

**THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD  
PSYCHOLOGY**

**RESEARCH THESIS**

***Secondary School Exclusions: Young people's experiences  
of support***

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explored the interventions that are offered to secondary school students who have experienced a series of fixed term and/or permanent exclusion in a county in England. The study employed a mixed methods design using a systems framework. Interventions that were recommended by educational psychologists in the county and those reported by secondary schools and pupil referral units were analysed and compared to the experiences of young people who had been excluded. Data was gathered via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The perspectives of the young people provide an insight into their experiences of support before and after their exclusion from secondary school. In particular, they reported considerable difficulty coping with a number of challenges associated with adolescence, transition, relationships with peers and teachers as well as issues around family and the design of interventions that appeared to punish rather than support them. Later experiences of acceptance, positive regard and a flexible approach with personalised measures had made a considerable impact in supporting their reintegration. Implications for EP practice are discussed along with the opportunities that this study may have provided for further research on this issue.

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ADHD	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
BMT	Behaviour management techniques
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DFL	Discipline for Learning
EHWB	Emotional health and well-being
END	The Extended New Directions
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPiT	Educational Psychologist in Training
IR	Inclusion Room
MAS	The Merit Award System
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RADIO	Research and Development in Organisations
SEB	Social, emotional and behavioural
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SFBT	Solution-focussed Brief Therapy
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
TAF	Team Around the Family
TaMHS	Targeted Mental Health Service
UK	United Kingdom

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this research is young people's experiences of the support they receive before and after being excluded from secondary schools in a shire county of England. This focus is exploratory in nature, attempting to draw attention to the interventions that are being accessed by a group of vulnerable young people. The ultimate aim is an ambitious one, to contribute to the reduction in exclusions. The theoretical perspective guiding this research is that in order to make this impact, interventions must involve all the systems that influence the development of the young person. These would therefore include the young person who is the first arbiter of his/her needs but would also involve the school, the family as well as the community.

The study therefore embraces a systemic model of enquiry (Rendall and Stuart, 2005), the theoretical bases of which is described in the literature review. Exclusions are highest at the secondary level though national reports suggest that primary school exclusions are on the rise. Permanent exclusions from secondary schools in this English county accounted for 5% of the national total, according to the 2010/2011 Department of education statistics. The county also contributed almost 6, 000 to the national figure of 271,980 fixed term exclusions for the same period (Department for Education (DfE), 2012).

The study adopts a mixed methodology with the emphasis on the perspective of six young people. In targeting the views of the young people who have been excluded, the study draws attention to those interventions that they consider to have been most helpful or unhelpful in supporting their readiness to be reintegrated into mainstream school.

### **1.1 Research Terminology**

In England, an 'exclusion' means that a pupil is not allowed to attend school or go on to premises of the named school for a period of time or permanently. Section 51A (1) of the Education Act 2002 states: 'The head teacher of a maintained school in England may exclude a pupil from the school for a fixed period or permanently'. Section 51A (2) gives that power also to the teacher in charge of a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

A ‘fixed term exclusion (FT)’ refers to exclusion for a fixed period – from half day to several days. A ‘permanent exclusion (PE)’ refers to the permanent or indefinite removal of the student from a particular school. Reports from exclusion managers in the Local Authority, are that reintegration into the mainstream is quite unlikely for a young person excluded beyond Key Stage 3. The research is therefore focussed on young people who are in Key Stage 3 at the time of exclusion.

In looking at the support accessed by secondary school students, the research sought to identify those approaches, strategies, programmes or therapies that are used as interventions to support those young people who have received multiple fixed term or permanent exclusions. In the research, these are referred to simply as ‘interventions’.

‘Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)’ – These refer to the range of difficulties that young people experience that usually affect their engagement and interaction with others including those at school. These difficulties often result in negative outcomes for the young people as they also affect their access to and engagement in learning opportunities (Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012). In relation to exclusion, the SEBD targeted are those that result in overt behaviours that negatively impact on others e.g. abusive/threatening language and violence. The research, at times, makes reference to ‘behaviour difficulties’ that put the young people at risk of, or that may result in, being excluded from school. This term is used frequently in the literature, and has been adopted by this researcher, to denote those “overt behaviours” in SEBD.

‘Reintegration (R)’ – The term is used here to refer to the return of the young person to the school after a series of fixed term exclusions or after having been permanently excluded from another school. The term also infers an acceptance of the student who is now able to gain full access to the curriculum.

## **1.2 Background and purpose**

In taking a meta perspective of my own view of exclusion, I recognise the passion with which I approach this subject. I acknowledge this in order to move forward with the objectivity that is demanded in scientific enquiry. However, my view of exclusion is not without foundation

and several researchers have drawn attention to the social consequences of large numbers (though a minority in the student population) of young people that are permanently excluded from schools in England. Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin (2000) refer to the risk of 'social exclusion' that these young people face. They warn of the creation of "ghettos of unemployed, unemployable, unqualified, socially excluded" (p.119) youth that will pose a threat to themselves, future generations and social stability.

My interest in young people who are excluded began in my role as a professional working with secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago. In this position, I was often expected, as if with the wave of a magic wand, to solve the problems being experienced by teachers and the school struggling with the challenging behaviour of students. In the schools' expression of concern, the focus was always on the young person and my need to make him/her better. The threat was that if this was not done he/she would be 'suspended' (fixed term exclusion) or 'expelled' (permanent exclusion) from school. Very often those young people were excluded before an intervention could be concluded as is often the case in British schools (Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin, 2000; Rendall and Stuart, 2005).

It is understandable that there remains significant conflict on issues surrounding exclusion in schools across the UK and possibly in many countries of the western world. The focus on academic excellence (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1997; Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), 2001) and 'zero tolerance' for behaviour considered outside the bounds of normal behaviour that is expressed in education policies, inform head teachers and governing bodies. This leaves many caught within a vice in which exclusion appears very often to be the only viable option (Rendall and Stuart, 2005). This seems often to be in contradiction to educational reform calling for inclusion (Circular 10/99 – DfEE, 1999) of all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background (Ofsted, 2000). Closing this gap is therefore an imperative for equal opportunities for all.

While UK legislation (e.g. Education Acts, 2002; 2011) has made provisions for the exclusion of pupils by the head of school, exclusion is identified as a measure of last resort after all attempts to solve the problem behaviour have been utilised. It is recognised that exclusion of pupils could have negative long term effects on the young person who is excluded with serious long-term implications for the society on a whole (e.g. Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin, 2000).

This research is intended to contribute to the demand for more effective work and collaboration by different services supporting young people and their families. Its ultimate aim is therefore the improvement of services targeting some of the most vulnerable young people whose needs must be met in order to increase their chances of more positive outcomes, at both the level of the school and wider social context. At this initial stage, three important questions were addressed in order to decide on the approach that was adopted in this study. They included: what is my understanding of the difficulties experienced by young people experiencing difficulties at school? Who are the young people most likely to be excluded? And what reasons are usually given for their exclusion?

### **1.3 Statistical data and at risk groups**

The total of more than 6,000 students excluded from secondary schools in the county in 2011/2012 amounted to approximately 6% of the school population. Statistics revealed that permanent exclusions had increased from 0.14% in 2010/2011 to 0.15 % of the school population in 2011/2012. Fixed term exclusion, often a precursor of permanent exclusions, had fluctuated between 10.57% to 12.04% of the school population between 2009/2010 and 2011/2012 (DfE, 2013).

The following groups have been identified as more at risk in the national statistics for the 2011/2012 academic year (DfE, 2013):

1. Boys are around three times more likely to receive a permanent or fixed period exclusion than girls (similar to the previous year).
2. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) are around eight times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those pupils with no SEN – in the previous year they were nine times more likely.
3. Pupils eligible for free school meals are four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those not eligible. The fixed period exclusion rate for pupils eligible for free school meals is around three times higher than the rate for those not eligible.
4. Ethnic minorities - e.g. Pupils of ‘Gypsy/Roma’ and ‘Traveller of Irish Heritage’ - have the highest rates of permanent exclusion.

The DfE statistics give several reasons for the exclusion of these young people from their school. According to these statistics for the last three years, persistent disruptive behaviour is the reason most frequently given for both fixed term and permanent exclusion of pupils. Second is verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult. Table 2 below presents the statistics of the major reasons given for the permanent exclusion of students compared with the national average. (See Appendix 1.4 for details in the DfE Statistical Reports, 2012)

Table 1: Six major reasons given for Permanent Exclusion in comparison to national average in 2011/2012 (DfE, 2013)

Reason Given	National Average	Percentage of National Average
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour (PDB)	1460	43 (3%)
Physical Assault of pupil	730	28 (4 %)
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour to adult	410	13 (3%)
Drug & Alcohol related	330	16 (5%)
Physical Assault of adult	320	0%
Other reasons	700	25 (4%)

## 1.4 Exploring the Issues

Young people exhibiting the types of behaviours outlined may not often attract the attention they need. The factors that contribute to the decision to exclude may be the very ones that are supposed to provide the best educational environment. Meeting the demand for best performance can act as a deterrent to keeping young people with challenging behaviours in school. According to Ofsted inspection data, the majority of schools have Good or Outstanding levels of behaviour. In December 2011, 92.3% of all schools in England were judged Good or Outstanding for standards of behaviour. A further 7.5% were judged Satisfactory and less than one per cent (0.3%) were judged Inadequate (Ofsted, 2012).



A number of initiatives led by the county in which the research was conducted have focused on the needs of vulnerable young people and communities. However, no empirical research studies on exclusions have been published. There have also been many projects and formulations of plans and programmes to address the needs of students with a wide range of difficulties including those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that often lead to exclusion from school. What is uncertain, however, is the extent to which these have resulted in tangible approaches being used and recommended by professionals such as educational psychologists and adopted by schools for use with young persons at risk of exclusion being excluded from school.

Legislative provisions like the panel of governors ensure the right of parents and the young people themselves to appeal the decision to exclude, as well as to ensure that there is access to education during exclusion. In addition, most areas provide a variety of services e.g. Special Teaching Service, Educational Psychology Service, CAMHS and Social Care to assist schools in providing support for a young person experiencing difficulties.

It needs to be recognised that most of the research on what works for children and adolescents who are excluded is not generalisable, as the research often does not use randomised trials. Of equal relevance is the reality that young people, who are excluded, in spite of their inherent commonalities, including the range of disruptive behaviours and conduct disorders, are not one group. An intervention that works for one child will not necessarily work for another – the same interventions cannot be systematically applied to all cases. Identifying the areas of need being experienced by vulnerable young people appears to be an important step towards solving the problem of exclusion.

#### **1.4.1 Developmental Issues**

My experience of working with young people, aged 11 to 19 years, especially those facing the threat of exclusion, has led me to an interest in addressing the apparent difficulty that a number of them experience in adjusting to school. These young people tend to share particular developmental features that put them at risk and make them feel they do not belong in the school (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2002).

## **Adolescence**

The young people who are the main focus of this research are between the ages 11 to 15, in the period referred to by researchers particularly in the field of biology, psychology and human development as adolescence (Kehily, 2007). This period of human development, between childhood and adulthood, is a challenging one for many young people and for those who have a significant role to play in their learning and development (Lerner and Steinberg, 2004). As can be seen from the DfE Statistics 2010/2011, around 52% of all permanent exclusions were pupils between 13 and 14 years old.

In her analysis of the social issues surrounding youth, Kehily (2007) notes that:

*The shift of emphasis from traditional models of adolescence and youth has led to the need for educational resources that reflect these social policy and practice changes to support the development of critical thinking and reflective practice in our work with young people (p.3).*

This research is expected to contribute to this process of critical thinking and reflective practice in our work with young people.

### **1.4.2 Gender**

Gender is not a major issue in this research. It has, however, been considered of particular relevance in the literature on behaviour of students and educational outcomes (e.g. Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Redman & Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Kehily, 2007; O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000). Over-represented in exclusion and crime statistics, the young male, in particular has been identified by many researchers to be more at risk in both the school and the wider social environment of developing significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Redman & Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002). Paying greater attention to some of the reasons for this phenomenon could be the way forward in finding the interventions that would stem this negative tide.

### **1.4.3 School and other environmental factors**

The impact of environmental factors on SEBD is well documented, not only in these difficulties directly, but also in shaping the expectations and standards in which decisions are

made about whether any problem exists that may lead to exclusion (Steffgan, Recchia and Viechtbauer, 2013).

Imich (1994) contends that institutional factors may predict exclusion better than the behaviour of the pupil involved. In their examination of the issues of race and gender in school exclusion, Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin (2000) reported on the ethos of the school and the value placed on exclusion by some schools. According to these researchers, schools “fail to adopt systems of support/sanctions, shared understandings and staff support, and means by which pupils can discuss issues on a regular basis” (p. 15). This, the authors suggest, must be considered in interpreting rates of school exclusion.

Macdonald and Marsh (2005) highlighted the plight of ‘disengaged’, ‘disaffected’ and ‘difficult to reach’ youth in Britain’s poor neighbourhood. This study focused on the relationship between poverty, school exclusion and social exclusion and may provide some explanation for the high numbers of young people from poor neighbourhoods as well as those in the care of the State in these statistics.

#### **1.4.4 Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

According to the SEN Code of Practice 2001, “A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.” (p.6). There appears to this researcher to be a complete contradiction of the policy of inclusion and *Every Child Matters* (DfEE, 1997), that young people with special educational needs (SEN) should continue to be excluded to such an extent as cited in DfE Statistics (2013). In the foreword to an edited work by Cigman (2007) on the challenge of the mainstream for some children with SEN, Baroness Warnock noted that children whose disabilities were not obvious or visible were often the one who suffered most. An update of provisions as expressed in a new Code of Practice for this group of young people will hopefully address the gaps that would reduce or eradicate all together, the exclusions of young people with SEN, stretching from early years to college age.

## **1.5 Children at the centre of research**

By their multiple fixed term or permanent exclusion from a secondary school, the young people who are at the centre of this study have been identified as having a particular need that must be met so that they can be engaged in education and remain in school for the duration of their education. Hearing their views is ultimately the most important part of this study. The right of children and young people to have their views heard have been recognised and supported in international convention (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989) especially in decision making on matters of living standards, education and having their needs met. This right is emphasised in this research also supported in the Draft SEN Code of Practice “Involving children, parents and young people in decision making” (Draft SEN Code of Practice 2014).

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The attitude to exclusion and to young people with behavioural difficulties is often complex. While schools and services work towards developing good practice within the school environment, exclusion is still accepted policy that appears to extend to some of the most vulnerable young people.

Commenting on exclusion for children with SEBD, Cooper (2007) notes,

*“(SEBD) is the only educational problem that law permits schools to deal with through the imposition of this punitive response. Although exclusion can in some circumstances be a catalyst in the process of finding the excludee a more appropriate educational placement, its primary function is to rid the excluding school of an individual who is deemed to be unmanageable in, and detrimental to, that setting” (p.159).*

In trying to identify the support that was experienced by a particular group of young people, the purpose of this research is to contribute to the efforts being made to address what appears to be a serious threat to the promise of inclusion. This chapter sought to establish the context in which exclusion is occurring, the level it has reached and some of the issues that these interventions must address in order to yield positive outcomes for young people. The literature review that follows is the next step in achieving the aims of this research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This review of the literature around interventions used with young people who have been excluded covers research that was done in the UK. The focus on the SEBD experienced by excluded young people covers a wide area of study and research, all of which could not have been covered in this review. There was however, an attempt to draw from as many of these areas as possible to create a coherent understanding of work that has been done in this area.

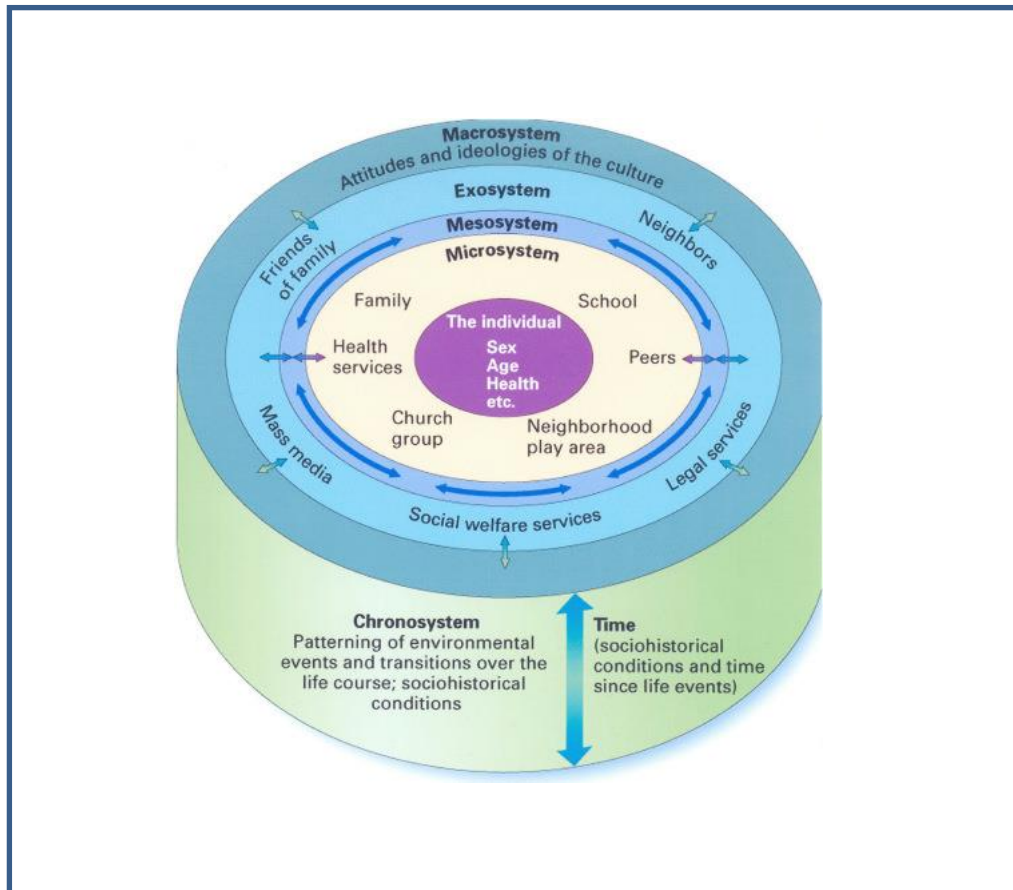
This chapter covers:

1. The theoretical framework of this research
2. The systematic search for articles
3. A critical review of the existing research and empirical findings

### **2.2. Theoretical Framework of the research**

This research study adopts a systems approach to identifying interventions that would best meet the needs of adolescents who present with the SEBD that often lead to their exclusion from school (see Dowling and Osborne, 2003; Cooper and Upton, 1990; Frederickson, 1990).

Developmental systems theories indicate that young people should be studied not in isolation but, instead, as the product of the bidirectional relationship between the individual and his or her environment. Behaviour conveys a message that can only be understood within the context in which it occurs (Mueller, Phelps, Bowers, Agans, Urban and Lerner, 2011; Rendall & Stuart, 2005). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development is one example of these theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; 1994). According to this theory, development arises from the multidirectional, reciprocal, synthesizing relationships among all aspects of the ecological system (Overton, 2010). Behaviour and therefore interventions ameliorating unacceptable behaviours must target the youth at different system levels. This systems theory seems to provide the most useful theoretical framework for research focused on the levels of need that may be experienced by young people who are excluded from school.



**Figure 2: Depiction of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Bowers, von Eye, Lerner, Arbeit, Weiner, Chase and Agans (2011) from the institute for Applied Research in Youth Development conducted a study on the role of ecological assets in positive and problematic developmental trajectories for youth. They found a significant role for family and school-based assets suggesting the importance of a multi-dimensional approach in achieving positive outcomes for youth.

Building on the developmental theories that posit the individual in the context of family and interaction with significant others, Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Bowers et al, 2011) recognises that person-centred assets combine with those of the environment to achieve the behavioural outcome. The adolescent in this approach is influenced by family, school and community resources.

Another supporting Developmental Systems theory is the self-system model of motivational development developed by Skinner et al (2008, 2009) which posits dynamic relations

between individuals' experience of 'context', 'self', 'engagement/disaffection', and 'outcomes'. The notion of self is viewed as individuals' self-appraisals about their ability and activity (e.g., control beliefs, task values) developed through socialisation in a particular context. The model posits that these self-appraisals lead to emotional and behavioural engagement or disaffection (Green, Liem, Martin, Colmar, Marsh and McInerney, 2012). Young persons who are disaffected because of their interpretation of their encounter with school can exhibit behaviours that are the result of this disaffection.

Developmental Systems theories provide the theoretical framework for this particular study and the basis for the exploration of the interventions that were identified as being helpful in meeting the needs of a particular group of young people excluded from secondary school. What issues do these interventions address in supporting the re-integration of excluded young people into the education process? This approach recognises that besides the issue related directly to the young person, major issues surround the concept of inclusion and exclusion as adopted by the school and the education system in general. In addition, the school ethos surrounding "acceptable" and "unacceptable" behaviour and how these are managed, the family as the main unit supporting the young person's development and the community that provides an extension of that support all may impact on supporting exclusion and re-integration.

In using a systemic framework, finding solutions to exclusions is not addressed only at the young person level but the systems in which he/she is placed. This shift in focus away from the individual/young person to the interactions they have, allows for a widening of the possibilities for interventions. Authors/practitioners like Osborne (2003) recognise the attention that should be given to the environment or situation in supporting the change that is desired:

*Instead of putting all our energies into changing the individual (whether child or teacher or parent) the emphasis is upon attempting to change the situation. Moreover it becomes possible to choose to intervene in the interaction that looks most amenable to change, or most productive in the longer term (p. 33).*

In maintaining the Developmental Systems framework on which this study is founded, the literature search targeted all interventions to support young people identified with behavioural difficulties at school and not only those focussed on the young person directly –

as individuals or in groups. Included in such interventions, were those that targeted the school in terms of policy/ethos with approaches that were used at the whole school level, as well as interventions that were focussed on the family and involved the community at some level. This approach complies with the theory underpinning the study that interventions targeted to the different systems in which the young person is engaged, are more likely to obtain the desired results, that is, providing the support needed by the young person to achieve more positive behavioural outcomes and avoid exclusion.

### **2.3. Systematic Literature Search**

A systematic review was accepted as the means of identifying, evaluating and interpreting the available research relevant to the research questions of this study. Systematic reviews form part of the movement towards more evidence-based practice. According to Robson (2011), the difference between traditional literature reviews and systematic reviews lies in their emphasis on:

- Providing a comprehensive coverage of the available literature in the field of interest
- The quality of the evidence reviewed
- Following a detailed and explicit approach to the synthesis of the data, and
- The use of transparent and rigorous processes throughout

Robson (2011) does not consider this an essential pursuit in a small scale research. However, its justification for doctoral research lies in the reliability and validity of findings which seem to outweigh the considerable amount of time, effort and resources that this process demands.

A number of search strategies were used to secure a systematic, nonbiased, representative sample of published studies. These included:

- Computer search for literature related to the research was carried out through the UEL library for books and through the various databases (and e-journals) for peer reviewed published research studies i.e. EBSCOHost; Academic Search Complete; Education research complete; PsychINFO; PsychArticles; ScienceDirect; and extended to *Google Scholar*.



- A manual search was conducted of journals by the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society for relevant articles.
- The reference lists of studies and of reviews of interventions for young people with behavioural difficulties and/or excluded from school were examined for related studies.
- Search for other texts recommended by colleagues on the topic of exclusion – electronically and manually.

Initially, reference to school exclusions appeared to be interpreted in a variety of ways and covering a wide range of issues including students with physical impairments and learning difficulties. In the area of SEBD, one of the tasks was to separate the literature about specifically identified mental health issues, including conduct disorders, from the behaviour problems that lead to exclusion as a policy employed to manage those children who get into trouble at school. The SEBD targeted in this research are those that result in overt behaviours (with or without a diagnosis) that also negatively impact on others e.g. abusive/threatening language and violence, usually without a diagnosis of mental illness. These were identified among the reasons given for exclusion by schools. To meet the aims of the study, priority was given to research on the support that was provided to encourage reintegration of excluded young people into the mainstream.

### **2.3.1 Inclusion/exclusion criteria**

Research studies selected for review had to meet the following criteria:

1. Interventions targeting excluded young persons, those with behavioural difficulties given as reasons for school exclusion or behaviours that put them “at risk” of exclusion
2. Secondary school students, age 11- 15 (equivalent to NC Years 7 – 9)
3. Education/school based research
4. Peer-reviewed
5. Current – i.e. published after 1990
6. Written in English
7. Generally based in the UK

The search began with an effort to obtain a general idea of terms used by different databases in sourcing studies. In initiating the systematic search, the first step was to build up the search

vocabulary i.e. to create lists of possible search words. Two lists of words were created. These related to the problem (List A) e.g. exclusion and behavioural difficulties; and the population (List B) e.g. secondary school students, young people (see Appendix B for this list). Extra words were identified after typing initial words individually into the database.

Search terms were obtained from combining words from list A and List B e.g. “young people excluded from secondary school”. This was important to exclude younger children i.e. primary school and lower, as well as to get the focus more on ‘excluded young people’ rather than all the support that may be offered to young people with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties generally. Applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria was important in narrowing the search as initial searches yielded thousands of results/hits, many of which were not relevant to the research. A brief overview of the systematic search with the articles obtained for this review is presented in Table 2.1 (Appendix B).

The initial search for books or articles on “school exclusion” brought 21 hits from a search of all databases. Most of these had some relevance to the background reading on exclusion and how this is viewed generally. These first studies however provided little in terms of the research on interventions to prevent/reduce exclusion or to support reintegration of excluded young people. A number were also not related to the age-group being studied as they focussed on work with younger children who are not the focus of this research.

A search on all databases for “secondary school exclusions” brought 568 hits, with 148 peer-reviewed. Three studies in this search were accepted for this review. A more focussed approach on individual databases, starting with those on EBSCO hosts using the term “Excluded from school” produced 231 hits but with only one based on an intervention. In the end, 12 studies were identified for this review. Each of these studies were found to fit the criteria that was set but additionally were representative of the different levels for intervention outlined in the developmental systems approach being used.

A PsychINFO search Full text, “reducing exclusion from secondary school” (1 hit) and “exclusion from secondary school” (9 hits) produced the study by Webb and Vulliamy (2003). Education Research Complete produced 59 hits for “Exclusion from secondary school” with one focussing on “responsive pastoral policies and practices” in UK secondary schools. “Interventions targeting excluded secondary school students” produced 658 hits with

only two having some relevance. The study by Munn and Lloyd (2005) was chosen for review as it presented a closer fit to the criteria.

Many of the studies chosen appeared repeatedly in several searches. “Secondary school exclusion” on all databases produced 568 hits with 148 from Peer-reviewed journals. The study by Jones and Smith, 2004 and the study by Kidger, Donovan, Biddle, Campbell and Gunnell, 2009 were identified from this list. See further details of the systematic search in Appendix C.

The 12 studies selected for review met the research criteria and additionally focussed on related issues including theoretical perspective, research design and methodology that were thought to be good examples of the work being done in this area. The study by Munn and Lloyd (2005) was not based specifically on interventions but an understanding of some of the issues affecting a group of young people. This study was relevant in its contribution to the understanding of a particular group of vulnerable young people. Research studies were sourced from September 2012 but the search was updated and new articles found until March, 2014.

## **2.4. Review of the existing research and findings**

This critical review placed emphasis on the methodology adopted in each research study, with a focus on the strengths and limitations and the impact of these on the utility of the work in informing practice related to the behavioural difficulties of young people in school settings as well as future research efforts. Each study was reviewed in relation to its contribution to an evidence-based package of interventions that can be used effectively with young persons in addressing different areas of need.

The following steps were used to critically review each study:

1. Topic of the study and authors
2. Summary – focus on research questions and findings
3. Theoretical perspective and methodology
4. Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations including critique of the support for claims made, limitations of the study and connection to the present study

The reviews are presented in levels related to the systems approach. This arrangement is, however, quite fluid with significant overlap. For example, interventions at the school level may also include direct work and interventions led by multi-agency professionals included direct work with young people, as well as work to support the whole school approach. Parents/carers were also included in quite a few of the studies on whole School interventions.

The reviews are presented in the order of:

1. Direct interventions with students individually or in groups
2. Family/Parents interventions
3. Whole school interventions
4. Community level/Multi-agency interventions

#### **2.4.1. Direct/Individual level interventions**

##### **Study 1**

Humphrey and Brooks (2006) evaluated a short cognitive behavioural anger management intervention for a group of twelve 14 year olds who were at risk of exclusions from an inner city secondary school in the north-west of England. While the intervention was found to be effective in reducing behaviour difficulties in school in the short term, this was not maintained in a four-week follow-up for some domains. The researchers did take note of this and suggested the focus of subsequent research to address this deficiency. From the analysis of the qualitative data, the researchers discovered a number of issues that might impact on the success of an intervention, including notions of power in the classroom, treatment readiness and the importance of sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences with others.

The convenience sampling method was based on a team of teachers identifying the participants who met the sampling criteria. The group of students included four girls and eight boys. The researchers employed a single group phase change design using quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The 59-item scale (Rutter, 1967), completed by the teacher in the quantitative phase, was supplemented by the contribution of a non-participant observer and semi-structured interviews with the participants in the qualitative phase.

### **Strengths, weakness and further consideration**

Including teachers in selecting participants may have been effective in obtaining their support which is helpful for any researcher wanting to conduct research in a school setting and particularly with students. However, having teachers choose the participants could present other drawbacks. It would have been beneficial from a statistical standpoint to follow the convenience sampling with a random selection of participants for the actual study. Those chosen may not represent all students (with difficulties) as teachers may select those who can represent their school in the best light. It is important to recognise though that the opposite is also possible.

However, given the profile of many of these pupils, some pupils, randomly selected, may not be willing to engage or be often absent/not available. This is an example of many of the challenges to be managed in real world research particularly in public settings like schools and when attempting to include pupils (Robson, 2011). In relation to the gender mix of participants, the choice of participants whether intentionally or not, had a balance of male and female that appeared to be representative of trends in the national statistics in which males are approximately four times more likely to be excluded.

Although the mixed methodology has potential for triangulation to improve credibility of findings, the two phases were directed to different questions. As it was, the young people did not have an opportunity to contribute to the conclusion of the intervention's effectiveness in achieving what was assessed to be a positive outcome in the short term. Instead, utilising a scale that allowed both views could have added weight to the conclusion. The researchers themselves recognised the limitation of using only one measure for intervention effect though this concern may not have been focussed on including a self-report or parent report.

The findings also highlighted the need for researchers and practitioners to 'look beyond the child' when hypothesising about the causes of anger problems in educational contexts. These findings support the call for 'whole-school change' (Akanke, 2001) to effect long term change in the anger response of these young people within the school environment, as well as the need for practitioners to consider the role of community and cultural factors in the young person's ability to manage anger over the long term.

There are a number of reasons including those cited in the current study for a shortened CBT intervention in school settings. The methodology, including sample size and recruitment procedures, did not allow any generalisations of results but this study represented a good example of a flexible research design that was achievable given the vicissitudes of this real world context (Creswell, 1998; Robson, 2011). The relevance of this study was also visible in its recognition of its limitations as well as its strengths.

## **Study 2**

Malberg (2008) describes the application of child psychotherapy in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and examines the importance of a flexible approach to outreach work. In this regard, particular focus was given to the implementation of interventions that consider both the internal and external world of the adolescent, and the importance of developing models of working with allied professionals in supervision and collaborative work in general. The report specifically focussed on a mentalisation-based programme that was completed with a small group of young people and on the staff group supervision with teachers. The author reported effectiveness of the intervention observed in the group of young people including the fact that two of them accepted individual therapy following the group intervention.

## **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

In terms of its inclusion as a direct intervention, this study is an example of the use of psychotherapeutic approaches with young people. It contributes a psychodynamic explanation as a perspective on the anti-social behaviours exhibited by some adolescents. According to psychoanalytic theory, the 'ego' is a structure of personality that acts according to the 'reality principle', subduing the demands of the 'id' or 'pleasure principle' (Freud, 1905). Blos (1998) explains that the subjective experience of the adolescent expressed in the question of 'Who am I?' reflects what is conceptualised as ego loss and ego impoverishment (Malberg, 2008). Psychoanalytic theorists describe the adolescent as having a low tolerance for frustration and being impelled to seek immediate pleasure associated with the unconscious 'id' or 'pleasure principle' (Freud, 1958).

Malberg (2008) questions the further impact of experiences on young people who have never enjoyed the benefits of a relational environment to facilitate the promotion of positive development. The adolescent may also have never experienced 'being safely in someone's mind' (p. 110). Value was attached to creating a space of reflection for the young people

through the removal of the threat of exclusion, ultimately moving the adults from a position of power to one of vulnerability shared by the young person.

This was a good example of research in casework. The report detailed the process of consultation with staff members that preceded the interventions as well as the details of the interventions that were delivered to both staff and the young people. Co-working with a staff member was also noted. Though no details about the work with parents were reported, particular mention was made of a significant amount of feedback between the parents' group and the teacher supervision group, identified as an effort to promote communication with the two systems.

A systematic approach was adopted in the reporting of the steps in the research process and in presentation of the results. This approach has been recognised in qualitative research as good support for transferability, a key element in trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

### **Study 3**

Ewen and Topping (2012) conducted an evaluative study into The Extended New Directions (END) project based on themes of personalised learning and curricular reform with young people who are disaffected with school or experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Using a mixed method research design, the researchers assessed the effectiveness of the project in re-engaging school-aged young people. The quantitative data were gathered on attendance, exclusion and achievement for the entire cohort of 30 young people while the qualitative data was gathered via self-report measures (focus group, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires) with randomly selected young people, parents and other stakeholders.

The researchers found limited evidence for an initial suggestion of effectiveness of this project in achieving its aims. While the interventions may have achieved positive results, on their own they were not as effective in achieving the re-engagement with school that was the desired outcome.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

This study provided scope for interventions that target the young person to be part of the planning that would address a wider area of need. A significant link was made between behaviour and learning within the school environment, with the latter appearing as both a causal factor and an outcome of social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. A role for the young person in the planning for learning was presented as a positive element of the intervention.

The study presented a robust process of empirical investigation, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches within each phase, thus permitting triangulation of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Robson, 2011). The description of the procedures throughout the research allowed transparency and a clear guide for replicability. END's contribution to the increase in young people's self-confidence and improved family relationships were noted as realistic and valuable achievements.

#### **2.4.2. Family/Parent interventions**

##### **Study 4**

Qualitative methods were used in a study by Webb and Vulliamy (2003) to evaluate a three year project (1996 – 1999) funded by the Home Office that placed social work trained home-school workers on the staff of seven secondary schools. For the duration of the project, there were extended periods of in-depth fieldwork carried out in schools where a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were employed. This study analysed the impact of the project on rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. It revealed that both fixed term and permanent exclusions were reduced by a variety of strategies adopted by the support workers.

School selection was based on particular indicators including students' eligibility for free school meals and those who had committed an offence. Two schools admitted a high proportion of their pupils from socially deprived areas and also received excluded pupils from elsewhere. 208 pupils at risk of exclusion, of which 62% were male and 38% female, were in the support workers' caseloads for periods of between one term and three years. Services provided by support workers included support for young siblings and families, direct



individual and group work and establishing and maintaining close contact with families through regular home visits.

### **Strengths, weakness and further considerations**

There were no details about the recruitment methods which negatively impacted on replicability of the research. The process of data collection through semi-structured interviews and the analysis of the qualitative data were well described. Analysis of the data used Grounded Theory - a process of category generation and saturation from Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The authors were concerned about grounding the analysis in the experiences of project participants, in an effort to counter the criticisms about evaluative studies being only concerned with measurable outcomes and failure to document the views and changing attitudes of those involved. Such criticisms were based on the view that such experiences are vital to eventual and sustainable success of the intervention (Coles, 2000; Vulliamy & Webb, 2003).

While the evaluative study was based heavily on the qualitative data (semi-structured) interviews, the researchers recognised the significant contribution to be made by use of a combined/multi-strategy approach. They recognised this as the best way to offset the challenges to reliability and validity of outcome measures posed by 'socially constructed' measures like performance indicators used in public institutions to promote accountability (Bryman 2006, Robson 2011).

A concern was around managing the data from two or three phases – quantitative and qualitative throughout the project and the qualitative data collected at the end of the project. Also included, were the issues surrounding different sets of researchers being responsible for the different stages of data collection. Other issues such as the length of time the project continued were considered for the impact on the programme's effectiveness. Projects required sufficient time to develop the confidence and involvement of key stakeholders and to bring about any significant or lasting change in culture, which would lead to positive results in the short term. However, from a research standpoint, this may not be the most effective approach to evaluating the effectiveness of interventions.

With the absence of any control group, concern arose around the management of extraneous variables that could have impacted on the participants during the period of the research and consequently the research outcomes. However, management of extraneous variables may have been effectively replaced by depth of data obtained in semi-structured interviews as a valuable approach used in qualitative research (Robson, 2011).

### **2.4.3. Whole School Interventions**

#### **Study 5**

Kidger, Donovan, Biddle, Campbell and Gunnell (2009) adopted a whole-school approach to addressing levels of support needed by secondary school pupils who are at risk of being excluded. They recognised that while schools were best poised to support adolescents' emotional health and well-being, there has been limited evidence of which interventions were effective. They also found that little was known about student and staff views regarding school-based emotional health provision and sought to fill this gap. In their research, they sought the views of staff and the young people on the interventions that had been in place and those that they believed could have been appropriately used to improve the provision to support the emotional health and well-being (EHWB) of students.

This research followed up on an initial survey of 296 English secondary schools randomly selected from a sampling frame of all non-fee paying secondary schools in England. From these, they identified eight schools for the qualitative study through purposive sampling and conducted 12 individual staff and 154 student interviews via 27 focus groups. Analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken through thematic analysis. The research uncovered a number of issues and identified several areas for development in order to support emotional health and well-being of young people at the level of the individual and whole school policy and practice. These included a significant level of focus on the physical and psychosocial environment, with improvement in the support provided for students who are in distress. Also included were suggestions to reduce bullying, improve teacher - student relationships, increase rewards and recognition of good behaviour and the need to ensure that a wide range and number of extra-curricular activities are available.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

This study was particularly important because of the emphasis given to the voices of young people in identifying those interventions that they believed would best meet their needs. It also brought out the idea that a survey of what was in place may not match up with what had been accessed by young people and particularly the quality of the intervention that they actually received. The quality (of delivery) of interventions was also brought out through the staff interviews that identified staff's lack of readiness to deliver interventions that they were expected to deliver, both in terms of training and personal interest/acceptance of this role.

While this study started off with possibilities of being a broad based investigation, the response rate was not considered sufficient to achieve this goal. A few, but significant, limitations made it difficult to generalise the findings of this study. These included small, non-randomised samples and the choice of focus groups with peers of the same network. This opens the way to socially desirable responses on particular issues (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Location of the focus group within the school environment may also not have been the best decision for similar reasons.

This research was important for the current study in the use of both the preliminary survey and the qualitative phase. The difficulties that were experienced with the low response rate (25%) to the questionnaire were instructive. It also drew attention to the length of questionnaires and the need to meet the right person to liaise with early in the research.

### **Study 6**

A three-year study at a secondary comprehensive school explored the role of music in re-engaging disaffected youth with school (Hope 2007). The study was built on a perspective that adjustments must be made in the school environment where minorities present with different needs. Music was seen to offer a viable opportunity to achieve the re-engagement of young people disaffected with school. In their study, the researchers identified minorities with English as a second language as well as those with special education and additional needs.

The research drew from a number of previous studies, including a study by the Mental Health Foundation (1999) which showed that a growing number of young people were 'at odds' with

the academic system that labelled pupils as 'able' or 'less able'. It was concluded that schools needed to develop ways to make education a rewarding experience for that group of young people along the lines of a more multifaceted approach to measure intellectual ability. Music was also identified as a useful resource in re-engaging these young people in the education process (e.g. Finney, 1999) and as a vehicle for enhancing physical, mental and emotional well-being (e.g. Lorch, Lorch, Diefendorf and Earl, 1994; Goleman, 1996).

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

There were 21 participants and the study began when they started secondary school and ended in Year 9 after they had chosen their subjects for Years 10 and 11. The methodology employed a number of research techniques including observation, semi-structured interviews and monitoring of pupils by parents, teachers and others.

The study, however, lacked the rigour needed to draw conclusions about the connection between music and the positive outcomes experienced by the students. There were no safeguards for extraneous variables such as maturity and different environment influences. Though all the participants were deemed 'disaffected' independently by their primary school, there was doubt about the consistency of criteria for the label since no evidence was presented of any objective criteria. This threw further doubt on the internal validity of the investigation.

The semi-structured interviews with the students, however, threw up a number of useful criteria for interventions. These explored what aspects of the music programme made a difference and what could be useful in bringing about positive change for young people disaffected with school. Recommendations included allowing disaffected young people a greater part to play in their learning, to do something in which they experienced success and to experience a sense of belonging.

### **Study 7**

Jones and Smith (2004) conducted an evaluative study of developments in behaviour/discipline systems over a period of three years in an inner-city secondary school. These authors reported on action research that began with attention to the particular piece of

legislation that was expected to promote good discipline and behaviour in schools (e.g. Education Act, 1997; DfEE, 1997).

Discipline for Learning (DFL) adopted a structured approach targeting a range of misbehaviours by students and was based on 'best practice' reported by other schools. The merit award system (MAS) was a behaviourist approach promoting motivation of students through extrinsic rewards. To oversee the evaluation, a working party was established.

The paper employed a valid definition of action research by O'Hanlon (1996) and placed the study securely within the theoretical framework that linked 'action' and 'research'. The purpose was to improve the practice of teachers working within the systems. In the intervention targeting the young person directly as well as through a whole school approach, recognition was given to the importance of the system in which the young person was placed.

The data obtained from the mixed methodology sequential design was reported and were believed to support the claim that the development and implementation of both systems had produced successful results. The quantitative data collected from staff was used to establish the development of priorities for the next phase of the research and for the involvement of pupils as well as other staff members. Subsequently, the collective views of both pupils and staff were used to build inspiration for the continued use of the systems to promote discipline. The case study was also recognised for its ability to gain an in-depth view of the particular issues that can arise and how they are dealt with.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

The study employed a reliable process that built on empirical approaches utilised in previous studies e.g. Johnstone and Munn, 1987 and Johnstone and Chalmers, (1992) on whole school approaches. Additionally, it adhered to continued reflection on the theoretical basis for action i.e. the view of discipline which was employed, with reference to the position taken by Docking (1987) about discipline.

Highlights of this study included the application of the views of the pupils and the continued referral back to pupils and staff to inform subsequent steps. There was ongoing consultation that contributed to improvement as it also built motivation. In this regard, there were approaches for organisational change that contributed to the positive outcomes. The

inconsistencies that were identified were considered an inherent part of the action research process. A description of how the information was utilised seemed beneficial to the validity of findings.

The limitations of the case study approach with regard to generalisation of findings were recognised. Also the recruitment of participants could have left out persons who could have a particular view that would have been more representative of the population. However, the case study provided depth in uncovering several issues and had provided examples of a process that could be transferable to a similar setting. Additionally, the action research design was instructive in identifying issues that could be addressed in later projects.

### **Study 8**

Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) report on an evaluation of a local authority behaviour support initiative in which four behaviour support teachers from PRUs were re-located to three mainstream secondary schools to work with students at risk of exclusion. The overall approach to the study design was informed by the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model, developed by Knight and Timmins (1995) to support the work of EPiTs in schools. It incorporated a strand from Co-operative Inquiry (Heron, 1996) that allowed the design of major aspects of the research process to be completed by the researcher working with behaviour support teachers.

The methodology was reported to accommodate both positivist and interpretive or qualitative approaches to research which the researchers saw as having its place in real world research (Robson, 1993). The report addressed the benefits associated with taking a co-operative approach and described the work of the team responsible for developing the approach that was taken to inform the investigation and for reflection on the work that was being done. To gather information on the work of the behaviour support teachers and its impact on the students and schools, the study used semi-structured interviews and school staff questionnaires.

The findings of this study identified a number of key aspects of the programme that were considered essential for its success. These included the preliminary assessment of each pupil's needs by the behaviour support teachers with regular contact with each student to

support progress on the individual behaviour plan. Also, beneficial, was the responsiveness of the behaviour support teachers to the students through their provision of immediate, intensive yet flexible support. The behaviour support teachers appeared to have influenced the approach of the mainstream schools to dealing with difficult students and all three schools seemed to have been moving towards a more proactive approach to behaviour difficulties, thus reducing the number of incidences that may have led to the exclusion of students.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

Though one of the research aims was the impact of the initiative on students, data was obtained only from the behaviour support teachers and there was no voice for the young person in this study. This study would have benefitted from the inclusion of the young person's voice as the initiative appears to hold potential for positive outcomes in the transference of skills to the mainstream.

### **Study 9**

In a paper titled *Exclusion and Excluded Pupils*, Munn and Lloyd (2005) explored school exclusion in the wider context of social exclusion and examined the challenges faced by schools in tackling this issue. They adopted a qualitative research design to present the views of a small group of young people who have been excluded from school in Scotland. This was part of a consultation project undertaken for the City of Edinburgh Council and the views of young people were extracted from their input in three projects, the third including young people in residential and secure care.

The findings, based on a thematic analysis of the students' views, identified 'routine practices' as playing a significant role in causing and finding solutions to the problem of exclusions. Attention was drawn to school culture and policy and teachers' view of students as being 'high maintenance'. There was also a call for "active pupil participation in school and classroom decision-making about rules, rewards and sanctions" (p. 214). While the students accepted some responsibility for their behaviour, they also identified things the teacher said or did that seemed 'patently unreasonable' provoking anger and resentment, which in turn fuelled behaviour that led to exclusion. Additionally, a common theme was the difficulties pupils were experiencing at home.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

Though the researchers recognised the small number of cases as representing a ‘small scale’ piece of work, they noted that the views expressed by the students were congruent with recognised case studies conducted elsewhere e.g. Cohen et al, 1994. This report did not include all the steps needed to produce a rigorous research design e.g. sampling method and recruitment of participant. However, it gave support to what can be achieved with limited number of participants. The use of tangible incentives for student involvement was helpful as was the idea of different locations for interviews.

### **Study 10**

A case study conducted by Gilmore (2013) was selected for its offering of students’ perspective on a disciplinary inclusion room (IR) as an alternative to fixed-term exclusions. Interviews were conducted with five students from one secondary school and the researcher reported the use of documentary evidence as a method of triangulation of findings.

The study was framed within a cultural historical activity theory approach. The researcher reviewed the perspectives of the IR as punitive or supportive in promoting the concepts for inclusion – i.e. including the key themes of rights, participation, equality and diversity. Instead of being viewed as punitive, IR was reportedly seen by students as a means by which they were allowed to remain in the school compound and pursue their education.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

This was a different view of IRs which has the potential of new insights. The researcher reported positive initial findings for the role played by the inclusion room in keeping young people in school. The opportunity for students to review and agree to the interpretations given to their views was seen as positive as a check for credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Elliott, Fischer and Rennie, 1999).

However, there were other issues in the methodology that imposed limits on the acceptance of findings e.g. recruitment of participants. Additionally, while the contradictions in the interpretations of findings were discussed, doubts that arose around the discussion of ‘punishment’ and ‘inclusion’ were not completely settled. The students generally appeared to



identify the IR as punishment and therefore consistent with popular thinking though the discourse focussed on this being ‘fair’ and was accepted as an improvement on withdrawal from the framework of the school.

#### **2.4.4. Community level/Multi- agency interventions**

##### **Study 11**

Burton (2006) describes a course of group work conducted by an EP with an assistant head teacher at a secondary school within a large shire county. The target audience was a group of five Year 8 students who were identified as at risk of school exclusion. Utilising a cognitive therapy approach, the group work was based on the participants’ self-reflection and drew heavily on the principle of self-change. The key elements of developmental group work were employed in a model of around six 50 – 60 minute sessions. These key elements were identified by Squires (2002) as:

- Involvement of the person as an equal and joint co-worker in exploring issues
- Unconditional positive regard towards the person
- Confidentiality
- Being non-judgemental
- Showing empathy, warmth and genuineness

The thinking governing this programme was that assisting young people to change their own behaviour encourages the development of the important and enduring qualities of self-reflection, personal motivation and empowerment. Positive results were reported with all students being said to have made significant progress in a number of areas that impacted on their actions in school and for some, even within the home environment.

The school itself, where the group was conducted, was known to be among those with the highest rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusions in the county. The group, made up of two girls and three boys, was selected by staff members and the invitation to join issued by the EP. Evaluation was achieved via a pre-test/post-test approach using a self-rating social skills assessment form comprising of 15 items completed by the students and the teachers – a key member of staff for each student. The four students who completed the course were

interviewed by the EP and the co-worker and were given feedback on their progress. A content analysis was completed on the report submitted on the students' progress.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

Though a significantly small-scale one, this study was chosen because it is a good example of the work done by EPs and in particular to build capacity within schools. It represented another piece of work done by practitioners that could be the basis of empirical studies.

### **Study 12**

Swinson (2010) reports on a case study of work done by a multidisciplinary team comprising of an advisory teacher, an educational consultant and an educational psychologist in an urban comprehensive school. The team was managed by the educational authority's advisory team and though excluded students were not specifically targeted, the focus on improved behaviour resulting in successful outcomes for Year 9 students gave it some relevance to the current study.

The study was conducted in three phases starting with consultation involving all the systems levels. These included reports from classroom observation using checklists and questionnaires completed by the teachers. The effectiveness of different strategies, including rewards, was assessed. Students gave their views through two rating scales, one of which was the student version of the questionnaire used for the teachers by Harrop and Holmes (1993). The other two phases were planning and introduction of the new system followed by an evaluation in Phase three.

### **Strengths, weaknesses and further considerations**

Only 12% of the parent body of 1200 students responded to a brief questionnaire and 'a handful' attended a meeting to discuss the issue of the school's behaviour policy.

In spite of its limitations as a piece of empirical research, Swinson (2010) drew attention to the wide variation in student behaviours between schools (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston, 1979; Reynolds, 1985; Swinson, 2010). He noted that this had become even more evident when examining schools that were successful in dealing with students who were very difficult to manage (Daniels, Viser, Cole and de Reykehill, 1999).

While pointing out the rarity of studies evaluating interventions used in schools to improve discipline and student behaviour, Swinson (2010) identified the levels of intervention as whole-school, class and individual that were notably part of projects obtaining evaluations of successful outcomes (Hallam and Castle, 1999 and Daniels and Williams, 2000).

In spite of the inability to attribute positive change in both attendance and exclusion, solely to the change in the school policy, the initiative was considered a success in some areas. It therefore presents an alternative view for looking at levels of support that might be used with students.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This critical review covered a sample of research on the issues to be addressed in the present study. They have offered some degree of investigation into a range of interventions that have been developed to support young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools in general and specifically for those who were either at risk or had been excluded from secondary schools.

The review also uncovered support for the theoretical framework of the current research, while contributing strategies and other approaches to enquiry that offered insights into possibilities for further research that would contribute to the later discussion of findings. The theoretical approaches adopted in the research studies including psychoanalytic and cognitive behavioural theories are recognised as supplementary to the over-arching systems approach that was taken in this research (Osborne, 2003).

Context was considered of major importance and therefore the focus was on interventions that have been carried out in the UK. This researcher recognised a significant list of interventions beyond those that have been presented in the review, many with a substantial evidence-base that were being used in other countries and sometimes in the UK to meet the needs of these vulnerable young people. The studies reviewed employed different research designs - quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods – with a range of research techniques and methods. These included cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, a case study, evaluative and exploratory studies as well as action research. Samples were randomly selected as well as

purposive or by utilising techniques of convenience. Instruments for data collection included standardised scales and checklists, structured questionnaires, individual interviews or focus groups. All studies reviewed were conducted in the school setting and participants tended to include students, parents, teachers and senior managers.

This review has provided some evidence of the ongoing research into interventions to support young people with behavioural difficulties in school. The wide range of research in this area appears to be based on the demand for better outcomes for schools and for those exhibiting behaviours that have continued to pose a significant challenge, often resulting in the exclusion of these young people. Professional agencies like the Educational Psychology Service engaged in supporting schools are increasingly required to produce the empirical evidence supporting the interventions they would recommend and/or use with young people.

The other issue that this review of previous research has highlighted is the importance of gaining the young person's perspective. Previous research has also provided some basis for the growing recognition of the value of input from young people in the development and the identification of interventions that were more likely to be effective in producing the desired outcome for themselves as well as for their families and schools in supporting them.

However, in spite of the ongoing research, it is still difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the interventions that are used with secondary school students who are at risk of being excluded, or after exclusion, in the UK. This includes those strategies to reduce exclusion and those strategies used to support young people back into school after exclusion.

While the research has recognisably uncovered a significant range of interventions, there still remains no conclusive evidence that these interventions provide the answer to exclusions or to the problems experienced by young people in school settings, leading to their exclusion. The questions still remain with regard to what is working in this context and what can work with this group of young people. In other words, none of the interventions in this review has crossed the boundaries set by the researchers to attain the level of applicability to all settings.

What has been achieved is the recognition that the difficulties experienced by students who are often excluded from school are founded within a particular context based on the young person's interaction with his/her environment. These studies, with the identified strengths

and limitations in their design and execution, nonetheless offered some direction to the current project that sought to answer the following research questions in two distinct phases:

### **Quantitative Phase**

R.Q.1. What interventions do educational psychologists consider to be effective in supporting students who are at risk of or have been excluded from school?

R.Q.2. What interventions are used to support students before and after they are excluded?

A. By Schools

B. By Pupil Referral Units

### **Qualitative Phase**

R.Q.3 What are the young people's experiences of interventions to support them before and/or after being excluded?

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The study employs a mixed methods exploratory design. In the quantitative phase, educational psychologists and staff of secondary schools and PRUs participated to identify the interventions that may have been accessed by excluded secondary school students. In the qualitative phase, six students undertook semi-structured interviews about their experiences of support throughout the process of exclusion.

The focus on secondary school exclusions and the young people's experiences of support draws attention to the interventions that have the potential to meet the needs of vulnerable young people. Developmental systems theories provided the framework with which to view the interventions that were applied in order to meet the needs of these young persons. This is addressed in order to answer the research questions:

#### **Quantitative Phase**

R.Q. 1: What interventions do educational psychologists consider to be effective in supporting students who are at risk of or have been excluded from school?

R.Q. 2: What interventions are used to support students before and after they are excluded?

- A. By Schools
- B. By Pupil Referral Units

#### **Qualitative Phase**

R.Q. 3: What are the young people's experiences of interventions to support them before and/or after being excluded?

As an exploratory study, this research is focussed on finding out about the interventions being delivered to young people who have been excluded. The interest of the Local Authority and the Educational Psychology Service more directly is to understand what is being done that is working and ultimately what more could be done in addressing the need of a significant minority of young people who are excluded every year from secondary schools. This study fills a gap for research on interventions that have been made available to these young people.

Hearing young people's accounts of their experience of support brings an approach to the understanding of the solution to the problem of exclusion that has not been previously adopted in this county.

To do this, the study began with a systematic search of the literature on interventions used to support young people who had been at risk of exclusion or had been excluded from secondary school. Previous research studies undertaken in England and other countries have focussed on a range of interventions available to children and young people with social and emotional difficulties. The review of the literature on interventions offered at various system levels – child, family, school and community – suggested that there was no shortage of interventions that have been developed to support the needs of young people with behavioural difficulties that put them at risk of exclusion.

It is also recognised that some of the interventions have not been robustly evaluated for use in the wide range of settings. This is evident in the limited number that employed research methodologies that could make them generalisable and/or applicable to other contexts. However, it must also be noted that the review was limited to a particular period and cannot be depended on to cover the full range of interventions that may be available. The attempt was made to provide some evidence of the availability of interventions as well as the approaches that were used in finding evidence-based effective interventions for use with young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that put them at risk of being excluded from secondary school.

Which interventions have been made available to those who have been excluded in the particular county is one of the questions that need to be answered. The perspective taken in this research is that the effectiveness of any intervention is based on the ability of the intervention to address the different points of need, at the particular stage in the young person's life. Therefore, it is hypothesised that in order to provide the level of support needed for these young people to engage more successfully with school, these interventions must not only target the young person directly but must essentially work through the systems in which he/she is developing. They must be applied through the school, the family and in the wider context of laws and policy guiding the development of the systems in which they are placed (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Dowling and Osborne, 2003).

The theoretical perspective of the study that draws attention to the developmental needs of the growing person is that effective interventions must meet the previously unmet needs of these young people. Drawing from developmental system theories, these needs, experienced by the child, are present in the various systems including within the child.

Theories of social and emotional developmental (Erikson, 1968; Bowlby, 1999; Ainsworth, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bandura, 1986, 1991) focus on the impact of the person's social experiences particularly with significant persons on their social and emotional development. From the early stages of development, a child learns about interaction with others through encounters with significant persons in his/her immediate environment. This learning is extended to his/her interaction with others in the school environment and other social settings.

This learning will contribute to the young person's ability to manoeuvre competently through school, to develop a positive image of himself and his place in the world. The involvement of the different systems is therefore identified as being paramount in the young person's ability to develop the social and emotional skills needed for positive behaviours in the classroom, school and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Dowling and Osborne, 2003). Deficiencies present in the various systems will often result in behaviours that schools staff find too difficult to manage within the immediate environment of the school.

Interventions that are successful in achieving the re-integration/re-inclusion of previously excluded young people with behavioural difficulties into their mainstream classrooms are likely to have been directed towards the school, family and wider community as well as the young person and the peer group in small or larger groups (Rendall and Stuart, 2005; Dowling & Osborne, 2003; Dowling, 2003).

This systems approach to the understanding and amelioration of the difficulties experienced by young people has been undertaken in several studies, some of which have been reviewed in this research. These studies have looked at interventions that were developed to address the difficulties experienced by young people in secondary schools. These interventions were available at the level of the school and/or family and community (e.g. Webb & Vulliamy, 2003; Kidger et al, 2009). This research study is an opportunity to investigate what has been successfully implemented in the county, thus contributing to some impetus for future



development in this area. The focus of the study is on students who have either had multiple fixed term exclusions or been permanently excluded.

The following pages of this chapter will include a description of the ontological position, the mixed method research design, the social and educational context of the research, the sampling method, the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research, trustworthiness in qualitative research and the ethical considerations that arose as a result of research with children. The research plan with timelines is given in Appendix D.

### **3.2. The Ontological Position**

In deciding on the ontological position that was adopted in this study, it was important to consider the varied positions that researchers adopt in their investigations. The extreme positions of positivism and social constructionism were both recognised for their value both in terms of the phenomenon under investigation, the issues being investigated, the purpose and context of that investigation and therefore the epistemology. Consideration of a position to guide one's research, generally, necessitates an understanding of each ontological position and its applicability, in order to obtain an appropriate position in relation to these two options. The researcher's understanding of the focus of his/her research is crucial in making this decision. Fox, Martin and Green (2007) provide a clear explanation of this choice. Is the focus the objective world or is it the socially constructed world? Or is it the reality that each individual will construct of the way he/she engages with, views and is viewed by the world.

The positivist/realists take the view that there is a 'real objective world which exists independent of human belief, perception, culture and language we use to describe it' (Fox, Martin and Green, 2007; Hart, 1998, p. 85). According to Fox, Martin and Green (2007), this world is observable and research can be used to verify the existence of something, using reliable measures. Robson (2011) explains that questions about causation are central to this positivist view of science and positivists therefore gravitate towards experiments, particularly those involving randomisation and randomised controlled trials (RCTs) used in quantitative research methods.

The other extreme, the socially constructed world, is one of shared meanings about the world that is constructed by groups of people or cultures (Fox, Martin and Green, 2007). Groups hold different positions in the social world that allow the members to have developed a view of the world that is distinct to their particular group and a shared language. In this view of the world, there are multiple realities.

A third world view, or ontological position, identified by Fox, Martin and Green (2007) is known as critical realism. Critical realism is an emerging meta-theory that suggests a shared ontology and epistemology for the natural and social sciences (Sayer, 1992). It argues that an external reality exists that is separate to what is experienced (Collier, 1994, Danermark, Ekstrom and Jakobsen, 2002). However, the social and historical situation affects how this reality is seen.

Critical realism is the middle ground that was sought for this investigation, being placed as it is between the positivist ontology and the social constructivist view of multiple realities. According to Willig (2008), this position acknowledges that our knowledge of the world is necessarily mediated by, and therefore also constructed through language, while maintaining that there are underlying structures and mechanisms that generate phenomena, versions of which are constructed through language (King, 2009; Willig, 2008).

The school as the context in which exclusions take place has a fixed structure of rules, policies and roles that guide and impact upon interactions. Exclusions are based on some of those rules and policy guidelines. Analysis of data on interventions being used with excluded young people fitted into a more positivist ontology. The question asked referred objectively to what was being offered. The information received from those who deliver services to schools, and within schools, those who oversee the delivery of interventions to students and their families, was obtained through this method in the quantitative phase of this research.

In the second phase, accessing the individual realities inherent in each participant's view also evolved from the theoretical framework of the revolving connection between context, self, disengagement/disaffection and outcomes as explained in the self-system model (Skinner et al, 2008). It resulted too from the impact of systems on the developing self/behaviour, espoused in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Critical realism attempts to produce in-depth explanations of the 'causal mechanisms'; how they exert

effect; if they have been triggered; and under what circumstances they have been activated (Sayer, 2000). The views of young people brought a high level of credibility to the process and gave voice to those whose words were often ignored or marginalised (Willig, 2008).

In this exploration of different individual realities, the views of the young people were influenced by their age, gender, family and other personal/social factors. This will have contributed to their unique experience of the system including the interventions that they were able to access at different stages of their journey through school. In a reverse effect, this experience would have impacted on their interactions within school, that is, with the adults as well as their peers within that environment. Qualitative methods were used in this second phase of the research for investigation into the individual worlds of participants.

As researcher, the intent was to embrace the different perspectives and incorporate them into the direction the research would take. The real world of practitioner and the individual worlds of the beneficiary of services, the young people themselves, were explored. Their reality however was founded on a reality that is obvious – the reality of the school and the focus on educational outcomes and the threat of exclusion for ‘unacceptable’ behaviour is just one dimension of this reality to which practitioners and young persons also responded. Such considerations pointed clearly to a critical realist position as the ontological position of this research project.

Bergin, Wells and Owen (2010) identify a primary concern of critical realism as its questioning about what exists (ontology) and its focus on a philosophy of reality that starts with ontology as distinct from epistemology (Bhaskar 1978). When what exists is identified, critical realism then concentrates on questions concerning the construction of knowledge about that existence (Frauley & Pearce 2007).

In looking for interventions that worked in supporting student’s reintegration into mainstream, and ultimately made available to reduce exclusions, the basic question asked, and hopefully answered, was thus multi-faceted. Pawson and Tilley (2004), embracing the critical realist position as the ‘new’ realism, suggest that ‘realist’ evaluations asks not, ‘What works?’ or, ‘Does this program work?’ but asks instead, ‘What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?’ (p.2)

### **3.3. The Mixed Methods Research Design**

This exploratory research adopts mixed methods sequential design focussing on the interventions used in a particular English county to support young people who were at risk of or have been excluded from school. The principal method was qualitative with the quantitative phase helping to guide the understanding of the context for the qualitative phase and adding to the evidence of what was available by way of interventions. The sequence of the research was quantitative – qualitative with the quantitative data providing the context for the interviews with the young people.

In the quantitative phase of the research, educational psychologists provided information on the interventions that they have recommended to schools to support children at risk of exclusion. This was followed by questionnaires that staff of secondary schools and pupil referral units completed about the interventions that have been used in supporting the particular group of students – that is, those who have received multiple fixed term or permanent exclusion. In the qualitative phase of the research, the young people themselves shared their experiences of support before and after exclusion, in semi-structured interviews.

The methodological approach to this study established the young people as a major contributor to the research. Exploring the views of young people was recognised as a growing trend in research as well as in the work of educational psychologists with young people. Engaging young people directly in developing such interventions was however still not common.

A number of studies developed in the UK, including some of those reviewed, have explored the views of students, parents and teachers about what they would like to see as far as school-based interventions supporting adolescent emotional health is concerned (e.g. Kidger et al, 2009). Others, like the King's (2009) thesis on permanent exclusions, have explored the views of pupils and parents on exclusion itself. However, few studies have focussed specifically on the systemic application of interventions and issues they addressed that could contribute to a successful outcome for young people who exhibited the behaviours that often resulted in their exclusion from school.

### **3.3.1 Benefits of using a Mixed Methods Design**

Mason (2006) has warned prospective researchers about the importance of having a ‘clear sense of logic and purpose of their approach and to what they are trying to achieve’ (p.3). This was valuable guidance in seeking to explore the potential benefits that many researchers have identified when bringing together quantitative and qualitative methods in a mixed methods or multi-strategy design (Bryman, 2006; Robson, 2011). Those relevant to this research helped to establish and clarify the ‘logic’ and ‘purpose’ of using mixed methods.

#### **1. Completeness**

It was important to try and produce, as far as possible, a complete and comprehensive picture of the interventions that the young people in this study had accessed and the impact of the interventions upon them. Getting information from the professionals and school managers contributed to this picture.

#### **2. Offsetting weaknesses and providing stronger inferences**

There is an inherent weakness in hearing about interventions that young people have accessed only from the professionals and managers of institutions responsible for delivering them. Hearing from the young people directly addressed that weakness. The young people provided the information along with different interpretations of the impact of the interventions. There was also the possibility that these young people may not have accessed the interventions that professionals reported. The data from the professionals and managers was invaluable in providing the information that the young person might be unable to articulate and to gain some awareness of his/her perspective on the problem which allowed for stronger inferences and points of discussion.

#### **3. Ability to deal with complex phenomena and situations**

Many experienced researchers believe that a combination of research approaches hold particular value to research done in real world settings. The issue of interventions that were seen as supportive by young people presented with a range of complex phenomena intricate to the developmental needs and experiences of each individual, their families, their schools

and the context in which the difficulties have been identified. Obtaining as broad a picture as possible was needed to support research goal of validity and reliability of findings.

#### **4. Refining research questions**

The qualitative phase of the research added to the identification and understanding of the interventions identified in the quantitative phase, in terms of its applicability, relevance and impact on the targeted issues and needs of the young person him/herself. In pursuing this phase, questions on the impact of the interventions were also related to the importance the young person attached to it. This made an invaluable contribution to the research undertaking.

#### **3.4. The Social and Educational Context of the Research**

The county that forms the broader context for this research was identified for the number of its districts that are on the list of the 20% most deprived in England (IMD 2010). This county also accounted for the highest number of National Challenge schools in England. These schools were branded as "failing", based on the British Government's target that 30% of pupils achieve at least 5 GCSE grades A\* to C. Approximately 50% of the secondary schools in the county had achieved below this requirement. The districts as the broader context for this research were among the most deprived in the county. Since 2007, deprivation levels in these areas have increased relative to other areas of England. Areas of deprivation include education and skills, employment, income, health deprivation and disability, barriers to housing and services, crime and living environment (Neighbourhood Statistical Release, 2011 and Local Authority data).

Secondary schools and PRUs in districts with high levels of deprivation were targeted for this research based on their relatively higher rates of exclusion supplied by Local Authority statistics. However, one district represented in the quantitative phase was identified as one with low rates of exclusion at the secondary level relative to other districts of the county.

### **3.5. Sampling Methods**

A non-random purposive/convenience method was utilised based on the availability of participants meeting the criteria who were willing to participate in this research. Initially, schools in the quantitative phase were randomly selected from particular areas with highest and lowest levels of exclusion but this did not yield expected participants. PRUs chosen were those in the district with highest levels of exclusion. It was recognised that this convenience sampling method (as well as the small size of the sample of participants) made statistical generalisation an empirical impossibility. However, as an exploratory study, this is not the aim of the research. Instead, the research aimed to be able to say something beneficial about the young people in their particular context in relation to their experiences of support. It also sought to obtain some evidence of the mechanism operating in each context. Or, as suggested by Robson (2011) in his discussion of multiple case studies, this small exploratory study may ‘speak’ to what “might be happening in other settings or cases” (p.152).

### **3.6. Quantitative Phase**

#### **3.6.1. Recruitment of participants**

Recruitment of participants followed the approval from the County Council through the Principal Educational Psychologist in charge of the service and the receipt of ethical approval issued in February, 2011 by the university. Two stages in the quantitative phase necessitated recruitment of two different sets of participants.

#### **Recruitment of educational psychologists (EPs) in the preliminary phase**

Recruitment of participants for the preliminary quantitative phase was executed via a service group email made to all EPs in the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The formal invitation in a research package (*see details of contents below*) was attached to a more informal message inviting them to participate in the research. Reminders were given in follow-up emails. The initial deadline for return of the questionnaires was eventually extended to facilitate additional participants (see Invitation in Appendix E).

### **Recruitment of exclusion managers in schools and pupil referral units**

All 16 schools managers were sent invitations to participate with research packages (*see details of research packages below*). These were sent by email and by post with an option to complete in electronic or hard copy formats. This was followed up by telephone calls and face to face contact (see Invitation in Appendix F).

Managers of four PRUs, providing for students who had been excluded from secondary school in the district were contacted directly and invited to participate. They were invited to complete the questionnaires in an interview session with the researcher.

Information packs for the two stages of the quantitative phase included:

1. Information about the research including the aims and benefits to be gained.
2. Request for involvement and nature of involvement – A questionnaire; copy of the contract between researcher and participant, outlining the conditions of involvement. These included clauses on voluntary participation, confidentiality/anonymity and withdrawal from the research.
3. Intended plan for reporting of research findings
4. Deadline for return of signed consents and completed questionnaires. Appointments were made for interview-based completion of the questionnaire with heads of PRUs.

### **3.6.2. Instruments for data collection**

Questionnaires were completed at each stage of the quantitative phase. The data collection in this phase was conducted in two ways – through structured questionnaires emailed to respondents (EPs/ school managers) and through interviews.

The responses obtained from the EPs were used to develop the questionnaire to managers of the 16 schools. The questionnaire was reviewed over a period of several weeks and adjusted by the researcher and research supervisor in order to achieve an instrument that was not too challenging for the respondents to complete and that provided the data that was required to



answer the research question. At a stage before completion, the questionnaire was distributed to two practitioners in the EPS for their comments with regard to its clarity and ease of completion.

The checklist provided by Robson (2011) p. 255 (adapted and abridged from de Vaus, 2001, p. 118 – 121) was used to ensure that the wording did not present with difficulties for respondents.

1. The language was short and simply expressed without the use of jargon.
2. Statements were expressed in positive terms
3. The questions related only to the knowledge that the respondents would have
4. Ease of completion was otherwise obtained by the use of items to be checked from a list for school managers. This was believed to compensate for the length of the questionnaire.
5. Unnecessary information was avoided and request for basic biographical data was kept to a minimum.

In the survey interviews with managers at the PRUs, the items to be checked off were removed and the respondents were asked to supply the interventions they offered to students. Following the guidelines presented by Robson (2011), the questionnaire covered:

1. The introduction to the questionnaire
2. Introduction to different groups of questions – respondents were asked to talk about interventions in four groups: targeting the young person directly individually or as part of a group, with family, through the whole-school approach, from external agencies or community groups.

The choice between self-completion vs interview-based completion of the questionnaire was made by the participant. Robson (2011) considers the differences that can emerge from the use of these two procedures. These include the interaction between interviewer and interviewee as well as the extent to which the interviewer adheres to the specific wording of the questions for all participants. It is considered that the sensitivity of the questions to be answered would be a major issue in any negative impact of the questionnaire completed in a face to face interview with the researcher. Such considerations were included in examining possible limitations that were attached to the quality of the data collected.

In completing the questionnaires, participants were directed to target interventions delivered over the two-year period from September 2011 to July 2013 for students who had been considered 'at risk' of exclusion or had had multiple fixed term exclusions (more than two in one school term) or had been permanently excluded.

### **3.6.3. Data analysis**

The data obtained through both sources in the quantitative phase was analysed manually, and via Excel, for descriptive statistics. The information provided by educational psychologists and school/PRU managers allowed particular comparisons to be made and provided the reference point for examining the young people's experiences of the support they received. These findings will be presented in the next chapter.

## **3.7. The Qualitative Phase**

### **3.7.1. Recruitment of participants**

Students identified for this phase met the following criteria for inclusion in the research study:

1. They were in Key Stage 3 at the time of exclusion from school.
2. They had been excluded - multiple fixed term or permanent exclusion.
3. They were excluded between September 2011 and December 2013.

Six students were recruited for this phase of the research. They were recruited through school managers and heads of PRUs. Three of these young people had already been reintegrated into a mainstream secondary school (one after a series of fixed term exclusions). The other three pupils were still at a PRU.

### **Background information on participants**

Participants in the study provided information about themselves that included aspects of their school and family life as part of the interview process. Some of this is presented as background information on each participant in the next chapter on research findings. This was included in an effort to promote a clearer understanding and appreciation of their

verbatim contributions to the themes. These strictly anonymised portraits were organised to present a brief background around the experiences of each participant. As a supplement to the community/school background information presented earlier, these portraits are expected to add to the readers' understanding of the context in which the challenging behaviours would have occurred. The basic information including reason given for exclusion (presented in Table 3.1 below) was confirmed by the school manager and heads of the PRUs and verified in data received via the Local Authority.

**Table 3.1. Brief Background Information on participants**

Student	Age	Sex	Period of Exclusion	Type	Reason Given	Status
A	14	F	Sept 2011 – July 2012	FT	Persistent disruptive behaviour (PDB)	Re-integrated (R)
B	15	M	April 2012 – July 2013	P	Drugs/Threatening Behaviour/PDB	R
C	14	F	Jan - June 2013	P	Assault of pupil	R
D	12	M	From Sept 2013	TO	Assault of pupil/PDB	In PRU
E	13	F	From Nov 2012	P	PDB	In PRU
F	13	M	From April 2013	TO	Drugs/Damage./PDB	In PRU

Kidger et al. (2009) identified the threat of 'gatekeeper' bias in their own study of a whole school intervention and this was considered in the managers' selection of students for participation in the study. However, though this was recognised as a limitation, it was not perceived as a significant threat to the validity of findings. It was important that the young person identified met the criteria in terms of status with regard to exclusion and the stage he/she had reached in the educational process. Each young person had a story to tell.

All managers received an information pack to be shared with parents and students (see Appendix G). These were delivered first to the parents to obtain their consent for their child to be interviewed. Parent and child were encouraged to review the information together after the parent had seen it to come to a final decision about the student's participation. The

researcher was contacted by the managers with the name of the students for whom consent (signed by parent and student) for interviews had been received. The interviews (time and location) were arranged with managers or via telephone conversation with parents. The researcher also spent the first few minutes of the interview reviewing the conditions governing their involvement in the research and ensuring that these and the details of the interview procedure were understood and accepted.

Information packs contained:

1. Information about the research including the aims and benefits to be gained and the name and contact details of the researcher and university supervisors.
2. Request for involvement and nature of involvement – outline of the interviewing procedure to be adopted; copy of the contract between researcher and participant, outlining the conditions of involvement. These included clauses on voluntary participation, confidentiality and withdrawal from the research.
3. A letter to students
4. Intended plan for reporting of research findings
5. Notification of gift voucher as thanks for their participation (included in the research information)

### **3.7.2. Data collection procedure**

This phase involved the collection of data received through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 6 students who were in Key Stage 3 at the time of exclusion. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allowed the researcher to ask specific questions as well as allow the participants to talk freely in response to each question or concern.

Interviews offer ‘a flexible and adaptable’ (Robson, 2011 p. 280) way of collecting data based on the experiences of research participants. Robson (2011) notes several advantages of using interviews to collect data, e.g. the face to face interviews with the students offered the opportunity of observing the participant for non-verbal responses which helped in the understanding of the verbal content of the messages. Questions were at times modified to meet the needs of respondents and led to more detailed account of experiences.

The interviews were time consuming from the planning and recruitment stage to the time taken to conduct and transcribe interview data. Face to face interviews were, however, valuable in obtaining the views and perspectives of participants unencumbered by burdensome questions and opinions of others. They provided an opportunity for participants to share in-depth information about their experiences that could not be gained otherwise. The interviews were considered valuable especially in accessing the views of young persons who might not normally get an opportunity to share their experiences and express their views on such a significant event as exclusions.

Robson's (2011) advice for interviewers was helpful in ensuring the validity and reliability of these interviews. This included:

1. Listening more than you speak
2. Putting questions in a straightforward, clear and non-threatening way
3. Eliminating cues which lead interviewees to respond in a particular way – being careful to avoid expressing questions that contain a possible correct response
4. Enjoying it (or looking like you do!)
5. Keeping questions short and straightforward
6. Avoiding the use of jargon
7. Maintaining a neutral position about information shared

### **The Interview Schedule**

An interview schedule was prepared in advance based on information that was needed to answer the research question and drawing from a combination of approaches compatible with development systems theory. It consisted of a short list of questions which allowed the students to talk about:

1. Background information e.g. family
2. The YP's views on school and how they interact with school
3. The difficulty that led to their exclusion
4. Their views on exclusion

5. The interventions that they have accessed individually, as part of the school and in the provision/PRU (if applicable) including any that have included their parents/carers and siblings. In addition, it contained suggestions for probes and prompts e.g. 'Anything more?'

The open-ended questions used in the semi-structured interviews were seen to have several advantages. These included:

1. They were flexible
2. They allowed the researcher to go into more depth or clear up any misunderstandings
3. They enabled testing the limits of the young people's knowledge (memory was an issue)
4. They encouraged cooperation and rapport
5. They produced unexpected or unanticipated answers

(Based on Robson, 2011 p. 283)

An audio recorder was used for all interviews because of the amount of the detail that was required from each participant. This included the language and concepts that each participant used about their experiences and perspectives, all of which could easily be lost in note-taking. Braun and Clarke (2013) also noted that note-taking can obstruct a proper focus on the participant. It was then possible to work on transcribing the data in a quiet environment with a suitable amount of time to record the details in each script. Participants were told about the interview being audio-taped in the information provided and this was further explained at the start of the interview. They were also reminded about confidentiality and the anonymity of data once it was transcribed.

The location of the interview was negotiated with the interviewee and parents or managers. This intention was made clear in the information provided to participants. It was important that the location met the general criteria for safety both for the interviewer and the student/participant. It was also important that it was a place where the student/participant felt comfortable and able to talk freely. A quiet location with no obvious movement of people back and forth was also essential for effective listening and recording purposes and also because participants tended to have difficulties that caused them to be easily distracted.

One participant wanted to avoid the attention from staff and peers and opted for a home interview after school hours. This was organised with his parent who was nearby throughout the interview. The location and time of the interview was also shared with office staff. Another interview was arranged for a meeting room in a public office building near to the participant's home as the interview was held during a school break. Other interviews were held within school and the PRU.

### **3.7.3. Transcription of interview data**

Transcription of data called for transferring the digital data to word format. The researcher transcribed all six interviews. This was time consuming as an hour long interview took approximately 3 hours to transcribe. To support the process, equipment included a headphone to minimise external disturbances and a media programme that allowed rewinding to hear missed words or phrases.

Transcribing the data included anonymising, which required additional time. This involved the removal of names of schools, teachers and other support staff as well as other identifying bits of information. Each interview was labelled by a number and eventually a pseudonym. The transcribed data for each participant was saved separately from the digital data in an individual online, as well as a hardcopy, folder. Data was backed up on a secure online system and on a memory stick.

### **3.7.4. Data analysis**

Qualitative data include the words of participants that have been described as 'rich', 'full' and 'real' (Miles, 1979), providing an insight into the world of the person(s) who for various reasons hold our interest. Making good use of those words to inform, describe and understand, to various degrees, the reality of research participants is a major goal of analysis. Finding the right method to analyse the data to be gathered from the young people in this study was an important decision. Consideration was given to different methods including Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Narrative Analysis, Grounded Theory and Thematic Analysis. While these methods share some common features (Miles and Huberman,

1994) e.g. use of labels or codes, going through the data trying to identify similar patterns, they each take a distinctive approach that allowed thematic analysis to be the most obvious choice. Robson's (2011) review of each of these methods was helpful in the decision making process.

Grounded Theory's focus on generating a theory from the data was not applicable to the research questions nor to the specific context of the study. Narrative Analysis' emphasis on the stories being told by the participants appeared to be more extensive in terms of the understanding that is sought and more suited to a case study approach. IPA's search for deep insight and understanding of concealed meanings of everyday life experiences seemed to be an approach that would be more applicable to a follow-up of a particular phenomenon that may be uncovered in this exploratory study. The applicability of Thematic Analysis is attached to the purpose and goals of the present study and the positioning of the researcher within the critical realist mode of enquiry.

Thematic Analysis has been identified as a flexible and effective method of analysis for the qualitative data, also accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research (Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2006). It has been recognised for its ability to capture the range of views and interpretations of each person's expression of his/her reality. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis may be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. The authors describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

From the theoretical perspective of critical realism, thematic analysis is recognised as a method in which individuals are said to make meaning of their experience within the broader social context that impinge on those meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In reference to the focus on drawing out the themes from participants' transcribed data, Braun and Clarke (2006) stress that the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question. These themes were important in capturing the common view shared by these young people with regard to their experiences of exclusion and the support they received throughout the process. These themes represent the shared reality of these young people and provide the structure needed to contribute to the credibility of the findings.



The researcher employed an inductive approach to thematic analysis. This means that the aim was to generate an analysis from the 'bottom up' (i.e. the data itself) rather than existing theory.

The following steps were used:

(Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 202 – 203):

1. Reading and familiarisation, taking note of ideas of potential interest.
2. Coding - complete; across the entire data set
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes (producing a map of the provisional themes and subthemes and relationships between them – aka the 'thematic map')
5. Defining and naming themes

(See Appendix H for full description of the Checklist)

### **1. Familiarisation with the data**

Transcribing offered a good opportunity for me to become familiar with the data. Replays to ensure that I had understood what was being said allowed me to become in tune with the young person, to become immersed into their story. Once the initial transcribing was completed, I found it helpful to play the tape as I read through what I had written. In each case, changes were made to the script but this gave me the chance to review the interview in its entirety. The next step in this familiarisation process was identifying statements of particular interest. Reading through each of the transcribed interviews in this way led me to identify the topics of interest that had been highlighted. These were identified around the topics I targeted in the questions I had asked to answer the research question.

### **2. Coding**

I used topics matching my research questions to organise the data into sections. I reviewed each interview, looking for the chunks of data that potentially dealt with that question or data item (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Coding was done in large or small chunks or anything in

between. Data that did not contain anything relevant was not coded. Every effort was made to give good codes, which according to Braun and Clarke (2013), should ‘work’ when separated from the data e.g. Never enjoyed school.

After the initial coding, all codes were examined to develop broader codes by merging codes that overlap e.g. there were several codes around bullying, fighting. Broader codes would be ‘peer conflicts’ and ‘involvement in school violence’. Another example was ‘big problems starting in Secondary school’, ‘more fighting in secondary school’ etc., leading to the broader theme of ‘severe challenges to be faced in secondary school’.

### **3. Searching for themes**

Reviewing all the codes brought out certain ideas or themes that were recurring in each of the stories the young people told. I recognised my role as an active participant in the development of these themes which leads me to present myself in the first person at this stage. While the codes were developed directly from the data, my own input on the themes evolved from my own understanding and interpretation of what had been expressed by each of the participants. Themes were not isolated ideas. They came from the theoretical perspective I had adopted and the ontological perspective guiding the research.

Analysis of broader codes led to the development of themes or central organising concept around codes. The theme “Struggling to cope” was developed from the codes relating to “Me and School”. The procedure was repeated for each data item leading to the development of other themes from codes around other data items.

### **4. Reviewing themes**

Initial themes were based on the researcher’s interpretation of the language used and the meaning that was intended. Every effort was made to represent as far as possible the mind, thinking and language that the young people themselves had used even as the influence of the researcher’s perspectives was acknowledged. For example, “struggled” was a term used by one of the participants to describe his experience and appeared to encapsulate much of what the others had said.

## **5. Defining and Naming Themes**

The thematic map had started from the data, to the topic items, to the codes, to the themes and subthemes to be reviewed as I sought the most suitable language in which to present what was essentially not my view but the view of these young people.

### **3.8. Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research**

Several writers on research methods have demonstrated how qualitative researchers can incorporate measures that deal with the issues associated with reliability and validity employed in positivist research (Silverman, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. These constructs correspond to the criteria employed by positivists relating to validity and reliability. These are:

1. Credibility (in preference to internal validity)
2. Transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability)
3. Dependability (in preference to reliability)
4. Confirmability (in preference to objectivity)

Informed by the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and other researchers (e.g. Robson, 2011), a number of strategies have been employed in this research to meet these criteria for trustworthiness.

#### **Credibility**

The transparency of the research process was one attempt to ensure credibility of the research. It has so far included a number of strategies:

- Familiarity with the context in which participants were located and interviewed started many months earlier from my entry into the county as a trainee educational psychologist working within school settings including work with one student who was at a PRU. However, before the interviews were arranged, meetings with the school manager and heads of PRUs had taken place, allowing specific familiarity with the context. Background information on each student was obtained through this source

and additionally verified in data obtained via manager for exclusions in the Local Authority.

- Ensuring participants were comfortable was important to encourage honest sharing of their experiences. Introductory conversation included review of the purpose of the research and what would be expected e.g. nothing right or wrong, just sharing about experiences; the length of time being dependent on what they wanted to say.
- Discussion about the research with colleagues and supervisors opened the way for corrections as well as refining of the strategies

### **Transferability**

Background data was provided to establish context of the study, with descriptions and definition of phenomenon and terminology surrounding the topic of the research e.g. exclusion. Included also was information on each participant. This could allow the reader to identify any existing similarities.

### **Dependability**

This was sought through detailed and in-depth methodological description that would allow for repetition of the process.

### **Confirmability**

Openness about my beliefs as researcher and sole investigator started at the beginning of the research in terms of both my beliefs and assumptions including the theoretical orientation guiding this research project.

## **3.9. Ethical Considerations for work with Young People**

### **3.9.1. Obtaining informed consent:**

Informed consent was received from all participants in the research. Information provided included. Many of the measures have been previously outlined in this chapter. The full list is presented in Appendix I. It includes:

- The research objectives, type of data to be collected, method of data collection, use of data and the potential benefits of the research were articulated in writing to initial gatekeepers as well as parents and verbally directly to participants as appropriate.
- Data collection was undertaken after permission was received from the Local Authority via the Principal of the EPS and others including schools, parents and young people themselves. This followed approval from the university and ethical approval.
- Participation in the study was voluntary and this was clearly conveyed to potential participants verbally and in writing. This included expression of the right to decline to offer any particular information requested and the assurance of adherence to all **Child Safety and Protection** laws.

### **3.9.2. Protection of participants:**

Participants in this research were not exposed to any immediate risk or hazards. In the quantitative phase, completed questionnaires were returned within a given period of time. In the qualitative phase, which involved interviews with young persons, the location was the school, the home of the participants or public office. Students had at least one other adult in close proximity during interviews. Participants were given contact information for the university as well as the Educational Psychology Service where the researcher is based. This facilitated participants' right to query any actions of the researcher. Debriefing at the end of each interview was also an opportunity to manage any issue that have the potential for causing distress. As a follow-up to the interviews, participants were also pleased with the gift of thanks received from the researcher through school or parents.

## **4. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Phase 1: Quantitative Findings**

#### **Research Questions: Quantitative Phase**

1. What interventions do educational psychologists consider to be effective in supporting students who are at risk of or have been excluded from school?
2. What interventions were used to support students before and after they are excluded?
  - A. By schools
  - B. By Pupil Referral Units

#### **4.1 Research Question 1: What interventions do educational psychologists consider to be effective in supporting students who are at risk of or have been excluded from school?**

The survey of the interventions being recommended by EPs in the county within the last two academic years produced a long list. Seventeen (17) EPs covering all districts of the county provided a wide variety of interventions and types of support that can be offered to the young person and/or family members (see list in Appendix J). These interventions are used at different levels – that is, involving the individual student, the family, the school staff and community groups and/or multi-agency professionals. The numbers represent the frequency with which interventions in the various categories were identified.

While a large number of these interventions were clearly defined, a number of them were focussed on general themes e.g. ‘behaviour management approaches’ and ‘developing effective interactions’. This could mean that there may be an overlap of interventions in the final count. Though these recommendations were not specific, they pointed to particular types of interventions. Additionally, as was also recognised in the TaMHS Report (DfE , 2011) on their project reviewing interventions used by schools across England, interventions were often “locally named and locally defined” (p. 41).

The range of interventions gathered from EPs was organised into categories that made them definable to the less informed reader while also simplifying the process of analysis. This was achieved through a detailed review of interventions, reference to the EPS framework for

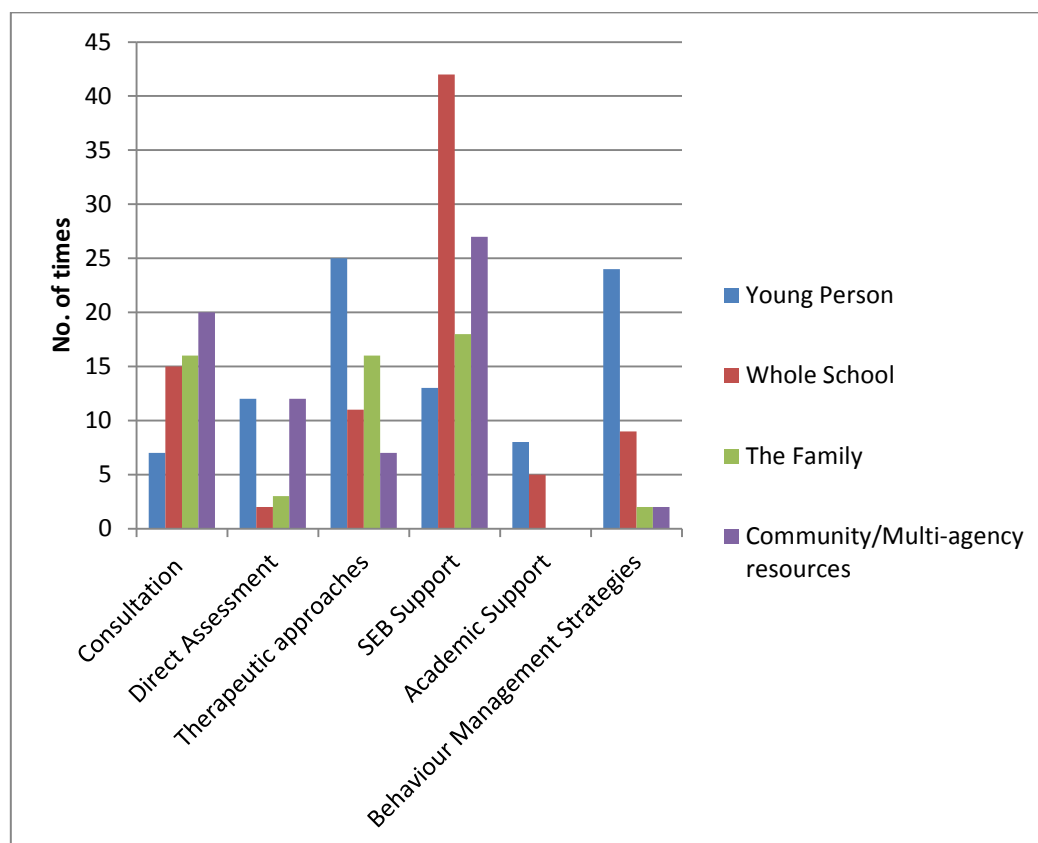
practice and further research on the listed interventions including consultation during daily encounters with EPs in the course of my work. At this initial stage, six categories were identified. These are outlined in Table 4:1 along with examples of the sort of work included in each category. The work in these categories could be at the different levels.

**Table 4: Descriptions of the six categories of interventions recommended by EPs**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Types of work included</b>
1. Consultation	Focuses on meetings with the young person and/or others including school staff, parents and other stakeholders, for the purpose of sharing information	Consultation/conversation with child; Attendance of young person at the Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) Meeting; Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings;
2. Direct Assessment	This is about the different measures used to understand the extent and source of any difficulty being experienced by the young person	Cognitive, psychological, Emotional or behavioural assessment; Observations; Close inspection and assessment using National Curriculum
3. Therapeutic Approaches	Therapies, approaches drawn from therapies and techniques developed for specific emotional and behavioural difficulties	Cognitive behavioural therapy and approaches, solution focused therapy, video modelling and social stories; counselling; family therapy
4. Social, emotional and behavioural Support	Measures based on psychological approaches to support young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as individuals or within groups	Nurture group; Mentoring; Emotional literacy interventions; Parent Support groups; Challenging behavioural policies in school/class; Advice for class teacher
5. Academic Support	Programmes or particular approaches used to support academic progress	Literacy Programmes; Peer-assisted learning strategies; Precision Teaching; Person Centred Approaches to engage in learning
6. Behaviour Management Strategies	Specific strategies to manage behaviour based on behavioural theory	Differentiated behaviour management strategies; role play positive behaviour; Withdrawal space; Anger Management techniques

Categories of interventions identified were rated according to the frequency with which they were recommended by EPs (see Figure 4:1). This shows the number of times items in the named category were delivered or recommended for delivery by schools during the period of two academic years. These are presented as percentages in Figure 4:2.

**Figure 4.1: Interventions recommended by EPs (2011-2013)**



The information provided here indicates that most the commonly recommended intervention was providing social, emotional and behavioural (SEB) support at the whole school level. Consultation, which usually took place at school, was most frequently recommended for multi-agency meetings that often followed the opening of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Consultation was also encouraged to include the family as much as members of the school staff. Consultation was least likely to be recommended for the young person directly and most often involved other professionals.

Assessment was most likely to be directed at the young person. Cognitive assessments, though minimal, were included among the assessments recommended by EPs. Other



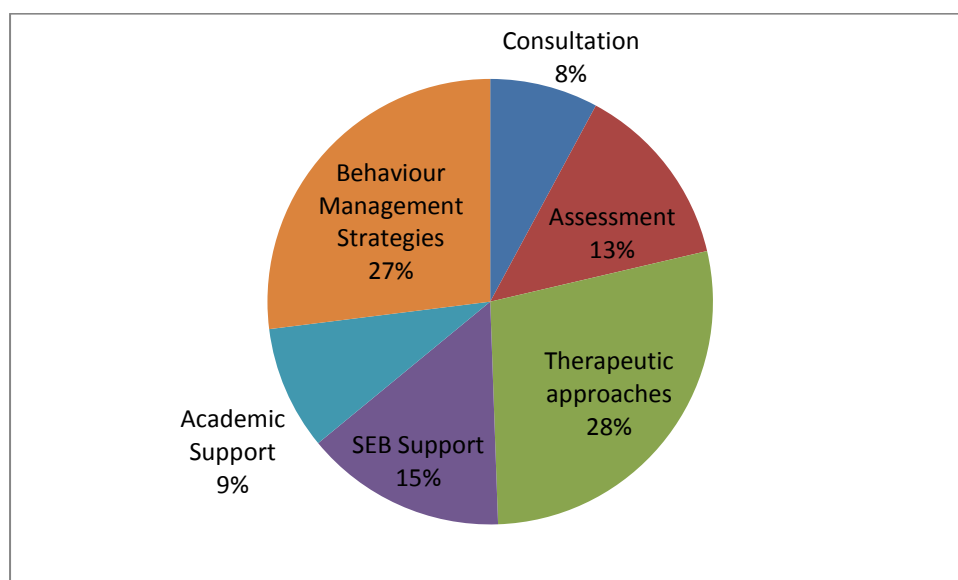
assessments were recommended to be carried out by external agencies. These included medical officers, psychologists, speech and language therapist and others.

EPs tended to recommend most therapeutic interventions directly for the young person though this was also extended to include family members. However, SEB support was offered predominantly in a whole school approach rather than to the young person individually.

The results also reveal that academic support was an unlikely intervention to be recommended by EPs to assist with the school's experience of difficulties exhibited by young people at risk of or being excluded. It was the area in which least interventions were specifically recommended and not at all through multi-agency or community sources. It was possible that such support may be intended in more general recommendations e.g. 'Support plans for students at risk' or 'After school programmes' categorised under SEB Support.

Behaviour management strategies were most often recommended for use by the school with the young person directly and sometimes as a whole school approach. Behaviour management strategies were very rarely suggested as the basis for a family intervention. *Figure 4.3 to Figure 4.6* gives a breakdown of the distribution of interventions across the different levels.

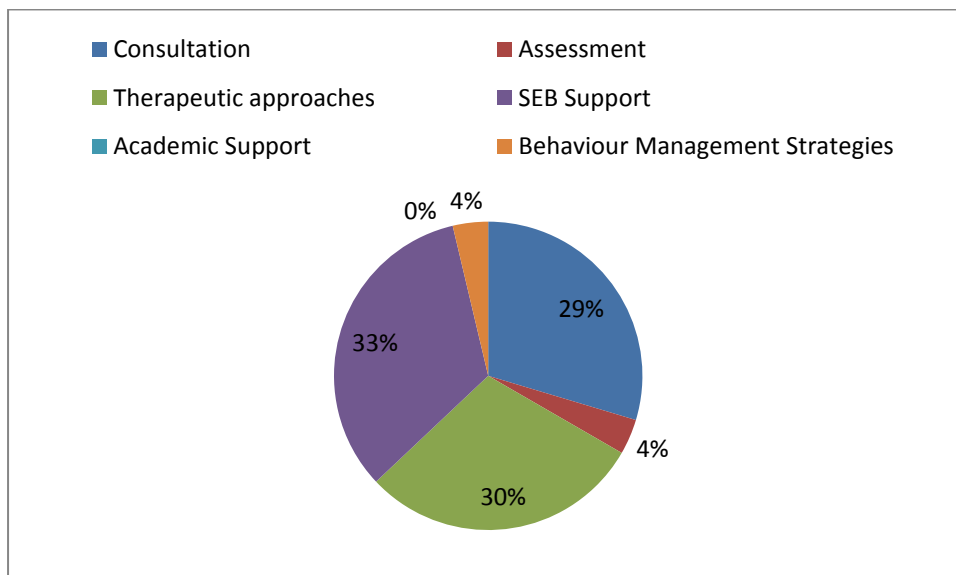
**Figure 4.3: Interventions to the Young Person directly**



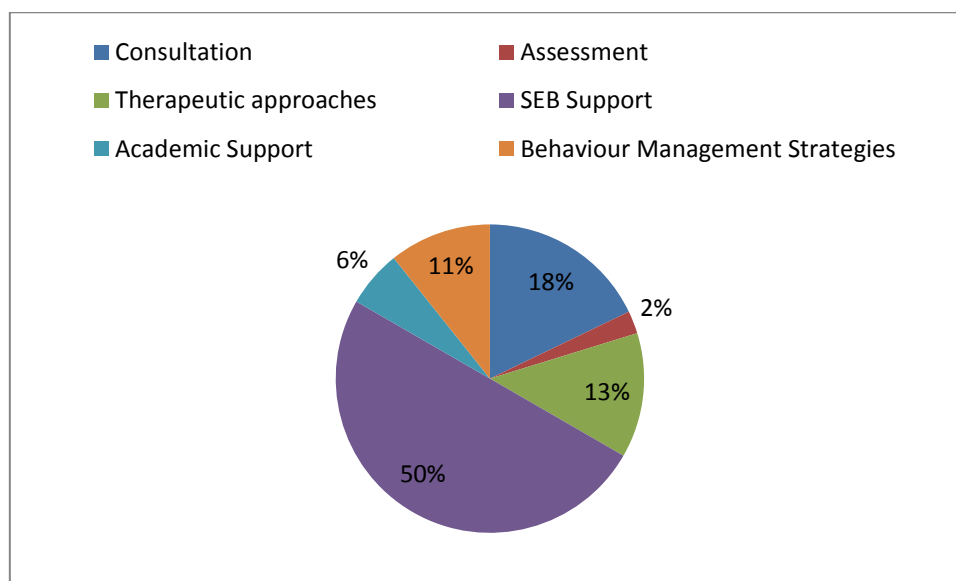
As can be seen from Figure 4.3, the two main approaches for the young person directly were therapeutic approaches and behaviour management. These interventions were about twice as likely to be recommended by EPs as Assessment and SEB support.

At the level of the family, 33% of the interventions suggested were in the form of SEB support (see Figure 4.4). This included family support groups and programmes that were accessed in the community and the involvement of other professionals. There was usually very little support in terms of behaviour management strategies, or assessment and literally no offer of academic support involving family members.

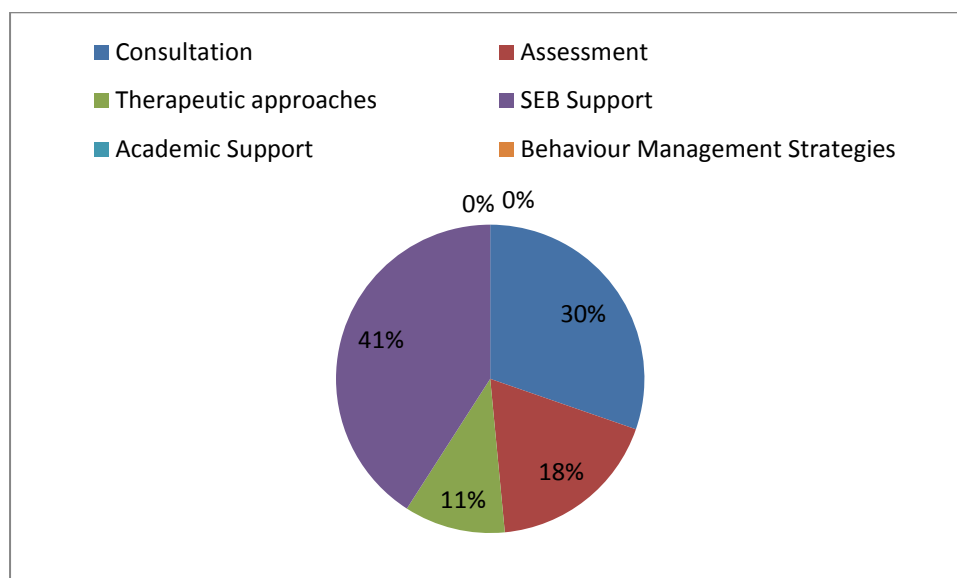
**Figure 4.4: EP recommendations for the family**



The intervention most frequently recommended by EPs for schools was SEB support (50%). This included to a large extent the use of nurturing approaches, the training for staff and the review of school policies around social emotional development and behaviour of students. This can be contrasted with the 2% recommendation for assessment, the 6% for academic support and 13 % for the use of therapeutic approaches (*Figure 4.5*).

**Figure 4.5: Interventions at the whole school level**

Community and multi-agency resources were often recommended to support young people experiencing SEB difficulties at school. Results showed that 41% of community/multi-agency resources were to provide SEB support to students and schools compared to 30% for consultation and 18% for assessment and only 11% for therapeutic interventions (*Figure 4.6*). Interventions using therapeutic approaches included cognitive behaviour therapy, solution focussed brief therapy and specialised approaches that would have been used by less qualified professionals e.g. cognitive behavioural and solution focussed approaches, as well as techniques developed for use with specific groups e.g. social stories and basic video modelling for young people on the autistic spectrum.

**Figure 4.6:EP Recommendations targeting Community/Multi-agency resources**

#### **4.1.1 Summary**

The survey showed that EPs participating in this study recommended a range of interventions covering support at the various levels for the difficulties experienced by young people. They most commonly recommended SEB support at the Whole School level and with the involvement of community/multi-agency resources, which would include EPs and other professionals. This was followed by therapeutic approaches and behaviour management techniques at the level of the individual young person.

Consultation involving community/multi-agency resources was next on the list of most recommended interventions. For the family, EPs recommended consultation, therapeutic approaches and SEB support. Academic support was least recommended by EPs for support with the family through services that may be available through multi-agency professionals. This was followed by direct assessment at the level of the family and BMT for engagement with the family and community/multi-agency professionals.

**4.2. Research Question 2:** What interventions are used to support students before and after they are excluded?

- A. By Schools
- B. By Pupil Referral Units

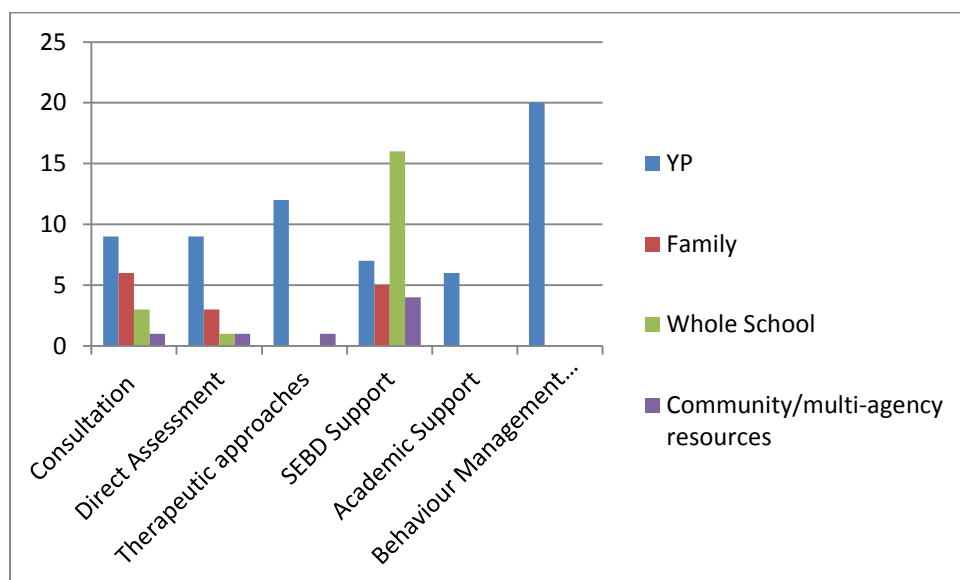
#### **4.2.a. Interventions used by Schools**

Data was obtained from school managers of three schools – two schools (Schools A and B) in an area with the lowest recorded number of exclusions and one school (School C) from an area on record as having the highest numbers of exclusion in the county. They were asked to identify the interventions from the six categories recommended by EPs which were used by the school to support young people being excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion. As in the previous phase, interventions were identified at different levels – the YP directly, to include the family, at the level of the Whole School and at the level of the wider community, utilising resources from external agencies (see list in Appendix K).

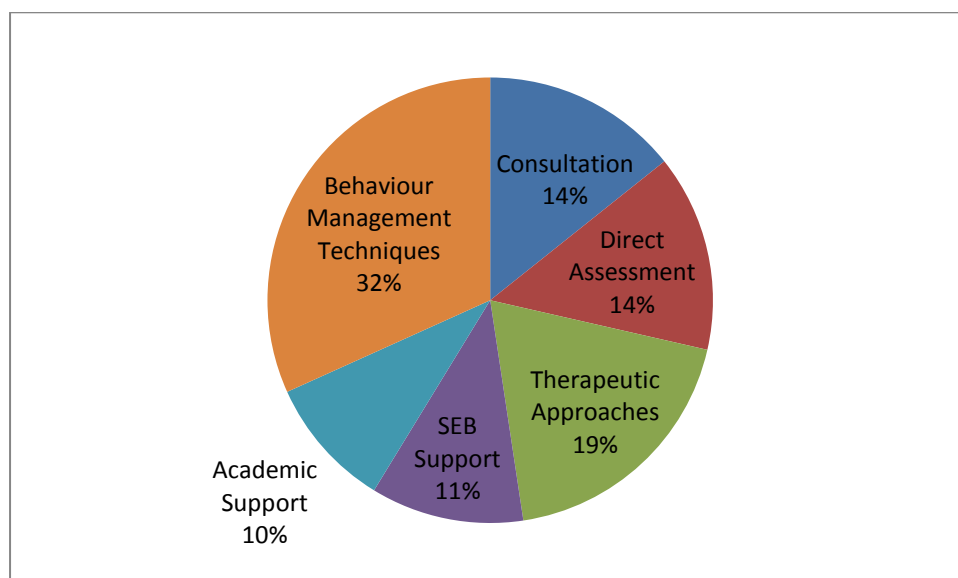
Figure 4.7 gives an overview of the interventions used by schools organised at the different levels. This indicates that the two most popular interventions used by these schools were

behaviour management techniques and social, emotional and behavioural (SEB) support measures. Behaviour management techniques were the most popular intervention applied to the young person directly while social, emotional and behavioural support measures were used most at the Whole School Level.

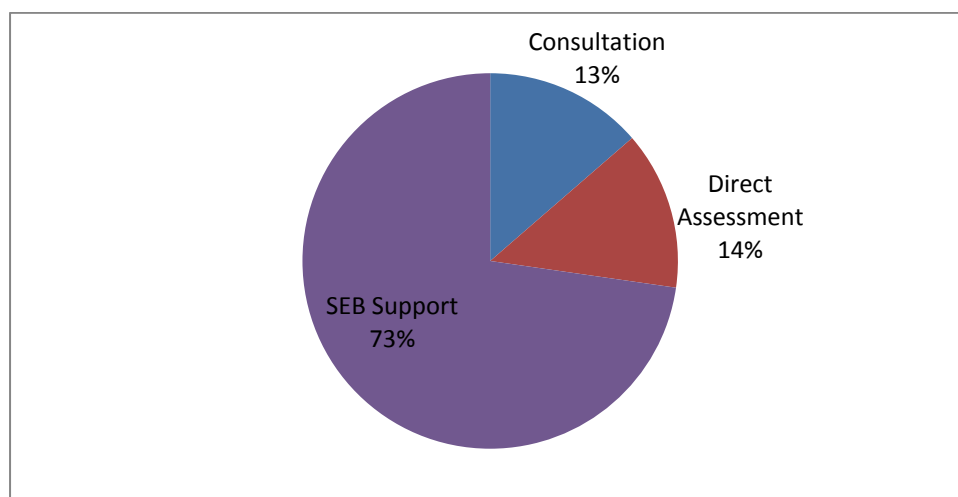
**Figure 4.7: No. of times interventions were identified by schools**



At the individual level (Figure 4.8), behaviour management techniques/strategies (BMT) were most popular, followed by the use of therapeutic approaches. Next were consultation and assessment followed by SEB support. A likely explanation for low levels of SEB support to the individual may be the fact that these measures were significantly applied at the whole school level. BMT included rewards for positive behaviour, withdrawal space and exit cards allowing students to leave the classroom often for the designated place to give them time to calm down. Therapeutic approaches included cognitive behavioural approaches and counselling or the use of solution focussed approaches. Academic support was least likely to be addressed at the individual level and significantly not addressed at any other level. This may be for a number of reasons including the impact of learning difficulties on behavioural outcomes not being recognised or the schools not having the capacity to address these particular needs more extensively.

**Figure 4.8: Interventions to the YP directly (by schools)**

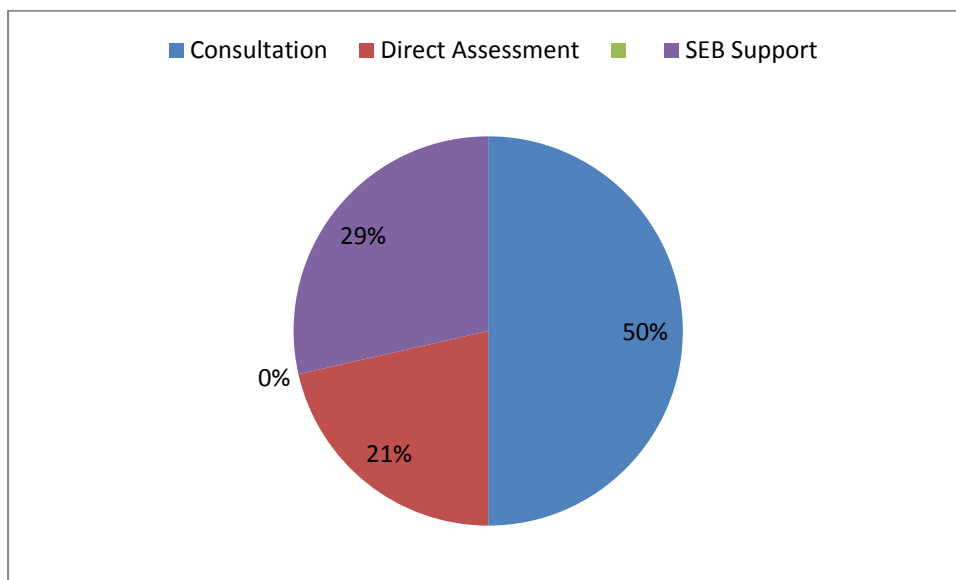
School managers reported that SEB support was provided for all students (i.e. at the whole school level) about five times as much as there was consultation to provide support for those students experiencing difficulties with behaviour. SEB support included pastoral support plans and mentoring by school staff. Direct assessment was only minimally indicated as a whole school measure – specifically, *close inspection and assessment using National Curriculum* was reported by one of the schools (See Figure 4.9 below).

**Figure 4.9: Interventions at the whole school level**

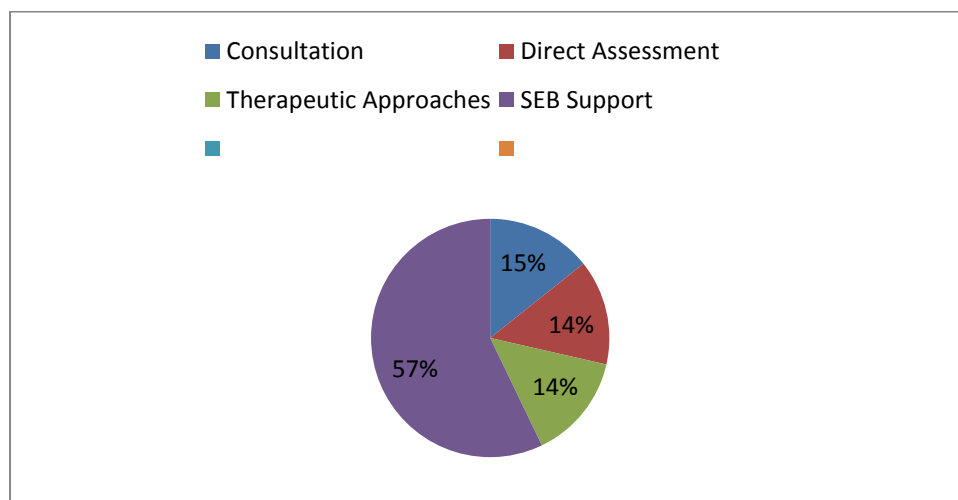
At the level of the family (Figure 4.10), consultation was indicated as being used most frequently, almost twice as much as SEB support measures, which was second (and more

than twice as much as direct assessment measures). Consultation with family members included the school's attendance at Team around the family meetings with other professionals. SEB support included parenting programmes and support groups. Noteworthy was the indication by two of the schools about the contribution of family liaison officers who are no longer available for consultation with families. Assessment involving the family was usually in the form of the CAF which allowed for the involvement of external agencies. Academic support was not identified by EPs and was not identified by school managers as an area in which school engaged with family members. BMT were not given specific attention but were identified as an area often covered in SEB support to families e.g. parenting programmes.

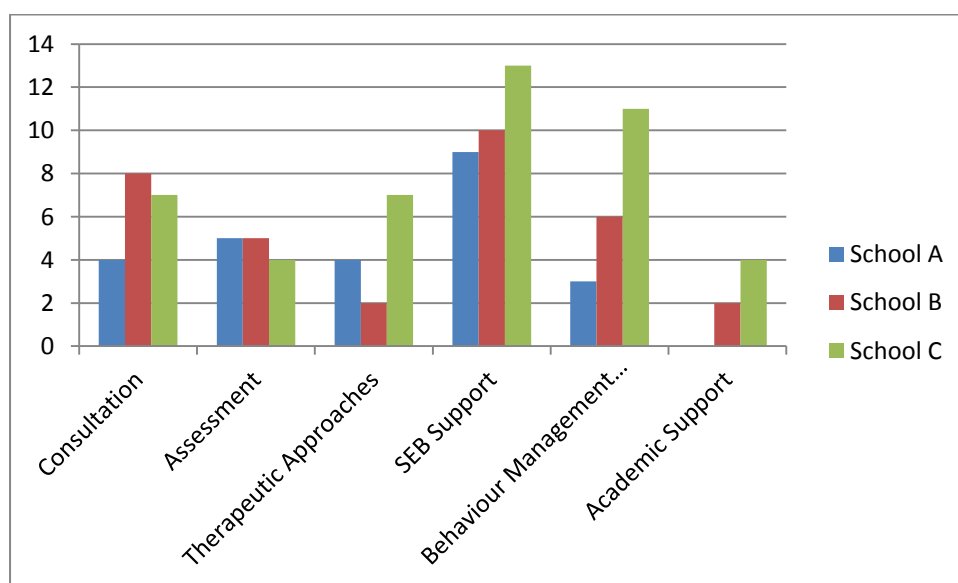
**Figure 4.10: Interventions involving the family**



The findings also suggest that schools utilised community and multi- agency resources such as educational psychologists most often for SEB support measures. This included involvement in the Team Around the Family (TAF). Significantly lower levels of involvement were reported for community/multi-agency professionals in consultation, assessment and therapeutic approaches beneficial to students. Involvement reported was through referrals to speech and language therapists, educational psychology service and community resources including the police service. The school managers did not identify any involvement of community/multi-agency resources with regard to learning support and behaviour management techniques.

**Figure 4.11: Interventions delivered through Community/Multi-agency resources**

The results present a number of similarities and differences in the interventions used by the schools (Figure 4.12). SEB support was most commonly used and Academic Support least, with one school not providing any supplemental academic support for a student facing multiple fixed term exclusion or at risk of permanent exclusion. The two schools (A and B) from the district with the lowest rates of exclusion seem to present little difference from School C, in the high risk district. The most noticeable difference is in the use of BMTs where School C reported substantially more use of interventions in this category than Schools A and B. Consultation and Assessment were the two categories in which School C did not report greater use of interventions to support young people at risk of permanent exclusion.

**Figure 4.12: Comparison between schools (interventions reported)**



Data about the use of interventions with young people at risk of or being excluded from secondary school was also obtained from the head of the pupil referral units providing for young people in the district with highest exclusion rates in the county.

#### **4.2.b. Interventions used by PRUs**

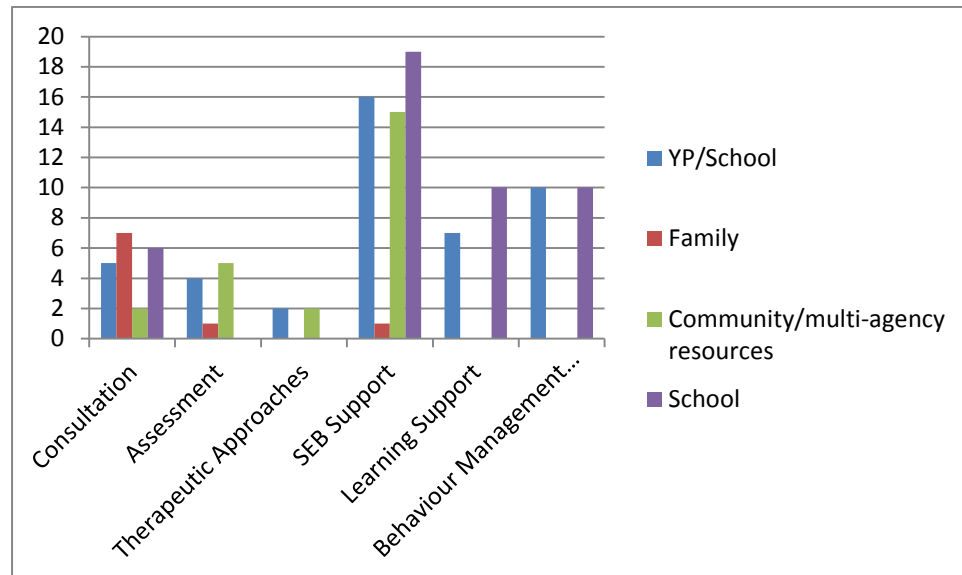
The same categories used for interventions reported by schools were applied in organising the interventions reported by heads of the PRUs. They reported a range of interventions that they used to support young people who had also been permanently excluded (See a full list of these interventions in the Appendix L). Generally, very few of the interventions recommended by EPs were actually being used. The most popular interventions were for social, emotional and behavioural (SEB) support which was something in common with schools who participated in the study.

A notable difference from the schools related to the fact that interventions, including those for SEB support, were applied across the ‘level of the school’; and not just to individual students. As a result, there was a considerable overlap of interventions between the individual level and the broader school level. Additional interventions in SEB support at the ‘level of the school’ (i.e. accessed by all students), were related to staff training in different areas. Interventions identified as ‘qualified teachers’ or ‘staff trained in phonics intervention’ were also interpreted as ‘academic support’.

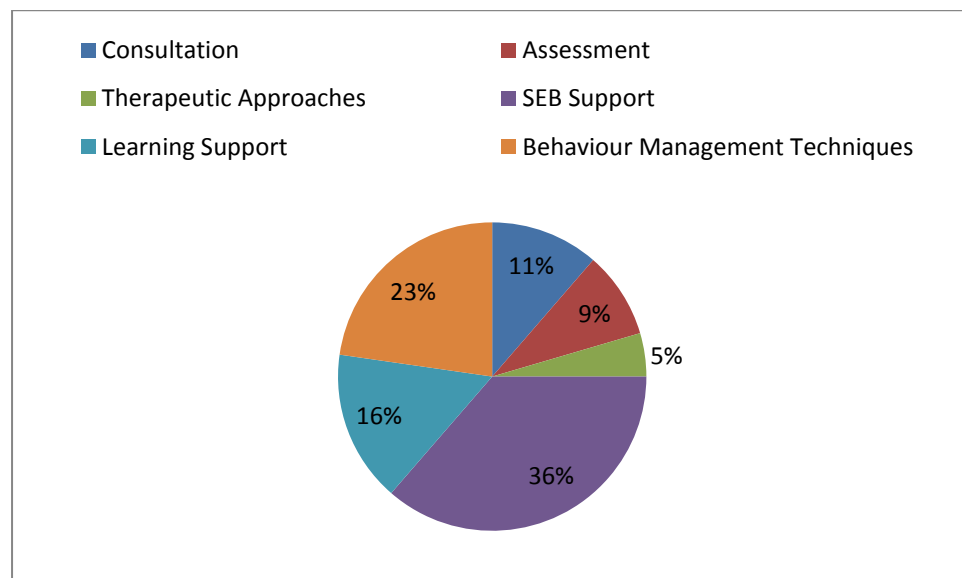
Consultations were used to a much lesser degree at PRUs in comparison to what happened at schools and what was recommended by EPs. Consultation was reported to take place with a member of staff and young people most often in small groups where listening was encouraged. Parents failed to be engaged as often as was considered beneficial though PRUs reported a number of measures in place to reach out to parents e.g. Open Door policy, regular phone calls and invitation to meetings at school. Only one PRU reported staff consultations as an important measure to effect positive change with regard to the young people’s

engagement in the education process. In that particular case, staff consultations on what was happening with different students were held at the beginning and end of every school day.

**Figure 4.13: Overview of interventions used at different levels**



**Figure: 4.14: Overview of interventions (percentages)**

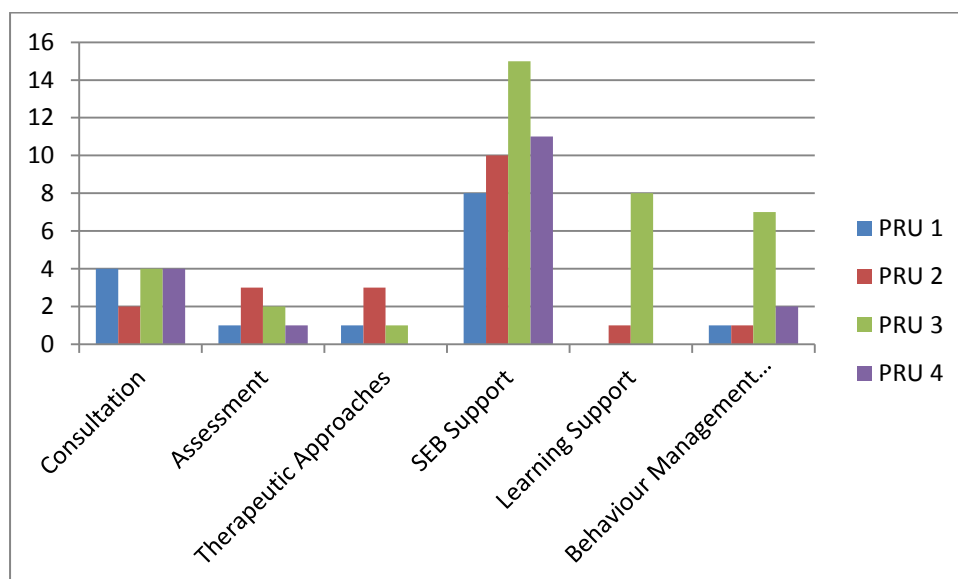


The PRUs offered very little in terms of assessment with some indication of a needs assessment being completed by two PRUs. Three managers reported that formal SEB assessment was seldom undertaken with students. Parents/carers were reportedly reluctant to

become engaged in the CAF process and in consultation generally. PRUs reported that a number of CAFs, opened at secondary schools, were eventually closed. Therapeutic approaches were least reported by PRUs and these were generally delivered through the EPS and CAMHS.

In examining these interventions, there appeared to be some variation in the number of interventions reported by the teachers in charge of the four PRUs (see Figure 4.15). Only one PRU reported a high level of learning support in contrast to very little from one PRU and no extra support for learning from another two. Besides literacy and numeracy, learning was addressed in non-traditional areas like cooking and craft. One PRU reported differentiated support for learning in a few instances. Two of the PRUs used no particular intervention to support learning, though academic support was offered generally. Three out of the four PRU reported minimal use of therapeutic approaches, delivered through referrals to external agencies like CAMHS for assessment of ADHD.

**Figure 4.15: Interventions reported by the individual PRUs**



### 4.2.3 Summary

The findings from schools and PRUs in the district of high exclusion rates show the range of interventions recommended by EPs were being used in varying degrees. They were least used in the four PRUs in the district and most used by the secondary school.

The following summarises these findings:

- SEB support was the most commonly applied support applied at the Whole School level in schools
- Therapeutic interventions were rarely used by PRUs
- Additional and differentiated support for learning was least delivered by both schools and PRUs
- At schools and PRUs, a significant level of SEB support was accessed by vulnerable young people through community/multi-agency resources
- However, at the individual level, BMTs were most often used by schools while therapeutic interventions were most often recommended by EPs.

## **Phase 2: Qualitative Findings**

### **4.3 Research Question 3: What are the young people's experiences of interventions to support them before and/or after being excluded?**

#### **4.3.1 Introducing the participants**

As described in the Methodology Section, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six students. The six students – 3 male students and 3 female students - have been given pseudonyms which will be used throughout the report of the study. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and lasted up to one hour. The young people talked about their experiences of exclusion and the support they had received throughout the process of being excluded. The following portraits provide further context for each participant, and as stated in the previous chapter, is expected to support each participant's contribution to the themes.

'Anne' (14 years) was the only participant who had received multiple fixed term exclusions before being successfully reintegrated back into her old school. Anne had lived with her father and elder sister since her parents separated when she was a pre-schooler. She spoke of her father not being "much of a father figure" and that her sister was the one who had really taken care of her, performing "the mother role". Her difficulties with behaviour and settling down in class began early and she was diagnosed with ADHD when she was in Year 3. She spoke of being excluded regularly from Year 4 onwards.

When Anne entered secondary school, she was almost immediately put on a half day schedule. By this time, she had moved in with her mother who had to be at home to supervise her during the time she spent out of school. Anne spoke of bullying during this period when

she had put on a lot of weight, which she attributed to the ADHD medication. She had also experienced difficulty making friends as she left school without her peers knowing where she was going, thinking she was “bunking classes”. She also spent increasing amounts of time “isolated” in her room during this period. Anne also spoke of difficulties getting along with different teachers and of being ‘angry’ and ‘depressed’ a lot of this time.

Anne attributed significant change in her attitude and behaviour by Year 8 to a particular member of staff and a team he put together to support her. She noted significant levels of support with the advent of this teacher. Such was the impact of these interventions, that she had no exclusions in Year 8. In Year 9, she had one incident for which she was not excluded but sent to the onsite exclusion room for half a day.

The interventions she spoke about included a number of behaviour management techniques e.g. an exit card that allowed her permission to leave the class when she thought she felt too upset or angry. She would normally go to the member of staff with whom she was able to talk over how she felt, or to a room where she remained until she felt calm and in control. She spoke of the understanding of the particular member of staff and others who provided mentorship and support for her family. There was regular communication with her mother through regular phone calls and consultation on ‘positives and negatives as well as some exchange of strategies that were useful in meeting her needs. Family members were also introduced to community support programmes e.g. mediation that she believed helped them to move forward with their lives.

Three of the participants - two female students and one male - had been permanently excluded. The oldest of this group, ‘Ben’ (15) had been out of school for a year before he was reintegrated into another school. Ben’s problems at school had escalated over the first two and half years at secondary school until he was permanently excluded for a drug related offence at school. He had been caught trying to pass on a marijuana cigarette to another student. Ben had gone to a small village primary school where he spoke of having “stuck out” because he was “bigger than everyone else”. His problem with school developed around his engagement with peers who were older and conflict with his teachers. Ben spoke of accepting whatever discipline measures his teacher would have used at primary school but that this changed early in secondary school. Being bigger than same-aged peers, Ben started “hanging out” with older students from the time he was in Year 7 and was introduced to those

he called “the bad people” – students from Year 8 and Year 9 who regularly “had a fag” on the playground and disrespected teachers.

Ben repeatedly broke class rules and had regular confrontations with his teachers during the next two years. He was regularly sent out of classes to the disciplinary room that he likened to a “prison cell”. Ben hated being sent to this room but felt locked into the system whereby he felt it was hard to avoid it. His behaviour deteriorated as he was also intermittently reprimanded in front of the entire student body. Ben spoke of not being given responsibility and being ‘irritated’ by being identified with a negative label. He spoke of wanting this to change but instead finding himself at times being wrongfully accused and not being able to fight what was happening to him.

After Ben was permanently excluded from his first secondary school, he was sent to a PRU but he had his mother’s support in rejecting that placement. His mother was able to obtain a placement at another secondary school on a trial basis. Ben’s behaviour was monitored at this new school and when his reputation caught up with him, he seemed unable to make good use of the second chance he had received. Ben was out of school for one year before he was finally reintegrated. During this time, he had a number of experiences including attendance at a second PRU for the last few months before he was gradually reintegrated.

During the period out of school, Ben’s mother was instrumental in finally securing some assistance. She had understood a bit of what school was experiencing and had sought an explanation for his behaviour. Finally being directed to approach the school to open a Common Assessment Framework (CAF), she obtained access to a number of professionals who supported Ben’s journey back. Ben is currently pursuing his GCSEs, having changed his approach to teachers.

‘Colleen’ (14 years) was reintegrated into another school after less than two terms at the PRU into another school. She had had no previous exclusions but had experienced an incident with some of her peers in Year 8 of her first school that caused her to change schools. Before the end of that year at her new school, she was excluded for fighting with another female student. Colleen lived with her mother and brothers, one of whom had a disability. She was an able student who had entered secondary school without any difficulty until she noticed that the girls in her friendship group had become “quite bitchy” to others. She reported that she

waited until the end of the school year to remove herself. She returned in Year 8 as a member of another group, an action which she said must have displeased the first group. She attributed being “jumped” by a girl to this action and felt so uncomfortable afterwards that she transferred to another school.

Colleen complained about being judged by teachers in her new school who had known her older siblings. She was settling in, however, when an altercation with another female student deteriorated into a fight and this led to her being permanently excluded. Colleen reported that the conflict with the other student was centred on the latter’s bullying of her disabled brother. After exclusion, Colleen was sent to a PRU where she managed to provide enough evidence of her ability in order to gain the support of teachers towards her reintegration into another secondary school.

‘Beth’ (13 years) was still at a PRU, starting to hope for another chance to continue her education, perhaps at an FE College. She had already been at the PRU for more than one year at the time of the interview after, what she said was not the first time, she was “kicked out” from a school. She had experienced significant difficulty settling into the school environment and forming positive relationships with teachers and peers.

Beth reported that she had attended “loads of schools” and been “kicked out”. She lived with her mother and siblings. Beth experienced significant difficulty making friends and interacting with teachers and other adults in the school environment. She spoke of not being happy to the extent of entertaining the idea of throwing herself off the roof at school. She also spoke of not feeling safe to share her difficulties as a process of obtaining support at the mainstream secondary school.

Beth also experienced difficulty with learning and spoke of not having much confidence in her abilities. At the PRU, she spoke of feeling understood and having a sense of “privilege” of being treated well.

The two younger male students, ‘Dave’ and ‘Francis’ – 12 and 13 years respectively - were at a PRU and said to be on an indefinite ‘time-out’. Francis had been finally excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour, truancy and drug use. He was well known by the community police in his neighbourhood for a range of offences. He was concerned that this could result

in him being taken away from home. Francis had been diagnosed with ADHD since starting at the PRU six months previously.

‘Francis’ was an only child living with his mother. He professed to like Maths but especially football and had done very little work while at school, bunking classes and smoking. At the PRU, Francis enjoyed the smaller school population and the amount of supervision he received, that he said resulted in him not being able to get away with doing the wrong thing. He felt the teachers were stricter and that was good. Francis also enjoyed the fact the Fridays allowed him time and opportunity to obtain a choice of different activities including cooking and football. Francis believed that the ADHD medication had also helped him to behave better.

‘Dave’ had started at the PRU only weeks before the interview. He had experienced several measures of disciplinary action including detention, isolation and shortened days at school for persistent disruptive behaviour as well as fighting. Eventually, he was excluded in what was reported by the head teacher (PRU) as the new option of ‘time-out’. Dave spoke of being surprised that after all the threats they had actually excluded him from school.

Dave lived with his mother who he said had been called regularly into school because of his ‘naughty’ behaviour. This started from Year 7 in secondary school. Dave expressed concern about his difficulty with reading which he had become aware of while at secondary school. After being bullied in Year 5, Dave started adopting the behaviours of a group of students that led to repeated infractions of the school rules. In addition to his mother, Dave spoke of his father whom he visited some distance away from the district where he lived. He also spoke of his brother who was killed when he 18 years old. Dave said his father had broken down and cried when he found out Dave had been excluded. He said that this had made him want to do better. It had not yet been decided when and if these two boys would return to mainstream school.

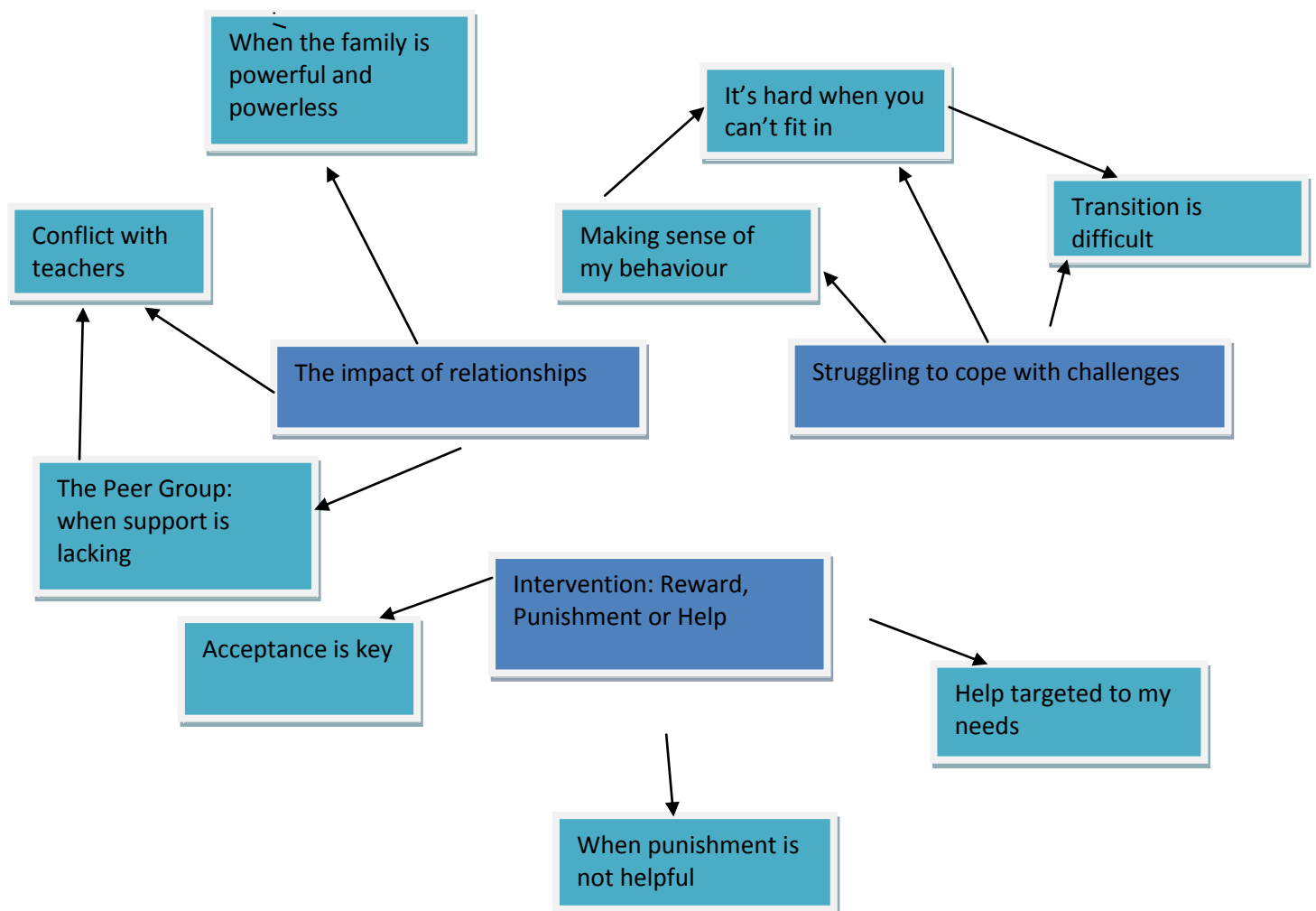
Central concepts or themes were derived from different sections of the transcribed interview data. The interview data was initially divided into sections relating to the research question that I wanted to answer. In the first section of the interview, students responded to the question about school and how they engaged with school, to give a personal account of their experiences and how they felt about school. The question began with “Tell me about you and



school” with some prompts to encourage more sharing e.g. what was class like? Francis had dismissed the idea of school with “I like it and don’t like it!” However, when I asked about class, I was able to hear about the experiences of “bunking” lessons or being sent out for disruptive behaviours.

As discussed in the methodology section, thematic analysis was used to make sense of the interviews. Initially six themes were derived from an inductive analysis covering the range of the interview data. These were condensed into three themes each with subthemes.

**Figure 4.16** presents these themes with subthemes. See Table 4.2 with themes, subthemes and codes in Appendix M.



**Figure 4.16: Themes and subthemes**

#### **4.3.2 Theme One: *Struggling to cope with challenges***

A pervading idea throughout the account given by each student was one of struggle. The words of the oldest of the participants, Ben, seemed to encapsulate what the others may have been saying:

*I struggled and it was quite hard.* (Ben Line 26)

Within this first theme, the issues recorded included finding it hard to fit in and facing rejection; issues around transition from primary to secondary school and the uncertainty around the options that were available; and struggling to make sense of their own behaviour that were at times not so easy to control.

In arriving at the overall theme, some developing themes became subthemes. These include:

- It's hard when you can't fit in
- Transition is difficult
- Making sense of my behaviour

##### **4.3.2.1 Subtheme: It's hard when you can't fit in**

Some of the challenges were those that have been associated with adolescent development and trying to find a place within the wider scenario, including fitting in the peer group. The difficulty fitting in seemed to be related to a sense of low self-esteem or not being happy to be different in some way from their peers.

Dave's feeling of inadequacy was around reading.

*My reading age is very small and so is my spelling age.* (Dave: Line 19)

*Ever since I get to school everyone was shooting up in their reading and I was just there... still reading R1 in Year 3.* (Dave: Line 23)

At Primary school, Ben noted,

*I was bigger.... I stuck out more than everyone.* (Ben: Line 13-14)

However, he remembered that he experienced few difficulties at primary school when he might have had a half day of exclusion on one occasion. His real problems, he reported,

started at secondary school. From Year 7, being bigger allowed him to ‘hang out’ with older students and this led to him trying out different behaviours. About his experience, Ben said,

*...at first I didn't know where I was and what it was all about but as the months got on, I sort of discovered who I was and who I was around and stuff* (Ben. Line 19 - 20)

Beth had found it difficult to fit into all schools she had attended:

*I have been to loads of schools... I was kicked out Primary and I got sent to ... I got kicked out in Year 5 because they didn't want me anymore. I was sent to Behaviour school... got kicked out there and then went to a Secondary school and now here* (Beth: Line 3 – 5)

*In the report, they said they couldn't handle me, didn't want me in the school...* (Beth: Line 44 - 45)

The young people's words provide some evidence of the difficulty that was experienced around fitting in and feeling accepted - whether this was in terms of ability or looking the same, in small friendship groups or within the wider school community or acceptance by peers or school authority.

#### **4.3.2.2. Subtheme: Transition is difficult**

With the exception of Colleen, who had been excluded as a result of a violent encounter with another student in Year 8, all of the young people had started having difficulties at the primary level. However, difficulties that may have started earlier worsened from Year 7 at the secondary level suggesting an unresolved issue with the transition from primary to secondary school.

*Big problems started in secondary school. In secondary school at first I didn't know where I was and what it was all about* (Ben Line: 19 – 20)

Dave insisted that his real problems started when he moved “from a tiny school of 56 to 2,000 in one school” (Dave: Line 10). Secondary school seemed to Dave like a long way from some of the security he experienced at the primary level.

*Primary was alright. It's in secondary that the problem only in secondary that the problem started really bad.* (Dave Line: 38 – 39)

Colleen experienced some difficulty with the transition from the PRU back into mainstream

*I felt I didn't want to go in because I wasn't used to like some many people in a class room. You go from like a school with 8 people to a school for 800 so it was really hard going back. (Colleen: Line 124 – 126)*

From the young people's account of transition - from primary to secondary or from the PRU back into mainstream/secondary - it was clear that this was an area where some difficulty was experienced and in which the young people thought that support was needed.

#### **4.3.2.3. Subtheme: Making sense of my behaviour**

- **Do I have a problem?**

Francis shared his ambivalent feelings about school, *I don't like it and I do like it* (Francis: Line 2). This seemed to be connected to his preference for non-academic subjects.

*I liked football and Maths and that's it... I love football and that's it.*  
(Francis: Line 2 – 3)

He also recognised that his behaviour was not what was expected

*I didn't used to do much at school. I bunked lesson, run out of lessons, run out of school, smoke in school, throw chairs.*(Francis: Line 16 - 17 )

Towards the end of the interview, Francis decided to share his experiences with the community police. It seemed that he wanted to obtain some clarity about his behaviour and his future options. I had asked him if there was anything more he wanted to tell me.

*Anything? I am in trouble with the police but not too much... For a couple of stuff I do outside.... That's it really...* (Francis: Line 116 – 117)

*If it continues, I will be sent to Young Offenders.* (Francis: Line 122)

Anne saw ADHD at the root of most of her behavioural difficulties including making it difficult for the teachers...

*to speak over me...because I would be talking to my friends, trying to make them laugh* (Anne Line: 62 - 63)

*When I was about in year 3, that's when I was diagnosed with (ADHD)... I was in year 3 and didn't understand what it was about it ...apart from that I was fidgety, I was moving about a lot (Anne Line:56 - 57)*

Anne also labelled herself as “an angry child” on more than one occasion as she told her story.

*If a teacher shouted at me, I would be louder and shout back...because a normal reaction with the ADHD and I'd get angry.... (Anne Lines: 108 – 109)*

*...because I didn't have much of a good upbringing with Dad (Anne: Line 104)*

Behaviour featured as the major source of conflict for the young people and they were found to have done some degree of reflection in an effort to make sense of their behaviour. It can be seen from the above that some of the young people explained their behaviour by focussing on internal factors (e.g. ADHD) whilst others gave external causes, e.g. their peers. This has implications for making sense of the support they receive when they have been excluded. Whether it was seen to be in response to relationship factors or attributed to a personal problem, making sense of their behaviour was necessary and another area where support was required and not always readily available.

- **Am I ‘hanging out’ with the wrong people?**

A number of the students talked about “hanging out” with the wrong people when they started secondary school and getting into the habit of being naughty.

*In Secondary school, the first six months I was just settling in so I was good in the first six months but then I started to hang out with the wrong people and was really naughty. (Dave: Line 5 - 6)*

*I started to discover that there were the good people and the bad people and that I had sort of narrowed myself with the bad people (Ben: Line 21 – 22)*

Beth reported that she was ‘kicked out’ of ‘Behaviour School’ after climbing on the roof with another girl:

*One of my mates was going on the roof and asked me to go with them. I was that dumb to go with her and then just threatened (low snigger) to kill myself (Beth: Line 28 - 29)*

Colleen's first set of friends at secondary school turned out to be 'the wrong crowd' when she noticed the way they treated other people. Trying to distance herself from them had negative results

*I waited until summer and I stopped hanging around them and they realised I had left them and turned nasty against me (Colleen: Line 20 – 21)*

Drawing from the young people's stories, it became evident that it was not easy to find the 'right' friends i.e. the friendships through which positive outcomes were achieved. Getting into 'the wrong crowd' was often the result of early efforts to make friends at secondary school, as they reached out to their peers for the support they needed.

#### **4.3.3. Theme Two: *The Impact of relationships***

This theme identified relationships that at times were supportive and at other times seemed burdensome. These relationships stood out for the young people as a very important part of their lives. These were identified specifically as family, peer group and relationships with teachers that featured strongly in their experience of school and being excluded. They presented their relationship with teachers as a significant part of both the reason and solution to the problems they experienced while the peer group was presented as a constant source of anxiety from which they sought acceptance and support. Issues of parenting by one adult who experienced increasing challenges, minimal parental involvement with school, the powerlessness of parents in the face of the powerful school system and family loyalty also feature strongly in the experiences of the young people.

Three subthemes were identified from the initial codes:

- When the family is powerful and powerless
- The Peer Group: when support is lacking
- Conflict with teachers

#### **4.3.3.1.Subtheme: When the family is powerful and powerless**

Parents and family members came up in the children's stories, seeming at times to exert a powerful influence. This can be inferred from acts by the students to defend their family in some way and in their reactions to changes in their family. At other times, the parent/family was presented as powerless in their influence over the situations arising from their child's encounter with school.

This theme arose from questions that related the extent of family engagement with school and the problems they were experiencing there and their engagement with school in general.

Involvement of parent/family members in matters relating to school seemed mostly prompted by mandatory meetings i.e. when they were called in to discuss the young person's behaviour or with regard to transition including returning from exclusion. From the young people's accounts, parents too seemed to struggle with the behaviours, not knowing where to turn and in some cases may have been less concerned than school. Though there would have been some differences in the young people's experiences of being parented and the involvement of parents in matters relating to school, the overriding theme appeared to be one of powerless/powerful interaction with the young person, the school and decisions being made.

Francis lives with his Mum. She did not like it that she was called in because he got into trouble repeatedly at school.

*She was cross... she was called into school a lot* (Francis: Line 13)

According to Francis, she also did not like him smoking....

*My Mum knows I smoke and don't like me doing it...I have been smoking a long time and I can't stop... I can but I don't want to stop* (Francis: Line 38 - 40)

Beth thought it was difficult for her Mum to cope with her problems at school because she had a younger sibling who needed her attention.

*My Mum found it hard because my little sister was just growing up* (Beth: Line 50)

Dave and Colleen said that their actions leading to exclusion was triggered by comments about family members.

*This girl in school pushed me and she was talking about my mum and my brother and so she went to hit me and I did hit her* (Colleen: Line 28 - 29)

Dave lived with his Mum and visited his Dad in another city. Dave seemed to be still working out his own sense of loss, first of his father moving away followed by his older brother who he said was 18 years when he died.

*I was on my last chance. I broke a kid's nose... I literally booted him in the face...because my brother passed away and he said something about my brother* (Dave: Line 60 -62).

He related that his Mum was going into school every week for meetings because he was 'so naughty and wasn't changing' (Dave: Line 74 - 75).

When Colleen told her Mum that other students were saying that she was going to be permanently excluded, her Mum had said "Don't be silly!" (Colleen: Line 61).

They were both shocked to get the phone call saying that she had been permanently excluded. They also felt it was unfair that she had received such a harsh punishment but didn't consider they had a chance to succeed over the authorities.

*We could have put in an appeal but we knew I wouldn't have been accepted back.* (Colleen: Line 75)

Annie reported that during her primary school years, when she and her sister lived with their father, it was her sister who took care of her

*She was basically my mother role* (Anne: Line 39)

Beth did not know what her Mum thought about the trouble she got into at school.

*I live with my Mum. I do not know my Dad. I don't know how Mum feels about me and school ...I don't really talk to her about it.* (Beth: Line 15 – 17)

Dave talked about his positive response to his mother's intervention when she punished him for his poor behaviour at school. This response however was short lived, he confessed, and he



inevitably fell right back into the behaviours that eventually resulted in his exclusion from school.

*I don't know why, I started to mess around again... and that resulted in my getting kicked out earlier. (Dave: Line 84)*

However, Dave said he decided he had to change when he saw his father break down and cried because he had been excluded.

*Well, I never saw my dad cry... Seeing my Dad cry made me pay attention (Dave: Line 134)*

Ben had a somewhat different experience in which his mother refused to go along with decisions to send him off to a PRU that they did not like. Ben's mother eventually got another school to give him a probationary placement. When his behaviour did not improve and they sent him away, she searched for answers to his behaviour during the months he was away from school.

*My mum thought something was wrong as I was always doing naughty things at home (Ben: Line 81).*

Ben's mother sought advice from professionals

*The doctor referred my mother to a counsellor ... She recommended that my mother get a CAF in place from the school (Ben: Line 110 – 111)*

Anne was diagnosed with ADHD when her mother decided that something was wrong. Although she lived with her father, he had been unconcerned. Her sister, older by 5 years had adopted the parent role since Anne was a small child,

*She didn't have much of a teenagerhood because looking after me kind of messed that up a bit. (Anne: Line 49 -50)*

In spite of her frequent reference to her father not being much of a father figure, she said she started self-harming when he moved away.

*I started being very angry... a little self-harming lasted about 2 months (Anne: Line 171)*

The young people's account of their families' involvement provides a picture in which a need for support for the family and for the young person around the roles usually fulfilled by the family, seemed to be clearly identified. Support for the family, when this was offered, came mainly through community involvement. For example, a CAF prompted support being made accessible to the family. However, the young people generally did not provide any evidence of their family's engagement in this process.

Ben noted the involvement of the educational psychologist after a CAF was opened but not of engagement in the TAF or other processes involving his family.

Teachers in charge of PRUs in this study noted the lack of engagement of parents in spite of their efforts to reach out and this is borne out in the accounts given by Colleen, Beth, Francis and Dave who were at a PRU. They noted no family involvement in efforts to support them. In response to my question about any family involvement at the PRU, Colleen responded:

*No, a meeting with the governors when I was excluded, when I first started at the PRU and signing letters, about grades and stuff like that and when I was returning to school (Colleen: Line 112 – 114)*

Dave reported:

*My mum is always at work (Dave: Line 117)*

These responses indicate how important the families involvement or lack of involvement is in understanding the YPs experiences of exclusion.

#### **4.3.3.2.Subtheme: The Peer Group – when support is lacking**

Friendship groups were seen as important for all of the young people. In the PRU, where he was more settled, Francis felt happy with the shorter hours which allowed him to hang out with his 'mates'. He was also happy to report that he had "old friends here now" (Francis: Line 104).

Being bullied was a problem experienced by most of the young people and having a friendship group, while sometimes leading to problems, appeared to offer some protection. Beth reported that after a period of being bullied by other students she had also made some friends who, although not a good influence, had caused the bullying to stop.

*The other pupils were just horrible. I bullied this girl in primary school then I used to get bullied in that school. But then one day, I actually stuck up for myself and started beating people up and then made a couple of friends and they were a bad influence... and I went along with it ... the bullying had stopped.*(Beth: Line 40 - 43)

Dave tried to compensate for other difficulties, including the fear of the bullying he experienced at the end of primary school.

*I did used to get bullied in school... a lot....* (Dave: Line 12)

*When I was in year 5, I used to get bullied by year 6s ... they used to punch me in the face all the time... and stuff like that* (Dave: Line 14 – 15)

This may have contributed to his indulging in a series of negative behaviours, which he explained as him “showing off for other people ... a lot of it” (Dave: Line 66).

Anne tried out several roles including being the class clown and getting into trouble...

*I would be talking to my friends, trying to make them laugh, basically I was being the class clown* (Anne Line: 63 - 64)

Colleen got into trouble because she had decided to change her friendship group. She saw this as the reason why she “was jumped” by a member of the previous group. Her level of discomfort was enough for her to change schools.

*I stayed in school because I thought that was finished but I never felt comfortable again in the school* (Colleen: Line 6 - 8)

The reports of these young people suggest that they looked to their peers as a source of comfort and support. However, this need was often not met and they instead had to deal with the conflicts that arose from peer interactions.

#### **4.3.3.3.Subtheme: Conflict with Teachers**

Relationship with teachers occupied an important place in the young people’s stories as they talked about their experiences at school. There were several accounts of conflict. Anne talked about being disruptive in class from primary school when she was diagnosed with ADHD but at the secondary level her difficulty was not managed for a long time.

*The teacher called me (bad name) because she did not like the way I acted and I retaliated by slamming the door, breaking three rows of lights and by slamming it I made a clock near the door fall down and break... (Anne: Line 94 – 96)*

The importance of her relationship with the teacher is illustrated by another quote:

*Whenever it came to English I got the lowest score in ever! (Little laugh) ... because I didn't have a good relationship with the teacher... (Anne: Line 127 - 129)*

Ben's story was woven around his relationship with teachers, one that contrasted with primary school where he dared not argue. At secondary school, making friends with an older crowd of students, introduced him to a different approach, one that landed him in a lot of trouble for most of the first three years at secondary school resulting in a lost year when he was permanently excluded.

*I would want every teacher in my way to feel like crap... I would walk into a lesson and say hello to the teacher, 'you alright?' and there would be a sharp response 'shut up, sit down' and to me, that seems really disrespectful... student or not you should say hello. It's manners.... (Ben: Line 120 – 122)*

Beth had trouble coping with the attitude of teachers in her mainstream secondary school:

*The last secondary school I was kicked out – I didn't like it there, didn't like the people, didn't like the teachers, hated it.... the teachers there were just selfish and looked down on you and they thought they were perfect (Beth: Line 38 - 40 )*

In school, Beth had felt other people saw her inferior and she had difficulty trusting,

*There was a teacher I talked to a bit but I couldn't tell her everything as I did not feel safe to share things. (Beth Line: 57 – 58)*

The young people's words about interaction with their teachers identified a significant amount of conflict. This conflict seemed to arise as they struggled with their expectations vs that they interpreted as the reality of their engagement in the learning environment.

#### **4.3.4. Theme Three: Interventions - Reward, Punishment or Help**

Throughout each of the interviews, it became clear that the young people had a particular view of the support that was provided. Each of them had experienced exclusion and some of the measures that schools and the PRU had put in place. Sanctions taken throughout the

difficult times had had no lasting impact in reducing the behaviours that schools found difficult. These include regular time-out from classes and forms of exclusion from the mainstream activities. In their accounts of their experiences, there were common themes with regard to punishment, feelings of acceptance and support that was helpful.

The following have been identified as subthemes:

- When punishment is not helpful
- Acceptance is key
- Help targeted to my needs

#### **4.3.4.1.Subtheme: When punishment is not helpful**

From the young people's stories, it was clear that, especially at their mainstream secondary school, they experienced more punishment than help. The response to their behaviour was generally one of added measures, supposedly to act as a deterrent for future infractions. They provide some detail around several instances of detention, isolation, half day exclusions or different timetables, as well as meetings with parents to discuss their behaviour.

Dave recalled being put on different school hours. Additionally, detentions increased as he often did not comply:

*I also got put on the 3 till 6 once...means you don't go to school until 3 o'clock and you stay until 6 o'clock. I got outs.... Which is you sit in a room....which is about that big... (very small)... I got that about 100 times....  
I had after school detentions ... I had 256 (1 hour after school) and I attended 11 of them.... They keep resetting it and after a while, just stopped... (Dave Line: 44 - 49)*

Ben remembered how much he hated being sent to the inclusion room which was "like a prison cell" (Ben: Line 31). His behaviour deteriorated in spite of this and the other measures employed by the school:

*After a while, it did get irritating so I said I must get on with it.... But even tiny things like not turning up after a lunchtime, I would get a day exclusion... after a while it got so ridiculous like I was passing by a radiator and my chair knocked the radiator and it was dripping. I tried to explain that it was an accident but I got two days for that. You can't fight a battle you know you are going to lose (Ben: Line 65 – 68)*

Colleen reported that she had had no previous exclusions but there was no opportunity to work through any difficulties she might have had when she fought with one of her peers. She said that this fight in Year 8 resulted in her permanent exclusion:

*....a teacher grabbed me and pulled me away... I did get over angry about it. They told me they will call my Mum and I will have to go home...they told me that I could be back tomorrow but then we got the phone call telling me I can't come back.*  
(Colleen: Line 65 – 67)

Punishment meted out to the students while at the mainstream secondary school did not appear to have had the effect that the school would have expected or hoped to achieve. From the young people's accounts, it seemed to spur on rather than deter from negative behaviours and to contribute to the destruction of the young people's trust in the system to mediate fairly.

#### **4.3.4.2.Subtheme: Acceptance is key**

Beth's story encapsulated a lot of what the other five young people spoke about the support they found most helpful. They had gone through the height of their difficulty rejecting the support that was offered, unable to engage in the classroom. Being listened to, feeling understood and generally feeling accepted seemed to change everything for Beth. She described the PRU where she had spent the last year

*I think it can be boring but it's alright...the most important thing is that the kids, the teachers they understand me and everyone else and they make me feel happy and sometimes sad... don't know ... you get a bit emotional .... (self-conscious laughter)  
....Sometimes it feels privileged just to be treated good.* (Beth: Line 81 – 84)

Anne also pointed to being understood and accepted as a significant point in the change process:

*But when they found out I was less angry in Year 8 because I did it in the end of the day in Year 8, they realised I didn't need it anymore because I was more calm and they wanted to know why and I said because I had a teacher who understood me and .. who didn't judge me.. Erm... that badly* (Anne Lines: 156 – 159)

Colleen was devastated about being permanently excluded and sent to a PRU. She had not been perceived as a student at risk, also performing at an average level in her school work.

*I really didn't want to go there. But when you get there you get to know all the teachers really well. There are only a few of them and you know you can talk to them and stuff... They were all like there for you (Colleen: Line 82 – 84)*

*They tested me a lot when I was there because my abilities were too high to be in that kind of school so they wanted me to get into a school as quick as I can (Colleen: Line 107-108)*

#### **4.3.4.3.Subtheme: Help targeted to my needs**

The accounts given by the six young people however provided limited evidence of formal approaches identified to support young people at risk of exclusion. However, help targeted to their individual needs was popular with the young people.

Young people reported it was helpful to feel understood/that someone was listening and there was indication of consultation done in small groups. In some situations, this was achieved in a Life Skill programme:

*You talk about things happening.... you just have to sit there, talk.... All the things like about yourself and what you need to do (Francis: Line 49; 51)*

They also reported some consultation with their families, though generally to a limited extent.

At a PRU, Francis reported that, “school calls sometimes to talk about my behaviour”.

Colleen reported that consultations with family were held at particular times:

*signing letters, about grades and stuff like that (Colleen: Line 113)*

Assessment was done in only a few instances e.g. for ADHD and to support learning. Colleen reported that she was assessed regularly

*They tested me a lot when I was there because my abilities were too high to be in that kind of school so they wanted me to get into a school as quick as I can (Colleen: Line 107 -108)*

Francis reported that he had been diagnosed “two months ago”, while he was at the PRU.

They all spoke of the use of some BMT both at the secondary and at the PRU, especially rewards and incentives for good behaviour which they found helpful,

*They put me on a daily report and that helped a lot because then I gradually managed to build my confidence with (Named teacher) (Anne: Line 122 – 123)*

*The (New Teacher) gave me an exit card for when I was angry in my lessons. So I got angry, I will take my stuff and go sit with him until I chilled and go back to my lesson (Anne: Line 132 – 134)*

Colleen and Anne enjoyed the trips that were given as rewards and incentives for good behaviour.

*We used to get behaviour stuff per week like rewards if you was good and attendance ones. And if we was good we will go on really big trips... (Colleen: Line 99 – 100)*

*They also set me up rewards like...erm... if I behaved I'd get to go on trips e.g. End of year trips which I enjoyed a lot! (Anne: Line 134 -136)*

Therapeutic approaches appear to have been seldom used with these young people but when used was usually mentioned in terms of counselling offered at school or through a community service provider. This, however, was not a popular intervention with the young people.

*The doctor referred my mother to a counsellor but it was pointless. (Ben: Line 111)*

Beth spoke about rejecting engagement in therapeutic approaches.

*I have had loads of people counselling. I hardly ever went... sometimes I walked out. My mum and I saw different counsellors somewhere outside the school....*

Dave had had periods of counselling while at secondary school. This was offered by local community workers.

*So then I got put into counselling... I had counselling once every week during lesson time. (Dave: Line 57 – 58)*

Anne reported that her family had rejected the counselling sessions which she said had been “antagonising” but family mediation which they all attended had helped. These had been accessed via community sources on recommendation of an officer at school.



*The mediation has helped.....they do understand and not against me (Anne: Line 257 - 258)*

The interventions that were most popular with the young people appeared to be learning support, BMT and SEB support – preceded by acceptance and positive regard of adults

- **Academic support**

Beth was empowered by the amount of help that was offered at the PRU after she was permanently excluded, not just to her but to all the students. She began thinking about a future for the first time.

*If we ask for help, they will come to us and they are really helpful. I get help with Reading and Spelling ... I get help with my work, in Maths and English. Not just me, they help everyone... (Beth: Line 77 – 80)*

The impact of the help Beth has received has been significant in a number of ways she has noted:

*In other schools, I didn't have the confidence to think that I wanted to be a TA – to think about what I want – to think about what I want to be when I'm old I think my behaviour is getting better... (Beth Line: 100 - 103)*

Dave talked about receiving 1:1 support to meet his literacy needs (Line: 115). He also experienced a sense of accomplishment to be able to obtain a finished product in Designer Technology:

*We've got our DT room – you make stuff like woodwork and stuff like that – I did have that in mainstream but there are not as many children here so it's easier to work. In mainstream, there were 56 people in my DT lesson and it's so hard to get your work finished but in this one, I have already done my jewellery box in 2 lessons and I only need one more lesson to finish it off. (Dave: Line 110- 115)*

The variety of SEB support seemed to be targeted to specific needs exhibited by the young people and was generally not expressed in the terminology used by EPs. Mentoring was an intervention popular among the young people and was provided by school staff and/or external /community based organisations.

*He also set me up with a mentor... back in Year 7 which helped a lot because obviously I could talk to her about problems (Anne: Line 140 – 141)*

*The teachers were all like there for you... I got really close to one of them, (Named teacher) and if I had any problems, I would go to her and it would all be sorted right away (Colleen: Line 84 – 86)*

For Ben, the support came after Mum approached the school to open a CAF. That member of staff was different to what he had experienced previously and turned out to be what he needed:

*(Person named) was a real support, not like a teacher, someone who really cares and was there for me. (Ben: Line 158 – 159)*

Other supportive measures included close monitoring, flexible curriculum and the element of choice as well as the time to change.

- **Close supervision**

For Francis, the help he needed seemed to include the rules and boundaries that were set at the PRU along with the support given by adults to help manage his behaviour

*Teachers are a bit more strict here and that makes you realise that you can't get away with it...and that's better... When they are more strict... in this group, when I walk out I get catch-up so it's better..... They help me (Francis: Line 33 – 35)*

Anne found a lot of measures adopted by her new teacher were helpful:

*(Name) met with my Mum and my sister at the beginning of the year to let her know who my head of year was.... called home regularly, every week – letting her know positives and negatives during Year 8 (Anne: Line 193; 195)*

Dave also saw value in the close monitoring that was done at the PRU.

*We get 10 minutes break and 10 minutes lunch and we come in for 15 minutes to eat and start lesson..... they don't really want you to socialise... that's why there are such short breaks because, think about it... there is more trouble in that as those other ways (Dave: Line 98; 100 – 101)*

- **Flexible approaches**

One of the issues brought up by the students who had experiences of attending PRUs related to the flexible approach taken. In one example, it was in regard to hours and the Friday

schedule that was different to the other four days. In another, it related to the opportunity to learn other skills as well as the occasions permission was granted to leave the classroom.

Francis responded to the question of what he found helpful,

*On Fridays, you have activities and you can cook. Activities you could do DT, watch a film, go to the sports centre – play football, basketball, dance, board games, computer games* (Francis: 87 – 89)

Francis decided that he wanted to remain at the PRU to do his GCSEs and work towards Auto Mechanics.

At a secondary school, Anne found the exit card helpful, allowing her to leave the class when she felt the need, “*when I got angry in my lessons*” (Anne: Line 132)

Colleen found the element of choice in delivery of the curriculum very helpful.

*We used to have Mondays and Wednesday afternoons – we used to either go bowling, to the park, golf, badminton and stuff like that, useful activities... and then on Tuesdays and Thursday afternoon, we could have options... we could do Art, Woodwork and stuff like that... so it was quite good...* (Colleen: Line 91 – 94)

- **Opportunity for a second chance**

Ben’s change came after more than three years of battles including one year spent out of school. Having been able to get another chance, he says he has settled down to focus on GCSEs:

*I realise this is my last chance* (Ben: Line 139)

The services provided for these young people seemed to be related to the use of targeted and differentiated approaches rather than formal approaches identified by EPs for use by schools in the district. Most popular were the SEB support measure including mentorship

Dave was looking forward to being given a second chance

*I would not let it happen again... I have one more chance* (Dave: Line 135)

The young people looked forward to second chances, hoping for more positive outcomes.

*Back in the mainstream with big classes, I would keep my head down and get on with my work (Dave: Line 132)*

#### **4.3.5. Summary of Qualitative Themes**

The experiences shared by the six young persons have been described under three main themes with related subthemes.

##### **1. Theme One: Struggling to cope with challenges**

###### **Subthemes:**

- It's hard when you can't fit in
- Transition is difficult
- 'Hanging out' with the wrong people

##### **2. Theme Two: The impact of relationships**

###### **Subthemes:**

- When the family is powerful and powerless
- The Peer Group: when support is lacking
- Conflict with teachers

##### **3. Theme Three: Interventions- reward, punishment or help**

###### **Subthemes:**

- When punishment is not helpful
- Acceptance is key
- Help targeted to my needs

Each theme and subtheme allows us to understand the views of the six young people, their experiences around exclusion and in particular the support they experienced before and after being excluded from school. Their experiences of support reflected some of the interventions recommended by EPs in the county and used by schools and PRUs in the district. However, the young people's experiences focussed on the level of support they received throughout the process and the impact of those experiences on their feelings and attitude to school and people in the school environment. From the reports of these young people, it would appear that they had no access to many of the interventions recommended by EPs, in the earlier

stages i.e. before they were excluded. The students' account of their experiences allowed us to see the impact of these on the way they engaged with school and the behaviours that had led to their exclusion.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides some initial discussion of the findings of this exploratory research. The interventions made available to young people who are excluded from secondary schools in a particular county in England have been explored in relation to the individual young person, the family, the school and the wider community – a system approach (Dowling and Osborne, 2003; Cooper and Upton, 1990; Frederickson, 1990).

This mixed methods study identified a range of interventions/support that was recommended by educational psychologists. Some of these were used by three secondary schools and four pupil referral units. These interventions were then explored in relation to six young people who had been excluded from secondary schools between September 2011 and December 2013. The exploration of these types of support was based on developmental systems theories (e.g. Skinner et al, 2008, 2009; Overton, 2010). These theories view the behaviour of young people as the product of the bidirectional relationship between the individual and his or her environment, necessitating the application of related interventions.

The chapter is organised into the following sections:

- Discussion of Findings
- Limitations of Findings and implications for further research
- Implications for EP work
- A Journey of Self-reflection
- Conclusion

## **5.2 Discussion of Findings**

### **5.2.1 Research Question 1: What interventions do educational psychologists consider to be effective in supporting students who are at risk of, or have been excluded from, secondary school?**

The interventions recommended by the 17 EPs in the county gave some indication of the theoretical framework used by educational psychologists in their work with students who are at risk of exclusion or have been excluded from secondary schools in the county. This may be related at some level to their understanding of the problem and their interpretation of the difficulties that are being experienced, thus informing the approach they will take to the provision of support. Interventions were recommended at the level of the individual, the family, the school and the community/multi-agency level. This suggests a holistic approach being adopted by EPs to both the interpretation and amelioration of the difficulties experienced by young people.

It was noted that EPs varied in the number and range of interventions that they recommended. While a few offered a range of interventions at each level, at the other extreme were those who had simply undertaken Statutory Assessment for these students or had participated in consultation with other professionals at a local forum. The 17 EPs who had completed the questionnaire made up just over 30% of the EPs working in the county. Some of those who had not participated in the study had given lack of involvement with young people at risk of or being excluded as the reason for their inability to take part in the research.

This lack of involvement by those EPs suggests that, in some instances, these young people may be bypassed for EP involvement at the level of the school. This seems to be in conflict with the concern expressed by many researchers and practitioners nationally about the negative social impact of high rates of exclusion (e.g. Webb and Vulliamy, 2004), promotion of excellence for all children and social inclusion (DfEE, 1997; 1999; DfE, 1994) and the DfE's recommendation of multi-agency involvement to support a proactive response to the problems that may lead to the exclusion of children and young people (DfE, 2012).

In the county where the research was conducted, this concern has reached the stage where attempts are being made in some districts to stop permanent exclusion altogether. The issue

remains as to how young people in secondary schools, where fixed term and permanent exclusions are highest, are to be supported with regard to the behavioural difficulties that have resulted in their exclusion from school. Also relevant, is the question of what is perceived to be the role of EPs in this movement away from permanent exclusions.

Another issue with regard to the young people's access to those interventions recommended by EPs relates to the training of staff. The training of teachers was an intervention that was frequently identified by EPs. Staff training was categorised under the SEB support since it was interpreted as part of the capacity of teachers/other staff to implement measures that were supportive. There is a good deal of research evidence that shows that classroom management strategies such as teachers' use of verbal feedback makes a significant difference to teachers' engagement with students and resulting behavioural outcomes (Elwell and Tiberio, 1994; Webster-Stratton and Hammond, 1997; Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2004; Swinson and Harrop, 2005; Swinson, 2010).

Other issues brought out in the findings that link to the literature review refer to what Humphrey and Brooks (2006) recognised as "community and cultural factors" that may impact on behaviour in the classroom. As a theme brought out by several researchers in the review e.g. by Munn and Lloyd (2005), it may offer wider scope for the training of teachers.

Of interest, in terms of the actual interventions being recommended by EPs, is the level at which they attribute difficulties which may put young people at risk of exclusion. It would appear from the range of interventions gathered from EPs and the popularity of recommended interventions that many EPs have chosen a balanced approach to the problem – recognising the problem as one that should engage all the systems including the individual at the centre of the difficulty. This is tantamount to what Rendall and Stuart (2005) have termed "a holistic model of enquiry" associated with the systemic model.

### **The Whole School Approach**

Evidence of the approach taken by EPs may be seen in the popularity of SEB support at the whole school level as well as EPs' recognition of the contribution made by community/multi-agency professionals and other persons with the skills to provide support to the young person and their families. Therapeutic approaches and BMT, following the more popular SEB



support, may also point to recognition of the nurturing environment with the issues of ‘containment’ and ‘reciprocity’ preceding the use of direct interventions for the young person. This approach is used in a parenting programme (Solihull Parenting) and has been attributed to early Freudian ideas (Freud, 1926), that were taken up by Klein (1953) and later, Bion (1959) who coined the term ‘containment’.

Emotional containment as espoused in the Solihull Parenting model is the notion of one person being able to hold on to these feelings, without being overwhelmed and communicating their understanding back to the other (Solihull NHS Care Trust, 2006). This approach that is used in mostly primary and special schools has found its place in the large number of nurturing approaches recommended by EPs for use by the secondary school to support these young people.

The emphasis on the systems approach (e.g. Rendall and Stuart, 2005; Mueller et al, 2011; Skinner et al, 2008, 2009; Bowers *et al*, 2011) has drawn attention to the person-centred assets combined with those of the environment to achieve positive outcomes for youth. A number of researchers identified in the literature review, have recognised the positive impact of interventions to support young people at this level (e.g. Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Kidger et al, 2009; Jones and Smith, 2004).

Kidger, Donovan, Biddle, Campbell and Gunnell (2009) evaluated a whole school approach and sought the views of staff and students about which interventions would be most supportive at this level. As discussed in the literature review, ideas related to emotional health in the curriculum, calls for support for those in distress, and improvements to the physical and psychosocial environment directly related to better behavioural outcomes for young people. Munn and Lloyd’s (2005) exploration of school exclusion in the wider context of social exclusion introduced some of the challenges to be met by schools to include students’ views in the development of “routine practices” that are more supportive of the needs of young people e.g. “active pupil participation in school and classroom decision-making about rules, rewards and sanctions”.

Jones and Smith (2004) are also noted for targeting a whole school approach, looking at school policy along with interventions directly to the young person in the evaluative study of developments in behaviour/discipline systems in an inner city secondary school. Also noted

in the literature review were Humphrey and Brooks' (2006) call for whole-school change to effect long term change in the anger response of young people within the school environment. Their reference for the need to "look beyond the individual" (p.20) positions the causes of anger problems in educational contexts. The consultation recommended by EPs was required to involve all levels of support. This was an approach that appeared to have widespread support in the review of studies on interventions to support young people and their families and ultimately reduce school exclusions (e.g. Webb and Vulliamy, 2003; Jones and Smith, 2004).

### **Family Interventions**

Family involvement in the education process is an area that can be highly emotive, both for the family and school staff. Tension has been reported from the tendency of each side to blame the other for any problems that arise (e.g. Dowling and Osborne, 2003; Osborne, 2003; Crozier, 2000). The lines of responsibility are generally unclear and may be the cause of much of the confusion. Consultation with the family to support the young person was identified by most EPs who participated in this research.

Previous research (with examples reported in this study) has shown, however, that in some instances, parents are reluctant to give their views, making excuses on the basis of not knowing what their children are like in the school setting (e.g. Swinson, 2010). Issues of power and related dynamics explored by authors like Rendall and Stuart (2005), appear to be recognised by EPs in trying to facilitate parents/carers/family members in discussion about their children with school and multi-agency professionals (Frederickson, 1990; Dowling and Osborne, 2003; Webb and Vulliamy, 2003).

These issues may also extend to the use of therapeutic approaches with family members including family therapy, counselling and family mediation where particular problems are noted with family relationships. Such recommendations for the family were generally made by the professional working with the young person and were accessed through community and multi-agency services, where there are likely to be practitioners with particular knowledge and skills needed to engage family members.

Family involvement in finding solutions to problems experienced at school was developed in the project evaluated by Webb and Vulliamy (2003). The placement of social work trained home-school workers on the staff of seven secondary schools may be the broad based approach that is required to incorporate all the stakeholders including peers, teachers as well as parents, at the school and wider community level to include families. This project had notably reported a 25% reduction in permanent exclusions (Webb and Vulliamy, 2003).

Some of these initiatives included establishing and maintaining close contacts with families through regular home visits; encouraging parents to meet with school staff and supporting them during such meetings and assisting parents in obtaining agency support for their other children and their own needs. Family liaison officers were mentioned by a few EPs in this study but it was learned that the placement of these officers have not been funded for a number of years at the secondary level. They were replaced by Pastoral Support Managers who work with families as well as staff members. From the school reports, it also seemed that there were other officers fulfilling this liaison role between a school and families usually from those identified to be in need e.g. children receiving free school meals.

This research identified that the interventions least recommended by EPs for engaging with the family and community/multi-agency services was academic support. Next in line, were direct assessment at the level of the family and BMT offered by way of intervention to the family and through community/multi-agency services. The possibility of the family being introduced to the BMT, that might assist young people, was perhaps best recognised in parenting programmes. Such training programmes were made available to families via community organisations and appeared to include very limited EP involvement.

It would seem from the very limited number of recommendations for academic support that the EPs in the current study were not inclined to consider such support as a precursor to social and emotional reintegration. This is in contrast to previous research that identified improved academic/learning outcomes as part of the young person's re-engagement with school. Bower et al (2005) identified learning support as one of the measures that was lacking in schools with highest levels of negative behaviour. The results of an evaluative study conducted by Ewen and Topping (2012) on a project based on themes of personalised learning and curricular reform suggested that these interventions were not effective on their own in achieving the re-engagement of students disaffected with school or experiencing SEB

difficulties. However, the evidence suggests that academic support is an area to be supported as a part of those measures targeting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that impact negatively on the young person's engagement within the learning environment.

Research by the Mental Health Foundation (1999) showed that many young people were 'at odds' with the academic system that labels students as 'able' or 'less able' (cited in Hope, 2007, p.29). In such an environment, many students experiencing difficulties may reject the academic support being offered, especially when such support does not incorporate the positive approaches that recognise the greater need for measures to enhance their emotional health and well-being. Webb and Vulliamy (2003) report on this clash being addressed by the introduction of teacher social workers and learning mentors (Carvel, 1999, cited in Webb and Vulliamy, 2003) and through the past Government's 'Connexion Strategy' intended to bring the two agendas together (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001, 2003) to improved outcomes. A related strategy is to introduce innovations in the curriculum an approach supported in Hope's (2003) three year study which explored the role of music in re-engaging disaffected young people with school.

Interventions related to direct assessment involving the family would have involved parents and/or family members in the understanding of the needs and behaviour of the young person within the family. The CAF was the process most recommended in this study but the success of this approach may be also linked to the issue of accessibility of the family/parents/carers in terms of engagement with professionals.

The above discussion has highlighted the different levels at which the EPs' recommendations can be seen. In particular, the EPs in this study appear to see their role as supporting the well-being and development of young people within the school environment. These EPs made recommendations that seem to provide support for the development of positive approaches to be used within the systems in which the young person is placed i.e. the school, the family and the community. However, it should be noted that the limited recognition of the importance of addressing academic issues that has been highlighted in previous research, may be an area for further consideration by EPs. EPs may wish to explore the work to be undertaken by both schools and by families in providing the support needed by young people who are experiencing behavioural difficulties that often result in their exclusion from school.

## **5.2.2 Research Question 2: What interventions are used to support students before and after they are excluded?**

### **A. By Schools**

### **B. By Pupil Referral Units**

#### **A. By Schools**

The school managers who participated in this study reported the expected differences in their access to and use of interventions reported by EPs. The most popular intervention reported by the school managers was SEB support. However there were also notable differences between the school within the district with the highest rates of exclusion and the other two schools. Notably, the school in the district with highest rates of exclusion reported more interventions at every level except consultation and assessment as well as the extensive use of BMT at the individual level.

Several of the studies in the literature review offered support for the use of BMT incorporated with other approaches, especially SEB support and including young people in consultation with teachers at each step of the process (e.g. Jones and Smith, 2004; Munn and Lloyd, 2005;).

The popularity of one level of consultation in the current study that included the young person, parents/carers and school staff with other professionals mainly happened within the TAF meetings. This is part of the CAF process and not typically organised by the school. It would appear from the reports from these three schools that consultations took place at times when they were mandated, that is, to discuss issues related to behaviour before and after periods of exclusion.

The low incidence of consultation reported by schools is a reason for concern. This is contradictory to both national and international initiatives led by the 1989 UNCRC to include children and young people. These has been reported as a source of much of the tension between schools and parents (Dowling and Osborne, 2003; Rendall and Stuart, 2005) with complaints from parents that when their children were in trouble appear to be the only times they are called in to school.

Recommendations from the current study are that young people and their families have much to offer in terms of the development and maintenance of rules and standards of behaviour. In the literature, the value of staff consultation on behavioural issues has been documented (e.g. Malberg, 2008) and the inclusion of young people in decision making and contributing to school ethos (including policy and standards) has been cited as factors with the potential to contribute to a number of positive outcomes (e.g. Webb and Vulliamy, 2003; Jones and Smith, 2004; Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Kidger, Donovan, Biddle, Campbell and Gunnell, 2009; Swinson, 2010; Ewen and Topping, 2012).

In this regard, the school ethos could operate as a debilitating or protective factor. The approach taken by the school may take an inclusive or exclusive approach to young people, in some situations, also with those who present attitudes and behaviours that are different from what is expected by the school. In the small, exploratory context of this study, these issues are not developed to the understanding of the ways in which these factors will impact on emotional health and well-being of students and families and influence their interaction at school and with school authorities. However, such understanding will be part of the basis for developing interventions to support these young people within the school setting (e.g. Rutter et al, 1979; Reynolds, 1985); Swinson (2010).

The reported use of therapeutic approaches was comparable with the use of all other approaches (besides SEB support) in the two schools in the low risk areas. This may be expected given the relatively lower rate of exclusion reported by these schools. However, they may also indicate very limited use of external professional services, e.g. EPs or other psychologists, as part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who are qualified to deliver particular interventions at an earlier stage where there is a greater opportunity to prevent the escalation of the problem to the level where they are excluded-formally or otherwise. This would also include assessment for which limited use was reported by all three schools.

Young people who are at risk of exclusion may need psychological and other forms of assessment including SEBD assessment as well as therapeutic approaches (Humphrey and Brooks (2006); Swinson, 2010). These schools may therefore be missing an opportunity to provide the level of support most needed by these young people. Opportunities provided in some therapeutic approaches also offer opportunities for young people to reflect on their

behaviour and the issues that have a negative impact upon them, contributing to behaviour problems.

Skinner et al (2008, 2009) has drawn attention to the self-appraisal that young people may develop through socialisation in a particular context. Self-appraisals developed in a context of lack of acceptance can lead to emotional and behavioural disaffection and the exhibition of negative behaviours (Green et al, 2012). Young people being provided with an opportunity to explore the reasons for their anger and be included in the development of interventions may offer some solution to this problem alongside authority figures who are prepared to listen and allow them to regain some measure of control (Munn and Lloyd, 2005 ; Humphrey and Brooks, 2006; Malberg, 2008).

It appears from the current findings that schools in the county may be well placed in channelling more of their resources towards developing an ethos of inclusion.

Developing/restructuring school policy was popular among the recommendations by the EPs in the study. This, as was noted, is in support of positions that have been taken by UK governments including the *Every Child Matters* (DfE,1997) initiative and supported by international recognition of the Convention on Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). These issues are as real for other groups, including students from ethnic minorities and other young people with special educational needs, with or without a Statement.

PRUs may be well placed to address some of the shortfalls that may exist, despite the variation noted in the support offered by the four PRUs in this research. The evaluation of a local authority behaviour support initiation by Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) provides some recognition of this potential. Though the limitations of that study has not allowed for any generalisations of their findings, the initiative to include PRU teachers within the mainstream does offer hope for meeting the goals of inclusion in this area.

These goals of inclusion were also introduced as part of the stated objectives of another intervention evaluated by Gilmore (2013). This related to the establishment of a Disciplinary Inclusion Room as part of the mainstream secondary school. The authors rejected the negative views attached to this punitive measure and obtained views from several students suggesting it was an acceptable alternative to being excluded from school altogether. The issues here may relate to the understanding of inclusion/exclusion that one holds.

## **B. Pupil Referral Units (PRU)**

The PRUs in this study were able to identify the different measures they adopted mostly at the Whole School (Unit) level with a widespread small group approach and a predominant use of SEB support and BMT. Once again there was limited use of therapeutic interventions which seem to suggest low levels of professional involvement by external/multi-agency services.

At each of the PRUs, there were measures in place to involve parents directly e.g. Open Door policy, parent meetings and Open Days. However, the difficulties encountered in this area identify a possible need for input from practitioners who might be able to offer innovative ideas as well as providing support needed to involve parents more directly in the efforts to reintegrate their children into the education process. Social work trained home-school workers (Webb and Vulliamy, 2003) could offer to PRUs (and schools) some of the approaches identified earlier in this discussion that have been found to be most useful in engaging families/parents/carers in the education process.

The PRUs completed some form of needs assessment for each student which may have identified particular areas that the student found challenging. Some evidence of this may be the additional or differentiated support that the four PRUs provided for learning. This support may be more readily accepted by the young people in an environment where most of the young people had similar needs and/or where the SEB support is adequate to manage feelings relating to self-concept and feelings of acceptance. Such arguments will be developed later on in this discussion.

The fact that a common approach (seen in the most popular provision of SEB support) was adopted by the three schools and PRUs in this study may suggest that the context in which the behaviour occurs is widely recognised and accepted by practitioners to exert a dominant influence on the development of particular behaviours. This context seemed particularly related to the response of the adults with whom the young person engaged and the opportunities that were provided for positive engagement.



In the case of one of the PRUs, preparation of meals that were shared by students and staff appeared to be one indication of this understanding. In another it was the opportunity to develop a positive relationship with a particular adult in mentorship. The latter measure was also reported by one of the schools. At all of the PRUs, it was the small group approach and the opportunities for dialogue between peers and adults that seemed to engender a sense of belonging and of being supported that the young people reported. The positive impact of student and staff consultation and dialogue was borne out by researchers looking into the role of home-school support workers (Webb and Vulliamy, 2003).

A question also arises as to the stage at which the young person should be exposed to this nurturing approach. Providing this support when the young person is at a PRU, would appear to be already too late, given the fact that he/she has already been excluded from school. Many of these young people may also be at a stage where the intensity and availability of such interventions at a PRU may be inadequate to bring about the change that is required, in the given period that is allowed for that change. This has serious implications for the permanent exclusion of these young people from the education process. These findings seem to suggest that such measures recommended by EPs should be made available at the whole school level to be accessed by the young people who are in urgent need of this support.

### **5.2.3 Research Question 3: What are the young people's experiences of interventions to support them before and/or after being excluded?**

The three themes, drawn from the accounts given by the six young people in this study, point to an experience of struggle, through inadequate support, support that they did not find helpful and support that provided them with an opportunity for reintegration into the mainstream. The themes also drew out the element of this support that was available through, and for, the different systems, in which they were placed i.e. the family, the school (and peer group) and the community. The young people's views seemed to have developed as they recounted their experiences. In particular, for the younger ones, the interviews seemed to have provided an opportunity for a deeper level of reflection than they had done previously on their experiences.

### ***Struggling to cope with challenges***

The young people's report of struggle to cope with challenges seems related to many that are associated with adolescent development within the social context of family, school and the wider community. These challenges are well documented in psychological thinking (Kehily, 2007). It is important to the theoretical approach of this study, that these challenges are related to the young person's interactions with the various systems. They may also be suggested as part of the explanation for the significantly higher rates of exclusion at the secondary level compared to the primary (DfE Statistics 2010/2011; 2011/2012).

The challenges reported by the young people in this study are not unusual e.g. being bigger than one's peers and sticking out; choosing the wrong group as friends and getting into conflict; being bullied; struggling to be recognised and accepted and coping with the major transition to secondary school (Lerner and Steinberg, 2004; Kehily (2007). Those young people with their own personal challenges, including difficulties within the family, obviously demanded more than may have been usually provided. It would seem from their reports that their schools had not risen to this challenge.

While the studies in the literature review do not focus on the stage of adolescence directly, their focus was on the difficulties experienced by young people in this age group. They also drew on issues of self-appraisal and self-esteem related to gender, social class and learning challenges. These issues are dominant in this theme and are known to exacerbate the challenges of adolescence (e.g. Humphrey and Brooks, 2006; Hope, 2007; Swinson, 2010; Gilmore, 2013). These studies focussed on interventions that addressed issues associated with the challenges of adolescence e.g. programmes of life skills and personal social development; supporting the development of positive self-concept and allowing young people opportunities to participate in decision-making, all of which feature heavily in the kind of support the young people found most helpful.

### ***The Impact of relationships***

The second theme highlighted the impact of relationships – with family, peer group and teachers – on the lack of/inadequate levels of support that resulted in their exclusion. This theme developed from the young people's references to family involvement in the process of

their engagement with school and in the process of their exclusion and reintegration; their account of their relationship with peers telling a particular story of anxiety about being accepted and conflict evident in stories of bullying, negative influences, and fights. The theme also drew on what sometimes appeared as a love-hate relationship with their teachers – conflicts that they often used to explain their behaviour and/or what had happened to them.

Family relationships are known to be a dynamic force in the lives of individuals. This is recognised in psychological research and theoretical perspectives as a significant influence within the context in which a problem may occur (e.g. Bandura, 1986, 1991; Bowlby, 1982; Ainsworth, 1989; Rachman, 1991; Ormrod, 1999; Miller, 2011; O'Donnell, Reeve and Smith, 2012). Issues of self-appraisal, as well as feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy that impact on behaviour are heavily dependent on the circumstances of the family. Additionally, issues related to concerns of minority groups noted previously for example, the working class male and the level of acceptance that he receives within the classroom and wider school environment, are important in understanding the problems being experienced by the young people in this study (Hope, 2007; Humphrey and Brooks, 2006).

For the working class male who was represented in this study, his engagement with a heavily academic curriculum (Hope, 2007; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Kehily, 2000) and the status that is given to the subjects recognised in his family group, seemed to impact on his engagement with school more so at the secondary level where the problem behaviours appeared to escalate. This appears to be consistent with statistics nationally that report highest rates of exclusion among students between 13 and 14 years (DfE, 2012).

Family loyalties featured strongly and the young people felt moved to come to the defence of family members from what they perceived as disrespect by peers and teachers who tended towards negative stereotypes. The participants in this study were mostly from homes where parents were separated. They may therefore face some of the challenges of one parent who had the full responsibility for themselves and their siblings. They spoke of the single parent “having to work” or being busy with a young sibling which made regular visits to school particularly difficult or changes from one parent to the other at different stages of their schooling.

Recognition of these family circumstances, especially with regard to their engagement with school and their ability to provide support to this young person, is an area for consideration to interventions that can be applied. Webb and Vulliamy's (2003) evaluation of the role of home-school trained support workers is an example of research that can provide the needed evidence base for what appears to be an intervention that is promising.

Findings from these six students indicated that support from a specialised member of the school staff had not reached them and their families. Whether parents/carers are always ready for this engagement is also an underlying challenge that is recognised and has to be met through workers with the experience and skills to undertake this role (Cullingford, 1999; Webb and Vulliamy, 2003).

The importance of this engagement with parents is borne out by what evolved as a dominant aspect of this subtheme, that is, the parents' "powerlessness" in the face of engagement with school authorities, the decisions they took with regard to their child's behaviour and the difficulty they experience with finding sources of help with the ongoing problem faced by their child in the school setting. Achieving parental involvement in school matters appears to be a challenge that is well worth the effort it demands. As suggested by Hope (2007) and others it offers significant insight into the young person's world and may be one certain path to eradicating school exclusion.

The young people's reports of conflict with peers and teachers are also well documented in research (e.g. Humphrey and Brooks, 2006; Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Malberg, 2008). This was often cited within the reasons given by authorities for exclusion of these young people. Being bullied, attacked by other students and being at the receiving end of negative attitudes and behaviours, had made them feel uncomfortable and threatened. In situations where this occurred, and from the accounts given by these young people, there was a message that they expected more. They had hoped for a supportive group of peers and for teachers who they could have trusted to be fair and dependable. The issue of these two themes is that these six young people had not experienced support or did feel supported for a long time in their efforts to manage a number of situations that arose.

The experience of Malberg (2008) in her co-delivery of a mentalisation-based group intervention at a PRU highlights the value of removing the threats of exclusion in allowing

young people to move through the process of reflection that would allow change. This may be an effective means to overcome the problem related to power which adults may often retain even in a therapeutic environment. Humphrey and Brooks (2006) have noted that such 'notions of power' in the school environment, can lead young people to perceive that they are viewed as inferior. There were examples of this in the young people's expression of the lack of support they experienced through teachers. This can trigger negative reactions, including refusal/inability to engage in interventions that may be offered. The young people's responses to these situations had led to permanent exclusion for five of them and for one, multiple fixed term exclusions (including part time schedule) that lasted from Year 4 to Year 7.

### **Interventions - *Reward, Punishment or Help***

The third theme from the young people's accounts focussed directly on interventions they had experienced - those that they saw as negative i.e. a number of school measures that were generally punitive responses to their behaviour and those that they considered helpful i.e. acceptance and the extra help that seemed to provide solutions to their specific difficulties.

Five of the six students' only positive experience of support was at a PRU where they were sent after being permanently excluded. These measures were a combination of interventions that can be categorised under SEB support e.g. nurturing approaches that led to feelings of being accepted and not judged negatively, mentorship, family support and a host of BMT including rewards.

Many of these measures, put in place by the member of staff at one secondary school, are those that students report to have experienced to an increased degree at two of the PRUs. One report of a negative experience at the PRU included smoking by students and staff members, acts of vandalism and widespread truancy and suggested that not all PRUs were at the standard needed to support young people towards positive behaviour.

There was also some focus on ADHD, and that the level of support considered helpful related to flexibility and a programme of learning that was relevant to their interests and areas of need. Ewen and Topping (2012) have reported on the gains reported through the inclusion of young people in decisions about curriculum and their appreciation of 'flexibility' in the

learning process. They also have noted that the improvement in self-confidence as a result of the 'personalised learning project' as well as its contribution to improved family relationships. This was attributed to a new feeling of control over their life and their future, brought about by the level of success they had experienced in the learning environment. This was noted in the young people's account in which their engagement in the learning environment helped to build their self-confidence resulting in their ability to set goals for themselves.

In their account of their journey to reintegration into the mainstream, the young people in the current study reported on interventions that were punitive and which they felt needed to be stopped. One was the inclusion/exclusion room similar to the disciplinary inclusion room that was positively evaluated by Gilmore (2013). In the case of these young people, punitive measures appeared to lower their self-confidence and to make them feel unwanted within the school environment, leading to increased negative behaviours.

Swinson (2010) reported that the much of the variance in student behaviour between schools was due to factors within the school. These include quality of teaching, positive reinforcement involving praise and appreciation within a framework of clear and fair rules as well as leadership by the head teacher. This seems to coincide with the themes identified from the accounts given by the young people in this study, of their experiences of support e.g. the punitive sanctions that they viewed as being very unhelpful, as well as their affirmation of praise and rewards as a sign of being accepted and understood.

Researchers also provided evidence to support the findings that positive strategies were more effective than sanctions in dealing with low level disruptive behaviours (Chalk and Bizo, 2004; Swinson and Harrop, 2005). These are reported to be beneficial in increasing pupils' on task behaviours, reducing disruptive incidents and increasing pupil motivation. From the reports of these young people, it was noted that journey to permanent exclusion had been made over years of sanctions for such behaviours.

Swinson (2010) also drew attention to school leadership, first identified by Reynolds (1985), which may be directly linked to decisions to exclude but also to the school culture from which the attitude to students who exhibit different needs particularly around behaviour is developed. In their account of how they were treated, the young people made reference to

feeling targeted for reprimands and punishment that was sometimes unfair, instead of being given a chance to show what they were capable of e.g. being given more responsibility. They also expressed disappointment that important decisions were made, e.g. to exclude them without any input from their parents.

Hope (2007) looked at possible changes that can be made to the school curriculum to accommodate young people with different interests and abilities. The author's recognition of the dilemma faced by schools with regard to academic excellence vs more inclusive approaches is applicable to the choices made by school leaders in situations like this one. Some authors have questioned the direction that schools are often accused of taking, in neglecting students who do not exhibit the attributes of success (Blyth and Milner, 1993).

From the account given by the students in the current study, it would appear that they did not feel adequately supported throughout many of their personal difficulties and challenges in coping with school. Many of these difficulties are associated with adolescence and social and cultural differences associated with gender, social class as well as special educational needs. These included feeling different and feelings of inadequacy, unsupportive relationships, negative attitude of teachers, difficult family circumstances and a lack of enjoyment of school/subjects as having a direct impact on the problems that developed. Those who had been permanently excluded or given indefinite 'time-out' reported that they had received very little in terms of actual support before this. The punishment of being isolated, put on shortened hours of school, singled out for parent and individual consultation and/or being reprimanded before the entire school had not produced the result expected by the school and in each case, the threat of exclusion had not worked as a deterrent.

On the other hand, the positive regard and acceptance by teaching staff and others with direct support for specific difficulties, incentives and rewards, flexible schedule and curriculum had made significant impact. These are reported as being the support they needed to re-engage positively with school or to look forward with intent on completing school. In each account insight was obtained into the experiences of support at the level of the individual, the family, the school along with peers and the community.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study and implications for further research**

The issues related to reliability and validity of research findings were addressed in the methodology. In the use of a mixed methods design, attention to trustworthiness has been promoted as a concept that is preferred by researchers undertaking qualitative research.

It is recognised that limitations posed by the non-random sampling method and small sample size will point to the impossibility of generalisation to the wider population. This is not the goal of this study. This exploratory study, with its small number of participants, was done to contribute to an EPS' efforts to affect positive change with regard to the number of young people who are being excluded annually from secondary schools in the county. In an effort to do so, it provides an example of what a small group of students have experienced against a backdrop of EPs and schools' accounts of what they believe is provided. Robson (2011) suggests that the issues of randomised controls and sample size are in reference to statistical generalisation. He suggests that seeing possible examples of what may be happening in a particular context as one of the other possibilities for research findings.

The initial intent to learn from schools reporting low levels of exclusion did not materialise through their lack of engagement and perhaps the general suspicion of any attempt especially by an unknown researcher to investigate issues surrounding exclusion. The need to bring exclusion further out of the shadows seems to be a real one.

The techniques used may have affected the quality of results that were obtained. This relates to the difference in procedures used in collection of data in the quantitative phase – self-completed and researcher completed (interview-based) questionnaires. Though the format used for the interviews with head teachers at the PRUs was the same used in the questionnaires completed by the school managers, the level of detail obtained from the interview-based format was a point of difference in the data collected. These are however not considered to be of sufficient significance to affect the validity of the information obtained from these measures. This is so because the findings relate to specific interventions that were used and, in each case, managers were given the opportunity to list those interventions that were used with students.

Explicit attention was paid in this report to address issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the findings presented (Shenton, 2004). This is in spite of the difficulties encountered in undertaking “real world” research of using personal reports.



The issue of social desirability and sample bias through the choice of young people chosen by the teachers at the school and the PRUs needs also to be recognised.

It is important to acknowledge that the views of the young people are contrasted but not triangulated with the views of the adults. The research started from the position that these YP would have different experiences of being excluded from schools, than the adults, and it was important to hear these views. These views however are reported as those belonging to the six young persons in this study. They are not representative of the views of all young people. They did not speak for all young people, nor about all that is available in their school or in the schools throughout the county. They are their accounts of their experiences as they were able to recall them.

In drawing themes from their account of those experiences, the extensive process of reviewing what was said and providing direct quotes as “evidence” is believed to have enhanced the validity of findings reported. In this research, these were held up against what was reported by the PRUs and the schools they attended and the recommendations made by the EPs working in the county.

In the county in which the research was conducted, it is hoped that the findings shared with key persons within the EPS and local authority would open up the discourse about what is actually being done locally to reduce or eradicate the exclusion of young people from schools. Research of this kind, into the interventions to support these young people, has not been previously undertaken in the county. The availability of services to meet the needs of young people does not necessarily assure that these services are being accessed by those who need it most.

The findings have suggested that young people who are excluded may have had too little or no support previous to being permanently excluded. From the findings, it would appear that exclusion is being utilised as a solution to the problem experienced with some young people rather than an action of last resort after all other channels have been exhausted. The research has also made a unique contribution in that it has uncovered a number of issues related to communication between the different systems in which the young person is placed.

The relationship between the school, the family and the community is particularly valuable in terms of the young person's access to the resources required to meet his/her developmental needs – needs that must be met in order to reduce negative outcomes.

As an exploratory study, this research presents some idea of the direction future research can take. In general, future research could examine the discrepancy between what EPs and Schools say they provide and what is actually accessed by students at risk of exclusion. Once this is clarified, it would be helpful to introduce some evaluative studies to see which interventions actually make a difference in particular situations and with particular groups of children and young people.

#### **5.4. Implications for EP work**

This research has provided EPs and EPiTs within the local EPS with a list of interventions that they can review and use in their practice. In its unique contribution, it is hoped that the findings of this study would also encourage EPs to see the benefits of expanding their work as teams to review and deliver services to children and young people who are excluded.

With the introduction of traded services vs core discretionary work for EP involvement in schools, schools seem to be the ones to make a decision about the young person's access to these services. As it is now, there may be more young people at risk of or being excluded who may not have had access to the services of an EP at any point in the process. However, EPs can look towards developing a stronger relationship with parents through an expansion of their delivery of the Solihull Parenting Programmes and other initiatives that can help to close the existing gap between the school, the family and access to community resources. It is hoped that EPs would be able to present in the Local Offer what is available to support children, young people and their families as well as how vulnerable YP can gain access to EPS.

In particular, EPs can:

- Work in teams to develop and deliver programmes that are suited to the needs of this group within the school environment. This will ensure that successful approaches can be shared and utilised as well as to minimise the workload on individuals.

- Provide greater direct support for schools with young people who are at risk of exclusion. This may necessitate a different approach as many EPs are not currently involved in the delivery of interventions to students directly - individually or in groups. Some EPs have achieved success in collaborating with school staff to deliver effective interventions. This is recognised as beneficial in building capacity within schools while reducing the dependence on external services for more minor issues.
- Offer supervision to staff members identified with skills to provide support in the delivery of therapeutic approaches to young people.
- Work on an expansion of their role in supporting families. Consultation appeared as a major intervention particularly to include families in decision making within the school but this may be happening too often only in crisis situations. EP support could be valuable in helping schools to build capacity in this area.

## **5.5. Development as a reflective researcher**

Argyris and Schon, (1974) have suggested that the key to practitioner success is "developing one's own continuing theory of practice under real-time conditions" (p. 157). I had begun this research inspired by my life-long passion to contribute to improved support for the most vulnerable children and young people within the school system. Once I had recognised that the problem of exclusion had existed in the UK as much as it did in Trinidad and Tobago, I seemed able to focus on nothing else. I started this journey having allowed myself to remain in a cloak of innocence about what pursuing this issue would demand or how difficult it may prove to access the support I would require.

I began to realise that I was seen to be investigating a volatile issue when the gate keepers at various levels did not engage as anticipated. This led to significant adjustments to the research having to be made along the way. The journey has resulted in what I consider to be fairly described as my own theory of growth as a researcher and awareness of my level commitment to the role I have chosen.

This journey may be interpreted as a version of Schon's *The Sequence of Moments*, outlined by Reeves (1994) p. 105:

- Routine Response
- Surprise
- Reflection
- Question Assumptions
- On the spot experiment

I have also always moved along with the idea that I am a skilled practitioner - mainly because other people seem to have seen me as skilled and I have generally managed to achieve the important goals I have set myself. This was evident in my 'routine response' to undertaking research, seeing it simply as the next step in the work I had undertaken.

But what skills do I have? What is my level of commitment in developing those skills? Along the way, I was not only in for a number of surprises but unexpected events led me to a deeper level of reflection on my own thinking – about different context with its rules and expectations, about my own skills and about my ability to stay the course of this research task.

This research has allowed me to reflect on these issues, to question my own assumptions about my abilities as a skilled practitioner and the journey on which I had embarked. I had followed the inner promptings of the kind of psychologist I will be and my choice of topic for research was the first visible clue to the response. The rest of the journey would allow me to learn more as I developed some of the skills I would need for practice as an EP. The following extracts from my Research Diary provide some indication of the steps I had undertaken from November 2012 to April 2014.

- **November 2012** - Deepening theoretical knowledge

*UEL guidelines for writing the research proposal gave me the framework for developing the proposal from the tentative ideas I had. I had many decisions to make as I tried to apply learning from lectures in methodology and the practice in writing a proposal ... Previous research I had done did not seem to give me an edge in doing this proposal. I had to read and reread to be able to come up with ideas to be written down. It demanded a great deal of knowledge and understanding of key concepts e.g. critical realism as an ontological position and the theoretical framework I was using. Focussing on these issues and having to apply them finally lead to a deeper level of understanding than I had previously.*

- **April/May/June 2013** – Accepting and coping with the challenges

*I started sending out the questionnaires to SENCOs in April via email and continued this in May, supplemented by mailed copies and eventually phone calls trying to obtain appointments for visits.*

*Getting responses from SENCOs became a nightmare as a few started refusing to complete it, citing the time factor in a number of cases ... Even attempts to meet with them directly failed as they were either busy, absent or not interested. It was very disheartening.*

- **July 2013** - Using work connections to achieve restructured goals and developing new relationships

*I worried about not being able to obtain the number of responses I needed. Trying different approaches meant emailing senior EPs, engaging with support officers and calling on persons I had met previously in the course of my practice. I saw my task to be finding those who will not refuse. Before schools closed for the vacation period, I had collected 4 responses from SENCOs – 2 from one district with recorded low exclusions; 2 from a district with high rates of exclusion.*

- **September 2013.**

*I completed another interview .... A male student who had been reintegrated in another school after being permanently excluded from one school. My deadline to complete data collection by mid-October seems possible as I have been promised five student interviews on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. That will make it 7!*

### **October 2013 – More Adjustments**

*The month has passed and it does not seem that I would get the interviews I had hoped for. I was however able to get one more, making it a grand total of 3 interviews completed so far!*

### **November 2013**

*I have to complete the methodology for the end of the semester. I have completed three more interviews - making it a total of 6!*

- **December 2013 - Being creative with ways of working**

*I have started this month still writing my Methodology – to submit to my supervisor on December 13. Then I needed to take work home with me – travelling on Christmas Day and*

*engaging long distance with my supervisor as I plan to work on transcribing interviews and organising my quantitative data before moving on to the Thematic Analysis.*

- **January 2013** - Being Surprised by my data

*All interviews transcribed!! Good job finishing this. Now moving to Thematic Analysis... I was really very excited about doing this and now I am actually here. I am dealing with so many uncertainties but realise that the only way is to move forward one step at a time.*

*Reaching this stage with my data is exciting... I am finally seeing my research participants or perhaps seeing them in a new way that I have not previously. The data is surprisingly surprising... Like I did not expect what I have received from them. It is amazing and in the words of one of them 'a real privilege' to have heard and received their views. I am excited to share their experiences with others who need to hear and receive them as well.*

- **February 2014** - Developing analytical and presentation skills

*My research title has been changed: It now fits what I have done. What has not gone so smoothly is my data analysis. Working through the qualitative data was an enriching experience. Not so, the quantitative data... another adjustment in my thinking! Organising the data and obtaining descriptive stats on Excel including charts and graphs.*

**March 2014** – Persistence and a supportive research supervisor

*It is the second week of March and having submitted a draft of my chapter on Findings, I am in a very strange place! Research, placement and family issues – so much to occupy my mind. A time of rapid swings in mood as so much continue to happen.*

**April 2014**

*Hard work, commitment and a consistently positive approach from my research supervisor and it has been done.*

Through the process of completing this research, I have gained positive examples of my commitment to the role I have accepted. My own response to completion of my research is that while there were surprises, while some of my assumptions in the actual research as well as about me as practitioner have been challenged, I have achieved my objective.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

Many educators have queried what appears as contradictions in government policies with regard to academic excellence and inclusion. There is a call to take an evidence-based

approach to personalised learning in schools to ensure lasting and consistent solutions to exclusion (Ewen and Topping, 2004; Boyd et al, 2007).

Inequities and the lack of social justice in exclusions from school has been well documented (e.g. Blyth and Miller, 1993; DfEE, 1997, 1999, 2002). It is important to understand the socio-political climate and make a commitment to address social, economic and educational inequalities in terms of distribution of resources and the ways these may be impacting on some of the most vulnerable young people who are excluded. This group include minorities including ethnic minorities, male working class and young people with additional needs that result in what is identified as behaviour problems within the school environment. With the new approach being taken by some school districts in the county where the research was conducted, to stop permanent exclusions altogether, there is an increased need to provide solutions for schools.

Meeting these additional needs of students, who are at danger of being excluded from schools, draws attention to the need for additional services within the school environment, to support them. Under the new Act these should be stated in the Local Offer that could open the way for greater involvement of professionals in consultation with schools about the needs of young people with behaviour difficulties.

In particular schools need to offer:

- Individual assessment of pupils' needs including emotional well-being and academic difficulties
- Staff training and collaboration focussed on solutions for difficulties related to behaviour in the classroom
- A nurturing environment based on support not punishment
- BMT strategies that are applied consistently throughout the school built on the foundation of SEB support
- Support for YP in transition – with a longer period given to those most in need of extra support
- Opportunities for students to develop supportive/nurturing relationships
- Greater collaboration with community/multi-agency services in devising programmes to promote parental involvement in the education of their children

While services within the community/multi-agency setting need to offer:

- Involvement within the school is seen as a preferable approach to bridge the gap between the home
- Individualised therapeutic interventions
- Direct work with families to engage and empower them to become involved in education
- Training around the disengagement/engagement of adolescents support systems

It is hoped that this study can make a small contribution to the work that is being done to give all young people a fair chance to the education that is their right. In this way, the promise of this research will be fulfilled.



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## **APPENDIX A**

- **Exclusion Data for Academic Year 2009/2010 (DfE, 2012)**
- **Update for 2011/2012 (DfE, 2013)**

### **Exclusion from school**

This section looks briefly at the evidence on exclusion from school. It summarises the evidence on the rate of and reasons for exclusion, the characteristics of those most likely to be excluded and the outcomes for those excluded from school. A more detailed report of the data related to exclusion from school can be found in the recent DfE report on pupil exclusions (DfE, 2012b).

### **Permanent exclusions**

In the latest data available data (2009/10 academic year), there were 5,740 permanent exclusions from maintained primary, state-funded secondary<sup>34</sup> and special schools in England. This translates to an exclusion rate of 0.08% or eight out of every 10,000 pupils. For the 2008/09 academic year, there were 6,550 permanent exclusions from maintained primary, state-funded secondary and special schools, a rate of 0.09% of pupils (DfE, 2012b).

The majority of permanent exclusions were in the secondary sector. In 2009/10, there were 5,020 permanent exclusions in state funded secondary schools, equating to 0.15% of the secondary school population (of which 590 were from Academies equating to 0.30% of the academy population). In the same period, there were 620 permanent exclusions from primary schools, equating to 0.02% of the primary school population, and there were 100 from special schools, equating to 0.11% of the special school population (DfE, 2012b).

### **Fixed period exclusions**

In 2009/10 there were 331,380 fixed period exclusions from maintained primary, state-funded secondary and special schools in England, equating to 4.46% of the school population. This is down from 363,280 exclusions in 2008/09 (a rate of 4.89%) (DfE, 2012b). As with permanent exclusions, the majority of fixed period exclusions occur in the secondary sector. In 2009/10, there were 279,260 fixed period exclusions from state funded secondary schools, 8.59% of the state-funded secondary school population (of which 28,440 were from Academies, 14.72% of the academy population). There were 37,210 fixed period exclusions from maintained primary schools equating to 0.91% of the primary school population and

14,910 for maintained and non-maintained special schools, equating to 16.46% of the school population (DfE, 2012b).

### **Reasons for exclusion**

This section looks at the reasons schools provide for why a pupil has been excluded, as recorded in the School Census.

#### **Permanent exclusions**

The most common reason recorded for permanent exclusion in all state funded schools in 2009/10 was persistent disruptive behaviour (29.0%). The second most common reason was physical assault against a pupil at 17.1% (DfE, 2012b).

Persistent disruptive behaviour was the most common reason for a pupil being permanently excluded in both primary and secondary schools (30.1% and 29.0% respectively). In special schools this was the second most common reason (17.6%), the most common reason being physical assault against an adult (33.7%). The next most common reason in primary schools was physical assault against an adult (29.1%) whereas for secondary schools it was physical assault against a pupil (17.4%) (Chart 4.7).

#### **Fixed period exclusions**

The most common reason recorded for fixed period exclusions from maintained primary schools, state funded secondary schools, and special schools in England in 2009/10 was persistent disruptive behaviour, accounting for 23.8% of fixed period exclusions. The second most common reason recorded was verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (20.9%), followed by physical assault against a pupil (19.3%) (DfE, 2012b).

As with permanent exclusions, the most common reason for receiving a fixed period exclusion in primary and secondary schools was persistent disruptive behaviour (27.5% and 23.4% of exclusions respectively). The next most common reason for primary schools was physical assault against a pupil (24.3%) whereas for secondary schools this was verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (22.4%). For special schools the two most common reasons for exclusions were physical assault against an adult and persistent disruptive behaviour (accounting for 21.0% and 20.7% of fixed period exclusions, respectively) (Chart not shown).

### **Characteristics of excluded pupils**

Certain groups are more likely to be excluded from school (whether permanently or for a fixed period) than others (DfE, 2012b). For the 2009/10 academic year:

The permanent exclusion rate for boys was approximately four times higher than that for girls, and three times higher for fixed period exclusions. Boys represented 78% of the total number of permanent exclusions and around 75% of all fixed period exclusions.

Boys were more likely to be excluded (both permanently and for a fixed period) at a younger age than girls, with very few girls being excluded during the primary years.

The most common point for both boys and girls to be excluded was at ages 13 and 14 (equivalent to year groups 9 and 10); around 53% of all permanent exclusions were of pupils from these age groups.

Pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) were around eight times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than pupils with no SEN, and were nine times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) have the highest rate of fixed period and permanent exclusion.

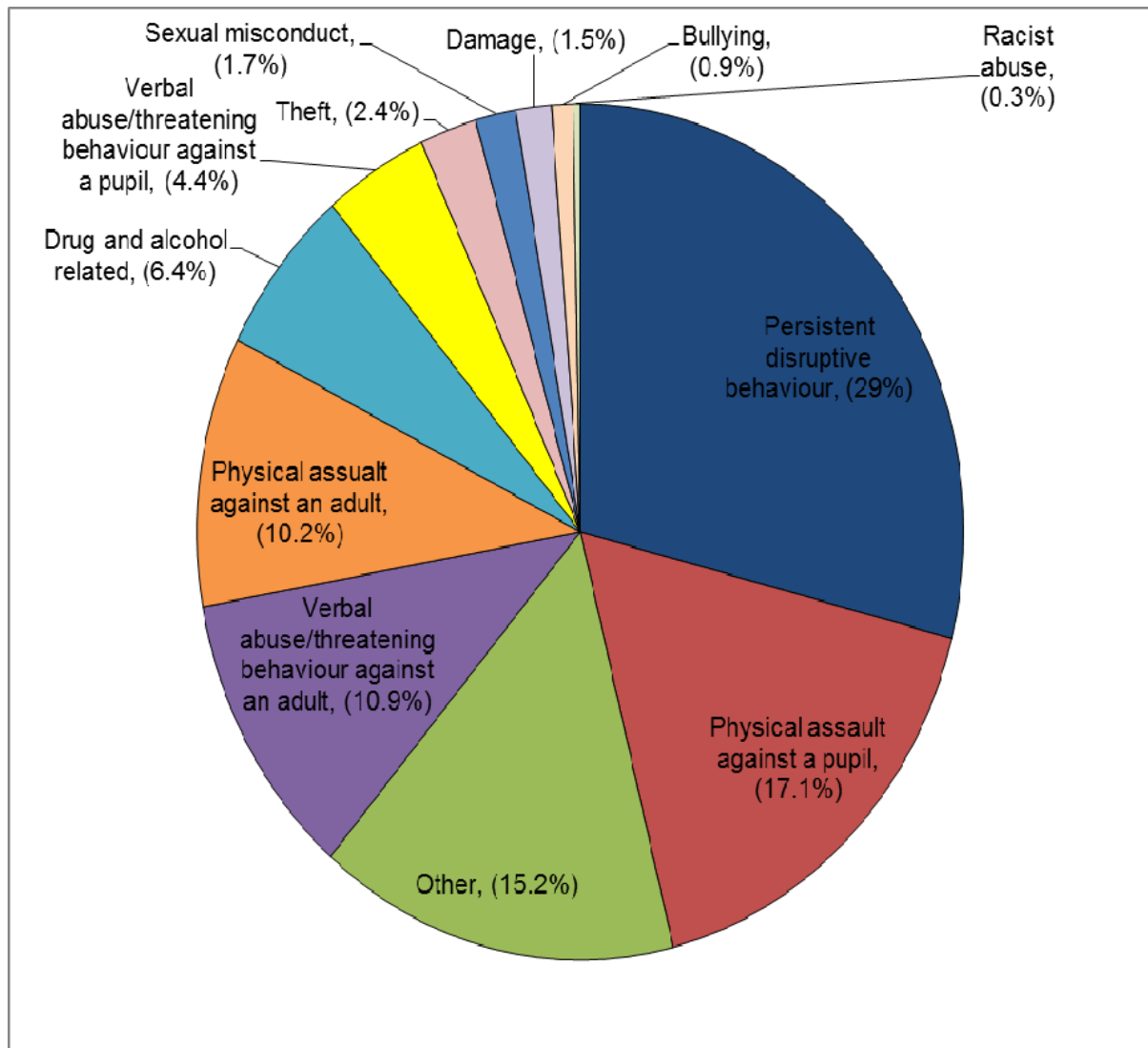
Pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals were around four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion, and were around three times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than children who are not eligible for Free School Meals.

The rate of exclusions was highest for Traveller of Irish Heritage, and Gypsy/Roma pupils followed by Black Caribbean pupils. Caution is recommended in interpreting the data for Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils and Gypsy/Roma pupils due to potential under-reporting and small numbers for these ethnic groups. Black Caribbean pupils were nearly four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than the school population as a whole and were twice as likely to receive a fixed period exclusion.

**Further detail on the breakdown of characteristics is included in the DfE report (DfE, 2012b).**

# **Permanent exclusions in maintained primary and state-funded secondary schools by reason (2009/10)**

*Source: DfE (2012b)*



## **PERMANENT AND FIXED PERIOD EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND, 2011/12**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Statistical First Release (SFR29/2013) provides information about permanent and fixed period exclusions from state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools during 2011/12 as reported in the School Census, together with exclusion appeals for maintained schools in England.

## **SUMMARY**

Permanent exclusions rose marginally, going from 5,080 in 2010/11 to 5,170 in 2011/12. The rate of permanent exclusion remained at 0.07 per cent of the school population, or in other words is equivalent to 7 pupils in every 10,000. This follows a steady decline in the permanent exclusion numbers and rate over recent years. Permanent exclusions in primary schools remain low but this is where most of the rise is seen, with numbers going from 610 to 690, a rise of 13.9 per cent.

The number of fixed period exclusions decreased, continuing the recent trend, going from 324,110 in 2010 to 2011 academic year to 304,370 in 2011 to 2012 academic year. The decrease is in secondary schools, with relatively little change in primary and special school figures.

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**APPENDIX B****Table 2.1. Brief Overview of the Systematic Search with articles identified for Review****List A**

Students  
 Students at risk  
 Adolescents  
 Adolescents at risk  
 Young people  
 Young people at risk  
 Secondary School  
 Disaffected youth  
 Minority groups

**List B**

Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties  
 Behaviour problems  
 Excluded  
 Exclusion  
 School exclusion  
 Interventions  
 Behaviour support  
 Solutions

The following is a list of the final search results:

Databases	Date sourced	Search Terms	Articles identified for Review
EBSCOhost Education Search Complete	11/10/13	“Solutions to school exclusion”	Munn, p. and Lloyd, G. (2005). Exclusion and excluded pupils. <i>British Educational Research Journal</i> , 31 (2): 205 – 221
EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete	20/12/13	“Excluded from school”	Gilmore, G. (2013). ‘What’s fixed term exclusion, Miss?’ Students’ perspectives on a disciplinary inclusion room in England. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 40 (3): 106 - 113
EBSCOhost PsycInfo	20/12/13	“Reducing exclusion from secondary school”	Webb, R. and Vulliamy, G. (2003). Bridging the cultural divide: The role of the home-school support worker. <i>British Educational Research Journal</i> , 29(3): 285 - 305
EBSCOhost PsycInfo	21/12/13	“Exclusion from secondary school”	Burton, S. (2006) ‘Over to you’: Group work to help pupils avoid school exclusion. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22 (3): 215 – 236

EBSCOhost PsycInfo	21/12/13	“Exclusion from secondary school”	Timmins, P., Shepherd, D. and Kelly, T. (2003). The research and development in organisations approach and the evaluation of a mainstream behaviour support initiative. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 19 (3): 229 - 242
EBSCOhost Education Search Complete	21/12/13	“Interventions targeting excluded secondary school students”	Malberg, N. (2008). Refusing to be excluded: Finding ways of integrating psychotherapeutic modalities to the emerging needs of a pupil referral unit. <i>Journal of Child Psychotherapy</i> , 34 (1): 101 – 110
EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete	23/12/13	“Secondary school exclusions”	Jones, J. and Smith, C (2004). Reducing exclusions whilst developing effective intervention and inclusion for pupils with behaviour difficulties. <i>Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties</i> , 9(1): 115 - 129
EBSCOhost PsycInfo <a href="http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/9/403">http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/9/403</a>	23/12/13	“Secondary school exclusions”	Kidger, J., Donovan, J., Biddle, L., Campbell, R., Gunnell, D. (2009). Supporting adolescent emotional health in schools: a mixed methods study of student and staff views in England. <i>BMC Public Health</i> , 9: 403
All databases	23/12/13	“Secondary School exclusions”	Swinson, J. (2010). Working with a secondary school to improve social relationships, pupil behaviour, motivation and learning. <i>Pastoral Care in Education</i> , 28 (3): 181 - 194
EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete	6/03/14	“Supporting Disaffected youth”	Ewen, M. and Topping, K.J. (2012). Personalised learning for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.



			<i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 28(3): 221 – 239
EBSCOhost PsycInfo	6/03/13	“reducing school exclusion among minority groups in England”	Humphrey, N. and Brooks, A.G. (2006). An evaluation of a short cognitive-behavioural anger management intervention for pupils at risk of exclusion. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 11(1): 5 - 23
Hand search	Between January and December, 2013		Hope, T. (2006). Are schools in tune with disaffected youth? <i>International Journal on School Disaffection</i> , 4 (2): 28 - 34

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Outline of the Systematic Search for Literature**

#### **Database Search with named articles that were chosen**

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>11/10/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	EBSCOhost Education Research Complete
<b>Key Words Used</b>	“Solutions to school exclusion”
<b>Results</b>	531 hits
<b>Results</b>	2 relevant
<b>Results</b>	1 identified for review

- Munn, P. and Lloyd, G. (2005). Exclusion and Excluded Pupils. *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 31 (2), pp. 205-221

#### **Database Search**

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>20/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	Academic Search Complete
<b>Key Words Used</b>	“Excluded from school”
<b>Results</b>	481
<b>Results</b>	1 identified for review

- Gilmore, G. (2013). ‘What’s fixed term exclusion, Miss?’ Students’ perspectives on a disciplinary inclusion room in England. *British Journal of Special Education*, 40 (3): 106 - 113

#### **Database Search**

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>20/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	EBSCOhost PsycInfo
<b>Key Words Used</b>	“Excluded from school”
<b>Results</b>	231 hits
<b>Results</b>	3 considered relevant
<b>Results</b>	No new studies identified for review

<b>Search Date</b>	20/12/13
<b>Databases Searched</b>	PsycInfo

<b>Key Words Used</b>	Reducing exclusion from secondary school
<b>Results</b>	1 hit
<b>Results</b>	1 identified for review

- Webb, R. and Vulliamy, G. (2003). Bridging the cultural divide: The role of the home-school support worker. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(3): 285 - 305

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>20/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	PsycInfo
<b>Key Words Used</b>	Preventing exclusion from secondary school
<b>Results</b>	2,880 hits
<b>Results</b>	2 relevant
<b>Results</b>	None identified for review

One of the relevant studies included a version of the study on Gypsy Traveller students that was eventually chosen (by Derrington and Kendall, 2004)

The other, "Reduction of problem behaviours and school exclusion in at-risk youth: an experimental study of school social work with cost benefit analyses" by Bagley and Pritchard ( ) was eventually not in the final set of studies.

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>21/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	PsycInfo
<b>Key Words Used</b>	Exclusion from secondary school
<b>Results</b>	9 hits
<b>Results</b>	7 relevant
<b>Results</b>	2 new studies identified for review

- Burton, S. (2006) 'Over to you': Group work to help pupils avoid school exclusion. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 22 (3): 215 – 236
- Timmins, P., Shepherd, D. and Kelly, T. (2003). The research and development in organisations approach and the evaluation of a mainstream behaviour support initiative. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 19 (3): 229 - 242

Another study was already in the final count – by Webb and Vulliamy and a third on the longitudinal study on Gypsy Traveller students.

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>21/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	PsycArticles

<b>Key Words Used</b>	“Exclusion from secondary school”
<b>Results</b>	84 hits
<b>Results</b>	No new studies identified for review

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>21/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	Education Research Complete
<b>Key Words Used</b>	Exclusion from secondary school
<b>Results</b>	59 hits
<b>Results</b>	1 new study identified for review

- Tucker, S. (2013). Pupil vulnerability and school exclusion: developing responsive pastoral policies and practices in secondary education in the UK. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 31(4): 279 – 291

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>21/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	Education Research Complete
<b>Key Words Used</b>	“interventions targeting excluded secondary school students”
<b>Results</b>	658
<b>Results</b>	1 new study identified for review

- Malberg, N. (2008). Refusing to be excluded: Finding ways of integrating psychotherapeutic modalities to the emerging needs of a pupil referral unit. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 34 (1): 101 – 110

Searches on 22/12/13 included Sage Journals, Scopus – no studies used from these searches  
Terms used included, “Excluded from Secondary School”; “Supporting excluded secondary school students”, “interventions for excluded secondary school students”.

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>23/12/13</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	EBBCO – Academic Search Complete; Education Research Complete; PsycInfo; PsycArticles
<b>Key Words Used</b>	“Secondary School exclusions”

<b>Results</b>	148
<b>Results</b>	13 relevant
<b>Results</b>	4 new studies identified for review

- Kane, J. (2006). School exclusions and masculine, working class identities. *Gender and Education*, 18(6): 673 – 685
- Jones, J. and Smith, C (2004). Reducing exclusions whilst developing effective intervention and inclusion for pupils with behaviour difficulties. *Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties*, 9(1): 115 – 129
- Kidger, J., Donovan, J., Biddle, L., Campbell, R., Gunnell, D. (2009). Supporting adolescent emotional health in schools: a mixed methods study of student and staff views in England. *BMC Public Health*, 9: 403
- Swinson, J. (2010). Working with a secondary school to improve social relationships, pupil behaviour, motivation and learning. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 28 (3): 181 - 194

**Two from this list had already been included.**

<b>Search Date</b>	<b>6/03/14</b>
<b>Databases Searched</b>	EBSCOhost – Academic Search Complete; Education Research Complete; PsycInfo; PsycArticles
<b>Key Words Used</b>	Supporting disaffected youth
<b>Results</b>	45 hits
<b>Results</b>	1 new study identified for review

Ewen, M. and Topping, K.J. (2012). Personalised learning for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 28(3): 221 – 239

**One study received via hand search between January and December, 2013**

- Hope, T. (2006). Are schools in tune with disaffected youth? *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 4 (2): 28 - 34

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Timelines for Planning and Conducting Research**

#### **September – December, 2012**

1. Decision making for research topic
2. Preliminary reading on the topic of interest
3. Developing the research proposal
4. Submitting the Research Proposal for approval
5. Registering the research study/topic
6. Applying for Ethical Approval
7. Making early plans for data collection

#### **Timeline: 15<sup>th</sup> March – 19<sup>th</sup> July**

<b>Research Task</b>	<b>Expected Completion Date</b>	<b>Actual Completion Date</b>
Step 1 – Review approved Research Proposal including minor conditions attached to Ethical Approval	15/03/13	30/03/14
Step 2 – Identify the areas to be developed – including methodology	15/03/13	ONGOING
Step 3 – Identify additional areas to be included e.g. designing of questionnaire	15/03/13	ONGOING
Step 4 – Focus on the Literature search: record details of books, articles etc	30/03/13	ONGOING
Step 5 – Create back up files for all this information – desktop, email, removable disk, writing	30/03/13/	ONGOING
Step 6 – Making contact to begin data collection – starting with Phase I: EPs followed by school managers	30/04/13	30/10/13
Step 7 – Recording Data collected	30/06/13	30/11/13

Further details of this work includes:

- Downloading or receiving hardcopies, recording and saving data for preliminary phase
- Withdrawing information about interventions (create document)
- Updating design of questionnaires to SENCOs using the information obtained
- Finalising names and locations of SENCOs needed for the research
- Making contact with the schools involved – information about the research, request for their involvement and what it involves
- Meeting with identified SENCOs – distribution of questionnaires
- Arrange time for collection of completed questionnaires (Maintain contact throughout)
- Organise invitations for parents
- Organise invitations for student participants
- Distribute and obtain consents for participation
- Conduct interviews
- Store data for later transcription and analysis

**Timelines: March – December 2013**

<b><u>Research Task</u></b>	<b><u>Planned Completion Date</u></b>	<b><u>Actual Completion Date</u></b>
- Downloading or receiving hardcopies, recording and saving data for preliminary phase - EPs	28/03/13	29/03/13
- Withdrawing information about interventions (create document)	28/03/13	11/04/13
- Updating design of questionnaires to SENCOs using the information obtained	29/03/13	30/04/13
- Finalising names and locations of SENCOs needed for the research	20/04/13	30/04/13
- Making contact with the schools involved – information about the research, request for their involvement and what it involves	26/04/13	30/06/13
- Meeting with identified SENCOs – Discussion on completion of questionnaires (draft	19/04/13	30/06/13

used – questionnaires to be emailed after response from supervisor		
- Collection of completed questionnaires (Maintain contact throughout)	9/05/13	30/06/13
- Organise and receive consent from parents and participants	24/05/13	11/13
- Meetings with prospective student participants	31/05/13	13/11/13
- Conduct interviews	12/07/13	13/11/13
- Store/File data for later transcription and analysis	26/07/13	13/11/13
- Complete chapter drafts for submission to my supervisor	09/13 - 04/14	09/13 – 04/14
Store file/data for later transcription and analysis	26/07/13	13/11/13
Analysis of Quantitative Data	30/9/13	30/11/13
Review chapters – Literature Review and Methodology	30/12/13	ongoing

**January – May, 2014**

Transcription of interview data	30/12/13	15/01/14
Thematic Analysis	02/14	03/14
Writing Chapter – Findings	03/14	30
Writing Discussion	30/03/14	30/04/14



## **Appendix E:**

## **Research Pack for EPs**

### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London E15 4LZ

**The Principal Investigator**  
Name and contact information

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology degree at the University of East London.

### **Project Title**

Reducing Exclusions in Secondary Schools: An investigation into what works

### **Project Description**

The research adopts a mixed methodology in investigating what works in helping students who are excluded to be reintegrated successfully into the mainstream.

In this first preliminary phase, I am asking professionals like yourself who work with children and young people in the school environment, to complete a questionnaire, naming the interventions they have used themselves, recommended for use or know to have been used with young people who are at risk of or have been excluded.

### **Confidentiality of the Data**

Questionnaires are to be completed anonymously so that the identity of participants will be protected. Only the service will be identifiable on the questionnaire. These completed questionnaires will be filed and not accessible to any but the researcher.

### **Location**

Participants will complete the questionnaire on their own and email back to the researcher/sender of the documents – .....

### **Disclaimer**

The information given on the completed questionnaires will be used for the expressed person of research and will be destroyed once the information presented have been withdrawn and utilized. .

If you have any questions or concerns about the questions being asked, please contact the study's supervisor Dr Mark Fox, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4680 **Email: ...**

**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.  
(Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: ..)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Date: 4/03/13

**Deadline for return of completed questionnaire: Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2013**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**Consent to participate in a research study**

Reducing Exclusions in Secondary Schools: An investigation into what works

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information.

I understand that my 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.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS): .....

Participant's Signature : .....

Date: .....

**QUESTIONNAIRE  
TO BE COMPLETED BY EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

1. **District(s) in which you work/deliver services to schools/students and their families**
2. **Please list or give a brief explanation of the interventions (under the given headings) you offer, have recommended or have used to support young people who have been excluded or at risk of exclusion.**

*Please note that 'intervention' here refers to any strategy or approach you have used or recommended to support the young person and not only to formal programmes.*

**A. Level of the Child (direct work – with individual or group)**

(list as many as you can)

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

**B. Level of the Family (i.e. work involving parents/carers and/or siblings)**

(list as many as you can)

**C. Level of the School (Interventions delivered or recommended to school staff to support students)**

(list as many as you can)

**D. Level of the community/Multi-Agency (recommendations that involved access through the community or other professionals)**

(list as many as you can)

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.*

**APPENDIX F:**            **Research Packs for parents/guardians**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London E15 4LZ

**Researcher**

Maraika Gooding, Trainee Educational Psychologist  
Email: [u1133561@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1133561@uel.ac.uk); or ..... Tel:(mobile) .....

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information about the research project in which I would like your child to be a participant. You need to consider this information in order to decide whether you will give consent for your son to participate in the research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology degree at the University of East London.

**Project Title**

Reducing Exclusions in Secondary Schools: An investigation into what works

**Project Description**

The project is focused on research that will help to support the national aim to reduce exclusions in school. To achieve this, we need to find ways to investigate the particular needs of young people and to find out what is being used effectively at different levels. Part of this research project is to obtain to views of young people themselves who have been excluded and may have benefitted from some type of intervention to be reintegrated into mainstream school. I am seeking your consent to approach your son/daughter to invite him/her to participate.

Obtaining the views of young people would mean they have an opportunity to voice their concerns and perhaps to help other young people like themselves. Being involved would demand just an hour of his/her time for an interview with me, the researcher. The interview will involve about 10 questions focused on school experiences and experience with interventions including while at the Pupil Referral Unit especially those that may have helped him in the return to school.

It is with the support of the University of East London that schools, parents and the young people themselves will have full assurance that all **Child Safety and Protection laws** will be upheld in the process of seeking their consent and interviewing these young people who agree to participate in this research.

**Confidentiality of the Data**

I will have your son's name and contact details on file but these will be kept separate to his interview and his views will be kept anonymous throughout the process.

**Location**

Participants could choose where they would like the interview to take place – school or home.

### **Remuneration**

Though persons who agree to be part of the research are quite willing to make this contribution, there is a gift of a voucher for a Fast Food chain that each participant will be given at the end of the interview. Participants will also be invited to a small reception once the research is completed and published.

### **Disclaimer**

No one is forced to participate and is free to withdraw at any time without disadvantage and without any obligation to give a reason. However, if your son should decide to withdraw after his views have been transcribed, the researcher reserves the right to use the anonymised data in the write-up of the study and for any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Please feel free to ask me any questions by email or the telephone given above. .

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Tel: **Email:**

**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.  
(Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: .....)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Date:.....

### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

#### **Consent to approach your son for his participation in a research study**

Reducing Exclusions in Secondary Schools: An investigation into what works

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purpose of the research have been explained 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 child will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that his 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.

I hereby give consent for this project to be discussed further with my son/daughter. At that stage, we will make a decision together about continued involvement.

Research Thesis: u1133561

Name of Parent/Guardian (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Signature of Parent/Guardian

.....

Date: .....

**APPENDIX G:**

**Research Packs for Students**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London E15 4LZ

**The Principal Investigator**  
NAME AND CONTACT INFO

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology degree at the University of East London.

**Project Title**

Reducing Exclusions in Secondary Schools: An investigation into what works

**Project Description**

The project is focused on research that will help to support the national aim to reduce exclusions in school. To achieve this, we need to find ways to investigate the particular needs of young people throughout different counties and to find out what is being used effectively at different levels. This research projects targets not only the professionals or practitioners in the field but also the young people themselves who have been excluded and may have benefitted from an intervention. The goal in this case is to recruit such young people in order to get their views.

Young persons who could help with this project will be given a chance to consider all the information given to them and sign a Consent Form if they are willing to participate. Being involved would demand just over one hour of your time for an interview with the researcher. The interview itself will last between 50 and 60 minutes, not more than an hour. If you decide to be such a participant, the researcher will have questions to ask and you will answer as clearly as you can. You do not have to worry about speaking in any particular way. You only have to answer what comes to your mind.

As the researcher and interviewer, I will take some notes and your views will be audio-recorded. Using an audio-recorder is to ensure that I do not miss anything that you said. There will be no more than 10 questions and you can decide not to answer if you choose. The questions will be about school and your activities, about your exclusion and the support you received to help you to return to school.

Throughout the interview, I will do everything possible to ensure you are comfortable. After the interview, you can talk to me about any concerns that may have developed from the interview. You can also send me an email or call me to answer any remaining concerns.

**Confidentiality of the Data**

I will have your name and contact details on file but these will be kept separate to your interview. Every participant interviewed will be given a code – a special name or number to identify them e.g. Participant 5. At the beginning of the audio-recording, you will identify yourself by that code and not your name. Your views from then will therefore be anonymous – that is, no one else will know it was

you who shared those views. You can depend on me, like a counsellor, not to share your identity with anyone – this is an extremely important rule of my profession. After listening to the recording of your views, I will transcribe them – again identified by the code – and these views will be analysed along with the views of other participants in the research. I will share these views with my supervisors but they will remain anonymous. These views will be important data for my research project and will therefore be stored very safely – in folders placed in a locked cupboard or in a password protected file on my computer that I alone will be able to access.

The audio-recordings will be destroyed after the research is published. However, the written/transcribed data will continue to be held safely as it could be the basis for further studies. Participants will be guaranteed access to the information they gave and to the use to which it was put.

It is with the support of the University of East London that schools, parents and the young people themselves will have full assurance that all **Child Safety and Protection laws** will be upheld in the process of seeking their consent and interviewing these young people who agree to participate in this research

#### **Location**

Participants will have the choice of being interviewed either in a private room at school or in their homes.

#### **Remuneration**

Though persons who agree to be part of the research are quite willing to make this contribution, there is a gift of a voucher for a Fast Food chain that each participant will be given at the end of the interview. Participants will also be invited to a small reception once the research is completed and published.

#### **Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel forced to do so. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. However, if you decide to withdraw after the data has been transcribed, the researcher reserves the right to use your anonymised data in the write-up of the study and for any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Tel: **Email:**

**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.  
(Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email:.....)

Thank you in anticipation.



**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London E15 4LZ

**The Principal Investigator**  
(,,,,,,,,,name and contact info)

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in this research study which aims to contribute to the support schools can provide for students who are excluded.

Please read the information attached in discussion with your parent and return to me as early as possible.

With thanks

Trainee educational psychologist

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**Consent to participate in a research study**

Reducing Exclusions in Secondary Schools: An investigation into what works

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what 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 in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher].

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Name of Parent/Guardian

.....

Signature of Parent/Guardian

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date: .....

## **APPENDIX H**

### **What makes a good thematic analysis?**

Braun and Clarke (2006) have devised a checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis that was used in this research to ensure a robust outcome. The 15-point checklist is quoted below – see Box 3.1.

#### **Box 3.1. What Makes a Good Thematic Analysis**

<b>Process</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the material for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach).
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
Analysis	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately without rushing a phase or giving it a once over lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you have done – i.e. described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process: themes do not just 'emerge'.

(Braun and Clarke 2006, p.287)

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Ethical Guidelines observed in the research**

- The research objectives, type of data to be collected, method of data collection, use of data and the potential benefits of the research were articulated in writing to initial gatekeepers as well as parents and verbally directly to participants as appropriate.
- Data collection was undertaken after permission was received from the Local Authority via the Principal of the EPS and others including Schools, parents and young people themselves. This followed approval from the university and ethical approval.
- Participation in the study was voluntary and this was clearly conveyed to potential participants verbally and in writing. This included expression of the right to decline to offer any particular information requested and the assurance of adherence to all **Child Safety and Protection** laws.
- Information was repeated to student participants on first meeting.
- Participants would be given details of the amount of time their participation required and be given a choice of location for their interview (fitting particular criteria identified).
- All participants were given contact information for the researcher in case of further questions or concerns and of the researcher's research supervisor in case of any queries.
- Written consent to proceed with the study as clearly articulated was received from all participants.
- Participants were informed of their right to withdraw if they have changed their minds about participating up to the point when analysis has been completed. . After this period, their audio recordings will be destroyed but their anonymous, transcribed data will be the property of the researcher.
- The gatekeepers and participants were informed of all data collection devices and activities e.g. tape recorder.
- Participants were guaranteed access to the information they gave if desired and to the use to which it was put.
- Verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations and reports as well as instrument developed from their views were made available to the participants.
- Participants were debriefed at the end of their interviews.

- Participants were to be notified about sessions in which the research would be presented and the access to research reports.
- There was no deception in this research.

The confidential and anonymous treatment of all data collected was fully maintained

- Participants in the qualitative phase were not initially anonymous as they participated in a face-to-face interview with the researcher.
- Participants were identified by a code and not names on tape recording of interviews.
- Transcribed data was identified by this code.
- Audio recordings will be destroyed once research process has been concluded and university events have passed.
- Transcribed data are stored in safe conditions held by the researcher at all stages. during and following the research process to allow for further research purpose – this was explained to participants as part of their informed consent of use of their data.
- Names and contact details of participants in the qualitative phase are stored safely in a way unconnected with the research.
- Names and professional references are included only with permission from the relevant authority.

## **APPENDIX J**

### **List of Interventions recommended by Educational Psychologists (EPs) (in categories)**

#### **1. Consultation**

- Consultation/conversation with child
- Meeting between school staff and student on return from FT exclusion
- Meeting with disciplinary body and student on return to school from FT exclusion
- Attendance of YP at the PSP Meeting
- Joint meeting with school and parents and YP for regular reviews of PSP
- Consultation meetings re problem behaviours
- Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings
- Joint consultations including YP, parent(s)/carer(s), school staff and others
- Circle of Adults
- Parent drop in sessions
- EP meeting with parents to explore issues
- Family Liaison Officer (FLO)
- Family GP
- Health Visitor
- Local Inclusion Forum
- EP liaison with inclusion/exclusion officer
- Allied professionals meetings
- Functional analysis
- Home consultations to help with implementation of ideas

#### **2. Direct Assessment**

- Psychological assessment
- Emotional/behavioural assessments e.g. BECK, BASC, Connors
- Cognitive Assessment
- Pupil Assessment of Self and School (PASS) Battery
- Observations
- Resiliency Scales
- Rating Scales to identify likes and dislikes
- Assessment of features of psychological experience e.g. style of attribution, self-concept
- Assessment of physical health and well being
- Statutory Assessment
- Close inspection and assessment using National Curriculum
- Joint Assessment by practitioners from different agencies
- Referrals for specialist intervention e.g. EPS, CAMHS, SLT
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

### **3. Social Emotional and Behaviour (SEB) Support**

- Nurture group
- Circle of Friends
- Mentoring
- Emotional literacy interventions
- Group based interventions
- Nurture Approaches
- Pastoral Support Plan
- Circle Time
- Parent Support groups
- Support for family members including siblings
- Challenging behavioural policies in school/class
- Reviewing Behaving Policy
- Whole school surveys around issues such as bullying
- Support Plans for students at risk
- Research and evaluation in positive behaviour management
- School policies reflecting an inclusive approach to vulnerable children
- School vigilance about specific vulnerable groups such as bereaved young people, whose behaviour can change quickly
- Referrals for additional support
- Primary Intervention Project for support in the home
- Liaison with Inclusion Officer to ensure guideline around exclusion are being followed
- Planning for speech and language differences
- Planning for poor auditory memory – particularly in giving instructions
- Family Liaison Officer to work with families
- Parent Support Programmes
- Early Intervention Teams
- Young Offenders support groups
- Community Police
- Apprenticeship Programmes
- Youth Clubs
- After School Programmes
- Parental support courses
- Parent Partnership Programme
- Specified Staff Training
- Managing behaviour, ADHD, ASD, Attachment issues
- Solihull Framework
- Differentiating work or developing specific work strategies, such as precision teaching

- INSET/Twilight training
- ASD Training
- Anti-bullying policies
- Use of sociograms to develop class teacher's understanding of class peer structure
- Use of Nurturing Approaches within school
- Use of Boxall Profiles for assessment and planning for vulnerable pupils
- Developing effective interactions
- Delivering interventions such as effective group work, Circle of friends and Emotional Literacy
- Developing the whole school culture and ethos, helping them understand difficult behaviour
- Formulation and delivery of Individual Behaviour plans, Pastoral Support plans for individual pupils
- General capacity building for Class teachers, SENCo's and Senior Managers
- **Staff Supervision and support**
- Creative problem solving groups (e.g. Staff Sharing Schemes)
- Advice for class teacher.
- Advice for Teaching Assistants
- Support for NQT's on class room management
- Mentoring/ coaching for teaching staff
- Whole class support through use of class audit

#### **4. Therapeutic Approaches**

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Solution Focussed Brief Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Video Interactive Guidance
- Basic Video Modelling
- Comic strip conversations
- Social Stories
- Narrative Therapy
- Narrative Approaches
- Cognitive behavioural approaches
- Solution focussed approaches
- Non-violent Resistance
- Motivational Interviewing
- Counselling
- Solution Focused Approach
- Cognitive Behavioural Approach
- Narrative approaches
- Family mediation
- Family Therapy



## **5. Behaviour Management Techniques**

- Calm box
- Negotiation strategies such as 'win win' negotiations with young people
- Behaviour management techniques
- Group interventions including Anger Management and Social Skills
- Explicit teaching concerning social/emotional skills/regulation
- Positive time with an adult structured into the day/ attachment strategies
- Support for YP to express needs, visual support/ use of Makaton
- ABCC charts (Antecedent, behaviour, consequences, communicative content)
- Visual scheduling/Timetable/Prompts
- Access to a safe, quiet space in school
- Using clear script/ the language of choice
- Individual or small group support
- Increase levels of predictability
- Differentiated behaviour management strategies
- Role Play positive behaviour
- Withdrawal space
- Anger Management
- Movement breaks
- Exit cards
- Supervision/prompting/guidance/check-ins
- Bespoke interventions e.g. guided imagery to aid relaxation and self-awareness
- Reinforcement/reward for positive behaviours
- Clear structures – boundaries, routine, visual timetable, cue cards
- Training in skills to self-monitor feelings
- Re-training for attribution style and behaviour modification
- Social Skills Training
- Behaviour Management Programme
- Solihull Parenting Programme
- Interventions that parents can deliver at home
- Behaviour management approaches

## **6. Learning Support**

- Person Centred Approaches to engage in learning
- Exploration of learning levels and appropriateness of programme
- Support for learning difficulties
- Literacy Programmes
- Peer-assisted learning strategies
- Precision Teaching

## **APPENDIX K**

### **List of interventions reported by Schools (in categories)**

#### **1. Consultation**

- Consultation/conversation with YP
- Meeting with school staff and YP on return to school from FT exclusion
- Attendance at PSP meeting
- Joint consultations i.e. with YP, parents/carers, school staff and others
- Joint meetings with school and parent for regular reviews of the PSP
- Family Liaison officer role (no longer available)
- Staff consultation meetings re problem behaviours
- Meeting with disciplinary body and YP on return from FT exclusion
- Inclusion in PSP meeting
- Parent drop-in session
- TAF

#### **2. Assessment**

- Referral for Assessment
- Checklists (SEBD)
- Observation schedules to monitor behaviour
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Observation schedule
- Assessment of Physical Health and well-being
- Referral to external agency
- Assessment (CAMHS)
- Close inspection and assessment using National Curriculum
- Rating Scales to identify likes and dislikes
- Pupil Assessment of Self and School (PASS) Battery

#### **3. Therapeutic Approaches**

- CBA
- Social Stories
- Anger Management
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Counselling
- Anger Management
- SFBT
- SLT
- Counselling
- Bespoke interventions e.g. guided imagery to aid relaxation and self-awareness

#### **4. SEB Support**

- Mentoring
- Pastoral Support Plan
- Support plans for students at risk

- Referrals for additional support
- Specialist Teaching Service
- Local inclusion Forum (multi-professional)
- Youth Offending Service
- Community Police
- Reviewing behaviour policies
- School vigilance about specific vulnerable group such as bereaved young people, whose behaviour can change quickly
- Referrals for additional support
- Researching strategies appropriate to individual cases
- Participation in TAF meetings
- Observation of teaching/learning
- Nurture Approaches
- Parenting Programmes
- Parent Support Group
- Support plans for students at risk
- Research and evaluation in Positive Behaviour Management strategies
- Mentoring/coaching for teaching staff
- Staff Training re Child Protection
- Family GP and/or Health Officer

## **5. Behaviour Management techniques**

- Withdrawal Space
- Exit Card
- Clear structures – boundaries, routine, visual timetable, cue cards
- Differentiated B/M techniques
- Supervision/prompts/guidance/check-ins
- Reinforcement/reward for positive behaviour
- Differentiated Behaviour Management Strategies
- Role Play positive behaviours
- Movement breaks
- Anger Management
- Training in skills to self-monitor feelings
- Re-training for attribution style and behaviour modification
- Social skills training

## **6. Academic Support**

- Literacy programmes
- Peer-assisted learning strategies
- Person-centred approaches
- Literacy Programmes
- Peer-assisted Learning Strategies

## **APPENDIX L**

### **List of interventions reported by Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)**

#### **1. Consultation**

- Individual Support – consultation
- Communication e.g. phone calls
- Consultation – meetings at school
- Open Days
- Open door
- Phone calls once/twice weekly
- Encourage calls from parents
- Adhoc meetings – about concerns

#### **2. Assessment**

- Assessment of needs
- Early needs assessment
- CAMHS

#### **3. Therapeutic Approaches**

- Counselling
- EPS
- CAMHS

#### **4. SEB Support**

- Structured Behaviour Policy
- Nurturing approaches
- Role Modelling
- Drugs and Alcohol addiction programme
- Sex Education
- Social skills training
- Small Groups
- Shorter lessons
- Personal Social Health education
- Field trips
- Reward trips
- Youth Offenders
- Fire Services – Arson
- Team Around the Family
- Shortened Days
- Code of Conduct
- Behaviour Points
- Nurturing approaches
- Breakfast
- Shared Lunch period
- Soft Room – if ill, angry or need to talk

- Pupil support officer
- Art Displays
- Notice Boards – points displayed; Pupil of the week – attendance; punctuality; list of activities
- Craft subjects
- Cookery
- Individual support meeting
- Small groups
- Personal Social Health Education
- Staff briefing beginning and end of the day
- Qualified staff
- Staff trained in Phonic intervention
- Staff trained in positive handling
- Staff trained in nurturing approaches
- Meals with staff and student
- Staff trained in Child Protection
- Team Teach
- CAMHS – ADHD medication
- Social Services
- Alcohol and drug intervention
- Mentorship
- Education Welfare Service
- Youth Offenders
- Youth Clubs
- Early Intervention Team
- Career Advice
- Processing CAF
- Education welfare officer
- Substance use
- Safer Stronger Families
- Social Services
- Youth Offenders
- Multi-agency risk assessment
- Early intervention Team
- TAF meetings
- Interventions for parents at home

## **5. Behaviour Management Techniques**

- Behaviour management approaches e.g. low attention to negative behaviours, high level of attention to positive
- Positive Regard
- Detention
- Certificates for Effort and Behaviour
- Rewards for desired behaviour
- Time out card
- Clear boundaries – rules
- Look out for opportunities for praise
- Common room

## **6.Academic Support**

- 1:1 Literacy and numeracy support
- Toe by toe Reading
- Qualified teachers
- Shared Tutor Group for support

## APPENDIX M

**Thematic analysis: Themes, subthemes and codes****Theme One: Struggling to cope with challenges with related subthemes and codes**

<b>1.1 It's hard when you don't fit in</b>	<b>1.2. Transition is difficult</b>	<b>1.3. Making sense of my behaviour</b>	<b>1.3.1 Do I have a problem?</b>	<b>1.3.2 'Hanging out' with the wrong people</b>
Feeling different; awareness of physical differences;	Moving from very small to very large school	Being the class clown	Habit developed early	Getting away from the wrong people
Not being the same as same-aged peers	Difficulty settling in	Doing anything to get out of class	ADHD	Finding the right people for friends
Struggling	Locating friendship groups	Responding to other people's behaviour	Not willing to give up smoking	Finding the right friendship groups
Finding it hard to fit in social group	Too many children with too few teachers	Being disrespected	Difficult home environment	Influence of the 'wrong' or 'bad' people
Judging achievements alongside that of peers	Problem developing	Ambivalence about school	Hated school	behaviour to adopt or avoid
hating some subjects	Worsening behaviour	Hating school	Finding out who I am	Following my friend on the roof
Having difficulties learning	More exclusions	Finding school boring	Fight or flight	Caught with friend's firecracker
Finding school boring	So many choices	Not liking certain subjects	Fighting a lot in Secondary school	
	Knowing who are the		Rebellion	

<p>Being stereotyped – judgements by adults No progress – ‘stuck’ in same place</p> <p>Singled out as a bad behaved student</p> <p>Being bullied</p> <p>Being sent out of classes</p> <p>Conflict with peer group</p> <p>Not accepted by peers</p> <p>Being looked down upon</p> <p>Getting ‘horrible’ treatment from others</p> <p>Being given fewer hours at school;</p> <p>Sent home while others are at school;</p> <p>Isolated from peers</p>	<p>‘good people’ and ‘bad people’</p> <p>Worry about consequences</p> <p>Communicating with teachers</p> <p>Finding the right way to talk to the teacher</p> <p>Getting attention</p> <p>Responding to bullying</p> <p>Finding out who can help</p> <p>Teachers too busy with so many kids</p>	<p>Defending family</p> <p>Not liking the teachers</p> <p>Finding some subjects difficult</p> <p>Feeling angry</p> <p>Feeling unhappy</p> <p>Self-protection</p> <p>Minor disruptive at primary level</p>	<p>Truancy</p> <p>Asking for help;</p> <p>smoking; truancy; self-harming</p> <p>Being identified for counselling</p> <p>Imprisoned at school</p> <p>Getting ‘kicked out’</p> <p>Feeling forced to change school</p> <p>In trouble with police</p>	<p>Hanging out with bigger kids who disrespected teachers, smoked on the field;</p> <p>Struggling to go along with bigger kids</p>
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**Theme Two: The impact of relationships with related subthemes and codes**

<b>2.1 When family is powerful and powerless</b>		<b>2.2 The peer group: when support is lacking</b>		<b>2.3. Conflict with teachers</b>	
Grieving early death of sibling; Defending handicapped brother; Recognising difficulty for mother; Dad moving away leads to self-harming; Mother helpful; Parent opposed to school decision; Mother getting help with new placement; Many changes in family life; Difficult family relationships; Mum 'cross' about being called in; Parents called in for formal meetings at school e.g. Permanent exclusion; School entry; No sense making an appeal; Impact of Dad's tears	Mother unaware about decision-making process at school; Complaints about my behaviour; Being brought in every week because of 'naughty' behaviour; Sister taking on the 'mother role'; Mother busy; Positive effects of mother disciplining short-lived; Father not thinking about behaviour; Mum can't stop my smoking; No conversation with parent about school; Mother struggling with behaviour at home; decision to exclude harsh – no consultation	Getting in trouble with friends  Bad influence of friends; Hanging out with friends who 'bunked' classes and smoked on the field; Friends also excluded; Other students horrible; Noticing that friends were 'bitchy' to others; Deciding to leave friendship group; Being 'jumped' for leaving friendship group; Being bullied; 'Dumb' to follow a friend; always showing off	Peer conflict causing discomfort  Choosing to be the class clown  Hating school because of 'horrible' pupils  Value with being accepted by other students  Good feeling from have similar experiences  New people and a fresh start  Needing friends to provide support	Answering back teachers when older; Finding teachers disrespectful to students Teachers not taking time to be courteous to students; Teachers unfair; Teachers being judgmental – stereotyping; Teachers complaining to my mother about my behaviour; Teachers feeling they are perfect  Calling head teacher a paedophile Being rude to teachers; Teachers not handling things correctly	Not feeling safe to confide in teacher  Disrupting lessons  Accepting teacher's authority – Primary school  Rejecting teacher's authority – secondary school;  Rebellion  Feeling targeted; not given a chance  Refusing detentions; Intent on 'pissing off' the teacher; Different perspectives on behaviour

**Theme Three: Intervention: Reward, Punishment or Help with related subthemes and codes**

<b>3.1 When punishment is not helpful</b>	<b>3.2 Acceptance is key</b>	<b>3.3. Help targeted to my needs</b>	<b>3.3.1 Academy support</b>	<b>3.3.2 Close supervision</b>	<b>3.3.3. Flexible approaches</b>	<b>3.3.4 Opportunity for a second chance</b>
Regularly threatened with exclusion; Isolation at home while on half day schedule; Labelled in front of whole school assembly; Hundreds of detentions; Giving up trying to change things; No sense trying; Exclusion from Play School; Multiple fixed term exclusion; Exclusion in Primary School; Not understanding; Every day the same; Lack of choice; Prison-like inclusion room; Reputation contributing to continuing of negative behaviours	Being understood is a privilege; Feeling safe and comfortable; Someone listening; Learning to listen; Just talking; Others being kind; School/Parent Communication; Teachers taking time to listen to students is good; Being treated with respect; Teachers being respectful make a big difference; Family mediation helped; Teachers caring for everyone; Treating all the same	Assessment, diagnosis and treatment; Life Skills; Adult support; Allowing a time to talk in groups; Teachers being more strict; Acceptance by teacher; Meetings with family at the beginning of the school year; Regular calls home; Parent getting help from other professionals; Maintaining class groups throughout the day; Separating old friends; Positive peer pressure; Group support; Time-out	Tutoring  Teachers responding to requests for help  Making lessons fun  Being helped with work  Teachers willing to help  Getting a chance to finish a project  Ongoing assessment;  A mentor  Seeking external support	Small number of students ("less kids"); More support from teacher to follow rules; More teachers better; Getting behaviour support; Rewards for good behaviour; Regular communication with family; shorter break/unstructured time;  Mentoring  Showing empathy Important to get along with teachers	Fieldtrips as a reward  Change in activities  Choice on certain days  Different hours  Loads of therapy and counselling did not work  More activities to choose  Some shorter work days  Some informal activities with teachers	Looking forward to a second chance; Learning how to cope with teachers; Developing self-confidence in a supportive, nurturing environment; Seeing teachers as caring adults; seeing change in being understood; Accepting help that is offered; Working with peers who have similar problems; Being able to think about the future; Beginning to set goals; Not wasting a second chance