An Exploration of Pupil Voice Practice in a Virtual School, Using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach.

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

April 2023

Word Count: 34,923

Abstract

Virtual Schools are teams within the local authority, who advocate for education matters for children with a social worker (CWSW). These children historically experience significantly poorer educational outcomes than many other cohorts. A key part of the role of the Virtual School is to listen and act upon pupil views. This research is conducted through a positive psychology lens, adopting an ecosystemic approach to organisational change. The systematic literature review critically appraises current research across primary, secondary and specialist provisions, as well as professionals who support children and young people systemically. It revealed a distinct lack of research with Virtual Schools and how pupil views are acted upon. This research uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within a qualitative methodology to explore how a Virtual School team conceptualise, obtain, and hear pupils' views. It also evaluates the usefulness of using AI as a tool for promoting change within a team in a local authority. The research involved team members of a Virtual School interviewing each other to explore pupil voice, then taking part in a focus group to make an action plan for the team to further develop their pupil voice practice. Through the AI process, the research identified how the Virtual School work systemically to hear pupil views and how they support other professionals. The data was analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). The findings were applied to eco systemic theory, highlighting how the role of the Virtual School permeates each system around the child. Key findings were around the importance of sharing practice; relationships; prioritising authenticity; the power of systemic working. Some barriers were also highlighted by the team. The team found the experience to be beneficial and wished for more time on the project with further opportunities to share practice. The thesis concludes presenting implications of the findings for future practice for Educational Psychologists who work with Virtual Schools and vulnerable children. It also reflects on the researcher's journey and directions for further research.

Declaration

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

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

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University of East London, School Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within this thesis.

I declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own and has been generated as a result of my own original research.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I'd like to thank the fantastic team of professionals in the Virtual School, who work tirelessly to champion and support the education of children in care. Without you, this piece of research would have not been possible, therefore I will be eternally grateful to you.

I would like to thank my UEL tutors Dr Janet Rowley and Dr Pandora Giles for all your support over the last few years. Thank you for giving me such helpful guidance and support throughout this process (and often putting up with my sometimes-questionable time keeping!). A massive thanks to everyone in Cohort 15 who have been an invaluable support network throughout this process.

Finally, to my incredible family and friends. To my mum, who has always believed in me no matter what I've chosen to do and listens to me whining and moaning on a weekly basis. Thank you, I love you. To my incredible friends, particularly to Caitlin and Pat; without you guys I would have found the last couple of years very hard indeed. You welcomed me into your flat weekly to stay when I had University, so I really couldn't have done this without you! To Meg, who has read far too many drafts of various essays throughout the year, your kindness hasn't gone unnoticed, thank you. And to all my other amazing friends who have provided an incredibly strong safety net when I have doubted my choices over the last few years, you're wonderful! Also – special thanks to the artists Ludovico Einaudi and Khruangbin for getting me through many, many hours of studying with your soothing sounds.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BPS	British Psychological Society
CINP	Child in Need Plan
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CWSW	Children with a social worker
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked-after child
PLAC	Previously looked-after child
PP+	Pupil premium plus
TA	Thematic Analysis
VS	Virtual School
VSH	Virtual School Head

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and set out the context to this research thesis, which focused on Virtual Schools and pupil voice. The research focused on exploring how Virtual School staff conceptualise, obtain and hear pupil views, to direct their work and support the children and young people whom they work with. The historical background regarding Virtual Schools will be presented, alongside key legislation and policy at both national and local levels. Pupil voice practice will also be explored, outlining key legislation that has shifted how education professionals view this area of practice. Key terminology that will be used throughout the thesis will be outlined. The researcher's position and rationale will be discussed. Finally, the chapter will present the relevance of the research to the educational psychology profession.

1.2 Virtual Schools

1.2.1 What is a Virtual School?

Rivers' (2018) definition of a Virtual School is clear that it is not a physical school, but rather a team of education professionals in the Local Authority (LA) who work with schools and other services to promote, advocate, and improve educational experiences of children in care. From 2021, Virtual Schools began to receive funding to oversee the education of children with a social worker (CWSW), in a strategic role. Virtual schools vary in size and function slightly between different LAs; what is consistent is that each one has a Virtual School Head (VSH), which is one of the few statutory roles within the LA (Sebba & Berridge, 2019). The VSH is responsible for the strategic oversight of educational outcomes

for looked-after children (LAC), previously looked-after children (PLAC) and CWSW (DfE, 2021).

1.2.2 Why are Virtual Schools Needed?

Virtual schools were initially formed in a response to the well-documented phenomena regarding the educational under-achievement of looked-after children (Fletcher-Campbell, 1998). In addition to this, children and young people in care also experience other outcomes which are much poorer than their peers, including being six times more likely to experience fixed-term exclusions (DfE, 2023), rates of offending are higher (5% compared to 1% of the general population (Sebba & Berridge, 2019) and 38% of care leavers were not in education, employment or training in 2022, in comparison with 11% of their peers (DfE, 2022).

1.2.3 Historical Context

Jackson (1994) was one of the first researchers to raise the problematic notion regarding the academic achievement of looked-after children. This article highlighted that among the many disadvantages suffered by this cohort, low educational achievement has the most serious consequences for their future life chances. It suggested that local authorities should give the same degree of primacy to education as a well-informed parent would (Jackson, 1994). As time progressed, the education of children in care came to be seen as equally important for their welfare as living situations and family relationships (Rivers, 2018). In 2007, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2007) produced a policy document that included a section titled ‘Delivering a First-Class Education’. Within this, the notion that there should be a team within a local authority that aimed to advocate and promote the education of looked-after children was presented.

Following this, a pilot project was conducted in 11 local authorities between 2007 and 2009. Berridge et al., (2007) conducted an evaluation of this pilot project. They found that

over the period of the pilots the 11 authorities performed well compared to the national average and many showed an improvement in GCSE results. There were several other findings, including around how the Virtual School tended to take more of a strategic role, how they were able to raise the profile of education to social workers, and support schools with quality and implementation of personal education plans (PEPs) (Berridge et al., 2007). Thus, it was concluded that the role of the VSH is a valuable one. In 2014, the Children and Families Act amended the Children Act (1989), to make the role of the VSH a statutory role for every local authority in England (Sebba & Berridge, 2019). Alongside this, the functions of the VSH were set out in the statutory guidance 'Promoting the Education of Looked-After and Previously Looked-after Children' (DfE, 2014). Further supporting documents were also released, including guidance for VSHs on how Pupil Premium Plus (PP+, funding that is devolved to schools by the VS to provide additional provision for children who are LAC/PLAC) should be managed (DfE, 2015). Guidance was also released for Designated Teachers (DTs) (DfE, 2018), on how to support looked-after and previously looked-after children in schools.

In September 2021, the DfE produced non-statutory guidance, extending the role of the VSH to take strategic leadership in promoting educational outcomes for children with a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker, e.g. children on child protection plans (CPP) or children in need plans (CINP). This was in response to the Children in Need review (2019), which evidenced that this cohort of children perform consistently poorer than children who do not have a social worker. This guidance states that VSHs should create a culture of high aspirations across education and social care, bring awareness to the disadvantage that this cohort of children face and ensure they make effective use of funding to embed the strategic leadership role (DfES, 2021).

1.2.4 Local Context

As of March 2020, the number of looked-after children in the LA in which this research took place was 190. Eighty three percent of the children are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. In Key stage 1, looked-after children achieved levels about the national average for maths and reading. They were in line with averages for Key stage 2 for maths and reading, but lower in writing. The average attainment 8 score in 2020 was 34.5, compared the national average for non-looked-after children of 44.6 (Corporate Parenting Strategy, LA, 2021). As part of this corporate parenting strategy, young people's views were captured. In these, a key ambition was *'Hear the child's voice. Provide help to children and young people to enable and encourage them to express their wishes and feelings'* (Corporate Parenting Strategy, local authority, 2021, pg 7). From this, a 'Local Authority Promise' was developed, with five areas outlined. One such area was for children to have their views heard and for these to make a difference. This provides further rationale for the current piece of research.

1.3 Pupil Voice

Manyukhina and Wyse (2019, p.224) define pupil voice as '*giving students voice and choice in how they learn'*. However, to accept this definition would be simplistic, given the many official and unofficial discourses of pupil voice in education (Cremin et al., 2011). Much of this complexity comes from the shift in how schools operate, in terms of schools being places which should reflect the democracy that exists within society (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004).

In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) delivered a landmark development regarding rights of children. Included within this were articles that explicitly stated that children have the right to express opinions and to have their opinions considered in any matters that may affect them (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Following this, children's participation was addressed in the 2002 Education Act (DfES, 2002), within a

section titled ‘Consultation with Pupils’. Furthermore, within this act, Section 7 requires Ofsted to regard the views of pupils when conducting an inspection.

Eliciting pupil views and using these to plan provision for children and young people has the full support of the UK government (Cremin et al., 2011), as can be seen through the legislation and policies implemented over the last twenty years. In 2003, the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) policy was produced, which placed the importance of enabling children to have a voice in decisions relating to their life and learning as a central tenet of the policy. The SEN Code of Practice (2015) includes a principle for practice, stating that *‘Local authorities must ensure that children, their parents and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision’* (DfES, 2015, p. 20). Following this, a rise of utilising person-centred practice with education professionals (Bason, 2020) has occurred, which includes educational psychologist (EPs).

1.3.1 Tensions

There are several tensions regarding pupil voice practice in education settings that must be acknowledged. There are several schools of thought that believe that school-improvement which is orientated through consultation with pupils is tokenistic (Hancock & Mansfield, 2002; Mannion, 2007). There are considerations regarding capacity: are schools able to act upon what children say, even if their voices are sought? (Cremin et al, 2011). Furthermore, Fielding (2007) reminds us that we cannot focus exclusively on the standpoints of young people. Thus, it can be summarised that the domain of pupil voice is not one which exists in a vacuum: it is fluid, contradictory and complex (Cremin et al, 2011).

1.4 Outline of Key Terminology

Looked-after child (LAC) – children and young people under the age of 18 who are accommodated by local authorities for a period of 24 hours or more. This can be voluntarily

in agreement with parents or due to a care or order being directed through courts (The Children Act, 1989).

Previously looked-after child (PLAC) – a child who is no longer looked-after, as they have been subject to adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order (DfE, 2018).

Children with a social worker (CWSW) – children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker (DfE, 2021)

Virtual school head (VSH) – the lead responsible officer for ensuring provisions are in place to support the educational experiences and outcomes for the looked-after children in the local authority, including those based outside of the geographical boundaries of the caring authority (Reese and NVSN, 2015).

Personal education plan (PEP) – a statutory document which describes the child or young person's education history, strengths, needs, and additional support required. It should include short- and long-term targets and any actions needed to help them gain the most from their education. It should also describe how the PP+ funding will be allocated.

'Obtain and hear' – initially, the researcher was using the terminology of 'gathering' pupil views, when designing the research and communicating with the Virtual School staff. However, during one of the interviews one of the participants stated that 'gathering' the views felt as though they were easy to access, as if *'they are all just all over the floor, waiting to be picked up'*. Therefore, researcher decided to adjust the language used throughout this thesis, to fall in line with this view from a participant. The word obtain was chosen as it is a more active word choice and suggests that effort needs to be used to acquire something (Stevenson, 2010). The researcher considered using the word 'hear' instead of the word 'listen', after the researcher read a paper which discussed the notion of how many adults

‘listen’ to children, but do not ‘hear’, e.g. fail to acknowledge or act upon their views (Caslin, 2022). However, the Virtual School team members used the terminology ‘listen’ as well as ‘act upon’ which seemed to represent this idea. Thus, throughout this research, these terms will be used interchangeably, to demonstrate the importance of representing the team member’s views authentically.

‘Conceptualise’ – When considering how to word the first research question succinctly, the researcher decided to use the word ‘conceptualise’. Throughout this thesis, the word 'conceptualise’ is used to describe how either authors or participants ‘see’ pupil voice, e.g. what they feel is at the very core of this practice and what pupil voice ‘means to them’ and what ‘big ideas’ underpin pupil voice.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks and Psychological Theory Underpinning the Research

1.5.1 Positive Psychology

This research adopted a positive psychology approach. Positive psychology has been described as the scientific study of optimal human functioning, which aims to discover the factors that allow both communities and individuals to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It aims to be a catalyst in changing the focus of psychology, moving from a preoccupation with only repairing the worst things in life, but moving to recognising and building upon positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology is aligned with the transformative nature of this study, as it aims to promote positive change for adults whose work is to promote change for a group which experience much marginalisation in society (CWSW).

Gersch (2009) states that positive psychology has the potential to assist Educational Psychologists (EPs) in developing an environment in which all those within education can benefit, not just those experiencing difficulties. This aligns with the aims of the current

research, as it uses an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model (Cooperrider et al., 2008). AI is an organisational change model which is solution focused. In this current research, the organisation in question is the Virtual School team.

1.5.2 Ecological Systems Theory

This study was underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of child development. This is a useful framework for identifying the multiple systems and environments that surround a child and is helpful for aiding understanding regarding how these systems interact with each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Virtual schools are organisations which 'bridge the gap' between social care and education, thus they are positioned between these systems. Furthermore, they support the adults who support children with a social worker, thus their actions have a 'ripple effect' on the children and young people themselves. Therefore, it is a crucial framework to underpin this research as the research explored a strategic institution (in this case, the Virtual School), which supports multiple systems (schools, social care, other agencies) which in turn support children and young people. The framework comprises of a number of structures, which are described as 'nested' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3), as each sits inside the next. They are as follows:

- **The Microsystem:** this system is at the centre of the model and has the child at its core, sitting directly around them. It is comprised of the factors of the child's environment that they directly interact with daily, including (not exhaustive): relationships with teachers; non-teaching staff; peers; classrooms; resources; playground; carers; key adults. Values and beliefs held by others can impact the child, and the child can impact the others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- **The Mesosystem:** this system is unique in that it promotes the notion that factors in the microsystem do not sit in isolation. Additionally, it recognises that the relationships in

an individual's life are dynamic and constantly evolve, rather than remaining static (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this current piece of research, the social workers and Virtual School staff who support the children directly exist within the mesosytem.

- **The Exosystem:** in this system, the interacting factors have influences over a child's experience of school and learning, but the child is not actively a part of this. Examples of this can include school leadership structure, ethos, culture, resources, and policies. All of these may have an impact on the child's experience of school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some roles within the Virtual School exist within the exosystem, for example, the education consultants. For children with a social worker, LA structure and availability of provisions in the local area may impact a child's experience of social care support.
- **The Macrosystem:** this system is placed outside of the direct environment of the school but influences the inner systems. Within the school context, these systems may include: social, political and educational systems; current agendas such as school performance; changes in curriculum and assessment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For children in with social workers, changing government legislation related to children in need/child protection plan/looked-after children would exist in this ecosystem.

1.5.3 Organisational Change through Appreciative Inquiry

This piece of research was undertaken through an Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is a solution-focused, strengths-based approach to organisational change, which seeks to bring about change by actively involving team members. It asks questions about the best of 'what is' and collaborates with them to plan future directions for their team (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This fits with the researcher's theoretical framework of positive psychology, which favours strengths-based approaches which recognise people's interests, capabilities, and resilience.

1.6 Researcher's Position and Professional Interest

The researcher has a longstanding professional interest in improving outcomes for looked-after children. The researcher was a primary school teacher and worked in a class with a looked-after child. Following this, she worked for a Virtual School as an Education Officer. Through these experiences, the researcher became aware that provision for looked-after children was not always consistent; the outcomes for looked-after children were consistently lower than their peers; staff were not always adequately trained; problem-saturated language was used.

Through the doctoral course, the researcher became increasingly aware of the power of promoting change at a systemic level. Educational psychologists are well placed to contribute to organisational level change (Morgan, 2016). Farrell et al. (2006) state:

"EPs are at the core of the interacting systems of school, local authorities, children's departments and families … they have a privileged responsibility across these systems and are able to contribute to the lives of individual, children, and groups and at policy level" (Farrell et al., 2006, p. 75).

The researcher has a strong interest in promoting social justice at a systemic level, believing that the most impactful way of making meaningful change is through collaboration and policy change, hence the choice to work with a team who support a marginalised group rather than direct work.

1.7 Relevance to the EP profession

This piece of research is highly relevant to the EP profession. Virtual schools often sit within the same directorate and work closely with educational psychology services. Alongside this. supporting the inclusion of children and young people who are vulnerable to experiencing difficulties in education is a key task for educational psychologists (Turner &

Gulliford, 2019). Collaboration between EPs and Virtual Schools have been viewed positively and cited as beneficial for supporting looked-after children (Drew & Banerjee, 2019). This further highlights the importance of this research and how it is highly relevant to the EP profession.

1.8 Rationale for the Current Study

Virtual schools are an organisation within the local authority, who until 2014 (except for pilot projects), did not exist. However, the VSH role is one of the few statutory roles that an LA must have in place (Rivers, 2018) and the work that they do is critical in supporting both education and social services to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in society (Berridge et al., 2009). Due to them being relatively new, there is currently a paucity of research regarding their functioning. Additionally, although there is a solid body of knowledge around pupil voice practice in education settlings, there is a distinct lack of research around how pupil voice is heard and used. Additionally, there are limited studies into how professionals who support children systemically hear their views. This piece of research is highly novel, as it is the first of its kind to explore a specific area of practice with a team of Virtual School staff. It draws together two fields of study (Virtual Schools and pupil voice) which are highly driven by a social justice agenda: how systems can fully hear the views of some of our most marginalised children in society and use these views to initiate change.

1.9 Research Aims and Contribution

This chapter has provided a historical and contextual background to the research, outlining the role of the Virtual School, why they exist and what has contributed to their development. It also provided a legislative background regarding pupil voice and highlighted the tensions that currently exist in this field. It introduced the main theoretical frameworks that

underpinned the research: positive psychology; ecological systems theory; appreciative inquiry. It explained the researcher's personal and professional interest and provided a rationale for this current study.

In Chapter 2, a full systematic and critical literature review of current research into how education professionals currently conceptualise and obtain pupil voice will be conducted. This research aims to provide a novel contribution to this area by utilising an ecosystemic approach, whilst also applying an organisational change model. It will aim to do this by examining the impact the Virtual School's work has across the multiple systems it works with.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to critically analyse the existing literature focusing on how pupil voice is conceptualised, obtained and heard by education professionals. A solution-focused, positive psychology approach was central to this research, thus the main objective will be to evaluate what worked in the 'real world' context. Underpinning the research is the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1996), which illustrates how a child's development is influenced by the multiple relationships and systems that exist around them. This literature review draws on findings from a range of education professionals that exist around a child, including teachers, teaching assistants, trainee teachers, governors, and educational psychologists (EPs). The literature was synthesised, critically reviewed, and presented in the form of key themes. Furthermore, the psychological theories discussed in Chapter One which underpin this research were explored alongside the key themes, to provide further insight and to underpin the methodological framework of this current piece of research. Through the systematic literature review, the researcher's aims were to discuss the current literature with a critical view and to explore the following review questions:

- How do education practitioners conceptualise pupil voice?
- What is known around obtaining and hearing pupil voice for education practitioners?

2.2 Literature Search

2.2.1 Details of the Systematic Literature Review

On 27.07.22, a systematic literature review was conducted, critically reviewing the research on how education practitioners conceptualise, obtain, and hear pupil voice. The databases that were searched were: Academic Search Ultimate; APA PsycArticles; APA PsycInfo; British Education Index; Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson); Educational Administration Abstracts; Education Research Complete; Teacher Reference Centre. The final search terms that were used were "pupil voice"; "children's voice"; "pupil views" "child views". The PRISMA Flow Diagram (Moher et al., 2009) (appendix a) presents the results from the systematic review.

Articles and abstracts were reviewed (n=40) and inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, resulting in 23 papers for full screening. A further 12 articles were excluded after the full papers were read. A further 3 papers were discovered through hand searching throughout the literature review (identified through reading the references through selected papers). The total number of articles that were selected for review was 11; these can be found in appendix B. A summary of the strategy used for the literature search is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of systematic literature review strategy

Date of literature search	27.07.22
Timespan	2000-2022
Search Language	English
Databases	Academic Search Ultimate, Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson), Education Research Complete, Educational Administration Abstracts, British Education Index, APA PsycArticles, APA PsycInfo, Teacher Reference Centre.
Search Terms	"pupil voice" OR "child's views" OR "children's voice" OR "pupil views"

Parameters	Peer-reviewed, English language, Academic journals, UK
Results	N=703 After parameters set: N = 40 After duplicates: N=23
Exclusion Criteria	• Articles conducted in social care or health settings • Papers that do not include theoretical underpinnings in pupil voice research • Conducted before 2000 • Not in English language (see appendix C for excluded studies)
Inclusion Criteria	• Studies that involve professionals who work with children in schools (e.g. teachers, trainee teachers, support staff, EPs) • All education settings in UK, including Virtual Schools, special schools and pupil referral units (PRU)s • Studies that use pupil voice as part of research methodology
Articles selected	N = 8 NB – a further 3 papers were identified to include hand search Total number of papers selected: 11

2.2 2 Critical Review Process

To quality assure the literature presented in this review, Gough (2007)'s Weight of Evidence framework was used. This framework was used to appraise the papers to ensure the papers

answer the review question and to assess if they are fit for purpose to include. It was used as part of the screening process. Three sets of judgements were considered:

- **Weight of Evidence A:** How transparent, accurate, accessible, and specific are the findings?
- **Weight of Evidence B:** Is the method appropriate and purposeful?
- **Weight of Evidence C:** Does the approach of the study provide relevant answers to the review question?

These three sets of judgment were then combined to form an overall assessment, Weight of Evidence D. Once each paper had been read, the researcher used a 'Red, Amber and Green' (RAG) rating system to assess the quality of the papers. A 'Red' rating indicated low, 'Amber' medium and 'Green' high, in reference to each 'Weight of Evidence' area. The researcher used these judgements, alongside exclusion criteria, to determine if a paper should be included in the final review. A table of the studies that were included in this review can be found in appendix B and those that were excluded can be found in appendix C, alongside the 'RAG' ratings for each study.

2.2.3 Structure of the Literature Review

To provide a framework for the literature review, the articles organised were organised into relevant themes, exploring how pupil voice is conceptualised and obtained at primary, secondary and specialist provision. A final theme was also around how additional groups of practitioners conceptualise and obtain pupil voice. Throughout the review, a solution-focused and positive psychology lens is adopted. Themes are congruent with the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), which highlights how systems and relationships affect child development. The themes are as follows:

1. Pupil voice in the primary setting

2. Pupil voice in the secondary setting
3. Pupil voice in specialist provisions
4. How related systems conceptualise, obtain and use pupil voice

2.3 Theme 1: Pupil Voice in the Primary Setting

2.3.1 Using Pupil Voice to Improve Learning Experiences

Three of the papers whose research was conducted in the primary setting looked at how learning experiences can be improved for pupils by consulting with them on their views (Bragg, 2007; Georgeson et al., 2014; Hopkins, 2008). Georgeson et al. (2014) explored how teachers from reception classes used a variety of pupil voice activities to access pupils' views on what helps them and hinders them at school. The paper conceptualises the notion of pupil voice within the framework of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (The UNCRC, 1989), citing article 12 (the right for children's views to be respected), 13 (freedom of expression) and 29 (educators ensuring that children are aware of their rights and can exercise them). The paper acknowledges the challenge of gaining views from very young or disabled children, thus stating that it takes an interactionist perspective. It claims to do this by acknowledging that there are barriers that exist to children's participation and considering how these may be removed so that they can authentically be involved. The paper presents the second phase of the 'Disability Data in Schools' project, which was funded by the UK government in two phases between 2007 and 2010. This second phase involved helping schools collect information from children about supports and barriers to learning and participation. This was with reception aged children (4-5 year olds). The research team developed six activities in consultation with school staff across seventeen schools from ten local authorities, with two of these being specifically designed for use with younger children ('Talking Mats' and 'Interview Schedule'). All activities were suitable for whole class involvement, so as not to identify any

children with a disability as different. Briefings were provided to staff representatives from the schools in the project and guidance materials were provided. All schools were asked to evaluate how the activities had been conducted and how useful they had been. For reception-aged children, it was found that the most effective tools were the talking mats and interview schedule. This was not surprising, as these were included specifically for use with children in this age group. Teachers reported that the presence of photos, pictures, and symbols alongside the vocabulary in both tools was useful as it provided a starting point for all children. From teachers' evaluations, Georgeson et al. (2014) deduced that young children were able to identify aspects of school life that they enjoyed, laying foundations for supports to learning. They claimed that this promoted children's early self-advocacy skills. Responses also highlighted the importance of choosing the type of activity carefully, particularly with children with communication needs and/or low self-confidence.

A strength of this paper is its clear write up of the protocol that was used to obtain the views, enhancing the replicability of the study. Furthermore, it draws data from a range of schools across different local authorities, thus it could be argued that it represents a variety of different settings, which enhances the credibility of the study. This is useful in the context of this study as it begins to evaluate the usefulness of the tools according to professionals alongside views from the children. However, the paper has not explained how either the quantitative or qualitative data was analysed. Furthermore, only three of the seventeen schools provided qualitative data detailing children's responses around their views of school. It would add further value to this piece of research if this data was collected from each of the settings involved. A final consideration is around the briefing sessions that were provided to teachers, as the researchers note that some of the teachers used tools that were not ideal for use with young children. Therefore, the evaluation of the tools provided may not be accurate as they were being compared to tools which were largely unsuitable for the demographic of children.

Hopkins (2008) used pupil voice to examine what pupils believed to be the ideal 'classroom conditions', which help them to enjoy and achieve at school. The concept of the 'classroom condition' frame (which was initially constructed with pupils in an earlier study by McCallum et al., 2000) was taken forward and utilised during this piece of research. McCallum et al. (2000) found that children wanted to talk about teacher-pupil relationships and the support they needed as learners. Hopkins (2008) combined this alongside the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme (HM Government, 2004), to conceptualise pupil voice as being key to helping children be able to 'enjoy and achieve' within the classroom. Hopkins (2008) collected data from 180 pupils in Key Stage 2 (7-11 year olds), from one junior school in an East Midlands city. They used an alternative data collection tool, the Ishikawa or 'fishbone tool' (Turner, 2004) to record data collected from semi-structured interview groups. The questions were positively framed, asking children: '*What makes lessons enjoyable? How do you know when you are doing well? What can a teacher do to make learning fun?'.* This research extended the previous work from McCallum et al., (2000) as it identified 8 classroom conditions for children to enjoy and achieve in their learning. These were: activities which require participation; appropriate amount of teacher talk; appropriate social demands made by activities; opportunities for challenge and struggle; a firm, fair, positive and psychologically safe regime; in focusing on the learning and achieving of individuals; plenty of variety of activities; appropriate length of activities.

The study has strengths in several areas. It has clearly identified questions and clear aims, which meant that the findings linked well to what the intention of the researcher. Furthermore, it built upon a previous study and utilised an innovative data collection tool, which was used to present findings in the paper in a visual and coherent way. It also fits well within the current research's theoretical underpinnings, as focuses on what works rather than a deficit-based model. Although the research was undertaken within one school, Hopkins (2008) discusses this

and acknowledges the impact that this may have had on the results. However, unlike Georgeson et al. (2014), Hopkins (2008) appears to have chosen the fishbone tool, without consultation from the teachers in the school. It could be suggested that by not consulting with a system which is closer to the children than the researcher, the ownership of the results of this research sits with Hopkins (2008), rather than the school community.

(Bragg, 2007) takes a slightly different approach to investigating pupil voice, by exploring the perspectives of teachers regarding a pupil voice initiative in a primary school. The paper presents data which was obtained during research conducted as part of a teaching and learning research programme network, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). A case study methodology was adopted, in one primary school in Hertfordshire. There were twelve, qualified full-time teachers and eleven support staff. The research followed the deputy headteacher as she embedded pupil voice practices across the school over two academic years. The data was obtained through the deputy headteacher reporting back to the researcher regarding what was happening with the teachers as the pupil voice work was progressing. It was found that it was crucial for teacher voice (or rather, the voice of all staff in a learning community) to be developed alongside pupil voice, for a true impact to be made. In this instance, this was managed by the school by making the process invitational rather than a directive, managerial model (Bragg, 2007). There were also interesting findings around how the teachers constructed their professional identities. It was found that many of them saw themselves as caregivers and protectors, meaning that they often saw children as vulnerable and passive. Furthermore, it was felt that by promoting child-centeredness, teachers often believed they already knew children's views.

The study has strengths in how it acknowledges the complexities of obtaining and using pupil voice and how this sits within a school system alongside staff voice. It acknowledges the limitations relating to narrative case study methodology, giving weight to the fact that all the

data came from the deputy head teacher's account of what was happening. Although this could be seen as a limitation due to the potential level of bias, Bragg's acknowledgement and reflexivity throughout the paper seems to mitigate this. Thus, a further strength that can also be drawn from this is the highly reflexive nature of the paper, as it acknowledges that this is one version of a truth. This may also be seen as a limitation of the paper, as teachers themselves were not interviewed but their stories were told through another. It would be interesting to conduct further research with the teachers themselves, to gain an alternative perspective of the practices within the school. Both Georgeson et al. (2014) and Hopkins (2008) found that with tools which are age-appropriate (talking mats, interview schedules, a fishbone tool) that primary-aged children can share their views around aspects of school life that enable that to enjoy and achieve in their learning. Whereas Bragg (2007) looked at teacher voice and the impact this power dynamic has on pupils. This builds upon the previous two findings, as it is a reminder that when adults choose the tools, they are making decisions on behalf of the children. It could be suggested that it may be beneficial to allow children to choose from a range of age-appropriate tools, to further promote their self-advocacy skills.

2.3.2 Using Pupil Voice to Improve Wellbeing and Mental Health Support

Hall (2010) conducted a study which unlike the previous studies, looked at how pupil voice was listened to and acted upon in terms of social and emotional aspects of learning. Similar to Georgeson et al. (2014), Hall conceptualises pupil voice within the UNCRC (1989). However, this is extended further in this paper, as Hall goes onto consider levels of participation, citing Hart's ladder of participation (Hart, 1992) and Kirby's cultures of participation (2003), which include consultant, participation, and child/youth focused organisations. The study was exploratory in nature and adopted a single school case study design. The researchers were two EPs and one trainee EP (TEP). A focus group schedule was created, based on The Ten Element Map (MacDonald & O'Hara, 1999). This map is a framework proposed to offer implications

for the practice of mental health promotion and includes multiple levels at which mental health can be promoted, these being micro, meso and macro (Hall, 2010). Children in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were involved in the study. Children considered several of features of their school that promoted and demoted mental health, including environmental quality, self-esteem, emotional processing, self-management, and social participation.

The findings were shared with the school staff and an action plan was developed with them. This is a real strength of this paper, as it is the first paper within this theme which has been explicit about how the views of children have not only been obtained but listened to. Furthermore, the specific focus around mental health rather than learning provides a novel use of utilising pupil voice in research; many other studies look at general school life rather than a specific area. A limitation of the study is that only a sample of children were able to participate, rather than all who attended the school. It could be suggested that their views may not be generalisable to the school population. It could also be suggested that it may have been more authentic if teachers who worked at the school were involved in the research process, as was the case in studies from Bragg (2007) and Georgeson et al. (2014).

In summary, the research indicates that pupil voice in primary schools can be used as a tool for adults to not only understand about aspects of learning that children enjoy, but also primary aged children are able to give their views around other matters of school life, such as mental health support. The choice of tool should be considered carefully with primary-aged children and adults should remain reflexive around their own voice and views, to ensure this is not impacting upon how the voice is interpreted.

2.4 Theme 2: Pupil Voice in the Secondary Setting

Three studies were selected during the literature search that were conducted in secondary schools. Two studies (Cremin et al., 2011; Thomson & Gunter, 2006) used pupil voice to

explore pupils' experiences of various aspects of school life, such as learning, routines, teachers etc. One study (Payne, 2007) looked specifically at how pupil voice could be used when designing the modern foreign language (MFL) curriculum in schools.

2.4.1 Using Pupil Voice to Explore Aspects of School Life

Thomson and Gunter (2006) situate the notion of pupil voice within the school improvement domain, claiming that to fully personalise learning, pupil voice is a key mechanism to do so. Furthermore, the paper refers to the UNCRC (1989), but not to specific articles, unlike Georgeson et al. (2014). The paper presents findings from one school who were granted funding from the innovations unit of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The school selected was a comprehensive school for 11–18-year-olds, with approximately 1600 students on roll. The researchers used a case study approach to conduct the research, obtaining information from the school in a narrative form. In the first stage of the project, they met with a focus group of 8 students across years 7-10. From this, a questionnaire was created, which was again checked by the students. This questionnaire was then completed by students in the wider school community. The students then met again to share the data from the questionnaire and identify a way forward. From moving from consulting with the students to involving them in the research, there were two main areas of significance that arose: one around testing and one around peer groups. In the former, students explained although they acknowledged the importance of testing, they felt over-tested. Furthermore, they felt that they were often compared to peers or siblings, and this was highlighted at parents' evenings. In the latter, students described which groupings they felt existed in the school and the affect this had upon their position in the school community. The findings from this initial consultation were then used to inform the next part of the research, thus demonstrating the shift from simply obtaining views, but rather hearing them and using them as part of a dynamic research process.

A strength of this piece of research was that it not only used pupil voice as a tool for school improvement, but it also examined the process, and which was the most effective way. This moved it from being tokenistic to more genuine. This is unique in the context of this literature review as many of the other studies investigate pupil voice without giving weight to which approaches might promote authentic participation. However, as the researchers do elicit, the data from the focus groups with the pupils is based on the researchers' notes as it was not recorded. Therefore, it is possible that the researchers may have misinterpreted what the young people said, thus it may not be a true representation of what the students wished to be communicated. Furthermore, there were no details on how the pupils in the focus group were selected. In future research, it would be important to consider a method of selection that gave all pupils the opportunity to be involved, to ensure that participation was both genuine and representative.

(Cremin et al., 2011) conducted a piece of research into how pupils and teachers in a secondary school in the UK experience pupil voice. Similarly to Thomson and Gunter (2006), Cremin et al. (2011), reference the UNCRC (1989) and link this to policy within the UK which have been influenced by the UNCRC (1989). They also note that although there has been good progress in terms of using pupil voice to reduce exclusion and disengagement with school, consulting with pupils can be largely tokenistic (Hancock & Mansfield, 2002). Cremin et al. (2011) suggest that issues of power and voice require further investigation, providing a sensible rationale for the present study. The study used a case study design, conducting the research within a mixed secondary school in a West Midlands city in the UK. The school selected classes of children for the researchers to work with. These pupils made scrapbooks to represent their views on identity and schooling. From these classes, teachers selected 19 'engaged' students and 16 'disaffected' pupils as candidates for the research project. The pupils were then interviewed using a photo elicitation interview. The teachers of the classes were also asked to

produce a scrapbook and were also interviewed regarding their views on pupil voice and policy that related to the project. All textual data was analysed using content analysis. Interview data was analysed using constant comparative analysis and discourse analysis.

Cremin et al. (2011) found that the actual photos in both the engaged and disaffected pupils' scrapbooks were similar; both had a considerable focus on peers and friendships. However, the disaffected pupils took twice as many pictures as the engaged pupils. There were differences in how they were presented: the engaged pupils seemed to adopt a 'visitors guide' stance. They found that there was more creativity and variation in the disaffected pupils' scrapbooks. Other than one young person, there was at least one positive element of school life in the scrapbooks. It was also found that the voices of disaffected seemed to align with how these pupils were represented in the analysis of the school policy documentation. Through the photo-elicitation interviews with pupils and teachers, it was found that there is a considerable disparity between what the school policy espouses with what pupils reported, regarding pupil voice. It was also found that there was a considerable amount of racism occurring in the school; a salient finding that may not have been uncovered if pupils had not been consulted with.

A strength of this study was its careful consideration of ethical issues, which were discussed in the paper. The researchers appeared to be reflective in their approach, as they also discussed that the content analysis categories were selected by themselves, rather than the young people. For a future study, it might be beneficial to have co-researchers decide these with the researcher, to make the piece more authentic. Another limitation of this research is regarding access to the school. The school was chosen as one of the researchers had an existing relationship with one of the teachers. It could be that there was an element of researcher bias involved as the researchers may have tried to paint the school in a more favourable light due to the existing relationship. However, this was clearly stated by the researchers in the paper, to promote transparency.

The research around pupil voice in a secondary school highlighted the importance of consulting with pupils, as both Thomson and Gunter (2006) and Cremin et al., (2011) uncovered findings around peer relations, suggesting that these are a highly salient part of the school experience for adolescents. The data collection tool that Cremin et al. (2011) used (photo scrapbooks) was novel and seemed to obtain rich data. This finding is similar to Georgeson et al. (2014), who found the most effective tools for obtaining views in the primary setting were ones which used photos, pictures and symbols. This highlights the importance of not only using these methods with young children, but older children too.

2.4.2 Using Pupil Voice to Explore Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) Planning

Payne's (2007) study took a different approach. Rather than examining general school life as Cremin et al. (2011) and Thomson and Gunter (2006) did, he looked at how pupil voice could impact planning in a specific subject area. This study was part of a larger research project from an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded study at the University of Cambridge, which investigated MFL planning in multilingual schools and communities. Unlike the previous two studies where data was obtained in secondary schools, Payne's study did not conceptualise pupil voice with the UNCRC remit, but rather it is discussed in the paper as an entity that promotes choice and personalised learning: a parallel to Thomson and Gunter's (2006) earlier work. The study adopted a grounded theory approach, obtaining qualitative data and adopting an interpretivist approach to the research. The research method used was an exploratory case study approach. The sample consisted of two secondary schools, one in London and the other in the Midlands. Data were collected in multiple ways: semi-structured interviews with key school respondents and pupil focus groups; language lessons were observed; documentary data were provided (pupil statistics and prospectuses); a pupil-background language survey yielding qualitative data was undertaken.

The main findings presented were from only one of the schools, which the researcher argues is due to it being part of a larger project. It was found during the GCSE focus group that the young people discussed the ideal language provision would be based around everyone being able to learn the language they wanted. This finding was similar in the A level focus group, who also seemed to focus on the idea of equality. They also demonstrated the importance of learning community languages. The authors conclude that pupils can contribute towards language planning and highlights that students did not choose anything 'out of the ordinary' when discussing language choices. The study demonstrates strengths in its clarity around research design, methods and the researcher's position is clearly stated. It is not clear why data from the activity was not included from school A, which is a limitation of this research. Furthermore, as a case study approach was used and the population was very specific (secondary schools who serve multilingual communities), it may be argued that these findings cannot be generalised to a wider population of secondary schools. Although this can be seen as a limitation by some, the researcher explains this early in the paper, which enhances its transparency.

The research demonstrates some similarities of pupil voice practice in secondary schools with primaries, in that both advocate for the use of interactive tools which use photos and pictures, which are age appropriate. At secondary age, it was found that through eliciting pupil voice there was often discrepancy between what policies stated and what was happening. Finally, the importance of peer relationships came across strongly in the secondary research, highlighting how impactful these can be on the secondary learning experience.

2.5 Theme 3: Pupil Voice in Specialist Provisions

Two studies focused on how pupil voice was obtained and used in specialist provisions (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Zilli et al., 2020). Both studies were conducted by Educational

Psychology Services. Much like many of the papers in this review, these studies both explored experiences of school life, such as curriculum, learning environment and relationships. Zilli et al. (2020) conducted a study which explored practices that enable autistic pupils to participate in decision making at school. The study uses the Framework for Participation (Black-Hawkins et al., 2010) as an analytical frame for interpreting the data produced. This framework related to four tenets of participation: collaboration, access, achievement, and diversity. It could be suggested that the inclusion of this framework is important as it reminds practitioners that participation involves going beyond access but considers the notion more holistically. The sample was taken from a specialist, independent school. Four male pupils, aged 11-15 with a diagnosis of autism and 11 members of staff took part in the research. The study took a case study approach, using both observations of pupils in lessons and pupils completing a photovoice activity. Staff were also interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed through deductive thematic analysis.

It was found that positive and respectful culture that was led by senior staff resulted in a range of practices that supported pupils' participation in everyday decision making. It was found that the relationships between staff and pupils was mutually respectful and within this, boundaries and compromises occurred. It was also found that pupils' special interests were valued and were seen as keys to supporting their engagement.

The paper was very clearly presented, and each part of the research was clearly outlined, including research questions, ethical considerations, and data analysis procedure, thus increasing the trustworthiness of the research. A further strength of this research is around the novel nature of it: it is the first case study of a school which aims to understand how specifically autistic pupils have a view in the decision-making processes in their school. However, the main bulk of the data came from 4 children. Although this is appropriate to the research design, it could be suggested that this is a small sample size. Additionally, only male pupils took part in

the research. What is unclear from the paper is how many pupils were in the school altogether and what the ratio of males and females was. Without this detail, it is difficult to know if the same is representative of the wider school population. Therefore, even though it is a case study, and we would not be able to generalise the findings to another setting regardless, we cannot also be sure if the views presented here represent the school population appropriately.

Michael and Frederickson (2013) explored the quality of alternative provision for young people with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. The paper uses a definition from Cefai and Cooper (2010) to define pupil voice, stating that it is defined as the views and perceptions of pupils. They also discuss the importance of hearing the views of young people with SEMH, as often these voices are ones that go unheard. What is interesting is that the paper does not go much beyond this in terms of conceptualisation and does not particularly consider what might be done with the views of these pupils in practical terms. The sample were recruited from pupils attending two different pupil referral units (PRUs), in inner and outer London. One setting was Key Stage 3, the other Key Stage 4. 16 young people took part in the study, of which 62.5% were male and 37.5% were female. 75% of the pupils stated their ethnicity was white. Deductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Five themes were identified that represented enabling factors for positive outcomes: relationships, teachers, curriculum, discipline, learning environment and self. Relationships seemed to be the most prevalent theme, which algins with Zilli et al. (2020)'s study. This is interesting in the context of specialist provisions, highlighting that this seems to be at the centre of practice in such settings. Three themes were identified as barriers to achieving positive outcomes: disruptive behaviour; unfair treatment; failure to individualise the learning environment. Again, similarly to Zilli et al. (2020), it seemed to be important that learning was highly bespoke in these settings. It could be suggested that this could be due to the often-unique learning profiles of young people attending these settings.

The study's sample size is a key strength in this field: previous pieces of research which that were of a similar nature e.g. Hill (1997); Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) had considerably smaller sample sizes (5 participants in each). This may mean that the findings are more likely to be representative of the wider school populations than previous studies were. A further strength of this study is that it included implications for future practice, adding value to the research. However, a limitation to note is around the simplification of pupil voice that was presented. All other studies in this literature review thus far have carefully considered the theory, frameworks and concepts which underpin the research. These were not clearly stated in this paper, which has the potential to reduce the trustworthiness of the research.

2.6 Theme 4: How Related Systems Conceptualise, Obtain and Use Pupil Voice

Two papers were identified which explored how groups of professionals who were not based in a single school utilised pupil voice. One study (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) took place within a local authority context and one other paper (Hopkins, 2008) took place within a University, as part of an initial teacher training programme.

Harding and Atkinson (2006) conducted their study with an aim to find out how EPs in a local authority ascertain and present pupil views in written reports. They discuss pupil voice in terms of the UNCRC (1989) and cite the importance of hearing pupil voice, stating that there are several reasons for involving children with SEN assessment. They state these are: an increase in motivation, independence, perception of having control, development of learning skills, knowledge of learning styles, personal responsibility for progress and greater responsibility for change. They also go on to acknowledge that often collecting pupil voice is tokenistic and often the voice of pupils with SEN can be silenced by professional discourses (MacConville, 2006). They also present issues relating to trust and power when EPs are

collecting pupil voice, noting that these issues may affect the reliability and validity of children's expressed views.

The research took place within a small metropolitan local authority, in which the EPS prioritised developing practice around promoting the voice of the child. The data were collected from the child's view section of the EP report and a content analysis was undertaken to establish key themes. A focus group was then used to ascertain techniques and strategies used by EPs around how they collected pupil voice and how information was selected and reported. The sample selected was year 9 pupils, with all reports focussing around supporting transition. Through the content analysis, they found that in the reports, the key things that EPs seemed to report on were: decisions and arrangements concerning the young person's education; feelings about school; difficulties in school; preferences in school; general information; strengths in school; dislikes in school. Through the focus groups, the researchers identified a wide range of practices relating to obtaining information around children's views. These included using the child's SEN statement as a framework for discussion and task related procedures (such as sentence completion tasks and questionnaires). They also found that therapeutic based approaches (e.g. personal construct psychology) were used to obtain views. This study also had some unique findings regarding asking the EPs why they had selected certain tools. This included identification of the need to be aware of both purpose and of report and audience and to create a 'pen picture' of the child, to provide context for report readers who had never met the child.

The study has several strengths relating to the methodology and transparency. The use of the focus groups alongside the content analysis allowed for data to be strengthened, as the information obtained in the focus groups added depth to the content analysis. This can be seen particularly with the well-planned questions which asked EPs to consider 'why' they had used certain tools, which a content analysis alone would have not found. Furthermore, the paper

clearly explains the procedure, meaning the study can be replicated easily. However, there are several limitations which should also be considered. Firstly, the sample of students selected is a very specific sample (e.g. year 9 pupils who have SEN and their transition plans). This does not represent the wide range of casework which EPs involve themselves in, therefore findings should only be considered within this context. Furthermore, it is important to note that the EPS in which this research took part had a focus in prioritising pupil voice, thus it could be suggested that practice in this remit is well-developed, thus creating a somewhat optimistic view of how EPs obtain the voice of the child.

Hopkins (2012) looked at accessing perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding important factors which support highly effective learning in schools in the UK. The paper references British education policy, stating that the importance of hearing what pupils have to say is now written into education policy (DfES, 2003, 2005) and how The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2005) requires inspectors to report on how far a school seeks value and acts on pupil views. It also discusses issues underpinning the development of pupil voice, presenting concerns around time constraints, authenticity, and power relations. The research was undertaken at a UK University, within the education studies department. It focussed on the perceptions of 30 pre-service teachers, in the second of a four-year teacher training course. Similarly to earlier work in 2008, Hopkins again used the Ishikawa or 'fishbone' tool, which provided a framework for the interview. This was combined with a card sort activity. The questions were based around what the pre-service teachers perceived pupils would state the reality of their experiences were. These questions were developed with a pilot group which included five thirteen-year-old students. They found that the most significant condition that determines pupils' enjoyment of lesson and learning was the quality of the interpersonal environment which teachers establish in the classroom. They also found that teachers needed

to: demonstrate their respect for pupils; see them as individuals; provide positive praise; operate fairly; provide pupils with the help they need.

A strength of the research related to its future directions: as a result, the author created a taxonomy of classroom conditions with other pre-service teachers in order to assist them with analysing and reflecting on their classroom practice. Additionally, the research had direct benefit to the pre-service teachers as they were now aware of a new tool which they could utilise to obtain pupil voice. However, there are several limitations to this study that cannot be disregarded. The main findings were based on the perceptions of the pre-service teachers rather than from pupils themselves, so may lack in validity and not be accurate of what children and young people think. Furthermore, the paper acknowledges a further two limitations, these being that the categories derived by the researcher from the analysis of the fishbones were not presented back for member checking. A second limitation elicited by the paper concerns the fact that no account was given to the range of teacher and learning settings that the pre-service teachers were drawing on. However, it is positive that the paper itself acknowledges these final limitations, thus increasing the transparency of the study.

These two studies were rather different in their approaches and findings; Harding and Aktinson (2006)'s findings were related to EP practice in report-writing whereas Hopkins (2012) used a fishbone tool to obtain data from pre-service teachers. However, the secondary aim of this piece of research was to provide the pre-service teachers with a tool they could go on to use with their pupils. Thus, both pieces of research explored a range of ways in which education professionals can gain access to pupil views.

2.7 Limitations of Review

There are several limitations of this review, some which relate to the researcher's review process and others which relate to the methodology and findings within the papers themselves.

In relation to the researcher's review process, the researcher only looked at papers that were in the education domain, rather than looking at studies from social and health care. The purpose of Virtual Schools is to raise the priority of education for children in care, thus the researcher felt it is important that research for this literature review came from the education field. Regarding the papers themselves, the review only contains research which yields qualitative data, with studies with small sample sizes. However, a real strength of such studies is that the data produced is rich in quality.

2.8 Summary of Current Literature

The two questions that this literature review aimed to answer were as follows:

- How do education practitioners conceptualise pupil voice?
- What is known around obtaining and hearing pupil voice for education practitioners?

Regarding the first question, it was found during the review that many of the papers referred to the UNCRC (1989), citing this as underpinning their work and using this to highlight the importance of obtaining pupil voice (Cremin et al., 2011; Georgeson et al., 2014; Hall, 2010; Harding & Atkinson, 2006; Thomson and Gunter, 2006). Many studies also cited the variety of British policy-making that occurred post the UNCRC (1989), placing pupil voice at the centre of school improvement and person-centred curriculum planning (Georgeson et al., 2014; Hopkins, 2008; Hopkins, 2012; Thomson & Gunter, 2006). Furthermore, a number of studies used frameworks such as: The Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992); The Framework for Participation (Black-Hawkins, 2010); Classroom Conditions (McCallum, 2000) as part of their analyses or evaluative processes (Hall, 2010; Hopkins, 2008; Zilli et al., 2020). Some of the papers also raised issues around power dynamics, tokenism, authenticity and practical concerns such as time restraints (Bragg 2007; Harding & Atkinson, 2006; Hopkins, 2012).

A variety of methods of capturing pupil voice were found, including: photo-elicitation scrapbooks, fishbone tools; interview schedules; talking mats; focus groups. Feedback from adults working with the children to obtain pupil voice highlighted that choosing appropriate tools was crucial to allow authentic participation. Many of the findings from children and young people around their school experience related to positive relationships, fairness, respect, adults providing pupils with the help they need. In the research in secondary settings, the importance of peer relationships and the impact on children's experience in school was highlighted. This was even more prevalent in studies which took place in alternative provisions, with relationships being cited as the most important factor to enable children to succeed in these settings. Staff also cited relationships and positive culture as supporting them in hearing to pupils.

2.9 Gaps in Existing Research

Throughout this systematic review, papers have referred to obtaining pupil voice in depth. However, this review has highlighted the paucity of research which addresses what happens once these views have been obtained (with the exception of Thomson and Gunter, 2006). Although many of the papers cite Article 12 from the UNCRC (1989) as underpinning their work, most do not give acknowledgement around what happens with the voices obtained after collection. Lundy (2012) argues for a new conceptualisation of Article 12 from the UNCRC (1989), stating that it should compromise of a) the right to express a view, and b) the right to have the view given due weight. The latter is something which this current study wishes to address, as it will not only look at how pupil voice is obtained but will look at how it is used and what the impact of this will be.

The studies that were identified through the systematic review obtained data from teachers, teaching assistants, governors, trainee teachers and EPs. All studies focused on groups of

professionals that do direct work with children and young people. No studies to date have been conducted with Virtual School staff.

2.10 Conclusion

The literature review set out to critically evaluate the research on how education professionals conceptualise, obtain, and hear pupil voice. This was the area selected by the Virtual School team as the area which they would like to focus on for the project. Studies took place in primary schools, secondary schools ,and specialist provisions in the UK. They worked with teachers, teaching assistants, trainee teachers, governors, and EPs. The gaps in the literature that were identified included: the lack of research involving how the pupil voice is used and how there are limited studies with professionals who support systemically. As a result, the identified gaps from the literature and the participants selection of an area of practice (pupil voice) have informed research questions stated below.

2.11 Research Questions

- How do Virtual School staff conceptualise children and young people's voice?
- How do Virtual School staff obtain and hear children and young people's voices?
- What is the impact of obtaining and hearing the voices of children and young people?
- How do members of a Virtual School evaluate the usefulness of using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to explore pupil voice practice within the team?

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Chapter

The term ‘methodology’ refers to a general approach to conduct research (Silverman, 1993). This chapter will outline the variety of considerations that combine to form the research methodology for this study. This research aimed to identify how members of a Virtual School conceptualised, obtained and listened to pupil voice. This research is systemic, as it aims to seek the views of a system which support children with a social worker. It also adopts a positive psychological stance, using strengths and what team members value to shape future directions. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a research tool will be considered, alongside various aspects of the research paradigm, which the researcher has aligned with for this project. An outline of AI and data collection approaches will be given, detailing the various stages of the study. To conclude, ethics and quality control of the research will be considered.

3.2 Purpose of Research

This research is exploratory in nature: it aims to explore the team members’ views around pupil voice. It is also transformative, as it provides an opportunity to create change for the team’s practice to further enhance the service.

The transformative nature places priority on social justice and human rights (Mertens, 2003), with the purpose of knowledge being so that people can improve society. This piece of research works with an organisation whose purpose is to support a marginalised group in society (children with a social worker), thus it is transformative as it aims to improve functioning in a team to better support this group. It is also rooted in social constructionism,

i.e. the notion that what is, what we perceive and what we experience is must be understood as a specific reading of environmental conditions (Willig, 2013).

3.3 Research Paradigms

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a research paradigm is a basic belief system (also known as a worldview), which has influence over a variety of choices which a researcher must consider. Such questions might be: How does one go about acquiring knowledge?; Of all the knowledge available, which is the most valuable and truthful? What is there that can be known?; 'What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the knowledgeable?; (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Each of these questions form a different part of the research paradigm: axiology, ontology, epistemology, methodology, respectively. These different facets of a research paradigm will be outlined and discussed within the context of this study.

3.3.1Axiology

Creswell and Poth (2018) state that axiology regards the role of values in research. They highlight that it is important that the researcher openly discusses the values that shape the narrative, including their own interpretation in collaboration with participants. Axiological assumptions characterise qualitative research, as researchers report their values and biases as well as considering the value-laden nature of information obtaining from a particular field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are several essential values that underpin this research. Firstly, the research promotes autonomy, as it involves the participants from the beginning and allows them to shape and redirect the research. The value of beneficence was considered throughout the project, from contracting with the team at the beginning of the project regarding what areas of their practice they would most like to work on, to allowing them to consider how they can action the plans in the 'design' phase. Additionally, transparency is an

essential value within the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2010), as there is a link between social justice and the outcomes of the research.

3.3.2 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and what there is to be known (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Creswell and Poth (2018) expand on this, stating that when researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the notion that multiple realities exist. Furthermore, they state that qualitative researchers conduct studies which intend on reporting this multitude of realities. The current study will be undertaken through a relativist ontology. This is the belief that reality is a wholly subjective experience and exists within our thoughts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This is appropriate for this research project as views will be taken from a group of participants in one time and place. It takes the view that multiple truths exist, and these will differ according to the different participants and their interpretation of the reality of the world. This contrasts with a positivist approach, which assumes that the external world determines that there is one view which can be taken, separate from the process or circumstance of the viewing itself (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

3.3.3 Epistemology

Epistemology differs from ontology in that it is concerned with the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and what would be known (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Willig (2013) states when considering epistemology, there are a number of considerations, including; the nature of knowledge itself, its scope around the validity of the knowledge; the reliability of claims to knowledge. This piece of research is within a social constructionist epistemology as the participants will be making meaning of their experiences, through sharing stories in interviews, sharing these in focus groups and creating and shaping their

own dreams and actions for their team, based on the stories and themes that arise during the interviews.

3.4. Research Design

3.4.1 Qualitative Research

A qualitative research design was selected as most appropriate for this research. Qualitative research varies greatly depending on the purpose and specific research methods used, however it is generally agreed that it regards people as beings who actively construct their own meanings of situations, who act in it through interpretations and there are multiple realities (Cohen et al., 2017). This fits with the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions of relativism social constructionism and working within a transformative paradigm.

3.4.2 Case Study Design

Yin (2009) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Stake (1995, p.2) extends this to be more in line with an interpretivist paradigm adding that a case study is "*the study of a particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances".* The case in this current study is the Virtual School team. The current study took place within one team in the Local Authority (LA), with an area of practice which is complex and multifaceted. Thus, a case study methodology was deemed appropriate.

It is important to note the limitations of case study methodology. Historically, there have been criticisms of the lack of rigor in case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Additionally, the very nature of a case study means that findings are not generalisable to wider populations. However, this term holds very little value for those who are researching using a qualitative approach (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), as the very point of case study research is study a single phenomenon in an in-depth approach (Stake, 1995).

3.4.3 Action Research

The proposed study will be undertaken as a piece of Action Research (AR). AR aims to bring a voice to participants who take part in the research by working collaboratively with them which ensures their commitment and involvement in the study (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). This method was selected because it aims to bring about positive change through collaboration with stakeholders and aligns with the transformative nature of the research.

3.4.4 Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a tool for organisational change that helps organisations to improve their organisational structures by creating an energy and renewed commitment to change and a sense of hope (Michael, 2006). AI is a type of action research, as it actively involves participants at all stages. However, it differs from more traditional models of action research, in that it focuses on what works and attempts to build on this, as opposed to using a problem-solving approach (Hammond, 1998).

AI is convergent with the research's groundings in positive psychology, as it is a solution-focused approach to organisational change (Cooperrider et al., 2003), as it aims to find out the best of 'what is' and what 'gives life' to organisations (Cooperrider et al., 20083). Furthermore, the roots of AI are in social constructionism, which is in line with the epistemological position of this research. There are several assumptions regarding AI that are grounded in social constructionism: what is focused on now becomes the reality; reality is created in the moment and there are multiple versions of it; the act of asking questions influences the group in some way; the language used creates our reality (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). In this research project, participants will be interviewing each other and sharing stories, which will all be understood by the research through a social constructionist lens.

There are several critiques of AI. A frequent limitation cited is regarding the possibility that a focus on positive stories and experiences may invalidate negative organisational experiences and repress potentially important and meaningful conversations that need to occur (Reason, 2000). The researcher mitigated this by selecting a very specific area of practice with the Virtual School with the participants; an area which they wanted to improve but also learn from one another. By demonstrating how 'what can give life' can be found within this safe area of practice, the Virtual School may be able to go on to use another AI cycle in the future, perhaps with a more delicate area of practice.

Rationale for AI in the Current Study

AI was the chosen methodology for data collection in this research for several reasons. Firstly, it was important that the methodology was consistent with the exploratory, transformative, and solution-focussed nature of the research. Furthermore, the systematic framework of AI is convergent with the exosystemic nature of the research. The Virtual School Team sit in the exosystem of a child's development; decisions that are made by this team strategically will have a direct impact on the child.

The researcher chose to use the 5-D Model (Cooperrider et al, 2008) of Inquiry in this piece of research. This was done for a several reasons: to give the participants a genuine opportunity to participate; to ensure the research was improving an area of practice that aligned with the team's needs; to give the research maximum opportunity to have direct benefit to the participants. Within the team, the participants were from various roles, from senior leaders to administrative roles. A strength of AI is that it addresses power imbalances by allowing participants to become co-constructors of change within the organisation (Nicholson & Barnes, 2013).

The Theoretical Basis Underpinning Appreciative Inquiry

AI is both a philosophy and an approach for motivating change, based on amplifying and exploring strengths (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). A key strength of using AI is its adaptable nature. Cooperrider et al. (2008) state that practitioners can successfully introduce AI by adapting the key concepts within the model to suit the culture and needs of an organisation. Cooperrider et al., (2005) identify five interconnected principles which AI is grounded in: the positive, constructionist, simultaneity, anticipatory and poetic principles. These principles are defined in table 2 below:

Table 2

The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

AI Principle	Definition
The Constructionist Principle	This principle focuses on the quality of interactions and conversations that people have with each other. Social context is viewed as crucial for creating the present moment and changing future moments. People not only interpret and understand the world through their conversation; people create the reality in which they live through such discourse.
Simultaneity Principle	This principle states that the conversations and interactions become positive the moment we tell a positive story, ask a positive question, or share a reflection that is positive. It views lines of inquiry as quick and effective ways to generate positive change.
The Poetic Principle	This principle connects attention with intention. It is based around the notion that the more people attend to positive dimensions of the present moment, the more positive their future intentions will be. People need to be mindfully aware of what adds richness, texture, depth, beauty, novelty and significance to life (Langer, 2009).

The Anticipatory Principle	This principle asserts that reflections and questions come from the outlook that people hold. Without hope, it is difficult to celebrate the positive. However, when people anticipate a positive future, things can shift in that direction.
The Positive Principle	This principle holds the energy and emotion associated with identifying, celebrating and building on strengths.

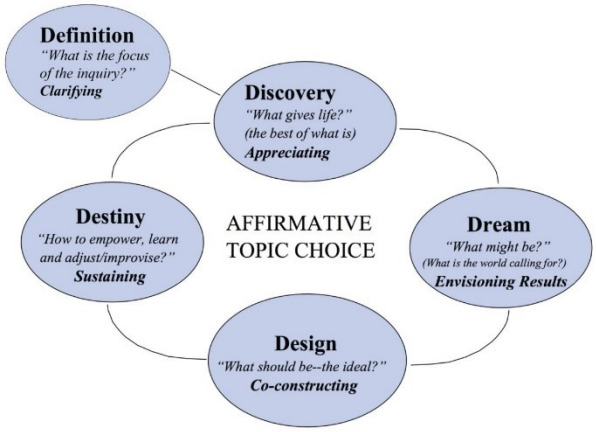
(*Cooperrider et al., 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011)*

Appreciative Inquiry Process

The AI cycle is commonly thought of as a '4-D Cycle of Inquiry', but due to the researcher's choice to involve participants in the decision-making around the topic choice, the 5-D Cycle of Inquiry was more appropriate in this context. The figure below demonstrates how the 5-D Cycle of AI creates a dynamic spiral of transformative change around a positive core (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011).

Figure 1 Appreciative Inquiry Cycle

Appreciative Inquiry 5-D Cycle



Adapted from Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.34.

Table 3

The Five Stages of Appreciative Inquiry

Definition Phase	In this phase, an area for development is selected. This allows the project to have an explicit focus.
Discover Phase	In this phase, the 'best of what is' is identified through investigating the organisation's (in the current study, the Virtual School team) experiences, using positively framed questions.
Dream Phase	This phase involves building upon the team's past strengths and creating a vision for what could be possible.
Design Phase	In this phase, 'provocative propositions' are created. These are statements which describe an ideal set of circumstances to do more of what is best practice in the organisation. These are based on the discover and dream phases.
Deliver/Destiny Phase	The team carry out the actions to deliver the future plans.

3.5 Research Participants and Setting

3.5.1 Participant Group Recruitment Procedure

The researcher recruited the participant group initially through the link EP for the Virtual School, within the same LA of the researcher's placement. The researcher set up a meeting with the link EP with two purposes: one was to find out what the current pertinent issues may be in the service; the second was to gauge if the team would be open to potentially taking part in the research project. The link EP shared some current developments with the researcher that had been occurring and explained that she felt the team would be open to taking part in some research. The link EP provided the researcher with contact details for the head of service for the Virtual School. The researcher emailed the VSH, offering the opportunity of being involved in a piece of organisational change work. A meeting was arranged with the head of service and two other members of the leadership team, to outline the project and what

it would entail. It was then agreed that the researcher would attend a team meeting, outlining the potential project to all team members. Additionally, the head of service asked permission from the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work, who oversees the Virtual School. It was agreed that the Virtual School were able to participate in the research.

3.5.2 Participant Selection

The participants were selected by a non-probability sampling method, specifically a purposive strategy. Purposive sampling is defined by Cohen et al. (2017) as when a researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the study, based on their judgement of the participants possessing a particular characteristic. In this instance, the characteristic was that participants needed to work in the Virtual School within the LA. The sample was not restricted by role and it was hoped by the researcher that all members of the team would consent to participate. The researcher was invited to a team meeting, where a presentation was delivered to the team to outline the project (see appendix D). Following the meeting, a consent form was sent out, alongside a participant information sheet (see appendix E and F). The consent form was sent using Microsoft Forms, so that participants could complete it electronically. Six out the eleven team members responded within the deadline outlined by the researcher. One team member started working for the Virtual School after this initial meeting, so the researcher arranged a meeting to present the research project as the other team members had received. This team member decided that they did not wish to participate, thus did not consent to taking part in the study. The remaining four participants completed their consent forms at the beginning of their appreciative interviews.

Table 4

Participant names (pseudomised) and roles in the Virtual School Team

Name	Role

Fiona	Specialist Reintegration and Inclusion Officer
Laura	EYFS Adviser
Helen	Education Support Officer
Leanne	Virtual School Operations Manager
Margaret	Virtual School Deputy Head
Naomi	Virtual School Head
Orion	Education Support Officer
Pepe	Post 16 Inclusion Worker
Simon	Education Consultant
Tanya	Educational Psychologist
Yannis	Specialist Reintegration and Inclusion Officer

3.5.3 Research Setting

The research setting was the Virtual School team, within the LA in which the researcher works. It oversees the education for children who are either children in need (CIN), on child protection (CP) plans, are looked-after children (LAC) or previously looked-after (PLAC).

3.6 Procedure

Figure 2

Data collection process

In the initial meeting, the researcher explained that they were offering the opportunity for the Virtual School to participate in an organisational change project, the focus of which was for them to decide. During this meeting, the participants were provided with a project timeline, including approximate dates for the interviews, focus groups and the review meeting. Additionally, as the researcher was adopting the 5-D Cycle of Inquiry, the researcher led a discussion into what areas of practice the Virtual School team would like to further develop and use as an area of focus for the study. There were several areas of interest and by the end of the discussion, there were two areas that seemed prevalent for the team, which were how they monitored attendance and how they obtained and used pupil voice. Following the meeting, the researcher sent out a Microsoft Form for the team to complete, asking them to vote on which of these areas the project should focus on. The researcher

received seven responses by the required date, which all selected pupil voice, thus this was the topic area that was chosen.

3.6.1 AI Cycle within the Current Study

In the current piece of research, the 5-D Cycle of Inquiry was used to structure the project and obtain the data. Although all stages were used, to align with time constraints, the Dream, Design and Deliver phases were combined into one session (the focus group). As part of the Deliver phase, a review session was also planned so the team would be able to come back together and monitor the progress they had made. The data collected during the Discover phase had two purposes: firstly, it sought to answer the research questions but also it provided a 'springboard' for participants to use to share their stories during the focus group. The Dream, Design and Deliver phases contributed towards the transformative nature of the research, empowering the participants, and allowing them to be active in their ability to make changes that were meaningful to them within their service. The researcher's intent was to ensure that the project had a positive impact and change within the system (in this instance, the Virtual School team).

Table 5

Phases of the Appreciative Inquiry and Data Collection Cycle

AI Phase	Participants	Data Collection	Data Analysis/Procedure	Research Questions Addressed
Discover Phase	All (n=10)	Paired interviews Focus group. Pairs shared their stories from the paired interview with other participants.	Thematic analysis	RQ1,2,3,
Dream Phase	All (n=10)	Focus group. As pairs shared their stories, the researcher created a mind map,	Thematic analysis	RQ1,2,3,

		pulling out key themes from the stories. Participants discussed what 'ideal' pupil voice practice would look like in their service.		
Design and Deliver Phase	All (n=10)	Focus group. Provocative propositions generated through a shared discussion. An action was set against each provocative proposition. Review meeting. Participants reviewed the action plan and then evaluated the process.	Output Content analysis	RQ 4

3.6.2 Discover Phase

Paired Interviews

The researcher designed the interview schedule to be in line with the principles of AI. In AI, it is common practice for members from within the organisation to interview each other (Cooperrider et al., 2008). This enables participants to share and learn from other members of the team, an experience which they may not often have the chance to do. A standardised open-ended interview was selected for use, with the wording and sequence of questions determined in advance (Cohen et al., 2017). The researcher created an interview schedule for the participants (see appendix G) to use to interview each other. This was devised using principles of AI, focusing on the best of 'what is' (Cooperrider et al, 2008). The researcher attended a team meeting prior to the interviews taking place and provided a briefing to participants around the interviews. During this briefing, the researcher asked participants if they would prefer to conduct their meetings in person or via Microsoft Teams. Two pairs of participants opted for in person interviews and three pairs opted for interviews on Microsoft

Teams. The researcher booked rooms at the LA office for the in-person interviews and sent Microsoft Teams invites for the virtual interviews. The researcher sent the questions to the participants a week ahead of the interview dates, with tips for interviewing (see appendix G).

Interview Protocol

The researcher met the participants at the booked meeting room or in the Microsoft Teams meeting. The researcher checked that the participants had returned the consent forms and asked anyone who had not done so, to complete it. Participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw at any point during the interview. Participants were welcomed and reminded of the purpose of the interview. They were asked if they had received the emailed interview schedule and then provided with hard copies of the interview schedule. The researcher intended on recording all interviews on Otter.ai, which records the audio and transcribes it. However, one participant wished not to be audio recorded so the researcher sat in the room and hand-recorded the conversation. For the other in person interview, the researcher began the Otter.ai recording and left the room, sitting in proximity outside the room. This was similar for the virtual interviews, except the researcher left the Teams meeting running on a laptop in a room, which the researcher left and asked participants to message on Microsoft Teams once they had finished interviewing each other (this was received on the researcher's mobile phone). Once participants had finished interviewing each other, the researcher thanked them for their time and advised them that they would be receiving a copy of their transcripts for member- checking via email.

The ten interviews and the first part of the focus group were recorded using Otter.ai and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. An example can be seen in appendix H. The paired interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) The researcher chose to adopt an inductive approach (or 'bottom up' approach) to the data

analysis; thus the researcher created thematic maps of themes and subthemes within each research question. The researcher looked for both semantic (what participants said during interviews) and latent (what was implied by the semantic content) themes. The researcher was aiming to examine what is already working within a system rather than developing new theory. The rationale and stages of thematic analysis are discussed shortly.

Focus Group Protocol

The researcher agreed a date for the focus group with the participants in the briefing meeting, which was three weeks after the interviews. The researcher felt that this gap was long enough for participants to be able to reflect on the interview but also close enough so they could recall information from the interview. It was agreed that the focus group would work better as an in-person meeting and all participants agreed on this. The researcher booked a room at the LA offices. The focus group had two aims: one was for participants to member-check the researcher's initial themes. The other, which was part of the Design and Deliver phase, was for the participants to create an action plan. This would be based on the stories shared from the interviews, to further enhance pupil voice practice in the Virtual School. The focus group began by the participants sharing a positive story from the interview. The researcher then handed out copies of the thematic maps that had been created and asked participants to work in pairs to look through them and generate initial thoughts around them. They were provided pens and asked to annotate the maps with any comments they had. The participants then discussed what the 'ideal' practice would be for obtaining and listening to pupil voice in the Virtual School. The researcher summarised the main discussion points that had come out of the participants checking of the themes, before moving the participants onto thinking about the Design and Deliver phases. The PowerPoint that was used during this focus group can be seen in appendix I.

3.6.3 Data Collection in the Design and Deliver Phase

Focus Group

The Design and Deliver phases both took part during the focus group. After the researcher summarised the main discussion points from the discussion around the thematic maps, 'Provocative Propositions' were generated. These are described by Hammond (2013) as symbolic statements which should stretch, challenge and innovate. Additionally, they enhance the AI process and they reiterate the positive experiences that have taken place within the team (Hammond, 2013).

Once the provocative propositions had been created with the group, the researcher facilitated a discussion, where each proposition was used as a starting point to generate actions. For each proposition, actions were created and added to the action plan.

Review Meeting

The review meeting was divided up into two parts. Firstly, the researcher facilitated a conversation around what progress had been made with the action plan. The second part was to ask participants how they had found the AI process. Data to answer RQ4 was collected through the review meeting, where participants were asked questions relating to how they had found the process. The questions were as follows:

1. What has been most valuable or meaningful about this process?
2. What would you have liked more of?
3. What is your next step (in terms of collecting/listening to CYP's voice in your role)?

These questions were designed in line with AI theoretical underpinnings in terms of being celebratory and were positively framed. It was initially intended that this would be a group

discussion. However due to time constraints, these questions were shared on a PowerPoint through Microsoft Teams and participants were asked to response using the 'chat' function available through this platform. See appendix J for the PowerPoint presentation from the review meeting.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was the method of analysis selected by the researcher, to analyse data generated by the interviews and focus groups. The process that was undertaken will now be discussed. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide was used as a framework for analysis. Qualitative approaches are diverse, complex and nuanced (Holloway & Todres, 2003) and TA provides a foundational, practical method of analysing data which is not always straightforward. TA is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Boyatzis (1998) extends this, stating that TA interprets various aspects of the research topic.

There are several reasons as to why the researcher selected TA as the data analysis tool of choice. Unlike many other qualitative analysis approaches (e.g. conversation analysis (CA), interpretative phonological analysis (IPA), TA is not convergent with only one theoretical and epistemological position. It therefore offers theoretical freedom, providing a flexible research tool can help provide a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through TA, it was felt by the researcher that patterns from the participants' lived experience would be identified. Furthermore, it was congruent with the social constructionist nature of the research, as through engaging in TA, meaning could be made from the themes that were identified during the process.

The limitations of TA must also be considered. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify a variety of considerations which one must be aware of when using TA, including the need to be aware of not just collecting extracts of the data, but ensuring that it is analysed to a full extent. Furthermore, they remind the reader that research questions should not form the themes and that researchers need to go beyond using their research questions to provide themes for their analysis. These were considerations the researcher considered during the process of TA, which proved to be helpful.

Thematic Analysis Procedure

Familiarisation with Data. Data was collected from the paired interviews with the Virtual School Team members. Ten members of the team (out of eleven) took part in the interviews. The interviews were initially transcribed on using Otter.ai, which is a piece of transcription software. The privacy policy of this software is in line with those of the institution at which the researcher studies. The researcher then went through the audio files and the transcriptions, ensuring that the transcriptions had been recorded accurately. The researcher then sent the transcriptions to the participants for member checking, to ensure that data had captured what they had said accurately.

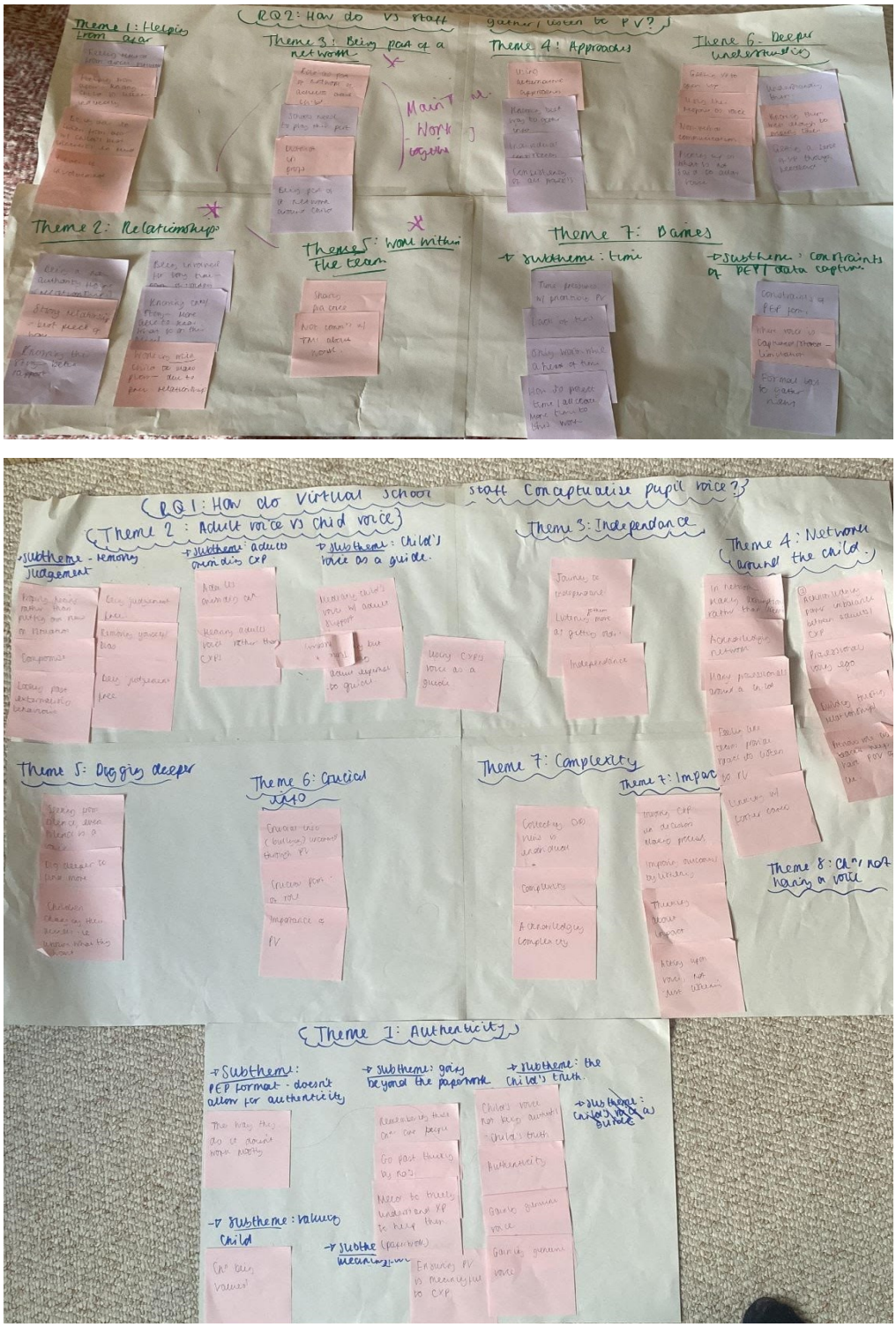
Generating Initial Codes. After the interviews had been transcribed and the researcher had become familiar with the data, a range of initial codes were developed. The researcher worked through the data, using the 'tracked changes' tool on Microsoft Word to demarcate codes. The researcher then selected to write the codes onto 'Post-It' notes. This manual coding was helpful as it aided the researcher further with the data familiarisation.

Searching for Themes. Once the data were coded, the researcher arranged the 'Post-it' notes into initial themes. This facilitated the exploration of dominant themes and sub-themes

in a systematic way. Appendix K demonstrates how themes and subthemes were derived from the codes.

Figure 3

Examples of visually sorting themes in the data



Reviewing the Themes. The themes were then refined and broken down into sub-themes and thematic maps was produced. For example, the codes *'Properly hearing rather than putting own views on a situation', 'Compromising own views', 'Looking past externalising behaviours'*, '*Being judgement free'* and *'Removing yourself/bias'*, formed the subtheme 'Removing Judgement'. The researcher chose to create three thematic maps, each one corresponding to the first three research questions.

Theme Definitions. Once the themes and sub-themes had been chosen, they were named and defined. The researcher wrote a description of each theme and sub-theme, to ensure they linked with the research questions. The initial thematic maps were taken to the focus group, where participants looked over the themes and made comments and suggested edits. The researcher then made some changes to the thematic maps before producing the final versions (see figures 2, 7 and 11 in Chapter 3).

3.7.2 Action Plan

The action plan that was created with the team is considered a data output but was not subject to analysis. This was due to it being meaningful for participants as it was a plan which came from them thus not appropriate to analyse.

3.7.3 Content Analysis

The researcher chose to undertake a content analysis (CA) of the responses from the evaluation section of the review meeting. CA defines the process of summarising and reporting written data (Cohen et al., 2017). In qualitative data analysis, the intention is to move from the original text to analysing information that is extracted from it (Glaser & Laudel, 2013).

The rationale behind this choice of data analysis for analysing the responses to the evaluative questions are as follows. Firstly, CA is an empirically grounded method which is

exploratory in process and allows for inference (Krippendorff, 2019). This is congruent with both the exploratory nature of the research and the epistemological position of social constructionism. Additionally, the method was appropriate for the format that the data was produced in i.e. written.

There are several limitations of CA which must be acknowledged as it could be argued they decrease the reliability of the data. Firstly, coding and categorisation can mean that the data may lose nuanced richness of specific words and their connotations. Furthermore, due to their inferential nature, category definitions and themes may be ambiguous (Cohen et al., 2017).

Content Analysis Procedure

Familiarisation with Data. Data was derived from the participant's' written responses to 3 questions, which prompted evaluation of the process. These were:

- What has been most valuable or meaningful about this process?
- What would you have liked more of?
- What is your next step (in terms of collecting/listening to CYP's voice) in your role?

The researcher asked the participant during the review meeting to respond to these three questions using the Microsoft Teams chat function. The researcher then collated these on a Microsoft Word document and read through them, to familiarise themselves with the data.

Coding and Calculating Frequency of Codes. The researcher then coded responses for each question, using the 'track changes' feature on Microsoft Word. Once coded, the researcher created a 'tally' to record the frequencies of the codes.

Categorising Codes. The researched then looked at the codes and sorted them into categories. Due to small data set, most codes became the categories naturally.

3.8 Reflexivity

An important tenet of qualitative research is reflexivity. Creswell and Poth (2018) define this when a researcher engages in self-understanding regarding biases, values and experiences that are brought to the research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state that the researcher should make their position explicit. The researcher made sure to explain to participants about their current role as a TEP but also noting their previous role in working for a Virtual School. This was something the researcher had to continuously be reflexive about throughout the research process. A research journal was kept throughout the process, which enabled the researcher to critically reflect on thoughts, biases, positions, and relationships throughout the research.

An audit trail of all raw data (which included transcripts and any documents produced by the team) was kept for the duration of the research. All transcripts were reviewed frequently to ensure reliability. The themes were summarised and member-checked with the participants during the focus group to ensure consistency.

Cohen et al. (2017) state that a major criticism of qualitative research is the notion of power, specifically how others might impose their own definitions of situations upon participants. To mitigate this, the researcher involved the participants in much of the decision making around the project as possible. One way in which this was done was by focusing on a research topic that was meaningful to them. Furthermore, the researcher moved away from being in the 'expert' position, but rather using Schein's (1969) model of process consultation, shifting to being the 'helper'. This gave power to the participants, aligning with the transformative nature of the research.

3.9 Quality Control

Qualitative researchers are frequently criticised by quantitative researchers for several reasons, including not developing reliable measures or yielding objective findings or replicable outcomes (Yardley, 2000). To quality control this piece of research, the researcher used a framework from Yardley (2000) to reflect on several areas to ensure that the quality of research is high. The four areas are: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and, impact and importance (Yardley, 2000).

3.9.1 Sensitivity to Context

To be sensitive to the context, the researcher conducted a literature review, to investigate what previous literature exists on the subject matter and to identify where gaps existed. Additionally, the researcher has undertaken a social constructionist approach to the research, thus is able to interpret the data with an understanding that data have been shaped by participants' worldviews and experiences. Furthermore, the researcher recognised the relationship between the participants and herself (working within the same LA, but in different teams) and was reflexive about this when interacting with participants.

3.9.2 Commitment and Rigour

The researcher demonstrated commitment to the research by engaging with the topic and ensuring that the data collected answered the research questions. To ensure rigour, the researcher followed ethical guidelines, used a GANNT chart (see appendix J) to ensure the research process was followed in a thorough and timely manner and also collected and analysed data by following frameworks and theories outlined in literature (e.g. following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to TA).

3.9.3 Transparency and Coherence

To ensure transparency, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and their role in the process. Additionally, when presenting and interpreting the findings, the researcher is clear that the responses are in the participants' own words, from their own experience and thus, are a subjective account of phenomena. Regarding coherence, which describes the 'fit' between the research questions and philosophical perspective adopted (Yardley, 2000), the research used TA to seek views around the topic of pupil voice from one demographic of participants (i.e. the Virtual School Team). It would have not been coherent with the philosophical assumptions to have also collected views from service users and other professionals, as this would have undermined the notion of the views of the Virtual School team of being consistent and complete.

3.9.4 Impact and Importance

This piece of research aims to have impact in both theoretical and practical ways. Firstly, it aims to add to the body of existing literature by looking at pupil voice practice specifically in the context of Virtual School staff and how they conceptualise, obtain and listen to views. The 'listen' element is particularly salient as this was a gap identified by the researcher in the literature review. In practical terms, the research was designed to ignite conversation, shift thinking and improve an area of practice for the Virtual School team. Through AI, the team will be encouraged to recognise what is already working regarding to listening to pupil voice. The aim will not to be find problems or flaws, but rather use positive stories and experiences to further enhance practice within the team.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The principles set out in the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) underpin all work conducted by Educational Psychologists, including research. These are respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity. These were prevalent throughout this piece of

research. Furthermore, guidance from the BPS (2014) was followed, to ensure the project was ethically robust, in line with this guidance. Each participant that took part in the study was treated with dignity and respect throughout the process of the research and full transparency was communicated throughout. The research was approved by the University of East London's ethical board (appendix L).

3.10.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Participants have the right to confidentiality and to remain anonymous in research (BPS, 2014). There were several steps taken during the research process to follow this. All participants' names were anonymised and provided with pseudonyms during transcription to protect confidentiality. It was agreed during the initial meeting that no names were to be used, alongside no identifiable information, including the name of the LA. When participants were interviewed, they were assigned a pseudonym. Transcripts of the interviews were undertaken only by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The name of the LA was also withdrawn to further ensure total anonymity.

3.10.2 Informed Consent

Sieber and Tolich (2013) view informed consent as an ongoing, two-way communication process between subjects and the investigator, alongside it being an agreement about the conditions of the research participation. This =underpinned the researcher's process for gaining and confirming informed consent throughout the research process. All participants were briefed on the purpose of the research and were provided with the information sheet (see appendix F). They were then asked to complete a Microsoft Form to give their consent in written form. At the beginning of the interview and focus group, the participants were briefed on what was about to happen and asked if they still consented.

3.10.3 Right to Withdraw

The right to withdraw was made clear to the participants frequently throughout the study. It was communicated during the briefing session and prior to each of the focus group sessions. Participants were advised that if they wished to withdraw, any input they had into the study would be destroyed up until the point of data analysis (January 2023).

3.10.4 Protection from Harm

The topic areas for discussion were not considered to be upsetting or offensive, therefore the researcher did not anticipate any physical or psychological risks to the participants, and none were disclosed during the research period. One consideration that the researcher held in mind was the power dynamics in the team, regarding the impact of power when discussing aspects of work. To overcome this, during the briefing participants were asked if they would like to be involved in selecting the pairs for the interviews. The team decided that they were happy for the researcher to select these. A debrief letter was provided to all participants with details of access to a free education staff wellbeing support service (appendix N).

3.10.5 Data Storage

Audio recordings and transcripts were saved in separate folders, on UEL's Microsoft OneDrive. The audio recordings were named with the pseudonym of the participant and the date of the interview. Each participant was given a participant number, in order in which the interviews happened. Transcription files were name, e.g. 'Participant 6'. There was no list kept linking participant numbers to personal information that may be identifying. A list of pseudonyms was kept in a password protected file. Consent forms were stored on the Microsoft Forms cloud. All files were encrypted and password protected.

3.11 Summary of Methodology

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, including the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher. AI was explored and critiqued and the researcher provides rationale

for selected theoretical frameworks throughout the chapter. A detailed account was provided of the research procedures and data analysis process and how this answers the research questions. The chapter concludes with considerations around ethical research and considers the quality control of qualitative research.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter will present the findings from each stage of the AI. The Discover phase will be presented first. A thematic analysis took place (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A thematic map was produced for each research question, each with its own themes and sub-themes. This stage of AI will answer the following research questions:

1. How do Virtual School staff conceptualise children and young people's voice?
2. How do Virtual School staff obtain and hear children and young people's voices?
3. What is the impact of obtaining and hearing the voices of children and young people?

The data was collected through paired interviews, both in person and via Microsoft Teams. Data from the 'Design' and 'Deliver' phases will then be presented, which facilitates the transformative nature of this research. This will be in the form of the provocative propositions and action plans that were created by the team during the focus group. Finally, data from the review meeting will be presented, in the form of a content analysis. This evaluates the usefulness of using AI as a means for organisational change within the Virtual School. The data from the review meeting will answer the following research question:

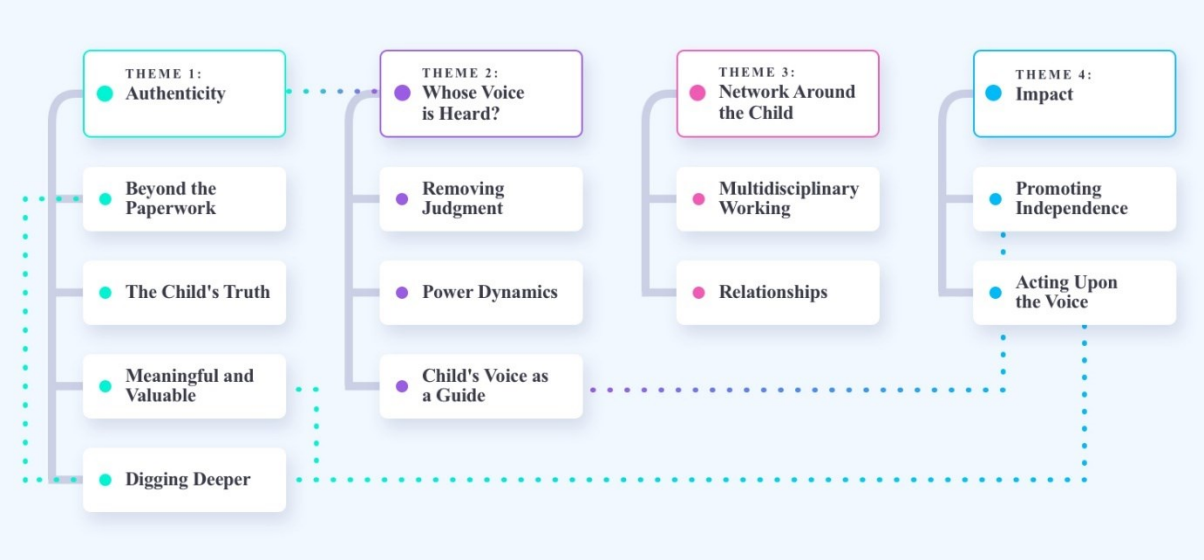
4. How do members of a Virtual School evaluate the usefulness of using AI to explore pupil voice practice within the team?

4.2 Discover Phase: RQ1

Research Question 1: How do Virtual School staff conceptualise children and young people's voice?

Figure 4: Thematic Map

Themes and subthemes of how Virtual School staff conceptualise child and young person's voice



4.2.1 Theme 1: Authenticity

The theme of authenticity was mentioned during most of the paired interviews. It seemed to be something that was at the heart of capturing pupil voice according to the team members. This is presented in figure 5 below.

Figure 5

Theme 1: Themes and subthemes

Beyond the Paperwork

It was clear that the Virtual School Team viewed authentic pupil voice as more than just another task that needs to be done. "*You start to realise there's a person at the other end, a smaller person who has a story. When you start to put yourself in that position as a worker, you totally have to learn to be modest and you know, and be led by humility. Because you can't do this work if you have just got yourself at the forefront and your views and thinking by numbers"* (Margaret, lines 110-113). It seems from the way the team members spoke about obtaining and listening to pupil voice that they wanted it to be more authentic than simply completing paperwork.

Additionally, having the ability to recognise that what is captured in the paperwork may not always be authentic, the team need to also have knowledge of the CYP, to understand what is captured. "*We hold the lives of these young people in our hands and therefore we need to think like/know and understand that young person on deeper level than how paperwork reads"* (Fiona, lines 87-89). It also seems that the Virtual School team members recognise the importance of being able to understand the child's voice, to ensure it is genuine. This also links with subtheme 4: digging deeper.

However, it was also noted that there are currently limitations in the way the system currently works. *"I've probably brought up at team meetings over years, for me the way we collect children's voice doesn't work. There are odd times when the child views have been collected before the PEP meeting – sometimes there might be something of some value that we can pick up on"* (Leanne, lines 68-70). This reinforces the idea that Virtual School Team members need to go beyond what is written on paperwork to authentically capture child's voice.

The Child's Truth

It seemed important to the Virtual School Team to be able to seek truth in what the children said to them. *"A child might say something. They might not mean it at all. They may mean exactly the opposite of it. So I guess what I'm looking for is and I really hate to kind of go there but the child's truth of sorts"* (Naomi, lines 36-38). Later in the conversation, Naomi adds "*It's a bit of a misnomer when you say child's voice because you imagine it's what they say. And it's not just that it's not just what they say. It's what they think they believe" (lines 41-42).* The notion of seeking the truth comes out strongly in her responses. She then states "*It's not just lip service sometimes where I mean, children are very good at saying what adults want to hear"* (Naomi, lines 4-5). This reinforces her earlier point about seeking truth from the child.

The idea that seeking children's own personal views also came out strongly from other members of the Virtual School Team. "*It is so important to seek children's views and see their experiences from their own point of view"* (Leanne, lines 78-79). Additionally, it seemed to go beyond just how children felt about things but understanding their thinking. "*So making sure that actually the real sight you know, their actual thinking has been captured and as much as possible acted upon"* (Tanya, lines 5-7). Later in the conversation, Tanya repeats part of what she has said, stating '*yeah, as much as possible acted upon or like taken into consideration' (Tanya, lines 10-12).* It highlights how staff value not only just listening to the child's truth, but also doing something with it seems to be important.

Meaningful and Valuable

It seemed important for the views to be captured in a meaningful and valuable way. "*This can make children feel more important and valued to know they are being listened to"* (Leanne, lines 80 – 81). This notion of listening to the children is also raised in Theme 4, Subtheme 4: Acting Upon the Voice, suggesting that the Virtual School Team value moving

away from simply obtaining views. "*And so yeah, it's important. It's so important to get each person's view so that we can tailor perhaps, something more appropriately to them. Yes, something that's more meaningful to them"* (Orion, lines 27-29). Tanya also highlights the importance of pupil voice being meaningful *'It's just sort of guiding them. And for that to happen in a meaningful way"* (Tanya, line 13).

Digging Deeper

Margaret spoke about the importance of being able to 'seek through the silence'. "*It's about understanding the importance of that child's voice, even if they have never articulated anything that you feel is yourself is important" (Margaret, lines 95-97).* Here she notes the importance of removing one's own views and focusing on the child. She goes on to acknowledge *"The fact that they are speaking, the fact that they are even in their silence, they are actually speaking and it's about having the humility and the understanding to seek from that silence"* (Margaret, lines 97-99). She focuses on the skill of humility as a way of doing this. *"Seek through the behaviour, seek through the negativity, to understand what they're really saying"* (Margaret, lines 99-100). She highlights the importance of going beyond how the children present, to capture their authentic voice. *"And a lot of times our children are saying, I don't trust people. I don't want to do this change. I don't want to move to this place, because I'm frightened, and I don't feel anyone's there*" (Margaret, lines 100-102).

Naomi also discusses the importance of knowing how to look deeper than how children may present "*I think it's a lot more complicated than I think most people think. It's not only what they might say out loud but it's also their body language, it's their emotional state".* She adds "*It's them communicating in a way that is very hard at times to either read or read*

accurately. And when children are in trauma, they communicate differently" (Naomi, lines 29-32).

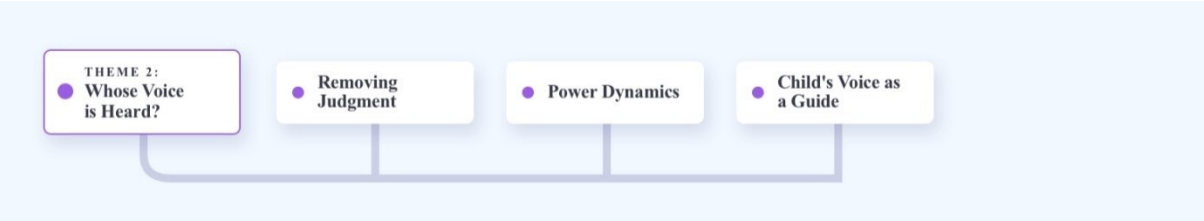
Laura highlights how critical pupil voice can be in uncovering information that could not have been found out by another means. "*Another one this term, a boy said what didn't he like at school, he explained when he was on the playground and when 'so and so' hits him. We wouldn't have found this out without obtaining child voice"* (Laura, lines 72-74). This demonstrates how pupil voice can provide direct insight into a child's everyday lived experience.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Whose Voice is Heard?

Linking closely to authenticity, the team discussed the importance of 'properly listening' to children and young people, whilst also being aware to remove their own judgement and be aware of power dynamics at play.

Figure 6

Theme 2: Themes and subthemes



Removing Judgement

The Virtual School team members discussed that it was important to remove judgement when they were listening to young people. *"Believing that we are the people that know best, and step back and say, we need to actually think and hear what this child needs, what this child wants, rather than be telling them"* (Margaret, lines 90-92). Later in the conversation,

Margaret comes back to this idea of removing judgement, stating "*You can't always have what you think is the right thing. And that's hearing the child's voice is about. It's about understanding the importance of that child's voice, even if they have never articulated anything that you feel is yourself is important"* (Margaret, lines 95-97). Yannis seems to share similar views, providing an example of removing judgement "*This young person, they said something 'out there' and left a pause, even before I gave a response, like they were waiting for me to say something. If there's something right or wrong I'm not going to judge you even if you've done wrong" (Yannis, lines 86-89).* Tanya also conceptualises pupil voice as being removed from adult's views, seeing her role as judgement-free. *"It's not our role to say like whether something might be not the right thing for them later on"* (Tanya, lines 12-13).

Power Dynamics

The Virtual School team members also recognised the power dynamics at play when capturing pupil voice. "*So it's not just making sure that the voice is heard. Because there might be other people that have quite loud voices and the children we know they are sort of at a disadvantage for things outside of their control"* (Tanya, lines 1-3). It seems they feel their role is to mitigate this and get to the heart of what is meant. *"Yes, sometimes, or too often I hear the voice of people who may not know that young person so well"* (Orion, lines 23-25). Margaret presents the idea of needing to 'step back' and acknowledge one's professional opinion, stating "W*hat it means is that we are challenged as professionals to lose our ego, lose attitude lose our conceitedness in terms of the way that we practice, believing that we are the people that know best, and step back and say, we need to actually think and hear what this child needs, what this child wants, rather than be telling them which is a very easy job"* (Margaret, lines 89-92).

The Child's Voice as a Guide

The Virtual School team members viewed the child's voice as a guide for directing their work. "*The young person's voice is really getting a steer or whatever it is that they want to do"* (Orion, lines 22-23). However, Simon acknowledges this also, stating "*So I think it's about knowing what's best for the child listening to the child and then gradually giving them more responsibility" (*Simon, lines 121-123). However, he also adds "*I know that they'll be in a better place in one year's time than if I listened to them completely at that point and allowed them to make the decision"* (Simon, lines 117-119). Here he acknowledges taking the voice into account but using professional judgement to also make decisions with the child's best interests at heart. He then goes on to explain his rationale for doing so "*That's what parents do, I think. that's what parenting is. For a four-year-old, a child wants to have an ice cream. But you know, as a parent that they don't, they shouldn't have an ice cream because sugar etc. But by the time they're eating ice cream, they have an ice cream and it's kind of that journey. You're the adults in a child's journey from 0-18, going from knowing in control to give them control. I think the child's voice is a part of that"* (Simon, lines 136-140).

4.2.4 Theme 3: The Network Around the Child

The network was mentioned frequently throughout the paired interviews, with the idea that the professionals around a child had a strong influence on how their voice could be heard.

Figure 7

Theme 3: Themes and subthemes

Multi-Disciplinary Working

The notion of multi-disciplinary working was discussed by numerous team members. "*We have network meetings where a lot of what is discussed/decided is based on assumptions of what is happening for that young person"* (Fiona, lines 82-83). *"It's a situation where you have many professionals, adults who are trying to work out the best for these young people"* (Orion, lines 17-19). Fiona highlights a challenge, stating *"actually we often leave out what the child is actually vocalising or expressing"* (Fiona, line 85). This suggests that although the multidisciplinary team work together to support the child, it may not always be the case that the child's views are listened to in these contexts. However, Laura provides an example where multi-disciplinary working had a tangible benefit "*There was a time when a child mentioned that he really loves gymnastics and we were thinking about how can we make that happen. The foster carer was going to look into what was available"* (Laura, lines 68-70), thus holding a different view from Fiona's views somewhat.

Tanya acknowledges that within the Virtual School team, pupil voice is valued "*So yeah, their voice is vital. So I hope they feel listened to, I think within our team that they have that space"* (Tanya, lines 14-15).

Margaret provides a thoughtful reflection regarding empathising with the various 'workers' (e.g. social workers, family support, youth offending workers) who may be involved with a child. "*When you start to put yourself in that position as a worker, you totally have to learn to be modest and you know, and be led by humility"* (Margaret, lines 109-110). This demonstrates a high level of professional curiosity regarding the role of the professionals around the children who the Virtual School support.

Relationships

One participant felt strongly about the quality of the relationships as being a key component of pupil voice practice. "*It's complicated and takes time and it is based on a relationship with a trusting relationship, in my view. So that's what it means to me. So that's how we get the truth, by building a trusting relationship between the child and professional* (Naomi, lines 29-32). A more latent acknowledgement of the importance of relationship-building seems to come from Simon, who acknowledges that his previous experience as a teacher has helped him know how to build relationships with young people "*Having the spectrum of all children as a teacher particularly gives you a very good viewpoint into young people"* (Simon, lines 115-116).

4.2.4 Theme 4: Impact

Across the team, it was clear that the notion of impact and the usefulness of the voice was salient, rather than just collecting children and young people's voice without good reason.

Figure 8

Theme 4: Themes and Subthemes

A Journey to Independence

Simon conceptualises pupil voice as *"A journey to independence"* (Simon, line 113). He explains "*So each year as they grow older, you kind of listened to them a bit more, but whilst having their protection and their development in mind* (Simon lines 117-119). It seems he sees listening to pupils as something that is dynamic and is done in different ways as children get older. He gives an example: "*Some 11 year old who says things, I'm always going to*

listen to them and I'm going to have more of an active role in decision making than an 18 year old who said something if that makes sense?" (Simon lines 119-121). He also acknowledges the challenges when obtaining views from older children "*So it's that challenge, and it's especially hard I think in Key Stage Four going into Key Stage Five, when young people begin to want to express their views very clearly* (Simon, lines 129- 132). This links with Theme 2, Subtheme 4: Child's voice as a Guide.

Acting Upon the Voice

The theme of acting upon the voice, rather than just obtaining it, seemed important to several team members. "*And yeah, as much as possible acted upon or like taken into consideration"* (Tanya, line 11). "*They have to feel part of the decision-making process, so yeah, their voice is vital" (*Tanya, line 14).

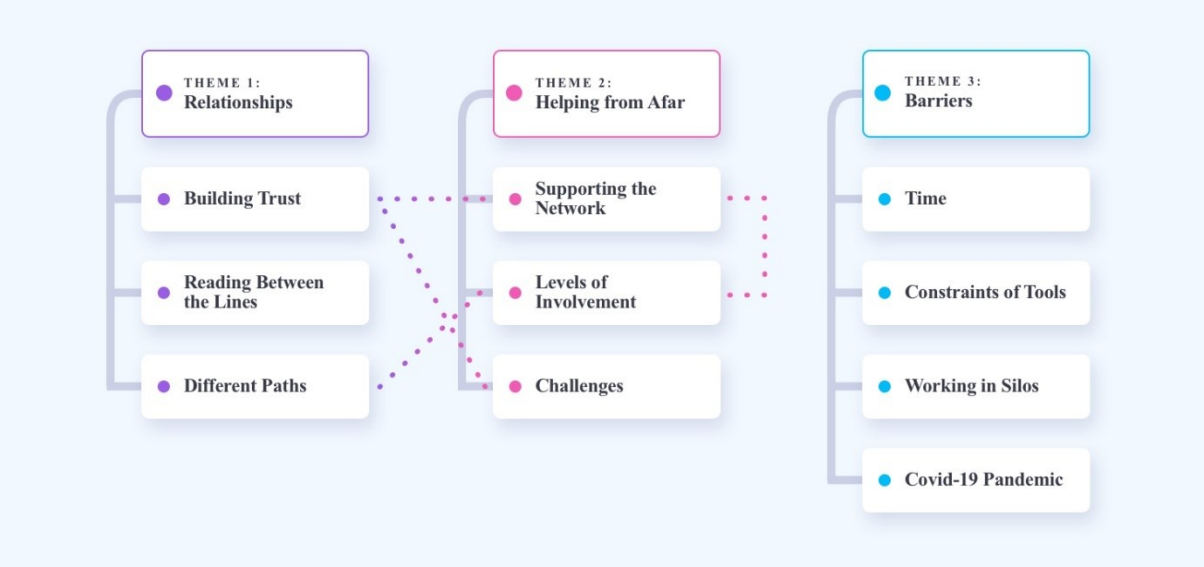
Helen reflected on using children's feedback to improve a celebration event that the Virtual School had arranged. "*Gathering people's feedback throughout the day gives me satisfaction and they've had a good time and I read it to try to find out how to make it better for them* (Helen, lines 58-59). She reflects on the processes involved with encouraging feedback "*And I do spend a bit of time thinking about how can we ensure that they do the feedback forms, how can we get as many kids as possible to fill them out and really do something with it. I don't want it to be a form that sits in the cupboard that we it's just a tick box" (Helen, 45-48).* Finally, she explains "*So certainly this year, I've really thought about what they said last year, and every year I build on it"* (Helen, lines 48-49). These findings also have strong links with Theme 1, subtheme 1: Beyond the Paperwork.

4.3 Discover Phase: RQ2

Research Question 2: How do Virtual School staff obtain and hear children and young people's voices?

Figure 9: Thematic Map

Themes and subthemes relating to how Virtual School staff obtain and listen to children and young people's voices

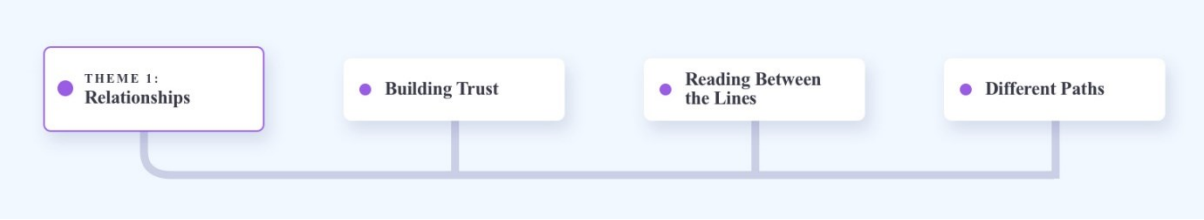


4.3.1 Theme 1: Relationships

The importance of relationships seemed to be a salient theme across the interviews in terms of what enabled staff to obtain and hear pupil views.

Figure 10

Theme 1: Themes and Subthemes



Building Trust

A theme that came across strongly from multiple team members was how building trusting relationships was foundational to collecting and listening to the voices of the children and

young people. Naomi explains the importance of relationships, stating "*A child starts by having a trusting relationship with its significant other, which is usually a parent. And they feed off that significant other or others and they learn about themselves by communicating with that significant other, they learn about themselves, they learn about the world through that significant other*" (Naomi, lines 229-232). It seemed that this was an important place to start for gaining pupil views, as without the established trust, gaining the child's truth would not be possible. This links with Theme 1, subtheme 2; The Child's Truth. Yannis explains "*From the outset it's important for me to be clear I'm not a teacher, social worker or an authoritative figure but this is my role, I'm working in a mentor type capacity" (Yannis, lines 82-83).* It seems he views himself sitting alongside the young person, rather than in a position of authority. Tanya speaks about building relationships in terms of getting to know the children "*I think when you know, some of the things that happened when they were younger, some of the things that led to them coming into care and of that process. And I think that helps you to build a rapport but also you so yeah, you go in with like quite a good understanding"* (Tanya, lines 10-13). She adds later "*And I think that's the best time because you've got you've got information that matters to know the sort of questions to ask and to have an understanding of what might be on their mind" (Tanya, lines 16-17).* This highlights how she seems to hold great importance on building trusting relationships as a cornerstone for collecting pupil voice.

Two more members of the team shared examples of when they had built good relationships with children and young people, which then helped with listening to their voice. *"One my best pieces of work with a kid in my first year. He was in your year 11 and I went and met him every day and during his exams because his foster carers didn't care. He stopped caring so he didn't go to his first exams. I went from South London to Wembley every single time he had an exam, into his exams. That's my best piece of work"* (Simon, lines 169-

172). Later, he goes back to this story, adding "*And at the end of it he asked me to go to his prom and sit in the audience and be his parents"* (Simon, lines 190-191).

Another example of when strong relationships had an impact on listening to young people comes from Margaret, who explained how through having a relationship with one child impacted their sibling in a positive way "*She already knew me in the background because she knew of the work I was doing around her sister. She reaches out sometimes and there were times that she was like when she had her first-year exams. She said to me, Margaret, I can't do this. She was struggling. So I just sat on the phone with her, emailed her across a timetable to write out every assessment that she had to write. And we did a plan together and we sat and did that"* (Margaret, lines 137 – 138).

Reading Between the Lines

A theme that seemed to come out of conversations around building relationships was the idea of being able to 'read between the lines', as a strategy to collect pupil voice. Simon explains "*Like you said, students voice is not about what they say, sometimes it's the body language or what they don't say*" (Simon, lines 171-172). Here Simon acknowledges the importance of non-verbal communication. Tanya agrees "*And I think being able to read between the lines, like picking up on what's not said as well, and that's why I think sort of feeling like you can have an understanding of what's going on in their head, like feeling you know them a little bit or understood the journey that they've gone on"* (Tanya, lines 24-27). Simon adds "*You can listen to a child when you don't speak. When you know them well enough. Listen to the tensions, then listen to the resolution of them"* (Simon, lines 208-210).

Different Paths

Different team members discussed different ways in which they might collect and hear pupil voice, depending on their role. Orion, whose role in the Virtual School is an Education

Support Officer, described pupil voice in the context of events or provision "*You get a bit of a feel of the character of the children or the young people. And that's in a setting where it's usually fun games, those two settings; the letterbox club and the celebration of achievement. It's usually quite joyful"* (Orion, lines 42-44).

Margaret acknowledges an alternative approach and the need to tailor and adapt approaches, depending on the child:

"Or actually go in sometimes when everybody's kind of saying 'this child is impossible', but go and visit them. Go and make contact with them, find out what's going on, be a constant because there are also cases where we just need to do something different. This is just my view, but bearing in mind that I believe that by keeping sometimes reaching out to those children in a different way, offering support and listening in a different way" (Margaret, lines 122-126).

It seems from this Margaret is acknowledging flexibility, whilst also providing consistency to the child or young person. Tanya also discusses the idea of consistency, explaining "*So I think the consistency not just of me, but also the people around them. So if the child's had the same social worker, or the education consultants are amazing, and they, you know, even if they've changed, the information is passed on to the other people around them know them really well"* (Tanya, lines 13-16). However, she also later acknowledges that it is not just information sharing between the professionals, but also directly to the child or young person. She says *"It's just sort of finding the best way to get the information directly from the young person* (Tanya, lines 17-18). This links with Theme 2, subtheme 2: Levels of Involvement.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Helping from Afar

Across some of the interviews, the idea that Virtual School staff 'helped from afar' came up. This seemed to be the idea that they supported the network who worked directly with the child but were one step removed.

Figure 11

Theme 2: Themes and Subthemes

Supporting the Network

Across the team, the notion of working with the network to collect pupil voice was discussed. The team seemed to feel that they were positioned outside of the child's network, helping from afar rather than being directly involved. Simon explains *"A child who's in a healthy family, that's all they would have. The family, school. When you have a looked-after child, they have multiple people. In addition to that they could have a social worker they have potentially a foster carer. If they're in a children's home they'll potentially have four key workers. That suddenly increases. I see my role as not being part of that"* (Simon, lines 157-160). He also explains how other professionals can be the voice of the young people, advocating for them "*I need to trust the opinions of the people who know them best and give them my advice* (Simon, line 169). This links to Theme 1, Subtheme 1; Building Trust. Tanya also shares this experience, stating *"I feel like I'm behind the scenes. I was at a meeting the other day and you know, it's the first time we've met that person, even though I've been involved on a periphery for a year or so* (Tanya, lines 2-4). Later on she adds "*So it feels like you've part of the journey you've sort of been observing or witnessing"* (Tanya, lines 5-9).

Simon reflects on how his work often goes on 'behind the scenes', sharing (in reference to a child he was working with) "*she doesn't even know what my help was I don't think* (Simon, lines 217-218).

The team reflected on their level of involvement, considering how this might impact their work. Naomi shares "*Well, basically I would like to meet every single kid"* (Naomi, line 64). She goes on to say *"I know I can't have a personal relationship with every single kid. So I don't do that. Because these kids have met enough curious adults. They don't need, you know, people pushing in, unless they're going to spend proper time with them. So I still have to find a way of balancing that out" (Naomi, lines, 64-68).* Later however, she acknowledges that although she steps back, there are other team members who can have more direct involvement:

"*So you have to have dedicated workers for this work. I can say to both Yannis and Fiona to tell me what the children think and believe. And they know their view. So I can ask to the child through Yannis or Fiona, would they attend this school for example and they might tell me they think it might be unlikely and here's the reason because they know them. Because the young person has allowed them in"* (Naomi, lines 59-63).

Laura considers her level of involvement and its impact on her work in a slightly different way "*For me having a chat and recording it is much better and the class teacher/teaching assistant who has best relationship, they should do it"* (Laura, lines 111-112).

Challenges

There were some challenges cited by team members when supporting the network to ensure pupils' views are listened to. Simon acknowledges how being 'one step removed' can be difficult in terms of investing in the young people, stating "*It takes a lot of getting invested with a kid like that as well. Because you do that you then you sat there at eight o'clock on a*

Friday night listening to this teacher talk about them but you don't have the ability to invest like that" (Simon, lines 195-197).

Yannis reflects back to his paired interview partner about how it might feel when you cannot get the pupil views directly from a young person, stating "*I was thinking about advocating for a young person you haven't met, if you are feeling you can't advocate or didn't get their voice from social worker, does this put you in positions where things might get uncomfortable?* (Yannis, lines 72-74).

Fiona acknowledges the challenges of working with larger networks in terms of relationships. This is important as the team identified the importance of relationships as a foundation for being able to hear pupils' views. *"The cases that I'm referred can be because the young people have developed distrust for the networks or professionals due to the amount of people involved"* (Fiona, lines 101-102). This links to Theme 1, Subtheme 1: Building Trust.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Barriers

In some interviews, barriers to collecting and listening to views arose, including the notion of time and constraints of tools. One member spoke in detail regarding what she called 'working in silos' as being a barrier for gaining views of children and young people.

Figure 12

Theme 3: Themes and subthemes

Time

Time was referenced by some members of the team as being a barrier for collecting pupil voice. Helen states "Y*ou know, I know that I need to find more time in my work. For this work, because it is so important. And that's, you know, and that's why it isn't prioritised"* (Helen, lines 50-51). *Although a barrier, she highlights its value and importance. She adds "I'd love to I'd love to spend more time doing just that"* (Helen, line 55). Later in the conversation, she also comes up with a solution to this barrier *"So I can speak to Leanne about just having that protected time already. How about blocking time on my calendar?"* (Helen, lines 57-58). This would suggest that collecting pupil voice is a seemingly important part of Helen's role, even if she currently does not have much capacity to do it.

Laura acknowledges the time barrier from a different perspective, considering how the schools that she works with seem to be impacted by a lack of time "*It's often it seen as an add on, like when I've got PEPs in September and still no pupil voice. Schools don't often have capacity or time"* (Laura, lines 68-70). She considers the value of pupil voice, stating "*It's only in those contexts when schools fill out ahead of PEP meeting and its worth bringing and raising to the meeting"* (Laura, lines 70-71). This suggests she recognises the importance of the pupil voice being obtained in a meaningful way.

Naomi also brings up the issue of time, in terms of being able to spend time with pupils, to get to know them and then use this to help them share their views. "*And the thing I get most annoyed about is we spend an awful lot of time doing other things apart from being with the kids. You know, when being with the kids is the rarest thing that we do, or certainly the rarest thing I do. It's disappointing*" (Naomi, lines 46-49). Later, she adds "*Time. Time and contact. There's no escaping it. You know that thing that says love equals time. Yeah. You've got to take an interest. And taking an interest starts with being up having the time to take an interest and doing things that they'd like to* do" (Naomi, lines 51-53).

Constraints of Tools

The tools which the Virtual School currently uses to collect pupil voice were identified as having limitations by some of the team members. "*The current format doesn't work. It's not a conversation and not dialogue, so we're not truly listening to what a child says. This is how the PEP system encourages it"* (Laura, lines 75-77). She goes on to acknowledge that the format is a barrier for relationship building, explaining *"There's even a section where you can ask child fill in. It's not a way to build a relationship. The format doesn't allow for listening to pupil voice"* (Laura, lines 78-80). Simon highlights this too "*I can tell usually how a child is, not by them telling me how they are but what I could see in class* (Simon, lines 206-207)[…] *It's hard getting it in Section C of the PEP"* (Simon, line 210). Yannis shares these views "*It seems these templates are doing the reverse of what we need them to. You are using your internal voice and you trust in that more* (Yannis, lines 113-115).

Working in Silos

A barrier to obtaining pupil voice is shared by Margaret. "*I think Naomi said something the other day. She said that I was speaking about when people work in silos, and the danger of working in silos. And she was saying that our roles are silos that we often do work in silos, but I don't think we do"* (Margaret, lines 116-118). Here she acknowledges not working in a joined-up way, whilst demonstrating that there are conflicting views around this. She goes on to say "*I don't believe that our role is about working in silos. I think that what we have to do is learn to share more of what we're really doing. We expect everyone knows what we do, but we don't say and that's a real difficulty in our work"* (Margaret, lines 119-121). She notes the challenges of not truly understanding what different people in the team are doing to promote pupil voice.

Covid-19 Pandemic

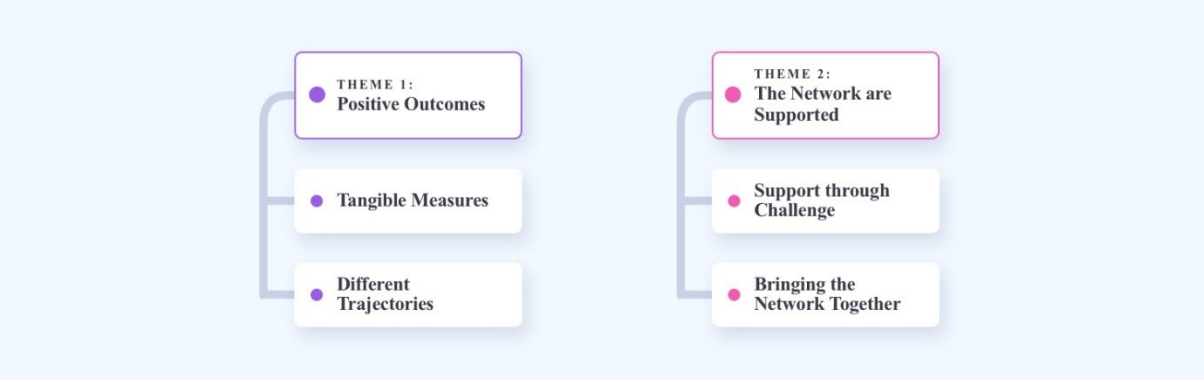
Some team members brought up how the Covid-19 pandemic had been a barrier for working practices to obtain and hear pupil voice. *"It was really nice to get back in person this year. Yeah, people said that. You know that they enjoy it and they'll always be children that attend every year"* (Helen, lines 77-78). Simon agrees *"I think what did help to is not having a pandemic. Not being on Teams. Going into the schools, meeting with schools particularly not just the kids but meeting the school. Normal School meetings. When everything's on teams it's not personal. We're not people anymore, are we? We're just windows on a screen. But when we are in front of you, you can't do that" (Simon, lines 231-235).*

4.4 Discover Phase: RQ3

Research Question 3: What is the impact of obtaining and hearing the voices of children and young people?

Figure 13

Themes and subthemes of what the Virtual School team view in terms of impact of listening to the voices of children and young people



4.4.1 Theme 1: Positive Outcomes

Several positive outcomes were discussed throughout the interviews. Some of these appeared more tangible, such as young people receiving much-needed equipment after raising

this with their workers. Others seemed to be less obvious, but arguably more important, seemingly around the possibility of more positive trajectories in terms of life outcomes.

Figure 14

Theme 1: Themes and subthemes

Tangible Measures

Team members were able to identify times where they noticed how they had used pupil voice to impact outcomes in a positive way. Orion provides a very tangible example of this:

"*Yeah, so we're able to contribute positively. The hope of that anyway. So for instance, the young person is just returning to education or just entering education. After a while, they get a laptop and it's been really needed. They've not been able to do much work, or they've had to borrow something or just use it within specified time. And they've just not had the freedom that their own device would bring. So they're able to, and this it is strange. It's just that it's just wonderful to see a young person go away with equipment. And like it's just the best new thing, but they're going to study. This is cool. That is wonderful*"

(Orion, lines 15-21).

Helen also demonstrates how gaining feedback from young people has impacted on her work "*So I asked for the children's feedback we asked the carers, what do you think? The counsellors tell us their feedback, you know, constructive criticism. We don't just want you to have a great day. I want to hear you know, what do you think we could do better next time?*

Like I said, I do. I do listen to that. And try to improve on it every year" (Helen, lines 83-86). It seems for these members of the team, the views and voice have lead to clear improvements, in the forms of being supplied equipment and the content of the annual celebration event.

Different Trajectories

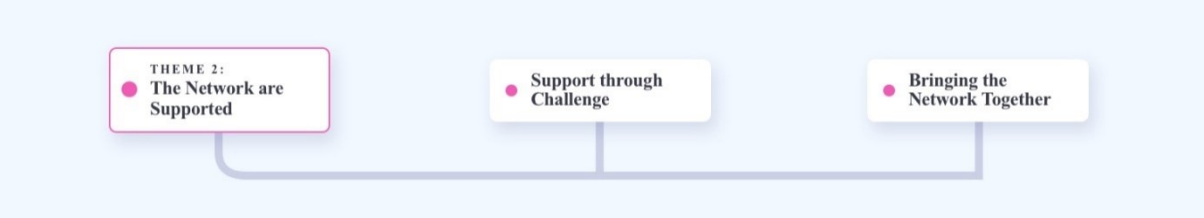
For other team members, the impact of their work was acknowledged in a less concrete manner. Tanya acknowledges "*It's really hard to know the impact I think just because we when things do go well, you don't hear about it. You hear about it when things don't go so well*" (Tanya, line 1). She goes on to share some moments when she feels proud of her involvement with a child "*That's what I've sort of felt proud of you, when feel like you're putting them on a different trajectory or that there could be a different trajectory for them"* (Tanya, lines 11-13). *"I think sometimes when children or young people have said something out loud that they haven't sort of said before, sometimes it's sort of naming the trauma (Tanya, lines 3-4).*She explains later on "*I think the best times are when you sort of see a change or like sort of maturity and understanding that these are things that have happened to me but they don't define me. And when that's actually we have to know that but when that's coming from the young person, I think that's been the best times" (Tanya, lines 8-11).* Here she highlights the importance of voice coming from the young person.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The Network are Supported

It seems that Virtual School team members feel their work has a significant impact supporting the network who work directly with the children and young people. This is done through challenging other professionals and by bringing the network together.

Figure 15

Theme 2: Themes and subthemes



Support through Challenge

Some team members felt that they used pupil voice to challenge professionals, to lead to positive changes for the young people that they supported. Yannis highlights this "*There's no point in jumping down a young person's throat if we don't look at underlying things, this idea of challenging professionals"* (Yannis, lines 136-137). He goes on to provide an example, in reference to a young person who he supports "*At a point where meetings were going well, the school kept sending incidents. This was over several weeks, where the big things had simmered down. I wanted to know, at what point will I get the positive points?"* (Yannis, lines 138-140). He then shared how he challenged the school "*When I asked why? They seemed a bit awkward/uncomfortable. It doesn't bode well to just receive negative work"* (Yannis, lines 140-141). He then shared how he felt this interaction had a positive impact "*I felt she knew what I was talking about"* (Yannis, line 144). Orion provides another example of where he provided challenge to a member of the child's network, in this instance a member of school staff, which had an impact "*It was the network of people. So being someone in a place to have that communication with a young person then say okay, they need they need this piece of equipment. They need this. This is what the impact is for them currently without it. Then us as a team being able to provide that" (*Orion, lines 28-30).

Bringing the Network Together

Many team members felt that a key part of their role was to use pupil views to encourage the network around a child to work together. Orion shares the importance of the network coming together, specifically hearing the needs from the pupils in order to do this "*I guess the*

network of people coming together to be able to hear a need, supporting someone and being able to hear a need and that being communicated over us being able to help assess what's the whole situation? Yeah, that's what I would say is as helpful. The network coming together" (Orion, lines 28-34). Tanya highlights how any impact of work she does is not just from her, but from the whole network "*that wasn't obviously just done by me that was done by a team around the child* (Tanya, lines 7-8).

Yannis explains the importance of having a 'universal language' within the network "*Working with parents and foster carers, you need a universal language. If you know me your network will know me, they share confidential things and I have to pass on"* (Yannis, lines 129-131). He goes on to explain how it is not just the young people's voices that get heard, but also members of a child's network "*There are ways I make myself present to foster carers so they sense their voice is heard by me. Teachers talk to me differently. Foster carers talk differently which can only happen cos they know I've been working with them. You can then get a better sense of their voice spreading through network* (Yannis, lines 130-133). Helen also discusses the importance of hearing the voices of people in the network around a child "*Also, social workers can be constructive feedback within the team, you know, we always encourage that communicating during team meetings, we reflect on the event"* (Helen, lines 94-95).

4.5 Design and Deliver Phase

The design and deliver phase was the final stage of the AI, which fulfilled the transformative nature of this research. The data was used to generate a set of 'provocative propositions', during the focus group with the team members. Provocative propositions are statements which describe an ideal set of circumstances to do more of what it is best practice in the organisation. In this focus group, team members were presented with the initial themes

and key quotes for member checking. This feedback was used to confirm the themes that the researcher had proposed and prompted discussion and reflection in the team. Then, through discussion, the provocative propositions were generated. These are presented in figure 14. Each statement was used to create an action plan (table 5). This action plan was not subject to analysis, as the researcher appreciated that it was likely to be more meaning to participants in its original form.

Figure 16

List of provocative propositions in the design and deliver phase

Provocative Propositions

- We always work in the best interests of the child
- Developing trust with children and young people is a priority in the Virtual School
- In the Virtual School, we get the immediate network to invest in the value of pupil voice

Table 6 *Action plan created in the design and deliver phase*

Provocative Proposition	**Action plan**	**By who?**	**Date**	**Review**
We always work in the best interests of the child	- In line manager meetings or supervision, discuss a child who you work with, thinking about the following questions: 1. What do you believe their best interests to be? 2. Who do you think is the best person to obtain that information? 3. What needs to be done to upskill the network that works with the child? - Choose one PEP where you feel a CYP's views have been captured well and come to share this at the review meeting <u>Potential future actions</u> - Ensure networks are clear about roles of Virtual School members - Include a section on importance of obtaining pupil views and how to do this authentically in Virtual School training sessions	Line managers/supervisors Virtual school Team members	Before review (end of Feb 23)	
Developing trust with CYP is a priority in the Virtual School	- Virtual School staff who do direct work to think about how they can 'check in' with CYP as part of their work, for example by modelling how they feel to build trust and rapport	Virtual school team members who do direct work with YP	Before review (end of Feb 23)	
In the Virtual School, we get the immediate network to invest in the value of pupil voice	- Virtual School staff who work with the network to encourage them to think carefully about who the person is that gathers the views <u>Potential future actions</u> - Collate tools for obtaining view to give to network - Provide networks with options to capture pupil voice to move away from the list of questions	Virtual school staff who work with the networks (i.e. Education consultants)	Before review (end of Feb 23)	

4.6 Deliver Phase: RQ4

Research Question 4: How do members of a Virtual School evaluate the usefulness of using AI to explore pupil voice practice within the team?

The final research question was addressed during the review meeting, which was held on Microsoft Teams. After reviewing the action plan, the researcher displayed the following questions on a PowerPoint slide and asked team members to respond using the 'chat' function. Responses were collated onto a Word document and analysed using a content analysis (CA).

1. What was meaningful and valuable about the Appreciative Inquiry process?
2. What would you have liked more of?
3. What is your next step (in terms of collecting/listening to CYP's voice) in your role?

What was meaningful and valuable about the Appreciative Inquiry process?

Sharing Practice. Sharing practice was the most prevalent category that arose in participants answers regarding what they had found meaningful and valuable about the process, with six responses being categorised as this. Some examples of responses that illustrate this are: *"Hearing about all the great work that other Virtual School team members are doing"* (Tanya); *"Sharing experiences and talking about what we do is always helpful"* (Helen);*"Hearing about the perspective of other team members"* (Yannis).

Prioritising Pupil Voice. One other response was around how the process had been a helpful reminder about how a significant part of their work should be around pupil voice. *"Keeping the young person's voice at the forefront of thinking for us as a Virtual School. This means that it is always a thought in network/strategy meetings but also in decision making"* (Simon)

What would you have liked more of?

Time. The most frequently occurring theme for participants in this section was around time, with five out of nine participants who were present for the review meeting sharing they would have liked to have had more time spent on the process. Some examples of responses that illustrate are as follows: "*More time to talk about specific examples" (Tanya)*;*"Continued chat as the sessions are short" (Fiona)*

Collection Tools. Two other responses were categorised as 'collection tools', relating to how participants would have liked to had space to think about the tools and processes they use to obtain pupil voice as part of the AI process. Laura states she would like to *"Review ways in which we ask schools to collect views and format".* Simon shared he would like *"More shared thinking around how we can utilise and capture these in the PEP".*

What is your next step (in terms of collecting/listening to CYP's voice) in your role?

For this question, there were three categories that were most prevalent for participants; advocating for children and young people, systemic working and ensuring views are heard. Each of these categories had two responses which fitted into them.

Advocating for Children and Young People. Two participants explained their next steps will be to continue to advocate for young people: *"Continue doing what I'm doing in the role and try to advocate"* (Fiona); "*Continuing to be an advocate for the CYP we work with"* (Tanya).

Systemic Working. The importance of working in a systemic way was identified as next steps for two participants*: "Recognising how we can have impact even if not in a pupil-facing role"* (Helen); *"Talking to team colleagues who work more directly with young people"* (Leanne)

Ensuring Views are Used. Finally, the importance of using the pupil views were highlighted by two participants: "*Ensure views are always fed into meetings where this has been completed beforehand:* (Laura);*"How we can put this into training for the schools to allow them to be able to capture the young person's views but also to have more consideration to what those views are, due to the history of a looked-after child"*(Simon).

4.7 Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings of the AI addressing each of the research questions. Each section starts with a thematic map identifying the theme and sub-themes, which address the first three research questions. The themes that were identified during the data analysis answered the research questions of how Virtual School team members conceptualise children and young people's voice, how they obtain and hear views and what the impact of this was. The themes identified for the first RQ were around authenticity, whose voice was heard, the network around the child and noting the importance of work being impactful. The themes identified for the second RQ were around relationships, helping from afar and identifying barriers to obtaining children and young people's views. The themes in the third RQ were around the positive outcomes and the network being supported. The Discover phase was presented in the form of provocative propositions and an action plan created by participants. The findings for RQ4 were presented in the form of a content analysis. The participants cited sharing practice and ensuring that pupil voice is prioritised the most meaningful and valuable parts of the appreciative inquiry process. They shared they would have liked to have more time on the project and they would have liked an opportunity to think about the tools they use to capture pupil voice. Finally, they identified next steps for their practice, which included continuing to advocate for children and young people, work systemically and ensure that pupil views are listened to. Chapter five will address and discuss the interpretation of the findings in the relation to the existing literature and the directions for future practice.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction to Chapter

The aim of this exploratory and transformative piece of research was to explore the following research questions:

1. How do Virtual School staff conceptualise children and young people's voice?
2. How do Virtual School staff obtain and hear children and young people's voices?
3. What is the impact of obtaining and hearing the voices of children and young people?
4. How do members of a Virtual School evaluate the usefulness of using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to explore pupil voice practice within the team?

This research was conducted in response to the paucity of research into obtaining and using pupil voice within Virtual Schools (VSs). The thesis adopts a positive psychology stance, hence utilising an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach to carry out the research. It was undertaken within a relativist ontology, thus believing that reality is a subjective experience and exists within our thoughts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The research sits within a social constructionist epistemology, with the participants making meaning of their own experiences. It is also transformative in nature, as it aims to improve functioning in a team to support a marginalised and vulnerable group of children and young people (looked-after children and children with a social worker). This chapter draws together the research findings, providing a synthesis which is both critical and reflective in nature. The implications for educational psychology will be explored, in addition to the strengths and limitations of the research. Finally, implications for future research will be addressed alongside the researcher's individual reflections on the research journey.

5.2 Reflective Synthesis of the Research Findings

5.2.1. RQ1: How do Virtual School Staff conceptualise children and young people's voice?

Authenticity

It was found that many members of the Virtual School team seemed to prioritise authenticity when it came to conceptualising the notion of pupil voice. Some team members described going 'beyond the paperwork', to remember that there is a child or young person whose voice is being presented in the documents and data capture formats that they work with. This was also apparent in Harding and Atkinson's (2009) paper, which investigated how EPs in a local authority obtained and presented pupil views in written reports. It was found in this paper that the EPs collected views to identify needs and 'create pen pictures' of young people. It is this notion of presenting a young person's voice through documentation in a way that is authentic that was pertinent in the current research.

The notion of 'seeking truth' was discussed by several team members, who felt it was important to go beyond what they think they want to hear, remove their own views, and focus on the child. These findings are convergent with research from Bragg (2007), who found that teachers' own professional identities had an impact on how they viewed the children. This is an important finding regarding authenticity when obtaining pupil voice, as if practitioners impose their values and identities onto children and young people, it may diminish the authentic voice from being communicated.

It came across that team members felt that obtaining pupil voice should be both meaningful and valuable to the children and young people. Cunningham (2022) conducted a study which highlighted the importance of ensuring participation was meaningful to the participants and did this by using a tool which was highly meaningful to the participants. This

enabled the researchers to move a step closer to understanding more deeply from the pupils' perspectives (Cunningham, 2022).

Some of the team also noted the limitations around the current systems that are in place in terms of the current ways in which pupil voice is captured as part of their work (within the Personal Education Plan [PEP]) system, stating that it *"doesn't work"* (Leanne, lines 68-70). These findings are convergent with those from Georgeson et al., (2014), who found that the tools used to obtain pupil voice are crucial for enabling authentic contributions.

Whose Voice is Heard?

Closely linked to 'authenticity', it was found that Virtual School team members felt it was important to ensure authentic pupil voice was heard. Team members felt it was important to take a "*step back'*, remember that '*you can't always have what you think is the right thing"* (Margaret, lines 95-97) and remove judgement, when working with children and young people to obtain their views. This aligns with seminal work from Rogers (1951), who describes the notion of 'unconditional positive regard', which is the premise of demonstrating complete support and acceptance of a person, no matter what they say or do. By demonstrating this, it is more likely that people can be their authentic selves and can be met with acceptance. By the Virtual School members demonstrating unconditional positive regard, it is more likely they can obtain authentic pupil voice.

Team members also identified the power dynamics that exist when obtaining pupil voice, noting that there may be other voices in the network around the child which are 'louder' (i.e. have more power) than others. Dimitirellou and Male (2020) state that due to inherent power dynamics in education settings, certain groups of children and young people continue to be ignored, thus remaining on the periphery of decision-making processes. A recent study from Caslin (2023) reflected on the role that adults can play in silencing the views of children and

young person. In this paper, Caslin (2023) presents the argument that many adults 'listen' to children, but do not 'hear' them, often acting as gatekeepers rather than empowering them. Furthermore, Georgeson et al., (2014) found that teachers commented that children often said what they wanted to hear, rather than what they thought. They also found that quieter children tended to have less input, thus the voice heard is less likely to represent the range of children in a setting.

The Virtual School team members brought up the notion that the young person's voice should be seen as a 'guide' for their work "*The young person's voice is really getting a steer or whatever it is that they want to do"* (Orion, lines 22-23). There was an interesting finding within this, about ensuring that although children and young people do need to be listened to, the adults who are working with them should also be key in the decision-making process and not just handing over every decision to the child or young person. This is congruent with findings from Payne (2007), who found that in the context of language curriculum planning, pupils are important partners who can contribute positively. The nuance in this finding is saliant: children and young people's views should be listened to, but also supported by adults who work in collaboration with them. This is different from simply 'taking into account' pupil views, but rather moving towards partnership working. Thomson and Gunter (2006) advocated for students moving from 'consultees' to 'researchers', but this was in the context of research rather than practice. Thus, this is a distinctive finding from this piece of research.

The Network around the Child

There were findings regarding the network around the child and how the professionals in this network had a strong influence on how their voice was heard. Within this theme, there were findings regarding multi-disciplinary working and regarding the relationships between the adults in the network and the children.

Within the area of multi-disciplinary working, there were multiple truths regarding how participants saw this area of practice. Some viewed this way of working as being *"based on assumptions of what is happening for that young person"* (Fiona, lines 82-83), whereas others felt that the young person's voice was *'vital'* in the decision-making that occurs in these meetings. Although there were multiple truths, there was agreement in the importance of the network and their role, as demonstrated by the provocative proposition that was created in the action plan: 'In the Virtual School, we get the immediate network to invest in the value of pupil voice'. Looked-after and previously looked-after children (for whom most of the Virtual School Team are the groups which are supported by them) quite often have multiple adults who are involved in their lives. Davies and Wright (2008) state that vulnerable children should be provided with equal choice and involvement in decision-making regarding provision. They also highlight that this is a complex process and it should be addressed methodologically, reflexively, and ethically.

It was found that quality of relationships was a key component of successful pupil voice practice. This finding is convergent with Zilli et al., (2020), who explored practices that enable autistic pupils to participate in decision-making at school. They found that the relationships between staff and pupils were mutually respectful, thus promoting authentic pupil voice.

Impact

It was found that pupil voice is something that aids children and young people on their "*journey to independence"* (Simon, line 113). Developmental stage and age should be considered when obtaining pupil voice, as this should impact the decision-making process. McCluskey et al., (2013) looked at student participation and negotiation across primary and secondary school aged children. They found that it did not seem there was any structure for

development or progress in levels of active participation or decision making. They also found that there was disparity between the primary aged and secondary aged children, with latter commenting on the lack of listening by teachers that they felt. This is important when we consider a main aim of education is to prepare children for life in the adult world, promoting independence and decision-making.

Acting upon pupil voice, rather than just obtaining it was a strong theme that came out of the study. Team members discussed the importance of this, whilst also providing specific examples where they had acted upon the voice of children and seen positive impact. The notion of 'truly listening' to pupil voice is something which the researcher felt key to address in the current study. Alderson (2000) argues that often, children's views are not obtained. When they are, they are not acted upon, which highlights the need for moving from 'simply listening' to ensuring young people's voices influence decisions that are made.

5.2.2 RQ2: How do Virtual School Staff obtain and listen to children and young people's voices?

Relationships

It was found that Virtual School team members viewed strong relationships as critical for obtaining and listening to pupils' views. Across the literature review, many studies also cited relationships as one of the most critical elements for being able to obtain authentic pupil voice (Bragg, 2007; Hopkins, 2012; Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Zilli et al, 2020). In some of these studies, these positive relationships also impacted additional situations, such as achievement and enjoyment in school (Hopkins, 2012; Michael and Frederickson, 2013). This highlights the multi-faceted role those good relationships play: they are the bedrock for children and young people to be able to express themselves fully and to engage in education successfully and meaningfully.

Trust was found to bey key in helping to build relationships. Virtual School members discussed several ways in which they formed good relationships with children and young people. These were; getting to know the children, learning their story, demonstrating that they were not in an authoritarian role, using already formed relationships with siblings to build further relationships and demonstrating commitment and consistency to the young people. By employing these strategies, Virtual School members felt they could then utilise the good relationships to 'read between the lines', thus improving the authenticity of the pupil voice. Furthermore, the team members created a provocative proposition in the action plan around trust, which was 'Developing trust with CYP is a priority in the Virtual School', with accompanying next steps. This notion of building trust is important for all relationships, but even more so for looked-after children. These children have often experienced a range of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Felitti et al., 1998), which can result in a mistrust of adults. Thus, this cohort of children require adults who are attuned to their psychological and emotional needs, who can demonstrate their attunement through their responses (Trevarthen, 2011). Furthermore, the notion of building trusting relationships also aligns with the work of Rogers (1959), who believed that creating non-judgemental, trusting relationships which allow for an individual to be understood and valued are key for growth.

Relationships were also discussed in relation to working with others in the network. The notion of information sharing was also discussed as a way in which views could be shared. This was not just between the members of a child's network but also with the child. The importance of sensitivity around information sharing should be considered here, as adults must be aware of confidentiality around what is shared. This is particularly pertinent when considering that the children the Virtual School team support children who are vulnerable and may disclose information that requires safeguarding procedures to be followed. Reamer (2005) suggests several steps that professionals can take when deciding how to handle

complex information, including; consulting with colleagues, utilising supervision, reviewing relevant ethical standards and documenting decision-making steps. It could be suggested these could be useful guidelines to support the Virtual School team members with this aspect of their work.

Helping from Afar

Most members of team saw the Virtual School as being outside of the main network around the child. They see their role as being supportive to the network, hence 'helping from afar'. From an ecosystemic perspective, it could be suggested that they see themselves as being in the exosystem. This system is unique, as it promotes the notion that the factors in the microsystem do not sit in isolation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, it could be suggested that this view is role dependant, as some of the members of the Virtual School team work directly with young people, thus it could be suggested their role sits within the microsystem. This is something that would need to be considered case by case, as certain workers may have more/less involvement depending on the relationship with the young person and their network. A further issue that was raised was that a member of the Virtual School had got involved directly with a young person due to a distrust for the existing network of professionals. Davidovitz and Cohen (2022) state that trust is the 'glue' that combines frontline workers with their clients and affects how they implement policy. This highlights the complexity of the roles within the Virtual School, and how the delicate balance of professionalism and relationship building must be considered. As Naomi puts it *"Because these kids have met enough curious adults. They don't need, you know, people pushing in, unless they're going to spend proper time with them".*

Being positioned in the exoosystem was also noted as having its limitations. It was discussed that by not always being directly involved, there may be difficulties with gaining

the authentic voice or conversely, by not having capacity to invest as much as some professionals would like.

Barriers

Several barriers were found to hinder the Virtual School team to obtain and listen to children and young people's views. Time was found to be a major barrier, with team members feeling like they would like more protected time to do this work. This finding is not surprising: with changes in legislation meaning that VSs now also have a strategic oversight of not only education for looked-after children but this is now extending to all children with a social worker (DfE, 2022). Others mentioned how they support the school to obtain views and how the schools also do not seem to have time to do this. This was also found by Georgeson et al. (2014), who found that the teachers who took part in their study used activities that required the least preparation for obtaining pupil voice. This demonstrates the competing demands on time that school face and should be considered by professionals supporting schools. A final point was made around how the lack of time impacted the amount that Virtual School team members could take an interest in young people and building relationships. Considering the findings around the importance of these relationships, the awareness of this barrier is salient.

It was discussed by several members of the Virtual School that the tools which they currently use to collect pupil voice do not always allow for conversation or dialogue and seem to limit the authenticity or the quality of the views being collected. Lewis et al. (2008) state that there is a danger to be considered regarding the over-formalising and over-pressurising of hearing the views of children. The PEP document that the Virtual School team members refer to is a legal document that must be completed termly for children who are looked-after (DfE, 2014). Part of this document includes a section on pupil voice. This

highlights the challenge faced by the Virtual School team of fulfilling statutory obligations whilst also obtaining legitimate pupil views.

The notion of 'working in silos' was identified as a barrier for collecting pupil voice. However, it was also discussed that to counteract this, sharing practice was important within the team to share more of what is being done. Oliver et al., (2018) state that to move beyond practice occurring in a way which is individual, it must be shared. For EPs, supervision is a critical component of both training and continuing professional development (Kennedy et al., 2018). Many supervision models have the purpose of reflection (e.g. Reflecting Teams [Anderson, 1987] or problem-solving (Forrest & Pearpoint [1996]). Thus, the salience of this finding is around the importance of dedicating structured time for sharing practice, which are not based around problems. However, it is important that the process of sharing must be widely discussed and is more complex than professionals simply talking about what they have done. Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010) discuss the importance of connecting professionals through networks or online learning communities. This could be applied to the Virtual School by setting up meetings with VSs from other local authorities, thus given formalised practice-sharing opportunities. This could also be done with other teams who work with looked-after children, to aid inter-professional learning and understanding. The Covid-19 pandemic was also acknowledged as barrier for obtaining pupil views, with members of the Virtual School team feeling that their work was far more personal when meetings were held in face-to-face. This piece of research was conducted at an interesting point in time, where professionals are constantly weighing up the efficiency of remote working with the potential detriment on 'real-world' interactions. It will be interesting to see moving forward the impact these new ways of working have on outcomes for children and young people.

5.2.3 RQ 3: What is the impact of obtaining and listening to the voices of children and young people?

Positive Outcomes

Several positive outcomes as a result of listening to pupil voice were elicited by the Virtual School team members. From hearing views, team members were then able to listen and respond to needs. One team member spoke about how a young person had shared that they needed technology during a session, so he was then able to supply it. Another team member shared that she explicitly sought views regarding the celebration event that the Virtual School held each year and as result of these views, she made changes to the next event. These are real-world examples of how pupil voice has not just been heard but listened to and acted upon. This links to earlier discussions around moving on from 'simply listening' to pupils (Alderson, 2000), demonstrating that the Virtual School seem to do this.

Other team members described how they felt through listening to children and then responding appropriately, this can support the young people to make changes, which can set them on a more positive trajectory. It was noted that this needed to be initiated by the young person. This notion of the individual recognising that they want and need to make a change is central to Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) motivation to change model. In this model, they conceptualise change as something that takes time, and varies from individual to individual. It moves through five stages; pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. During all stages, the individual is supported by a professional who can mentor and coach them. This links to the work of Virtual School staff, particularly those who do direct work with the young people, often in mentoring roles. One team member discussed how a young person voiced that they wanted to attend their exams, but *"couldn't face it",* so the team member listened and supported him by accompanying him to school.

This fine balance of listening and supporting seemed to promote a positive outcome for this young person. Furthermore, this idea of working with children and young people as opposed to making decisions on their behalf was identified in the literature by a number of researchers (e.g. Payne, 2007; Thomson and Gunter, 2006; Zilli et al, 2020). These studies particularly reference the importance of partnership working and shared decision-making between children and professionals.

The Network are Supported

Virtual School team members felt that often the best way to support professionals was to challenge them, in terms of using pupil views to then advocate for children and young people. They discussed how challenging professionals had then had a positive impact on situations for the children. Advocacy for children, particularly those who are looked-after has seen significant growth in the last few decades (Oliver, 2003). The development of several key policies is likely to have had an impact on this, including The Children Act (1989), which supports the idea that adults should ascertain the views and wishes of children and the United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child (UNRC, 1989). It is important for all children to be heard, but for those who experience marginalisation, it could be suggested that this is even more important. Thus, having adults who can hear children's views and advocate for them in a way which is meaningful to them is a key part in empowering them. The importance of this is also evident through the action plan, with the provocative proposition 'We always work in the best interests of the child', which included actions around understanding children's best interests and finding out which adults in their immediate network knew them best, to aid gaining authentic views.

Other team members discussed how using pupil views supported bringing the network around the child together. They give credit to their involvement being a whole network effort,

not just individual and discuss the notion of the network having a 'universal language'. Placing children at the heart of their provision is a key tenet of Person-Centred Planning (PCP), which has its theoretical roots in positive psychology (Seligman, 2002) and personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1995). PCP allows for children and young people to be at the centre of planning and decisions and aims to help them express their views (Sutcliffe and Birney, 2015). This finding from the current study aligns with the aims of PCP and is an important reminder of its power.

An interesting finding was some Virtual School team members felt it was important to consider that is it is not just pupil voice that is important, but also hearing the voices of those in the network at the same time. This is concurrent with findings from Bragg (2007), who found that teacher voice should be developed alongside pupil voice. However, it is also noted in this study that professionals need to be aware of their professional identities and how these views impact children.

5.2.4 RQ4: How do members of a Virtual school evaluate the usefulness of using AI to explore pupil voice practice within the team?

The Virtual School team members elicited that they found the sharing practice aspect of the AI process helpful, as it allowed them to hear about the work that other team members were doing and seeing work from different perspectives. Team members also expressed that they would have liked more opportunities during the process to think about the tools and processes they used to capture pupil voice. One piece of feedback centred around how having more shared thinking around views could be utilised further and captured in the PEP.

It is interesting that the importance of practice sharing came up again, demonstrating the Virtual School feel it is important not only for the people who they support, but for their own development too. Professional communities and the social supports that are implicit in their

formation represent a key component of effective professional development (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). It seems that the team members value this collaborative way of working and it could be suggested that this could form a future direction for the team as part of their professional development cycle.

It was found that the team showed a strong preference for having more time on the project, sharing that they would have liked more time to discuss specific examples of work that they had undertaken with children and young people. There was also an expression of interest for more time to continue 'chat' as the sessions were short. Engaging participants in real-time conversations, allowing for time to reflect, discussing, and using new ideas are all key components of AI (Whitney, 2010), as it is a learning process which allows for exploration and investigation. Although this project had limitations in terms of time constraints (see section 5.6.2), it is positive to find that the participants seemed to value the experience and would have liked to spend more time on it,

Virtual school team members identified several next steps for their practice: These were; continuing to advocate for children and young people, ensuring that the views of the young people they collect are properly heard (for example by feeding them into meetings) and working systemically and recognising their impact (even if this is not directly with young people). The former two findings were concurrent with existing research from the literature review (Payne, 2007; Thomson & Gunter, 2005; Zilli, 2020) however the latter notion of recognition of impact of systemic work was not discussed. Valuing the work that happens 'undercover' is a salient finding of this current research.

5.3 Application to Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992)

This research has showed how Virtual School team members conceptualise pupil voice, how they obtain and listen to their views and what the impact of this work has. Many of the

findings were around the role the Virtual School play in supporting the network and systems around the child, as well an exploring individuals' worldviews around where they feel they belong in the ecosystem around the child. As emphasised through Every Child Matters policy (DfES, 2005), the importance of systems working closely together is important for all children, but especially for those who are looked-after children or have social worker. In the words of Orion: *"It's a situation where you have many professionals, adults who are trying to work out the best for these young people"* (Orion, lines 17-19). The findings of this research will now be summarised by using the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) model, which demonstrates how different aspect of the child's environment affect their ability to be heard, advocated for and most importantly, placed at the centre of provision planning for them. Figure 15 provides a visual representation of the key findings that were identified by the Virtual School team members as ways in which they support the network and the children to hear children's views throughout the research. The individual themes and sub themes were discussed in Chapter 4.

Figure 17: Ecosystemic Framework

Themes and Subthemes mapped onto the Ecological Systems Framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1992)

5.3.1 Microsystem

This system is at the centre of the model and the influences within this system have the most direct and explicit impact upon the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), such as teachers, key adults, mentors, peers, foster carers. There were several factors that arose from the current research that exist within and between the individuals in the microsystem. Findings that were

relational in nature, such as the importance of building trust and digging deeper to promote meaningful and valuable pupil voice use are situated in the microsystem. This was also convergent with the findings from Zilli et al. (2020), who found that when relationships between children and staff were strong and mutually respectful, authentic pupil voice was promoted. The notion of pupil voice being used to promote independence and viewing the voice of young people as a guide is situated here. Finally, the notion of pupil voice being used to put young people on different trajectories or paths leading to tangible positive outcomes also sits at microsystem level, as the adults who have direct contact with these young people can use their views to support them in doing this.

5.3.2 Mesosystem

The mesosystem is unique as it promotes the notion that the factors in the microsystem do not sit in isolation, but rather interact and impact child development (Bronfenner, 1992). Thus, the notions of supporting the network (through challenge and by bringing them together) sit within this system, as it is a key finding that the Virtual School support the professionals who have the direct contact with the child or young people. Additionally, the theme of removing judgement sits within this system, as it seemed significant for Virtual School team members to both model and act in a way which promoted unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951), to both children and other professionals. It is also important to note that the relational aspects that were mentioned at microsystem level exist within the mesosystem, as they permeate throughout each layer of the ecosystem.

5.3.3 Exosystem

Within the exosystem, the interacting factors have influences over a child's experience of school and learning, but the child is not actively a part of this (Bronfenbrennner, 1992). This layer of the ecosystem is particularly relevant for the Virtual School, as it seems that many of

them view themselves in the role of 'helping from afar', thus existing within the exosystem and working with the adults who support the children and young people. However, it is important to note that some team members who carry out direct work presented as seeing themselves as part of the mesosystem, or in some cases, as part of the microsystem. It was at the exosystem level that several challenges to listening to children's views were found. Virtual school staff members discussed how when professionals worked in 'silos', this limited how pupil voice was obtained and how information was shared. Multi-disciplinary working was also discussed, with some team members feeling that some professionals within networks had 'louder' voices, thus may have had a greater influence on what was happening for children and young people than others. Time seemed to be a prevalent issue for the team, often feeling that although the work around pupil voice was important, they often did not have the capacity to carry out the work in the ways they would have liked to. The action plan created by the team also exists within this system.

5.3.4 Macrosystem

The macrosystem is placed outside of the direct environment of the school but has influence over the inner systems (Brofenbrenner, 1979). In this current piece of research, the constraints of tools (the PEP system, which is a statutory document) were found to be limiting when it came to professionals obtaining pupil voice in a meaningful and authentic way. Furthermore, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were also mentioned by the team members.

This conceptual model has summarised the findings from the research, identifying how the Virtual School team perceptions of this multitude of factors have enabled pupil voice. It has also shown where there have been barriers or challenges to hearing pupil voice. Importantly, it has demonstrated that throughout the framework, relationships and interactions are at the

centre of promoting meaningful pupil voice use for the Virtual School team and the network of professionals for whom they support.

5.4 Implications of Research for EP Practice

5.4.1 Use of Appreciative Inquiry

The aim of this research was to explore participants' views around obtaining and listening to pupil voice, whilst also helping them to make changes to an area of practice which they identified as wanting to focus on. EPs are well placed to support organisations by applying psychology and evidence-based practice to assist with the change process (Fixsen et al., 2009). This research has demonstrated that Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a valuable tool which Educational Psychologists can use with teams that they support, to facilitate change. The solution-focused nature of AI allowed for the team to recognise and celebrate 'the best of what is', to then plan future directions. Throughout the process, strengths were recognised, shared, and used to create actions. Using solution-orientated language and promoting positive aspirations are approaches that are more likely to encourage change (Morgan, 2016).

5.4.2 Eco Systemic Framework

This research utilised Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic framework (1992) and identified how this could be used to identify the range of factors which exist at the different levels can be used to enable Virtual School members to obtain and listen to pupil voice. It also highlighted the complexity of organisations and the individuals, in terms of what they perceive their position in the system has.

The use of this framework highlights the potential for EPs to support teams to identify aspects of practice and analyse the levels that they work within and how these affect a system. For example, by identifying that developing trust is a key component of relationship building to access pupil voice, the team were then able to plan actions around how they could

work at the microlevel to promote this with those who did direct work and other professionals who they support to do this.

5.4.3 Importance of Sharing Practice

A key finding from the research was around the significance of sharing practice. It was felt that practice sharing was important across the multi-disciplinary teams that supported the children and young people and within the team, to avoid *'working in silos'* and ensure work is being conducted in a coordinated and well-informed manner. This practice sharing is something that rose in prevalence following the 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2004) policy document, which highlighted the importance of professionals working together to ensure children's safety and promoting their wellbeing. Although the notion of practice sharing is not new, the finding from this research that is salient is the notion of providing regular, structured opportunities for professionals within a team to share practice and reflect on their working processes. EPs are often seconded to teams who support the most vulnerable children (e.g. VSs, Youth Offending Teams, Early Help) and are well-placed to facilitate not only supervision, but formal practice sharing between team members.

5.4.4 Recommendations for EPs and Other Relevant Professionals

There are several explicit recommendations that can be suggested for EPs and other professionals who obtain and support others to obtain pupil voice. They are as follows:

- The importance of relationships when obtaining and hearing pupil voice should not be underestimated. EPs and other professionals should focus building strong relationships with each other and the young people which they support.
- Professionals must be aware of and commit to removing their own bias and judgement when hearing pupil voice.

- Professionals should be aware of the importance of working in partnership with children and young people. Practically, this involves building trusting relationships with young people, listening to their views, and ensuring these are appropriately acted upon.
- Professionals should not be afraid to provide 'support through challenge' when working with others, to ensure best outcomes for children and young people.
- EPs should consider using the AI model as a tool for promoting change, with teams and services for whom they work with and support. This piece of research has demonstrated the power and impact that this approach can have.
- Structured practice-sharing time should protected *alongside* supervision for teams such as Virtual Schools and educational psychology services. This should not replace supervision but compliment it and should allow for team members to frequently learnt from and share information with each other.

5.5 Dissemination of Research

This piece of research will be shared with the key stakeholders who were involved in the research. These are the Virtual School Team and the director of children's safeguarding at the local authority. As part of the Discover phase, the themes and sub-themes were shared with the team members. These were used to help create the provocative propositions and the action plan. The latter was then emailed out and reviewed 8 weeks later.

All participants will receive a short PowerPoint slideshow, detailing the research findings in the Summer term of 2023. Furthermore, the research findings will be presented to the wider LA and will be presented at the SENCo forum in Summer term 2023. The research will also be shared with the EP team at the Summer service day, following the completion of the viva. The researcher aims to publish the findings, following viva.

The researcher would like to share the findings with other VSs, possibly through the annual conference held by the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) conference in 2024. The researcher would also like to share these findings in their future role as an EP, sharing knowledge with organisations that EPs often work with, such as Virtual School, early help teams, youth offending teams, CAHMS, neurodevelopmental pathway teams.

5.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

5.6.1 Strengths

Data Collection

The use of paired interviews where the participants interviewed each other was a strength of this study, as it was more meaningful for them. Informal feedback communicated that all those who took part in the paired interviews enjoyed them and found it interesting to learn from each other and find out about '*the person behind the role'*. This also met the 'Sensitivity to Context' element of Yardley's (2000) framework for qualitative research, as it allowed for data to be interpreted with an understanding that data have been shaped by participants' worldviews and experiences.

Transparency and Coherence

The transparency and coherence of the research was also a strength. Yardley (2000) states that a key tenet of quality qualitative research is that the process of the research is explained to the participants and that responses are in the participants' own words. The researcher did this by providing briefing sessions and information sheets throughout the different stages of the research process. In terms of coherence, the research questions and the philosophical perspective that was adopted 'fit' well. The research questions explored the views of each participant, in line with the social constructionist perspective that the researcher took.

The Use of AI in the Study

The use of AI in the study was a significant strength of the research. AI worked successfully to enable the researcher to structure the data collection stages. Furthermore, it allowed for meaningful and insightful answers to be derived from the data which answered the research questions. The AI allowed participants a space to focus on the positive and share stories about each other's work, something which they valued and had not previously had the opportunity to do. It provided a structure for sharing practice and learning from one another and reignited thoughts around an area of practice which the team members had chosen themselves. The team members fed back that they enjoyed the experience, stating that they enjoyed hearing from their fellow team members and that they would have liked more time on the project.

The research was conducted post the Covid-19 pandemic, in a time where organisations are in a state of flux: organisations and teams now understand the benefits and limitations of both working remotely and working in person and trying to ascertain what works for their teams and individuals. This piece of research made use of both physical and virtual spaces, which was determined in consultation with the team.

A further strength of the AI is that it involved members of the team across the different hierarchical levels: senior members of the team took part alongside those who provide administrative support. This allowed for a '360 degree' view on working practices around pupil voice. This is convergent with the research's epistemological stance of social constructionism, as it accepts that there are multiple views of a situation and multiple truths exist. Additionally, by having members of the senior leadership team involved, this meant that decision-making on action plans was able to happen in the sessions, rather than having to

wait for approval on certain ideas. This increases the likelihood that the actions will be implemented, and change will happen.

Commitment and Rigour

A further strength of this study is that it demonstrated commitment to the research by engaging with the topic and ensuring that the data collected answered the research questions, which Yardley (2000) highlights are important for ensuring quality qualitative research. A GANNT chart was followed (see appendix M) and data was analysed by following frameworks and theories outlined in literature (e.g. following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to TA).

Transformative Nature

The research has a strength in that it is transformative in nature, and it fulfilled this aim. This transformative element existed in two elements. One was for the participants themselves, as the research allowed for a time and space to recognise the 'best of what is' within their individual practice and with what was occurring with the wider organisation. The second is around the impact that the research has had on raising the profile of listening to pupil views, for the Virtual School team members and for the professionals they support. The piece of research appears to have been a 'catalyst' for change and has re-centred the children that the Virtual School support at the heart of what is done. This also demonstrates how the study meets Yardley's (2000) 'Impact and Importance' section of the quality assurance framework, as it has demonstrated that there has been an impact for the participant group, which can also be used by the wider Virtual School community.

Action Plan

A key strength of the research was the action plan that was produced by the Virtual School team members. Not only did this fulfil the transformative nature of the research, but it gave

the team the chance to take ownership over the data and use it in a way which is meaningful and valuable to them.

Review Meeting

A final strength of this piece of research was the holding of the review meeting. The review meeting served two purposes: to review the actions set with the participants and to evaluate the process, providing data for the fourth research question. The review held the participants accountable and encouraged continued discussion and reflection around the subject matter, thus raising its profile within the team.

5.6.2 Limitations

Design

The research adopted a case study approach, set in one team within the local authority. Thus, the generalisability of the findings is limited. However, it is important to note that this was not the aim of the research. A case study involves interactions, relationships, and practices between the case and the wider world and vice versa and collects rich data, capturing the complexity of the case (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). This piece of research was not seeking a single truth but rather was exploratory in nature, looking to understand a current situation and using this to promote change. Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings from this study can help to inform the limited literature around VSs and their functioning, particularly in the field of pupil voice.

The research took a broadly positive, solution-focused stance. However, during the paired interviews, participants did mention challenges and barriers to their work. The researcher was not present for the paired interviews, and therefore was not able to have a steer on where these conversations went. However, it could be argued that these interviews were more meaningful to the participants and did not attempt to ‘sweep over’ or minimise problems. The

researcher decided that it is possible to take a solution-focused stance, whilst also acknowledging the issues. The challenges can also be reframed as a 'call to action', thus remaining within the solution-focused realm.

Data Collection

There are several limitations at the data collection stage that must be acknowledged. At the point of the first briefing session, a new team member had joined, who had not received the initial contact email from the researcher, which included the participant information sheet. During this briefing, the team member stated that he did not know anything about the project and so did not wish to participate. The researcher arranged a phone call with the team member and emailed across the information, but the team member decided they did not wish to take part. This could be seen as a potential limitation as the AI process is about organisational change, and actions being set may have then affected this team member's practice in the future. The researcher mitigated this by offering a 'check-in' with this team member, to give them the opportunity to ask questions they might have about the action plan.

During one of the online paired interviews, there was a power outage and the interview stopped recording. The researcher realised this when returning to the computer and found it had turned off. The researcher re-entered the MS Teams meeting and explained what had happened to the participants. The participants sent through notes of their conversation, but the full detail of the interview was not captured. Therefore, the views of these participants are likely to not be as rich or full as those who had their interviews captured verbatim.

One participant requested that they did not wish to be audio-recorded during the paired interviews. The researcher sat in during the interview and scribed whilst the participants interviewed each other. This may have resulted in some of the content of the interview being missed. However, this was mitigated by the researcher emailing all participants a copy of the

transcripts for member-checking. The participant agreed that this was true to what they had communicated.

The researcher planned to conduct the 'Dream' phase of the AI cycle as part of the focus group, by asking the participants to complete the sentence 'Ideal pupil voice practice in the Virtual School would be…'. However, a discussion occurred in the focus group that seemed meaningful to the participants and the researcher did not want to interrupt this opportunity. The researcher chose to move onto the 'provocative propositions' part of the AI cycle, therefore omitting the 'Dream' phase. However, it could be argued that these propositions formed the 'Dream' stage themselves, as they are forward-thinking and outline ideal practice. It was also important to the researcher to ensure the focus group was centred around the team's needs, hence the decision to not halt the conversation.

Data Analysis

During analysis, it was noticed by the researcher that more data seemed to come from certain participants. It could be suggested that this might skew the data or demonstrate an imbalance. However, as the research was undertaken through a relativist ontology (the belief that reality is a wholly subjective experience and exists within our thoughts [Denzin & Lincoln, 2005]) it could be argued that this demonstrates the differing schools of thought which exist within and to each participant.

5.7 Reflexivity

This piece of research was highly driven by social justice, addressing the complexities of enhancing the working practices of a team who support often highly marginalised and vulnerable children and young people. Prior to training as an Educational Psychologist, the researcher worked for a Virtual School. She has real-world experience about the power and potential of listening to children and young people and the importance of developing practice

in this area. Being aware of this, the researcher ensured to be reflective throughout the research journey and aware that her own beliefs about the values that underpin larger narratives might impact upon decisions and interpretations during this research (Fox, 2015). To assist with this process, the researcher kept a journal throughout the research process, which assisted with the process of reflecting critically around the relationships, biases, positioning and power throughout this piece of action research. The researcher also had regular meetings with her academic tutor to reflect upon the process and discuss any potential difficulties that arose. Alongside this, the researcher remained in regular contact with peers and took regular opportunities to jointly reflect upon the process of research in such forums.

5.7.1 Power and Position

It is important to note the power that exists within all organisations. According to Foucault (1998, p. 63) *'Power is everywhere'* and *'comes from everywhere'*, therefore it is not so much a specific agency or structure, but rather is inherently relational (Anderson & Brion, 2014). This piece of research involved all but one of the team members from the Virtual School, including members of the senior leadership team. The researcher was aware that during the paired interviews, there may be team members who were paired with other team members where a power imbalance existed. This may not have been only due to roles in the team, but also factors such a race, class, gender or sexual orientation, which are all aspects of identity that can shift and affect power (Burnham, 2012). The researcher attempted to mitigate this by asking the team members if they would like to be paired at random or to choose their pairings. The researcher also provided the option of conducting the interviews face to face or online, which empowered them to choose a setting which they felt more comfortable in.

The researcher was also aware of their positioning as the researcher and the potential affect this may have had on the participants. This was mitigated by the researcher assuming

the position of ‘helper’ and ‘facilitator’ (Schein, 1978) rather than of expert. The researcher aided this by involving the team members in decisions throughout the research and by empowering them to create the action plan.

5.8 Directions for Future Research

This piece of research was the first of its kind to research a specific area of practice within a Virtual School team, using an AI. Following on from this research, there are several directions that could be taken to further expand the body of knowledge in this area. It would be interesting to conduct another piece of research which asked the children and young people about how they feel the Virtual School and other teams who support them hear their voices. It would be interesting to conduct this research in a similar manner with other Virtual Schools, to explore whether they conceptualise, obtain and hear children in a similar manner. This would be useful to further generalise the findings. Furthermore, it would be useful to use the AI model to explore areas of practice with other teams in the LA, for example social care teams or youth offending services. Finally, it would be interesting to do some follow up research with the Virtual School team in the study, to see the longer-term impact of the current research.

5.9 Conclusion

This research aimed to contribute to gaps identified in previous research by providing an in-depth exploration into how Virtual School team members conceptualise pupil voice, how they obtain it and what the impact of this work is. Additionally, it aimed to evaluate the usefulness of AI to explore pupil voice practice within the team. A key success of the research was the space provided to the team to share practice and learn from each other. Additionally, an action plan was created by the participants which sought to recentre pupil voice to be at the heart of what they do. Thus, the transformative nature aimed to promote

authentic collection of and use of pupil voice within Virtual School, with a social justice agenda at its core.

The data demonstrated that the Virtual School prioritise authenticity of pupil voice as part of their work and showed that they are committed to removing their own bias and judgement to 'hear' children and young people. They are aware of the power that exists within networks who support looked-after children, demonstrating that certain voices can be louder than others. They showed how they use the pupils' voice as a guide and use this to enable children and young people to become more independent. There was a real sense that the Virtual School team felt it was key to 'act upon the voice', moving away from the traditional conception of 'listening'.

Data showed the ways in which the Virtual School team obtained and listened to pupil voice successfully. At the heart of this was the relationships, inter-professional and between children and professionals. They described how they built these relationships, which included learning the children's stories, demonstrating that they were not in an authoritarian role and showing commitment and consistency. The power of systemic working was found to be key for promoting children's voice, by Virtual School team members 'helping from afar' and supporting the adults who work directly with the children and young people.

There were a number of barriers to obtaining pupil voice cited by the Virtual School team, including time, the constraints of the current tools which are used and the danger of 'working in silos'. These barriers can be seen as action points, to be investigated further and identified as part of whole-team development.

The data showed the impact that obtaining and using pupil voice has had and several positive outcomes were described, with key outcomes being around how by listening to pupils, Virtual School staff were able to redirect young people onto more 'positive

trajectories' and encouraging change. At a more systemic level, the Virtual School felt that they could use pupil views to support the network around the children, by both challenging professionals and bringing the network together.

The AI process was a positive experience for the Virtual School team, many of whom wished that the project was longer and that they had further opportunity to share practice. This data highlights the importance of enabling formalised practice-sharing opportunities for professionals, whose own development can fall by the wayside as they prioritise the needs of the vulnerable children they support.

This piece of research echoes the multi-faceted role which EPs often play. EPs have a commitment to not only support the children and young people to whom they are referred, but also to the staff who tirelessly support these children, often without space to think and reflect themselves. This research has demonstrated that to truly hear children, one's own views, biases and judgement must be cast aside. In the words of Margaret:

"*You can't always have what you think is the right thing. And that's what hearing the child's voice is about. It's about understanding the importance of that child's voice, even if they have never articulated anything that you feel yourself is important"* (Margaret, lines 95-97).

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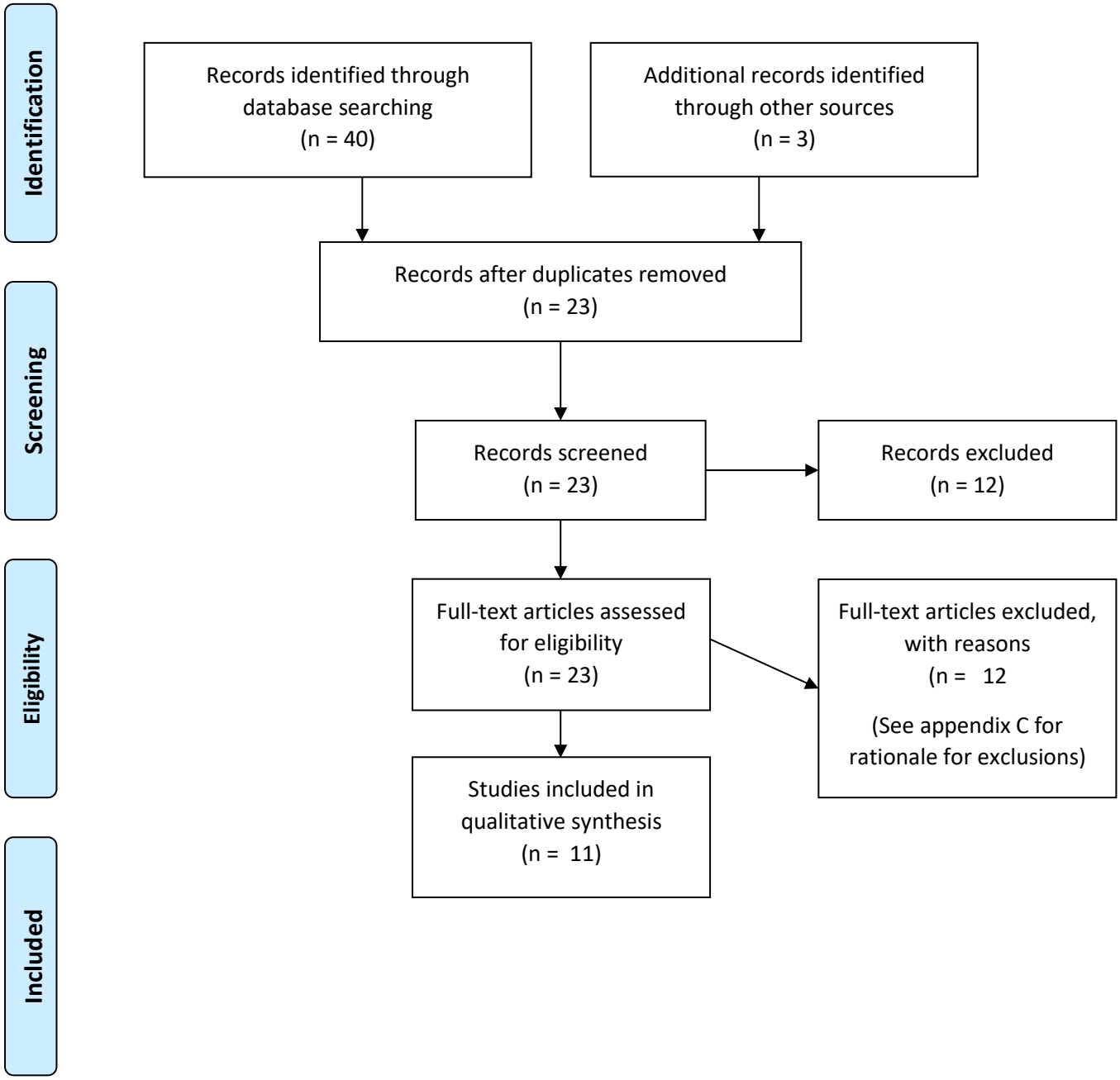
Appendix A

PRISMA Flow Diagram for Literature Review

PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram



Appendix B

Summary of Papers Included in Literature Review

Author, date and country	Objective	Participants N	Participants Description	Study design: data collection method	Data analysis	Main findings	Critical analysis	WoE A	WoE B	WoE C	WoE D
Bragg (2007)	Exploring perspectives of teachers about a pupil voice initiative in a primary school	23	Teachers, Support staff	Narrative Case study	Analytic procedures not reported	Teacher voice should be developed alongside pupil voice Teachers professional identities impact how they view children Relationships between pupils and teachers must be considered Teacher voice includes the voices of all those in the learning community	Acknowledged complexities of obtaining and using pupil voice Acknowledges methodological limitations of a narrative case study Highly reflexive in nature No explanation of how data was analysed				Yes
Cremin et al., (2011)	Exploring how pupils and teachers in a secondary school in the UK experience pupil voice	25	Pupils, 19 'engaged', 16 'disaffected'	Case study design Observations Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis Constant comparative analysis Critical discourse analysis	More creativity and variation in 'disaffected' students scrapbooks Differences in relationships portrayed between 'engaged' and	Careful consideration of ethical issues Reflective approach taken by researchers One researcher had an existing				Yes

						‘disaffected’ pupils Disparity between what school policy states occurs and what actually occurs Racism occurring in the school	relationship with one of the teachers				
Georgeson et al., (2014)	Effectiveness of pupil voice tools with young pupils	Not stated	Teachers, pupils	Teachers evaluations Focus groups Records of children’s responses	Analytic procedures not reported, seems to be content analysis	Photos, pictures and symbols were helpful in tools Most effective tool were talking mats and an interview schedule Young children were able to identify aspects of school life they enjoyed The type of activity should be chosen carefully	Clear write up of protocol, enhancing replicability Data drawn from a range of schools. Enhancing credibility of the study No explanation of how data was analysed Only 3 of 17 schools provided qualitative data Many tools not suitable for young children in briefing,				**Yes**

							therefore evaluations may not be accurate				
Hall (2007)	Exploring how pupil voice was listened and acted upon in terms of social and emotional aspects of learning	18	Primary aged pupils	Case study design Focus groups	Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)	Project was successful in accessing the voice of children who participated Sustained involvement of school staff throughout project was viewed as positive for promoting pupil participation and mental health and wellbeing across the school Children considered several of features of their school that promoted and demoted mental health, including environmental quality, self-esteem, emotional processing, self-management and social participation.	Finding were shared with staff and action plan was developed in collaboration with them Specific focus around mental health Only a small sample of children in school able to participate				**Yes**

Harding and Atkinson (2009)	Investigation into how EPs in a local authority ascertain and present pupil views in written reports.	30	Year 9 Pupils (reports)	Case study Focus group	Content analysis	Key areas EPs reported on were: decisions and arrangements concerning the young person's education; feelings about school; difficulties in school; preferences in school; general information; strengths in school; dislikes in school. Range of practices identified regarding gathering pupil voice, including using SEN statement as a framework for discussion and task related procedures. Therapeutic approaches were used to gather views EPs identified that they collect views to	Focus groups alongside content analysis added depth Clearly explained procedure Very specific sample of students' reports Researcher bias				**Yes**

						identify need and to create 'pen picture' of young people.					
Hopkins (2008)	Identifying what pupils believed to be the ideal 'classroom conditions', which help them to enjoy and achieve at school	180	Key stage 2 pupils	Group interviews Fishbone tool Card sort exercise	Fishbone tool (for categorising data) Card sort exercise (categorised data)	8 classroom conditions were identified: activities which require participation; appropriate amount of teacher talk; appropriate social demands made by activities; opportunities for challenge and struggle; a firm, fair, positive and psychologically safe regime; a focus on the learning and achieving of individuals; plenty of variety of activities; appropriate length of activities	Clearly identified questions and clear aims Innovative data collection tool No consultation with teachers around tool of choice				**Yes**
Hopkins (2012)	Examining perceptions of pre-service teachers	30	Pre-service teachers	Group interviews Fishbone tool	Fishbone tool (for categorising data)	Most significant condition that determines pupils'	Outcome was a creation of a tool which could be				**Yes**

	regarding important factors which support highly effective learning in schools in the UK					enjoyment of lessons: quality of interpersonal learning environment Teachers need to demonstrate their respect for pupils; see them as individuals; provide positive praise; operate fairly; provide pupils with the help they need	used to help other pre-service teachers with their practice Main findings are perceptions of pre-service teachers, rather than direct views of children No member checking carried out No account given to range of teaching and learning settings that were being examined				
Michael and Frederikson (2013)	Exploration of the quality of alternative provision for young people with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs	16	Young people	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis	Five themes identified for enabling factors for positive outcomes: relationships, teachers, curriculum, discipline, learning environment and self. Relationships most prevalent theme	Larger sample size than previous research in the field Inclusions of implications for future practice Theory and frameworks that underpin the research not clearly stated				**Yes**

						Three themes identified as barriers: disruptive behaviour; unfair treatment; failure to individualise the learning environment Learning needs to be highly bespoke to meet young people's needs					
Payne (2007)	Investigation into how pupil voice could impact planning in a specific subject area (modern foreign languages)	Not stated	Pupils from two secondary schools, GCSE and A-Level groups	Grounded theory approach Exploratory case study Pupil focus groups	Analytic procedures not reported	Ideal language provision based around individuals being able to learn the language they wanted Importance of learning a community language stated Pupils can contribute towards language planning positively	Clarity around research design Researcher's position stated No data included from one of the schools				**Yes**
Thomson and Gunter (2006)	Evaluation of how a school moves from	8	Pupils from Years 7-10	Case study Focus group	Analytic procedures not reported,	Students felt they were over tested	Process was examined alongside				**Yes**

	'pupils as consultees' to 'pupils as researchers'			Questionnaire Lesson observations	seems that some quantitative analysis used	Students identified groupings within the study population and described how they affiliated themselves Students identified a number of issues that they felt were important: bullying and safety; careers and future options; how students' learn	the findings Data based on notes from researchers and not verbatim No details on recruitment				
Zilli et al., (2020)	Exploration of practices that enable autistic pupils to participate in decision making at school	15	4 pupils 11 members of staff	Case study Observations Photovoice activity Semi-structured interviews	Deductive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)	Positive and respectful cultures lead by senior staff supported pupils' participation in decision making Relationships between staff and pupils was mutually respectful Special interests were valued and	Clearly presented, each part of research clearly outlined Novel research: first case of study of school for autistic pupils and how they have a view in decision making Small sample size				yes

						were key to supporting engagement	Only male pupils Total school population not stated				

Appendix C: Excluded Studies

Excluded Studies	Reason	WoE A	WoE B	WoE C	WoE D
McCluskey, G., Brown, J., Munn, P., Lloyd, G., Hamilton, L., Sharp, S., & MacLeod, G. (2013). 'Take more time to actually listen': students' reflections on participation and negotiation in school. *British Educational Research Journal*, *39*(2), 287-301.	No theory or conceptualisation of pupil voice				No
Cefai, C., & Cooper, P. (2010). Students without voices: the unheard accounts of secondary school students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *25*(2), 183-198.	Schools in study not in the UK				No
Harris, J., Cale, L., Duncombe, R., & Musson, H. (2018). Young people's knowledge and understanding of health, fitness and physical activity: issues, divides and dilemmas. *Sport, Education and Society*, *23*(5), 407-420.	About health and fitness generally rather than educational issues				No
Walker, R. (2013). ''I don't think I would be where I am right now''. Pupil perspectives on using mobile devices for learning. *Research in Learning Technology*, *21*.	No theory or conceptualisation of pupil voice				No
Doddington, C. (2001). Entitled to speak: talk in the classroom. *Studies in*	Not empirical research				No

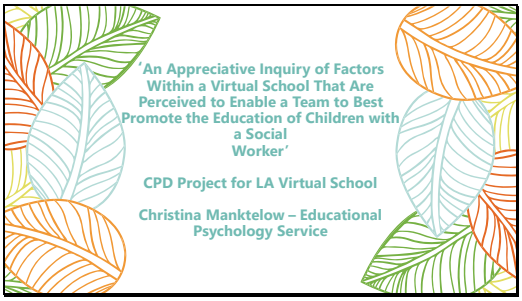
Philosophy and Education, *20*, 267-274.					
Bruce, M. (2014). The voice of the child in child protection: whose voice?. *Social Sciences*, *3*(3), 514-526.	Social care research rather than education				No
Hallett, F., Hallett, G., & McAteer, M. (2007). Every voice matters: evaluating residential provision at a special school. *British Journal of Special Education*, *34*(4), 219-225.	No theory or conceptualisation of pupil voice				No
Weatherall, K., & Duffy, J. (2008). Are we listening to children? An examination of the child's voice in social work reports to the court following parental separation disputes. *Child Care in Practice*, *14*(3), 275-292.	Social care research rather than education				No
Sanders, R., & Mace, S. (2006). Agency policy and the participation of children and young people in the child protection process. *Child Abuse Review: Journal of the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*, *15*(2), 89-109.	Not empirical research Social care research rather than education				No
Bell, M., & Wilson, K. (2006). Children's views of family group conferences. *British Journal of Social Work*, *36*(4), 671-681.	Social care research rather than education				No

MacBeath, J. (2006). Finding a voice, finding self. *Educational Review*, *58*(2), 195-207.	Very specific context (students who cross the Scottish border to visit schools and families), not relevant to context of study				No
O'Connor, M., Hodkinson, A., Burton, D., & Torstensson, G. (2011). Pupil voice: listening to and hearing the educational experiences of young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *16*(3), 289-302.	No theory or conceptualisation of pupil voice				No

Appendix D

Briefing Presentation to Virtual School Team

Slide 1



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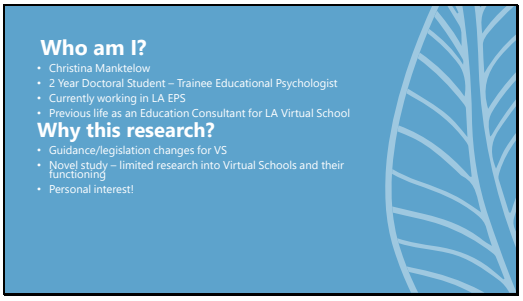

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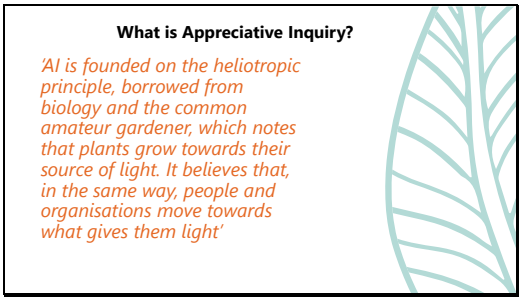

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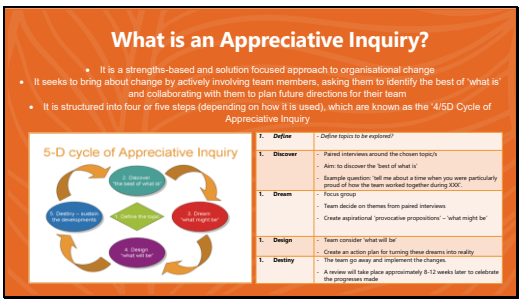

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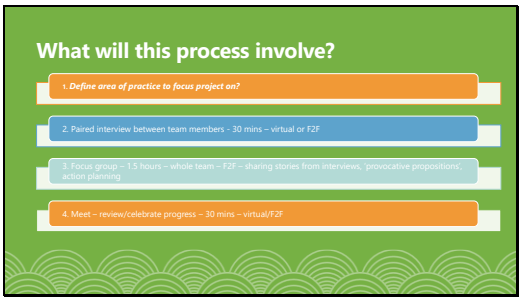

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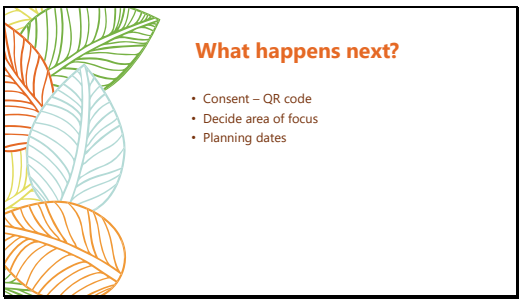

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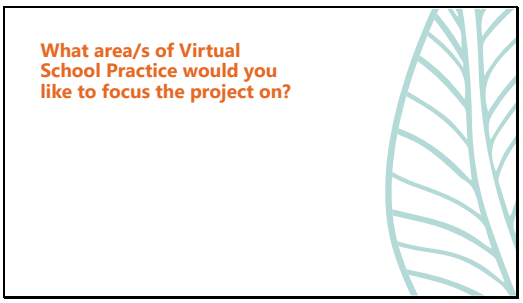
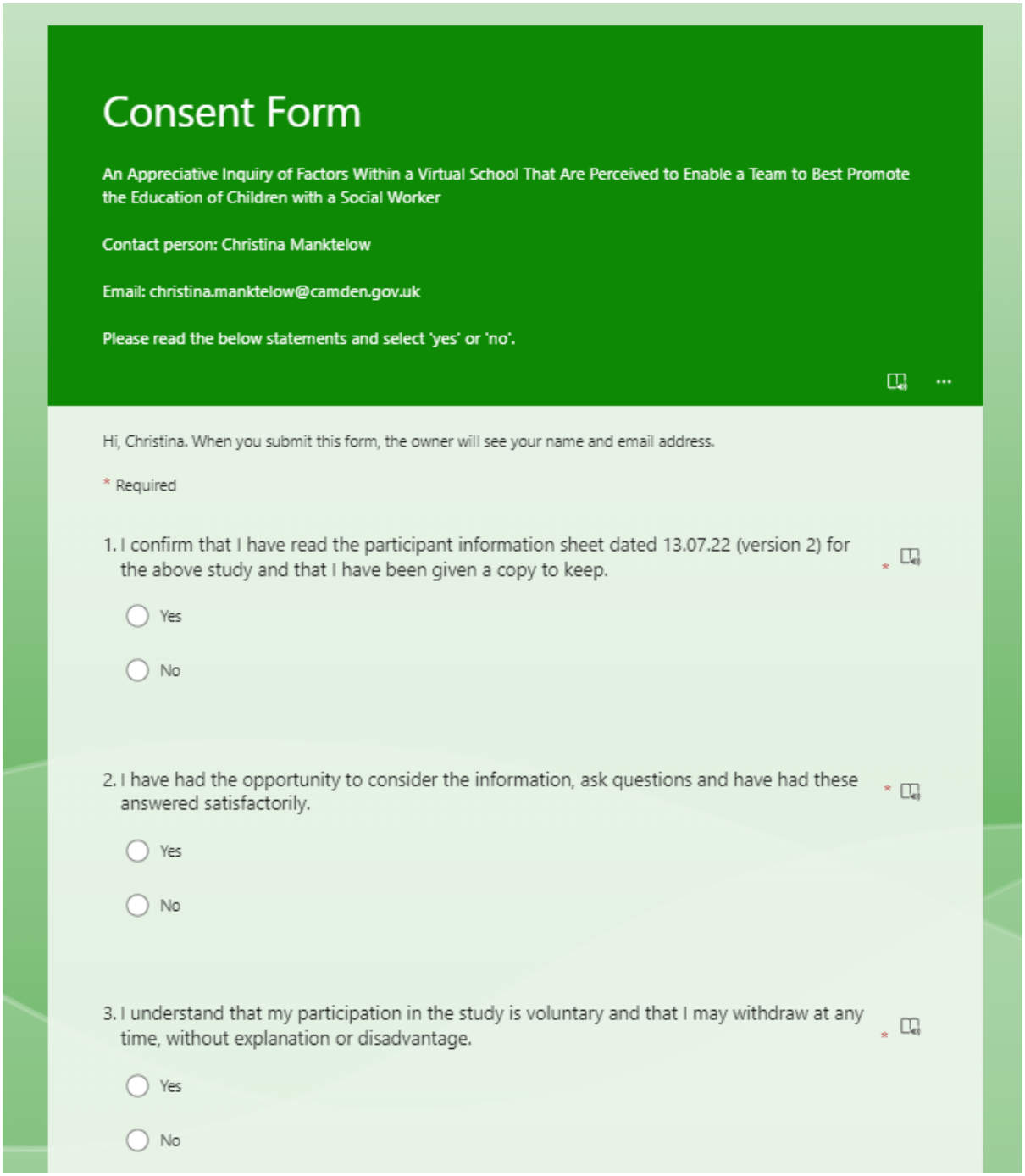


Slide 8

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form



Consent Form

An Appreciative Inquiry of Factors Within a Virtual School That Are Perceived to Enable a Team to Best Promote the Education of Children with a Social Worker

Contact person: Christina Manktelow

Email: christina.manktelow@camden.gov.uk

Please read the below statements and select 'yes' or 'no'.

Hi, Christina. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

* Required

1. I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet dated 13.07.22 (version 2) for the above study and that I have been given a copy to keep. *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

3. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without explanation or disadvantage. *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

4. I understand that if I withdraw during the study, my data will not be used. *

- Yes
- No

5. I understand that I have 2 weeks from the date of the paired interview/focus group to withdraw my data from the study. *

- Yes
- No

6. I understand that the interview will be recorded using Microsoft Teams and transcribed using Otter.ai. *

- Yes
- No

7. I understand that my personal information and data, including audio recordings from the research will be securely stored and remain confidential. Only the research team will have access to this information, to which I give my permission. *

- Yes
- No

8. It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research has been completed. *

- Yes
- No

8. It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research has been completed. *

- Yes
- No

9. I understand that short, anonymised quotes from my paired interview and focus group may be used in material such as conference presentations, reports, articles in academic journals resulting from the study and that these will not personally identify me. *

- Yes
- No

10. I would like to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed and am willing to provide contact details for this to be sent to. *

- Yes
- No

11. I agree to take part in the above study. *

- Yes
- No

12. By typing my full name below, I agree this represents me signing this form. *

Enter your answer

13. Date: *

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)

Appendix F

Participant Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

An Appreciative Inquiry of Factors Within a Virtual School That Are Perceived to Enable a Team to Best Promote the Education of Children with a Social Worker

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

Who am I?

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?

I am conducting research which is titled ***'An Appreciative Inquiry of Factors Within a Virtual School That Are Perceived to Enable a Team to Best Promote the Education of Children with a Social Worker'***

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in my research as you are employed by the local authority, in the Virtual School Team. I am looking to involve those work within Virtual School teams who advocate for and champion the education of children with a social worker.

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in anyway and you will be treated with respect.

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

What will your participation involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

- Take part in a paired interview, a focus group and a review session
- You will first take part in a paired interview with another member of the team, which will follow an interview schedule created by the researcher
- You will then work with the researcher and the team to collaboratively come up with some 'dreams' for the team, followed by some action planning for how to make these dreams a reality
- The final session will be a review, where we will come together and see how the action plan has gone
- This will be during your working day and will contribute towards your CPD
- It will take place at the local authority office and on Microsoft Teams
- The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. See below for confidentiality arrangements.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic.

Your taking part will be safe and confidential.

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times.

- Participants will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research.
- Participants do not have to answer all questions asked of them and can stop their participation at any time.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

- Personal and contact details are not required.
- Names will not be noted on transcripts, only initials.
- Anonymised data will only be accessible to the researchers, research supervisors at the University of East London and Educational Psychologists at Camden Council who supervise the trainees conducting this research.
- Following the study, all data collected including the interview recordings and transcripts will be saved for two years, on a password protected secure drive.

What if you want to withdraw?

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. Separately, you may also request to withdraw your data even after you have participated data, provided that this request is made within 2 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Christina Manktelow: christina.manktelow@camden.gov.uk

Trainee Educational Psychologist

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

Email: [j.rowley@UEL.ac.uk]

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

[Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk]

Appendix G

Interview Schedule for Participants and Tips

Appreciative Interviews

Why Appreciative Interviews?

- Appreciative Interviews are based on an agreed "Affirmative Topic" (i.e. listening to children's voice) so are implicitly positive
- Appreciative Interviews gather new information about what is already working well and contributing to the success of a given topic
- Appreciative Interviews value personal experiences and contributions
- Appreciative Interviews raise the sense of what is possible in anticipation of the Dream stage
- As you tell your stories and associate into your own positive reference experiences, you are more likely to come up with fresh insights than if you were asked for abstract lists of principles

Interview top tips

- Remember to maintain eye contact to convey compassion and that you are listening
- If a response seems unclear, do not be afraid to ask for clarification
- If needed, you could say '*what else?*' Or ' *tell me a bit more about that'* to stimulate further conversation
- Be aware of potential power relations that may exist, e.g. someone paired with a manager
- Be careful not to let your own assumptions get in the way of hearing perspectives or stories that you do not expect to hear
- **Assume vitality and health, rather than 'deficit'.** You are looking for incidents and examples of things at their best
- **It's not just the questions, it's how you ask them.** The non-verbal elements of your communication (voice tone, body language, the surroundings in which you do the interview) can influence people's emotional state
- When you are genuinely focused and interested, the interviewee will experience being fully heard and understood, and empathy will develop rapidly
- Remember, we are looking for stories rather than opinions or analysis

Interview Schedule

Timings: 15 minutes per person, then swap

Opening question:

1. Let's start with something about you and your work: what is your current role and what most attracted you to your present work that you find most meaningful, valuable, challenging or exciting?

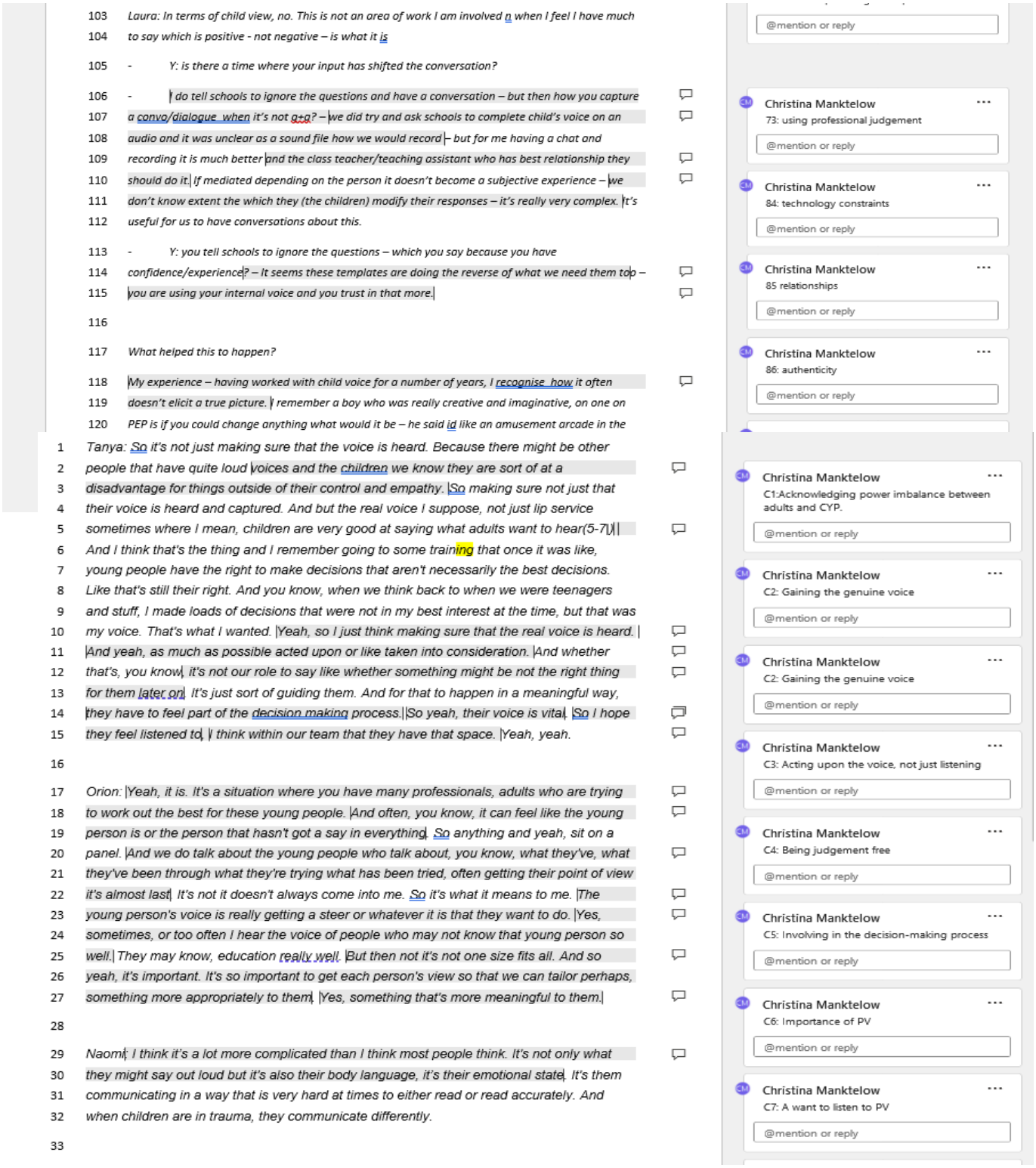
Topic questions:

2. The team selected 'children's (or young person's) voice' as the area to focus this research project on. Can you tell me what this means to you?
3. Can you tell me about the best time/s when you have been able to gather and listen to children/young people's voice in your work?

4. What were you most proud of during these pieces of work? What might have been the impact of this work?
5. What helped this to happen?

Appendix H

Example Interview Transcription and Coding



103 *Laura: In terms of child view, no. This is not an area of work I am involved n when I feel I have much*
104 *to say which is positive - not negative – is what it is*

105 *- Y: is there a time where your input has shifted the conversation?*

106 *- I do tell schools to ignore the questions and have a conversation – but then how you capture*
107 *a convo/dialogue when it's not q+a? – we did try and ask schools to complete child's voice on an*
108 *audio and it was unclear as a sound file how we would record – but for me having a chat and*
109 *recording it is much better and the class teacher/teaching assistant who has best relationship they*
110 *should do it. If mediated depending on the person it doesn't become a subjective experience – we*
111 *don't know extent the which they (the children) modify their responses – it's really very complex. It's*
112 *useful for us to have conversations about this.*

113 *- Y: you tell schools to ignore the questions – which you say because you have*
114 *confidence/experience? – It seems these templates are doing the reverse of what we need them top –*
115 *you are using your internal voice and you trust in that more.*

116

117 *What helped this to happen?*

118 *My experience – having worked with child voice for a number of years, I recognise how it often*
119 *doesn't elicit a true picture. I remember a boy who was really creative and imaginative, on one on*
120 *PEP is if you could change anything what would it be – he said id like an amusement arcade in the*

1 *Tanya: So it's not just making sure that the voice is heard. Because there might be other*
2 *people that have quite loud voices and the children we know they are sort of at a*
3 *disadvantage for things outside of their control and empathy. So making sure not just that*
4 *their voice is heard and captured. And but the real voice I suppose, not just lip service*
5 *sometimes where I mean, children are very good at saying what adults want to hear(5-7)*
6 *And I think that's the thing and I remember going to some training that once it was like,*
7 *young people have the right to make decisions that aren't necessarily the best decisions.*
8 *Like that's still their right. And you know, when we think back to when we were teenagers*
9 *and stuff, I made loads of decisions that were not in my best interest at the time, but that was*
10 *my voice. That's what I wanted. Yeah, so I just think making sure that the real voice is heard.*
11 *And yeah, as much as possible acted upon or like taken into consideration. And whether*
12 *that's, you know, it's not our role to say like whether something might be not the right thing*
13 *for them later on. It's just sort of guiding them. And for that to happen in a meaningful way,*
14 *they have to feel part of the decision making process. So yeah, their voice is vital. So I hope*
15 *they feel listened to. I think within our team that they have that space. Yeah, yeah.*

16

17 *Orion: Yeah, it is. It's a situation where you have many professionals, adults who are trying*
18 *to work out the best for these young people. And often, you know, it can feel like the young*
19 *person is or the person that hasn't got a say in everything. So anything and yeah, sit on a*
20 *panel. And we do talk about the young people who talk about, you know, what they've, what*
21 *they've been through what they're trying what has been tried, often getting their point of view*
22 *it's almost last. It's not it doesn't always come into me. So it's what it means to me. The*
23 *young person's voice is really getting a steer or whatever it is that they want to do. Yes,*
24 *sometimes, or too often I hear the voice of people who may not know that young person so*
25 *well. They may know, education really well. But then not it's not one size fits all. And so*
26 *yeah, it's important. It's so important to get each person's view so that we can tailor perhaps,*
27 *something more appropriately to them. Yes, something that's more meaningful to them.*

28

29 *Naomi: I think it's a lot more complicated than I think most people think. It's not only what*
30 *they might say out loud but it's also their body language, it's their emotional state. It's them*
31 *communicating in a way that is very hard at times to either read or read accurately. And*
32 *when children are in trauma, they communicate differently.*

33

@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
73: using professional judgement
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
84: technology constraints
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
85 relationships
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
86: authenticity
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C1:Acknowledging power imbalance between adults and CYP.
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C2: Gaining the genuine voice
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C2: Gaining the genuine voice
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C3: Acting upon the voice, not just listening
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C4: Being judgement free
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C5: Involving in the decision-making process
@mention or reply

Christina Manktelow
C6: Importance of PV
@mention or reply

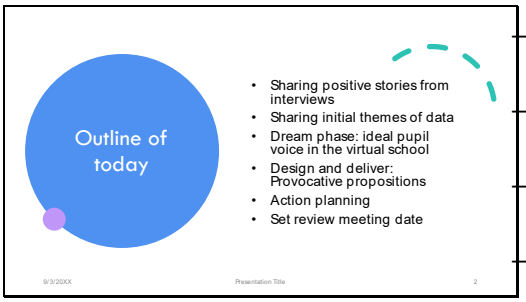
Christina Manktelow
C7: A want to listen to PV
@mention or reply

Appendix I

PowerPoint presentation from the Focus Group

Slide 1

Slide 2



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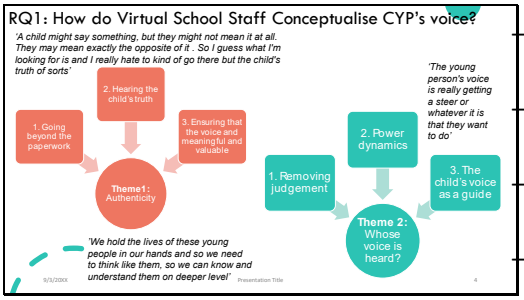

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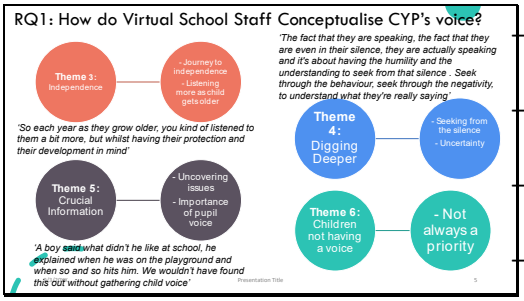

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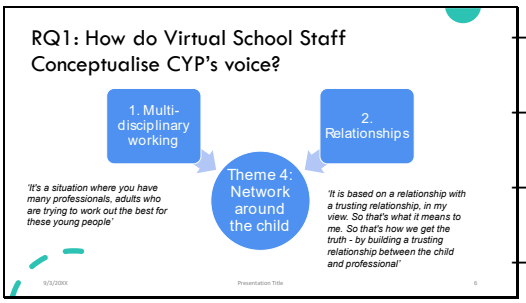

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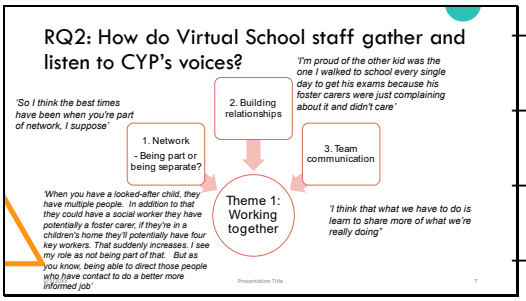

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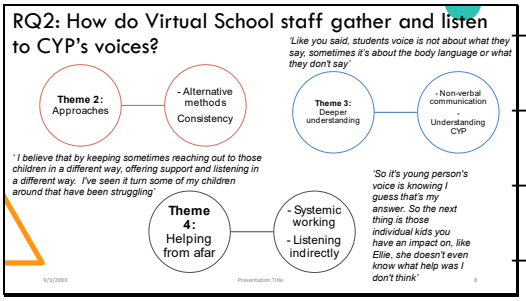

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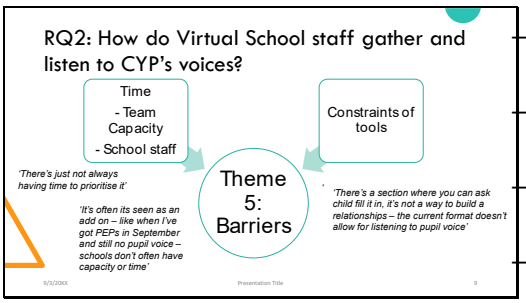

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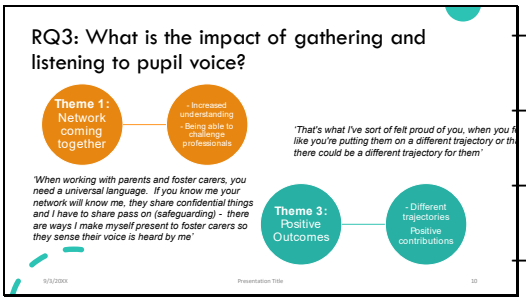

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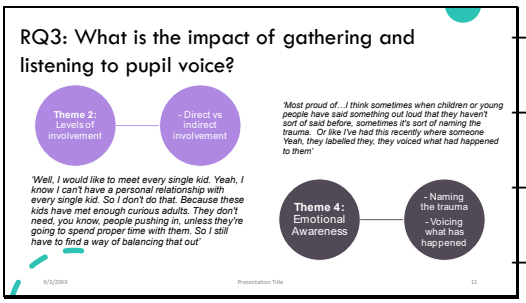

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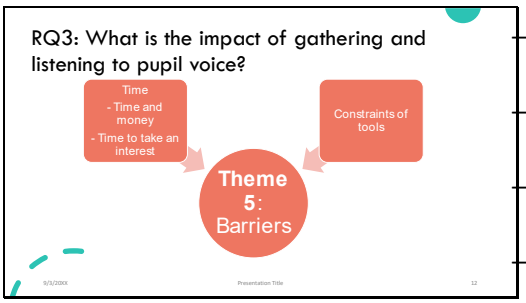

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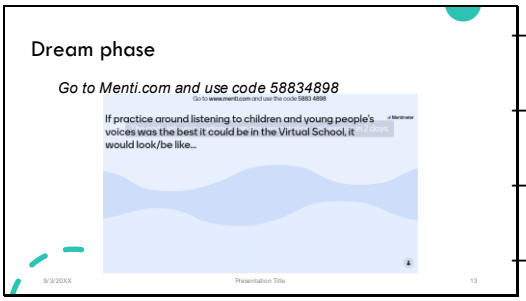

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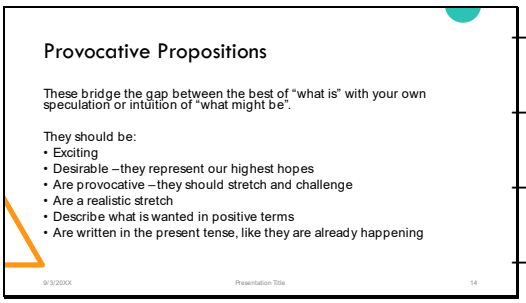

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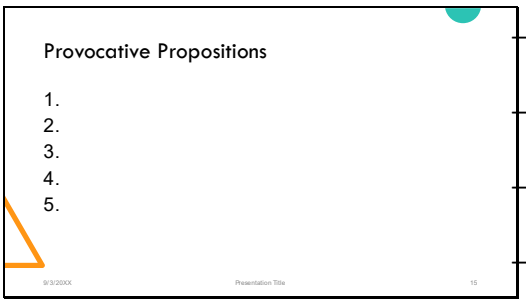

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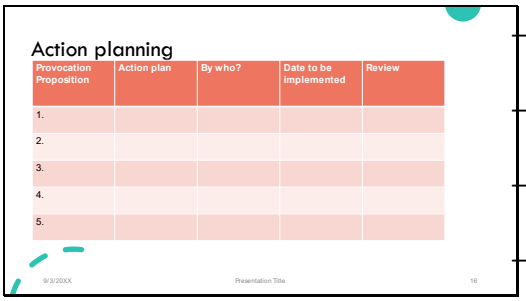
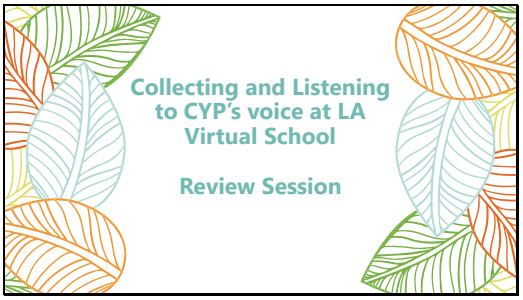


Slide 17

Appendix J

PowerPoint presentation from the Review meeting

Slide 1



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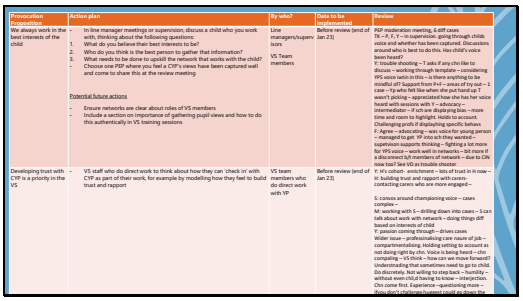
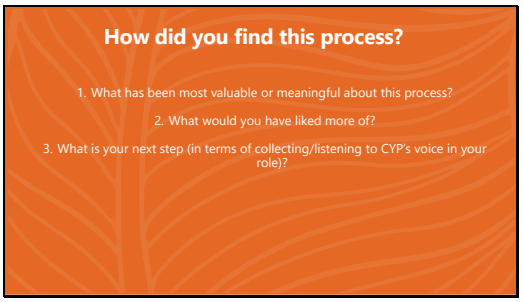


Provocation Proventition	Action plan	By who?	Date to be implemented	Review
We always work in the best interests of the child	- In line manager meetings or supervision, discuss a child who you work with, thinking about the following questions: 1. What do you believe their best interests to be? 2. Who do you think is the best person to gather that information? 3. What needs to be done to upskill the network that works with the child? - Choose one PEP where you feel a CYP's views have been captured well and come to share this at the review meeting Potential future actions - Ensure networks are clear about roles of VS members - Include a section on importance of gathering pupil views and how to do this authentically in VS training sessions	Line managers/supervisors VS Team members	Before review (end of Jan 23)	PEP moderation meeting, 6 diff cases TK – F, C, Y – in supervision, going through childs voice and whether has been captured. Discussions around who is best to do this. Has child's voice been heard? Y: trouble shooting – T asks if any chn like to discuss – working through template – considering YPS voice twice in this – is there anything to be mindful of? Support from P+C – areas of try out – 1 case – Tp who felt like when she put hand up T wasn't picking – appreciated how she has her voice heard with sessions with Y – advocacy – intermediator – if sch are displaying bias – more time and room to highlight. Holds to account. Challenging profs if displaying specific behavs C: Agree – advocating – was voice for young person – managed to get YP into sch they wanted – supervison supports thinking – fighting a lot more for YPS voice – work well in networks – bit more if a disconnect/sch members of network – due to City now too? See VD as trouble shooter.
Developing trust with CYP is a priority in the VS	- VS staff who do direct work to think about how they can 'check in' with CYP as part of their work, for example by modelling how they feel to build trust and rapport	VS team members who do direct work with YP	Before review (end of Jan 23)	K' H's cohort- enrichment – lots of trust in it now – H: building trust and rapport with carers- contacting carers who are more engaged– S: convos around championing voice – cases complex – M: working with S – drilling down into cases – S can talk about work with network – doing things diff based on interests of child Y: passion coming through – drives cases Wider issue – professionalising care naure of job – compartmentalising. Holding setting to account as not doing right by chn. Voice is being heard – chn competing – VS think – how can we move forward? Understnading that sometimes need to go to child. Do discretely. Not willing to step back – humility – without even chil,d having to know – interjection. Chn come first. Experience –questioning more –

Slide 3



Appendix K: Codes and Themes

RQ1 Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Theme 1: Authenticity	Beyond the paperwork	• Remembering they are people • Go past thinking by numbers • Need to truly understand YP to help them • The way they do it doesn't work mostly
	The Child's Truth	• Child's voice not being authentic • Child's truth • Gaining genuine voice • Gaining genuine voice (2) • Authenticity • Collecting chn's views is individual
	Meaningful and Valuable	• Chn being valued • Personal learning from listening to PV • Ensuring PV is meaningful to CYP
	Digging Deeper	• Acknowledging complexity • Collecting CYPs views as individual
Theme 2: Whose voice is heard	Removing Judgement	• Properly hearing rather than putting own views on a situation • Compromising own views • Looking past externalising behaviours • Being judgement free • Removing yourself/bias
	Power dynamics	• Adults overriding chn • Hearing adults voice rather than CYP • Some voices louder than others • Acknowledging power imbalance between
	Child's voice as a guide	• Mediating child's voice with adult support • Listening but also using adult experience to guide • Using CYP's voice as a guide
Theme 3: Network around the child	Multidisciplinary working	• Acknowledging network • Many professionals around a child • Feeling like team provide space to listen to PV • Crucial info passed on
	Relationships	• Professionals losing ego • Building trusting relationships • Previous role as teacher helps have POV of child
Theme 4: Impact	Promoting independence	• Involving CYP in decision making process • Journey to independence
	Acting Upon the voice	• Acting upon the voice not just listening • Thinking about impact

RQ2 Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Theme 1: Relationships	Building trust	• Being a non-authority figure • Strong relationships – best piece of work • Knowing their story – better support • Being involved for a long time – part of journey • Consistency of all professionals
	Reading between the lines	• Non-verbal communication • What's not said • Body language • Knowing best way to gather info
	Different paths	• Getting a sense of YP through voice • Different approaches
Helping from afar	Supporting the network	• Role as part of the network of adults around a child • Being able to listen from afar with child's best interest in mind
	Levels of involvement	• Feeling removed from the direct situation • Being part of a network around a child • Helping from afar - knowing child well so listening indirectly
	Challenges	• One step back • Not direct voice • Distrust in professionals
Theme 3: Barriers	Time	• Time pressures, priortising PV • How to protect time • Allocate more time to this work • Not having enough time
	Constraints of tools	• Current format not working • Not conducive to relationship building • Cannot represent true response in tool
	Working in Silos	• Danger of working in silos • Difficulty of not sharing practice
	Covid-19 Pandemic	• In person – preference • More personal when not on Teams

RQ3 Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Theme 1: Positive outcomes	Tangible measures	• Getting physical resources • Feedback informing next event • Can see improvements
	Different trajectories	• Redirecting paths • Change – maturity • Increased understanding

Theme 2: The network are supported	Support through h challenge	• Challenging professionals • Wanting feedback • Challenging schools • Challenging network
	Bringing the network together	• People coming together to hear need • Team around the children • Universal language • Supporting multiple people • Hearing voices within the network • Reflecting on working with networks

Appendix L

Ethical Approval Decision Letter

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION LETTER

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

Reviewer: Please complete sections in **blue** | **Student:** Please complete/read sections in **orange**

Details	
Reviewer:	**Elley Wakui**
Supervisor:	**Janet Rowley**
Student:	**Christina Manktelow**
Course:	**Prof Doc in Child and Educational Psychology**
Title of proposed study:	An Appreciative Inquiry of Factors Within a Virtual School That Are Perceived to Enable a Team to Best Promote the Education of Looked-After Children

Checklist (Optional)			
	YES	**NO**	**N/A**

Concerns regarding study aims (e.g., ethically/morally questionable, unsuitable topic area for level of study, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Detailed account of participants, including inclusion and exclusion criteria	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding participants/target sample	☐	☐	☐
Detailed account of recruitment strategy	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding recruitment strategy	☐	☐	☐
All relevant study materials attached (e.g., freely available questionnaires, interview schedules, tests, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Study materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, etc.) are appropriate for target sample	☐	☐	☐
Clear and detailed outline of data collection	☐	☐	☐
Data collection appropriate for target sample	☐	☐	☐
If deception being used, rationale provided, and appropriate steps followed to communicate study aims at a later point	☐	☐	☐
If data collection is not anonymous, appropriate steps taken at later stages to ensure participant anonymity (e.g., data analysis, dissemination, etc.) – anonymisation, pseudonymisation	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data storage (e.g., location, type of data, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data sharing (e.g., who will have access and how)	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data retention (e.g., unspecified length of time, unclear why data will be retained/who will have access/where stored)	☐	☐	☐
If required, General Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks/burdens to participants have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☐	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks to the researcher have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☐	☐	☐
If required, Country-Specific Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☐
If required, a DBS or equivalent certificate number/information provided	☐	☐	☐
If required, permissions from recruiting organisations attached (e.g., school, charity organisation, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
All relevant information included in the participant information sheet (PIS)	☐	☐	☐
Information in the PIS is study specific	☐	☐	☐
Language used in the PIS is appropriate for the target audience	☐	☐	☐
All issues specific to the study are covered in the consent form	☐	☐	☐
Language used in the consent form is appropriate for the target audience	☐	☐	☐
All necessary information included in the participant debrief sheet	☐	☐	☐
Language used in the debrief sheet is appropriate for the target audience	☐	☐	☐
Study advertisement included	☐	☐	☐

Content of study advertisement is appropriate (e.g., researcher's personal contact details are not shared, appropriate language/visual material used, etc.)	☐	☐	☐

Decision options	
APPROVED	Ethics approval for the above-named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice), to the date it is submitted for assessment.
APPROVED - BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES	In this circumstance, the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made **before** the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box at the end of this form once all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to the supervisor. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records. **Minor amendments guidance:** typically involve clarifying/amending information presented to participants (e.g., in the PIS, instructions), further detailing of how data will be securely handled/stored, and/or ensuring consistency in information presented across materials.
NOT APPROVED - MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED	In this circumstance, a revised ethics application **must** be submitted and approved **before** any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application. **Major amendments guidance:** typically insufficient information has been provided, insufficient consideration given to several key aspects, there are serious concerns regarding any aspect of the project, and/or serious concerns in the candidate's ability to ethically, safely and sensitively execute the study.

Decision on the above-named proposed research study	
Please indicate the decision:	**APPROVED - MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES**

Minor amendments
Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

3.11. I'm not familiar with Otter.ai -just to check confidentiality and storage/access of data via an app is ensured? **7.1. I'll leave with the supervisor to ensure all documentation is correct from the LA before the start of any recruitment or data collection please. Looks like there has already been email exchange though?**

Major amendments
Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Assessment of risk to researcher		
Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?	**YES** ☒	**NO** ☐
	If no, please request resubmission with an **adequate risk assessment.**	
If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard, please rate the degree of risk:		
HIGH	Please **do not approve a high-risk** application. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not be approved on this basis. If unsure, please refer to the Chair of Ethics.	☐
MEDIUM	Approve but include appropriate recommendations in the below box.	☐

LOW	Approve and if necessary, include any recommendations in the below box.	☐
Reviewer recommendations in relation to risk (if any):	Please insert any recommendations	

Reviewer's signature	
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	**E**lley Wakui
Date:	**1**8/03/2022
This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee	
RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE For the researcher and participants involved in the above-named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place. For a copy of UEL's Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard.	

Confirmation of minor amendments (Student to complete)	
I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data	
Student name: (Typed name to act as signature)	**Christina Manktelow**
Student number:	**U2064594 18/03.22**

Date:	Click or tap to enter a date
Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed if minor amendments to your ethics application are required	

1

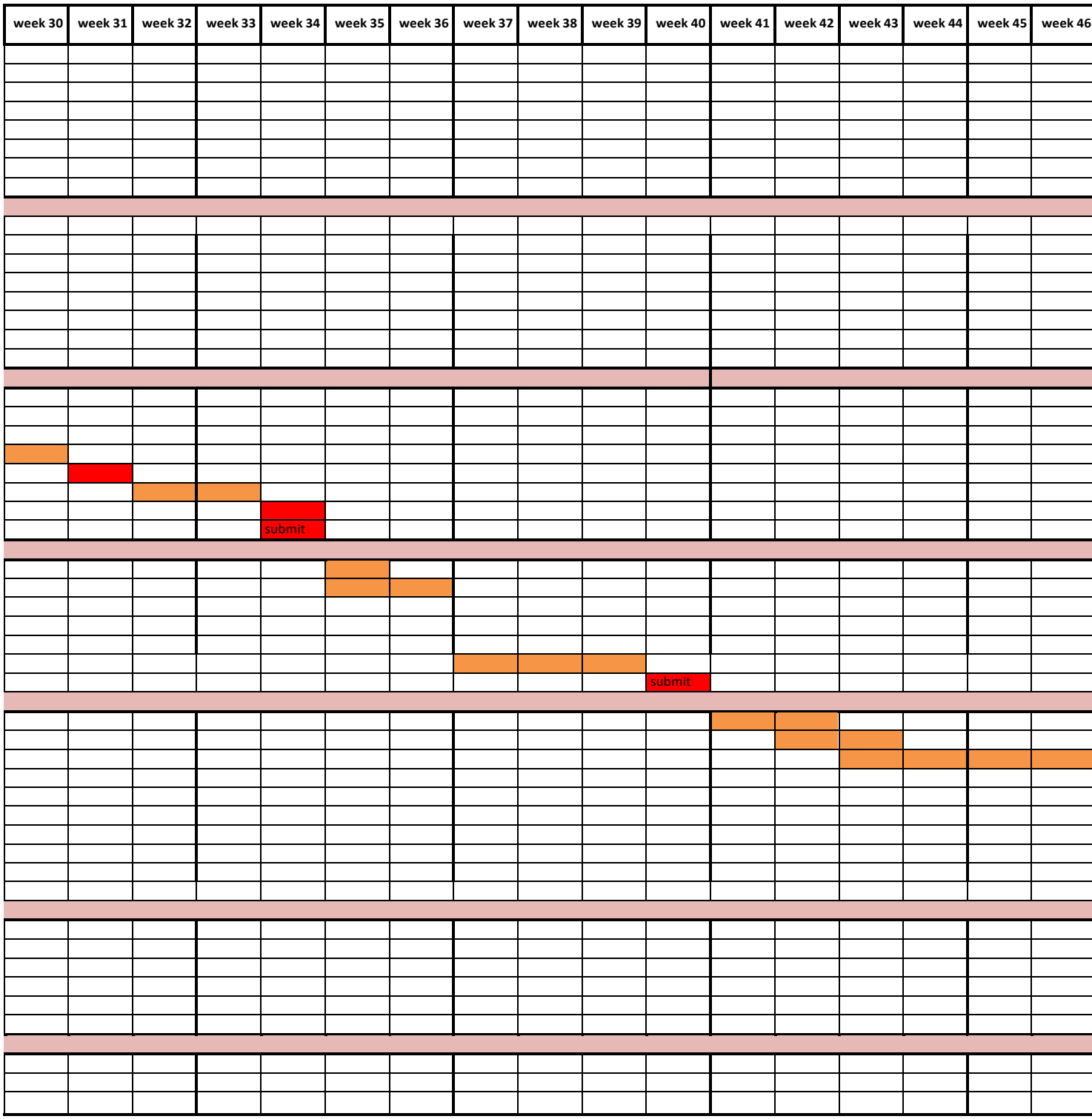
Appendix M

GANNT chart

Thesis Plan

Task No.	Description	Additional information/ Dates	Resources Needed	Progress	To be completed by/ Submission date?
1	**Topic finding**				
1.1	Read through lecture notes and assignments for topic inspiration			Completed	
1.2	Create a mind map of possible topics and what interests me			Completed	
1.3	Select and start learning to use reference management software (Zotero)			Completed	
1.4	Preliminary research is there enough sources data or literature available			Completed	
1.5	Refine topic into research questions			Completed	
1.6	Write preliminary objectives for achieving my research question			Completed	
1.7	Meet with supervisor to discuss topic suitability, research question and objectives			Completed	
1.8	Amend topic focus/ plan based on supervisor feedback			Completed	
2	**Proposal**				
2.1	Conduct scoping review of literature			Completed	
2.2	Decide on and write agreed research questions			Completed	
2.3	Research methodologies			Completed	
2.4	Ethics			Completed	
2.5	Write up scoping review			Completed	
2.6	Create bibliography and reference list			Completed	
2.7	Meet with supervisor to check in RE proposal and things to include			Completed	
2.8	Submit proposal			Completed	
3	**Literature review**				
3.1	Refresh searching skills (attend workshop or complete online tutorial)			Not started	
3.2	Carry our searches			Not started	
3.3	Read through materials gathered picking out common themes and debates			Not started	
3.4	Writing Lit Review			Not started	
3.5	Speak to supervisor have I missed any of the major sources/ papers?			Not started	
3.6	Proof reading			Not started	
3.7	Check in with Supervisor				
3.8	Finalise and submit draft			Not started	
4	**Methodology**				
4.1	Select and prepare methods			Not started	
4.2	Read for methodology			Not started	
4.3	Write and submit ethics form			Not started	
4.4	Meet supervisor for approval of ethics			Not started	
4.5	Plan dates for gathering data			Not started	
4.5	Update bibliography and write up methodologies section			Not started	
4.6	Send to supervisor for checking				
5	**Data collection and analysis**				
5.1	Test selected methods			Not started	
5.2	Review results and methodology			Not started	
5.3	Carry out data collection			Not started	
5.4	Record results			Not started	
5.6	First TA cycle - coding			Not started	
5.7	Second TA cycle			Not started	
5.8	Create themes			Not started	
5.9	Member checking data analysis				
5.1	Write up data analysis section			Not started	
5.11	Send to supervisor for checking				
6	**Writing**				
6.1	Write up remaining sections - discussion			Not started	
6.2	Edit and redraft sections			Not started	
6.3	Proofread			Not started	
6.4	Appendices			Not started	
6.5	Finish reference list and bibliography			Not started	
6.6	Add in front page, contents, abstract, appendices etc.			Not started	
7	**Gathering together/ finishing off**				
7.1	Final proof read and re-writing			Not started	
7.2	Arrange printing and Binding			Not started	

7.3	**Sumbit and celebrate!**			Not started	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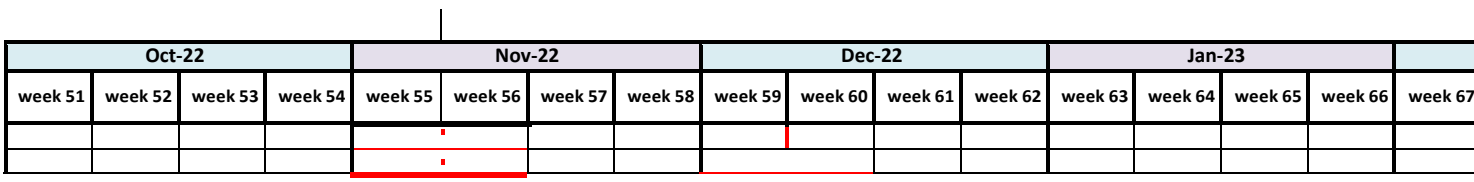
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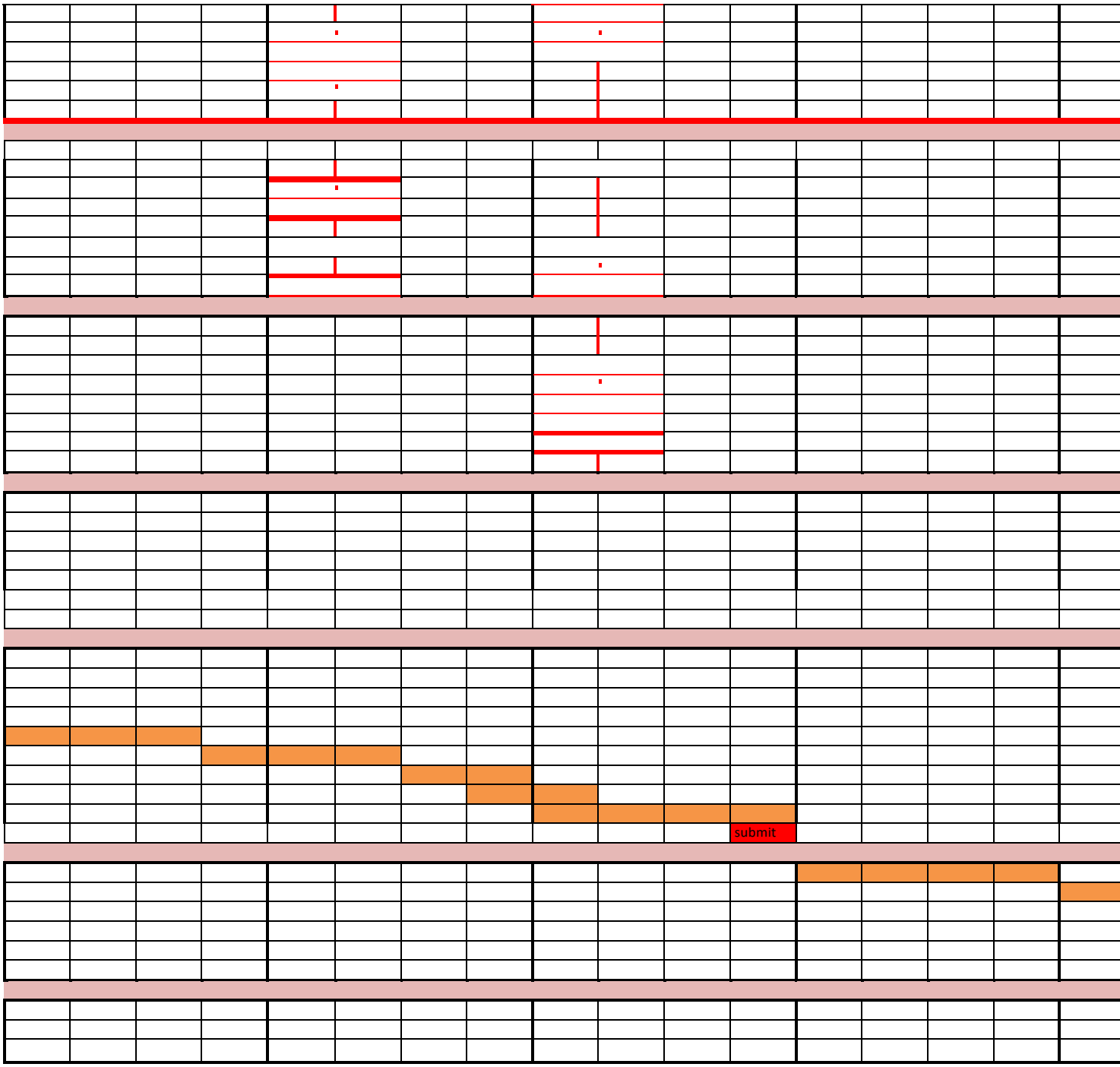
submit

	Apr-23			
week 74	week 75	week 76	week 31	week 32
		submit!		

Appendix N

Participant Debrief Letter

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER

Thank you for participating in my research study on:

An Appreciative Inquiry of Factors Within a Virtual School That Are Perceived to Enable a Team to Best Promote the Education of Looked-After Children

This letter offers information that may be relevant considering you have now taken part.

What will happen to the information that you have provided?

The following steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the data you have provided.

Audio and video recordings from Microsoft Teams will be saved to the UEL one drive on the same day that they are recorded. Files will also be backed up in a password protected file on a laptop, on a password protected user account.

I will use the audio interview to create anonymous transcripts; any identifying features, such as names or schools will be redacted, and transcripts for each participant will be labelled with pseudonyms. Although the researcher will know the identity of participants and through recruitment, this information will not be shared.

Contact information for each participant will be saved in a password protected file on UEL One Drive, accessible only to the researcher and her research supervisor. You will have up to 2 weeks to notify the researchers should you wish to withdraw, after this point data analysis will have begun.

Findings will be shared with XXXXXX Educational Psychology Service, via the Principal Educational Psychologist and Fieldwork Tutors. They will also be shared with UEL Trainee Educational Psychologists and UEL examiners. To reiterate, your responses will be anonymised, so there will be no identifying features in the analysed data shared with the Educational Psychology Service.

Data will be kept until 30th August 2024 on the UEL password protected One Drive, after this time the data will be destroyed.

What if you have been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise potential harm. Nevertheless, it is still possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/ is a free UK charity supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education staff in schools, colleges and universities. Free helpline 08000 562 561

You are also very welcome to contact the researchers or our supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Christina Manktelow: u2064594@uel.ac.uk

Trainee Educational Psychologist

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

Email: j.rowley@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)