Institute of Education

'It makes me feel a sense of belonging'

Using person centred approaches to elicit and promote the voices of young women placed in a specialist SEMH provision.

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Declaration

'I, Sophie Martin confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

Evidence has indicated that pupils with social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs are more likely to be excluded from mainstream school and placed in alternative provision (AP). Young women are a minority within this cohort and due to the differential prevalence rates, research exploring their experiences is restricted. Consequently, there is a paucity of knowledge on the impact SEMH and placement in AP has on young women's educational experiences, identities, lives and futures. Without such knowledge, opportunities to improve educational outcomes for this group of pupils is limited.

This study adopted a longitudinal, participatory and person-centred approach, to elicit the voices and views of six young women placed within a specialist alternative provision (Riverford). Three sets of interviews were conducted with each young woman, to gain a rich and comprehensive understanding of their experiences in and out of school. Narrative analysis using Gilligan's listening guide (1982) enabled a dynamic exploration of each young woman's sense of self and identity. A thematic analysis was also used to extrapolate the commonalities in the young women's experiences.

The findings drawn from the young women's narratives highlighted the complexity of their identities and self-concept. The longitudinal nature of the study allowed the temporality of their experiences to be explored. Relationships and self-concept were identified as integral to all the young women's stories. Riverford was presented as providing a distinctly different educational experience to mainstream school. Within this setting, the young women described a sense of belonging and the opportunity to see visions of 'hope for' future selves.

Through a co-construction of knowledge, the current study offers new insight into young women placed in AP. The voices of the young women were integral to the research process and findings, and through their narrative's implications for professional educational practice and further research have been identified.

Impact statement

This research explored the experiences of six young women placed within a specialist AP. A longitudinal and participatory design was used to elicit the young women's voices and co-construct knowledge around their experiences. A dual-level approach to analysis was adopted, including narrative and thematic analysis. The findings highlighted the importance of identity and relationships to the young women's educational experiences.

Reflecting on the findings of this study, there are several implications for all professionals, including EPs. This relates both to work with young women with SEMH needs, young women placed in specialist SEMH provision, and more generally with children and young people who have been removed from mainstream provision due to SEMH needs.

Reflecting on the findings of this study, there are several implications for all education professionals, including EPs. A summary is presented in the table below. More detail can be found in Chapter 6.6 of the thesis.

Desired outcome from study	Implications for professional practice
Creating educational environments where young people with SEMH needs can be successful	*- Relational-based strategies embedded within classroom practice*
	-Systemic review of all provisions with including a re-evaluation of what 'provision' means for those with SEMH needs.
	-Application of holistic and effective interventions to support SEMH needs in all provisions
Promoting social bonds and a sense of belonging	*- Ensure that young women with SEMH can make and maintain positive social connections*
	-Creating an ethos of connection and belonging for key adults out of school.
Promoting pupil voices	*-All professionals to ensure that the voices of children and young people are present in any planning around their*

within professional practice	*needs. EHCPs and reviews, especially when reviewing a break-down in placement*
Engaging vulnerable young people	*- Direct work with vulnerable or marginalised young people to manage SEMH needs*
Effective systemic planning for pupils with SEMH needs	*-Ensuring multi-agency working is at the centre of support for children and young people with complex needs.*
	- Explicit recognition of the potentially detrimental impact multiple school placements and exclusions have on young people's identity and relationship with education

Considering the findings, the strengths and limitations of the research, future research would benefit from considering the following (more suggestions can be found in Chapter 6.7):

- Future research could look to include young women from a variety of localities and ages, to further assess the role of different risk and protective factors, on SEMH, identity and relationship with school.

- Extend the current study, to explore the roles of parents and carers in more depth. Develop a greater understanding around their role in facilitating positive school experiences for young women in AP.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This study was concerned with exploring the experiences of six young women with social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, placed within a specialist alternative provision. This introductory chapter will outline the professional rationale and personal motivation for undertaking this study, and close with a brief outline of the thesis structure.

There is increasing concern around the rates of SEMH needs in children and young people, with studies indicating a significant rise in prevalence (Thorley, 2016). Within the United Kingdom, data from the Department for Education has found that thirty per cent of children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) have SEMH as their 'primary' category of difficulty (DfE, 2018). This equates to 193,657 children and young people and is one of the highest areas of need behind speech, language and communication needs, and severe and moderate learning needs (DfE, 2018).

However, the rates of permanent exclusion within the United Kingdom in 2018, was disproportionately higher for those pupils with SEMH needs, than any other SEN. For example, out of 186,795 pupils with SEMH needs, 2,030 received a permanent exclusion, compared to 200 pupils out of 234,075 with speech, language, and communication needs (DfE, 2018). Following successive exclusions, pupils with SEMH needs are often removed from mainstream education, either on a temporary or permanent basis and placed in a variety of different provisions (Popham, Counts, Ryan, & Katsiyannis, 2018). Provision offered to pupils on the edge of mainstream schooling is often alternative education provision (AP) and pupil referral units (PRU). These settings are often viewed as systems to manage or change pupil behaviours deemed as problematic (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016).

However, for those pupils at the acute end of SEMH needs, a complete removal from mainstream education maybe be sought. These pupils can be placed in specialist AP, which does not aim to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream schools. There is also wide variation in the type, focus and approach of specialist settings, supporting pupils with SEMH needs. These may range from day access to residential or a combination of both. Residential settings generally offer three types of placement including weekly, term time (boarding 38 weeks per year including weekends) and 52 weeks, where

students can live at the school all year round (Lenehan & Geraghty, 2017). Defining these provisions is often problematic, as they can take numerous forms (Local Authority, Private and third sector) and they can also be focused on different outcomes (Gutherson, Davies, & Daszkiewicz, 2010). Therefore, within this thesis, the term 'alternative provision' (AP) will be used to define all types of SEMH provision which is not mainstream, including PRUs, specialist and residential, unless otherwise specified.

There is distinct difference in prevalence between genders, within the cohort of pupils with SEMH as their primary need. In 2018, there were 25,529 secondary aged male pupils identified as having a primary need of SEMH, compared to just 14,037 female pupils (DfE,2018). Reflective of this discrepancy, only a small proportion of pupils placed outside mainstream education are young women. In 2018, this equated to 9,945 female pupils out of the 39,580 pupils placed in AP (DFE, 2018). Consequently, effective education of pupils with SEMH needs placed in AP, could be conceptualised as an inherently male issue (Osler, 2006). However, young women and girls placed in AP are a significant minority, whose marginalised status make them vulnerable to potentially negative life outcomes (Russell & Thomson, 2011).

Currently the evidence base exploring the experiences of young women with SEMH needs placed within AP is minimal, and has variable and contradictory findings and implications (Osler, 2006; Russell & Thompson, 2011; Clarke, Boorman, & Nind, 2011). Additionally, knowledge that is available has been drawn from 'one off' or standalone interviews. This limits the scope and depth of understanding, especially in relation to the temporality of experience (Weller, 2012). Consequently, there is a scarcity of knowledge of the impact placement and education within specialist AP has on young women and girls.

The experiences I gained prior to my Educational Psychology (EP) training developed my interest in the interaction between gender and education, specifically the experiences of marginalised groups such as those with SEMH needs. I have worked both within an AP for pupils with acute SEMH needs, as well as within a local authority team, promoting inclusion for 'high risk' children and young people at the edges of education. In addition, I have worked within Domestic Violence services, supporting children to overcome trauma, access education settings and rebuild their lives. Through these experiences I have

developed a keen awareness of the impact that systemic failings have on opportunities for children and young people to be successful. Conversely, I have also seen how nurturing, creative, caring, and inclusive school environments can be effective in enabling growth and development for the most challenging of pupils.

My work in Domestic Violence services taught me the importance of empowerment for marginalised groups, whilst my work with SEMH pupils has demonstrated the potential school communities have to change lives. These professional experiences informed the current research and my desire to understand the unique lived experiences of young women and girls with SEMH needs placed within AP. My perspective within this research, was that by engaging a group who have been postulated as "hard to hear" (Russell & Thompson, 2011), their voices might be used to inform future provision developed to support them

The research was set in a specialist AP (herein referred to as 'Riverford') in a local authority in which I was working as a trainee educational psychologist. Riverford offered a distinctly different provision compared to other settings supporting pupils with SEMH needs, such as PRUs. The provision offered permanent education placements for pupils who had removed from mainstream school and gave the option for pupils to board on site. Pupils were given a highly differentiated curriculum and substantial pastoral support through personal key workers. However, as with other SEMH provisions, Riverford had a predominantly male cohort, with a ratio of approximately two girls to every eight boys. Most of the young women in the study were the only female pupil in their class group.

Through the reflexive, participatory and longitudinal approach this study offers insight into the experiences of six young women placed within Riverford. This includes understanding of the complexity of their identities, relationships with others and their connection with education. The research findings aim to inform professionals, including EPs, mainstream and AP school staff, social workers and mental health practitioners of the experiences, aspirations, barriers and motivations of young women with SEMH needs placed within AP.

The study will be outlined within this thesis. This will include a review of the available literature in relation to SEMH and gender, pathways out of mainstream education and evaluation of AP, current knowledge of young women within AP and an overview of relevant theoretical underpinnings within Chapter two. This precedes Chapter three which provides a justification of the research design, process and tools used to elicit young women's voices. Chapter four, will outline findings from the narrative analysis and chapter five will present the thematic analysis. The thesis will close with a discussion of the findings, methodological reflections, limitations of the research and implications for professional practice in Chapter six.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter will present and critically evaluate the literature relating to young women with SEMH needs, and young women who have been placed within AP. This will include research outlining the relationship between SEMH and gender, within both the international and national evidence base. Research pertaining to school exclusion and placement outside of mainstream school will be presented, alongside an evaluation of alternative provision (AP) to meet the needs of pupils, especially girls and young women. The chapter will close with the aims and research questions underpinning the study.

Details of the literature search can be found in appendix one.

2.1 What is meant by 'SEMH'?

SEMH is the most recent evolution within SEN terminology and is seated in legislative development. Following the 2011 Green Paper, 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs' (DfE, 2011) released by the Coalition Government, the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) code of practice (DfE 2015) was implemented. Within this new Code of Practice pupils struggling in school were re-defined, from a label of 'Behavioural, Emotional and Social difficulties' (BESD) to 'Social and Emotional Mental Health' (SEMH).

The code of practice defines SEMH as;

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

(DfE, 6.32, page 98, 2015)

Although it is not within the interest of this study to 'label' or 'categorise' children and young people, the use of common educational language can

enable a level of shared understanding (Caslin, 2019). This is particularly pertinent for those children and young people who have SEMH, as the language used to describe and identify their needs is often inconsistent and subjective (Caslin, 2019). For example, international terminology ranges from behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, emotional disturbance (ED), socially maladjusted and behaviour disorder (Lessof, Ross, Brind, Bell, & Newton, 2016; Popham et al., 2018).

Therefore, throughout this thesis the terminology SEMH will be used to describe individuals who either present with SEMH 'type' difficulties, inclusive of mental health needs and diagnosed disorders, or who have 'SEMH' as an identified Special Educational Need (SEN).

2.1.1 SEMH and Gender

There is a clear difference in the representation of young women and girls within the clinical notion of SEMH compared to the educational SEN category. As outlined previously, boys and young men are substantially more likely to be categorised with SEMH as their primary SEN need than young women and girls. The most recent survey of child and adolescent mental health in the U.K. has indicated that young women aged between fourteen and sixteen are reporting significantly higher levels of psychological distress than their male counterparts (Lessof et al., 2016)

However, in school-age populations boys are twice as likely to be assessed for mental health disorders as their female counterparts at four different ages. Research has highlighted that boys are significantly more likely to be assessed as having had severe mental health problems at least once in their lifetimes (Hamblin, 2016). However, this gap significantly decreases with age and is reversed when girls reach late adolescence and maintained throughout adulthood (Hamblin, 2016).

This swinging pendulum between gender, need and identification, potentially impedes an accurate understanding of the impact that SEMH may have on young women's educational experiences. The data available skews knowledge around the prevalence of SEMH needs in young women, with high occurrence in clinical samples (Hamblin, 2016) but low within SEN (DfE, 2018). There is however robust evidence drawn from national and

international research that describes the more general, but differential experience of SEMH for young women. By understanding the prevalence, presentation, risk and resilience factors pertaining to girls and young women's SEMH, there may be greater opportunity to support those who are struggling within school and education.

2.2 SEMH in girls and young women

2.2.1 Emotional and behavioural needs

In the broadest sense, children and young people's SEMH needs are often referred to in relation to their behavioural presentation. These are usually characterised as either 'externalising' or 'internalising' problem behaviours (Hamblin, 2016). Externalising behaviours are emotional responses directed away from the self and are often related to disruptive, aggressive or anti-social conduct. Conversely, internalising behaviours are emotional responses that are directed toward the self, and often refers to withdrawal, low mood, depression or anxiety (Bask, 2015). Previous and current research identifies young women as more likely to engage in internalising problem behaviours, and young men with externalising (Bask, 2015; Hamblin, 2016; Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). The relationship between emotion expression, SEMH needs and mental health disorders has been consistently explored.

Chaplin and Aldao (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 166 studies, exploring the effect sizes relating to gender differences in emotion expression. This included the observed facial, vocal and behavioural emotion expression from birth to adolescence in a total of 21,709 participants. They found that gender was a significant predictor of different emotion expression, although the effect size was small. Girls were more likely to show positive externalising emotions and internalising behaviours, and boys generally more externalising. However, this effect was mediated by factors such as age; boys were more likely to show externalising emotions in the early years, but less likely in adolescence (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). Similar trends were also found in Swedish sample of 3,000 adolescents. The difference between young men and women's internalising problem behaviours became acute during adolescence, however no gender differences were found regarding externalising behaviours (Bask, 2015).

The small but significant effect sizes concluded in Chaplin and Aldao's study suggest that biological gender cannot wholly account for differences between boys and girl's emotional expression. Instead, it is in the interaction between gender and other variables such as age, that mediate the relationship. Chaplin (2015) later argued that it is important to explore the developmental pattern between emotion-expression and gender, as this may indicate predispositions to specific SEMH needs. For example, girls and young women who cope with stress by supressing anger and frustration but express unfelt happiness, may be at risk for internalising feelings of distress, and developing depression and anxiety (Chaplin, 2015).

2.2.2 Emotional disorders

Statistically, young women and girls are more likely to experience emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Hamblin, 2016). The Millennium Cohort Study (MSC) (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017) is a longitudinal study following the lives of 19,517 children born across U.K. at the turn of the Millennium. Data sweeps have been drawn from the cohort at different ages, with the most recent being in 2014 when the cohort were 14 years old. Findings from this sweep demonstrated significant gender differences in reported incidences of depression, especially within adolescence. Parental reports of depressive symptoms were the same for both genders until the age of 11, where it increased by five per cent for girls. Self-reporting from the young people found that one in four of the young women had reported experiencing substantial symptoms of depression (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017).

Concurrent findings have been observed internationally. Granrud, Steffenak, & Theander (2019) explored the association between gender and reported symptoms of depression. Eight thousand young people aged between 13 and 16 years, across forty-one different areas of Norway were asked to complete a survey on their mental health and well-being. Girls were found to report significantly higher levels of depressive and anxious symptoms than their male counterparts. Similar findings have been drawn from research within Belgium (Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Keppens, 2018) and Australian youth (Landstedt, Coffey, & Nygren, 2016).

Whilst these studies highlight and support the notion of gender differences in emotional disorders, the data is drawn from self-reporting measures which may impact the validity of responses. Young men are reported to be far less likely to identify and verbalise their emotional experiences (Hamblin, 2016), therefore reducing the likelihood of self-reporting. This potentially limits the scope of understanding around gender and the prevalence of these specific mental health needs. Additionally, girls have a far greater emotion recognition ability which develops from a young age (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). This ability to recognise and name their emotional experiences may account for the higher prevalence in self-reporting symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Although data is drawn from international cohorts, participants within the literature are almost exclusively Western and from higher socio-economic populations. Evidence suggests that there is a low occurrence of emotional disorders in non-western populations, such as semi-nomadic African communities. However, even within these cohorts, gender differences have still been found (Lewis et al., 2015). Such findings may highlight a level of homogeneity within the presentation and experience of SEMH amongst girls and women.

2.2.3 Risk and resilience

Regarding SEMH needs, girls and young women may experience several different risk and resilience factors, related too and interacting with their gender. These may make them less able to cope with stress, or more able to manage in the face of adversity (Hamblin, 2016).

Just by being female, girls and young women are already more susceptible to particular risk factors than their male counterparts (Hamblin, 2016). Gendered violence and abuse are inequalities that severely impede the mental health and well-being of girls and young women. For example, girls are more likely to experience child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, forced marriage, honour-based violence, and genital mutilation (Hamblin, 2016). Scott & McManus, (2016) identified that one in twenty women in the U.K. have experienced substantial physical and sexual abuse, both in childhood and adulthood. They suggest that some of the disparity in adult mental health needs between genders, maybe accounted for by the levels of

gendered violence and abuse experienced by girls and young women (Scott & McManus, 2015).

Alongside these wider systemic factors, the evidence base has also highlighted that fractious or ruptured relationships maybe a key life stressor that informs SEMH needs in girls and young women. Lewis et al., (2015) explored the relationship between depressive symptoms in adolescents and family orientated stressors, with a population study of 6,552 Australian youth aged between 10 and 14 years. Girls and young women who reported low emotional closeness with their families, were found to be nearly three times more likely to report substantial depressive experiences. This suggests that the quality of parent–child relationship and interaction, could be key to young women's mental health and well-being (Lewis et al., 2015). Similar findings have been drawn from (Granrud et al., 2019) who found that family conflict was a significant predictor of young women's self-reported depression symptoms.

The impact of relationship difficulties on young women's mental health is also evident within the education environment. Stressful relational life events, such as difficulties with parents, peers and intimate relationships, have been directly associated with early school leaving in girls and young women (Pereira & Lavoie, 2018). Östberg, Modin & Låftman, (2018) explored the link between school bullying and relational aggression, with adult mental health in a Swedish population. The results demonstrated a distinct interaction for women but not men. Those women who were bullied at school, were substantially more likely to experience SEMH needs in adulthood than those women who were not bullied. Even after other variables such as socio-economic status were controlled for, these findings remained consistent (Östberg, Modin, & Låftman, 2018)

Despite the differentiation in prevalence rates and the risk factors pertaining to young women's SEMH, several resilience factors specific to young women and girls have been identified within the literature. They have been highlighted as having proficient emotion literacy and recognition abilities, compared with their male peers (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). This allows girls and young women to recognise and express their emotional experiences more readily than boys and young men (Hamblin, 2016). These skills potentially allow young women a

greater channel to seek help and support for SEMH needs. Differentiation in help-seeking behaviours between the genders have been identified in both early years and school-age children (Benenson & Koulnazarian, 2008). In a study exploring American youth's knowledge and beliefs of mental ill health found that young women were significantly more able to recognise emotion disorders and were more likely than young men to recommend seeking support for difficulties (Coles et al., 2016).

2.3 SEMH needs in education- A male issue?

The evidence around young people's mental health indicate that girls and young women are more likely to experience emotional difficulties, psychological distress, anxiety, depression and self-harm (Hamblin, 2016). However, despite this evaluation, young women and girls continue to be disproportionately underrepresented within the SEMH categorisation of SEN. Such disparity suggests that there is a discord between the potential levels of psychological distress, emotional needs and mental health in female pupils, and their subsequent identification within the education system. Conversely, it has been argued that a socially constructed fear of male youth violence and crime in adulthood, has skewed the focus within research and educational literature (Osler, 2006). Such discourse can lead to the common misconception, that educating and supporting pupils with SEMH is an entirely male problem.

These gendered assumptions are historically embedded in the language and terminology used to describe pupils with SEMH needs, within education. Definitions have evolved from 'maladjustment', to 'emotional and behaviour difficulties' (EBD), to 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' (SEBD), and finally 'behaviour, social and emotional difficulties' Faupal & Hardy, 2016). The emphasis on 'behaviour' makes identification problematic for female populations. It conjures an explanation of SEN which focuses on externalised symptoms, which are so often deemed inherently male.

The youngest in the evolution of definitions and terms, 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs' (SEMH), continues to present with as much ambiguity around identification, thresholds, and application of interventions for female pupils as its predecessors (Norwich & Eaton, 2015). A lack of clarity, poor definition, and arbitrary boundaries around what is considered 'need', places

pupils in a potentially disadvantageous position. In Faupal & Hardy's (2016) analysis of the history of challenging behaviour, they describe how there is a degree of subjectivity in the assessment of pupil's needs, compared to other SEN. Assessment of SEMH is usually conducted through adult rated checklists, which are subject to bias, norms, beliefs, and values (Faupal & Hardy, 2016). This may particularly impact young women and girls, who are conditioned to communicate their frustrations and emotions in a quiet and "non-threatening" style which may not fit with the gendered construction of SEMH (Russell & Thomson, 2011).

The social construction of gender and gender norms are often re-enacted and reinforced within education settings. Discourse around the underachieving male pupil compounds a sense of hypervigilance around boy's behaviour in the classroom (Russell & Thompson, 2011). Research has highlighted a bi-directional relationship between children's behavioural presentation in the classroom and teacher's ability to recognise and respond. Jones and Myhill, (2004) found that teacher's commentary around classroom behaviours, which they explicitly linked to achievement, saw a polarisation of the genders as 'troublesome boys' and 'compliant girls'.

Girls identified by staff as underachieving were reliably less likely, or the least likely, to be observed being invited to answer a question, whilst boys who were identified as underachieving were consistently more likely, or the most likely, to be invited to respond. This was directly related to the underachieving boy's behaviour being more externalising and visible to the class teacher (Jones & Myhill, 2004). Comparatively, the behaviour of the high achieving girl; compliant, quiet, and passive, influenced teacher perception of the behaviour of all girls (Jones & Myhill, 2004).

However, the notion of both 'girl's compliance' and 'boy's disruption' were not supported by the classroom observation record. Instead, engagement within the classroom was more explicitly linked to achievement levels. Those children who were high achievers, were more likely to work independently, despite their gender, across all year groups (Jones & Myhill, 2004).

In a more recent study, (Loades & Mastroyannopoulou, 2010), explored teacher's ability to recognise emotional and behavioural difficulties within

vignettes. They found that teachers were far better able to recognise symptoms pertaining to behavioural difficulties in boys than girls, and the inverse for emotional difficulties. Crucially however, behavioural disorder symptoms were more likely to stimulate teacher concern than those of an emotional disorder (Loades & Mastroyannopoulou, 2010).

Teachers may demonstrate a lower tolerance for externalising behaviours, and by proxy boy's externalising behaviour, due to the level of disruption it causes in the learning environment. This is especially relevant within the current educational climate, where performative cultures preside (Trotman, Enow, & Tucker, 2018). The outcome of this bi-directional interaction between pupil behaviour and teacher response, mediated by political and societal agenda, re-enforces the social and gendered construction of SEMH.

When pupil's SEMH difficulties challenge the social expectations around conformity within education, they may be disregarded, misunderstood, met with punitive responses or not effectively supported (Hamblin, 2016). For boys and young men, societal fear of male violence and disaffection can lead to externalising behaviours being overtly pathologized (Liasidou, 2016). Behaviours such as these challenge the subjectively agreed standards of the classroom, leaving boys at much greater risk of exclusion. Responses from adults may well address the behavioural indicators of psychological distress, but these are overwhelmingly focused on disciplinary action.

For girls and young women, gendered expectations around their behaviour encourage a position of subordination, rather than an overt presentation of challenge (McNeish & Scott, 2014). Girls and young women who do respond to adversity with externalising, disruptive or violence behaviours, can experience an even greater punitive response, as they fail to comply with the gendered construction of femininity (Hamblin, 2016; Lloyd, 2005). For those pupils who are within gender minorities, such as transgender or non-binary young people, the re-enforcement of gender role conformity within education may compound already significant prevalence of SEMH needs (Hamblin, 2016).

2.4 Removal from mainstream education

Liasidou (2016) argues that education settings play out power dynamics, discourse and social constructions around SEMH and behaviour. These unintentionally maintain wider social assumptions and hierarchy, such as grouping and othering, which is often shrouded in the language of SEN. Caslin (2019) highlights the ethical and political aspects of the socially constructed and maintained notion of SEMH. They argue that through the guise of 'SEN', pupils viewed as troubled or troubling, can be subjected to disciplinary mechanisms, including removal from mainstream education. However, those pupils are often the most vulnerable within the education system. Cole, (2015) identified key risk factors relating to SEMH needs and subsequent school exclusion. These included risk factors at the *individual level,* such as, academic failure, low self-esteem communication difficulties and genetic influences; *family level*, such as conflict in the family home, hostile and rejecting relationships, abuse, parental mental ill health; and at the *community* level such as, low socio-economic status, poor housing and discrimination. For example, pupils who face three or more stressful life events, are three times more likely to develop SEMH needs, especially emotional and behavioural disorders (Cole, 2015).

The presence of multiple risk factors exponentially increases the likelihood of developing an SEMH need and being excluded from school. Trotman et al., (2018) has proposed that politics and policy are encouraging schools on a relentless pursuit of arbitrary performance outcomes. Through a perpetuation of performative values, schools are finding themselves sustaining an environment which exacerbates SEMH needs. Trotman et al., (2018) describes this as a 'spiral' effect, whereby the interaction between the complexity of pupil's needs, and the restrictive mainstream environment amplifies potential SEMH. Pupils predisposed to anxiety, experienced low self-esteem, leading to difficulties in school and subsequent feelings of isolation, depression and self-harm (Trotman et al., 2018). Those pupils who challenge the system, face stringent sanctions and potential removal from school (Trotman et al., 2018). The consequence of which can lead to poor educational trajectories, resulting in high personal, economic and social costs (McCluskey, Riddell, & Weedon, 2015). Therefore, the ability for education

settings to support the needs of those removed from mainstream provision is paramount.

2.5 Evaluating the effectiveness of alternative provision

The effectiveness of provision which aims to support SEMH needs is often unclear, with educational and social outcomes being as varied as the settings themselves. A substantial body of research has explored the experiences of pupils placed within such settings, focusing on evaluating the provision's effectiveness and outcomes.

McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon (2015) collated information from a wide range of stakeholders within alternative provision, including children, young people and family members, to explore how they experienced education outside of mainstream provision. They triangulated this data with information drawn from individuals who held a relevant understanding of exclusion at a local authority and national level. They concluded that pupil's experiences were highly variable. Although all the pupils who were interviewed described numerous positives of AP, several challenges were also identified. These included weak or inappropriate curricula opportunities, inequitable pastoral support and experiences of physical restraint and isolation as behaviour management solutions (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015). Research by Jalali & Morgan (2017) highlighted the potentially detrimental influence AP has on pupil's educational experiences and mental health. Investigating both primary and secondary pupils, the research concluded that AP was ineffective at addressing the thinking patterns underlying pupils' behavioural difficulties. They postulated that over time, these thinking patterns could lead to further educational exclusion, negatively affecting pupil's self-concept and mental health. Difficulties managing mental health, behaviour and social development needs, whilst maintaining academic aspiration and attainment, is postulated as a key challenge facing APs (Malcolm, 2019; Trotman et al., 2018).

Despite these trials, the evaluations made by the children and young people of their experiences in AP is often positive. Malcolm (2019) used retrospective life histories of young adults who had been educated within AP. They found that AP was a turning point in their lives as it offered students a 'different social space' compared with mainstream provision (Malcolm, 2019). Within this space, pupils could reassess their self-concept and identity, and make

sense of past experiences. This notion of a social space within AP is parallel within other studies. A review of international evidence, based on nine different papers, concluded that there are many opportunities and a wealth of resources offered by AP (Pennacchia, Thomson, Mills, & McGregor, 2016). Commonality between what is offered is based around the notion of 'collectivism', where pupils are encouraged to feel a sense of belonging and community. Pennacchiaa and colleagues highlight that APs;

> *"Stand apart from the dominant individualising approach to education promoted through neo-liberal ideologies and practices"*
>
> (Pennacchiaa et al., 2016, page 4)

Similar findings were drawn from Mills & McGregor (2016), who concluded that the learning environments within AP allowed pupils to reengage with their educational journeys. Mills and McGregor (2016) found that AP's were successful in raising expectations around learning potential and provided pupils with the opportunities to feel successful. Positive attachments, adult support and personalised learning opportunities have also been identified as key factors creating an emotionally safe AP environment (Hart, 2013). This review of evidence suggests that AP can offer something different to those children and young people who have been removed from mainstream education. Although there are disputes around the effectiveness of AP to provide extensive curricula options, and consistency in support structures (McCluskey et al., 2015), the opportunities for pupils to build new and trusting relationships is evident and highlighted as paramount (Mills & McGregor, 2016; Pennacchiaa et al., 2016). However, the evidence base is constrained by the lack of clarity around the descriptions of different AP structure, offer and remit. The scope of what constitutes an alternative provision is both broad and extensive, and ever evolving to meet the needs of its pupils (Trotman et al., 2018). Therefore, although studies present some knowledge on the role of AP and its support for vulnerable pupils, drawing absolute conclusions is unfeasible.

Additionally, much of the research that has explored the role of AP in educating children and young people, is seated in retrospective or singular time point interviews. Weller (2012), highlights that such approaches view the

experiences of children and young people as fixed and impermeable by context and time. However, by adopting a longitudinal approach an understanding of the temporal nature of social phenomena can be enabled (Weller, 2012). Qualitative longitudinal research explores themes such as life journeys, critical moments, community dynamics, and motivations, experiences and conceptualisations (Morrow & Crivello, 2015). As such, it is presented as an effective approach to understanding the dynamics of lived experiences.

2.6 Educational experiences of young women in AP

Alongside methodological critiques, the current literature on AP and its effectiveness is overrepresented by male or mixed-sex samples. Although this may be reflective of provision demographics, there is an absence of focused representation for female pupils with SEMH needs within research. Therefore, the experiences of male pupils in SEMH provisions is often ascribed to represent "all pupil experiences". This generalisation feeds into the wider understanding of SEMH, and the provision developed to support pupil's needs.

However, there are a significant minority of young women and girls who are unable to manage in mainstream education due to their SEMH needs, that are removed either through disciplinary (exclusion) or SEN (placement) processes. Despite the wealth of evidence that suggests young women experience SEMH needs differently to their male counterparts (Chaplin and Aldao, 2013; Granrud et al., 2017; Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017), there is an absence of research exploring their educational experiences. Subsequently there is a significant lack of exploration into the effectiveness of AP in providing support for young women with SEMH needs. The evidence that is available, often presents with similar inconclusions as with mixed-sex samples.

Some have postulated that placement in provision outside mainstream schooling, can further disadvantage female pupils with SEMH needs (Russell and Thompson, 2011). Such provisions are often male dominated and place female pupils in the minority. Girls and young women attending such provision may become socially excluded, as they have minimal opportunities to build same-sex relationships (Osler, 2006). However, it has also been highlighted that placement outside of mainstream education provides girls and young

women with smaller class sizes, greater teacher to pupil ratio, more positive interactions with staff, and greater access to appropriate SEMH support (Osler, 2006).

Russell & Thompson (2011) explored the experiences of young women placed in SEMH provision, through ethnographic fieldwork across six AP sites. In addition, eighty-five interviews, with several AP stakeholders were also conducted. This included 42 young men and 15 young women, as well as staff. They found AP to be highly gendered, which restricted the opportunities for female students to fully participate. They also describe how the discourse, activities and social interactions within the provision encouraged heteronormative masculinity. This impacted significantly on the identity development of the young women, as they attempted to manage the male dominated environment (Russell & Thompson, 2011).

The notion of providing a new 'social space' for young women in AP, and its relationship with 'voice' and 'power' were outlined in Nind, Boorman, and Clarke, (2012). Using a range of visual methodologies, they explored the educational experiences of three young women placed in an SEMH provision. The study also asked the young women to express their ideas around curriculum and provision development. Observing the young women's engagement with the tasks and the information they shared, the research highlighted that the AP provided a positive space for the young women. The community of the school allowed the young women to present a different part of themselves, and they highlighted the importance of relationships as key to feeling successful (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012).

Despite the differences between these studies in relation to the type of provision investigated, the interview methods used and the time period in which the research was conducted, clear commonalities in findings can be observed. The role of identity, and its interaction with the 'social space' provided for young women, seemed integral to their experiences of AP. Additionally, the importance of relational interaction, belonging, community and connectivity was also consistently extrapolated.

2.7 Theoretical underpinnings

Prior research investigating pupils with SEMH needs and AP has highlighted several important and integral factors supporting engagement, experience and well-being. These include pupil's connection with the school's social environment, such as relationships with staff and peers. This is conceptualised as belonging, and thus 'sense of belonging' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) will be a key theoretical underpinning of the current study. Additionally, prior research has also established that identity and self-concept have an essential role within pupil's experiences of SEMH and AP. Therefore, 'Possible selves' theory, postulated by (Markus & Nurius, 1986), will also inform this research.

2.7.1 Sense of belonging

Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that humans have an innate drive to form and maintain positive, significant, and durable interpersonal relationships, and that these require recurrent affectionate or pleasant interactions with others. They also claimed that for these relationships to be most satisfactory, interactions need to be frequent, stable and promote care. Based on theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Bowlby's attachment theory, they postulate that a 'sense of belonging' is essential to higher order functions and behaviours (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The theory is also used to understand human motivation and behaviour, ascribing the drive for achievement as a need to be recognised, valued, and validated (Baumeister& Leary, 1995). Experiencing a sense of belonging can elicit a range of positive emotions, whilst an absence can lead to negative emotional states, such as anxiety, abandonment, jealously and social isolation (Norwalk, Hamm, Farmer, & Barnes, 2016). Whilst lack of belongingness is equated to social deprivation (Norwalk et al., 2016), a sense of belonging can act as a potential protective factor for those who have experienced trauma, hardship and adversity (Corrales et al., 2016).

When a pupil feels a bond or connection to a school, through the care and safety provided by staff, and positive interactions with peers, a sense of school belonging is created (Flitcroft & Kelly, 2016).There is considerable evidence demonstrating the positive impact a sense of school belonging has on individual pupils including, higher academic attainment, interest, motivation and lower levels of disengagement and disruption (Flintcroft & Kelly, 2016).

Pupils with higher sense of school belonging have fewer mental health and social difficulties, with often lower rates of social isolation from peers and lower levels of depression (Hart, 2013).

Within Nind, Clarke and Boorman's (2012) exploration of young women's experiences of a specialist provision, keys themes around belonging were identified. Alongside this notion of belonging were the mechanisms that created the sense of connection, including inclusion and being heard. They highlight that a sense of belonging and community was established for the young women, through the relational connections they made with others. Nind, Clarke and Boorman's (2012) highlight that this sense of community allows the development of a collective identity, within which potential and growth could be recognised.

2.7.2 Possible selves

Markus and Nurius, (1986) proposed that much of the significant behaviours we display are related to an approach towards, or an avoidance of our possible or future selves. Representations of the self in the past, act as antecedents for possible future representations. The probability of achieving a 'hoped for' possible self is perceived to be more likely, if that possible self is seeming to be closely aligned with the real self (Knox et al., 2000). Conversely, the perception of reaching a 'feared for' possible self seems more likely if the distance between that possible self and the real self is close (Knox et al., 2000). Possible or future selves are both individually and socially constructed;

> *'Inventive and constructive nature of the self, but also reflect the extent to which the self is socially determined and constrained'*

(Markus & Nurius, page 954, 1986).

Possible selves can act as motivators, guiding a sense of what is possible but also as an evaluation or comparison of the current self (Cross & Markus, 1991). Self-concept is intrinsically linked with motivation, and Markus and Nurius (1986) describe it as the driving force moving us forward towards our numerous possible selves. This challenges the idea that motivation is simple a set of task-orientated, goal achievement behaviours.

The notion of possible selves within the context of schools often relates to the expectation and subsequent motivation towards school attainment and success (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010). However, for pupils experiencing failure because of school difficulties such as SEMH, their self-concept maybe shaped by negative future possibilities, rather than positive possible selves. Engineering a school environment which counteracts negative self-schemas, by providing pupil's the opportunity to expand the range of possible 'ideal' selves, has been demonstrated to improve feelings of competency, agency and efficacy (Knox, 2000). This particularly pertinent for those pupils who have experienced adversity in childhood and may not have had positive role models on which to develop future selves. They are more likely to conceptualise feelings of difficulty as a sign of inevitable failure, which undermines the behavioural pursuit of possible selves (Oyserman et al., 2006).

Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) used the construct of 'possible selves' to investigate the aspirations of pupils within a mainstream provision and a PRU. Exploring pupil's 'feared for' and 'hoped for' possible selves, they found a significant discrepancy in the production of possible selves in the PRU group. Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) concluded that the pupils placed in the PRU may have internalised the difficulties they had experienced in mainstream, leading to fragile possible selves and negative perceptions of future aspirations. Consequently, Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) highlight that focus on the skills and strategies to move towards positive possible selves may support pupil's self-concept, so that the positive possible selves are internalised and reduce the likelihood of long-term social exclusion.

2.8 Implications for Educational Psychology

The implementation of the Special Educational Need Code of Practice (DFE, 2014) has focused schools and subsequently EPs, to involve children and young people in their own SEN support plans. The inclusion of pupil voice and participation is an underlying principle of the recent legislation, paving the way for its development in research and practice alike. This makes EPs well positioned to explore and promote young people's views on their education, both in mainstream settings and AP.

This is particularly pertinent for marginalised and 'hard to hear' groups of pupils, such as girls and young women with SEMH needs (Lloyd, 2005).

Eliciting and promoting the voices of these pupils is not without challenge. Needs and prior experiences with professionals can create barriers, especially if the approach taken is inappropriate or inaccessible. EPs are in a unique position to support, guide and inform settings around creative and engaging methods to elicit pupil views. Such approaches provide means for girls and young women to be experts in the story of their own lives (Nind et al., 2012). This knowledge can be used in collaboration with school staff, to inform planning and decision making, subsequently developing settings to better meet the needs of their pupils.

2.9 Summary and aims of the current research

The current evidence base suggests that young women and girls are experiencing significantly high levels of psychological distress (Hamblin, 2016; Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017), predominantly identified as emotional disorders, such as anxiety, depression and self-harm (Droogenbroeck, Spruyt & Keppens, 2018; Granrud et al., 2017). These findings have been established across both national and international datasets (Landstedt et al., 2016). However, despite the concern suggested around young women's mental health, there is a distinct lack of knowledge regarding female pupils with SEMH as their primary SEN. This literature review has postulated that the discrepancy in knowledge between male and female pupils, could be due to the gendered construction of SEMH within education. Externalised behaviour, often socially constructed as 'male' behaviour, is synonymous with SEMH. As boys are more likely to display externalised behaviours to express their psychological distress, they are placed high on the agenda of schools and other professionals (Osler, 2006). Therefore, focus within education practice and research is rarely concentrated on the experiences of young women and girls with SEMH (Russell & Thompson, 2011).

However, for those girls and young women who subvert the mainstream school system and the expectations of their gender, sanctions are often stringent (Osler, 2006; Russell & Thompson, 2011). Those at the acute end of the SEMH spectrum are at risk of permanent exclusion and placement in AP (Russell & Thompson, 2011). Evidence investigating the effectiveness of AP for all pupils regardless of gender is inconclusive (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015; Malcolm, 2019). However, for the significant minority of girls

and young women placed within AP there is a distinct absence of knowledge and understanding of their experiences (Osler, 2006; Russell & Thompson, 2011). Once placed in AP, the appropriateness and effectiveness of provision to meet young women's needs are open to investigation.

Therefore, the current study seeks to address the lack of research concerning the educational experiences of young women with SEMH needs placed within AP. The aim of the present study is to explore how young women with SEMH needs perceive their educational experiences, how these change over time, interact with their experiences outside of school, and inform their developing self-concept.

This study also aims to elicit and promote the voices of the young women, to enable a greater understanding of the structures, systems, and processes surrounding their educational experiences.

The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: *How do the young women in Riverford describe their experiences of mainstream school and specialist AP?*

RQ2: *How do the young women in Riverford describe their sense of self and identity?*

Chapter Three: Methodology

Within this chapter of the thesis I will outline the methodology, including the underlying paradigms of the research, as well as the design, procedure and analytical approaches that were adopted.

All decisions made throughout this study, were underpinned by a conscious recognition of the young women's vulnerability and marginalised social status. It was integral that the methodological design, tools, process and analysis were sensitive to their needs, whilst promoting their voices. This underpinning approach, named 'ethical attunement' will be outlined in more detail below.

3.1 Ethical attunement- Implications for the research design

Through the exploration of young people's experiences, research with vulnerable and/or marginalised groups can challenge the circumstances that create disadvantage, help reverse internalised stigma, create a sense of empowerment and support towards improved social capital (Auerswald, Piatt, & Mirzazadeh, 2017). Such vulnerable young people are often in highly monitored and institutionalised social groups. They are frequently expected to explain and reflect upon their lived experiences with a range of professionals, from social care, education and criminal justice services (Aaltonen, 2017). Therefore, this study was underpinned by a purposeful acknowledgment of the impact research can have on marginalised and vulnerable young people. The young women in this study live at an intersection of multiple social, familial and individual vulnerabilities. Factors such as low socio-economic status, poor housing and school exclusion, exist alongside experiences of domestic violence, family breakdown, mental health, gender and additional learning needs. Thus, to ensure young women's voices were authentically heard and promoted, I adopted a reflective and considered ethical approach at each stage of the research process. This was akin to the psychological term 'attunement', which describes how responsive an individual is to another's emotional needs. Attunement is presented through behaviours and communication which demonstrate an awareness of another's emotional state (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017).

Guillemin and Gillam (2004), propose the term 'micro-ethics' to highlight the necessary reflexivity of ongoing ethical decisions to meet the needs of participants. This notion was adopted throughout the current research process

and design. The iterative and participatory approach allowed the research to be reflexive, malleable and responsive to the young women's views and opinions. Inclusion was integral to the research experience and it informed the use of accessible and person-centred methods to elicit young women's voices. By doing so, this study has achieved a sense of reciprocity, ensuring sensitive and ethical attunement between myself and the young women

Explanation of the steps taken to ensure ethical attunement will be outlined in detail later in this chapter.

3.2 Philosophical positioning

Research that is conducted in a systematic, sceptical, and ethical manner ensures that the rules of scientific research are acknowledged (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Historically, research paradigms are spilt into two predominant alternatives, either positivism or constructivism. Robson and McCarten (2011) outline positivism as the standard philosophical stance in research, focused on separating facts from values, with knowledge gained from direct experience or observation. Within this paradigm, ontology and the notion of reality is viewed as one singular truth, to be discovered by the researcher (Mertens, 2010). This view lends itself well to the quantitative methodologies used within a positivist paradigm. It therefore follows that the epistemology within the positivist paradigm assumes the researcher and their subject are independent entities (Scotland, 2012). The researcher sets out to discover an absolute truth within an objective reality, which is value free and removed from historical or social context (Scotland, 2012).

Conversely, the constructivist paradigm adopts an ontological stance outlining that meaning does not exist, instead it is constructed through interactions between humans (Robson & McCarten, 2011). Researchers within this paradigm reject the notion of one true reality, adopting an epistemological stance of subjectivism based on real world phenomena (Scotland, 2012). It identifies that knowledge is the interaction between humans and the world around them, developed in a social and historical context (Crotty, 1998). This paradigm therefore lends itself to qualitative data collection, with the central purpose being on understanding phenomena through individual's lived experiences (Robson & McCarten, 2011).

This research focused on how vulnerable young women make sense of their realities, by exploring their perceptions and constructions of the important events throughout their lives. Therefore, I adopted a social constructionist position within this research, centralising the belief that there are multiple and subjective realities, rather than one singular known truth. This paradigm emphasises that an individual's reality is constructed through discourse, social interaction and experience, and is rejecting of the notion that knowledge is an objective representation of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

(Heron & Reason, 1997) argue that axiology encompasses philosophical value questions. Within the constructionist paradigm of this research, I acknowledged that the aims of the study are value bound, and that my axiology cannot be separated from the process. To ensure credibility, I reflected on dynamic relationship between myself and the young women, and the impact of my values throughout the research process, both in supervision and within my reflective diary.

3.3 Research setting

Alternative education provisions (AP) are often offered to pupils who are unable to manage within mainstream schools. These settings are wide and varied in their provision, offer and remit. Pupil referral units (PRU) are the most frequently accessed AP and have the core remit of managing or changing pupil behaviours deemed as problematic (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2015). Most PRU placements are 'dual role' with the pupil's mainstream school, offering either part-time timetables in both settings or a short-term placement in the PRU with a focus on reintegration back to mainstream. Prior research exploring the views of pupils placed outside of mainstream provisions has most frequently taken place within PRU settings (Malcolm, 2019; Mills & McGregor, 2016)

However, for those pupils at the acute end of SEMH needs, a complete removal from mainstream education maybe be sought. These pupils can be placed in specialist AP, which does not aim to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream schools. There is wide variation in the type, focus and approach of specialist settings, supporting pupils with SEMH needs. These may range from day access to residential or a combination of both. If residential, settings

generally offer three types of placement including weekly, term time (boarding 38 weeks per year including weekends) and 52 weeks, where students can live at the school all year round (Lenehan & Geraghty, 2017).

This research took place in a specialist AP situated in England and has been given the name 'Riverford'. Some identifying factors of the provision have been removed or blurred to enable confidentiality. Riverford is based in the locality where I was a trainee EP. Riverford was identified as an appropriate setting for the study due to the specialist nature of the support provided for their young people. Riverford is a non-maintained AP supporting up to ninety students, ranging from seven to nineteen years old. To access the setting pupils are required to have an Education Health and Care plan, with a primary need of SEMH. The setting takes pupils from several surrounding local authorities. Therefore, the context of the local authority in which Riverford is situated, is not necessarily represented in the setting's population. The ratio of female to male pupils in the setting is approximately 2:8, with greater numbers of young women in secondary rather than the primary years. The provision offers both day and residential placements. Those students on day placements return home to parents and carers each day, whilst students on residential placements board during the week. Every pupil is assigned a key worker who is responsible for their pastoral care. As part of their personalised support, some of the pupils also attended other local provision, such as mainstream college.

Riverford offers a distinctly different provision compared to other settings supporting pupils with SEMH needs, such as PRUs. As a specialist setting Riverford does not aim to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream school nor does it offer short-term or dual-role placements. This makes pupil's placement in Riverford relatively permanent, stable and secure compared with the transient nature of PRU placements. The only time where this differs is when pupils in Riverford's sixth form access the local mainstream college alongside their specialist placement. In addition, pupils are placed in Riverford through SEN systems, often within the Education Health and Care process. Pupil's parents and carers often 'name' Riverford as the provision they want their child to attend, giving them agency over the placement process. During the initial process of placement, pupils are invited to visit Riverford and meet with senior

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leadership staff before their placement is decided upon. This is comparable to the placement into other AP, such as PRUs, whereby the process is most frequently initiated and lead by the mainstream school.

Due to the remit of the provision, pupils are provided with a specialist package of support. This includes an onsite Clinical Psychologist, Speech and Language therapist and counsellor. These professionals also provide specialist training to school staff, for example attachment and trauma informed practice. Each pupil is also assigned a key worker, who meets with them regularly to support their well-being and personal development. In addition, key workers support the relationship and communication between parents, carers and school and lead on the access to services outside of the setting such as, Children's Social Care, Child and Adolescent Mental Health services and Youth Offending Services. This type of support package may be different to what is provided within another AP and is reflective of Riverford's remit as a specialist SEMH provision.

3.4 The young women

This study used a purposive sample of six young women placed and educated in Riverford. I defined the group as young women, rather than children, as they were of upper secondary age. This age range was chosen due to findings in the literature which suggest that rates of placement in AP are most prominent between 13-16 years of age. This is also the age that young women are most likely to disengage from education and face associated risks (McNiesh & Scott, 2014).

The young women were introduced to the study by a trusted staff member, using a visual handout explaining the process and explicitly outlining the 'opt-in' process. This ensured information around consent was accessible and sensitive. Prior to data collection the young women had opportunities to discuss the research with myself and their key adult. This ensured they understood the nature of research before giving their consent to participate. Once consent had been given, it was revisited and verified by me and school staff. The young women were reminded they could opt-out at any time, in a way they chose as comfortable.

Six young women took part in the present study. It is their narratives, views and experiences which underpin the research process and findings. Therefore, the following section will introduce the reader to each of the young women, before presenting the research methodology. The introductions were drawn from the information given by the young women during their interviews.

All the young women were given the option to choose their own pseudonym. These have been used below and throughout the study. Some identifiable features of the young women have been removed or blurred to support confidentiality.

3.4.1 Frankie

Frankie is a day pupil in Riverford's sixth form and has attended for two years. Currently, Frankie attends Riverford twice a week, and a local mainstream college twice a week. She is provided with one to one teaching assistant support to enable her to access the mainstream college. Frankie has two mental health diagnoses, Depression and Anxiety. She also has a neurodevelopmental diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition. Frankie received her diagnoses after being placed in Specialist provision.

Prior to Frankie's placement, she was deemed as a 'school refuser' and spent a significant amount of time at home. Frankie's difficulties with school centred around her mental health needs and experiences of significant bullying. Frankie had self-harmed and attempted to take her own life, due to the difficulties she experienced. Frankie has experienced significant trauma and loss in her early life. This has included sudden and tragic bereavement, and disruption to key familial relationships. Frankie's primary support is her grandmother, as she is the person who Frankie identifies as understanding her needs the best.

I experienced Frankie to be a chatty, confident, calm and warm. She was a well-liked personality amongst the staff and pupils in the sixth form and often had a group of younger pupils following her around the school. Frankie enjoyed talking about her interests including make-up and beauty, which was a course she was pursuing at college. Frankie also spoke to me in detail about her family, friends and life outside of school, and it was clear how important

they were to her.. Frankie was engaged throughout the project and was open in sharing her experiences with me. She was very confident in expressing her opinions about Riverford and was clear about what she liked and disliked about her experiences.

3.4.2 Becci

Becci is a residential pupil at Riverford and is in sixth form. Becci has attended the unit for one year. Prior to her placement Becci was permanently excluded from her mainstream secondary school and spent two years being home-educated. Currently, Becci spends half of her week within sixth form and half in the local mainstream college.

Becci was given a diagnosis with Autistic Spectrum Condition in primary school. Becci is a transgender young woman and experienced bullying and social isolation within her mainstream setting as a result of her gender identity. Becci had experienced violence and aggression from other pupils. This had a substantial impact on her mental health, and Becci has been suicidal in the past. Becci has a positive relationship with her family, although there has been challenges in the past due to her sexuality and gender identity.

Becci was a loud and vivacious young woman, who often made me laugh because of her dry wit and excellent story telling skills. I experienced her to be creative and dynamic, with a real motivation to be successful. Becci was a 'larger than life' character within the sixth form unit, often having staff and pupils laughing at her jokes. Becci was very articulate and expressive in her views, often giving me an intricate account of her educational experiences. Becci was ferociously protective and proud of her identity, and I wondered if this might be related to the experiences she had as a transgender young woman.

3.4.3 Charlotte

Charlotte is a day pupil at Riverford and has been attending for two years. During the research process, Prior to her placement in the specialist provision, Charlotte had experienced multiple school transitions, fixed term exclusions and a permanent exclusion. This was often due to Charlotte's difficult or aggressive interactions with other peers. In addition, Charlotte struggled with

accessing her learning in mainstream school, and would often avoid going to lessons or coming into school.

Charlotte has a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Charlotte also has additional learning and Speech and Language needs. Charlotte has experienced substantial trauma in her early years and was adopted at a young age. Charlotte has a positive and close relationship with her adopted family.

Charlotte had a strong presence, seemed self-assured and confident, but also measured and reflective. Charlotte told me about her love for sport and her, drive and determination to be successful in her areas of interest. Charlotte was well respected by the other young people in the school and she often took the lead in resolving conflict in her peer group. She had a strong sense of justice and expressed her dislike of bullying Charlotte often came across as 'wise beyond her years' and had a calm and controlled attitude within the interviews. Charlotte was also incredibly insightful in her views around school, especially how her behaviour have impacted her educational experiences.

3.4.4 Sarah

Sarah is a day pupil at Riverford and has been attending for ten months. Prior to her placement, Sarah had experienced multiple exclusions. She attended six different schools before coming to Riverford, including a pupil referral unit and a provision for pupils with additional learning needs.

Sarah has a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. She has experienced significant trauma and loss throughout her early childhood. Sarah had been removed from the care of her parents during primary school and spent a substantial amount of time being moved around the country. Sarah continues to have a difficult relationship with her family, which impacts on her functioning at school.

In my experience of Sarah, she was a loud, confident and energetic character. It was easy to build rapport with Sarah because of her open and warm nature. She was super inquisitive and often made me smile with her curiosity and questioning. Sarah had a good group of friends and was popular within her year group, although she often had staff members running around the school!

Sarah enjoyed being creative and art was one of her favourite subjects and she often bought this creativity into the interviews.

3.4.5 Lily-Mae

Lily-Mae is a day pupil at Riverford. Lily-Mae has attended the school for two years. Prior to her placement, Lily-Mae was excluded from several schools due to her challenging behaviour. Lily-Mae was diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Condition and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Lily-Mae also has a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis and co-morbid Anxiety and Depression diagnosis. Lily-Mae has attempted to take her own life. She also has additional learning and Speech and Language needs which impacts her school experiences.

Lily-Mae has experienced developmental trauma, including witnessing significant domestic violence from two different perpetrators. Lily-Mae has a fractious relationship with the key adults in her life, and often looks to her friends for support. During the research Lily-Mae was placed into care. This had a profound impact on her school experiences and mental health.

Lily-Mae was a kind, friendly and considered young women. She had experienced immense trauma during the research process but demonstrated humbling resilience and strength. Lily-Mae had a great sense of humour and often came across as quite eccentric. Lily-Mae was very conscious of others well-being and seemed to adopt a caring role within the school, supporting younger children and her friends. Lily-Mae spoke highly of her experience within Riverford and it was clear she had built strong relationships with most staff members.

3.4.6 Queen

Queen is day pupil at Riverford. Queen has attended the school for eleven months. Prior to her placement, Queen experienced multiple school moves across the country. This was usually related to moves in foster care placements, although she has also experienced several exclusions due to challenging behaviour. Queen does not have identified mental health or neurodevelopmental diagnosis.

Queen has experienced substantial developmental trauma and loss, including significant domestic violence. Queen was removed from her family's care during primary school and has moved between several different foster care placements across the country.

Alongside Sarah, Queen had not been at Riverford for a long time when the research started. I experienced her to be more guarded and cautious than the other young women and building rapport took much more time. Queen was a more reserved character within the school and seemed reflective and measured. Queen also struck me as an intelligent and articulate young woman. When she became more comfortable in interview, she was able to give great insight and strong opinions about her experiences. Queen had intense relationships with her friends, and it was clear that loyalty and trust were important to her.

3.5 Research design

A research design should encompass methods and approaches that are appropriate for the questions trying to be answered (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Qualitative approaches enable the collection of open-ended and emerging data (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Such approaches also allow for flexibility, with the potential for development and innovation to take place throughout the entire research process (Weller, 2012). Within this study I was not concerned with establishing a singular truth about young women placed within AP. Instead, I sought to understand how the young women presented and conceptualised their experiences over time. Therefore, I adopted a qualitative research design. As outlined in the literature review, prior research in this area has focused on exploring participant's experiences in the present or retrospectively. This constrains the scope of investigation, reducing the option to consider social phenomena with greater time perspective (Weller, 2012). Therefore, a longitudinal approach was adopted in this research, recognising that young women's lives and the perceptions of their experiences are not fixed, but evolving over time (Weller, 2012).

3.5.1 A participatory approach

Traditional research methodologies have raised debate around the unequal power interaction between the adult researcher and the child participant.

Children and young people exist within a space where the power is centred on adults, and ultimately, they experience unequal power relations (Conolly, 2008). However, more recent research methods have focused on trying to overcome this inequity of power and promote the views and voice of the child, so they are no longer subjects to be studied. Within in this sphere, participatory research approaches have gained significant ground (Kim, 2016). Participatory research can be defined as an approach which explicitly highlights the active involvement of the child or young person within the research process (Bishop, 2014). At the foundations of participatory research is the assumption that children and young people hold political and social space and gaining knowledge from them is an inherently positive endeavour (Bishop, 2014). Research that adopts a participatory approach can address experiences of marginalisation and challenge power hierarchies, by enabling children to feel valued and creating links between children and young people, policy and practice (Bradbury-Jones, Isham, & Taylor, 2018; Thomas-Hughes, 2018).

The voices of pupils placed within AP are often deemed as difficult to hear, due to a lack of supportive communication channels, hesitant expression and marginalised social status (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012, pg. 644). Conolly (2008) presented a detailed questioning the role of absolute participation when working with vulnerable cohorts. She outlined several dilemmas, both ethical and logistical. She highlighted that using pupils to lead research in the name of participation, is an adult-led agenda within itself, as such a level of engagement may not only be uninvited but also impractical for vulnerable young people (Conolly, 2008). Instead, Conolly (2008) promoted the use of task-based interviewing methods, to enable a reflexive co-production of knowledge around the young people's lives. Conolly (2008) claims that this process encourages engagement and reduces power differentiation, so that information and knowledge is co-constructed between adult and young person.

Underpinned by the notion of ethical attunement, the active participation of the young women within this study was central to the evolution and development of the research. At each stage of the research process the young women's voices and views supported the development of the methods, questions and

analysis. They were encouraged to choose which activities to take part in and in which order they would be completed. The process was reflective and reflexive, developed to meet the needs of participants over time. Adopting such an approach ensured that young women's voices were not just an outcome, but also integral to the research process.

3.5.2 Developing the interview schedule and questions

The development of the interview schedules was part of the iterative and reflexive nature of the overall research process. Informed by notions of ethical attunement, I wanted to ensure that the young women's voices and opinions remained central to the development of the research. Therefore, the construction of the interview schedules, interview questions and the choice of methodology was informed via the knowledge given by the young women. Initial informal discussions allowed me the opportunity to explore different themes and topics with the young women. They highlighted that their previous experiences in mainstream, their friendships and family, and their experiences of being female in an AP, were all important topics to discuss. This knowledge formed the basis of developing the schedule and questions for the first interview. Following analysis of the first set of interviews, it was evident that the notion of self-concept and identity was important for the young women. When this was member checked, the young women also agreed that this was an important topic. Therefore, this informed the development of the schedule and questions for the second interview. Analysing the second interview, strong themes around the young women having a lack of agency and voice arose. It felt important that the final interview would focus on ensuring that their voices informed the evaluation of the research, and reflections on the process including dissemination. This understanding underpinned the third interview schedule. Although the interview questions were informed by the voices of the young women, they were also developed with the consideration of research conducted with similar cohorts of young people. These included life journeys of those in pupil referral units (Jalali & Morgan, 2017), transitions between education settings (O'Riordan, 2011) and experiences of being a marginalised group in a specialist setting (Russell & Thomson, 2011).

Alongside the construction of interview schedules and questions, I wanted to ensure that the style and approach within the interview was also informed by

ethical attunement. Rigid and structured approaches to interviewing children and young people can act as barriers to successful collaboration, especially with participants that are deemed hard to hear (Conolly, 2008). However, interviews which are underpinned by narrative principles (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008) overcome some of these difficulties. Such interviews invite the participant to freely express their story, starting from where they choose and allowing their narrative to guide the flow of topics (Kim, 2016). This challenges the unbalanced power dynamics that can be present when interviewing children and young people. Within a narrative interview, the interviewer is an active listener, rather than an interrogator with an inflexible agenda (Kim, 2016). However, this doesn't mean that the interviewer is passive. Curious but cautious questioning can then be used to deepen and explore answers, so that a richness of understanding can be obtained (Kim, 2016). Within this study, I used semi-structured interviews underpinned by narrative thinking and principles (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008) to elicit young women's voices and experiences. This allowed for a reflexive co-construction of knowledge, with the young women's voices guiding and informing the direction of the interview.

3.6 Person centred research tools

Inclusive and person-centred activities, used alongside interview questions, are a practical and supportive way of engaging young people in research (Conolly, 2008). Adopting such activities or tools, can enable rich and meaningful knowledge to be constructed with young people. The use of such tools to elicit pupil views has been demonstrated in several studies within AP (Jalali & Morgan, 2017; Sheffield & Morgan, 2016; Tellis-James & Fox, 2016). The current study adopted a similar approach. To support the co-construction of knowledge, I developed and adopted several person-centred research tools as part of the interview process. Similarly, inclusive visual aids were also used to ensure I had heard and understood the young women's views and narratives. These are outlined below in more detail.

3.6.1 Life Path- exploring experiences in and out of school

The 'Life Path' tool (O'Riordan, 2011) was used in the first interview to support the young women to explore their narratives. The tool is a visual prompt, using a timeline split into key timeframes in an individual's life. In the adaptation by

O'Riordan (2011), participant's life paths were split into 'preschool', 'primary school', 'secondary school' and 'the future' time slots, with 'home', 'school' and 'other' as categories for discussion. Tellis-James & Fox (2016) used the same adaptation but highlighted four phases of interview including; eliciting narratives about the future, eliciting narratives about the past, identifying strengths and resources in their lives, and exploring how these strengths and resources may help them in the future.

The 'Life Path' approach has been demonstrated as an effective methodology to structure thinking and support engagement as it removes the need for directive questioning. In this research, the 'Life Path' was presented as a mechanism for the young women to think about times or experiences in their lives that have been particularly important to them. The young women were then given the choice to create their own timeline (see figure one) or use the proforma provided (see figures two). If they chose the latter, young women were encouraged to start at the point that they felt was most important to them. The supported the young women to have ownership of the interview process.
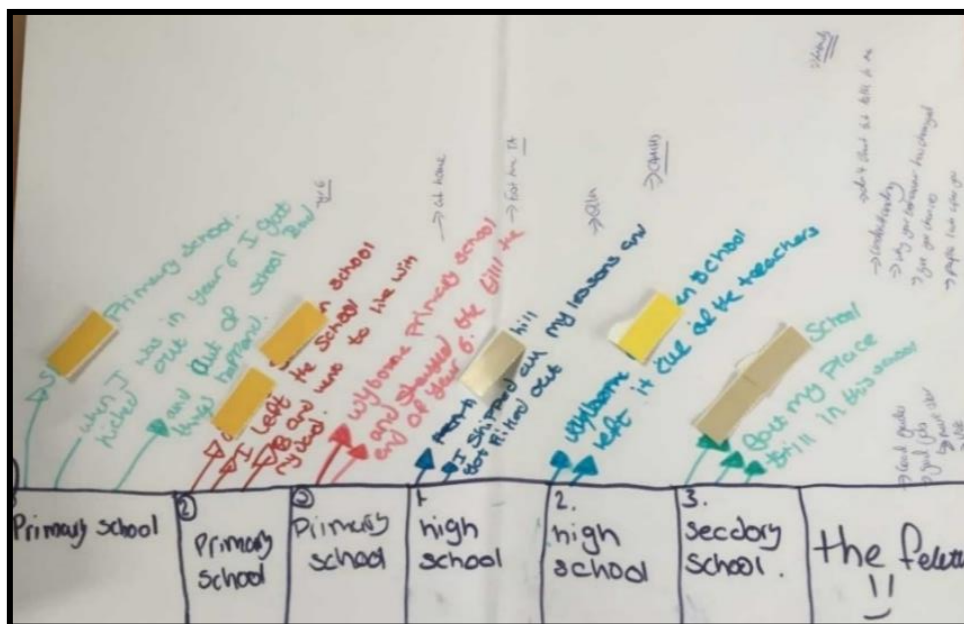
Figure one: Sarah's life grid
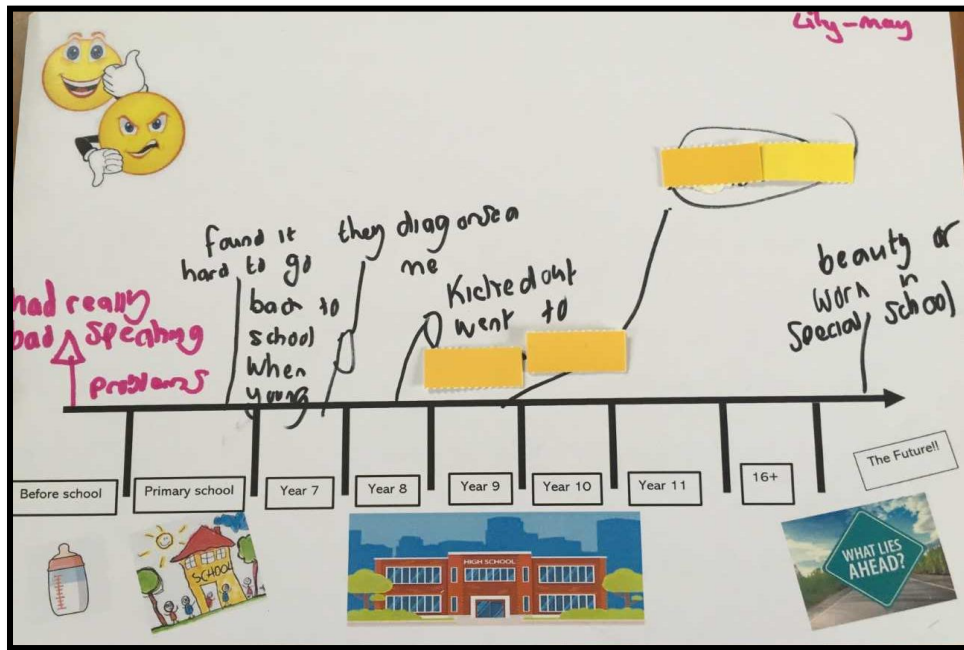
Figure two: Lily-Mae's Life Grid using pro-forma

3.6.2 'Ideal self'- exploring self-concepts and identity

The second interview was an opportunity to further explore themes raised in the initial interview, including the notion of self-concept and identity. Therefore, a technique called Drawing the Ideal Self (Moran, 2001) was used to aid this exploration. The technique is grounded in Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1995) and allows the researcher to understand the self-concepts and perceptions that a child or young person may have about themselves. A key feature of the process is adopting a curious approach to exploring the different conceptualisations the child has about themselves (Moran, 2001). Importantly these conceptualisations are then discussed with the participant as part of the process, so they can reflect on and take ownership of the experience. There is a scarcity of research using the technique to elicit views. However where it has been used, it has been evaluated as effective for supporting children with additional needs to express their thoughts and opinions (Tyrrell & Woods, 2018).

Within this study, the young women were first asked to think about a person they would least like to be, or the 'Non-Ideal' person. The young women were invited to draw the people if they wanted too (See figure three for an example).

They were then asked a series of questions about this 'person', their beliefs, their relationships, their future and their past. The young women then followed the same process, but instead for the person they would most like to be, or the 'Ideal' person. A rating scale was then used to explore where the young women felt they were most of the time, were they were in their previous school and where they were in the specialist setting. The young women were also asked to explore when they were closet to their 'Ideal' self and when they were furthest away, and what support they felt they would need to be closer to their ideal self.

Figure three: Becci's 'Ideal' and 'Non-ideal' selves

3.6.3 Ensuring young women had been 'heard'

Tracy, (2010) argues that credible and ethical research should follow a process of member reflections, whereby participants can critique, ask questions, feedback and validate the research findings and experience. Through this process, member reflections are an opportunity for collaboration and expansion, rather than just a test of research findings (Tracy, 2010). Member reflections also demonstrate the value held for participant's views and opinions, ensuring they have been fully understood and that their views and opinions are appropriately represented (Robson and McCartan, 2011). To ensure the young women felt heard and ethical attunement was maintained

throughout the research process, I adopted a process of member reflection after each stage of analysis. This was supported accessible thematic maps (see appendix three). Member reflections included checking that I had understood what the young women had told me and provided an opportunity for them to challenge my thinking, which informed the next steps in the process.

In addition to member reflections, it was imperative that the research ending was also informed by ethical attunement, holding the young women and their stories at the centre. As part of ending of the research relationship, young women were presented with a personalised letter, thanking them for their involvement, open approach and time (appendix four). The letters also contained an overview of the stories the young women had told about their lives and school experiences. Such approaches are often used within in narrative therapy. They can be a powerful and reflective mechanism to reaffirm the individual's 'chosen' story and ensure they feel heard (Bjoroy, Madigan, & Nylund, 2016).

3.7 Research process

The research process was iterative, reflexive and followed several steps. These steps included building rapport, developing the initial interview schedule, completing interview one, thematic analysis of interview one, member reflections, developing the schedule for interview two, interview two, thematic and narrative analysis, interview three, including member reflections and endings. The support of the staff within Riverford, especially the young women's key workers, was key to enabling the research to be carried out.

3.7.1 Rapport building

Given the reflexive nature of the research design, the small number of participants involved and the important of promoting individual's voices, it was felt that conducting a pilot interview would not be appropriate. Instead, reflexive rapport building opportunities were built into the initial stages of the research process. Mertens, (2010) describes the importance of the relationship between the researcher and participants in the co-construction of knowledge and understanding. However, this can be challenging when working with marginalised groups of young people, who are often over observed and scrutinised by adults (Aaltonen, 2016). I took careful consideration in planning

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how to build positive relationships with the young women, so that they could feel empowered to contribute to the research process.

Initially, members of staff from Riverford who had good relationships with the young women, spoke with them about the research and it's aims. A visual information sheet was provided to support these conversations (See appendix seven). Once they had expressed interest, I sought consent from parents and carers to speak with the young women about the research in school (see appendix five). I spent time with each young woman in different lessons, giving the chance for us to become acquainted away from the formalities of the research process. During these sessions, I was able to speak to the young women in depth about the research aims and explore potential topics that could be discussed during interviews. In addition, I was also able to discuss and discount methods I could use to elicit views. For example, prior to speaking with the young women I had hoped to give them journals to use in between interviews. However, during the rapport building stage, it became clear that the young women did not feel this would be a manageable, enjoyable or engaging resource, and therefore it was omitted from the process.

3.7.2 Process of the interviews

All the interviews took place in a quiet and confidential space within Riverford. The first two interviews were audio recorded and ranged between 25 to 80 minutes long. The final interview was not audio recorded but notes were made during the discussion.

The schedule for each interview contained a summary of topics to be covered and an outline of the task. For interview one (See appendix eight) these included, education experiences in different settings, important experiences outside of school and hopes for the future, and an outline of the 'Life Grid' task. For interview two this focused on using an accessible thematic map (See appendix nine) to explore themes from interview one in more depth. It also included the 'Ideal self' task (Moran, 2001) and prompts to explore their self-concept in relation to school.

The experience of building rapport enabled the young women to enter the interview space in an engaged and relaxed manner. However, I used general

questions and conversation at the start of each interview to enable them to feel calm, and to ensure they were positioned as central to the process. Kim (2016) highlights the importance of building a trusting researcher-participant relationship, which is subject to continuing negotiation and informed by the researcher's behaviour. This reflexive relationship was key throughout each interview in the current study, and was built on genuine care, interest and respect for each of the young women.

The task for each interview was then presented to the young women as an aid for the discussion. It was emphasised that they were able to choose how they would like to approach each task. For example; if they wanted to draw or write, or if they wanted me to do it for them, what point on their Life Grid they wanted to start, and the topics they wanted to highlight as important. The young women were free to explore topics of their interest at their own pace. I ensured I had understood what the young women had said by 'checking back' with them, using their own words. At times I would explore topics further by asking curious and open questions or prompts. At the end of each interview I debriefed the young women, to ensure that I had understood all they had told me and that nothing was missing. I also used this time to ensure that the young women were feeling emotionally and psychologically safe before returning to lessons.

The process of the final interview was different to the previous two, as the focus was on member checking and drawing the research relationship to an end (See appendix ten). The young women were all presented with an accessible map of the final themes and were asked if they felt what they had said had been captured, and if anything had been missed. Riessman (2008) highlighted that is not enough just to member check with participants to ensure their voice has been heard. Steps should also be taken to reflect on how this information will be disseminated, digested and understood by different audiences. Therefore, the young women were then asked how they'd like the information to be shared, who they'd like it to be shared with and what was the most important thing for adults and professionals to understand. The findings of the study will be shared with all school staff later in the academic year, to ensure the young women's voices are promoted and heard.

3.8 Ethical considerations

To ensure the emotional safety and well-being of the participants the Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014b) was followed throughout. University College London Institute of Education guidelines were also followed. Initially, I sought a GDPR data protection number for the study. The study was then given full ethical approval from the University College London-Institute of Education Ethics board, granted on the 5th of February 2018.

Due to the longitudinal nature of this study, informed consent was a significant part of the ongoing and ethically attuned relationship between participant and researcher. Considered reflections were made around young women's capacity for informed decision-making throughout the research process. This included recognition for the impact additional learning needs and mental health difficulties might have on informed consent. The safeguarding procedures and consent were revisited with the young women at each interview.

3.8.1 Safeguarding procedures

The young women in this study had been placed in AP due to difficulties experienced in previous education settings. It was anticipated that they may find questions about school and thinking about their school experience, uncomfortable or anxiety provoking. Prior to training as an EP, I had worked directly with many vulnerable children, young people, and adults, specifically those who had experienced difficulties with school. These experiences supported the management of emotionally sensitive situations during the interviews in a safe and containing way.

Considerations were made for each young woman so that they had a system for opting out of the research at any time, in a way that they feel most comfortable. These were decided before the interviews and were personal to each young woman. The young women were reminded at the start of each interview that they were able opt-out at any time and will not have to explain why they chose to opt-out.

After each interview, I reminded the young women what would be done with the information they had provided and encouraged them to speak with their

key adult if they have additional questions. I ensured the young women were in a good psychological and emotional state to return to class.

In addition, the safeguarding and child protection procedures within the school were strictly adhered too. The young women were fully debriefed after each interview. However, to ensure young women's emotional and psychological safety, their key worker 'checked-in' with them in the hours after the interview and then in between each set of interviews.

Whilst there is opportunity to develop an in-depth research relationship through a longitudinal design, this is also a threat of unconscious exploitation. Participants may reveal more than they otherwise would, due to a sense of trust and familiarity with the researcher (Weller, 2012). Therefore, the ethical tensions within the researcher and participant relationship were continually revisited throughout this study. The use of a research journal, supervision and discussion with school staff enabled a reflective approach.

3.9 My role as the researcher

Reflexivity is the process whereby emotional and intersubjective investment in research is critically acknowledged (Gemignani, 2017) By adopting reflexive stance within qualitative research, transparency and validity within the inquiry can be developed. This overt acknowledgement of the 'self' on the research reduces the influence of researcher subjectivity on observations and inferences (Gemignani, 2016). Kim (2016) highlights the importance of reflexivity within narrative inquiry, which is often working with ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictability.

The current study was based on a notion of reflexivity and ethical attunement. This included the acknowledgment and recognition of the influence my views, beliefs and experiences may have had on the research. This includes my personal experiences as a woman, and my professional work with marginalised and vulnerable women of all ages. My knowledge of special school systems, school exclusions and young people with SEMH, may have also influenced my role within the research.

As part of my reflexivity, especially given the vulnerabilities of the young women, I used supervision to reflect on the emotional processes taking place within the interviews. I was conscious of the projection of emotion that could

take place when discussing sensitive topics. Through this process of reflection and supervision I was able to ensure I was emotionally contained, creating a psychologically safe environment for the young women.

3.10 Data analysis

3.10.1 Inductive reasoning

When following an inductive approach, themes are developed from the data as the research progresses (Goddard & Melville, 2011). Inductive reasoning includes a 'bottom-up' process, extracting themes from the data, rather than using theory as a lens from which to understand the data (Goddard & Melville, 2004). This research followed a longitudinal, flexible and participatory design, promoting young women's voices as integral to the process. Therefore, an inductive approach to data analysis was used. This ensured data analysis was led by young women's voices, opinions and stories.

3.10.2 Dual-level analysis

(Edwards & Weller, 2012) suggest through the application of different analytical approaches, we can generate innovative understanding. Through a curious and dynamic approach, diverse facets of the data may be extrapolated. Through this process, Edwards and Weller (2012: 203) argue that:

"We believe that the construction of varying ontologies of self, through different process of data analysis, are complementary rather than exclusive"

Within this study I was concerned with gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences, views and voices of young women placed in AP. I recognised that there was diversity and individuality in the young women's narratives, but also that there were clear and distinctive commonalities in the stories they told. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was considered as an alternative method of analysis, due to its focus on individual' attributions and meanings made from their lived experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). However, the method is tied to a pre-existing theoretical framework and phenomenological epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This was not felt to fit with the exploratory and reflexive nature of the current research. Therefore, I decided that a dual-level analysis using Narrative and Thematic analysis would enable a holistic understanding of both the individual and group

experience. I felt that this would give an opportunity to explore the wider systemic and contextual factors surrounding the young women's experiences.

3.11 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is described as a 'family' of methods, which is used to interpret diverse data which have in common a storied form (Riessman, 2008). Within psychology, narrative analysis often explores long segments of talk which can be obtained in one off or multiple interviews. Different definitions of narrative often lead to a diverse range in the methods used for analysis (Riessman, 2008). Although there is no universally agreed method, all processes require researchers to select and organise text for detailed analysis, for example, consideration for the way the narrative is transcribed and subsequently organised for the reader. Close inspection of the text allows the researcher to interpret the narrative, exploring the shifting connections between past, present, and future (Riessman, 2008).

Narrative analysis is not deemed appropriate for large sets of participants, as it requires close attention to the nuance of spoken language, the organisation of speech, the interaction between researcher and participant, and the social and historical context in which personal narratives exist (Riessman, 2008).

3.11.1 The Listening Guide

The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) is a method for narrative analysis that has been applied by a range of researchers for three decades. The approach is predicated on the notion that personal narrative is an interplay of voices. It highlights that one voice does not exclude another, rather they exist in tandem presenting a harmonious or discordant relationship, interrupting or silencing and weaving in and out of another (Gilligan, 2015). The Listening Guide encourages researchers to move away from the categorical and often disjointed experience that comes from traditional coding approaches within psychological research (Gilligan, 2015).

As a method, it promotes the listening of marginalised people and understudied experiences. It encourages an exploration of how individuals negotiate the most complex and challenging parts of their lives (Sorsoli & Tolman, 2008). Gilligan, (1982) originally developed the 'Listening Guide' to explore the changes and continuities in their participant's data over time. They

used it to explore participant's narrative longitudinally, enabling them to develop a rich and intimate understanding.

The guide involves reading through transcripts in sequence at least four times, with each step focused on listening for differing aspects of the participant's narrative. The first step focuses on the overall story that is being told, looking for 'plot' including who is present, repeated words, striking themes, prominent metaphors, emotional moments or ruptures (Gilligan, 2015). The second reading or listening, is focused on 'I', the notion of the first-person voice and how it describes the self in relation to the world. 'I-poems' are created int his section, the process of which will be described in more detail below, in relation the current study. The final two stages of reading and listening focuses 'contrapuntal voices', the musicality, interplay and interaction between differing voices within a narrative (Gilligan, 2015).

The Listening Guide has been used in a wide range of research, predominantly within psychology and sociology. Hall et al., (2018) used the Listening Guide to explore the notion of student's mathematical identities. They argue that by using this method they were able to illuminate individual complexity around mathematical identity and propose implications for teaching practice. Edwards and Weller (2012), used the method, especially the creation of I-poems, to explore to explore change and permanency of a young person's sense of self over time. They highlight that the method is not without issues. The process is time consuming, requiring focused attention on a small selection of cases, making its application to larger samples impractical. They also acknowledge that the exploration of 'self' is not without subjectivity and that narratives are produced accounts, rather than absolute truths (Edwards & Weller, 2012). However, Edwards and Weller (2012) argue that the method enables a different analytic angle, whereby the researcher can 'stand alongside' their participants to better understand the narratives they produce about themselves.

3.11.2 Using 'The Listening Guide' within this study

'The Listening Guide' allows an open and flexible way of listening to participant's narratives. However, the approach is not always clearly defined, and researchers have often developed elements to fit with their subjects, aims and methods. Therefore, the application of the Listening Guide used within this

study is a culmination of experiences and views drawn from previous research (Edwards & Weller, 2007 & Hall et al., 2018). The process undertaken in this study will be outlined below.

Due to the inductive nature of the research the development of 'voices' during the analysis of the young women's narrative was not directed by pre-determined concepts. This enabled an opportunity to present all the possible voices within an individual's narrative, ensuring the analysis didn't 'flatten' the data (Edwards &Weller, 2007). Kiegalmann (2000) argues that by adopting this approach within the 'Listening Guide', researchers can better present the multidimensional nature of identity and self-concept.

The approach taken is outlined in detail below. The process was not linear, and instead followed a dynamic approach of moving back and forth between each step.

1. *Verbatim transcription*
   Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, in the language used by the young women (including slang), overlooking any utterances or pauses, but including punctuation if required to ease reading

2. *Familiarisation with the data (Listening and reading)*
   This process began during the transcription phase, where the data was first being explored. The written transcripts where then read alongside the audio recording, and initial thoughts were noticed. This stage was the same for both the Thematic and Narrative analysis process. See figure four for example.
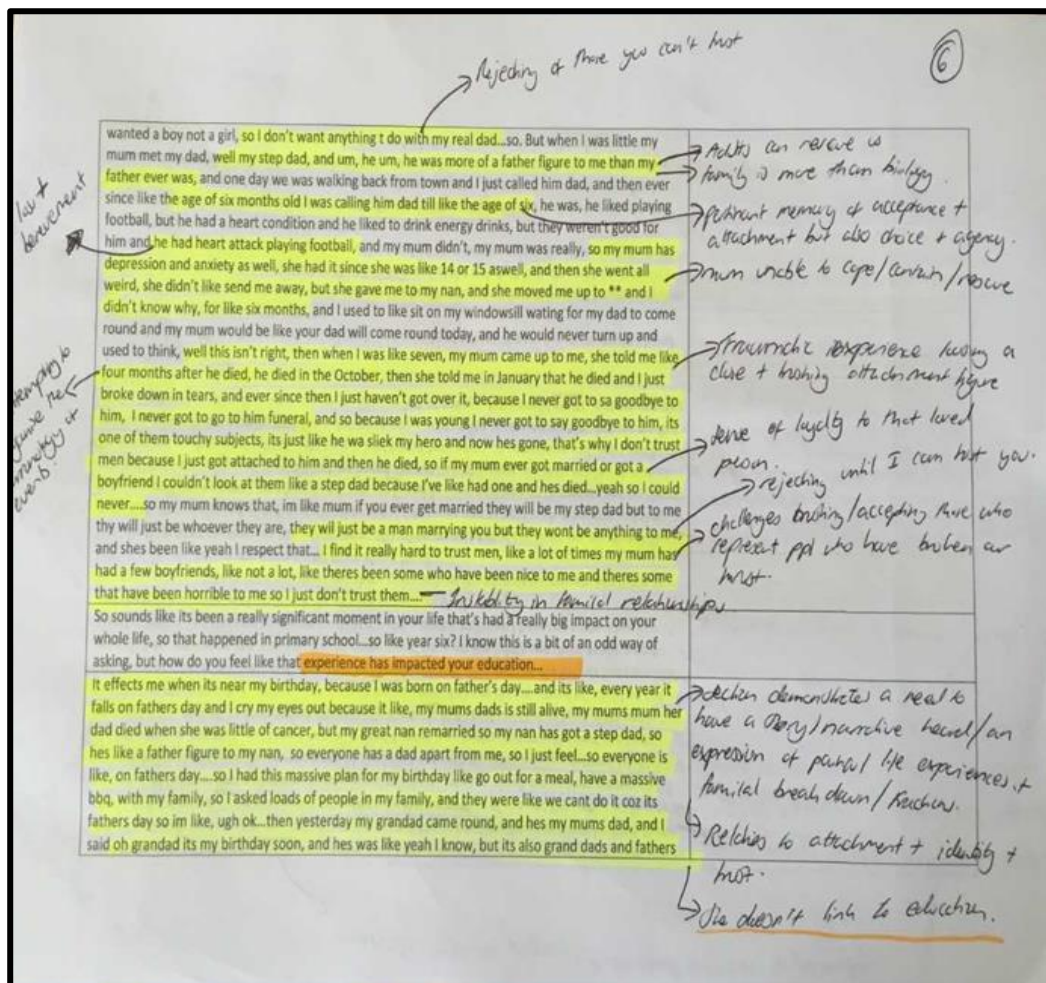
Figure four: Initial thoughts written on transcript

3. *Listening for the plot*

   Stage one was repeated however the narrative plot was listened too. Within this stage of listening, striking themes, repeated words, metaphors and symbols, moments of emotion or rupture and gaps in the story, were noted down. This process enabled an understanding of the key characters, and plot lines. Within in this stage was also a conscious reflection of the emotions, thoughts and feelings the narrative evoked in the listener. This enabled reflexivity to be maintained as the analysis progresses. See table one for example demonstrating the process of listening for plot within a transcript.

Table one: Example of drawing 'Plot lines' from transcript

Transcript	Plot line
Ummm, I saw him more than average, I saw him like every month, but like I was like kind of going off track I'd have to like see him and he'd give me like, not a lecture but like a calming lecture…he really say about my anger problems and being rude to people….	Mental health support-saviour/support-parenting role? "Angry" character re-emerging- who can support? Expressing sense of self
I think it was both things…my mum used to be like to me you're a naughty child because I didn't have a diagnosis and say you'll never get anywhere in life……yeah I cried, it seemed like she didn't care and she wasn't proud of me…	Ruptured relationship with mother character-Emotional distress from rupture Diagnosis supporting new attachments. Diagnosis is powerful? Rejection-mimicking earlier rejection…continuity of plot? "Mum didn't care"- repeated phrase, consistent plot line *Reflexivity- emotional response to the distress in this section. Trauma is ongoing for Lily-Mae*
Yeah it felt like she wanted to be there, it felt like she cared for me…	Shift in tone/plot within narrative after diagnosis -change in mother character "Mum cared"- Shift in the presentation of the 'mum' character- tension in the plot line between mum being present and mum not being present

4. *Creating I-poems*

   To create the 'I-poems', the transcript was methodically and chronologically read, and each statement including 'I' and accompanying text was extracted and placed on separate lines. Statements that were deemed representative of the individual's 'self' but included 'you' 'me' or 'they' were also extracted. See table two for an example of this process. The statements were then ordered into stanzas, based on the breaks in topics, voices, or themes. See table three for example of I-poem stanzas. Stanzas were then placed landscape on a page, moving from left to right, so the narrative could be viewed in its entirety.

Table two: Example of drawing 'I' statements from transcript to create 'I-poem'

Original Transcript	I-Poem stanzas
Yeah coz that was year 7 and I have depression, I was self-harming a lot, and the like I wasn't because he (psych) was the only person I could tell everything too and my mum and him I could tell everything too… I dunno but like if you're feeling low, then you need someone to talk to, otherwise you might do something… Yeah, yeah, I dropped out of school, I didn't go to any lessons…whereas when I'm here I've had few upset days and where I've self-harmed but nothing like I used too I think coz it's like calm…well not like calm in here, but like smaller groups and like, I feel like the friends here are better than friends in mainstream because they understand you and have the same issues as you…yeah Yeah, so like when I went back it was really weird, they basically was like we don't want you anymore, so then I was like at *** (PRU) for six months…I supposed to be there for six weeks, but it turns out I was so naughty I had to stay there for six months…but they couldn't find me a school so I went back to ** for like two months, then the council got involved and I came to this school…	**S17** Year 7 and I have depression I was self-harming a lot I wasn't because he (psych) was the only person I could tell everything too My mum and him I could tell everything too If you're feeling low You need someone to talk to Otherwise you might do something **S18** I dropped out of school I didn't go to any lessons When I'm here I've had few upset days I've self-harmed Nothing like I used too I think coz it's like calm **S19** I feel like the friends here are better They understand you and have the same issues as you **S20** When I went back it was weird I was like at *** (PRU) for six months I supposed to be there for six weeks I was so naughty I had to stay there for six months I went back to ** for like two months I came to this school

Table three: Extract from completed I-Poem

| (S8)
I got my Anxiety and Depression diagnosis
I was depressed
I was always crying and stuff
I couldn't get out of bed for school or nothing
I was depressed
But I got diagnosis at the beginning of the year

(S24)
I used to have anxiety attacks
I wouldn't like hear what people were saying
I couldn't like move
I would shake, and my head would go back
I would tilt my head back and seize up
I couldn't move

(S25)
I just left
I didn't do anything
I just stayed at home
I didn't really do anything at all
I just wouldn't go to school
I didn't want to go to school
I didn't like it
I was scared that it was going to be the same

(S34)
I'm really struggling at the moment
I've been struggling a lot
yesterday I cried
The day before I cried my eyes out
I don't know why
I just cry
But I get over it | ....
(S46)
I've got anxiety, depression and ASD
I was having like really bad mental health
I was all over the place
I didn't know how to be or how to act
I got an appointment to CAMHS
I'm medicated from depression and anxiety
I'm all like diagnosed
If I wasn't, then I would probably be how I was last year
I would have been how I am now
I am thankful
....
(S47)
I've got four diagnosis now
I have something like anxiety with secondary depression
....
(S48)
I get really bad days
I'm still medicating
I'm on 125g
I think that's quite bad
I feel happier than I was
I think it's like proper bad
I'm happy I'm on it because it makes me happy
I'm happier and get along with people
I'm always like sleeping
Even if I'm not ill I will always go home and sleep
I'm not really eating much at the moment
I normally am
If I don't take them, I'm like proper bad
I wake up
I don't need them today
But then I take them
.... |

5. *'Ideal/Non-Ideal' self*

    Narrative around young women's 'Non-ideal' and 'Ideal' self was also broken into stanzas, to create two separate, short poems. Statements that represented elements of the Non-ideal and Ideal self, were also extracted in chronological order and placed line by line. The two poems were presented opposite one another, so the polarised narrative could

be seen visually. See table four for example of completed 'Ideal/Non-ideal' self.

Table four: Frankie's 'Ideal/non-ideal' poem

Non-ideal	Ideal self
I dunno, chavvy, rude They don't really have much They can be rude and horrible They can't be bothered They'd be nice, they'd be different They're family would be nagging They'd still be different at home Wrong crowd Prison Going to prison Not having any money Not being able to do stuff	She'd be Happy She'd be presentable She'd be approachable She would have money, They'd be well off She'd get along with people, knows what she wants with her life She'd get along with everybody She's happy They do lots of things together They'd think she was fun Bubbly Nice She's focused Good at concentrating Gets along with the teachers She fears losing people She concentrated She's had a happy nice life She's got a nice supportive family She's got good friends She'll have a nice career

6. *Listening three and four*

   During this stage the whole narrative was read and re-read several times for contrapuntal voices. This involved listening for 'voices' within the narrative and exploring how these interacted with one another and changed over time. Stanzas containing different voices were underlined or colour coded, so that shifts, changes and moments of intensity in the voices could be seen visually, when the narrative was viewed as whole. See table five for an example of this process. At times the narrative was

read alongside the audio of the interview, to ensure the richness of meaning was not lost.

Table five: Example of the process of locating contrapuntal voices

Stanzas 8-11	Voices	Stanzas 12-15	Voices
S8 I got my Anxiety and Depression diagnosis I was depressed I was always crying and stuff I couldn't get out of bed for school or nothing I was depressed But I got diagnosis at the beginning of the year S9 When I was little, when my dad died S10 I used to get bullied I used to get bullied because of what I looked like I just couldn't like cope with it I used to just say I can't I just didn't like the school at all S11 I started get bullied I was getting like Fs and Us I started like going down and that I wouldn't talk about it I didn't want her to like I just went to school I would just go home to bed I wouldn't eat or drink I wouldn't eat or drink I used to just wear a load of make-up I used to just like I wouldn't eat anything I'd just starve myself I overdosed	(S8) Impact of mental health throughout narrative. Sense of helplessness and not coping. Positive experience of diagnosis as a validation of mental health needs and difficulties in school. **(Mental health is overwhelming)** **(Diagnosis is powerful)** (S9) Trauma and loss Disrupted family (S10) (S11) Rejection and social isolation from bullying experience. Impacting mental health and ability to manage in school. Not going to school as a way of coping with rejection **(Rejection/bullying)**	S12 When I had the CAMHS person they helped S13 Some mornings I don't want to come here I just like can't be bothered I'm just feeling like shitty S14 When I do come here I feel like I can be myself I can be what I want to be like I can be like a hyper Frankie S15 When I was at the other school I would just walk around with my head down I had the group of friends I had they were really like supportive of me I left because everyone would like <u>fall</u> out with me I was naive I'd be like 'oh well its fine' I realised that as I got older I matured up more and that	(S12) Agency support (S13) Mental health impacting school **(Mental health is overwhelming)** (S14) Special school allows her to express herself, compares to mainstream **(Authentic self)** (S15) feeling of being out of place but need to find psychological mechanisms to protect herself. **(Defence mechanism)**

3.12 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a process of thoroughly identifying, organising and providing understanding into patterns of meaning across qualitive data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It enables an opportunity to make sense of collective meanings and experiences between participants, which are grouped into themes (Braun & Clarke 2013). The value of a theme is not necessarily determined by its quantitative frequency across a dataset, but by the significance and emphasis placed on the theme within participant's accounts

(Floersch et al., 2010). The value of a theme is also determined by its ability to deepen understanding of existing knowledge about the subject of inquiry (Floersch, 2010). Through this process, a greater exploration and understanding of experience can be achieved.

I decided to use thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2013) alongside the narrative analysis to achieve a more holistic understanding of the young women's experiences. Thematic analysis differs from narrative analysis, in that its purpose is not to make sense of idiosyncratic meaning within singular data set (Braun & Clarke 2013). Whilst the narrative analysis used within this study explored individuality and temporality, the thematic analysis extrapolated shared meaning and commonality between young women's accounts. This extended and expanded the knowledge and understanding around their experiences. Joining thematic and narrative analysis has been used effectively in prior research. In an evaluation of multi-analysis methods Floersch, (2010) concluded that the integration of thematic and narrative analysis produced a multidimensional understanding of their research topic.

Similar analytical methods to thematic analysis, such as content analysis, were considered for this study. Although content analysis also searches for patterns, it looks to quantify qualitative data through statistical analysis, such as the frequency of particular words or phrases (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). However, due to the inductive and flexible design and the social constructionist ontology of the current study, such an approach would not have been appropriate. Thus, I chose to utilise thematic analysis. By using a method which could be responsive to the data, I was able to develop rich and complex accounts of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis has some limitations, namely the potential bias in researcher interpretation. However, through a process of personal reflexivity, member reflections with the young women and academic supervision I was able to ensure a good degree of objectivity. Coded and themed transcripts were also corroborated by a doctoral colleague, which enabled scrutiny of my interpretation and understanding.

I conducted two thematic analyses within this research, both following the same procedure, however the second analysis included all twelve interviews across the two time points.

This process is outlined in detail below. As with the narrative analysis, the analysis was not linear, but followed a recursive process of going back and forth to the data.

1. *Coding*

   Sections of the data were given meaningful codes. This process was recursive, and the transcripts were read and re-read, with codes being split or refined until a final coded transcript was achieved. Codes were given an index number relating to participant, time point and extract number.

Table six: Example of coded transcript

Extract	Index	Code
Oh ok, so they don't shout, they talk...what is it do you think that is important for you about people talking and not shouting?		
If you like shout, it gets me like more annoyed, because it's like annoying....so then like they go on again, they keep going on..	17	T1E17: Poor communication aggravates T1E17: Punitive approach shuts down engagement T1E17: Punitive approach mirrors earlier trauma (?)
So when people talk instead of shout, how does that make you feel?		
It makes me feel better; it makes me feel calm down....	18	T1E18: Acknowledging me helps my emotional well being T1E18: Containment through calm communication
Ok, so what's important to you and your education?		
Well, I want to get good grades, and I want try my hardest but sometimes if the boys like, coz the boys sometimes mess around in our classes, so it stops me from learning...so they mess around and like, if they are in a bad mood they like throw tables and like mess around and the teachers like some of the teachers, like, don't teach us, they get involved in the situation with them, so I'm always the one who is waiting for them to calm down	19	T1E19: Educational aspiration is important T1E19: Male dominated environment impacts educational engagement T1E19: Male aggression dominating environment T1E19: Not being noticed/acknowledged in the classroom (left behind)
Hmm, so how does that make you feel?		
Sometimes it makes me feel annoyed because I want to get a good GCSE mark but I'm getting used it...	20	T1E20: Peers impacting educational aspiration

2. *Searching for themes*

   I then manually sorted indexed codes into piles to form initial themes. Themes were then moved, merged, divided and renamed, until they were grouped into potential themes and subthemes.

3. *Reviewing themes*

Themes were then checked against indexed data, to ensure they were appropriate. Themes were moved and renamed, and some extracts were appointed different themes. Themes were checked across the entire data set.

Table seven: Example of checking themes

Extract	Code	Theme
If you like shout, it gets me like more annoyed, because it's like annoying….so then like they go on again, they keep going on...	T1E17: Poor communication aggravates T1E17: Punitive approach shuts down engagement T1E17: Punitive approach mirrors earlier trauma (?)	**Breakdown in the relationship with mainstream** Fractious interactions with school staff
So, when people talk instead of shout, how does that make you feel?		
It makes me feel better, it makes me feel calm down…..	T1E18: Acknowledging me helps my emotional well being T1E18: Containment through calm communication	**Emotional safety through relationships** Containing and responsive staff in Riverford
Ok, so what's important to you and your education?		
Well, I want to get good grades, and I want try my hardest but sometimes if the boys like, coz the boys sometimes mess around in our classes, so it stops me from learning…so they mess around and like, if they are in a bad mood they like throw tables and like mess around and the teachers like some of the teachers, like, don't teach us, they get involved in the situation with them, so I'm always the one who is waiting for them to calm down	T1E19: Educational aspiration is important T1E19: Male dominated environment impacts educational engagement T1E19: Male aggression dominating environment T1E19: Not being noticed/acknowledged in the classroom (left behind)	**Pervasive difficulties with managing school** Destabilising impact of peer conflict

4. *Defining and naming themes*

Themes were considered in relation to the wider "story" of the data and given final names for analysis.

3.13 Methodology summary

This study adopted a longitudinal, participatory approach, underpinned by a notion of ethical attunement. Person-centred research tools were used to support the young women's inclusion and engagement with the research

process. A dual-level analysis was used to enable an in-depth understanding of the young women's experiences. This included the use of an innovative narrative analysis method "The Listening Guide" (Gilligan, 1982) to develop knowledge around the young women's individual experiences. To ensure an understanding of the commonalities between their experiences was captured a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was also used. Reflexivity, validity and transparency of the study was achieved through recursive member reflections between me and the young women. These took place after each interview and at the end of the research process.

Chapter Four: Young women's narratives

Within this chapter, a narrative analysis of each the young women's interviews using 'The Listening Guide' methodology (Gilligan, 2015) will be presented. This analysis reveals the consistencies, changes, tensions and themes within their stories, and how these interact at different time points. This will enable the reader to understand the young women in greater depth, adding wider context to their school experiences.

To ensure each young woman's voice was equally promoted, the individual analysis of their narratives will be presented in turn. Each analysis will highlight the contrapuntal 'voices' identified within their 'I-Poems'. Interpretation of the relationship between the 'voices', and the young women's experiences will also be presented. For each 'voice' or set of 'voices', an associated and illustrative 'I-Poem' extract will be given.

Due to the word limitations of the Doctoral thesis, full presentation of the 'I-Poem' analysis for each young woman could not be given within this chapter. An extended extract can be found in appendix eleven and a summary of each young women's 'Ideal/non-ideal' self can be found in appendix two.

Due to the importance of maintaining the authenticity of the young women's voices, the quotes included in all chapters are verbatim. However, it is important to note that at times this includes potentially unfamiliar 'slang', ungrammatical expressions and language that the reader may find offensive.

4.1 Frankie

Throughout Frankie's narrative, the notion of mental health is pervasive and consistently present. She perceived mental health as having a detrimental influence on her relationship with school and education, and as being key to her placement in Riverford. Two contrapuntal voices were identified in Frankie's narrative in relation to mental health, firstly **'*My mental health is overwhelming'*** and secondly '*My diagnosis is empowering'.*

S34	S48
I'm really struggling at the moment	**I get really bad days**
I've been struggling a lot	**I'm still medicating**
yesterday I cried	I'm on 125g
The day before I cried my	**I think that's quite bad**
eyes out	<u>I feel happier than I was</u>
I don't know why	**I think it's like proper bad**
I just cry	<u>I'm happy I'm on it because it makes me</u>
But I get over it	<u>happy</u>
	<u>I'm happier and get along with people</u>
S46	**I'm always like sleeping**
I've got anxiety, depression and	**Even if I'm not ill I will always go**
ASD	**home and sleep**
I was having like really bad	**I'm not really eating much at the**
mental health	**moment**
I was all over the place	**I normally am**
I didn't know how to be or	<u>If I don't take them, I'm like proper bad</u>
how to act	<u>I wake up</u>
<u>I got an appointment to CAMHS</u>	<u>I don't need them today</u>
<u>I'm medicated from depression</u>	<u>But then I take them</u>
<u>and anxiety</u>	
<u>I'm all like diagnosed</u>	
<u>If I wasn't, then I would probably</u>	
<u>be how I was last year</u>	

'***My mental health is overwhelming'*** narrates an all-consuming experience to the listener. Within this voice is exhaustion and a lack of control, as Frankie attempts to manage school and her mental health. Although mental health consistently disrupts and impacts Frankie's ability to manage, a new voice *'My diagnosis is empowering'* is identified when she moves to Riverford. Within this voice, Frankie seems to have her experiences validated, highlighting that diagnosis resulted in support and intervention. However, these two voices

present as conflicting, with mental health continuing to burden Frankie despite the positive change she associates with diagnosis. This conflict is also present in her description of medication and the impact that it has on her ability to manage in school.

The next voice within Frankie's narrative, is *"My authentic self"*.

S14
When I do come here
I feel like I can be myself
I can be what I want to be like
I can be like a hyper Frankie

Within this voice there is a shift in Frankie's perception of herself as she moves into Riverford. There is a sense within this voice that the change in provision gave Frankie an opportunity to present a 'true' self. There is also a sense of ownership and autonomy within this voice, which acts as a stark comparison to the lack of control described at other points in her narrative.

Two further contrapuntal voices, *"I'm an adult. I'm in control"* and *"I need you to care",* are present in Frankie's narrative.

S40	S42
I have an EHCP which helps me	If I need to go see my nan
Trying to tell me I'm not allowed to have a break	I have to go see my nan
I had to tell them	If I'm anxious
I'm allowed to have a break	I need to go and see my nan
I was like, yes you do	I'm like, no I want my nan
It's because I'm a child, they don't listen to me	I just want my nan
I'm an adult next year	
If I was ten fair enough but I'm not	
I'm 17	

These seem to demonstrate a tension between her desire for independence, adulthood and autonomy, whilst still needing to be supported and contained. Her narrative seems to express growing independence, as she tries to move away from her past self into her future more adult self. Although Frankie is still in a place of transition between child and adult, a sense of autonomy and control seem integral to her self-concept.

The notion of difficult relationships is a prominent and revisited theme within Frankie's' narrative. Two contrapuntal voices expressing this experience of relationships work in tandem in her narrative, **"I'm rejected, I'm abandoned"** and *"I must protect myself".*

S20
<u>I don't trust men</u>
I just got attached to him and then he died
I've like had one and he's died
<u>I could never</u>
<u>I find it really hard to trust men</u>
<u>I just don't trust them</u>

This first voice outlines experiences of relational rupture, and a sense of loss and abandonment. There is much suffering portrayed in this first voice, and it seems to interweave with voices around mental health and sense of belonging. The **"I'm rejected, I'm abandoned"** voice seems to inform the second, and within it is presented a sense of 'self' protection mechanisms to ensure rejection and abandonment aren't revisited.

4.2 Becci

Within her narrative Becci described her experience of identity including her sexuality and gender. Within these experiences, two contrapuntal voices were identified including *'I am vulnerable'* and *'I have been shamed'.*

S7	S27
I'm not good with change	I'm quite a weird person
I started being open about being trans	I embrace being weird

Everyone knew I was gay	*I was like shamed for*
I had come out as Bi	*being different at my old*
I came out as gay	*school*
I was trans	*I was just never*
I trusted someone	*believed*
I came out suddenly	
I lost all these friends	

Through these voices Becci describes how expressing her true self left her open to experiences of shaming and isolation. The **'I am vulnerable'** voice seems to highlight Becci's sense of betrayal from those she thought she could trust, after revealing her gender identity. The 'I have been shamed' voice seems to be present the consequence of the **'I am vulnerable'** voice. Becci describes several significant incidents of shaming from her fellow classmates, which seems to be integral to her ongoing narrative of rage and mistrust but also of resilience.

Another distinctive voice identified within Becci's narrative was named **'I will show my rage'**. This voice seems to work in tandem with the **'I am vulnerable'** and 'I have been shamed' voices.

S14
I mean
I cried a little bit
I broke down
I was going through like bulimia
I want to fucking kill myself because of all of you
I became the bully that bullies bullies!
I got revenge
I would pretend I liked everyone just to get 'em
I had no sympathy for anyone
I would walk round the school stirring the pot
I had this master plan of tearing everyone apart

Becci's negative experiences within school seem to have a profound and significant impact on her emotions, which was most often expressed as rage. This voice was especially prominent at the start of Becci's narrative, where she uses visceral and emotive language to portray to the listener the significance of her experience.

Two further contrapuntal voices seemed to emerge around her sense of self-worth; **'I'm courageous'** and _'I'm not good enough'_.

S5	S20
I've kind of been brave ever since I was little **I'm really proud of myself**	_I can't have a good thing_ _I kind of felt I didn't have any worth_ _I came here_ _Still didn't think I had any worth_ But I've met some great people

Although **'I'm courageous'** doesn't arise often, it is expressed with strength and ferocity, demonstrating a sense of resilience, confidence and sureness. However, another voice seems to arise from Becci's narrative, _'I'm not good enough'_. Within this voice Becci seems to express an inner voice of criticality, one that seems to be just as emotive as **'I'm courageous'** voice. These two voices seem to work against one another, whilst Becci tries to make sense of her experiences.

Becci's narrative seems to be temporal in nature, with some of the voices, themes and characters being pertinent to different chapters of her story. A particularly stark shift arises towards the end of Becci's story when she moves to college. A voice, **'I'm not one of you'** was woven through her discussion.

S33	S36
I'm in college and it's all changed	**I don't have to be around these people**

I've gone to college	*I'm not though*
I definitely prefer college	*I'm not like them*
I still don't really like people here	*I'd hang around with outside of here*
	Not really people I enjoy being with

This voice seems to distance Becci from peers in Riverford, describing her as different, older and more mature. This change in tone is distinctive compared to earlier experiences, where Becci describes peers in Riverford as people she can relate too, feel safe around and connect with.

4.3 Charlotte

Throughout Charlotte's narrative she explores the difficulties she has experienced in school and the impact that has on her sense of self. It is particularly poignant that Charlotte uses the word 'struggle' or 'struggling' consistently through her story, as a way of expressing her experience to the listener.

At the start of her narrative Charlotte discusses the disruption in her early life, including being adopted. Later in her story, she links this disruption to the difficulties she has experienced in school. Within this story the voice **'I understand myself',** makes links between Charlotte's experience and subsequent behaviour. However, this voice seems to quieten over the course of her story and the voice *'My emotions are overwhelming'* is identified.

S25	S38
Why I was struggling	*I don't understand why I'm like it*
Why I am the way I am	*I get annoyed*
Trying to get the help that I need	*I dunno why I've done it*
	I feel bad

Within this voice Charlotte seems to lose her assured tone, and she describes to the listener experiences which seem almost out of her control, leaving her confused and upset.

Throughout Charlotte's narrative she seems to describe a fractious and challenging relationship with learning. This is particularly prominent within her account of mainstream school. Two contrapuntal voices relating to her experience as a learner were identified.

S8	S14
I get really frustrated	I like was supposed to go
I get upset	I dropped one
I can't do it	I only did three
I just feel stupid	I'd like to go down to the unit
	I was supposed to do like extra English
	and maths
	I'd go down there
	I wouldn't do anything

Within the first voice *'I'm not able'*, Charlotte seems to be expressing her insecurities around learning, and the negative experiences she has had within the classroom. Within this voice is a critical tone, which seems to elicit feelings of fear and anxiety. A second voice *'I need to escape'* was also identified. Within this voice Charlotte seems to describe the mechanisms and behaviours she has used to avoid the negative feelings that accompany the *'I'm not able'* voice.

Despite these difficulties Charlotte was keen to express to the listener moments of achievement and success in her learning. Although these moments are quieter in Charlotte's narrative than other voices, they seem to be distinctive punctuation points in a story of insecurity and uncertainty.

S6
I work at my gymnastics club
I coach
I passed my level 0

Two further contrapuntal voices were identified within Charlotte's narrative, ***'I'm supported'*** and *'I'm not understood'.*

S10	S16
I'm struggling with something	I was being silly
I can speak to her	I wasn't listening
I know that she's trying to help	*In mainstream school if you do something wrong*
I can learn	*They still hold it against you*
I can leave school not like struggling	*I'm not letting her into my class and then*
	You're not coming in this lesson
	You did this like three weeks ago
	You can't do this now
	Made me feel annoyed
	I never went to their lesson

These two voices seem to present a sense of conflict in Charlotte's experience of how others perceive and support her within school. The ***'I'm supported'*** voice seems to express Charlotte as someone whose needs are recognised and supported. Consequently, in response to this voice, Charlotte then presents herself as someone who enjoys school, someone who is more assured and someone who is connected to others. The second voice *'I'm not understood'* seems to express Charlotte as someone who is misjudged and excluded. Within this voice Charlotte seems to portray conflicting feelings of frustration, hurt and at times, abandonment. These seem a stark contrast to the ***'I'm supported'*** voice.

4.4 Lily-Mae

Lily-Mae's story explores moments of difficulty within her familial relationships. These seem to have consistent and distinctive impact on her school experience.

Two contrapuntal voices were identified within Lily-Mae's narrative including, *'I want to be close with my mum'* and *'My mum is distant'*.

S23	S33
I think mum was supporting me a bit more with my depression I did a lot better at school **I got more levels up when my mum understood me**	I don't really have a lot of that at the minute I'm always getting excluded I don't know I think it's playing a big part I dunno I think I just normally **If I was at home** **I could tell my mum about everything** I can't tell my foster carer I can tell her some bits but not all of it

These voices seem to represent the conflict of emotion Lily-Mae has about the relationship with her mother. The *'I want to be close with my mum'* voice seems to express a sense of intimacy in their relationship but also Lily-Mae's need for her mother's presence for her mental well-being and comfort. This voice runs alongside another; *My mum is distant'.* Within this voice Lily-Mae seems to express a sense of pain, experienced as a result of the emotional and physical distance from her mother. Within both voices, Lily-Mae's sense of self seems to be expressed as a reflection of how her mother views her. Therefore, her presentation of self is undulating alongside their relationship.

Another two contrapuntal voices where identified within Lily-Mae' narratives including **_'I'm angry, and I'll show'_** and _'I'm hurting inside'_.

S9	S17
I just get really angry	Year 7 <u>and I have depression</u>
I dunno I just can't	<u>I was self-harming a lot</u>
I can't explain	I wasn't because he (psych) was the only person
	I could tell everything too
	<u>If you're feeling low</u>
	<u>You need someone to talk to</u>
	<u>Otherwise you might do something</u>

These two voices seem to describe to the reader the conflict Lily-Mae experiences within her sense of 'self'. Within the **_'I'm angry, and I'll show'_** voice, Lily-Mae seems to be explaining to the listener the outward expression of her inner experience, which is displayed as anger and physical violence. Using visceral language, Lily-Mae demonstrates the intensity of her emotional experience to the listener. However, alongside this voice is another, _'I'm hurting inside',_ where Lily-Mae expresses her vulnerability and a sense of being overwhelmed and hurt.

Another two voices identified within Lily-Mae's narrative, seemed to express her sense of self as it is experienced by others around her.

S5	S21
I liked them apart from ****	**I felt like my behaviour got worse**
They like knew who you was	**I feel like**
What you was about	**I was in *** I never got in trouble with the police**
They didn't talk to you like you was a naughty kid	**I went to that school**
They'd let you come into lesson and talk to them	**I hung around with the wrong people**
Mainstream teachers they'd like talk to your mum about it	

I feel like they actually care here	**I personally felt like it wasn't the right school for me**

The first voice identified was **'I can't be kept safe'.** Within this voice Lily-Mae seems to describe to the listener a sense of being out of control and uncontained by the adults around her. Lily-Mae seems to emphasis a sense of extremity in this presentation of her 'self'. However, the second voice _'I'm understood',_ seems to express a different experience to the listener. Through the actions and responses of staff within Riverford, Lily-Mae seemed to have the opportunity to present a different part of her 'self'. Through this voice Lily-Mae seemed connected to and cared for by others, which has a positive impact on the way she views her 'self'.

4.5 Sarah

Within Sarah's narrative several contrapuntal voices were the identified, including **'I can't be managed'** and _'I'm not cared for'_.

S11	S35
I felt annoyed	I've never been excluded…
I feel they don't actually like care	**No, I was excluded…**
If I went to them	**I got kicked out of my secondary school**
Asked them if I could like talk	**I got kicked out of my primary school**
I lost a friend	**I got kicked out of ******
I was going to talk to the head teacher	**I got kicked out of *****
I feel that like	**I left ******
What I was going to talk to them about	**I basically got kicked out**
I was best friends with the girl	**I got kicked out of *****
I found out	
I was in bed, my sister was crying	
I think she knew	
I'd be really upset	

These voices seem to work in tandem as Sarah describes her experiences of multiple exclusions from different schools. The tone within these voices seems to express a sense of helplessness and an assumption that exclusion or removal from school is inevitable. Within this voice there also seems to be a frustration that her psychological distress is not acknowledged when decisions around her placement in different education settings are made. Although these voices seem to quieten as Sarah's narrative moves through time, they become prominent again in her last interview, where Sarah seems reiterate her experiences of exclusion to the listener.

Two further voices identified in Sarah's narrative were *'I am bad'* and *'I am not in control'*.

S7	S38
I want to get good grades	<u>I can't control how I feel</u>
I want to try my hardest	<u>I dunno</u>
I'm always the one who is waiting for them to calm down	<u>I feel</u>
I want to get a good GCSE mark	<u>I can't explain</u>
I'm getting used it	<u>Why I'm like this</u>
S19	
I didn't do my work	
I refused to go to lesson he would just send me home	
I don't really remember a lot of it	
I know	
I know	
I was bad	
I was the worst student in the school	
I dunno	
I hadn't been in school for ages	

These were prominent throughout Sarah's description of education, and the perception she had of herself within these experiences. There is a sense of powerlessness within both voices and this seems consistent over time. Within the **'I am bad'** voice, Sarah seems to warn the listener, highlighting the extremity within her experiences. There was also a notion of secrecy within this voice, almost that this part of herself is so 'bad' that it can't even be spoken out loud. Alongside this voice runs a second, *'I'm not in control'*. This voice is interchangeable, and at times seems to describe the way control is removed from Sarah by others, for example, when she is placed out of her mother's care, due to an undisclosed incident where she had to 'save' her mother. Sarah described how she is then moved to live with her father, a key figure in her narrative who had left her when she was young. Sarah's progress in school often seems contingent on the decisions made by the adults around her. The *'I'm not in control'* voice also seems to describe the lack of control she feels over herself and her behaviour.

An additional voice was identified within Sarah's narrative is 'I am aspirational' (S7). This contradicts the more negative voices in her narrative but seems consistent over time. This voice can seem quietened by others and is often marked with self-doubt and restricted by uncertainty.

4.6 Queen

Throughout her narrative Queen refers to the difficult experiences that took place early in her life. She describes to the listener the emotional pain of being removed from her parents and the impact that had on her experience of school. Within this part of Queen's narrative two contrapuntal voices were identified **'I experience pain'** and *'I have no control'*.

S9	S45
I was meeting new people	**I don't like live with my mum and my dad**
Really hard like keeping the friends that I loved	**I don't sometimes it comes up**
Support me with the things that I've been through	**I feel like crushed inside and that**
<u>You're moving around all over like England</u>	
<u>You just don't know like where you are gunna go</u>	

Within the first voice Queen seems to express a part of her 'self' that has experienced immense emotional trauma as a result of family separation. The pain and feeling expressed within these voices are expressed throughout Queen's narrative. The second voice identified, *<u>'I have no control'</u>* moves alongside the first and seems to develop as a response to the difficult experiences Queen has faced. Within this voice Queen expresses a sense of her 'self' without agency or control over her experiences, constantly being moved and in transition.

Another two voices identified within Queen's narrative was **'I'm angry'** and *<u>'I am someone to fear'</u>*.

S14	S28
<u>I got bullied by people saying things</u>	<u>I tripped over this boy's foot</u>
<u>I just got fed up with it</u>	<u>I slapped him around his face</u>
<u>I started bullying them</u>	I said
I was young like five years old	I will
I started to get like angry, angry	I wish
	<u>I had a chainsaw to cut your throat open</u>

Not like I'm born with all this anger	I said fine
	I'll go get a knife
	I went to get a knife
	I got excluded

These voices appear consistently throughout Queen's narrative, often reflecting moments of challenge or trauma. Within the **'I'm angry'** voice, Queen describes an overwhelming emotional experience whereby her anger spills and consumes her 'self'. Within this voice Queen expresses her emotional experience as internalised as well as externalised. Her anger is not only directed outwards to others but towards her 'self'. Within the second voice *'I am someone to fear,* Queen uses provocative language to impress a different part of her 'self' onto the listener. The use of violent imagery seems to be used almost as a warning signal, perhaps to scare or test others and keep herself safe.

Queen's friendships are an important thread to her narrative and are interwoven over time and remain consistent throughout her story.

S16	S37
I've tried to act so good around them	**I have friends who can help me**
When I was younger	**I know**
I didn't really have much friends	**I can like to talk to my friend properly**
I was like a weird kind of girl	**I didn't used to talk to people**
	I can talk to anyone now
	I can like shout it out
	I can talk to anyone

Two distinctive and competing voices seem present in her narrative. The first voice *'I don't belong'* seems to express an experience of being isolated or

separate from peer. This voice seems to carry a critical tone, in which Queen seems to almost blame parts of her 'self' for difficulties with friends and friendship. In contrast the second voice, **_'My friends are important to me'_** seemed to express an almost intense connection with those people she considers her friends. Within this voice Queen seems to express the importance of loyalty and support.

Although both voices seem to have equal volume within Queen's narrative, the second voice becomes more prominent when she discusses her move to Riverford. Perhaps being part of an environment where she feels understood has supported Queen's experience of connection and provided her an opportunity to present a different sense of 'self'.

4.7 Summary of the young women's narratives

This chapter has presented the analysis of the young women's narratives, through 'I-poems'. Exploration of their stories revealed the complexity of their self-concept, reflected through contrapuntal voices. These voices expressed multifaceted, conflicting, complimentary and undulating life stories. Their narratives also gave a sense of the temporality of their experiences, including the shifts, changes, tensions and continuities over time. This included the relationships they had with family, friends and school. It also encompassed the relationships they had with themselves, such as their mental health, SEMH needs, challenging behaviour, learning and future aspirations.

By listening and hearing the stories they told, I was allowed a unique opportunity to appreciate the dynamic nature of the young women's self-concept and identity. This was influenced by both past, present and future 'selves', with both educational and personal experiences having a significant and interacting impact on their presentation of 'self'.

Chapter Five: Comparing young women's narratives

There were many similarities revealed between the young women's stories. Due to their marginalised status in the current literature, I decided it was integral to the research aims to capture these similarities. Therefore, the current chapter sets out the thematic analysis of twelve semi-structured interviews, split across two different time points. This analysis enables an understanding of the commonalities between the young women's interviews, including their educational and personal experiences, prior and after placement in specialist SEMH provision.

The analysis extrapolated four main themes and thirteen associated subthemes from the data set. These are outlined in the table eight. A selection of quotes and associated themes can be found in appendix twelve

Table 8: Themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Breakdown in the relationship with mainstream	Behaviour challenging the mainstream school system
	Fractious interactions with mainstream school staff
	Insecure mainstream school placement
	Bullying and social isolation in mainstream
Pervasive difficulties with managing school	Enduring impact of significant life events
	Destabilising impact of peer conflict
	Negative self-concept inhibiting ability to thrive
A sense of belonging within Riverford	Connected school community in Riverford
	Needs appropriately understood and supported in Riverford
	Opportunity to explore future goals and aspirations in Riverford
Emotional safety through relationships	Containing and responsive staff in Riverford
	Close and supportive friendships
	Familial bonds and care

5.1 Breakdown in the relationship with mainstream

This theme explores the factors identified by the young women as leading to a disconnection and breakdown in their relationship with mainstream school. These included, the inability for mainstream school to contain and effectively manage their challenging behaviour, disrupted and transient school placement, fractious relationships with mainstream school staff and significant experiences of bullying. All the young women perceived these difficulties as leading to the breakdown in their relationship with mainstream.

5.1.1 Behaviour challenging the mainstream school system

When their relationships with mainstream school was explored, all the young women spoke of the inability of the school system to contain and manage challenging behaviours. For most young women, these were externalised presentations.

> *"I stopped coming into school, I and then when I went in, I was held in an isolation room for a year, that's for excluded students…they said it was because I was a danger for kicking off all the time"* (Becci)

However, some young women described more internalised experiences, managing depression, anxiety and self-harm. They all highlighted the inability for mainstream school systems to manage, recognise and support their needs.

> *"I don't know, it made me really angry…and then made me shout even more. I was trying to tell them that I was ill but I didn't have my diagnosis then, so I kept telling them look, this isn't me, that's why I haven't been in lately, they were just like no its excuses…but I was like no its not, you've got to understand it's not….they put me in isolation and excluded me" (*Frankie)

For a few young women, they related their challenging behaviours to unmet learning difficulties. Mainstream school systems were perceived as being unable to respond effectively to behaviours associated with the frustration of an unmet learning need.

> *"I'd go into school and I'd get annoyed with them and then they wouldn't listen to me so I'd like misbehave in school….but it was more because like my concentration in school is rubbish, it was like an hour and half*

lessons, and yeah so they were just putting me aside as a naughty child" (Charlotte)

All the young women identified exclusions as being the most prominent response to their challenging behaviours, and subsequently their underlying needs. The young women linked these moments explicitly to the breakdown in their relationship with mainstream education.

*"I knew I was going to be chucked out of the school at this point, so I went out to the field, lit up a fag, and said to one the heads of year and said, fuck you, fuck all the kids, you're all shit, and I hope it all burns down and fucking hate you…..and then I got home schooled" (*Becci*)*

5.1.2 Fractious interactions with mainstream school staff

For all the young women the breakdown in their relationship with mainstream school was also informed by difficult interactions and communication with mainstream school staff.

They represented critical moments of tension and conflict between them and staff members. Many of the young women perceived the response of school staff as punitive and uncaring.

*"I feel, like, they don't actually like care, they don't understand, they actually just want the job for money and that like….coz like if I went to her and asked if I could like talk she'd just be like no" (*Sarah*)*

For many of the young women there was a sense of dissonance in what they felt, believed and understood about themselves, and how adults responded to them. Most of the young women identified their challenges in school as being informed by difficulties in their home life. They described how problematic interactions with mainstream staff arose when they felt these underlying needs were not recognised or were ignored.

*"Coz they thought, like if you were in trouble they'd be like 'oh well, you're not in your class anymore'…..It made me angry and like I'm not good enough…I didn't have a good reaction…" (*Lily-Mae*)*

All the young women spoke about how these fractious interactions damaged their trust and relationships with school staff, leading to feelings of rejection

and victimisation, and ultimately informing their disconnection with mainstream school.

> *'Well it made me a bit annoyed because people always say adults are like the influence and you've gotta do what they do …well not what they do, but you've got to take a leaf out of their book, but we couldn't coz they would have a go at us, and the students couldn't win…so it yeah it's just…. it annoyed me…' (*Frankie)

5.1.3 Insecure mainstream school placement

For all the young women, their relationship with mainstream education was impacted by the insecure and transient nature of their school placement. The young women described experiences of being moved and removed as disempowering and integral to the negative connotations they held towards mainstream school.

Exclusion from mainstream school was repeated throughout all the young women's educational journeys. Most spoke of multiple exclusions, from various settings, which often ended in their complete removal from mainstream provision.

> *"No, I was excluded…I got kicked out of my secondary school, I got kicked out of my primary school, and I got kicked out of school X, then I got kicked out of school Y, well I left, but basically got kicked out …and then….I got kicked out of School Z and now I'm here" (Sarah)*

Alongside permanent exclusion from mainstream, many of the young women also experienced dual placements. This included being on roll at both mainstream school and AP. Most of the young women highlighted their frustration of being placed out of mainstream school, into provision that they felt was inappropriate. They made the distinction between their SEMH needs and other SEN, such as learning difficulties. There was a sense that their learning ability was disregarded by mainstream school due to their behaviour needs.

> *"I was put in a golden curriculum class for children with like special needs and I was like, there were kids, like there blind kids, and they*

were like the lowest set and I was like still bad in that apparently, so I was like urgh" (Becci)

For a few young women, the insecurity of their school placement was influenced by multiple moves between foster carers. These young women spoke of attending schools across the country, and there was a sense that they had no control over decisions. The constant moving not only impacted their learning opportunities, but also their ability to make and maintain positive connections with school.

> *"I can't really remember before school…..obviously I got taken into care…and then primary school, I've been in a few… and then primary school, yeah its ok, I mean it was difficult because I've been moving around to like different places and schools" (Queen)*

The young women perceived these experiences of being moved and removed as disempowering, and integral to the negative connotations they held towards mainstream school.

5.1.4 Bullying and social isolation in mainstream

Multiple episodes of bullying were central to almost all the young women's experiences of mainstream school. These were perceived as a prominent factor in the breakdown of their relationship with the mainstream school community.

Many of the young women spoke about being recipients of bullying, and this was often conveyed as inescapable. Bullying was perceived as both overt targeting but also insidious. Young women cited incidents of physical and verbal aggression and psychological bullying.

> *"I got bullied by people saying things like, oh your mum left you, your mum left you and all this crap" (Queen)*

They often spoke about the negative impact this had on their sense of self and connection with school. A few of the young women described how the distress caused by bullying led them to school non-attendance.

> *'I used to get bullied because of what I looked like and people would call me fat and ugly and stuff like that they used to say stuff about my dad to me, like really horrible stuff, and they were really horrible to me*

and I just couldn't like cope with it, where like I tried to kill myself twice, and, it just, and I didn't like the school and I used to just say I can't, and I just didn't like the school at all' (Frankie)

Experiences of bullying were always accompanied with descriptions of social isolation and victimisation. The young women perceived these events as segregating and rejecting them from the rest of the school community.

"Then he threw a pair of scissors at me and I just snapped, I was like a snapped woman who kills…. I mean I cried a little bit when he was out of the room, but I broke down, they tore me to pieces, I was going through like bulimia, suffering from suicidal thoughts" (Becci)

5.1.5 Summary of theme one

Within this theme, the young women described the significant events, experiences and relationships that lead to the breakdown in their connection with mainstream school. All the young women spoke about externalising behaviours that led to disciplinary action within mainstream school. These behaviours were identified as a reflection of underlying needs including mental health or learning difficulties.

Difficult and fractious interactions with staff conflicted with the views the young women had about themselves. This led to feelings of rejection and victimisation and informing their disconnection from mainstream. These negative emotions were perpetuated by significant experiences of bullying and relational aggression, leading to feelings of social isolation within mainstream school.

For all the young women, their difficulties with mainstream school were also compounded by the experience of being removed and placed in various alternative provision that they viewed as inappropriate or unsupportive.

5.2 Pervasive difficulties with managing school

Through their reflection of experiences within different education settings, the young women identified several factors which inhibited a positive connection with school. These included the impact of developmental trauma, peer conflict and negative self-concept. Irrespective of the setting these factors reoccurred

frequently and were often described as having a detrimental bearing on success in school.

5.2.1 Enduring impact of significant life events

All the young women's life stories were punctuated by descriptions of adverse experiences and traumatic life events. These included difficulties with family and familial relationships, violence, loss of key relationships and bereavement. The negative impact of these events was persistent, and all the young women linked them directly to the challenges they faced in managing school.

Most of the young women spoke about difficult events that took place specifically in their early childhood. They often spoke about experiences of trauma within their family home, relating to substance misuse, violence and neglect.

> *"Me and mum at home, by myself, I saved my mum…so I had to go to my friend's house, and they had to call the police" (*Sarah)

> "*My mum, she was an alcoholic and she did- I think she still does-do drugs and that, and she was drinking when she was pregnant with me and that's why I've got-I'm not even going to try and say it-but yeah she just wasn't looking after me right, and then yeah like me and my brothers were put on like, risk register, a high risk register for neglect"* (Charlotte)

Many of the young women also spoke about the loss of significant relationships throughout their lives. For a few this arose from being removed from the family home in their early years and placed into care.

> *"I was six years old before I went into care. I was just having a difficult time with my dad and with my mum, because my mum couldn't look after us all properly-but she's been doing very well lately-but my dad, he wasn't like nice, he wasn't like fair to mum or us, my brothers or sisters, he was like stalking us" (Queen)*

For one young woman, Lily-Mae this distressing experience took place during the research process. During the second interview she expressed both the emotional and psychological impact being taken into care had on herself, and consequently on her school experience.

"I think it playing a big part, I dunno, I think, normally if I was at home, I could tell my mum about everything what's going on, but I can't tell my foster carer, well I can tell her some bits but not all of it"

Adverse experiences and trauma were perceived as having a significant and pervasive impact on their ability to cope in school. All the young women spoke about the influence critical live events had on their sense of self, identity and ability to manage in school.

"I think I've got like trauma, I dunno why, well obviously I do know why, something that went on in my life with my mum and dad and their partners, they think I have depression again, and bulimia, they think I have that" (Lily-Mae)

"I get really bad days, like I'm still medicating, I'm on 125g which for a 17 year old I think that's quite bad…..its showing me how bad my depression was and how bad its affecting me , and like everything that went on in my life and caused it which is why I think it's like proper bad" (Frankie)

The role of developmental trauma was echoed in the young women's discussion of the ideal and non-ideal self. When speaking about the non-ideal self, all the young women spoke of people who had experienced trauma and the direct bearing that had on later life opportunities.

"She got bad GCSES, she got a bad job, she didn't even get a job, she went through a lot when she was younger" (Sarah)

5.2.2 Destabilising impact of peer conflict

Conflict with peers was identified by all young women as negatively impacting their ability to manage in school. They spoke about the complex and turbulent relationships they had with friends, and this was consistent across all education settings.

Such relationships were often described as transitory, with friendships coming and going from the young women's lives following disagreements or conflict. For a few young women, this created a sense of fear around loss and separation.

"It kinda impacted me, because after what has happened with friendships it's kind of difficult to keep that anger inside, and like making friends, it's easy to make friends here but at this school it was so easy to lose your friends, the ones that are so close to you like you don't want to hurt them or anything" (Queen)

All the young women highlighted that conflict was a consistent component within their peer groups. Ruptures to key relationships were identified as having a significant and destabilising impact on their ability to engage with day to day school life.

"Yeah coz, like if you're going to school, no one really likes school, no one is like yeah, I really wanna go school. But like some of the only reasons people go to school is to see their friends. But like if you argue with them then you're in the same class as them it's going to be hard to like concentrate with other people like talking about it and saying stuff" (Charlotte)

For most of the young women, conflict with peers was just as prominent at Riverford as it was in previous settings. In particular, the young women highlighted gendered aggression from the boys towards female pupils, as negatively impacting their school experiences.

"Lots of the boys are disrespectful to girls, like the boys spat at girls, you know….it makes the girls feel very small and intimidated" (Lily-Mae)

5.2.3 Negative self-concept inhibiting ability to thrive

Descriptions that many of the young women gave of themselves within school were underpinned by a negative sense of self. These included internal belief systems around their learning ability, their capacity to manage difficult feelings and behaviour, and their skills in maintaining positive relationships.

Many of the young women internalised the problematic experiences they had encountered within school. Challenging behaviour, violence and defiance were perceived as an unavoidable part of themselves.

"All I'm saying, I was the worst, out of everything, I was the worst, I used to miss all of the lessons, run away, used to always be rude to

teachers, since I went to that school, I'd only been to like five lessons"
*(*Sarah)

Many of the young women spoke of the detrimental impact previous experiences of difficulty had on their belief that they could be successful in the future.

> *"I wanted to be there (ideal self), but I think I was more like here (non-ideal self), because of the experiences I had had in my old school. I didn't think anything was going to be able to help me, I didn't think anything was going to work…" (Charlotte)*

For most, this impinged their motivation and self-belief to achieve their goals and aspirations.

> *"I've been wanting to make a change because I want to be a plastic surgeon, but I won't be able to make it, I can't feel it at the minute, people say that I can, but I don't know" (*Sarah)

A few young women identified how their mental health, including a lack of control over their thoughts, feelings and emotions, impinged their self-belief. Consequently, they seemed untrusting of themselves, describing a sense of helplessness and disempowerment.

> *"It's making me feel like I can't trust anyone, and I can't like trust myself, I don't know what to do with myself, and I used to cut myself, and that's how I was dealing with it, sometimes I'm just like crying"* (Queen)

5.2.4 Summary of theme two

The impact of trauma, loss and familial difficulty arose consistently within the young women's narratives. The impact of these events was recursive, often re-emerging at different points across their narratives and life journeys, having a negative effect on the young women's mental health and subsequent relationship with education.

Irrespective of provision, young women's educational experiences were impacted by challenging peer conflict and tension. Within their descriptions of Riverford, the young women highlighted specific incidents of gendered aggression directed towards them from the male pupils.

The young women's belief around future success and aspiration, was substantially hindered by their negative self-concept, which was informed by the experiences they had in and out of school. This negative self-concept was consistent across time and context.

5.3 A sense of belonging within Riverford

Discussion around the young women's experiences of Riverford were often starkly different to that of previous settings. Riverford seemed to provide the young women with a sense of belonging, that they had not experienced in other settings. The young women identified social connection, appropriate support and the opportunity to explore future goals, as contributing to their sense of belonging within Riverford.

5.3.1 Connected school community in Riverford

All the young women identified that feeling connected to others was integral to the positive relationship had with Riverford. This related both to their relationships and interactions with school peers, but also to the special school ethos and its ability to support a sense of belonging.

Many of the young women spoke about social connection as a result of being with peers with similar needs and similar life experiences. This was often directly compared to the social isolation they had identified within mainstream school.

> *"Because like in mainstream, everyone is the same basically, everyone wants to be the same but it's like a contest, like who's the smartest, but like everyone here, you know that that everyone's different and struggles with different things so, everyone just understands that…."* (Charlotte)

Many of the young women also discussed special school as a place where they were accepted for their true and authentic selves. This opportunity for self-expression without judgement is compared starkly to more constricted experiences in other provisions.

> *"It's more relieving, like some mornings I don't want to come here because I just like can't be bothered and I'm just feeling like shitty, but*

*when I do come here, I feel like I can be myself and I can be what want
to be, I can be the hyper Frankie that I actually am, whereas when I
was at the other school I would just walk around with my head down"*
*(*Frankie)

*"They don't get tore down, they don't get rip to shreds, for like being a
bit weird, like I'm quite a weird person but I embrace being weird and
different whereas I was like shamed for being different at my old school"*
(Becci)

However, this experience of connection and belonging was not consistent for
all the young women across time points. The young women in the post sixteen
setting spoke of their rejection of the Riverford, as they begun to spend more
of their time in a mainstream college. This was particularly marked for Becci,
who spent the majority of her second interview discussing her disassociation
from the specialist school community;

*"Yeah, like I don't have to be around these people, and some people
are like you are these people, but I'm not though, if you put me and any
of them next to each other you can see I'm not like them, like they're
not people I'd hang around with outside of here, they're not really
people I enjoy being with…"*

5.3.2 Needs appropriately understood and supported in Riverford

The ability for Riverford to appropriately meet the young women's needs, was
identified as being integral to the sense of school belonging.

Many of the young women highlighted that the provision was able to effectively
recognise and support learning needs. Becci describes the impact targeted
learning interventions had on aiding the pupils to better access the learning
environment, including exams;

*"What you need, you get here, I've got and lots of students have
scribes, and extra times and like learning breaks and that kind of thing
and that's key. Kids in exams in the old schools, they would just be like
call out names but not give them extra help, apart from put you in a
separate room"*

Alongside the support given within school, all the young women identified the Riverford as being instrumental in their access to external agency support. This included, Speech and Language Therapy, Counselling and Child and Adolescent Mental health Services (CAMHS).

> *"I was having like really bad mental health and no one knew what was really going on with me because I was all over the place because I didn't know how to be or how to act, but I got an appointment to CAMHS from (keyworker). Now I'm medicated from depression and anxiety and stuff like that and ASD, so I'm all like diagnosed …..if I wasn't then I would probably be how I was last year ….so I am thankful"* (Frankie)

Most of the young women described the experience of receiving mental health support through the Riverford, as a turning point in their educational experiences. Receiving support was identified as empowering them to make some sense of the challenges they had previously experienced in school.

> *"I had CAMHS, and that helped with my behaviour so much, I had to talk about what I went through, about why my anger was so bad, and they tried to help me with making my anger good" (*Sarah)

Although Riverford was identified as being effective in appropriately supporting needs, there was a distinctive shift in tone for a few young women in the second interviews. Lily-Mae, Charlotte and Sarah spoke about the 'ineffectiveness' of exclusion as a mechanism used by Riverford to manage their needs.

> *"If they put me in isolation, that would be a better punishment…I shouldn't say it…but it would actually teach me, but like yeah exclusion doesn't do anything it just makes it harder for my mum coz like my mums got to keep coming out of work of the meetings and that"* (Charlotte)

5.3.3 Opportunity to explore future goals and aspirations in Riverford

All the young women identified that feeling settled and supported within Riverford, allowed them the psychological space to explore future goals and aspiration.

Most of the young women attributed their placement in Riverford as providing them with opportunities to feel successful. These experiences challenged their negative self-concepts and enabled a sense of future possibility and aspiration.

> *"I knew if I didn't go to school I wouldn't be getting money and have a job and a life, so that school (mainstream) kind of messed it up for me I think, but when I came here it kinda went back up, then college went back up, and (I) went where I wanted to be, and that's why I am where I am now"* **(**Frankie)

All the young women identified the possibility within Riverford to develop social and personal skills. They explicitly link these experiences with sense of improved belief of future aspirations being achieved.

> *"My tutor says she's going to put me down for this thing where you have to talk about your anger and the different ways you can manage it in different situations and that, so then I can leave school not like struggling in like communication" (*Charlotte)

For other young women, Riverford provided them with the possibility to re-engage with learning. This was identified as imperative for them to be able to achieve their academic goals.

> **"***Passed my second year of college, so I got five As, five Bs and three Cs, so it's really good and then passed my Maths and my English, I've passed everything this year" (*Frankie)

The importance of goals and aspiration were also highlighted in the young women's discussions are the 'ideal' and 'non-ideal' selves. When describing a person, they would most like to be, almost all the young women spoke about an individual who was 'successful' and 'motivated'. There was a sense that achieving goals was driven by aspiration.

"They'd do well. They'd do what they want because they worked for it." (Charlotte)

5.3.4 Summary of theme three

In their descriptions of Riverford, all the young women highlighted a feeling of social connection and sense of belonging. This was identified as being imperative to a positive school experience. Their sense of belonging within Riverford was enabled by the connection they felt with others in the school community, due to similarities in needs and life experiences.

The young women identified Riverford as being able to recognise and respond appropriately to their needs. This included support enabling them to access appropriate mental health interventions and encouraging them to explore their goals and aspirations.

5.4 Emotional safety through relationships

Throughout all interviews, the young women identified the importance of relationships in ensuring a sense of emotional safety. They highlighted that specialist school staff, friends and family, were all key relationships that enabled them to overcome challenges in their home and school life.

The notion of emotional safety through relationships was also explored in the young women's discussion of the 'ideal self'. All young women identified success as directly related to positive attachments with family and friends.

"Because she's had a happy nice life and she's got a nice supportive family and good friends and that" (Charlotte)

5.4.1 Containing and responsive staff in Riverford

For all the young women, the approaches adopted by school staff at the Riverford were highlighted as essential to emotional and psychological safety.

They identified that staff within the Riverford were better able to respond to their needs, because they had specialist knowledge of mental health, familial difficulties and special educational needs. All the young women highlighted that this enabled a sense of reciprocity and containment in moments of difficulty.

"It's just that they like understood what I was going through with like friendships and like family and stuff, going into care and stuff, they really understood me" (Queen)

"They like understood me and understood that I needed help and I didn't need neglecting, and they helped me" (Frankie)

Many of the young women spoke about key interpersonal skills adopted by school staff, which enabled feelings of emotional safety. This included calm, understanding and measured communication in times of crisis. There was sense that staff were attuned to the young women's needs, allowing them to respond before emotional crises escalated.

*"Miss. C, she'll sit there and like she'll listen to me if I have something to say or I'm struggling with something, she's always helping me, like if she sees me out of my lesson she won't be like, 'oh Charlotte go back to your lesson' she'll like ask if anything is wrong" (*Charlotte)

The positive interactions between staff and the young women seemed to encourage the development of trusting working relationships, and many of the young women spoke about the impact this had on their ability to self-regulate and move forward from challenging situations.

Lily-Mae and Charlotte described being given a 'second chance' to repair and rebuild relationships following difficult moments in school. This experience of being contained and responded too with empathy, seemed to bolster the attuned relationships they had with staff.

"You don't have to like come into school like, feeling like oh I've done that , so they are like gunna hold it against me or like, they are not going help me coz of that or something like that but you don't coz you come in and your like it's a new day, just apologies and move on….
"(Lily-Mae)

Sarah described the positive impact this had on her learning;

"That they should understand you and help you a lot, and since I've been in this school my GCSEs have been going up a little bit….I think my behaviour has helped that, I haven't got excluded since I've been

here....and if I had been in my other schools I would have been
excluded in like four days"

Whilst Frankie described the positive impact this had on her mental health and
well-being;

'I've got ASD, depression and anxiety so because they are trained in
special needs and mental health and that, they are more understanding
and helpful where as a mainstream school doesn't understand....if we were
to lash out they would just be like its bad behaviour and put us on report,
whereas here if I'm doing bad behaviour here they just calm me down"

5.4.2 Close and supportive friendships

When describing moments of emotional safety, each of the young women
identified a key friendship that was integral to the experience. When these
friends were present, they enabled the young women to feel positive about
themselves, school and the wider world.

Many of the young women spoke about the qualities that made specific
friendships powerful and supportive. They often spoke about sharing joyful
experiences with these key individuals. This compared starkly to other social
interactions with peers, which were often centred around conflict or isolation.

"She was really funny, we used to go on the bus together, in the
mornings and after school, and we used to always hang around after
school…. nothing good about that school, apart from her…. she's never
been naughty once, never been rude always going to lessons…she
*liked helped you, she was there for you" (*Sarah)

For many of the young women their key attachment figures in their lives were
close friends. There was a sense that this was especially pertinent for those
young women who had experienced significant family trauma and disruption.
Sarah, Lily-Mae and Queen described friendships as paramount in
counteracting the inconsistency in attachment they experienced from the
adults.

"Friendships! I need friends in my life…my best friend Charlotte, she
always has been. You just need them if you're going through a hard

time. If you don't have your family, then you need your friends around you" (Lily-Mae)

5.4.3 Familial bonds and care

All the young women spoke about the importance of family relationships and care to their feelings of emotional safety and positive educational experiences.

A few young women spoke of the role their parents and caregivers took in fighting for their educational support. These young women spoke with the sense of knowing that they had unconditional support from their families.

> *"Coz she's always doing more to help me like when I was being adopted, she was in court near enough every day fighting for me and that and then with school she's always trying to get me the support and get me into this school and go to my meetings" (*Charlotte)

For others, their family member's understanding of their needs ensured they felt emotionally and psychologically supported. They often described the importance of these relationships in being able to cope with the challenges they faced in school.

> *"I didn't even know this until a few years ago, but when I was little my autism was so bad, that like, I don't think I was like mute, but it was so bad that me and mum like had to do sign language, so like obviously I don't remember it now, but like… didn't stop me from speaking in the end" (*Becci)

However, for many of the young women their familial bonds were often presented as ruptured or absent. Those pain of familial disconnection had a momentous consequence on these young women's sense of emotional safety.

> *"My mum used to be like to me you're a naughty child because I didn't have a diagnosis and say you'll never get anywhere in life. Yeah, I cried. It seemed like she didn't care, and she wasn't proud of me" (Lily-Mae)*

5.4.4 Summary of theme four

Key relationships that enabled a sense of emotioanl safety were identifed within young women's narratives. All the young women percieved Riverford staff as being able to respond appropriately to emotional, behavioural and

mental health needs. The communication style and approach adopted by Riverford staff supported the young women to feel contained in moments of crisis. This had a positive impact on young women's behaviour and self-concept.

All the young women had friendships with other young people built on close bonds and reciprocal care. These were often highlighted as being more important than adult support, especially for those who had experienced significant relational trauma. However, familial relationships were also perceived as a powerful and influential factor in young women lives. These relationships were both positive and detrimental to young women's experiences of school.

5.5 Summary of thematic analysis

The thematic analysis within this study revealed four main themes within the young women's interview data. This chapter presented descriptions of the themes, alongside illustrative extracts from the young women's interviews.

Further interpretation and discussion of these findings is presented

in Chapter six.

Chapter Six: Discussion and reflections

The present study was concerned with exploring the experiences of six young women placed within a specialist AP (Riverford). The permanency of pupil's placement and residential provision at Riverford make it substantially different to other APs. The acknowledgement of these differences is noteworthy, as there is scarce understanding around such settings, and the impact they have on pupil's educational experiences. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge a significant knowledge gap around the educational experiences of young women placed within specialist AP.

This study was also concerned with eliciting and promoting the young women's voices. Using a longitudinal and participatory design, and a process of narrative analysis, knowledge about the young women's experiences, views and opinions was co-constructed. This enabled a richness of understanding about their experiences, identifying strains, challenges and shifts in their daily lives.

The research questions within this study were:

RQ1: *How do the young women in Riverford describe their experiences of mainstream school and specialist AP?*

RQ 2: *How do the young women in Riverford describe their sense of self and identity?*

This chapter considers how the findings identified in chapters four and five address the research questions. As the findings traverse both research question one and two, they will be discussed together under two overarching titles- 'The fundamental role of relationships' and 'The dynamic expression of self'.

The strengths and contributions of the study's findings will then be offered, including a detailed reflection of the effectiveness of the chosen methodology, in its ability to elicit young women's views and co-construct knowledge around their experiences. This chapter will close with limitations of the study, implications for professional practice and future research directions.

6.1 Fundamental role of relationships

Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that the desire to 'belong' is an inherent function of all human behaviour, portrayed by consistent, stable and affective interpersonal relationships. The need to experience belonging is argued to inform motivation, emotion regulation and cognition (Norwalk et al., 2016). The findings within this study revealed that relationships and belonging were integral to the stories young women told about their experiences within mainstream school and Riverford. These included relationships within education settings and young women's personal lives.

The young women's accounts of relationships were often polarised, described as either supportive and caring, or destructive and fractious. Both had an impact on the young women's sense of self and identity.

6.1.1 Ruptured relationships

Findings identified that the young women experienced significant ruptures in their relationships with mainstream school. These were characterised by repeated experiences of tension, conflict and disappointment. The discordant relationship between pupils with SEMH needs and mainstream school, has been frequently explored within current research (Caslin, 2019; Trotman et al., 2018). In this study, the young women described how the challenging behaviour they displayed within mainstream school was met with disciplinary action and exclusions. The mainstream school's response was frequent and cumulative, and some of the young women experienced multiple school moves and placements, before settling in Riverford. The young women perceived these responses as rejection and subsequently identified their experience in mainstream school as being damaging to their mental health and well-being.

This outcome is reflective of the 'spiral effect' described by Trotman et al., (2018) (see section 2.4). The ruptured relationships young women had with staff members led to a difficult experience of mainstream school. Ultimately, they became disillusioned as well as disengaged from mainstream education. This finding proposes that ruptures to pupil's relationship with mainstream school, such as exclusion, may be harmful to their sense of school belonging.

This may inform further SEMH difficulties and disciplinary action, resulting in complete removal from mainstream school.

Ruptures to peer relationships in mainstream were also identified within the young women's narratives. These included experiences of significant and pervasive bullying, often in the form of relational aggression. The young women reported these experiences as having a significant impact on their engagement with school. Incidents of bullying created feelings of victimisation, abandonment and rejection. These were identified as leading to increased SEMH needs, such as anxiety, low mood and violence. The accounts given by the young women supports previous research, which has identified that bullying and relational aggression can have a detrimental impact on young women's well-being and school experiences (Östberg, Modin & Låftman, 2018; Pereira & Lavoie, 2018). Bullying and relational aggression were substantial factors informing the young women's SEMH needs and disconnection from mainstream school. Therefore, this study proposes that recognising the complexity of adolescent social interaction, including different forms of bullying and aggression, could support a greater sense of school belonging in all education setting.

Analysis of the young women's narratives found that their educational experiences were also impacted by key relationships outside of school. These relationships were often characterised by significant rupture, including multiple experiences of family separation, conflict, loss, physical and psychological abuse, violence and parental mental health. This concurs with existing research which suggests that young women with acute SEMH needs are more likely to be exposed to substantial levels of familial violence and abuse (Droogenbroeck, 2018; Hamblin, 2016). The young women associated the difficult experiences in their personal lives with later SEMH needs, including diagnoses of anxiety, depression, self-harm, as well as challenging behaviour. Prior literature has also suggested that relational based trauma or adversity is particularly detrimental to the mental health, well-being and educational engagement of young women (Granrud et al., 2017; Hamblin, 2016; Lewis et al., 2015).

Existing research on the educational experiences of pupils in AP, has focused exclusively on the role of relationships occurring within provisions, such as those between staff and pupils (Malcolm, 2019; Mills & McGregor, 2016; Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012; Russell & Thompson, 2011). However, the current study offers new insight, with findings revealing that relationships within the personal lives of the young women were crucial to their educational experiences, including their sense of self, mental health and learning capacity. Knowledge of the potentially harmful effect of relational trauma on SEMH needs, maybe supportive for all education settings working with vulnerable young people. Recognition of the relationship between adversity and challenging behaviour, could support equity of educational opportunities and improve outcomes for young people with SEMH needs.

All the young women experienced ruptures and loss of key relationships within their lives. Those outside of school seemed to have the most detrimental impact to their mental health, well-being and access to education. However, this impact was compounded by volatile interactions and conflict, with both peers and mainstream school staff. Gendered aggression within Riverford and bullying within mainstream were also identified as factors compounding a disconnection from education. Counteracting the impact of rupture with relational based support in all education settings, is a suggested outcome of these findings. These could include; support to manage experiences of relational aggression, evaluation of the social space within AP and ensuring positive relationships in all schools for vulnerable pupils.

6.1.2 Social and emotional connection

Analysis of the young women's narratives highlighted that social and emotional connection was crucial to their sense of self, and their educational experiences, within all settings.

The transition to Riverford was generally presented as a positive turning point for all the young women's sense of belonging. Within their narratives, they associated their placement in Riverford with improved social connections and a greater ability to build constructive relationships. In their accounts of Riverford the young women identified that they were able to feel connected to

others. They described how a sense of inclusion and belonging, made Riverford a distinctly different social context compared with mainstream. Nind, Boorman and Clarke, (2012) and Malcolm (2019) also highlighted the ability of AP in creating an inclusive social environment for pupils with SEMH needs. The young women attributed their sense of belonging within Riverford, to the similarities they had with the other pupils. They reported being able to express their authentic identities without fear of rejection or abandonment.

This is consistent with literature exploring the effectiveness of AP, where the notions of 'commonality' and 'community' have been frequently cited as facilitating positive educational experiences (Pennacchiaa, 2016). Some of the features of Riverford's environment were successful in creating a sense of belonging for the young women. These included an ethos of inclusion and the promotion of community. Applying such features within other settings, including mainstream and AP, may be beneficial to the educational experiences of pupil's with SEMH needs.

The social and emotional connection that the young women had with staff members in Riverford also supported a positive educational experience. The quality of communication and interaction delivered by Riverford staff was identified by the young women as enabling a trusting, caring and reciprocal relationship. This fostered a sense of psychological and emotional containment and supported a positive school experience in Riverford. The impact of staff and student relationships within AP is well documented. Feelings of support and care given by AP staff can act as a resiliency mechanism for pupils who have experienced adversity and difficulties within their experiences of education (Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2019; Mills & McGregor, 2016; Pennacchiaa et al., 2016).

Through their positive relationships with Riverford staff, the young women were presented with tangible experiences of educational success, improving their sense of self-worth. Through this process the young women described a renewed sense of motivation and drive towards their goals and aspirations. Markus & Nurius (1986, see 2.7) describe how the experiences of accomplishment could be seen to reduce the discrepancy between the 'present' and 'possible' or 'Ideal' self and improve sense of school belonging and motivation to be successful. Through positive relationships and

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interactions with Riverford school staff, the young women were able to begin exploring convincing visions of their 'possible' or 'ideal' selves. This experience of success was starkly contrasted to numerous moments of perceived 'failure' and disconnection within mainstream. These findings identify the opportunities all education settings can provide in supporting pupils with SEMH to realise their potential and achieve their aspirations. Quality interactions between education professionals and pupils, built on unconditional regard and care, could allow effective working relationships to be developed. Within these relationships, pupils who are deemed 'challenging', may be able to explore different and more positive identities and strive towards their goals.

Supportive friendships, characterised by close emotional bonds, were also found to enable positive education experiences. The young women all identified at least one 'best' friendship, built on close bonds and reciprocal care. Positive school experiences in mainstream and Riverford were frequently attributed to these friendships. This is consistent with the current research base which has postulated the importance of relationships and social bonds for young women (Pereira & Lavoie 2018). Findings from the young women's narratives suggest that key friendships were seen to counteract the rupture and trauma they had experienced within familial relationships.

Close friendships and emotional connection have been suggested as especially important for young people who may have experienced relational trauma or a lack of positive social bonds during childhood (Corrales et al., 2016). It may be that within these close friendships, the young women found a sense of belonging that counteracted the insecurity they felt in other relationships. These findings suggest that support for vulnerable pupils within all education settings should include opportunities to develop positive peer relationships.

The protective influence of belonging and connectedness through friendships was explicitly outlined within the young women's narratives. In relation to their experiences within Riverford, the findings suggested that same-sex friendships were particularly important to the young women. This is consistent with prior literature which has highlighted the important role of female same-sex friendships in minimising social exclusion within predominantly male AP environments (Russell & Thompson, 2011). The close bonds and emotional

connections between the young women and other female pupils were often presented as providing a sense of camaraderie. This enabled the young women to develop a positive sense of identity and connection, improving their experience in Riverford. The experiences described by the young women indicate the potential importance for educational professionals to reflect on the social space provided for female pupils within AP.

The role of familial relationships was also found to be integral to young women's narratives. These included key relationships with adults either in their immediate or extended family. The relationships were underpinned by mutual love, affection, care and support, and the young women often described these adults as the only people who truly understood them. There is a body of evidence showing the detrimental impact of negative familial relationships on young women's mental health and education experiences (Hamblin; Lewis et al., 2015). However, the findings from this study suggest positive familial relationships provide support for young women with SEMH needs placed in AP. Therefore, it might be proposed that supporting pupils with SEMH needs should include involvement from key family members.

All the young women felt a strong sense of community and belonging within Riverford. This was facilitated by the similarities in need and background of the pupils, ethos of the school and relationship with staff members. The young women also highlighted the importance of close peer relationships for their well-being. Same-sex friendships were particularly supportive for the young women's experiences of Riverford. Familial relationships, care and emotional bonds were identified as supporting positive educational experiences in all settings. Encouraging the development of social and emotional bonds, within mainstream and AP, is proposed as integral to supporting young women with SEMH needs.

6.2 The dynamic expression of self

The young women's sense of self was presented throughout their narratives and constructed through contrapuntal voices. These voices articulated the undulation of their daily lives, describing key moments of conflict, change, growth, success and disappointment.

The findings within this study highlighted an interactive relationship between the young women's sense of self and identity, and their experiences within all education settings.

6.2.1 Complexity

The young women's mental health was found to be a complex element of their identity and sense of self. Their experience of mental health difficulties was often presented as exhausting and debilitating. Low mood and anxiety hindered young women's educational experiences and relationships. For example, difficulties managing mental health led to self-harming, destructive and risk-taking behaviours. The young women used visceral and emotive language to express the intensity of their psychological distress. They described feeling emotionally 'overwhelmed' and behaviourally 'out of control' throughout their narratives. Such findings are consistent with existing literature, which has highlighted the interacting relationship between gender, mood disorders and maladaptive coping mechanisms such as self-harm (Droogenbroeck, Spruyt & Keppens, 2018; Hamblin, 2016; Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017).

Despite the frustration and anguish associated with their mental health needs, receiving an official mental health diagnosis was perceived as positive, impactful and empowering for many of the young women. This opposes the suggestion that categorising and labelling young people's SEMH needs has a determinantal impact on their sense of self and identity (Caslin, 2019). For the young women in this study, having their mental health needs officially recognised seemed to validate their feelings of psychological distress. This informed the way they viewed themselves, challenging negative self-perceptions. This study proposes that the process of externalising psychological distress to a mental health label, may have been a mechanism that served to protect young women's sense of self-worth. Therefore, it could be suggested that person-centred support, which acknowledges an individual's relationship with SEMH, maybe an effective approach to support pupil's psychological distress.

The findings also identified that the young women's behavioural presentation was complex and multifaceted. When each young woman recounted her educational journey from mainstream to specialist, their story was illustrated

with displays of behaviour that they described as 'challenging'. These were often seen as a mechanism to demonstrate their psychological distress and were particularly pertinent within their descriptions of mainstream school. This included their behaviour in the classroom, interactions with staff and peers and engagement with learning. As postulated by prior research, some of the young women displayed psychological distress as behaviours which have been established as inherently 'female'. This included internalised states of anxiety and low mood, and withdrawal and disengagement from school (Hamblin, 2016; Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017).

However, for most of the young women, their psychological distress was also expressed through externalised challenging behaviours such as disruption, anger, aggression and violence. This finding emphasises the complex identities of young women placed in AP and offers new insight into their expression of SEMH. This includes the potential for psychological distress to be displayed as both internalised and externalised behaviours.

The young women's narratives all presented complex facets of their identity. Their relationship with mental health was both empowering, as well as destructive and consuming. The young women's behavioural presentation of psychological distress demonstrated the complexity of their identities. These findings suggest that support within all education settings should be reflective of the dynamic identities of young women with SEMH needs.

6.2.2 Insecurity

The current study found that the young women expressed uncertainty about their ability to be successful in the future. This uncertainty was underpinned by negative self-belief and low self-worth, which the young women linked to adversity experienced in their personal lives. Corrales at al., (2016) suggested that relational adversity within an individual's childhood can impact the developing self and inform internal beliefs of unworthiness. This notion is consistent with the accounts given by the young women, linking difficulties in familial relationships with feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy. These negative self-concepts were found to have a damaging influence on their mental health. Descriptions of low mood, anxiety and aggression, were frequently accompanied by a negative, critical and deprecating sense of self.

Young women's low self-worth impacted their educational experiences within mainstream school and within Riverford. Hopes for future success were frequently disrupted by the young women's fear of failure or a sense of inadequacy. The young women's accounts of their 'non' and 'ideal' selves demonstrated the informative relationship between negative self-concept and future aspiration. This supports the suggestion that negative internal beliefs can impact pupil's abilities to create positive future selves. This is especially pertinent for pupils who have been removed from mainstream education. Internalised difficulties experienced in and outside of school create fragile possible selves and negative perceptions of future ambitions (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010).

The findings from the present study propose that wider environmental and socio-political influences can perpetuate negative self-concept. This infers that identity development is not just seated within the individual but is vulnerable to social interaction and construction. Such a notion is congruent with existing knowledge exploring the identity development of young people with SEMH (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010; O'Riordan, 2011). For the young women, this was principally evident in their descriptions of mainstream school. Provision and staff were perceived as unable to manage or respond to the young women's needs. This led to a cyclical relationship of disappointment, frustration and self-conceived failure, perpetuating negative internal beliefs.

Unable to observe opportunities to achieve their ideal or possible selves, but consistently presented with their feared selves (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010: Markus & Nurius, 1986), young women's motivation to be successful within that context was demolished. These outcomes suggest that mainstream and AP can improve educational experiences by providing opportunities for pupils with SEMH needs to feel closer to their 'hoped for' future selves. Through cumulative experiences of success, pupils may feel a greater distance between their present self and 'feared for' future self, improving motivation and aspiration.

For each young woman, negative self-belief developed through difficult life experiences, impinged their daily lives. Fears of failure impacted on visions of future successes and aspirations. The relationship young women had with the

mainstream school system compounded their negative self-beliefs, impacting their motivation and engagement. However, the current study proposes that all education provisions can utilise the concept of 'possible selves' to improve educational experiences, engagement and motivation for young women with SEMH needs.

6.3 Summary of discussion and the key contributions to knowledge

Prior research exploring the experiences of pupils placed outside of mainstream schools due to SEMH needs has predominantly focused on male or mixed sex samples (Jalali & Morgan, 2017: Malcolm, 2019) and has most frequently been conducted within PRUs (Osler, 2006: Russell & Thompson, 2011). Subsequently there is a distinct paucity of knowledge regarding the educational experiences of young women placed within SEMH settings. Therefore, the outcomes of the current study contribute to knowledge and understanding of the educational experiences of young women placed within specialist AP. The findings offer new insight into an under researched group of pupils and a scarcely explored education setting. Such outcomes can be used to inform professional educational practice both within AP and mainstream settings.

The current study offers a nuanced understanding of the identities of young women placed within AP. The findings within this study propose that young women's conceptualisation of self within AP is multi-faceted and dynamic. This extends Russell & Thompson's (2011) research, which focused solely on the interaction between gender, the AP environment and young women's conceptualisation of self. Whilst gender is an important facet of young women's self-concept, findings from the current study emphasises that other elements are also key to understanding their educational experiences. For example, mental health needs, social group, family and aspirations. The young women's narratives within the current study presented the complexity within their identities, including tension, consistency and conflict within their individual conceptualisation of self. The temporal nature of self-concept captured within the current study adds to knowledge from prior research (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012; Russell & Thompson, 2011) and subsequently enables a more comprehensive understanding of young women placed in AP.

The current evidence base has suggested that for many young people, including young women (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012) placement within AP is perceived as a positive experience (Malcolm, 2019: Mills & McGregor, 2016; Pennacchiaa et al., 2016) and is predominantly attributed to relationships built with staff and peers which enables a sense of belonging (Hart, 2013; Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012; Pennacchiaa et al., 2016). Concurrent findings were drawn within this study and the young women's narratives also highlighted the importance of relationships and social belonging in enabling positive school experiences. Within Riverford, this included their relationships with staff and peers, and the sense of inclusion, connection and belonging. This challenges Russell & Thompson (2011) who propositioned that the heteronormative and predominantly male AP environment has a detrimental impact on young women's sense of belonging and connection.

The young women's narratives highlighted that their sense of belonging to Riverford was not only enabled through their relationships within the setting, but through the qualities found within those relationships. The responses of staff within Riverford towards the young women, were found to promote positive self-concepts. When the young women perceived adult responses as caring, they believed this was because those adults did not see them as inherently 'bad'. This facilitated improved self-esteem and positive school engagement. The interactions between the young women and Riverford staff enabled them the opportunity to feel closer to 'hoped for' future selves. Accounts of mainstream school was strikingly different. Negative interactions with mainstream systems, staff and peers, reduced the distance between the young women's' present self and 'feared for' future self. This understanding contributes to current literature which has utilised possible selves' theory as an explanation for the engagement of pupils placed within AP (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010).

Experiences outside of school on young women's relationships with themselves and education settings, were also identified as a key finding of the current study. Specifically, relational trauma including rupture, loss, violence and separation was identified as significant to all the young women's

narratives. This outcome adds to clinical evidence, which suggests that familial trauma (Hamblin, 2016) and gendered violence (Scott and McManus, 2016) are significant risk factors influencing poor mental health in young women. In addition, it presents new insight into the development of SEMH needs, it's manifestations and consequences for individual young women and their education. Positive relationships outside of AP were also presented as important. This related to the emotional bonds and care the young women had with their immediate and extended family. When this support was present, the young women described more successful school experiences within their narratives. This finding is a novel contribution to the current evidence base, which has limited literature on the role of relationships outside of school on pupil's experiences within AP (Malcolm, 2019: Mills & McGregor, 2016; Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012; Russell and Thompson, 2011).

6.4 Methodological reflections

A longitudinal and participatory research design was adopted in this study, to provide a space for knowledge to be co-constructed between myself and the young women. The longitudinal element of the research design enabled the opportunity for a positive and reciprocal working relationship to be built. Building a research relationship over time helped to shape the young women's trust and support their engagement (Weller, 2012). The use of a longitudinal research design offers an expansion to methods adopted within the existing literature, as the views of pupils within AP are often elicited within standalone interviews (Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan, 2016; Russell & Thompson, 2011). By adopting a longitudinal design within this study, I was enabled the time and space for reflection and creativity, which allowed a great depth of understanding (Weller, 2012).

A participatory approach, whereby the young women's voices were central to the construction and development of the research, was also employed. Through this approach, I was able to ensure multivocality through collaboration with the young women (Tracy, 2010). This was underpinned by a notion of "ethical attuenment" which included reflexivity, sensitivity and an awareness of the impact of micro-ethics when working with vulnerable young people (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The participatory approach was supported using person-centre and accessible tasks, including the 'Life Path' tool

(O'Riordan, 2011) and the 'Ideal Self' task (Moran, 2001). Feedback from the young women suggested that they enjoyed taking part in the tasks, generally finding them accessible and interesting.

> *"It's just much easier to talk it through when you have something to focus on" (*Becci)

> *"It's been fun and interesting and good to talk to someone" (*Queen)

I found the activities encouraged the young women to feel relaxed, in what could be conceived as an intense and potentially intrusive experience. Flexibility in the way tasks could be completed supported those with additional needs such as speech and language difficulties. Inclusive and person-centred activities, used alongside interview questions, have been found to be a practical and supportive way of engaging young people with SEMH needs in research (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012; Conolly, 2008). The outcomes of the present study support and promote this notion.

Reflecting on the overall research experience, I concluded the design and tools had been effective at enabling and maintaining the young women's interest and participation. All the young women attended each interview, actively engaged with the tasks and chose a wide variety of interesting and informative experiences to share. Such an outcome challenges the notion that young women with SEMH needs are 'hard to hear' (Russell & Thompson, 2011). Using participatory research approaches that were relevant and accessible (Conolly, 2008), this research has been able to provide space for marginalised and vulnerable young women to exercise their voices (Bradbury-Jones et al; 2018).

A novel method of narrative analysis was used to explore the young women's stories. 'The Listening Guide' (1982) has rarely been used within educational or EP research, however it has been demonstrated to be effective in promoting the voices of marginalised young people (Edwards & Weller, 2007; Hall et al; 2018). Reflecting on the analysis process, I found it to be stimulating and rewarding. The literature describing the analysis method was scarce but also highly variable, making the experience of applying the approach challenging. However, the process was able to give a richness and depth of

understanding that I felt wouldn't have been achieved through other analytical methods (Hall et al., 2018). It enabled an intricate depiction of the complexity of this group's identities and self-concepts and provided a greater level of context around the young women's individual educational experiences. This enabled tacit knowledge of the young women's narratives, exploring hidden assumptions, beliefs, conceptualisations and meanings (Tracy, 2010). The outcomes demonstrate and support a literature base for an original data analysis method that has substantial analytical worth (Hall et al., 2018).

Through the analysis, it was evident that the young women often felt unheard and misunderstood within their educational experiences. Thus, it was imperative that their voices were explicitly acknowledged throughout this study. The third and final interview offered additional space for the young women to express their evaluations of the research experience. This was integral to the notion of ethical attuenemnt, whereby the promoting the voices, views and opinions of the young women was a key aim of the current study.

The reflections that took place in the third interview were a co-production of knowledge between me and the young women. I ensured a discerning acknowledgment of my role within this process. I reflected on the notion of agenda, including my investment in the research outcomes, and the influence this may have had on my evaluations. I explored the possibility that young women might feel pressure to respond in a way that they felt would please me. I was also conscious that the young women may not have or may not wish to give, any opinions on the process. Therefore, within the discussion I ensured an environment where the young women could feel comfortable to be critical, open and reflective.

Reflecting on the overall experience of taking part in the research the young women were generally positive, with most of the young women describing the experience as 'helpful' or 'interesting'.

> *"It's been helpful to get off my chest"* (Lily-Mae)

Most young women felt that the research process wouldn't need to change if it was done again. However, Becci raised that she felt the meetings were sometimes 'out of the blue'. She highlighted that the process would be

improved if she had more warning about when the interviews would take place.

I then shared the young women's personalised letters and 'Ideal-self' as part of the member reflections process to ensure I had captured their voices appropriately. Within this letter the key stories and themes from their narratives were presented. I felt this was a particularly powerful part of the research process. Reflecting on the letters, all the young women highlighted that their stories had been heard, understood and validated.

> *"It's important that we are understood. I feel like you have understood"* (Sarah)

> *"You have got everything in there, you've got it right!"* (Charlotte)

Listening to the young women's evaluations, it struck me that being provided a space in which they were able to express their views, thoughts and experiences had been powerful and for some, potentially transformative.

> *"I have been able to say how I really feel, and it didn't matter because I wasn't judged"* (Charlotte)

This highlights the importance of ensuring the views and opinions of vulnerable research participants are validated. Participation should not be tokenistic but ensure that research provides an authentic space in which marginalised voices can be exercised and promoted (Bradbruy-Jones et al., 2018).

The young women also reflected on dissemination of findings and key research messages. As a researcher, it was powerful for me to hear the depth of insight and connection the young women had with their own experiences, and the clarity to which they were able to express the implications for professionals.

For some of the young women, they wanted professionals to recognise and acknowledge them as individuals, moving beyond their behavioural presentation or mental health needs.

> *"Mental health doesn't define who we are"* (Lily-Mae)

"Everyone is different, you go through different things" (Frankie)

All the young women asked the findings to be shared with Riverford, especially with senior leadership staff.

> *"Staff think we are here to learn but they don't always understand what goes on in our heads. They need to understand when we mess around it looks like we don't want to be here, but we do want to be here" (Sarah)*
>
> *"Relatability is important. Staff need to be unbiased and unprejudiced in their reactions to young people. Personality of the staff is important"- (Becci)*
>
> *"Most important for them to know is about bullying and goals" (Queen)*

The young women also felt the information should be shared with other education settings, such as mainstream schools. Again, they highlighted the importance of being understood as an individual, and that all school staff should have an improved understanding of their experiences, needs and aspirations.

6.5 Limitations of the current study

- **Small sample:** The generalisability of the findings within this study are limited to the small sample size of only six young women, from a specific area of the U.K.

- **Longitudinal design:** It may have been valuable to follow the young women for longer to observe the development of their identity over a more substantial length of time. However, this may have presented several ethical dilemmas, including the saturation of participant's interest and engagement, maintaining informed consent and asserting adult-led agendas.

- **Young women's self-presentation:** I recognise that the young women's narratives were likely informed by agenda and bias. Narratives would have been a perception of their experiences, and not necessarily a true reflection of events. However, I was not concerned with establishing a 'truth' about the young women (Kim, 2016). As a social constructionist, I was interested in the way young women made sense of their lives and how they felt this impacted on their education.

- **Analytical approach:** I acknowledge that the research will have been limited by my novice experience of narrative analysis. This was compounded by the scarcity of studies within psychology that have used 'The Listening Guide' (Gilligan, 1982). I also recognise that my own professional and personal beliefs may have influenced some interpretation of the data. This was overcome through member reflections, reflexivity and supervision.

6.6 Implications

Reflecting on the findings of this study, there are several implications for all education professionals, including EPs. This relates both to work with young women with SEMH needs, young women placed in specialist SEMH provision, and more generally with children and young people who have been removed from mainstream provision due to SEMH needs. These are outlined below in table nine.

Table nine: Implications of current research for professional practice

Desired outcome from study	Implications for professional practice	Intervention	Impact
Creating educational environments where young people with SEMH needs can be successful	*- Relational-based strategies embedded within classroom practice.*	-Positive recognition, reciprocity, consistency, predictability and emotional containment.	-Chances for young people to feel closer to their 'hoped for' or 'ideal' self.
	-Re-evaluation of what 'provision' means for those with SEMH needs.	- Informal and personalised learning options alongside formal curriculum. Focus on building regulation before learning.	-Broader educational offer for those who are not managing within a mainstream environment.

	-Application of holistic and effective interventions to support SEMH needs in all provisions.	-Whole-school audits of the systems and interventions in place to support pupils with SEMH needs.	-Improved pupil and staff well-being.
Promoting social bonds and a sense of belonging	*- Ensure that young women with SEMH needs can make and maintain positive social connections.*	-Bullying policy that recognises the impact of relational aggression.	-Improved social relationships for young women in all provisions.
	-Creating an ethos of connection and belonging for key adults out of school.	- Systems for parent, carer and family engagement.	-Holistic support packages for vulnerable pupils can be achieved.
Engaging vulnerable young people	*-Direct work with vulnerable or marginalised young people to manage SEMH needs.*	-Application of narrative principles, approaches and tools.	-Young people can make sense of experience.
		-Utilise trauma informed practice.	- Providing emotionally safe and secure spaces for young people to share their views and experiences.
		-Adopting a strength based and solution focused approach.	Building resilience and promoting agency and empowerment.
		- EPs delivering specialist therapeutic interventions in all schools. This might include, play therapy, cognitive behavioural approaches.	-Graduated response to young people's SEMH needs.

Promoting pupil voices within professional practice	*-All professionals to ensure that the voices of children and young people are present in any planning around their needs. EHCPs and reviews, especially when reviewing a break-down in placement.*	-Application of person-centred planning such as, PATH.	-Young people have a sense of ownership over the plans and provision to support their needs in school.
Systemic planning for pupils with SEMH needs	*-Ensuring multi-agency working is at the centre of support for children and young people with complex needs.*	- Training opportunities, working groups, information sharing events, policy development and joint practice.	-Effective sharing of good practice and developing positive working relationships.
		-Mentoring or coaching between provisions. For example, between two mainstreams or between mainstream and specialist AP.	-Effective sharing of good practice.
	-Recognition of the potentially detrimental impact multiple school placements and exclusions have on young people's identity and relationship with education.	- Local authorities' policy around exclusion and moves between provisions, should be sensitive and reflective of the needs of the young people they impact. Focus on vulnerable or 'at risk' groups such as, those with SEN, mental health needs, those within the youth	-Improved systems of support for schools and pupils who present significantly challenging behaviour.

		offending service, those subject to children social care or 'looked after' and young carers.	

6.7 Future research

This study was exploratory and therefore there is scope for further research in the experiences of young women with SEMH needs placed outside of specialist provision. Future research could also look to include young women from a variety of localities and ages, to further assess the role of different risk and protective factors, on SEMH, identity and relationship with school.

Within the context of the current study, it could be valuable to interview the two young women accessing the local mainstream college, to explore the dynamics of their experiences in more depth. Specifically, it would be interesting to explore the mechanisms they use to negotiate the different social contexts within the two provisions. It would also be an insightful extension of the current study, to explore the roles of parents and carers in more depth. This could be achieved through the voices of the young women or directly with the adults.

6.8 Conclusion

Despite the ample research indicating the high rates of psychological distress in female adolescents (Hamblin 2016; Lessof et al., 2016), there is a lack of knowledge around young women who have an SEMH as a primary SEN need. Furthermore, only a handful of studies have explored those young women with SEMH needs placed in AP. Consequently, little is understood about their educational experiences, both within mainstream and alternative provisions. However, young women and girls who have been removed from mainstream school due to their SEMH needs, often sit within several interacting vulnerabilities and disadvantages (Hamblin, 2016; Russell & Thompson, 2011). Without research informing policy and practice, the ability for girls and young women with SEMH needs to access appropriate resources are

diminished, significantly increasing the risk and severity of difficulties in adulthood.

The current study aimed to address this gap in understanding and knowledge, by conducting an in-depth exploration of the experiences of six young women, placed within specialist SEMH provision. Using a reflexive and creative research process, knowledge was co-constructed with the young women through their narratives. This knowledge highlighted the complexity of their daily lives, interwoven with difficult past experiences and aspirations for the future. The findings of the study suggest that their experiences of education can only be understood in reference to the wider context of their lives and histories. Through a dynamic understanding their identities and a fostering of reciprocal relationships, education settings can offer an environment of emotional and psychological safety, social connection and belonging. Within such environments, vulnerable and marginalised young women can be presented with the opportunity to feel successful and connect with visions of positive future selves.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Details of literature search criteria

The literature review involved accessing the following databases; ERIC (pro-quest), PsychInfo, ERIC (EBSECO), JSTOR, British Education Index and Ovid.

In order to explore relevant governmental policy, data, legislation and work of key children's and SEMH third sector agencies, a search of key internet sites was also completed.

Different combinations of search terms were used to ensure all relevant literature could be extrapolated. These included the following;

1. "young women" or "girls" or "gender" or "gender differences" or "female"
2. "SEMH" or "mental health" or "challenging behaviour" or "emotional difficulties"
3. "alternative education provision" or "specialist education provision" and "school exclusion"
4. "participatory research" or "person-centred research approaches"

Papers prior to 2000 were excluded, but both national and international papers were included. Peer reviewed and grey literature were also both included.

Appendix Two: Summaries of 'Ideal/non-Ideal selves'

Frankie's description of her 'Non-ideal self' relates to someone with low social capital, someone she described as 'Chavvy'. They have difficulty with others, seen as 'rude', and getting into trouble in the future. However, Frankie highlights that this person can have positive relationships with their family. Conversely, Frankie's description of her 'Ideal self' is emotionally content, with positive relationships and close bonds and high social status. Frankie placed greater emphasis on this person being 'happy'.

Frankie felt she was closest to her ideal self within AP, mainstream was a negative experience for her confidence and self-esteem. To move closer to her ideal self she needs self-determination and focus on goals and aspirations.

Becci's descriptions of her 'non-ideal self' relates to someone whose highly negative personality traits, impacts their relationships with others and with themselves. They have a negative future. However, there is a sense within Becci's description that this person's difficult behaviour is protecting her vulnerability, as she 'fears abandonment and rejection'. Becci's description of her 'Ideal self' contrasts starkly as she projects and image of perfection, both in external and internal features. However, Becci highlights that this person 'used to be a mean girl', demonstrating the possibility of change in identity.

Mostly 'Non-ideal' because of outward appearance and worry. Non-ideal in old school but closer to Ideal in AP due to adult's support and self-determination. Still not near ideal self educationally.

Charlotte's description of her 'non-ideal self' reflects a complex individual, whose difficult life experiences have impacted their negative and uncaring behaviour in school and within relationships. Charlotte highlights a vulnerability within this individual, stating that they fear being alone, and that their future will be what they feared (being alone) because of their negative behaviour. Conversely, Charlotte's description of her 'Ideal-self' reflects someone with positive attributes and relationships, who has achieved in life. However, Charlotte highlights that this person's early life might have been the same as the 'Non-Ideal', but *'she turned it around'*.

More recently 'Ideal' but it shifts back and forth depending on how others respond to her. Closer to 'Non-ideal' when first starting in AP because of previous experiences. Self-determination will help get to the ideal self.

Sarah was more able to describe her 'Non-ideal' person than her 'Ideal' person. Within the description of the former, she described someone in a desperate situation, with low social capital without support or opportunities. Sarah explicitly stated she would *'Never be this person'*. Sarah highlighted that this person had been through a difficult time as a child, which impacted her later life. Sarah's description of the 'Ideal self' was much thinner and focused on material gain and high aspiration. Sarah explicitly stated she would be this person when she was older.

Lily-Mae's description of the 'non-ideal' self, was explicitly linked to her violent stepfather. She described someone who is unkind, scary and uncaring, but sometimes funny. She highlights that this person had difficulty in their early life *'his dad used to hit him'*, as an explanation for his behaviour. Conversely, Lily-Mae's description of her 'ideal self' as someone with a family who *'looks after them'* so that they can have positive relationships, achieve well in school and having high aspirations. However, Lily-Mae also highlights that they are someone who worries a lot about losing people, demonstrating the fragility of this positive identity.

Closer to 'ideal self' in primary school when relationship with parent was better got worse when excluded and moved to AP, relationship break down with parent. Generally, she placed herself in the middle.

Queen wasn't able to complete this activity.

Appendix Three: Example of accessible thematic map (final themes)
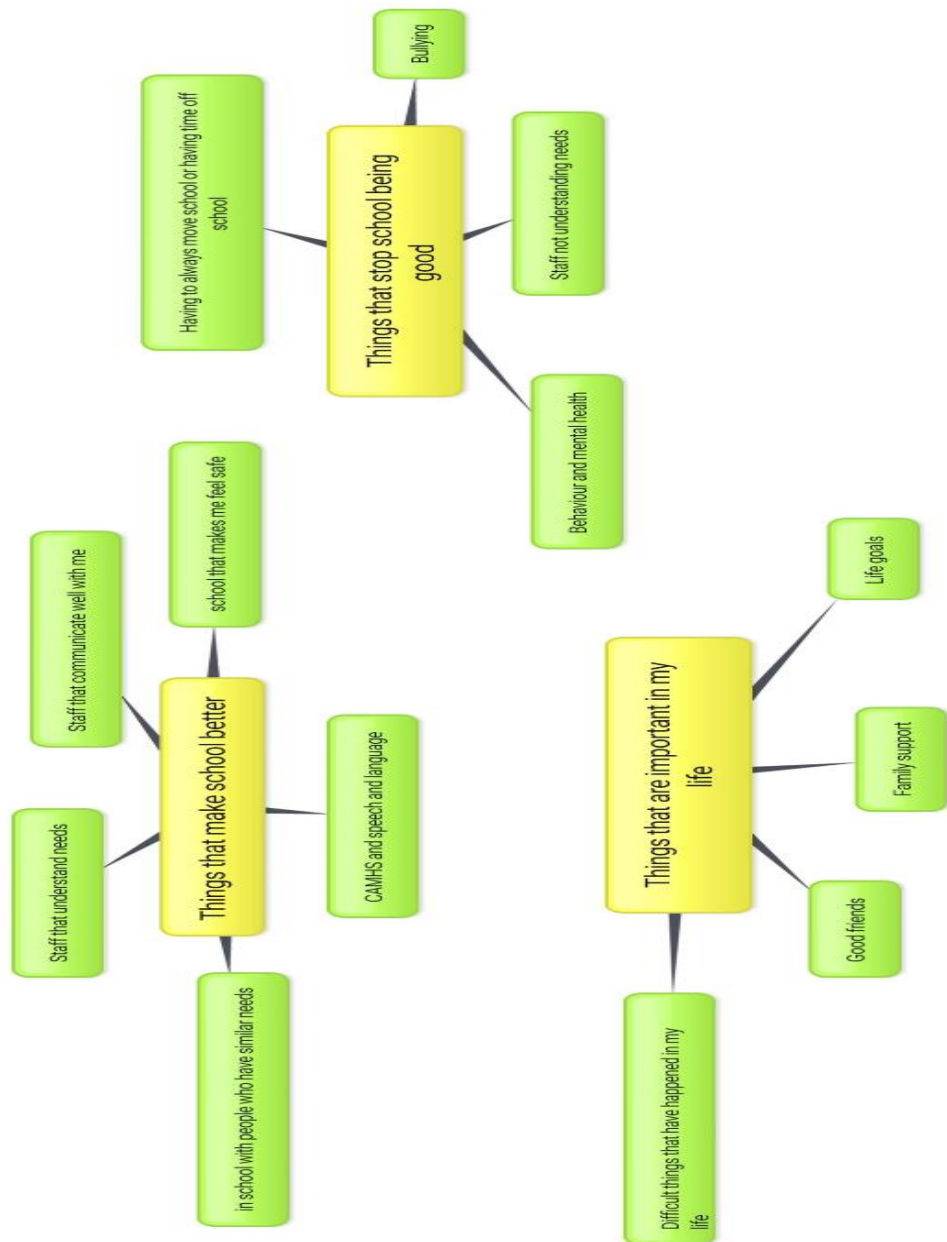
Appendix Four: Example personalised letter

Dear

I'm writing you this letter to say a big thank you for taking part in my research.

The information you have shared with me has been so useful in helping me to better understand what supports young women in a school like Riverford. Thank you for time and thoughts.

During the times that we met we spoke about lots of different things including experiences in school and out of school.

Some of the experiences you spoke about were difficult and painful. You spoke about losing people close to you and being bullied.

During our discussions you also told me about your mental health and the challenges it has bought you. You also told me how helpful it was to be given your diagnosis.

You also told me about the things that were important to you. Some of these included being able to express yourself, being treated like an adult and staff understanding what you need to be supported.

You also told me how important your family are to you.

Although there have been times where things have been hard, you also spoke to me about your achievements and successes, like going to college, passing your exams, making new friends and caring for other people.

I hope you have enjoyed taking part in the research. I hope that I will be able to use what you have told me to support other young women who have had similar experiences in school.

Thank you again.

I wish you all the best for your future.

Kind regards,

Sophie

Appendix Five: Parent consent form and info letter

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Young women's view of education- what supports them?

January 2017 to July 2019

Information sheet for Parents

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Sophie Martin and I am inviting your daughter to take part in my research project, "young women's view of education- what supports them?". I am currently a trainee Educational Psychologist working for Educational Psychology Service. My job is to support children and young people to learn and enjoy school.

I will be conducting a piece of work Riverford, looking at young women's views of education. I hope this information sheet will provide you with an understanding of what I am hoping to do.

I very much hope that your daughter would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Please explain the research to your daughter and discuss whether they want to take part. If you feel happy for me to ask your daughter to take part, please complete the consent form attached. This doesn't mean that they must take part in the study. I will ask your daughter to fill out an additional consent form, and will remind her throughout the research that she can leave or stop at any time.

Why is my daughter doing this research?
Understanding pupil's views of their educational experience is important, as it helps us to know how pupils want to be supported and what is important to them in school. However, there is very little research exploring young women's experiences attending a school like Riverford. I believe it is important for us to understand their experiences, so that the support we provide can meet their needs as young women.

What will happen if my daughter takes part?
I will meet with your daughter on three separate occasions over a year. At these meetings we will have discussions about her educational experiences and to support our discussion, we will also complete some creative tasks together. These discussions will take place at a time agreed with your daughter and a staff member. In between our discussions, will send your daughter a letter. This will be a summary of our discussion and an invitation to meet with me again. A copy will also be sent to the school.

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During the study, the conversations I have with your daughter will be recorded on an audio-recording device. This will be kept safe and confidential, and your daughter's real name will not be used. The recordings will be written up and then destroyed. The written notes will be kept for a maximum three years.

Will anyone know my daughter has been involved?
Any information provided will be held securely and kept anonymous and destroyed on full completion of the research. If at any time, your daughter wishes to withdraw from the research please contact the researcher. On completion of the research a summary of the findings will be shared with the participants, and should the research go on to be published, all data will continue to remain anonymous.
Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless during my conversation with your daughter I hear anything which makes me worried that she or someone else might be in danger of harm. In this case, the school's safeguarding procedure would be followed, and you would be notified accordingly.

Does my daughter have to take part?
Once you have given consent for me to speak with your daughter, it is entirely your daughter's decision if she would like to take part in the research. I hope that by choosing to be involved you and your daughter will find it a valuable experience. If you decide to withdraw you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up that point.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to school or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee [insert reference number].

Appendix Six: Young women's consent form

Institute of Education

UCL

Young women's views of education- what supports them?
Information Sheet for Young People
January 2017 to July 2019

Who am I and why am I writing to you?
Hello, my name is Sophie Martin. I am a trainee Educational Psychologists which means I work with children and young people in schools to find out what helps them learn. I am inviting you to take part in my research project at your school. I am really interested in hearing about your experiences of education. I really hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please do contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Why am I doing this research?
I'm really interested in what it is like to be a young woman in a school like _____. I think it is important to her the views and opinions of all pupils, so that we can make schools better places for everyone.

What will happen if you choose to take part?
We will meet on three separate occasions over a year. At these meetings we will have discussions about your educational experiences and to support our discussion, we will also complete some creative tasks together. Our discussions will be recorded on an audio-recording device and I may ask to take a photo of the creative work we complete together to include n my final report.

Will anyone know I have been involved?
Any information provided will be held securely and kept anonymous and destroyed when the research is finished. If at any time, you wish to not be part of the research anymore please contact me or the school SENCO and all the information will be taken out of the research. When the research is finished I will write to you and share the findings.

Do I have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether you choose to take part. I hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience.

Thank you for reading this information

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to school or _____

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at _____

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee [insert reference number

Appendix Seven: Information sheet for young women

My work in school......

I would like to come in and speak with you about school as part of a research project about young women's experiences of education.

I would like to hear about what is important to you and your education.

I would also like to hear about the people that are important to you and your education.

It is completely your choice to take part in the research.

A bit about me..........

Hi, my name is Sophie!

I am a trainee Educational psychologist.

I like to help people to learn and feel positive.

I often work with young people to find out what helps them to learn.

What next?

If you would like to take part, please speak with Miss *** or Miss **

I will be coming into school in March and April where you can ask me any questions you may have about the research.

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Appendix Eight: Interview schedule one

Themes to be covered
- ➤ Important experiences at home/school both challenging and positive
- ➤ Differences between provisions (mainstream/specialist)
- ➤ Experience of being a young woman in specialist SEHM
- ➤ Life grid to support discussion

<u>Introduction</u>
- Explain: purpose of interview; importance of their views and experiences; right to withdraw; confidentiality and anonymity.
- Check young person still happy to continue
- Any questions?.3.3

    What have you been up to since we last saw each other? (and other warm up questions)

<u>Life grid</u>
I'd interested in the important experiences in your life and how these may have impacted on your education. These might be experiences in school or outside. They might be positive or not so positive experiences. There are no right or wrong answers, I am just really interested in knowing what you think.
To help our conversation we are going to create a life grid. A life grid is just a way of mapping out experiences that are important to you.
Here is a basic example, you can see it has different sections for different times in a person's life, including, preschool, primary school, year7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16+ and then the future.
You can choose how to make your life grid (laptop, creative, written on template)
Whilst you make your life grid, I might ask you some questions to understand a little bit more.

<u>Questions (schools)</u>
- When did you move to the Riverford? (mark on life journey) How did it make you feel coming here? What is it about being at Riverford that makes you feel that way?
- Can you tell me a bit about your old schools? What was important about your experiences there?
- How did being part of that school make you feel?
- What has changed?
- How would did you see yourself at that school/the Riverford? Why do you think that might be?
- How does the Riverford support your education? How does that make you feel?
- How did your old schools support your education? How did that make you feel?
- What are your thoughts/hopes for the future?

<u>Questions (outside of school)</u>
- What experiences outside of school were important during these times?
- What experiences outside of school are important for you now?
- What has changed?
- Does being part of Riverford affect your experiences outside of school in anyway?

<u>Prompts</u>
- Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- How does that make you feel?
- What do you mean by that?
- How often are things like that/does it feel like that?
- Has anyone else noticed this?

Do you have any questions?

Appendix Nine: Interview schedule two

<u>Resources</u>

- Visual representation of themes
- Art materials
- Additional (PCP) task should we want to explore specific areas in depth

<u>Introduction</u>

- Explain: purpose of interview; importance of their views and experiences; right to withdraw; confidentiality and anonymity.
- Check young person still happy to continue
- Any questions?
-

What have you been up to since we last saw each other? (and other warm up questions)

<u>Interview</u>

Since we last met, we decided that there were a few themes that were important to you and the other young women in Riverford. Today, I'd like to explore those further. I have also bought your life grid with me, to remind us of some of the conversation. We can always add to this if you like. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, I am just really interested in knowing what you think.

<u>Key questions</u>

- Which of these themes do you feel is most important in your life right now? Can you tell me a bit more about why it is important to you?
- Which one of these is least important in your life right now? Can you tell me a bit more about why?
- Can you see anything that is missing that is important to you? Can you tell me a bit more about why?
- What has changed the most in your life since we last met?

<u>Prompts</u>
- Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- How does that make you feel?
- What do you mean by that?
- How often are things like that/does it feel like that?
- Has anyone else noticed this?
- Would you like to add that to your grid?

Ideal self-activity, exploring self-concept and self-perception

Part 1:

Think about a person you would not like to be. This is not a real person, but perhaps a person made of various people you have known. Make a quick sketch in the middle of the page, and let's think about the following;

- What kind of person would they be?
- How would you describe this person?
- Tell me three things about them and what they are like
- How does this person get on with their family?
- What would their family say about them?
- How does this person get on with their friends?
- How does this person get on at school?
- What does this person fear?

- How did this person come to be like this? What is their history? Have they always been this way, or have they become like this?
- What will this person's future be like?

Part 2: same as above, but this time, the kind of person they would like to be like

Part 3: Place the drawings next to one another, with a landscape piece of paper in between. Draw a horizontal line down the middle, joining the two drawings.

Now let's get an idea of where you think you are on this scale. We have the kind of person you don't want to be like here, (point to the picture on the left), and the kind of person you would like to be like here (point to the picture on the right). Think about what you have been like recently, for most of the time. Put a line like this (demonstrate a short vertical line which crosses the rating scale) to **show where you usually are** and then, **where would you like to be on this line, in an ideal world? If you can't get all the way there, what would you settle for?**

Exploration questions

- Where do you feel you were in your old school? and why?
- Where do you feel you were when you started Riverford? And why?
- Where would others say you are along this line and why?
- When do you think you've been closest to your ideal and non-ideal self?
- What helped you get there? And/or what was the difference between the two-time points?
- How could you move towards your ideal self? What do you need? Who do you need to help you? Why?

Appendix Ten: Interview schedule three

<u>Resources</u>

- Visual representation of themes
- Personalised letters
- 'Ideal self' overview

<u>Introduction</u>

- Explain-purpose of interview; importance of their views and experiences; right to withdraw; confidentiality and anonymity.
- Check young person still happy to continue
- Any questions?

What have you been up to since we last saw each other? (and other warm up questions)

<u>Interview</u>

Today is going to be our last session, and a chance to reflect on the research and how you have found the experience. Since we last met, I put all the information you can the other girls gave me together into these themes. Today, I'd like to explore those further to make sure I have understood all you have told me. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, I am just really interested in knowing what you think.

<u>Thematic map</u>

- This is what I found….do you agree with the words I have used, and do you think they make sense?
- Are these themes still important to you?
- Are any of these themes especially important to you?
- Can you see anything that is missing that is important to you?

<u>Personalised letter</u>

In this letter I have written what I understood about your story from the conversations we had together. This isn't all the information you gave me, but a summary of what I thought were the themes.

- Do you feel what I have written describes what you told me?
- Is there anything missing or anything you want me to take away?

The letter is yours. You can decide if you want to keep it, or if you'd prefer to leave it.

<u>Dissemination</u>

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences with me. I has been so helpful, and I hope it will enable others to be supported in schools like this one.

- How do you feel the information you have given me should be shared with the school and other professionals?
- Who else do you think needs to know about your stories?
- Is there anyone you wouldn't want to hear your stories?

<u>Experiences of the research</u>

- How did you generally find taking part in the research?
- How did you find the questions asked in the interviews?
- What did you think of the Life Grid and the Ideal self-tasks?
- If I was to do this research again, what would you suggest I do differently?

Appendix Eleven: Full I Poem

S1
I've been to three primary schools
I didn't get kicked out of this one
I left it
I was there for like a year and a half
I hated this school
I missed half of year six

S2
I went to ***
I didn't like get any work
I was like in the little unit
I didn't go to all my lessons
I left these ones as well

S3
I get scared when I start new schools
When I first came in it was me and all the rest of
were boys
It was my first day they were like, why aren't you
talking

S4
They were looking after me and that
That they understand me
My other schools they didn't really understand
me
They like understand what I've gone through
Why my behaviour has changed

S5
I was naughty
I wasn't listening the teacher would like shout

S6
It gets me like more annoyed
It makes me feel better
It makes me feel calm

S9
I was in my first school
I was there I was in *** (class) until year 6
I was excluded on that day it happened as well
I was like missing some lessons
I got excluded
I was allowed to stay there
I was kicking off
I got kicked
I got excluded

S7
I want to get good grades
I want try my hardest
I'm always the one who is waiting for them to
calm down
I want to get a good GCSE mark
I'm getting used it

S8
Since I've been in this school my GCSEs have
been going up a little bit
I think my behaviour has helped that
I haven't got excluded
Since I've been here
If I had been in my other schools
I would have been excluded in like four days

S10
I was like shouting at the teachers
I was throwing the tables
I was kind of like the boys here

S11
I felt annoyed
I feel they don't actually like care
If I went to them
Asked them if I could like talk
I lost a friend
I was going to talk to the head teacher
I feel that like

S12
I think it was a couple of times
I got excluded
I got excluded something else also happened
I saved my mum
I had to go to my friend's house
I was scared to sleep

S13
I didn't get to like learn a lot
I could do it in like five minutes

I wanted to learn more
I knew I had made mistakes before
I wanted to change it
I couldn't do it
Well I did it
But I wanted harder

What I was going to talk to them about
I was best friends with the girl
I found out
I was in bed, my sister was crying
I think she knew
I'd be really upset

I felt like the person knew where we were
I had to go
I saw the person there with his kids
I think he got a fine
I was excluded
I was permanently excluded
Coz I was moving

S16
I knew I was like in a school
I was learning still
I was still getting good grades

S14
I used to when I got home
I used to do stuff and that
I used to like
I dunno
I feel like it affected me more here
I used to always mess around
I used to go to like this sensory room
I knew the work was easy
I felt like I shouldn't have done it anyway

S15
I got used to it
I knew I wasn't going to be in there long
I could tell already
coz I was like in year six

S19
I didn't do my work
I refused to go to lesson he would just send me
home
I don't really remember a lot of it
I know
I know
I was bad
I was the worst student in the school
I dunno
I hadn't been in school for ages

S17
I knew already
I was living with dad
I've been living with him for two years
I went
I went to this school
I've been waiting a long time to get into this
school
I was waiting at home

S18
I had a TA
I had a TA in this school
I had had a couple of other TAs
I met miss *** and she was my favourite

S22
I don't like loads of students in my class
I like hated it
All I'm saying
I was the worst
I was the worst
I used to miss all of the lessons

S20
I don't like having TAs with me
I feel like
I feel like

S21
I think she was just disappointed in my behaviour
I think she knew what was going to happen,
I just didn't understand

S24
I was kicked out with this school
I felt happy
I didn't want to be in this school

I went to this school
I'd only been to like five lessons

S25
I met the head teacher
I knew it was a boy
I didn't get on with boys
I think he knew
I had a problem with the deputy head teacher
I did
I wanted to speak to her

S28
I came to visit this school
After I came to visit
I came back to the other school
I got back into school
I had a meeting,
what I was
I was doing bad things as well
I left it
I left it because some of it was true

S31
I think
I'm a girl and dad is a boy
I was younger
I used to be seriously tom boy
I've got like girly
I still play play-station

S34
I've been out with people

I get annoyed

S37
About why I'm like this
Why I'm like that with ***
Why I'm upset

S40
I feel
I'm not doing very good in class
I'm not very good at listening

I'm the only one that needs help
I don't
I feel like they are only there for my behaviour
I don't want the TAs
My behaviour would be better if I didn't have any
TAs
Now I don't have any TAs

S23
I feel
I didn't know what people would be like now
I couldn't trust anyone
If I had met you after that
I wouldn't let you record me
I had one TA who was really nice
If I was still there
I would probably still have her
I was confused
I couldn't trust anyone
I shouldn't have trusted her

S26
When I was younger he left
When I was young
I didn't get to see him much
I had to go and live with him

S29
I met with *** and *** (keyworkers)
I was obviously shy
I was just worried
I would be bad again

S32
I want to have good grades
So I can have a good job
I want to be a movie star or a vet
I got A* in English once

S35
I've never been excluded...
No I was excluded...
I got kicked out of my secondary school
I got kicked out of my primary school
I got kicked out of ****
I got kicked out of ***
I left ****
I basically got kicked out
I got kicked out of ***
Now I'm here

S38
I can't control how I feel
I dunno
I feel
I cant explain
Why I'm like this

S41
I feel
I need support...

I got on with all the students

S27
I had CAMHS
I had to talk
What I went through
I had a nice CAMHS worker
People I get along with move
I'm still waiting for my CAMHS appointment
I'm hoping its good
I spoke out
How I actually felt
I felt so much better
I felt like really refreshed
I started my CAMHS
I got so much better

S30
It got easier as I went
I met *** and ****
I met all the like girls and the boys
I like about them
I didn't have many friends
I have quite a lot of friends

S33
I am in trouble!
I'm not in trouble
I'm joking
I love school

I just don't show it

S36
I had to move from my mum
I struggled to get into a school
Now I'm here
I've got better
I've got bad

S39
I've been wanting to make a change
I want to be a plastic surgeon
I won't be able to make it
I can't feel it at the minute
I know
People say that I can
But I don't know

S42
I'm always there for her
I don't like seeing people go through a lot

Appendix Twelve: Themes and example quotes

Theme	Example quotes
Breakdown in the relationship with mainstream	*'It's very different here, like I was put in a golden curriculum class for children with like special needs and I was like, there were kids, like there blind kids, and they were like the lowest set and I was like still bad in that apparently, so I was like urgh'* *'Horrible, you couldn't express yourself…..like if you came in in a certain thing you'd get like and isolation or a detention, yeah, I just didn't see the point in that because they are always saying they want us to show who we really are, but when we come doing that they come tell us off'* *'They helped me a bit, but when I got mad they were just like shouting at me, because like it didn't help me, it made me feel like not scared like not helping me…It just felt like they're not helping me, they aren't understanding what I'm going through'* *'It wasn't a really nice school….I just felt like with that school it just wasn't going to get me anywhere, because they just didn't understand me, they didn't take time to understand me, they'd just exclude me and isolate me, and they were just really horrible to me ….they would just stress me out….I didn't want to go to school, I didn't want to do anything'*
Pervasive difficulties with managing school	*'I'm like I'm such a perfectionist, I'm really and, like genuinely it eats me alive, I want to be like perfect, like if I get something wrong in a test it literally like eats me alive and people are like, you don't have to be like perfect, but you can be, you know what I mean….its juts like something that like eats me up….'* *'I've been like through stuff that people won't understand, like obviously some other people would have gone through the stuff that I've been through but they haven't gone, but some other people don't understand what I've been through in my life, I've been abused, I've been hit I've been physically abused, verbally abused, like when that started t happen like the physical abusing, I was about three years old, that's when I started to be like out of control'* *'Yeah coz, like if you're going to school, like no one really likes school like no one is like yeah, I really wanna go school…but like you…like some of the only reason people go to school is to see their friends, but like if you argue with them then you're in the same class of them it's going to be hard to like concentrate with other people like talking about it and saying stuff…'*
A sense of belonging within Riverford	*'I suppose it like, everyone here is misunderstood, like I think I relate to that, like I get along with people I never thought I would get along with, like when I first came here I*

	thought I everyone was going to rip into me, but literally no one cares' *'Because then I know that she's trying to help and then I can learn, so then I can leave school not like struggling in like communication and that….'* *'What you need, you get here, like I've got like, lots of students have scribes, and extra times and like learning breaks and that kind of things and that's key, and like kids in exams in the old schools, they would just be like call out names but not give them extra help, apart from put you in a separate room'*
Emotional safety through relationships	*'Miss *** she'll sit there and like she'll listen to me if I have something to say or I'm struggling with something, she's always helping me like if she sees me out of my lesson she won't be like, oh *** go back to your lesson, shell like ask if anything is wrong….'* *'She was really funny, we used to go on the bus together, in the mornings and after school, and we used to always hang around after school, I think she was just disappointed in my behaviour….she was always like…come to your lessons then…I think she knew what was going to happen, but I just didn't understand…'* *'Coz she's always doing more to help me like when I was being adopted she was in court near enough every day fighting for me and that and then with school she's always trying to get me the support and get me into this school and go to my meetings and that…'*