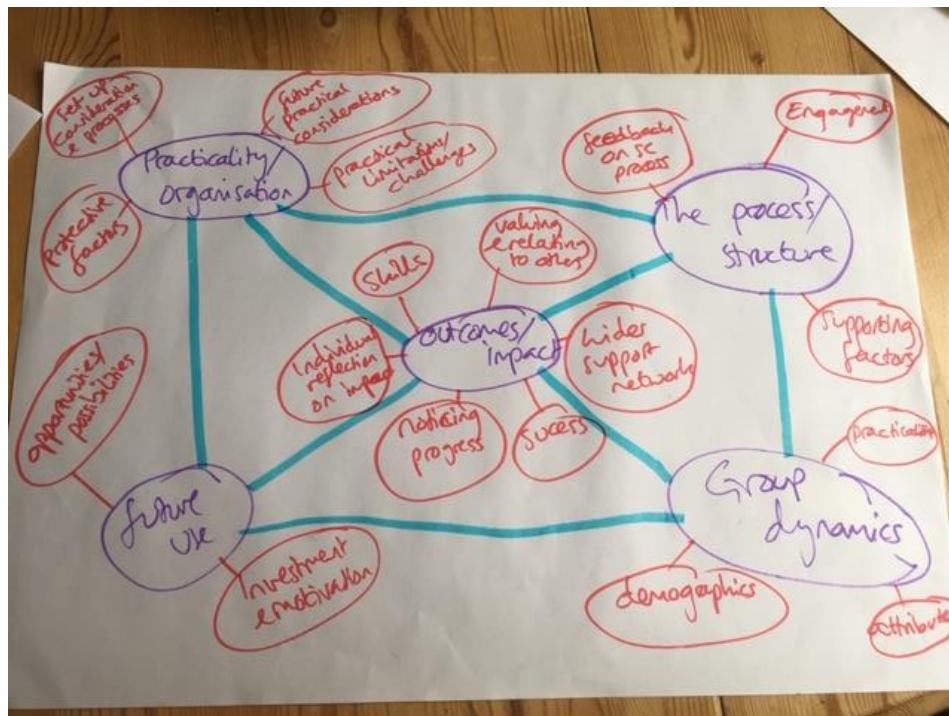
Visual review of themes and potential subthemes

Exploring themes and subthemes alongside codes and extracts

184
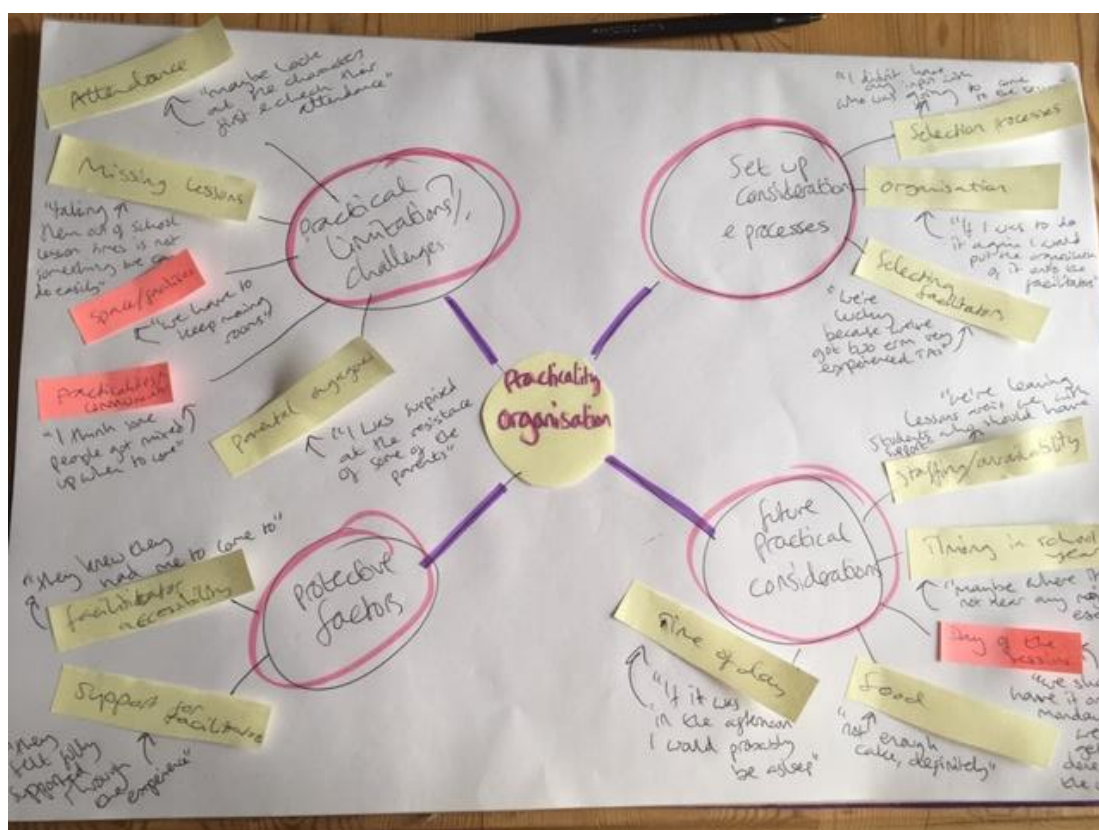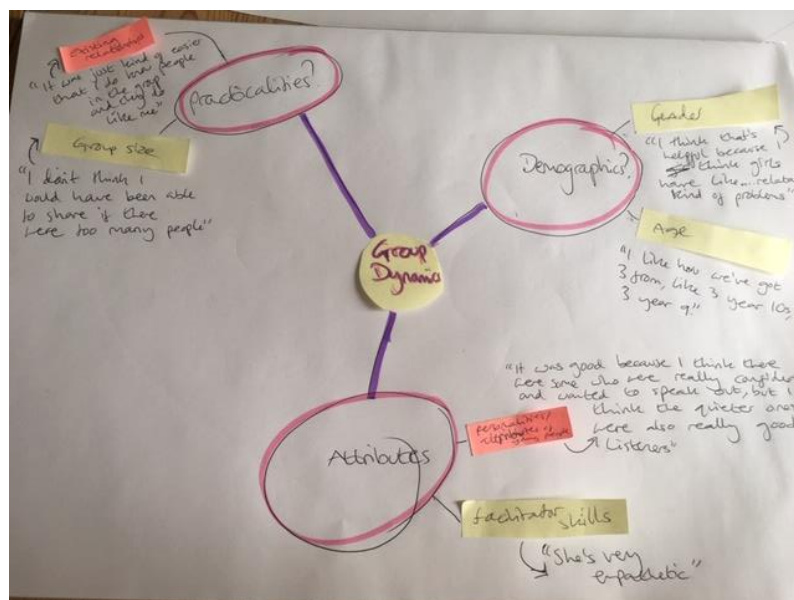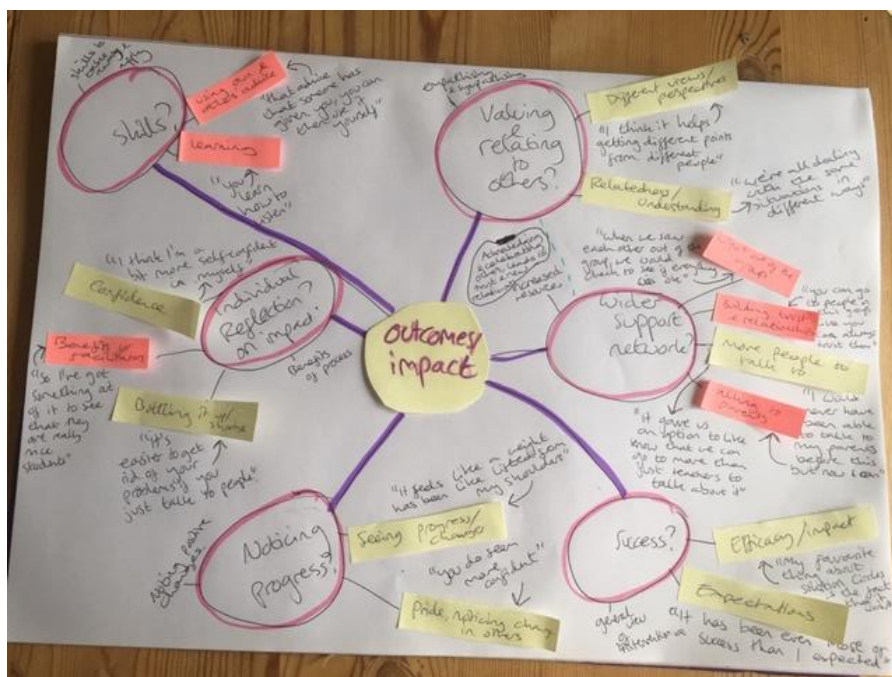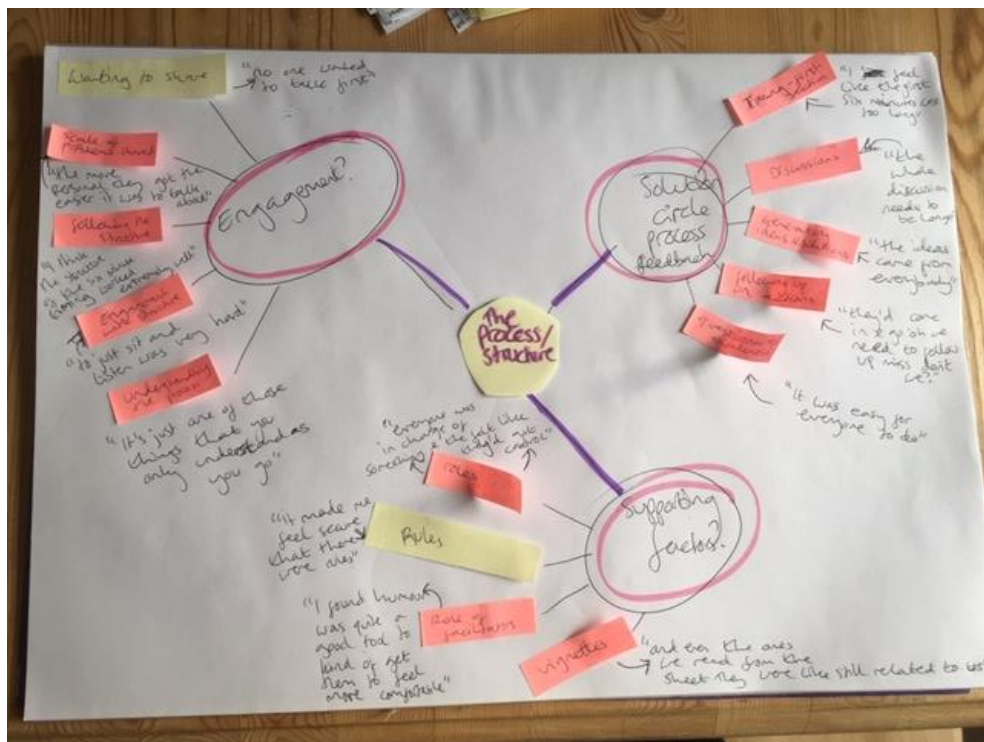
Stage 5: defining and naming themes
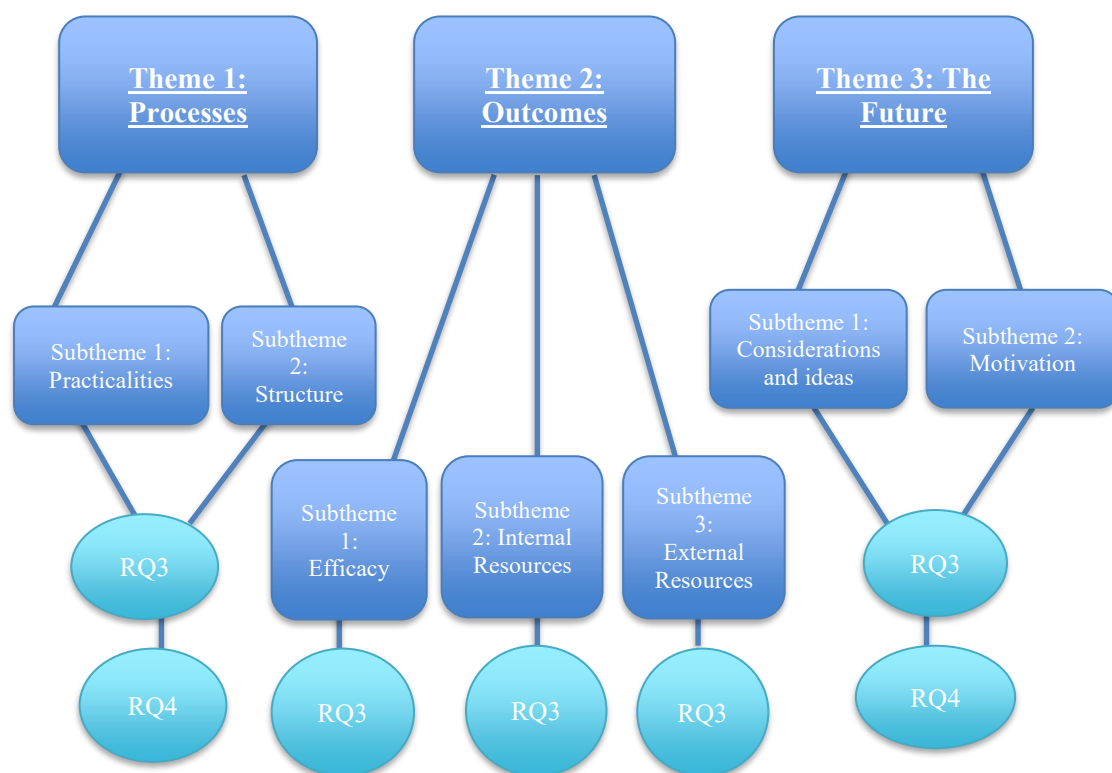
Themes and subthemes reviewed and refined to create a final thematic map of three main themes and seven subthemes.

Appendix 32 – Table of Themes, Subthemes and Codes

Theme one: Processes		Theme Two: Outcomes			Theme Three: The Future	
Subtheme 1: Practicalities	**Subtheme 2: Structure**	**Subtheme 1: Efficacy**	**Subtheme 2: Internal Resources**	**Subtheme 3: External Resources**	**Subtheme 1: Consideration and Ideas**	**Subtheme 2: Motivation**
Description	**Description**	**Description**	**Description**	**Description**	**Description**	**Description**
Practical considerations e.g. selecting facilitators, group dynamics, time considerations.	Engagement with the structure, understanding of and views on structure.	How well the intervention worked, how it differed from expectations, and how progress was noticed.	Confidence, skills, learning to trust others, helping others and themselves.	Wider support network, connecting with others, noticing other's success.	Suggested changes, ideas and plans for use in the future.	Level of motivation to continue with intervention, feelings around groups ending.
Codes	**Codes**	**Codes**	**Codes**	**Codes**	**Codes**	**Codes**
• Selection • Organisation • Selecting facilitator • Facilitator skills • Staffing/availability • Attendance • Missing lessons • Space/facilities • Parental engagement • Support for facilitators • Age • Gender • Group size • Existing relationships • Personalities/attributes • Communication for timings	• Scale of problems shared • Understanding the process • Wanting to share • Following the structure • Engagement with the structure • Rules • Role of facilitators • Roles • Vignettes • Following up on actions • Timing of first section • Discussions • Generating ideas/solutions	• Effectiveness • Exceeding expectations • Seeing progress	• Confidence • Benefits for facilitators • Building trust • Using own and others' advice • Learning/skills	• Facilitator accessibility Bottling it up/sharing • Benefits for facilitators • Different perspectives • Relatedness/ understanding • Noticing change in others • More people to talk to – building relationships • Support out of group • Talking to parents • Using own and others' advice	• Questionnaires • Number of sessions • Flexibility in structure • Follow up/dissemination • Suggestions of changes for future use • Time in school year • Time of day • Day of week • Food • Attendance • Missing lessons • Parental engagement • Communication for timings	• Motivation to continue • Opportunities to share again • Concerns about stopping • Exceeding expectations

Appendix 33 – Thematic Analysis Codebook

Interview/focus group Key:	
SAS - School A, SENCO A	SBS - School B, SENCO B
SAF1 – School A, Facilitator 1	SBF1 – School B, Facilitator 1
SAF2 – School A, Facilitator 2	SBF2 – School B, Facilitator
SAFG1 – School A, Focus Group 1	SBFG1 – School B, Focus Group 1
SAFG2 – School A, Focus Group 2	SBFG2 – School B, Focus Group 2

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Theme One - Processes
Subtheme One: Practicalities</td></tr>
<tr><th>Code</th><th>Interview/ focus group</th><th>Line number</th><th>Extract</th></tr>
<tr><td>Selection</td><td>SAS</td><td>53</td><td>Stephanie: Er quite interesting because we initially thought we would use SEND students and then on speaking to our child protection officer we felt that actually perhaps that wasn't the right audience. So we had a combination of some SEN students and some students who had got particular issues worries concerns, that were a concern to us anyway and needed the opportunity to have, the opportunity to be part of a group and to chat, not just about opening up and sharing their worries, but building those social skills that they actually haven't got.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>SBF1</td><td>15</td><td>Dianne: so that's what why I would the question is why were they asked, so who asked them because I didn't have any input with who was going to come to the sessions</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>SBF1</td><td>236</td><td>Dianne: yeah I think knowing those students now, seeing them there I can see that yes, so I can see where the SENCO came from in finding those students</td></tr>
<tr><td>Organisation</td><td>SAS</td><td>11</td><td>Stephanie: Getting it organised was bit of a challenge. That may have been because of running two groups at the same time, it's also the time of the year because of using TAs</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>SBS 78</td><td></td><td>Catherine: I think if I was to do it again I would put the organisation of it onto the facilitators, so I think that just from my perspective I was trying to get consent forms and everything else, so probably if I was to do it again I would invite, I'd have that initial meeting with the facilitators and then pass the whole thing on over to them rather than me trying to do bits and then somebody else trying to do bits etc and I</td></tr>
</table>

			think we that would probably have been better
	SBS	117	Catherine: Potentially a barrier was my disorganisation and leaving things to the last minute and then not having enough time to get things back
	SBS	152	Catherine: Erm I just think, from your perspective it was really well organized. Erm really clear, really good training, so I think we all felt like we knew just what we had to do, so thank you
Selecting facilitators	SAS	81	Stephanie: the first decision was that we were going to go with TAs
	SAS	83	Stephanie: I wanted to choose somebody or two people, that I could use again and again, so they were going to be trained, but I needed them to be reliable and likely to be here if you like, I know that's a practicality but quite important to make use of the fact that you were training them.
	SBS	144	Catherine: I think we are lucky because we've got two erm very experienced TAS that felt confident to work within a group dong these types of interventions. I think it would be quite difficult to just choose anybody to deliver it, I mean I might be wrong, but I think we were fortunate because we had experienced staff who had the confidence to do that.
Facilitator skills	SAFG2	146	Jasmine: I think it was helpful with miss…because she used to be in all my classes so I know her quite well
	SAFG2	149	Leanne: yeah she used to be in all my lessons last year, so she so she kind of understood in a way so she knew how I was
	SAFG2	154	Leanne: and she was quite an easy teacher to talk to as well
	SAFG2	164	Leanne: yeah she was quite calm about the whole thing and that and if it was a serious problem something that had just happened she was always calm about it
	SAFG2	158	Bill: erm I felt like I could talk to her
	SAFG2	162	Bill: she said it calmly not like you need to do this you don't need to do that, you can just share as much as you want in here
	SAFG2	167	Bill: and very positive, even when there was nothing else we could think of, always positive, positivity.
	SAFG1	459	Kimberly: she was so lovely
	SAFG1	463	Kimberly: she's very, she's very reassuring
	SAFG1	461	Anabelle: she was always like really happy so like it sort of made me feel quite calm
	SAFG1	462	Hayley: she's very empathetic as well

	SBF1	111	Dianne: well we can have a laugh and I was able to share some of my things
	SBF1	126	Dianne: think yeah sometimes they quite like that you know a staff member that you've got some empathy and can share different things with them
	SBF1	183	Dianne: seeing us I suppose as ordinary people as well not a member of staff but one who's caring and you know they can come and chat to and have a laugh
	SA	87	Stephanie: the skills, the people that I chose, erm are very gentle, kind, I mean firm and don't take any messing but they are more understanding, more approachable
	SAS	96	Stephanie: I didn't want to just put anyone in there who perhaps wouldn't be able to get the children to chat
	SAF1	126	Jane: Yeah because obviously were leaving lessons aren't we with students who should have support
	SBF1	8	Dianne: I mean I did miss a few sessions because I was doing other things that I had already timetabled in which was fine and (Janine) took them for me
Staffing/availability	SAF1	124	Jane: its staffing isn't it it's very difficult
Attendance	SAS	106	Stephanie: the 7 and 8s didn't turn up so frequently. I don't know why, I really don't know why, they were on board, their parents were on board.
	SAF1	152	Jane: I think obviously in hindsight perhaps choose students who were here more or whatever that might have been more helpful
Missing lessons	SAS	137	Stephanie: The school itself doesn't like children coming out of lessons, particularly 9 and 10
	SAS	43	Stephanie: Initially concerned it was going to hit every lesson, so what we had done was we'd tried to move it around so it wasn't hitting the same lesson every week and I think that's quite important that you're quite flexible
	SAS	46	Stephanie: to have it on the same time, same day is good for the children but it's not good for the teachers and for their learning, so we moved it around.
	SAF1	118	Jane: It's difficult isn't it because obviously taking them out of school lesson times is not something we can do easily
	SAF1	122	Jane: it would be difficult to do it you have to as I say you certainly couldn't take them out of lessons to do it but maybe if a group could meet at a lunchtime or something
	SBFG2	325	Andrew: there was one thing I did want to say quickly, this was going over an English

			lesson, er which would mean that I'm missing out on a core subject
	SBFG2	328	Molly: yeah I'm missing geography as well..
	SBFG2	491	Molly: or lessons we're missing
Parental engagement	SBS	92	Catherine: I was surprised as the resistance of some of the parents for their children to join, and in fact we probably had 4 parents who didn't give permission for it.
	SBS	99	Catherine: I wonder whether we need to do, would need to do more work around just around how we frame the initial letter, erm to make it, I just wondered if it looked so official that it may have put some people off
	SBS	105	Catherine: I think perhaps just initial contact even with parents through the telephone and talking it through may have been better
	SBS	96	Catherine: I think two of them were concerned that there was ed psych involvement and maybe it made it seem more official or that their child had got a problem
Communication for timings	SAFG1	137	Naomi: the first session was quite stressful because we started late because none of us knew about it so we all started late and then it was like going through everything we had to cram it in quite quickly
	SAFG1	142	Hayley: I think some people got mixed up with when to come, we were told it was period 3
	SAFG1	143	Isla: we mixed up with like the year 9s or something
	SAS	19	Stephanie: getting students to one place at the right time is always a challenge for anybody at any time.
	SAS	38	Stephanie: it's a case of doing it from all angles you know. So the timetable that they got, or the letter right at the start, the daily reminder and then fi they don't turn up actually fetching them does work, it's just about using all of those resources available to you.
Support for facilitators	SBF2	154	Janine: Oh yeah, no no, I felt very confident, erm obviously you were an email away or a phone call away so you know and (other facilitator) was running it was well so we could talk to each other
	SAS	101	Stephanie: I mean obviously you gave them the training in the first place, and I know they were pleased to catch up with you after they just started, and they talked together.
	SAS	198	Stephanie: they really appreciated your training, you know and that and they felt

			fully supported through the experience, so I think it was very successful.
Age	SBFG2	241	Ryan: and they could have been through stuff that like we that were going through you know so they could have helped
	SBFG2	228	Sophie: and I like how we've got three from like three year 10s three year 9
	SBFG2	239	Sophie: they'd give us as advice and they'd know like right were going to do that next year think of that advice
	SAFG1	270	Naomi: yeah were all like the same year
	SA	63	Stephanie: The other thing about that was that we had two year groups together. And I did wonder if that would work or not, but it did
	SA	66	Stephanie: And I think that's also positive, because it helps them to see children in different year groups a little bit differently
	SBF2	40	Janine: The only thing I would be concerned about in terms of some of the, the older students they do want to take it a little bit, like I had a year 7 in there I had a year 9 in there, and a couple of times the year 9, there were some issues that I thought I don't really know if I want the year 7 to be you know, obviously it was kept anonymous could be completely not really suitable for a year 7
	SAS	72	Stephanie: I suppose the challenge would be to have 7-10 mixed, but things that are worrying 9s and 10s are not necessarily what are worrying 7 and 8 are they?
	SBF1	250	Dianne: but having a mix of the two year groups wasn't too bad because they're not far away in age anyway are they
	SBF2	189	Janine: its bringing different year groups together which I think is a really positive thing
Gender	SAFG1	273-275	Kimberly: I think that's helpful because I think girls have like… relatable kind of problems
	SAFG1	278	Isla: and I think boys are also like don't tend to open up as much
	SAF1	34	Jane: I think that particular group gelled well. I don't know I think it may have been different have we have had because we did have a boy, but we didn't have a couple of boys that I think would have been a bit more, would have felt unable to open up
Group size	SAF1	77	Jane: Well because obviously that meant somebody had to do a problem more than once or take notes more than once maybe, I don't know, I don't know there was a major problem for that because I think they still did what they had to do, yeah no I don't think it was a major problem

	SAF1	80	Jane: would have just been easier with more people and more ideas coming I suppose, but they all had ideas, I mean everyone had a solution or you know an idea to come up with so, it wasn't too constrictive I think not having the whole group
	SAF1	64	Jane: The challenges for us were having the whole group obviously, we didn't have a whole group
	SAF1	66	Jane: every time we didn't have enough people I'd suggested you know are you still ok to go along cause obviously it puts more pressure on you to do more jobs and they were always very keen to do it. They wanted to do it, so even though we had problems with numbers I think they were happy with however many were there that week.
	SAF1	11	Jane: Yea, which did mean obviously we didn't have a large group to be able to help with the problems necessarily, that may have suffered because we only had a small group. But I think overall it went really well
	SAF1	6	Jane: It went really well obviously we suffered by not having 6 members, but I think in the end, a couple of the characters who didn't come probably would have spoilt that group
	SAFG1	216	Anabelle: I don't think I would have been able to share if there were too many people
	SAFG1	217	Kimberly: yeah I don't think I would have been able to share if there were many more people
	SAFG1	220	Kimberly: I think 5 including me, six is a good enough size
	SAFG2	80	Bill: erm less ideas which means everyone has to think harder
	SAFG2	82	Jasmine: I don't think a lot else changed if there was just 3 of us in the group not a lot changed
	SAFG2	117	Jasmine: I think it was better with less people
	SAFG2	120	Bill: you can explain it more because when there's less people, so there's more of a chance they won't spread it
	SBFG1	143	James: not too many people that you feel overwhelmed but it's not too little people that there's no one here and no one's paying attention
	SBFG1	152	Wayne: yeah I think if it was ten it would have been too big and if it was something like three it would have been too small
	SBFG1	158	Lydia: I think if it was more I think people would get overwhelmed and wouldn't want to share
	SBFG1	163	Wayne: if there were too few people the

			responsibility on one person would have been bigger, because like for example if there's two people it's hard but with size it's been cut into six smaller pieces
	SBFG1	137	James: I think six people is a good number
	SBFG1	140	James: and I think this is the perfect number as well
	SBS	44	Catherine: certainly that group size seemed to work
	SBF2	126	Janine: Smaller, no I don't think it would really work very as well as a smaller, but I think you could add perhaps one or two more perhaps for a larger group, but I don't think you should be too big, because you've got to build that group trust and that relationship
Existing relationships	SAF1	37	Jane: I just felt there was a bit of a connection with them anyway, they did know each other a little bit
	SAF1	40	Jane: I think everybody knew everybody a bit, so I think that helped them
	SAFG2	134	Leanne: it was a lot better because I knew they wouldn't say anything in a way because if we don't know each other well then can't really nothing to say about each other
	SAFG2	129	Leanne: but it depends on what you have in the past so like me and (pupil) have a really bad, we don't get on with each other anymore but we used to and I think I wouldn't have been able to stay in it
	SAFG1	333	Naomi: it was just kind of easier to know that I do know people in the group and they do like me
	SAFG1	328	Naomi: I also think that its helpful that we have all met each other before we have all spoken and we don't have any hatred towards each other because I think it would have been a lot harder to like share problems if I didn't like any of you because then I would think oh they're going to use this against me
	SBFG2	22	Nayna: I think it was good that we didn't really know each other
	SBFG2	29	Nayna: yeah cause you didn't know the background so you didn't know as much you were just going on what you were being told
	SAF1	156	Jane: do they all get on or know I mean they obviously don't necessarily have to be best friends but there were certainly people there who were going to upset the others if they had of come anyway
Personalities/ attributes	SBF2	32	Janine: I think its them, the individuals in the group actually, I think you know we had one lad, James, he was very, very you know

			forthcoming and confident and empathetic
	SBF2	37	Janine: I think the dynamics was right for that group
	SBF2	111	Janine: It was good because I think there were some who were really confident and wanted to speak out, but I think the quieter ones were also really good listeners
	SBF2	115	Janine: I think the quieter ones added their own what we needed to make the team to work well really
	SBF1	104	Dianne: Nayna was very quiet but she's very very sensible, very mature for her age
	SBF1	95	Dianne: because she's very forthcoming, she wasn't afraid to, she doesn't hide with a light under the bush, she's very yeah willing to put herself out there
	SAF1	7	Dianne: I think maybe the group that we ended up with were a group who could open up to each other,
**Theme One - Processes** **Subtheme Two: Structure**
Code	**Interview/ Focus group**	**Line number**	**Extract**
Scale of problems shared	SAFG1	47	Anabelle: but I feel like if there's like small problems that I can talk to these guys about it, it would probably be these guys I would go to first
	SAFG1	370	Isla: I actually didn't know what to share because I was feeling really pessimist about it because I was like well yeah I have this big problem but they're not gonna have a solution so I said a different thing that kind of still bothered me
	SAFG1	374	Isla: I was like well I feel like I've wasted it but I haven't really because it was also really bothering me so I don't know I just I mean it still felt good you know knowing that even if it was a small thing it still, it still erm it still made me feel better sharing it
	SAFG1	65	Naomi: I've shared like a very small problem in my life
	SAFG1	84	Isla: I think at like the very first sessions we were kind of like erm I'm just going to share a minor thing and then as the time progressed people started sharing deeper
	SAFG1	67	Kimberly: I think in the group we've shared like minor details to our lives
	SAFG1	69	Kimberly: it depends like what lifestyle you have and how you feel and but for me my problem was a big thing for me but probably like a minor thing for the rest of you
	SBFG2	37	Lissy: yeah the more personal they got the

			easier it was to talk about
Understanding the process	SAF1	49	Jane: I think they did yeah. They were quite quick to pick it up and understand what it was.
	SAF2	32	Sarah: I think the six minutes actually gives a framework that they understand and they can follow it.
	SAFG1	367	Kimberly: I think it was just not understanding the first session
	SAFG1	138	Naomi: we had to cram it in quite quickly so it was quite stressful to like understand everything that she was saying
	SAFG1	112	Isla: it's just one of those things that you only understand as you go
	SAFG1	110	Isla: I mean I think she explained it fairly well
	SAFG1	78	Hayley: I didn't know what we were doing in the first thing so I messed up my thing to talk about
	SAF1	132	Jane: Initially I think they did find it difficult not to interrupt or when the problem was being said initially you know they wanted to ask the questions then but once they understood the structure they were much better
	SAF1	59	Jane: Yeah and for the first time they were wanting to ask questions in the second part and you'd go 'no we don't ask questions now', you know, once they understood that there was a time to do that and you just had to wait for that time, they were really good
Wanting to share	SAFG2	69	Jasmine: at first I was a bit shy of like speaking about my problems, I didn't know what to say
	SBFG2	14	Molly: no one wanted to talk first
	SBFG2	12	Sophie: yeah I think we're, were all a bit nudgy at the beginning
	SBFG2	7	Ryan: er I was quite confident, well kind of, like I felt like I could like after the first like time someone had started talking like I spoke last or whatever but I felt more confident that I could do it
	SBFG2	34	Nayna: nobody wanted to speak it was very quiet
	SBF2	102	Janine: for quite a while there was two that really didn't know what they were going to share. They were I think they were quite anxious about it, I think they were anxious about being that person being the problem presenter, but when it actually came to it they really excelled and they were really good
	SBF1	137	DIANNE: getting them to open up and getting them to want to share, yeah you know, and you know that obviously what we are talking about not going to leave the

			room, you know it's going to stay here and because obviously we made the rules up to start with you know and they knew that but, overcoming their shyness to be able to share that.
Following the structure	SAF1	152	Jane: No I think the structure worked well
	SAF1	49	Jane: So if anything, some of the times we didn't need quite the length of time, but it was still nice to have that time where they just have to be just that one person speaking and the others listening and the other way round.
	SAF1	42	Jane: I think they quite enjoyed the structure part of it, I think they knew then they only had 6 minutes to talk about things.
	SAS	146	Stephanie: Yeah absolutely, we'd follow it [structure] completely, it's gone really well
	SAFG2	38	Bill: the way we did it, the way that you have 6 minutes to explain, 6 minutes of thinking of ideas and then another 6 minutes for sharing the ideas. So it was the way we did it which helped.
	SAF2	9	Sarah: the six minute structure also works well because some of those difficult issues, we were able, because we were focusing on the positives meant that we wouldn't allow nay negatives to come through, and we had to turn that into a positive, and they very quickly got into that into that mode
	SAF2	27	Sarah: I think the structure of the six minute timing worked extremely well
	SAF2	33	Sarah: it also means that without it getting going off track so much, we have we it brings it back on target very easily. And I think the other good thing about that is that erm once they know that structure, they feel comfortable with that structure, they are the ones saying to the others 'shh, you're not supposed to be talking now.' And that really, really worked well.
Engagement with the structure	SBFG2	89	Lissy: I mean we just made it a lot longer than it was
	SBFG1	300	James: because you want to ask questions as soon as you think of a questions that they've got you want to answer it but you can't
	SBFG1	302	Kyle: yeah and as soon as you think of a problem you're like yeah yeah yeah but you can't because you're not allowed
	SBFG1	309	James: it was exceeded sometimes but not all the time
	SBFG1	313	Wayne: because today there's like two

			cases where we ran out of time and people had to keep going after the time limit
	SBFG1	298	James: yeah and to just sit and listen was very hard
	SBFG1	306	Wayne: and then we find that we run out of time with the other like options
	SBFG1	356	James: I wanted to say something else and maybe that something else could have really helped them, but I couldn't quite do that and so it was a bit frustrating because you had so much to say and then you were half way through saying it and then you had to stop because your six minutes were up, it was very, it was quite annoying
	SAFG1	191	Hayley: yeah like because I wanted to add something but then it was the next thing so I thought ok don't worry
	SBF2	64	Janine: I think they found it hard the first, the first step once they had shared once the problem presenter has said right this is my issue, and then that silence, they found that really difficult
Rules	SBFG2	143	Sophie: yeah having the rules as well, we had little rules like saying like listen to each other and what happens in this room stays in this room stuff like that
	SBFG1	181	Wayne: giving us the freedom was probably the biggest thing personally, because if you'd because if the (facilitator's name) had come in and said erm you have to do this you have to do that, you have to do that, but she let us have the freedom to decide what would be best for us so yeah because if she put too many rules then we wouldn't be able to do much, if that makes sense
	SBFG1	187	James: the rules were reassuring
	SBFG1	192	James: erm with the rules that we had and we'd established them we established them as as group and that meant that everyone agreed to them
	SBFG1	194	Lydia: and everyone had a say
	SBFG1	195	James: and everyone was ok with that and everyone had a say they could change it if they wanted to, that was just really reassuring for me that everyone was on the same page and everyone was familiar with what was going and they were all aware and I thought that was also a benefit to the whole situation
	SBFG1	31	James: or in school, whatever stays in the room is kept in the room
	SAFG2	12	Bill: and everything you say stays in the group

	SAFG2	49	Jasmine: yeah it made me feel secure that there was rules
	SAFG2	44	Jasmine: you never know they could go and tell someone, but like people here could but if they did it would have just been breaking the rules
Role of facilitators	SBF1	206	Dianne: no just a bit of prompting [to come up with ideas] but they were very articulate
	SBF2	14	Janine: Er just to just to make sure they stuck to the what, what steps they needed to stick to, I thought perhaps sometimes when they was like the first part they would get a bit stuck and sometimes I would perhaps chip in and say 'is there anything else you want to add?', just little sort of nudges here and there to say 'well have you thought of' you know, or sometimes I had to say well no you can't ask that cause they always, I mean they kind of still struggled right til the last couple of sessions where they wanted to sort of ask questions when it wasn't that time, so it was like just little things like that just little reminders but no they were very keen so that was that was nice
	SBF2	48	Janine: I would encourage them you know to sort of bond them that they had a little joke
	SBF2	95	Janine: trying to encourage some of the ones that were harder, trying to get them to open up and feel confident.
	SBF2	98	Janine: giving them that space and time to do that but you know just encouraging them, but I found humour was quite a good tool to kind of get them to feel more comfortable
Roles	SBFG2	141	Nayna: I think having the book was really good where it was written down it wasn't just on loose pieces of paper
	SBF2	76	Janine: each week they changed roles quite happily I never had to say right you need to you know they always volunteered
	SBFG1	171	James: because erm everyone, everyone was in charge of something and they felt like they'd got control and deal with that and they did it effectively rather than having everything to have to deal with and sort out, everyone was given something different to do and they focused on that, and because they were focused on that they could be more effective with how they came across the problem and how they helped the person out and I thought that was really also really good.
	SAFG1	306	Hayley: it was nice when we wrote down

			how to help and everything
	SAFG1	308	Hayley: and then you could take it away and re read and then just remember what other people said and how that could potentially help you
	SAFG1	314	Anabelle: I think what made it easier was that when we were talking erm because we'd made sort of roles for when we were doing
Vignettes	SBF1	72	Dianne: no I think they that may not have mentioned that it was personal them but you got the feeling I got the feeling that it was something to do with them by the way they spoke about it and were able to put more information in, I think yes, yes
	SBF1	148	Dianne: having the vignettes, yeah, as back up yeah [helped the pupils open up more]
	SBFG2	41	Sophie: and even the ones we read from that sheet they were still like related to us
	SBFG2	43	Lissy: well I used one because it was almost exactly the same as how I actually felt I just didn't know how to put it into words
	SBFG2	60	Nayna: cause as Lissy said there was bound to be one you'd relate to in some way
	SBFG2	62	Sophie: and even if it was say like someone might not have a real problem you could still think maybe think 'oh my girlfriend went through that' and how would I fix that, and tell them how we did
Following up on actions	SBFG1	124	James: I think the steps about the 24 hours and the few days and then the long term ones I thought they were really good as well because it set easy milestones that we can achieve and when I did them, everything got ten times better
	SBF2	83	Janine: Oh yeah, every week, in fact I got to the point where I never had to say right let's hear, they'd come in and go 'oh we need to follow up miss don't we?' And so they were doing it without me, they were doing it, and so, I spoke to so and so and I did this and you know.
Timing of first section	SBFG1	361	Wayne: I feel like you should have an option where you can decide how much time there can be
	SBFG1	304	Joshua: cause the first six minutes is two long innit because then we've normally got three minutes left
	SBFG1	297	Joshua: I feel like the first six minutes was too long
	SAFG1	161	Hayley: six minutes is a bit long
	SAFG1	166	Anabelle: because I know that when I was talking I did like it did take me a lot longer than six minutes to finish and there was still like quite a bit more that I felt like needed

			to get off
	SAFG1	182	Naomi: personally I was struggling to fill the 6 minutes because everything I was saying was kind of so small to say it was kind of like it's there and you can't expand on it as much as you could with other problems so for me like 4 minutes would have been enough
	SBFG2	69	Ryan: they were too long
	SBFG2	70	Molly: yeah a bit too long
	SBFG2	71	Lissy: six minute was a bit too long to explain the problem because otherwise there was just like an awkward silence
	SBFG2	75	Ryan: you could have the six minutes if you needed it or just like stop it whenever you know someone's finished talking
	SBFG2	82	Ryan: just the bit afterwards it was kind of like a bit awkward
	SAFG2	100	Leanne: I think people around you want to explain it fully but if it's something that you feel you don't always know how to explain it or anything so I guess six minutes is a good thing
	SAFG2	91	Bill: a bit too much time for explaining the problem.
Discussions	SAFG1	156	Anabelle: I think it could, it would have been helpful if we'd had a bit longer to talk because like once everyone sort of felt a bit more comfortable with everyone there it would get to six minutes and people were still having a little bit to talk about
	SBFG2	88	Ryan: the whole discussion needs to be longer
	SBFG2	89	Lissy: I mean we just made it a lot longer than it was
	SBFG2	91	Sophie: cause I mean like after you've presented your problem then they tell you solutions and after they've said their solutions you kind of say more about your problem. So maybe go like problem then discussion then a bit more problem and the discussion.
	SBFG2	94	Lissy: but with the second discussion would be with the kind of asking stuff
	SBFG2	73	Sophie: but we'd have like maybe have like a longer discussion
	SBFG1	64	Kyle: discussions have helped
	SBFG1	332	James: and to ask questions and give the person feedback on what we think and what we feel cause I think that everyone was very opinionated that they had a lot to say and if we had more chance to say it then they could make a more educated guess on what to do next
Generating ideas/solutions	SAF1	80	Jane: they all had ideas, I mean everyone had a solution or you know an idea to come

			up with so
	SBF1	202	Dianne: oh they were very good at that, yeah very good at that, very sensible very adult way of thinking yeah
	SAF1	46	Jane: And the ideas came from everybody

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<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">Theme 2 - Outcomes
Subtheme 1: Efficacy</td></tr>
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Code	Interview/ Focus group	Line number	Extract
Effectiveness	SAS	60	Stephanie: So it was working, it did two things really, it helped build some friendships and some relationships and it also allowed those that needed help to talk through things.
	SBFG2	198	Nayna: the way that I sorted it out worked really well
	SBFG2	193	Sophie: I sorted out an argument with a friend really easily
	SBFG1	126	James: when I did them, everything got ten times better, and so it does it does work because I have improved or helped improve my friends life permanently because she was at a lot at risk and now she's better and she's fine and I thank everyone for that
	SBFG1	108	James: and it works. That's the, my favourite thing about the solution circles is the fact that it works
	SBS	5	Catherine: Yeah so in terms of us as a school I think it's had an enormous impact
	SBS	17	Catherine: Erm I think from the students, they've come away feeling that actually they're able to problem solve, and that they're able to problem solve amongst themselves, and that's been really empowering for them erm and that they've created through these little groups a bit of a support network
	SBS	27	Catherine: they found it really productive for their revision, and coming with, with strategies for revision
	SBS	15	Catherine: I think that one of the facilitators in particular can see the benefits of using it to problem solve friendships issues with young people
	SBS	48	Catherine: they feel that they've got another way of building students' resilience
	SBF2	184	Janine: Just that it really works, you know, that's all I would say. It's a really good tool, it builds confidence, you know run programmes that are quite long programmes and we often found that that doesn't really help. But I've seen a big impact in a short time I think with this
	SBF2	89	Janine: As well, and when they came back,

			it was always that it had improved,
	SBF2	147	Janine: a student would present a problem, and then the others would be like well that happened to me and I had that and this is what I did, and honestly you could see it on their, almost like a wow you know I'm not the only person going through this, and that's got to have a massive impact hasn't it?
	SBF2	137	Janine: now they've got these people in the school that they know they can go and talk to and I think the impact of that is incredible
	SBF1	222	Dianne: he's working on his confidence with opening up conversations and I think that worked straight away afterwards, because a young man came into the room just as we finished the session and he was like, Andrew said would you like a game of chess?
	SAS	60	Stephanie: So it was working, it did two things really, it helped build some friendships and some relationships and it also allowed those that needed help to talk through things
Exceeding expectations	SBF2	5	Janine: I was really impressed with how the process worked
	SBF2	175	Janine: You know it's really, I was very impressed with it, I really loved it.
	SAF1	160	Jane: No I mean I was quite pleased I was you know initially I was quite concerned because you don't know how these things would run, but they made it easy for me they were very nice and a good group of students and were very positive to help one another which I was really pleased to see
	SAF1	169	Jane: yeah it's been very good. It worked better than I thought you know when you see it you think 'oo how's it going to go?' but in the end no it went really well.
	SAF1	147	Jane: I was quite surprised by how good they were at coming up with things
	SAF2	7	Sarah: It has been even more of a success than I expected.
	SBF2	27	Janine: I was really impressed with the whole you know how quickly they became comfortable and learnt to trust one another and yeah it was just very impressive and something I was a bit blown away by actually, I wasn't expecting the impact to be so good, you know?
	SAS	63	Stephanie: The other thing about that was that we had two year groups together. And I did wonder if that would work or not, but it did
	SBS	12	Catherine: So we kind of went into it with

			not many expectations at all, but it's come out as an intervention that we are going to offer as part of our interventions, so it couldn't have been better from our perspective
	SBS	7	Catherine: its been absolutely brilliant, the feedback from the members of the staff that have been doing it has been so positive, erm but what we weren't expecting was the positive feedback from the students
Seeing progress	SBFG1	473	Lydia: I think with me I didn't progress as much because my problem has been a problem since primary school so I know I wouldn't progress that much but I've progressed a little bit and I know that's helped more than if I was just dealing with it on my own
	SBFG1	461	James: I think the target system like how we put the targets on the scale and stuff, I thought that was really good because that showed me what progress I've made and how I've adapted and how I've changed. Because right now I might not think that I've changed at all, but when you've got it right in front of you it shows you how much you've changed on the scale and how you felt about yourself and now I feel much better about myself
	SAFG1	443	Naomi: I think my thing didn't really change that much, it was kind of like yeah I did this thing, but it was kind of like, I liked the fact that you could like see that it was an 8 before and it had really changed
	SBFG2	285	Sophie: like before we started this group I was like full on not like scared of going into lessons where everyone would look at me
	SBFG2	383	Lissy: I would go see (facilitator) a lot before this
	SBFG2	414	Nayna: there was certain lessons that I had to like force myself to go into like every time it was just like don't go in there and now I can just go in fine and its great and I talk to people I didn't think I'd ever talk to
	SBFG2	420	Sophie: but I've never stayed, I've got double business on a Wednesday period 3 and 4 and I've never been able to stay for the 2 hours but I have been for the last 3 weeks because I feel like if I have something goes wrong I can, I've always got you guys to help me through it
	SBFG2	112	Sophie: I feel more comfortable around people and like I can just be myself
	SBFG2	392	Nayna: I'm proud of myself
	SBFG2	385	Sophie: like before we started this group I was like full on not like scared of going into lessons where everyone would look at me…

Code	Interview/ Focus group	Line number	Extract
			388 Sophie: and I'd be like oh my god but now I feel like I walk in and I feel like no no I'm good, I'm calm
	SBFG2	287	Sophie: It feels like a weight has been like lifted from my shoulders, I feel I know that if I've got a problem on a like on a Wednesday I'm just like right keep it on the low down talk about it on Friday
	SAFG1		Hayley: you're sharing a problem aren't you that really can't really be solved but you are giving solutions
	SAFG1	352	Anabelle: And then I started this group and I feel like just talking to more people about different things makes it a lot easier

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<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">Theme 2 - Outcomes
Subtheme 2: Internal Resources</td></tr>
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Code	Interview/ Focus group	Line number	Extract
Confidence	SBFG2	402	Lissy: I feel more confident in standing up for people rather than just for myself because I didn't feel confident with that anyway but now I do and I can stand up for other people as well if they get bullied a little bit
	SBFG2	252	Lissy: I think I'm a bit more self-confident in my self
	SBFG2	254	Sophie: I've learned I can be confident because I always think I'm not confident but then by thinking that every week when someone doesn't want to be the problem presenter I want to do it so I think oh wait I am confident in a way
	SBFG2	259	Lissy: in school I'm not but like with myself now I am a bit more confident
	SBFG2	271	Nayna: I've been talking a lot more about my problems, which has resulted in me being more confident in myself
	SBFG2	20	Lissy: it definitely builds your confidence
	SBFG2	109	Andrew: and I've got a bit more confidence in talking to other people most of the time
	SBF1	174	Dianne: that they have got more confidence now, to be able to share their problems with whoever.
	SBF1	178	Dianne: yeah having the confidence to ask for help should they need it and don't bottle it up
	SAF1	106	Jane: she could say to someone I've got this problem, she feels more confident in being able to do that now, because she's seen sharing isn't people then laughing at you or criticising you
Benefits for facilitators	SBS	48	Catherine: Well I think that they just feel now that they've been upskilled I guess

	SAF1	100	Jane: I think that will help me as well because working with the majority of them that you could just, we'll have more of an easier relationship because we've had that sort of shared those things
	SAF1	19	Jane: In class she's very you know one of those ones who looks as if she you know wouldn't be friends with people but inside she's obviously not like that at all so it was lovely to see different sides of people for me because I work with a lot of them so I've got something out of it to see that they are really nice students who suffer and can understand other people's problems which is great
	SAS	152	Stephanie: I think it's been good for their confidence and their self-esteem because the role of the TA is a strange one isn't it, and to actually be given that authority if you like to run that activity, I think that was good for them.
	SAS	154	Stephanie: I think it was good for them to work with different students than they're used to, erm and in a different environment. So I think, I think for them it was motivating, encouraging. You know I think they will have grown from it.
	SAS	150	Stephanie: Erm I think for the facilitators: an eye opener.
Building trust	SBFG2	8	Ryan: I trusted everyone else and I knew everyone else had it so like I just knew that I could do it as well and no one body would judge me
	SBFG2	172	Sophie: and I like trust all you guys because I know you're not in like in like the groups that I'm friends with so they're not going to talk about it outside
	SBFG1	259	Kyle: yeah trust, trusting people
	SBFG1	266	James: I'm talking about years and years, that I had I erm didn't trust anyone, I didn't feel like I could trust anyone cause I'd just be judged on that or it would be used against me, apart from maybe one, two people that I literally spoke to no one else about how I felt and so I never showed that and that's why if anyone ever saw me in the corridor I'd always be really happy and really smiley to make others feel happy but then really no one knew what was going on behind closed curtains, or behind closed doors even. But now I've got a place like people like this that I know that I can talk to because I feel like I can be more open about how I feel to other people and to other friends that I might not be as close with but I could be and it opens, it opens your perspective on things that all not all people

			are bad, not all people are horrible, that there are people like this that you can trust and that are going to be kind and considerate and so they almost give you faith when you didn't have any.
	SAFG1	340	Anabelle: I used to feel like I couldn't trust anyone, like I, I had a lot of problems with my dad when I was younger so I always felt like I couldn't trust many people unless I really needed them so being able to do this feels like I can trust people without knowing everything about them
	SAFG1	294	Kimberly: I think being able to trust everyone in the group and making sure that it stays in that room and it doesn't go anyone else
	SAFG1	296	Anabelle: I think I can trust all of you a lot more than I did
	SAFG1	17	Kimberly: trusting others like not new people like because I've spoke to them before but kind of talking to like different people and having to trust them is a big thing for me
Using own and other's advice	SAFG2	22	Leanne: that advice that someone has given you, you can then use it yourself
	SAFG2	24	Leanne: probably like all the things that people have said to help you in a way
	SAFG2	22	Leanne: that advice that someone has given you, you can then use it yourself
	SBF1	160	Dianne: they could have had the same sort of problem themselves and think oo well I'll just take that in and I'll be able to do that next time
	SBFG2	195	Lissy: I gave Nayna advice for something and then managed to fix it for myself cause I had the same problem
	SBFG2	593	Nayna: me and my dad didn't talk very much, and we still don't but erm we're now exchanging letters which was one of the solutions that I was given
	SBFG2	202	Sophie: I gave the advice to her and then I thought wait I could use that my own advice, like thinking hang on I need to use that as well
	SBFG2	519	Sophie: I know that how I've helped them and now I can help this other person as well
Learning/skills	SBS	17	Catherine: the students, they've come away feeling that actually they're able to problem solve, and that they're able to problem solve amongst themselves
	SBFG1	12	James: yeah because I've learnt a lot and I've learnt some stuff that I didn't know I was going to learn, like different skills that I didn't know I was going to acquire, like by helping other people I could also apply

			that to help myself within my own problems.
	SBFG1	233	Wayne: be more open to people
	SBFG1	251	Lydia: I feel like I can go to people now
	SBFG2	405	Sophie: and if someone now messages me and says like something I'll just now either ignore it or say look oh stop it
	SBFG2	524	Ryan: and you can help yourself, when you need it
	SAFG2	65	Leanne: you know you learn how to listen and you learn how to wait for them to finish talking about their problem and then you can try and help
	SAFG2	56	Bill: I can actually make friends

Theme 2 - Outcomes Subtheme 3: External Resources			
Code	**Interview/ focus Group**	**Line number**	**Extract**
Facilitator accessibility	SAF2	24	Sarah: I've also said you know where I am you know you can always come and find me and if you can't find me somebody will, you know I'm here for you, so I feel that was also very successful too.
	SBF2	160	Janine: They knew they had me to come to, you know so that helped I think a lot as well as far as them sharing, because they knew they had me to go to outside of the group so yeah, that's another reason why it worked I think as well
	SAF1	166	Jane: obviously I'll be able to keep up and see them around school and things
Bottling it up/sharing	SAFG1	418	Anabelle: I felt like I didn't really give much detail I just kept going on about the same thing and I felt like it would have been better if we knew each other more than just sort of you know each other's names now you're going to give everyone tell everyone your problems, I felt kind of uncomfortable in a sense.
	SBFG1	209	Wayne: because it can be really hard and really difficult to talk to people
	SBFG1	205	Wayne: yeah you realise how sort of how much you keep to yourself
	SBFG1	204	Lydia: I didn't realise I was so closed off
	SBFG1	37	James: I know for me sometimes I can bottle up what's going on whereas now I know that there are other people that are in the same boat that I know I can trust
	SBFG2	356	Lissy: cause there's no other way I really let it out I always keep it to myself
	SBFG2	359	Sophie: I bottle everything up, but with this I feel like I can let everything go
	SBFG2	165	Lissy: no because it's easier to get rid of your problems if you just talk to people

	SBFG2	599	Nayna: I used to bottle everything up and just break down and I haven't done that in months
	SAFG1	349	Anabelle: I'd either keep things bottled up and not tell anyone or I'd only tell like half of the story I wouldn't tell the complete thing, because I didn't feel like they needed to worry about me, like I wasn't that important to them they don't need all my problems on top of theirs. And then I started this group and I feel like just talking to more people about different things makes it a lot easier
Benefits for facilitators	SBS	48	Catherine: Well I think that they just feel now that they've been upskilled I guess
	SAF1	100	Jane: I think that will help me as well because working with the majority of them that you could just, we'll have more of an easier relationship because we've had that sort of shared those things
	SAF1	19	Jane: In class she's very you know one of those ones who looks as if she you know wouldn't be friends with people but inside she's obviously not like that at all so it was lovely to see different sides of people for me because I work with a lot of them so I've got something out of it to see that they are really nice students who suffer and can understand other people's problems which is great
	SAS	152	Stephanie: I think it's been good for their confidence and their self-esteem because the role of the TA is a strange one isn't it, and to actually be given that authority if you like to run that activity, I think that was good for them.
	SAS	154	Stephanie: I think it was good for them to work with different students than they're used to, erm and in a different environment. So I think, I think for them it was motivating, encouraging. You know I think they will have grown from it.
	SAS	150	Stephanie: Erm I think for the facilitators: an eye opener.
Different perspectives	SAFG1	9	Naomi: it was interesting to see how other people's lives were different, how much they kept in without showing
	SAFG1	37	Anabelle: having people be able to give you advice from like different perspectives instead of just like one person.
	SBFG2		Lissy: you can get a better understanding of like a different group of people
	SBFG1	132	Lydia: I think it helps getting different points from different people, like different views on the situation and different solutions to it

	SBFG1	156	James: I just think that the fact that all of us were again the fact that all of us were so different I thought that was also really good
	SBFG1	102	James: yeah the fact that we've all had a lot of experience in different areas. Like because I'm older I might have had more experience with stuff and I've got a lot of past experience and therefore I can relate more
Relatedness/und erstanding	SBFG2	187	Ryan: and just like not knowing people like you, you could find out anything about them that you've got in common, just start a great conversation
	SBFG2	40	Lissy: we usually share something that was relatable in a way
	SBFG1	340	James: yeah oh yeah we used past experiences to help them because yeah we thought that because we've had similar experiences
	SBFG1	66	Wayne: for example I was talking about relative stuff today and I found it really easy to talk to people because after they'd revealed that they'd been through stuff like this it was easy to open up
	SBFG1	118	James: these guys really helped me understand what it's like because they've also had friends who have done similar things to my friend and they've had other friends that they're friends with that are in the same boat as me, and so because they all understand is we're all sort of we're all dealing with the same situations in different ways
	SBFG1	20	James: it show you that like you're not alone cause some people in this group in particular may feel like they're a bit isolated and that no one will understand what they mean but by opening up how you feel and what the problems you had and how other people can help you overcome them I think that it's really really important for people to understand that we are alike because we do know what it can feel like, and we are quite empathetic in that aspect, which I think is really important.
	SBFG1	16	James: everyone has their own problems but they're fairly similar, and we all have, were all more alike than we thought we were
	SBFG1	80	Lydia: it's kind of shown me that we have more in common than we thought in a way
	SBFG1	87	Lydia: I wouldn't have thought we would get along because we have got so much different personalities and I thought we would kind of like
	SBFG1	85	James: but we are we're all so different as people but we've come together in a way

			that I didn't think would ever come across, like I've never come across that.
	SBFG1	82	James: even though we might be very different we are very similar
	SAFG2	15	Leanne: gives you understood each other's problems and what everyone else was going through, you might have similar problem to relate to
	SAFG1	25	Naomi: I think you normally like you know that like some people are sharing the same situations as you and you like some of the time you still feel alone, but then when you hear like what other people are going through then you feel like oh I can relate to that
	SAFG1	31	Naomi: it made me feel I'm not, I'm not the only one. Like other people get it.
	SBF2	144	Janine: it's also shown them that I think often they feel quite isolated when they have a problem and they think 'I don't know who to talk to, I don't think anyone else has got this problem or had this problem', I think its shown them that actually people do have similar problems, people do understand when you have a problem
	SBF2	147	Janine: often a student would present a problem, and then the others would be like well that happened to me and I had that and this is what I did, and honestly you could see it on their, almost like a wow you know I'm not the only person going through this, and that's got to have a massive impact hasn't it?
	SAF1	27	Jane: I think sometimes talking when they realised that others had a very similar problem and they probably didn't know that, I didn't know all or some of the things they came out with so perhaps they all think it's just them got it so they don't share.
Noticing change in others	SBFG2	410	Lissy: yeah she's talking to a lot of people now in lessons
	SBFG2	390	Lissy: I'm so proud of you
	SBFG2	411	Ryan: you do seem more confident
	SBFG2	408	Nayna: I think I erm have been subconsciously applying these things anyway because like Lissy said that she's noticed that I've been better
More people to talk to – building relationships	SBF1	29	Dianne: and I think that's what happened with our little six, they got to know other people who they perhaps wouldn't see in the day to day workings of the school
	SAS	66	Stephanie: And I think that's also positive, because it helps them to see children in different year groups a little bit differently

	SAS	60	Stephanie: it helped build some friendships and some relationships and it also allowed those that needed help to talk through things.
	SBF2	146	Janine: Er I think its encouraged them to know that they there are people they can talk to in school, and it's also shown them that I think often they feel quite isolated when they have a problem and they think 'I don't know who to talk to, I don't think anyone else has got this problem or had this problem', I
	SBF2	8	Janine: And how how, very quickly the students settled into that sort of group dynamic and found sort of that they were comfortable and started to open up
	SAFG2	10	Jasmine: get help a lot because you can speak about your problems and ask for help
	SBFG1	26	Lydia: it gave us an option to like know that we can go to more than just teachers to talk about it, we can go to like different people in the school
	SBFG1	28	Kyle: yeah, you don't have to just go to teachers you can go to people in this group, like you can always trust
	SBFG1	256	Kyle: I like how I can just go to people and share my problem and then there not going to go round the school saying oh this happened
	SBFG2	97	Ryan: I know everyone here now, and I can talk to everyone
	SBFG2	290	Sophie: and then we'll sort it, yeah and I knew I had people there to help me
	SBFG2	167	Ryan: I've found it easier than actually talking to a teacher about my problems because you know there's other people around and you know if somebody judges you, which they won't, even if someone does judge you there is other people around that won't, obviously nobody's going to do that though of course
	SAFG1	12	Isla: I think it was really weightlifting to know that you can share and that others are going to be there to listen and you can also get to know the other people in the group
	SAFG1	34	Anabelle: I think it was quite hard for me because it felt like I couldn't talk to more people because usually I just talk to this one person and it's kind of nice to talk to someone else about problems and know that they are truly understand what I'm going through
	SAFG1	297	Anabelle: it's been a lot more helpful that I can talk to other people as well instead of like the same person
Support out of	SAFG2	177	Leanne: I never used to talk to Bill before,

the group			at all, but now I can make sure he's alright and that
	SAFG2	180	Leanne: so I'm always like making sure he's ok if I see him out or anything
	SAFG2	181	Bill: and even if she's with her friends she tells them to leave me alone
	SAFG2	137	Bill: and when we saw each other out of the group, we would check to see if everything was ok
	SBFG2	403	Lissy: I can stand up for other people as well if they get bullied a little bit
	SBFG2	122	Sophie: well so like if I see one of them getting like bullied I'll go over
	SBFG2	126	Sophie: cause I know like in this I know they've told me stuff that they struggle with and maybe then I'll be like no stop you don't know the whole story
	SBF1	166	Dianne: Sophie was very good in offering her support should they need her at break times and lunch times
	SBF1	169	Dianne: the offers were to support provide support for each other
	SAF1	87	Jane: he had a particular problem and one of the other group members saw him outside of school and said 'oh I saw him but I went up spoke to him, checked he was ok', and I thought that was such a positive thing, that even outside of school that they're now saying 'hello are you ok?'
	SAF1	93	Jane: Yeah, some of the solutions were maybe just making sure that that person's ok. Because they understood that maybe that day, they'd had a problem in the morning that may have affected their school day.
Talking to parents	SBFG2	275	Sophie: I've also been able to talk to parents about it as well
	SBFG2	277	Sophie: I would never be able to talk to my parents about it before this but now I can
	SBFG2	279	Nayna: me neither before this but now I talk to my mum which is great
	SAFG1	361	Anabelle: I feel like I can talk to family members about likes things as well because I never really told my family much about what was going on like if they asked how it's gone I'd just say fine even if I was having a really bad day just because I didn't want them all worrying about me but now I feel like if something does go wrong I know I can talk to them because I know that they'll be there for me
Using own and other's advice	SAFG2	24	Leanne: probably like all the things that people have said to help you in a way

	SAFG2	22	Leanne: that advice that someone has given you, you can then use it yourself
	SBF1	160	Dianne: they could have had the same sort of problem themselves and think oo well I'll just take that in and I'll be able to do that next time
	SBFG2	195	Lissy: I gave Nayna advice for something and then managed to fix it for myself cause I had the same problem
	SBFG2	593	Nayna: me and my dad didn't talk very much, and we still don't but erm we're now exchanging letters which was one of the solutions that I was given
	SBFG2	202	Sophie: I gave the advice to her and then I thought wait I could use that my own advice, like thinking hang on I need to use that as well
	SBFG2	519	Sophie: I know that how I've helped them and now I can help this other person as well

Theme 3 - The Future Subtheme 1: Considerations and Ideas			
Code	**Interview/ focus group**	**Line number**	**Extract**
Questionnaires/ evaluation	SBFG2	536	Ryan: I find the reading of the questions I find really hard. I think like the question like sometimes the answer didn't make sense it was like never, you know like rarely, sometimes often and then mostly always, but some of the questions for that it didn't make sense
	SBFG2	540	Lissy: I wanted to write a sentence for some of them
	SBFG2	547	Lissy: Some of them didn't make sense as an answer anyway, it's like you've got to answer that in a sentence to describe what happened
	SBFG2	549	Sophie: it depends on the situations
	SBFG2	551	Nayna: there were a couple of questions and then the answers that you had just didn't make sense for it, like if they used different words it would be fine
	SBFG2	558	Andrew: I kind of found it to be a bit confusing but erm for all the questions that were situational I just put down sometimes because sometimes you're in that situation and sometimes you're not
	SBFG1	470	Kyle: it was quite easy
	SBFG1	472	James: yeah that's the other thing it was easy for everyone to do
Number of sessions	SBFG1	409	James: if we could have more, just more sessions in general so many instead of six weeks maybe 12
	SBFG1	402	Wayne: if we could have something like a erm like a I dunno a sort of semi session, so

			in between two sessions we could come together
	SBFG1	399	Joshua: it should be six weeks two times a week or just ten weeks one time a week
	SBFG1	401	Joshua: there should have been ten or twelve sessions
	SAFG1	208	Hayley: I think we just did it for six sessions and then you just two extra sessions if someone's like if something has happened or I don't know you want to change how you did something
	SAFG1	202	Anabelle: so like every couple of weeks, like do the six sessions that we did and then maybe a couple of weeks later we do another six sessions, and then if need be another one like a couple of weeks later so it's sort of like constant
	SAFG1	93	Kimberly: I think we should have session seven sessions, so like the first session actually like explaining to us in detail what we were doing kind of and then like the rest of the 6 sessions just like doing what we did
Flexibility in structure	SBFG2	174	Janine: I think it a brilliant tool, I think it's a universal thing isn't it you can use it wherever, yeah I think it's adaptable isn't it?
	SBFG2	70	Janine: they were making a valid point or a suggestion I let it go on and then yeah and so that they could yeah, so there was a bit of flexibility, yeah
	SBF1	44	Dianne: and then they would just chat about things in general, all to do with school and perhaps problems they were having in school. But not in the formal way of the six minute sessions
	SBF1	79	Dianne: we did the structure, and then perhaps when we got to the end of it and we couldn't do anything more with that, we thought ok fine well close that book well just have a general chat about things
	SBF1	192	Dianne: I think there is you can move the goalposts you, yeah you know more flexible yeah
	SBFG2	490	Lissy: I think it all needs to be varied on how long it needs to take
	SBFG1	361	Wayne: I feel like you should have an option where you can decide how much time there can be
Follow up/dissemination	SAS	121	Stephanie: Definitely going to continue with it. And as I say, keep the two ladies doing it at the moment, eventually introduce more people into it so they can step in if need be.
	SAS	113	Stephanie: Were also going to get them to do some erm cascading, if we use that word anymore, to the other TAs just to that they

			know what we've been doing and then probably in time get somebody else to come along on board with it
	SAS	131	Stephanie: it would be really good potentially to measure the impact again in a period of time. Erm, I guess it would be good to hold some follow up meetings with them, but I haven't necessarily thought about doing that
Suggestions of changes for future use	SBS	61	Catherine:I can see that we can use it in many different capacities actually. And the other thing that we want to try to use it as is amongst the staff as well
	SBS	55	Catherine: it might be quite good for our younger cohort with our year 7 pupils
	SBS	34	Catherine: potentially even with the year 10s in the run up to their mocks, identify those students that we know have difficulty motivating themselves and settling down to revision
	SBS	38	Catherine: perhaps do it erm as a longer intervention
	SBS	68	Catherine: what would be really helpful is maybe to have a session, maybe with yourself to lead a session around a student that we've got an issue with. Because I think that despite me saying how we've got to do it, I think for an initial session it would be useful to have someone external from the school to lead it
	SBFG2	158	Nayna: every like two weeks or something
	SBFG2	373	Nayna: but maybe even like a little session after school like half an hour after school, on like a Monday or a Wednesday
	SBFG1	432	Wayne: if this was open to if this was open to like everyone in the school, and if they could like I don't know if they could have a little invitation little ticket or something they'd write down if they wanted to do it and when and then they could hand it to some sort of office and then they'd set it up and then they could come in and talk about it and it'd feel comfortable
	SBFG1	440	James: so to start off with I think I will facilitate it but when people get use to the system then get used to how it works then I'll teach and I can teach other people the other anti-bullying ambassador to do it as well
	SBFG1		James: and then they can use it and they can use it in different groups if I'm not there then they can use it and I think that's also very important as well
	SAS	171	Stephanie: I think it might be a good idea to try and do it again, whether we do it in the same format or whether its they get together and a one off meeting sort of trouble

			shooting if you like, just catching up
	SAS	141	Stephanie: I mean it might be that it wouldn't be over 6 weeks
	SBF1	88	Dianne …perhaps you could meet up yourselves you know once a month or something it's entirely up to you
	SBF1	255	Dianne: I think one a week at the moment, because of capacity of time and of obviously the students missing lessons and things like that because there's lots going on but erm if you know it's going to be good for them, I think it could work once a week.
	SBF2	172	Janine: I think it could be used for anybody I don't think just for students I think it's something you could use in a team
	SBF2	167	Janine: Well we have anti bullying ambassadors and erm James is one of them, and he's very keen to take it and use it in a safe room or something, where they can look at doing that in the school where kids can go and they can talk to ambassadors and actually use the solution circles to talk about things like that
	SAFG1	154	Hayley: yeah, you could have like a starter, a starter session
	SAFG1	320	Nadia: I think maybe they should have added like you share it and then there's like a question kind of thing like is there any more detail to be able to give to give advice that would help because once you've given your problem and then you people have given advice then you're like oh I didn't explain this this now this advice is not helpful to me because of this
	SAS	122	Stephanie: Work more closely probably with houses, so that when we start to identify who goes into that group, we have perhaps a stronger, a stronger understanding of why they might be the most appropriate.
Time in school year	SAS	190	Stephanie: just not when it hits our heavy time so or in the school not when they're doing mocks and not when they're doing their GCSES but other than that, it's always busy and we have exams in year 10, so I think it's just about looking at the timetable
	SAF1	113	Jane: It's a shame that we picked a difficult time of year, but then we would have always had a problem I think
	SAS	193	Stephanie: the one off days, not so much, not so much of a worry really I think you could do that at any point in the year.
	SAFG1	482	Hayley: because then when they give us these little task things then your like oh I have to do this and I also have to do this so I can get a good grade

	SAFG1	484	Naomi: I was almost picking between oh wait I've got to this but I also have to revise and I need to do that in my room
	SAFG1	499	Hayley: but then if you do the group you might relieve yourself a little bit of all that tension
	SAFG1	478	Hayley: but maybe where it's not near any major exams
	SAFG1	507	Isla: there were things going on that made her really stressed during the mocks so maybe if she could have been able to share it, even if it's just sharing it and getting it off her chest, you still feel better, so even if its during exams, it can still help you
Time of day	SBFG2	495	Ryan: I think it being in the morning was ok as if it was in the afternoon I would probably be asleep by now
	SBFG2	502	Nayna: although I feel like everything happens at break
	SBFG2	499	Lissy: but to be fair more happens during the day
	SAS	135	Stephanie: We've tried to run interventions at break, lunch time, end of school start of the day, and they are not as well attended.
Day of week	SBFG2	492	Nayna: on the Friday and then having the three days being the Monday immediately after is a bit difficult
	SBFG2	212	Sophie: we should have done it on Monday so we can get it done during the week so maybe have one on Monday and then another one on the Friday so then we can talk about it on Monday and then catch up on Friday to see if we've done it
	SBFG2	218	Ryan: I kind of found it kind of like nice cause you know and then even if I did get the advice or whatever you know I wouldn't have to worry about it for the whole weekend, and it would make it so, say I was worrying about it and then I wouldn't have to and it would make my weekend even better and then I would come back to school and then sort it out or whatever
Food	SBFG2	446	Sophie: biscuits
	SBFG2	448	Ryan: biscuits, we need biscuits
	SBFG2	452	Nayna: snacks yeah, obvs, snacks makes everything better
	SBFG1	279	James: oo. I wish we had cake every week
	SBFG1	281	Wayne: not enough cake, definitely
Attendance	SAS	106	Stephanie: the 7 and 8s didn't turn up so frequently. I don't know why, I really don't know why, they were on board, their parents were on board.
	SAF1	152	Jane: I think obviously in hindsight perhaps choose students who were here more or whatever that might have been more helpful

Missing lessons	SAS	137	Stephanie: The school itself doesn't like children coming out of lessons, particularly 9 and 10
	SAS	43	Stephanie: Initially concerned it was going to hit every lesson, so what we had done was we'd tried to move it around so it wasn't hitting the same lesson every week and I think that's quite important that you're quite flexible
	SAS	46	Stephanie: to have it on the same time, same day is good for the children but it's not good for the teachers and for their learning, so we moved it around.
	SAF1	118	Jane: It's difficult isn't it because obviously taking them out of school lesson times is not something we can do easily
	SAF1	122	Jane: it would be difficult to do it you have to as I say you certainly couldn't take them out of lessons to do it but maybe if a group could meet at a lunchtime or something
	SBFG2	325	Andrew: there was one thing I did want to say quickly, this was going over an English lesson, er which would mean that I'm missing out on a core subject
	SBFG2	328	Molly: yeah I'm missing geography as well..
	SBFG2	491	Molly: or lessons we're missing
Communication for timings	SAFG1	137	Naomi: the first session was quite stressful because we started late because none of us knew about it so we all started late and then it was like going through everything we had to cram it in quite quickly
	SAFG1	142	Hayley: I think some people got mixed up with when to come, we were told it was period 3
	SAFG1	143	Isla: we mixed up with like the year 9s or something
	SAS	19	Stephanie: getting students to one place at the right time is always a challenge for anybody at any time.
	SAS	38	Stephanie: it's a case of doing it from all angles you know. So the timetable that they got, or the letter right at the start, the daily reminder and then fi they don't turn up actually fetching them does work, it's just about using all of those resources available to you.
Parental engagement	SBS	99	Catherine: I wonder whether we need to do, would need to do more work around just around how we frame the initial letter, erm to make it, I just wondered if it looked so official that it may have put some people off
	SBS	105	Catherine: I think perhaps just initial contact even with parents through the telephone and talking it through may have

Code	Interview/ Focus group	Line number	Extract
	SBS	92	Catherine: I was surprised as the resistance of some of the parents for their children to join, and in fact we probably had 4 parents who didn't give permission for it.
	SBS	96	Catherine: I think two of them were concerned that there was ed psych involvement and maybe it made it seem more official or that their child had got a problem

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">Theme 3 - The Future
Subtheme 2: Motivation</td></tr>
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Code	Interview/ Focus group	Line number	Extract
Motivation to continue	SAFG1	474	Kimberly: can we do it again?
	SAS	111	Stephanie: And both feel quite confident I think, to go forward with it
	SAF1	165	Jane: I think they would have carried on
	SBS	9	Catherine: the students themselves have asked us, if we can carry on doing it with them
	SBFG1	238	James: we want to create a safe space where people that do feel excluded and they do have a lot of problems that they hold back, that they can go to this space where they can talk about it and they can chill out and you know feel accepted and a part of something
	SBFG1	243	James: because they've all got very similar situations a bit like us, that we can it will really help them and if it helped us then why can't it help other people
	SAFG1	50	Kimberly: I think it would be helpful to do something like this again
	SBFG2	161	Lissy: yeah exactly how it is would be great
	SAS	164	Catherine: I think they would have continued, if we'd of said well lets have another six weeks, they would have done and that's testament really to how they felt about it
	SBS	64	Catherine: I think we can we just see the benefit of it as a technique full stop
	SBS	49	Catherine: I think they've [facilitators] been very positive about it and would want to carry it on
	SBFG2	312	Lissy: I think it should carry on like this
	SBFG2	150	Sophie: yeah cause I mean like at the beginning we were all like who are these people but now I'm feeling more comfortable so I feel like I want to keep it going now
Opportunities to	SAFG1	376	Isla: I still do wish I could have said other

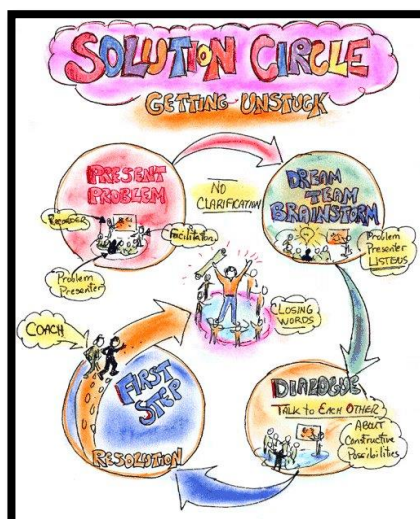| share again			things as well.
	SAFG1	81	Hayley: yeah so I was like I thought like the next day oh this is what we're doing so I was like I want to talk about that but then I couldn't because I had my go. Oh well
	SAFG1	195	Anabelle: although like we've shared like a big problem there may still be things that we need to talk about so it might have been a bit helpful if we had another chance to do it
	SBFG1	393	Kyle: --I wish we had more, more chances to do this
	SBFG1	406	James: everyone has more than one problem they want to share
	SBFG1	410	Lydia: and then you can share more than one problem
	SBFG1	422	James: if we'd had more, more opportunities to like present a problem I think it would have been more helpful
Concerns about stopping	SBFG2	341	Ryan: we need, we need, I neeeeed it
	SBFG2	353	Sophie: like if we wait two weeks and then we come back everyone will be exploding
	SBFG2	356	Lissy: cause there's no other way I really let it out I always keep it to myself, like I barely even told her, I keep it all in
	SBFG2	377	Sophie: I'd feel so much more confident like if this kept going
	SBFG2	381	Sophie: I'm gonna slip back to not wanting to be in certain lessons, being with (facilitator) all the time, but since we've started this I've hardly missed anything.
	SBFG2	292	Lissy: it's a bit worrying now it's going to stop to be honest
	SBFG2	302	Nayna: this needs to carry on
	SBFG2	313	Sophie: because you guys are gonna get stressed because you're year 10, we're gonna get stressed cause of exams, we're gonna need each other there
Exceeding expectations	SAF1	160	Jane: No I mean I was quite pleased I was you know initially I was quite concerned because you don't know how these things would run, but they made it easy for me they were very nice and a good group of students and were very positive to help one another which I was really pleased to see
	SAF1	169	Jane: yeah it's been very good. It worked better than I thought you know when you see it you think 'oo how's it going to go?' but in the end no it went really well.
	SAF1	147	Jane: I was quite surprised by how good they were at coming up with things
	SAF2	7	Sarah: It has been even more of a success than I expected.

	SBF2	27	Janine: I was really impressed with the whole you know how quickly they became comfortable and learnt to trust one another and yeah it was just very impressive and something I was a bit blown away by actually, I wasn't expecting the impact to be so good, you know?
	SAS	63	Stephanie: The other thing about that was that we had two year groups together. And I did wonder if that would work or not, but it did
	SBS	7	Catherine: its been absolutely brilliant, the feedback from the members of the staff that have been doing it has been so positive, erm but what we weren't expecting was the positive feedback from the students
	SBS	12	Catherine: So we kind of went into it with not many expectations at all, but it's come out as an intervention that we are going to offer as part of our interventions, so it couldn't have been better from our perspective

Appendix 34 – Solution Circle 'Top Tip' Leaflet for Schools

Setting Up a Solution Circles Group With Pupils – Top Tips For Schools

Tip 1 – Staffing

Ensure that staff members that are selected to facilitate the groups are available, willing and feel confident to take on the role.

Tip 2 – Communication

Promote clear lines of communication amongst all school staff about the purpose and potential benefits of Solution Circles to ensure that everyone is on board. Additionally, ensure teachers are aware of when their pupils will be attending the groups so they are able to plan accordingly.

Tip 5 – Supporting a Whole School Ethos

Fostering a shared understanding of the importance of prioritising pupils' wellbeing in order for them to be able to succeed in their learning can help promote positive outcomes.

Tip 3 – Parental Engagement

It is important that parents are clear about why their child has been invited to attend the Solution Circle group, and what it will involve. Schools could host coffee mornings for parents to share information, or offer follow up phone calls after consent forms are sent home.

Tip 4 – Group Dynamics

Solution Circles allow pupils the opportunity to share personal and potentially sensitive information with their peers, and therefore careful consideration of the group dynamics when planning the Solution Circle groups is important. Consider the age, personalities and needs of the pupils and how they may function together as a group.