

*Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent
Psychology*

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Exploring the experiences of school exclusion for looked after children and young people

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctorate in
Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and list of references): 37,940

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22.05.2020

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the inspiring young people who took the time to share their experiences with me. It was a privilege to listen to your stories and your honest insights. Thanks also go to their carers and professionals for supporting this project and your helpful contributions.

Thank you to my research supervisors Elaine Chase and Vivian Hill for their invaluable guidance and support throughout the process. It has been a real pleasure to work with you both.

To my trainee EP colleagues, thank you for your words of reassurance when I needed them most. The life-long friendships we have established have made this a truly unforgettable experience.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my husband for his patience and unwavering support over the last three years. Thanks also to my family and friends for their support throughout this process.

Abstract

Statutory guidance from the Department for Education places a duty on local authorities in England to safeguard and promote the welfare and educational achievement of looked after children and young people (LACYP). Accordingly, head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LACYP. Nonetheless, LACYP are five times more likely to have a fixed-period exclusion than their non-looked after peers (DfE, 2020).

LACYP currently lag behind their non-looked after peers on several educational outcome measures. They are also more likely to experience homelessness, high unemployment and be involved with the criminal justice system. Despite their detrimental effects, currently fixed-period exclusion rates for LACYP are rising year on year with no consensus on how best to prevent them. To date, few recent studies have explored the school exclusion experiences of LACYP.

Using Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological systems framework, this study adopts a multi-informant approach to explore the experiences of school exclusion for LACYP from a range of perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eleven LACYP. In addition, interviews were conducted with carers (5), a Special Educational Needs Coordinator, a Virtual School Head, and Educational Psychologists (10) to better understand their perceptions of the wider systemic influences on school exclusions.

The findings illustrated an overwhelmingly negative narrative from the LACYP associated with their school exclusions. Key themes included: a lack of advocacy and not being listened to; a mismatch between young people and adult expectations/aspirations; and that psychological containment, a sense of school belonging and a positive sense of identity were not nurtured within their secondary schools. Further negative consequences associated with school exclusions included poor mental health, involvement in drugs and crime as well as continued social and economic exclusion as care leavers. Implications for policy and practice at a school, Local Authority (including Educational Psychology Services) and national level are discussed.

Impact Statement

This study investigated the school exclusion experiences of looked after children and young people (LACYP) and how these voices can be used to inform practice and policy. It is one of few recent, qualitative studies which has attempted to understand the perspectives of the young people as well as their carers and professionals. It therefore addresses a notable gap in the research. This research is timely given that LACYP are currently five times more likely to have a fixed-period exclusion than their non-LACYP peers (DfE, 2020). The study found that LACYP felt a lack of advocacy from both adults and the systems around them. The study also uncovered a narrative around a mismatch between LACYP and adult expectations and aspirations and that young people were not provided with containment or belonging and lacked a positive identity. The study also found several negative consequences of exclusion particularly with regards to their mental health.

The research demonstrates the value of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological model and is the first study to use this model with this cohort of young people. Using this lens enabled a thorough exploration of the range of issues which affected their exclusions and the consequences of these exclusions at different levels within the child's ecosystem. The framework also elicited three key implications for schools, professionals, the Virtual School (VS) and Local Authority (LA)/government: i) relational activism, relational repair and social connection, ii) high academic expectations and ambitious outcomes and iii) aspirational services promoting advocacy. The findings indicate that supporting the inclusion of LACYP extends beyond schools and requires a collaborative, whole-system approach.

The thesis highlights the importance of the Educational Psychologist (EP) role in supporting the inclusion of LACYP. EPs are uniquely positioned both within schools and within the Local Authority therefore can facilitate a collaborative approach across the child's multiple ecosystemic layers. Specific implications for EP professional practice include:

- *Training* – i) for carers such as therapeutic parenting, ii) for schools on attachment, trauma-informed approaches and the mental health needs of

LACYP, iii) to support social workers' understanding of LACYP's needs and co-deliver training with the VS.

- *Consultation* – i) with carers to problem-solve concerns, ii) promoting high expectations from schools concerning academic achievement and reviewing behaviour policies, working with teachers to reframe behaviour, understand any unidentified learning needs, discussing LACYP in planning meetings with SENCos, iii) with VS caseworkers, EPs to advocate within PEP meetings to prioritise stable placements and consult with out-of-borough EPs.
- *Assessment* – i) with LACYP to be clearly explained and person-centred, ii) to support schools to self-assess inclusion practices, iii) strengthening system level advocacy for LACYP, including clearer monitoring and protection of Children in Need (CIN); use of 'unofficial exclusions' and isolation rooms.
- *Intervention* – i) therapeutic work with LACYP such as narrative approaches, ii) facilitating reflective practice in schools, iii) EP and VS discussion groups across/within LAs.
- *Research* – i) with 'at risk' LACYP, care leavers and CIN, ii) understand teacher views of LACYP's exclusions, iii) to create a LA pathway of support for 'at risk' LACYP.

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List of Abbreviations

ACEs: Adverse childhood experiences

AP: Alternative provision

BTHD: Bioecological Theory of Human Development

CAMHS: Child and adolescent mental health services

CIN: Child in Need

CYP: Child(ren) and young people

DT: Designated Teacher

EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan

EPs: Educational Psychologists

EPS: Educational Psychology Service

FE: Further education

LA: Local Authority

LAC: Looked after child(ren)

LACYP: Looked after child(ren) and young person/people

NEET: Not in education, employment or training

PEP: Personal Education Plan

PRU: Pupil Referral Unit

SEMH: Social, emotional and mental health

SEN: Special educational needs

SENCo: Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SLT: Senior leadership team

SW: Social worker

VS: Virtual School

VSH: Virtual school head

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) places a duty on local authorities in England to safeguard and promote the welfare and educational achievement of looked after children and young people (LACYP)¹ (DfE, 2018a). In line with statutory guidance, 'head teachers should, as far as possible avoid excluding any LACYP' (DfE, 2018a). Virtual Schools (VS) are advised to build relationships with governing bodies, head teachers and designated teachers (DTs) to support their inclusion. They are also advised to 'ensure that carers and social workers know where to seek advice about their role and responsibilities regarding exclusions' (DfE, 2018a). This is due to the acknowledgement that the often traumatic past experiences of LACYP can impact on their behaviour and therefore schools are advised to remember this when applying their behaviour policies.

However, despite this guidance, LACYP are five times more likely to have a fixed-period exclusion than non-LACYP (DfE, 2020). In 2018, 11.67% of LACYP had at least one fixed-period exclusion, compared with 2.33% of non-LACYP (DfE, 2020). LACYP currently lag behind their non-looked after peers on a number of outcome measures, including educational attainment (O'Higgins et al., 2017). The attainment gap between LACYP and their non-looked after peers is already 25% by the end of Key Stage 1 (aged 7) (DfE, 2020). This gap increases all the way into higher education. These negative educational experiences are also detrimental to the mental and physical health and wellbeing of LACYP, with LACYP being more likely to experience homelessness, high unemployment and be involved with the criminal justice system (O'Higgins et al., 2017).

Greater educational success has been linked to better long-term outcomes, so promoting the education of LACYP is an important strategy to counteract these negative life trajectories (Forsman et al., 2016). It is therefore vital that LACYP have access to appropriate educational provision and exclusions are avoided. However, at present there is no consensus about how to avoid excluding LACYP and as such, fixed-period exclusion rates are rising year on year for LACYP (DfE, 2020). To the

¹ This thesis will refer to looked after children and young people as LACYP for economy of expression.

researcher's knowledge, there are only three other studies which have explored the school exclusion experiences of LACYP (McElduff, 2001; Turner, 2003; Sarmezey, 2004). However, these studies were conducted almost twenty years ago highlighting the urgent need for an update considering the considerable socio-political changes which have since occurred. Few studies have explored pupil perspectives on their school exclusions. This thesis argues that listening to these views is vital in gaining a better understanding of how best to support LACYP in mainstream schools and inform relevant policy and practice.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Tudge et al (2009) argue that the purpose of a theory is to give researchers a common scientific language and to allow comparability of findings. Therefore, to provide clarity and scientific integrity, it is important to make the theoretical framework explicit. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development (BTHD) model underpins this study as it provides a useful framework to explore the interacting systems around the young person on their educational experiences within the wider socio-political and historical context. This research does not seek to test this theory but rather uses it as a conceptual framework (Tudge et al., 2009). This section will outline the rationale for its application within this research.

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development was in a continual state of development until his death in 2005. In its original form, Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that an individual's development is a result of the influence of different environmental systems within which an individual person interacts. He termed these contexts the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (see Figure 1).

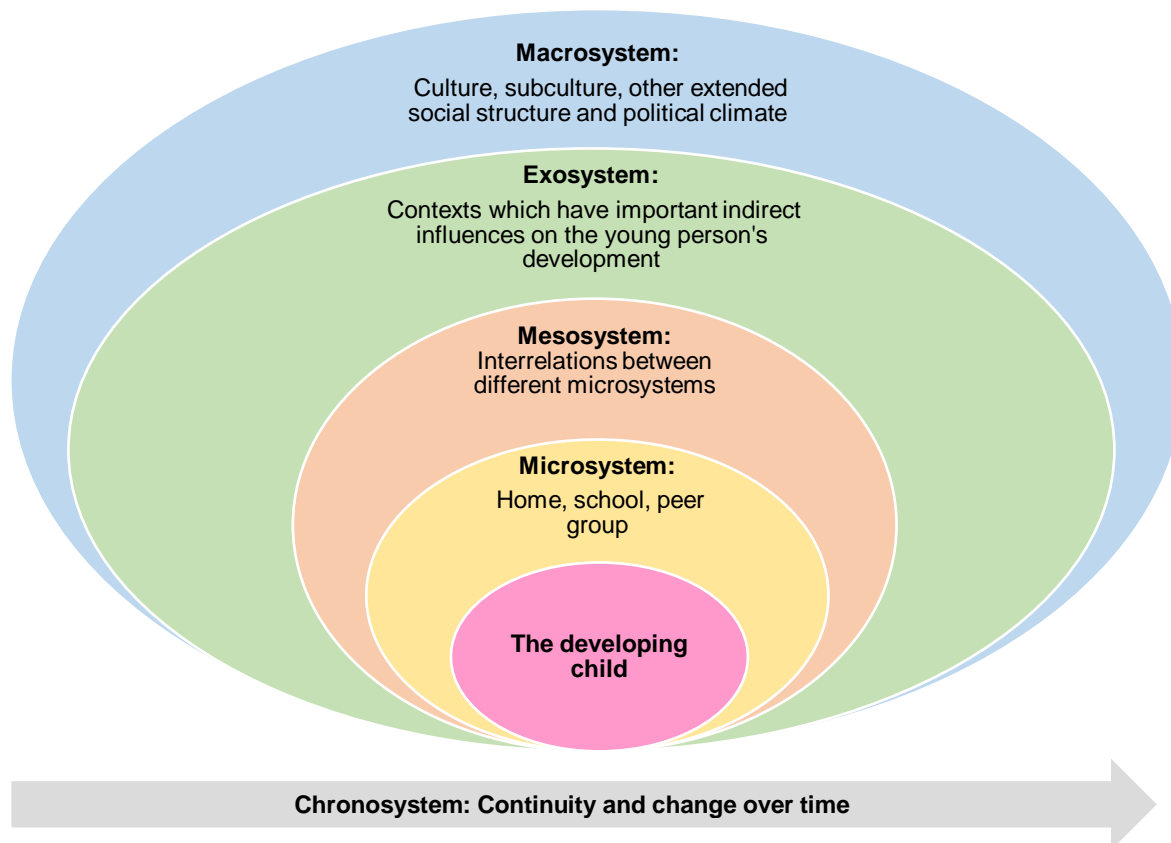


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) BTHD. Labelling from Tudge et al., (2009).

Over time, Bronfenbrenner revised his theory as he believed it did not adequately reflect the importance of the personal characteristics of an individual and that there was an over-focus on context (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This adapted form is the 'bioecological model' (BMHD) or the 'Process-Person-Context-Time model'. Within the new model, the idea of proximal processes has been emphasised as fundamental (Tudge et al., 2009). These comprise the types and forms of interaction between the individual and their environment that operate over time and are considered to be the main ways to bring about human development. However, this theory emphasises that these proximal processes can vary as a result of i) personal characteristics of the individual, ii) the wider context(s) in which the person is situated, iii) the time period in which the proximal processes take place (chronosystem). This updated theory differs from the original in its omission of certain earlier concepts such as 'ecological validity' ("the extent to which the environment experienced by the subjects has the properties it is assumed to have by the investigator") and 'molar activities' ("an ongoing behaviour, perceived as having meaning by the participants") (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.29, 1977, p.45). This

updated theory also emphasises how an individual can change their context based on demand, resource and force characteristics.

There has been criticism of the application of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory within research by scholars such as Tudge et al (2009). Tudge et al. (2009) examined 25 papers published since 2001 which were described as using Bronfenbrenner's theory and found that just four used the most updated theory. He argued that this results in "conceptual confusion and inadequate testing of the theory" (p.198).

The present research used the BTHD framework while acknowledging that the research was not designed specially to test this theory as this would limit the research intention to explore participants' lived experiences. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that translating the theory directly into the research and including each and every aspect of the theory would overcomplicate the study design (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner also provides no clear methodological guide to help in the application of the theory, nor did he explain how any of his existing research fits in with the theory. It has therefore been argued that researchers who base their work on a specific theory do not have to use the theory in its entirety and can chose to draw on specific concepts from the theory (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner also never implied that every aspect had to be included within any study and stated that any study involving the updated model should focus on proximal processes and how these are implicated in developmental outcomes. Therefore, this research acknowledges that it was not possible to explore certain aspects of Bronfenbrenner's updated theory in any depth. For example, fully exploring the chronosystem would have involved collecting data over time which was not a viable methodological approach for this study.

The BTHD framework is useful for developing an understanding of the different factors that affect LACYP exclusion experiences. The model recognises that in addition to the individual consequences of early trauma that many of these children may have faced, a range of additional factors affect their educational experiences. Other literature related to LACYP's exclusions has used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original theory to conceptualise their experiences of exclusion (e.g. McElduff, 2001). However, to the researcher's knowledge, this

current study seems to be the first to use the updated BTHD theory to explore LACYP's exclusion experiences. This seems pertinent in order to better understand which proximal processes promote favourable outcomes which will help inform the implications (Palacios, 2009). It has also been found that studies using Bronfenbrenner's updated model, therefore those which consider interactions between and within systems, result in recommendations that are most useful for guiding mental health policy and practice (Erikson, Ghazinour & Hammarstrom, 2018). This model is also embedded within the role of the EP which has seen the shift from a 'within-child' conceptualisation of a child to the view of a child within their multiple contexts (Pellegrini, 2009). This framework is therefore particularly valuable in allowing a consideration of which proximal processes are likely to promote favourable outcomes (Palacios, 2009).

The BTHD framework was preferred to other systems theories such as Cicchetti and Lynch's (1993) ecological-transactional model as the researcher aimed to explore LACYP's experiences of exclusion, rather than explicitly elicit risk and resiliency factors. This was deemed particularly important given the lack of research in this area meaning that the knowledge base for this topic is in its infancy and thus worthy of inductive exploration. The researcher also did not aim to assess elements from each level of ecology over time which is pertinent in Cicchetti and Lynch's (1993) model; for example, the availability of resources within a community (exosystem) and quality of parenting (microsystem) (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998). Much of the research using this model also involves large sample sizes and quantitative data. It was anticipated from early on that excluded LACYP would be a difficult population to recruit and therefore the study would be relatively small-scale and qualitative in order to explore their lived experiences. Therefore, this approach appeared incongruent with much of the research using Lynch and Cicchetti's model. Furthermore, the researcher did not aim to explicitly elicit details on the CYP's past experiences therefore it was deemed tenuous to make assumptions about risk and resilience factors.

Using this framework, the present research seeks to gain an understanding of the school exclusion experiences of LACYP. The research aims to gain an understanding of what could be done, particularly by EPs, to support the inclusion of

LACYP in schools and what the implications are for policy and practice at a school, Local Authority and national level.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Chapter summary

This chapter explores the existing literature in relation to the school exclusion of LACYP using Bronfenbrenner's (2005) BTHD model. Due to the limited evidence base in this area, a wider consideration of the literature as to why LACYP may be vulnerable to school exclusion is first analysed. The literature with regards to LACYP and exclusions, the voice of the child and the EP role in supporting the inclusion of LACYP is then discussed. The chapter ends with the aims and rationale for the present study. Appendix A details how the literature search was conducted.

2.2 Looked after children and young people

2.2.1 Definition

LACYP are those children for whom the state undertakes parental responsibility because the adults caring for them are no longer able to do so. Under the Children Act (1989), a child is legally defined as 'looked after' by a Local Authority (LA) if he or she receives accommodation from the LA for a period of more than 24 hours, is subject to a care order or is subject to a placement order. The same act outlines the duty of the LA to safeguard and promote the educational achievement of LACYP.

2.2.2 Statistics

According to recent figures, in England there are currently approximately 78,150 LACYP (recorded by the 31st March 2019), an increase of 16.5% compared to 2012 (DfE, 2019). The number of LACYP has increased steadily over the last decade in England, 2% each year between 2012 and 2018. However, the rise between 2018-2019 has been far greater, at 4% (DfE, 2019). Within these statistics, 63% of the LACYP are aged 10 or above and 56% are male.

2.2.3 National context over time (chronosystem)

Over the last half a century, there has been increasing national concern about the underachievement and poor life outcomes of LACYP in relation to their non-looked after peers (Audit Commission, 1994). Nonetheless, research in this area is a relatively recent phenomenon (Connelly & Chakrabarti, 2008).

The Children Act (1989), in UK legislation, is seen as the launch point of research and policy measures designed to improve the educational and life chances of LACYP. More recently, the coalition government, set out in 2010 to 'close the achievement gap' (Whitty & Anders, 2014). There have subsequently been a series of policies and initiatives that aim to raise the attainment and promote the well-being of LACYP. For example, in current statutory guidance, every school must have a designated teacher (DT) for LACYP. Furthermore, all LACYP must have a 'Care Plan' and within this a 'Personal Education Plan' (PEP) which is a record of what needs to happen to support a child reach their full potential (DfE, 2018a).

The government also recently amended section 22 of the Children Act (1989) and placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) to promote the educational achievement of its LACYP (The Children and Families Act, 2014). Furthermore, there has been a recent government increase in Pupil Premium funding for LACYP from £1,900 in 2017 to £2,300 from 2018. This funding is managed by the VSH. However, to date, no systematic empirical evidence exists as to the effectiveness of these initiatives or how they are affecting outcomes for pupils (Carroll & Cameron, 2017).

2.2.4 Cultural and societal attitudes towards LACYP (macrosystem)

There is a wealth of literature relating to the stigma LACYP are subject to in relation to being in care and not living with their birth parents (Ferguson & Wolkow, 2012; Dansey et al., 2019). This may encompass adverse social judgement, social exclusion and rejection. This internalisation of societal stigma can result in feelings of shame and guilt with long term consequences (Goffman, 1963). Kang and Inzlicht (2012) argue that societal stigma can impact on children's emotional, psychological, behavioural and educational outcomes. Perceptions about LACYP within the macrosystem influence understanding of LACYP within a child's microsystems such as school. This negative stereotyping has been found to lead to low expectations of LACYP in schools which have been found to be major obstacles to their educational success (Martin & Jackson, 2002).

2.3 Outcomes

2.3.1 Educational outcomes

Despite government initiatives to raise outcomes for LACYP, the academic attainment of LACYP remains significantly lower than the attainment of their non-looked after peers (DfE, 2020). In 2019, only 37% of LAC reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, which is much lower than the 65% of their non-looked after peers. This gap continues to widen further throughout their educational careers. For example, in 2019, the average 8 attainment score for LACYP was 19.1 at Key Stage 4 compared to 44.6 for non-LACYP (DfE, 2020). In 2020, the government published destination measures for LACYP for the first time. They found that in 2017/18, 78% of LACYP who completed KS4 in 2016/17 were in sustained education or employment. However, currently only around 6% of care leavers aged 19-21 participate in higher education compared to 28% of the general population (DfE, 2019). Research suggests a strong association between level of education and life outcomes which thus makes excluded LACYP extremely vulnerable to social exclusion and unemployment (Parker, 2017).

2.3.2 Special educational needs (SEN)

In 2019, 55.9% of LACYP had a SEN compared to 14.9% of all children (DfE, 2020). This makes LACYP almost four times more likely to have a SEN than all children and almost nine times more likely to have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) than all children (DfE, 2020). Within these EHCPs, Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) was the most common primary type of SEN covering 40.4% of those with EHCPs which contrasts with 13.3% for non-LACYP (DfE, 2020).

2.3.3 Life outcomes

The prevalence of poor outcomes for LACYP are well-documented in the research literature (Carroll & Cameron, 2017). Current statistics affirm that 63% of LACYP are in care due to abuse or neglect, 14% due to family dysfunction, 8% due to the family being in acute stress and 7% due to absent parenting (DfE, 2019). These adverse early life events can have a lasting effect on their mental health and wellbeing. Currently almost half of all LACYP meet the criteria for having possible mental health difficulties, compared to one in ten of their non-LACYP peers (House of Commons Education Committee, (HoCEC), 2016).

The early disadvantages LACYP face appear to follow them into later life and mean that they are more likely to experience poverty, be dependent on welfare and have lower standards of living (Oakley et al., 2018). Care leavers are also disproportionately represented in UK prisons; in 2015-2016, 37% of incarcerated 12-18 year olds had care backgrounds (Simmons, 2016).

2.3.4 Factors contributing to poor outcomes

There are several factors across different levels of the bioecological system which have been identified as contributing to poor outcomes for LACYP.

Micro level

Positive interactions between a child and their immediate environment (proximal processes) are more likely to foster positive development. However, the majority of LACYP have experienced chaotic and neglectful early life experiences (Happer et al., 2006).

Many of these adverse early childhood experiences can be understood through the lens of developing neuroscientific research investigating the impact of developmental trauma and attachment. The term 'developmental trauma' has been conceptualised by several theorists (van der Kolk, 2005; Treisman, 2017a; Spinazzola et al., 2018) and describes ongoing exposure to distressing events within early childhood such as abuse, neglect and distressing events within the family context (van der Kolk, 2005). Research suggests that exposure to repeated, interpersonal traumas can negatively affect a child's "neurological, social, emotional, sensorial, physiological, moral and cognitive development" (Treisman, 2017a, p.9). Van der Kolk (2015) argues that traumatised children can develop a range of unhealthy coping strategies to threat which makes it difficult for them to manage impulses, solve problems or learn new information. However, other authors have argued that this conceptualisation of trauma does not account for findings around the plasticity and resilience of the brain as a result of psycho-social experience (Wastell & White, 2012). Research has also indicated that a history of maltreatment does not necessarily lead to difficulties (Chaffin et al., 2006) and many young people emerge without any long-term attachment-based disorders (O'Connor & Zeanah, 2003).

Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) posits that relational experiences in infancy shape an individual's beliefs about themselves. If they grow up experiencing positive interactions with a caregiver, they are likely to develop a view of themselves as worthy, and of others as trustworthy, caring and responsive. However, if they have grown up around abuse and neglect, they are likely to develop a low sense of self-worth, and a view of others as being unresponsive, unpredictable and secure attachments are unlikely to develop. All LACYP have experienced separation from a primary caregiver which involves a degree of trauma as well as weak or broken attachments (Carroll & Cameron, 2017). Evidence suggests that trauma and abuse are closely associated with insecure emotional attachment to one or more primary adults (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Insecure attachments have been found to be associated with difficulties in learning at school (Carroll & Cameron, 2017; Mcauley & Young, 2006). There is now increasing neuropsychological research to suggest that poor attachment in the early years may affect brain development as a consequence of the child's physical responses to stress (Bernard & Dozier, 2010). Due to their adverse early life experiences, it follows for LACYP to have difficulties developing secure attachments and relationships with new adults and therefore it has been argued that they are disadvantaged within the education system (Mckeever, 2006). Critics suggest that this theory is too deterministic and that it does not explain why some children and young people (CYP) with insecure attachments go on to achieve good outcomes (Meins, 2017). In fact, there is some evidence that insecure attachments can prove adaptive in certain situations (Ein-Dor et al., 2010). Crittenden's (2006) 'dynamic-maturational model of attachment' offers a consideration of how attachment patterns change across time and across relationships. This theory offers optimism in suggesting that supportive relationships with key adults can contribute to more positive outcomes.

Meso/exo/macro level

Within the education system, it is important to consider the significance of relationships for the young people. Research suggests that teachers feel that system level pressures such as the drive for academic results jeopardise the quality of their relationships with pupils (Hutching, 2015). It has thus been argued that the current UK education system which values attainment over all else, is not compatible with a strong relational approach (Noddings, 2015). Zero-tolerance behaviour policies have

also been argued to be unsupportive of promoting caring, trusting environments and have been found to contribute to the rise in exclusions (HoCEC, 2018).

Statistics from the DfE (2019) demonstrate that 68% of LACYP had only one care placement during the year, 21% had two and 10% had three or more placements. Changes of care placement and school placement have been found to have a negative influence on a child's educational outcomes (O'Sullivan & Westerman, 2007). Stein (1995) identified that young people who have stable placements are more likely to succeed in education, be in work, have better mental health outcomes and have better social integration in adulthood when compared to young people who have experienced a greater number of placement moves in care. Stability is now understood to be a crucial protective factor in positive life outcomes for LACYP (Berridge, 2017).

This highlights the need for a robust consideration of the interacting factors across a child's microsystem in order to gain a holistic understanding of their difficulties within education and subsequent poor outcomes.

2.4 Exclusion

School exclusion is a disciplinary measure used around the world whereby a school has the power to remove the child from the school either permanently or for a certain time period (Ford et al., 2018). Currently in the UK, there are 'fixed-period' exclusions which are up to a total of 45 days per academic year and 'permanent' exclusions which terminate a CYP's attendance at that setting (Ford et al., 2018).

The number of permanent exclusions across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has increased from 7,700 in 2016/17 to 7,900 in 2017/18 (DfE, 2019a). This corresponds to around 41.6 permanent exclusions per academic day in 2017/18, up from an average of 35.2 per day in 2015/16 (DfE, 2019a). The number of fixed-period exclusions across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has increased by 8% from 381,900 in 2016/17 to 410,800 in 2017/18 (DfE, 2019a). This corresponds to around 2,162 fixed-period exclusions per day in 2017/18, up from an average of 1,786 per day in 2015/16. The majority (80%) of fixed-period exclusions occurred in secondary schools and these exclusions have increased by 0.73% between 2016/17-2017/18 (DfE, 2019a).

The rise in exclusion rates nationally has been explained by a number of factors at different system levels, including a rise in the number of children with complex needs, a rise in child poverty and a rise in children's mental health difficulties (Gill et al., 2017). The most common reason for exclusion was 'persistent disruptive behaviour' and those who are overrepresented in these statistics include boys, CYP with SEN, those eligible for free school meals and LACYP (DfE, 2017).

2.5 LACYP and exclusion

The SEN Code of Practice (2015) states that the UK government is committed to inclusive education and removing barriers to learning (DfE, 2014). This also emphasises that all children should be educated in mainstream schools unless there are specific reasons why this cannot happen (DfE, 2014). In recognition of the poorer outcomes LACYP face, the government has issued statutory guidance to ensure that the educational outcomes of LACYP are protected within legislation. Despite statutory guidance advising against LACYP exclusion, current statistics state that they are more than five times more likely to have a fixed-period exclusion than non-LACYP (DfE, 2020). In 2018, 11.67% of LACYP had at least one fixed-period exclusion compared to 2.33% for all children. Recent research has also highlighted that just one-third of primary and secondary schools considered a pupil's history when identifying and supporting pupils who may be at risk of exclusion (Thomson, 2018). Looked-after young women were also found to be three times more likely to be permanently excluded than their non-LAC female peers (Viner & Taylor, 2005).

Current government figures state that the number of LACYP being permanently excluded has been in decline in recent years and now stands at 0.05% compared to 0.10% for their non-LACYP peers (DfE, 2020). They note that this could be due to revised guidance on exclusions in 2017 (DfE, 2020). However, this improved rate of permanent exclusion has simply been supplanted by a higher rate of fixed-period exclusions and therefore placement into alternative provision (AP) schooling (Malcolm, 2018). Worryingly, the government does not currently publish statistics on the number of LACYP who attend APs. New data gathered through a freedom of information request demonstrated that the average total number of LACYP attending AP settings was 4,422 (Malcolm, 2018). Therefore, despite LACYP being less likely to experience permanent school exclusion than previously, they are

more likely to experience at least one fixed-period exclusion and are overrepresented in AP (Malcolm, 2018).

There are several issues surrounding exclusion statistics which include discrepancies between sources (Smith, 2009), under-reporting and unofficial exclusions (Parsons, 2008). Unofficial exclusions include:

- Managed moves - whereby headteachers mutually agree to move a pupil from one school roll to another.
- Offsite alternative provision - whereby the school directs the pupil to be educated somewhere else such as a PRU, but they remain on the school roll.
- Illegal exclusion or 'off-rolling' - whereby the school encourage parents to take their child out of school. Or when a child attends an offsite AP and the school then removes them from their register.

Ofsted have recently found that 'large numbers of pupils' are being off-rolled before they sit their GCSEs to boost school performance (Ofsted, 2017). Analysis by the Institute of Public Policy Research also reveals that there are many more pupils not captured in any government data that are being excluded from schools and that 'managed moves' are increasingly being used as an intervention to avoid a child being permanently excluded (Gill et al., 2017). Research suggests that two-thirds of secondary schools have used this strategy between 2017 and 2018 (Thomson, 2018). Alarming, the government are not currently collecting any data on schools' use of these measures (Thomson, 2018).

The lack of statistics gathered by the government in these areas make it difficult to assess the factors leading to, or the consequences of all forms of exclusion for LACYP. It also makes it difficult to generate an accurate figure of the number of exclusions of LACYP and therefore appreciate the true extent of the problem. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the outcomes for LACYP who have been excluded from school are stark (Gill et al., 2017). LACYP who have been excluded are ultimately at greater risk of social exclusion (Kendrick, 2005). For example, they are more likely to be unemployed, develop severe mental health problems and go to prison (Gill et al., 2017). There is also an economic cost to society in failing this cohort of young people. A recent report estimates that every

cohort of excluded pupils will go on to cost the state an extra £2.1 billion in education, health, benefits and criminal justice costs (Gill et al., 2017).

These statistics also do not encapsulate a wider conceptualisation of exclusion including internal school exclusions. Concerningly, the government do not gather statistics regarding the use of internal exclusion. This is alarming given that over half of all secondary schools operate some form of internal unit (Timpson, 2019). The DfE (2016) has stated that schools can adopt seclusion/isolation rooms for 'disruptive pupils, in an area away from other pupils'. However, further detail is lacking making the guidance unclear and open to the discretion of individual schools regarding the conditions, length of time in there and whether the CYP can leave of their free will (DfE, 2016).

Therefore, this research rejects the narrow conceptualisation from policy makers around exclusion either being 'fixed-period' or 'permanent'. Instead, it takes a child-centred perspective and sees exclusion as comprising a broad range of absence from education including internal exclusion, off-rolling and managed moves.

2.5.1 Literature on LACYP and exclusions

It is now recognised that there are a multitude of factors which can influence outcomes for a CYP, including factors within the child, their environment and the interaction between these factors (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For LACYP, there appear to be a number of pre-care and in-care experiences, which are risk factors to poor educational experiences (Mallon, 2005).

Risk factors for LACYP exclusion at the micro/meso level

Weinberg, Oshiro and Shea (2014) noted a significant relationship between the number of school moves and exclusions for LACYP. McElduff's (2001) study corroborated that stability and continuity were key in reducing school exclusions. Turner's (2003) study found that low expectations from teachers, related to their care status, contributed to LACYP exclusions. Other factors associated with their care status such as feeling different to their peers leading to social exclusion and low self-esteem as well as a lack of role models were also contributory factors (Turner, 2003). This was corroborated by Sarmezey's (2004) research which found that poor attitudes and low expectations from responsible adults were key factors leading to

LACYP exclusion. Sarmezey (2004) also identified that poor relationships between LACYP and their peers and LACYP and their teachers was a crucial factor contributing to their school exclusion. Coates (2011) highlighted that bullying is often an issue for CYP in care. This is concerning given findings from The Millennium Cohort Study which has been following the lives of over 19,500 young people. They found that negative interactions with peers and being bullied were associated with high depressive symptoms at the age of 14 (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2018).

Poor mental health outcomes for LACYP have been well-documented (Keyes et al., 2012). However, less well researched is the trajectories of mental health needs for LACYP. The theory of latent vulnerability (McCrory & Viding, 2015) asserts that LACYP may not present with clinical-level problems for many years but later develop significant mental health needs as a result of their early trauma (Hiller & St. Clair, 2018). Research has found that there is an association between poor mental health and exclusion (Ford et al., 2018). There is also an association between learning disability and exclusion. Therefore, LACYP having higher levels of SEN and SEMH needs than their non-looked after peers could go some way in explaining why LACYP are facing disproportionately high levels of exclusion from school.

Exo/Macro level

The House of Commons Education Committee (2018) has argued that there is a lack of consistency within school approaches to the exclusion of LACYP meaning that schools are able to exclude much to their own discretion. Sarmezey's (2004) research identified that the reactive stance of schools and a lack of opportunity to build resilience within school, such as a lack of support to foster a positive self-image and social competence, contributed to LACYP exclusions.

Sarmezey (2004) also found that wider socio-political pressures on LACYP, for example, the move to independent living after they turn 16, contributed to their school exclusions. McElduff (2001) demonstrated that although there were individual differences within the group of LACYP, the level of social disadvantage, poverty, low income, family disruptions, low expectations and high number of stressors seemed to be the uniting factor between those at risk of being further disadvantaged through exclusions.

It has been argued that austerity measures from the government in recent years have contributed to a lack of specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to support both LACYP and teaching staff in schools (Paget et al., 2018). As such, schools are often employing inappropriate and reactive disciplinary action rather than evidence-based early intervention strategies (HoCEC, 2010). Research has also shown that teachers feel ill-equipped to support the mental health needs of excluded or 'at risk' LACYP. For example, Osler et al., (2001) examined the reasons behind the school exclusion of students with SEN, ethnic minority children and LACYP. Interviews with teachers highlighted that they wanted more training and support in handling and minimising exclusions. The study also found that secondary schools with lower rates of exclusions generally had alternative flexible curriculum arrangements for vulnerable students.

Jackson and Sachdev (2001) argued that wider, LA level factors influence the exclusion of LACYP and that there is a lack of proactive steps taken to reengage them in education. Despite this research being outdated, statistics suggest it is still a relevant concern. For example, currently 39% of 19-21-year-old LACYP are not in education, employment or training (NEET), compared with just 12% of non-LACYP (DfE, 2019).

Protective factors

Research has also identified a number of protective factors which contribute to positive educational experiences for LACYP, and thus avoiding exclusion. Jackson and Martin (2000) identified the following factors as crucial for educational success: stability and continuity, learning to read early and fluently, having a parent/carer who values education, having friends outside of care, developing hobbies, meeting a significant adult who offered consistent support/mentoring and attending school regularly. Sebba et al.'s (2015) mixed method study explored the relationship between educational outcomes and LACYP's histories. They found that young people identified teachers and school staff as the main determinants of educational progress as they needed someone to care about them before they could care about themselves. Young people also reported that they enjoyed and benefitted from one-to-one tuition, funded through Pupil Premium funding (Sebba et al., 2015). Adrian-Vallance's (2014) study also found that supportive, consistent relationships

and being treated as an individual instead of defined by their LACYP status were important to their inclusion in school. Sarmezey's (2004) study corroborates this finding in that friendships were found to be a protective factor among female LACYP. It therefore appears that positive proximal processes within the child's microsystem could contribute to more positive outcomes. It is therefore important to understand whether these factors could be protective in avoiding exclusion.

It has therefore been argued that there are several interacting risk factors, at different levels within the ecosystem which have been identified as contributing to the exclusion of LACYP. Likewise, there is emerging evidence around protective factors which could support their inclusion. It should however be noted that much of the literature is outdated which emphasises the need to provide updated evidence in this area.

2.5.2 Government response

Responses at the macro level include the recent introduction of a VS in each LA which aims to encourage more stringent monitoring and intervention for LACYP, overseen by a VSH. Each LACYP must have a PEP which outlines targets and interventions to help them achieve positive educational outcomes. However, Ofsted's recent evaluation of PEPs found that the quality of such plans was 'variable', targets were often unspecific or not challenging enough and many did not focus adequately on educational attainment (Ofsted, 2012). As previously discussed, the government are not monitoring unofficial exclusions nor are there official monitoring procedures for those 'at risk' of exclusion.

Promoting relational approaches, underpinned by attachment theory has recently gained momentum at both a school and policy level. At a policy level, it has been used as the theoretical base for fostering standards (DfE, 2012) and at a school level, the basis of numerous interventions (NICE, 2015). There has been a recent movement to make schools 'attachment aware'. The project focuses on relational-based strategies and aims to promote awareness of attachment in relation to a child's behaviour and learning. Alongside this, Emotion Coaching has also been gaining popularity and is promoted as a universal, relational-based practice approach for schools (Rose et al., 2015). Early findings suggest that these projects are having positive impacts on pupils' academic achievement and decreasing the

number of school exclusions (Parker et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2019). However, Smith et al. (2017, p.1) argue that “attachment has become shorthand to signal the importance of relationships” and that a focus on attachment has detracted from other useful approaches. They argue that Honneth’s (1995) theory of recognition presents an alternative view which highlights the importance of reciprocal relationships not just between individuals but between individuals and their wider social, political and community contexts.

A systematic review of interventions to support LACYP in school found that none of the studies were robust enough to provide evidence for effectiveness but that there were a number of interventions which ‘showed promise’ (Liabo et al., 2013). A more recent systematic review of educational interventions for LACYP also concluded that evidence of effectiveness could not be ascertained due to variable methodological quality, again highlighting the need for more robust measures of these interventions (Evans et al., 2017). Interventions with positive results included transition support, staff development and training as well as more community-based interventions (Liabo et al., 2013). Tutoring and mentoring has increasingly been found to be effective in raising outcomes for LACYP and has been the most widely evaluated intervention for raising the attainment of LACYP (Carroll & Cameron, 2017; Forsman & Vinnerljung, 2012).

Several LAs across the UK are currently collaborating with UCL, Institute of Education to deliver ‘Promoting the Achievement of Looked after Children’ (PALAC) programmes. PALAC is a knowledge exchange programme, built on evidence-based practice, which seeks to support practice in schools to improve outcomes for children in care. A recent study analysed 17 secondary schools who were deemed as having effective practice in supporting LACYP. The study identified several key qualities that summarised the schools’ effective practices. These included, linking a young person with a key adult, building strong relationships, having strong relationships with the carers/LA/specialist agencies, ensuring consistency but also flexibility and planning for future transition (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009).

Evidence for early intervention strategies to specifically support LACYP ‘at risk’ of exclusion is limited. Within the DfE (2017) guidance to schools with regards to exclusion, it simply states that schools should ‘in partnership with others, consider

what additional support or alternative placement may be required' and / or to request an early annual review (p. 11). This guidance lacks detail as to which intervention strategies schools should employ to support these CYP. This lack of detail could in part explain why LACYP are still being excluded at such high rates.

The government's recent Green paper; 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' (2017a) outlined the government's commitment to mental health services to CYP. This document acknowledged that the system currently 'struggles to address the severity and complexity of LACYP's needs'. The paper also highlights a need for targeted, person-centred interventions as well as appropriate assessment to support these complex needs (DfE, 2017a). However, there is a lack of detail on the action to be taken or the funding, for example, for specialist services. It has also been argued that the paper's proposals do not meet the mental health needs of LACYP and may well exacerbate them (DfSC & DfE, 2018). The DfE have since announced the launch of 10 pilot programmes, led by the Anna Freud centre which aim to identify LACYP mental health and wellbeing needs in order to support early intervention (DfE, 2018). However, this relies on correlational data to assume that supporting LACYP mental health needs will support their school inclusion. This assumes that mental health needs are the primary risk factor leading to the exclusion of LACYP. This therefore highlights the need for more research to gain a greater understanding of the factors leading to school exclusion experiences for LACYP.

2.6 LACYP's voice

Thirty years ago, the landscape of children's rights was drastically changed by the introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UK parliament passing of the Children Act (1989). A recent report by the Children's Commissioner (2019) however notes that there is still much more to be done to make these rights a reality for all children. The report argues that system level issues such as statutory requirements, funding limitations, management priorities and professional processes are taking priority over children's wishes and feelings. They note that children often feel unheard and powerless in a system that does not have the capacity, or the will to listen and respond. They therefore argue that children need independent professional advocates. They define advocacy as: 'representing the views, wishes and needs of CYP to help them navigate the system' (Department

for Health, 2002). The review stressed the importance of advocacy services for LACYP yet found that only a small proportion of LACYP gain access to advocacy. This is despite it being a statutory right for LACYP according to the Adoption and Children Act (2002).

CYP, by their very status are excluded from having a voice in a number of the processes of social inclusion (Ridge & Millar, 2000). Their voice has traditionally been excluded as they have historically had little or no input into national and local policies (Hill et al., 2004). Children who enter into the care system have additional challenges having their voices heard as they are often geographically and socially isolated due to changes of school and home (Berridge & Brodie, 1998). The social stigma many children feel being in care has also been emphasised by LACYP themselves (Axford, 2008; Polat & Farrell, 2002). Many LACYP will have experienced family breakdown whereby many will not have had an active voice in the decision to go into care (Kendrick, 2005). Research suggests that LACYP often resent this loss in autonomy and responsibility, with social workers and new carers now making decisions for them (Barry, 2002). This highlights the importance of gaining the LACYP's voice in order to promote their social inclusion.

Holland's (2009) review of studies analysing LACYP's perspectives highlights great theoretical and methodological diversity between studies. He found that the studies ranged from one-off, structured interviews (Chapman et al., 2004) to longitudinal, more in-depth case-studies (Greeson & Bowen, 2008; Renold et al., 2008). It has been argued that such varied research designs complement one another and enrich our understanding of LACYP's lived experiences (Holland, 2009). This diversity also emphasises the complexity of LACYP as a group and how a range of methodological approaches is often necessary in order to fully encapsulate their voices. In doing so, it is widely acknowledged that LACYP are not a homogenous group and will each come with different individual experiences (Sinclair, 2007). The diversity of this population has therefore been emphasised in approaching how to gain their voices (Statham, 2008).

Previous research with LACYP has often asked those around the child, such as carers and professionals to speak for them (Holland, 2009). A consistent finding from Holland's (2009) review was that there were often different understandings of

key concepts between the young people and adults. The review also found that when the CYP's voice was included within research, there was a lack of consideration of the ethical implications of working with LACYP. For example, a lack of acknowledgement that talking about their previous experiences, which often include loss and trauma, is highly personal for these CYP (Holland, 2009). This highlights the importance of including the CYP's voice, with a thorough consideration of the ethical implications.

McElduff (2001), Turner (2003) and Sarmezey (2004) all gained the views of young people in their research looking at LACYP's exclusions. However, a range of designs and interview techniques were used and they involved very small sample sizes. Liabo et al.'s (2013) systematic review of interventions to support LACYP highlights that there are a number of studies which have asked LACYP about their school experiences (Jackson & Sachdev, 2001). However, the review did not find any studies where young people's views informed the development of policy and practice. Furthermore, Holland's (2009) review also highlights the trend in research to focus on the problems LACYP face, instead of focusing on what is working well (Chase et al., 2006). This has therefore influenced the aims of this study to not only gain the voice of the LACYP, but also to use this voice to inform future approaches to supporting the inclusion of LACYP in schools.

2.7 The role of Educational Psychologists

The core role of the Educational Psychologist is the 'application of psychological theory, research and techniques to support children, young people, their families and schools to promote the emotional and social wellbeing of young people' (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2019). EPs work at a number of levels within a child's ecosystem providing support at these different levels to bring about positive change for CYP (MacKay, 2008).

EPs across the country are currently being commissioned to work within VS teams. A study involving 107 EPs across five LAs in the South West of England found that the majority of EPs (83%) worked with LACYP as part of their school work as opposed to any formal collaboration with the VS (Norwich et al., 2010). Those with specialist EP roles reported that these were new posts (EPs had had these roles for three years or less). The main activities they undertook within these roles

were grouped into five main areas: supportive (individual and group work), training of teachers/other professional groups/foster carers, promoting achievement (project work) and multiagency meetings and overview work (liaising/advising on casework).

Microsystem (individual child)

Walker (2012) carried out a systematic review to understand how EPs provide support at an individual level for LACYP. This review included just six papers and they were all small-scale studies. At an individual level, the review found that EPs advocate for LACYP, emphasising and promoting their voice (Harker et al., 2003; Golding et al., 2006). Bradbury (2006) reported that EPs working within specialist roles were predominantly involved in individual case work, for example, supporting LACYP with attachment difficulties.

A study examining the effectiveness of EPs working with LACYP at an individual level has demonstrated a positive correlation between EP involvement and placement success (Del Valle, 2005). However, this study lacked evidence of how EP intervention affects outcomes. There has been some evidence that EPs are positively affecting outcomes for LACYP. For example, research by Sinclair, Wilson and Gibbs (2005) found that direct EP work with LACYP was perceived positively by carers and social workers and that EP work was associated with a reduction in levels of truancy, running away and placement breakdown. This suggests that EPs may have an important role in supporting the needs of these children (Osborne et al., 2009).

Meso (school connections)

EPs have been found to be well-positioned to provide psychological advice and knowledge to help those who work with LACYP including school staff, carers and other professionals (Bradbury, 2006; Mcparlin, 1996; Norwich et al., 2010). This approach has been advocated by Cameron and Maginn (2011) who affirm that consultation with adults within the child's different microsystems allows EPs to disseminate psychological knowledge to help problem-solve highly challenging situations. Norwich et al.'s (2010) study found that consultation was the main way EPs worked with DTs. Lipkin (2016) highlighted that EPs should also be working closely with DTs to help them to be advocates for the CYP. Whitehouse (2014) found

that DTs would like greater access to EPs, including regular input for a LACYP over time, more training around LACYP needs and support with how to manage multi-agency meetings. Other research has highlighted how EPs could also be effectively supporting the 'emotional labour' of teachers working with LACYP experiencing SEMH difficulties for example, through supervision (Edwards, 2016).

Macro (Local Authority / multi agency work)

EPs in Walker's (2012) study emphasised the importance of working at a multi-agency level to support LACYP. Farrell et al. (2006) found that EPs were working in multi-agency contexts and 71% were involved in services related to LACYP. Bradbury (2006) added that EPs felt that attending multi-agency meetings was an important part of their role in supporting LACYP. However, further research has highlighted difficulties working in a joined-up way due to a lack of communication between professionals (Thomson, 2007). Despite these challenges, Mcparlin (1996) argues that EPs are well-equipped through their training to mediate when such difficulties arise.

A review of the literature suggests that there has been no assessment of impact with regards to EP involvement within the VS. A small case study in a London borough provides some evidence for the impact of EP involvement with the VS at a strategic level (Buchanan in Carroll et al., 2018). This case study found that EPs were able to support multiagency working between the DTs and VS as well as support the development of DT practice through VS conferences and networking groups (Carroll et al., 2018).

Going forward, researchers have highlighted the role of the EP in providing more whole-school systemic work such as training to support schools' understanding of the unique needs of LACYP (Coates, 2011; Dent & Cameron, 2003; McElduff, 2001). Others have argued that EPs should be supporting the development of policy which protects the rights of LACYP (Coates, 2011). The limited literature highlights the importance of further research to clarify the unique contribution EPs could make in supporting LACYP either 'at risk' of exclusion or who have been excluded. This would support funding decisions around commissioning EP time in the VS.

2.8 Conclusions

The poor educational experiences of LACYP have been well-documented in the literature. However, there are very few studies which have explored the factors which contribute to the exclusion of LACYP as well as the young people's lived experiences of these events. Much of the literature reviewed is arguably now outdated. This is important given the substantial changes within the wider socio-political landscape and the subsequent impact on school resources and LACYP services over the last 20 years. This lack of recent research makes it difficult to understand how best to support excluded / 'at risk' LACYP and reduce exclusions.

2.9 Aims and rationale of the study

Current research highlights the negative educational experiences of LACYP and their disproportionately high rates of exclusion. However, there is a significant lack of current research exploring these exclusion experiences from the perspectives of young people. Furthermore, a lack of multi-informant research in this area means that we are lacking the views of key adult voices around the child, including EPs whose voices have not been captured in LACYP exclusion research previously.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the experiences of school exclusion for LACYP?
- 2) What are schools and professionals doing and what more could be done to support the inclusion of LACYP?

The first research question aimed to fill the gaps in the extant research by exploring the experiences of school exclusion for LACYP by harnessing both the young person's lived experiences as well as the perspectives of those who share responsibility for their education, care and well-being. In doing so, the research seeks to extend and update the current literature and use Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological framework to explore the influences of the systems around LACYP's exclusions. This involved gaining the perspectives of young people, carers, a SENCo, VSH and EPs. By exploring their experiences, the study also hoped to better understand the systemic and contextual factors as well as the proximal processes at different levels of the CYP's ecosystem which affect the exclusion of LACYP as well as the consequences of the exclusions for the CYP.

The second research question sought to build on the growing research in the area of strengths and resilience-led approaches by looking at protective factors within the CYP's system in order to support the young person going forward (Chase et al., 2006; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). In doing so, it aimed to elicit positive examples of effective practice and support from the perspectives of the young people, their carers and professionals. It also aimed to understand what each group believes could be done better to support LACYP and prevent the school exclusion of LACYP going forward. The study sought to do what few studies have previously been able to do in using the participant voices, particularly the young people, to inform the implications of the study and ascertain which protective factors, interventions and government/LA responses appear to be working well and therefore warrant further exploration and/or implementation. It is argued that this research question is critical in order to develop protective systems of support to discover the implications for future practice at the different levels of the CYP's ecosystem.

As previously detailed, excluded LACYP's voices have previously been overlooked in the literature. This research therefore purposefully intended to privilege young people's voices and perspectives in answering both research questions to address this gap. Given the lack of research into EPs working in the VS, the research also aimed to use these voices to better understand their perspectives on LACYP exclusions as well as their role working with excluded LACYP.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter summary

This chapter first explores the theoretical perspectives and ontological and epistemological stance taken by the researcher. The research design, sample groups and participant recruitment are then outlined. Methods of data collection and analysis as well as a thorough analysis of the ethical issues involved within this study are then discussed.

3.2 Theoretical perspective

As discussed in chapter one, Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development (BTHD) provided the theoretical framework for this research. This approach was derived from the research questions which aim to explore the exclusion of LACYP from a multi-informant perspective. Of particular interest therefore are how CYP's experiences are shaped by the multiple contexts around them. This was explored through interviewing LACYP, carers, a SENCo, VSH and EPs.

3.3 Ontological and epistemological considerations

A social constructionist epistemological and ontological position is adopted in this research. This regards interactions between people, predominantly through the use of language, as fundamental to developing an understanding of the world in which we live (Burr, 2003). The axiological assumption of this study accepts that by the very nature of exploring participant constructs, the study will be value laden and there will be a certain amount of bias in the questions asked. These positions are aligned with the theoretical perspective of bioecological systems theory, which emphasises how a person's understanding of the world is dependent on where and when they live and is influenced by those around them (Burr, 2003). Therefore, reality is socially constructed through the interaction of multiple systems which are subsequently interpreted to become the reality for that person / group. This approach also acknowledges the heterogeneity of experiences whereby each exclusion will be interpreted uniquely both between individual children but also across the different systems. This range of different perspectives on school exclusions for LACYP can

help build a shared and deeper understanding of the factors influencing such exclusions.

Using a social constructionist lens also permits the framing of the term 'exclusion' within a western-societal and historical context. The term 'exclusion' is a socially constructed concept and therefore it is acknowledged that it may hold different meanings for different groups. For example, the UK government currently collect data on 'fixed-term' and 'permanent' exclusions. However, this research challenges this limited conceptualisation and considers "exclusion" to be a young person being removed from access to education which encompasses permanent, fixed-term, managed moves, off-rolling and internal isolation within a school. A social constructionist perspective also acknowledges that the researcher will construct their own meaning through data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Research looking at gaining the views of LACYP has highlighted a range of methodological approaches which are often influenced by the complexities of the lives of LACYP (Holland, 2009). In acknowledging this complexity, a pragmatist paradigm underlies this research (Robson, 2011). This is firstly due to previous reviews of research with LACYP which have highlighted the difficulties in accessing this population (Holland, 2009; Murray, 2005). As such, Berridge (2007) argues that much of the research to date could be characterised as 'pragmatist'. Second, a pragmatic approach has the advantage of allowing changes to be made at a school level given its focus on 'what works' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). It was acknowledged that this approach would not however detract from a systematic approach to the research as will be detailed.

3.4 Research design

A qualitative, multi-informant approach was used to explore the experiences of school exclusion for LACYP. This approach was adopted to capture the wider systemic information affecting the young people's exclusions as well as their personal lived experiences and fits well with the BTHD framework. This approach to knowledge attempted to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints (Johnson et al., 2007). Data triangulation, the use of a variety of sources in a study, was therefore used in this research (Denzin, 1978). This was not to corroborate but to provide complimentary perspectives to enrich understandings of

the topic (Yardley, 2008). Jick (1979) affirms that such triangulation has the advantage of creating thicker, richer data which can uncover contradictions and ultimately aid the development of new theories.

3.5 Sample

Purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants and there were five groups of research participants. Difficulties with recruitment (as detailed in 3.66) meant that a pragmatic design frame was adopted, with a sample comprising young people from two London local authorities, but predominantly from 'LA X'. This was due to the researcher being on placement within LA X therefore being able to use professional contacts to support recruitment. A single case study approach was not appropriate given the mobility of young people across different local authorities. Therefore, it was deemed relevant to recruit LACYP from another neighbouring borough. This was seen as a strength as it enabled the researcher to also access the voices of young people of college age, giving a novel and unheard perspective. From the young people, opportunity sampling of their parents/carers was also used. Opportunity sampling was further used to sample a SENCo and HoVS in LA X as these were professional contacts of the researcher. Given that the majority of young people were recruited from LA X, it was considered appropriate that the SENCo and HoVS were also working within that context. Opportunity sampling was further used to recruit EPs with a specialist responsibility for working within the VS from LAs across London. Recruiting these EPs from London LAs was seen as important given that the young people participants were from two London LAs. The sample size within each of these groups and where they were recruited from is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Research participant groups, sample size and sampling location

Participants	Sample group	Recruitment process	Total
Young people	'At risk' of exclusion	Mainstream schools in LA X* and identified by the VS	1
		College in LA Y	1
	One or more fixed-term exclusion	PRU in LA X	2

		Identified by Virtual School within LA X	5
		College in LA Y	2
		Total	11
Carer / parent	Carers of 5 of the young people (three foster carers, one mother, one key worker from the child's care home)	All carers were invited to take part as part of the consent process	5
SENCo	From PRU in LA X	Contacted directly via email	1
Virtual School Head	Head of VS in LA X	Contacted directly via email	1
Educational Psychologists	EPs from 9 different London boroughs who work within the VS and/or have a specialist role working with LACYP.	Contacted via email and snowballing	10

*LA X refers to the Local Authority the researcher was on placement in. **LA Y was another, neighbouring London Local Authority.

The final sample comprised 28 participants; 11 young people, 5 carers/parent, 1 SENCo, 1 VSH and 10 EPs. The 11 young people (5 males, 6 females) were between the ages of 13-20 years ($M = 16$ years; $SD = 2$ years) and were known to the LA as being looked after at the time of recruitment and one was a recent care leaver. Further characteristics/contextual information about the young people is presented in Table 2. The information in this table is presented in this way to protect the individual participant details and ensure anonymity/confidentiality. The young people came from a range of ethnicities and sees representation from many of the ethnicity groups associated with higher rates of exclusion according to new government statistics (DfE, 2019a).

Table 2.

Characteristics of the young people in the study

	Total	11
Gender	Male	5
	Female	6
Ethnicity	Black British	2
	White British	5

	British Bengali	1
	Mixed White / Black African	2
	Mixed Caribbean and African	1
Academic year	8-9	3
	10-11	2
	Post 16	6
Placement type	Foster	4
	Kinship/Friends	1
	Children's home	3
	Independent living	3
School type	Mainstream	1
	Special (including PRU)	3
	College	4
	Apprenticeship	1
	NEET	2
Length of time in care	1 year or less	2
	1-5 years	4
	6-12 years	5
SEN status	EHCP	5
	No EHCP	2
	Unsure	4
Number of social workers in the last 3 years	2	1
	3	8
	4+	2
School changes in the last 5 years	1-2	7
	3-5	3
	6+	1
CAMHS involvement	Yes	4
	Yes, but did not engage	5
	No	2
EP involvement	Yes	6
	No	3
	Unsure	2
	2-7	2

Number of internal Exclusions	8+	9
Number of Fixed-Period Exclusions	0 (at risk)	2
	1-3	4
	5+	5
Number of Permanent Exclusions	0	6
	1	5
Reason for permanent exclusion or fixed-period exclusion	Physical assault towards a pupil or adult	6
	Threat of physical assault towards a pupil or adult	3
	Persistent disruptive behaviour	2

The study included 5 carers/parents; three were foster carers, one was the mother of the child and another was the young person's key worker in the care home. For ease of reference, this group will be referred to as 'carers' for the remainder of the thesis. The researcher attempted to recruit two Designated Teachers (DTs) from secondary schools in LA X via email and two consented. However, these teachers could not be interviewed due to increasing demands on their workload, then interruptions due to responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ten EPs (9 females, 1 male) were interviewed who were working within VSs across London LAs. Two EPs were from one LA and the other eight EPs came from different London LAs. Length of experience in this role within the VS ranged from 6 months to 6 years ($M = 2$ years 9 months; $SD = 1$ year 10 months). All the EPs worked one day a week within the VS when there were 2 EPs in that borough working in the VS (so one day each). For more information on sample choices see Appendix F.

3.5.1 Context for the study

All the participants recruited were London based and eight of young people came from the London borough where the researcher was on placement as a trainee EP (LA X). Three participants were recruited from a neighbouring London borough (LA Y). LA X had approximately 300 LACYP on roll and LA Y had 350 as of January 2020. LA X had no permanent exclusions of LACYP as of January 2020 and had 30 fixed-term exclusions between May 2017 and 2018, which resulted in 63 days lost.

The two PRUs in LA X are considered Tier 2 services, providing educational programmes to Key Stage three and four students, across two school sites, who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school as well as providing respite for those at risk of permanent exclusion or who are on extended fixed-term exclusions from mainstream schools. These provisions had received a 'Good' rating from Ofsted in 2017.

3.6 Participant recruitment

3.6.1 LACYP who had one or more fixed-period exclusion

Recognising the researcher's broad conceptualisation of the term exclusion, the inclusion criteria started off broad (see Appendix F) but was refined to 'children or young people who are looked after, and who have been subject to an exclusion (fixed-term or permanent) within their secondary school education and are currently residing within a London LA'. The period which had passed since the CYP's exclusion is presented in Appendix B.

The researcher chose to contact professionals within LA X as this was where the researcher had been on placement as a trainee EP. The headteacher and SENCo who oversee the PRUs within LA X were contacted and asked if they would be willing to support recruitment and two young people were ultimately interviewed via these PRUs.

VS caseworkers were asked to identify secondary age and Post-16 young people based on the inclusion criteria above. Over forty young people were identified by their VS caseworker, however, just four young people were interviewed via this route.

Through snowballing methods, a further education college specialising in beauty (in LA Y) was contacted as a participant had identified that there were several LACYP within the college who had experiences of school exclusions. The Inclusion Manager identified three young people who met the inclusion criteria and would be able to talk about their experiences retrospectively.

All the young people were asked individually by the inclusion manager or SENCo within their setting, their VS caseworker or social worker whether they would like to take part. They were then given an information sheet and consent form (see

Appendix C). If under 16, consent from their carer, parent or social worker was also requested (as appropriate) (see Appendix D).

3.6.2 LACYP who were 'at risk' of exclusion

The researcher asked EPs in LA X to identify if they were currently working with any LAC who was having difficulties within their secondary school setting and just one was identified. The other 'at risk' young person was of college age and spoke retrospectively about her experiences of being 'at risk' of exclusion.

3.6.3 Carers

SENCOs within the different settings initially liaised informally with the carers of the young people involved to talk to them about this research. The carers of the young people were asked for their consent for their young person's involvement. Within this consent form, they were asked whether they would also like to be interviewed. Young people were also asked on their consent form whether they would like their carers to be interviewed or not and who this would be. If both the young person and the carer had agreed to the carer being interviewed, then interviews were arranged.

3.6.4 SENCo and Virtual School Head

A SENCo who worked across all three PRU sites in LA X for over 15 years was contacted via email to be interviewed. The VSH in LA X had worked in this role for over a year whilst also maintaining a more senior role within the LA was also contacted via email. It was decided that these professionals would not be asked about any specific young people in order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the young people taking part and considering the sensitive nature of the young person's experiences.

3.6.5 Educational Psychologists

The researcher first interviewed two EPs who work within the VS within LA X and provided them with an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix E). From there, snowballing techniques were used from those already interviewed and through trainee Educational Psychologist links to VS EPs in other London boroughs.

3.6.6 Recruitment difficulties

Recruiting LACYP from this hard-to-reach population proved extremely challenging and time-consuming. The researcher attempted to recruit participants via their LA, positioning herself as a trainee EP. Therefore, existing professional relationships were utilised as well as significant lengths of time building new relationships with LA professionals such as VS caseworkers and Youth Offending Team colleagues. The researcher primarily found support within the local PRUs through their SENCo. However, this SENCo then left and the school no longer had the time or capacity to promote this research.

It was acknowledged early on that the researcher would need trusted adults within the child's microsystem to support the recruitment of the young people due to their lack of trust when meeting adults for the first time. Initial feedback from adults was that young people were reluctant to meet with yet another professional unless they "had to". The identification of each young person who met the criteria for the research involved weeks of rapport building with adults around the child to enable them to ask the young person if they would like to be involved. This came with challenges as it relied on these adults showing passion/interest in the research and prioritising it within their already busy schedules. Many of the adults closest to the young people did not want to ask the young people if they would like to be involved as they noted that many were in current volatile school and/or home contexts.

The process of recruitment is further outlined in Appendix F. In summary, the researcher relied on existing professional relationships and building new relationships with colleagues within LA X. It was acknowledged that the adults closest within the child's microsystem were vital in supporting the recruitment process.

3.7 Data collection

Young people took part in semi-structured interviews which also included completing a task where they were invited to draw their 'Ideal School'. Due to difficulties with recruitment, young people were given the option to be interviewed either face-to-face or over the phone. Seven interviews with young people took place face-to-face and four over the phone. Those who interviewed over the phone were given the option to draw the 'Ideal School' task and send it to the researcher, but

none chose to do this. Five of the face-to-face interviewees chose to draw the 'Ideal School' and two did not want to draw. Carers, the SENCo, VSH and EPs were also asked to take part in semi-structured interviews and again given the option to do these over the phone. Two interviews with carers took place face-to-face and three over the phone. The SENCo and VSH interviews both took place face-to-face. Two interviews with EPs took place face-to-face and eight over the phone.

3.7.1 Qualitative data

Qualitative data was gathered in the form of semi-structured interviews in order to understand the experiences of school exclusions from the young person, carers, SENCo, VSH and EPs. The research aimed to understand each individual's experiences of exclusion therefore interviews were carried out one-to-one to ensure participants felt comfortable to share their own experiences as well as respecting confidentiality.

Young people declined the offer to meet the researcher informally beforehand, so a one-off interview was arranged as this was their preference. The researcher therefore had to use experience and skills from training as an EP to build rapport very quickly. A range of flexible person-centred approaches were planned with the young people however, it was apparent that the young people did not want to discuss these very personal and often traumatic experiences with a new adult. Therefore, it was decided to ask them to complete three tasks: 1- Drawing the 'Ideal School', 2 – gathering contextual information (see Table 2 and further detail in Appendix F), 3 – Interview questions. The researcher also spoke to the people closest to the child beforehand (SEnCo, carers etc) and was able to gauge whether these methodological approaches would be appropriate for this individual and adapted approaches accordingly.

Drawing the Ideal School

The 'Ideal School' task was deemed to be a good activity to start with as it served as an icebreaker and a chance to talk about something less personal/direct. Drawing was also seen as a way of enabling the young person to socially and cognitively engage in this new environment (Jolley, 2010).

This technique is derived from Moran's (2001) drawing the Ideal Self technique and based on Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955). This approach was first used with autistic young people to identify the most important features of their school provision (Williams & Hanke, 2010). PCP fits well with the social constructionist stance of this research as it proposes that we always impose meaning upon the world and by doing so we give shape to it (Pavlović, 2011). This technique provided a visual approach to better understand young people's personal constructs around schooling and helped identify factors which have led to their difficult school experiences as well as factors that they think have been or would be supportive going forward.

Pupils were asked to draw a school they would *not* like to go to (non-ideal school), naming elements of the classroom and describing the other pupils and teachers. They were then asked to draw a school they *would* like to go to (ideal school), including the classroom, students and adults. They were also asked what they would be doing in each school and prompted to think of three ways that they would be feeling in each (see Appendix I for Ideal School instructions). These responses were later collated into two Word Clouds (see chapter 4).

It was acknowledged that tailoring the method to the individual young person was crucial in capturing their voice and facilitated their responses. This was particularly significant given that these children had a range of abilities, strengths and difficulties. There was acknowledgement that these are vulnerable CYP therefore flexibility about which questions to ask and when was considered as well as the option to whether they want to draw or not. The researcher also offered to scribe some of their ideas. See Figure 2 for an example and Appendix G for all drawings:

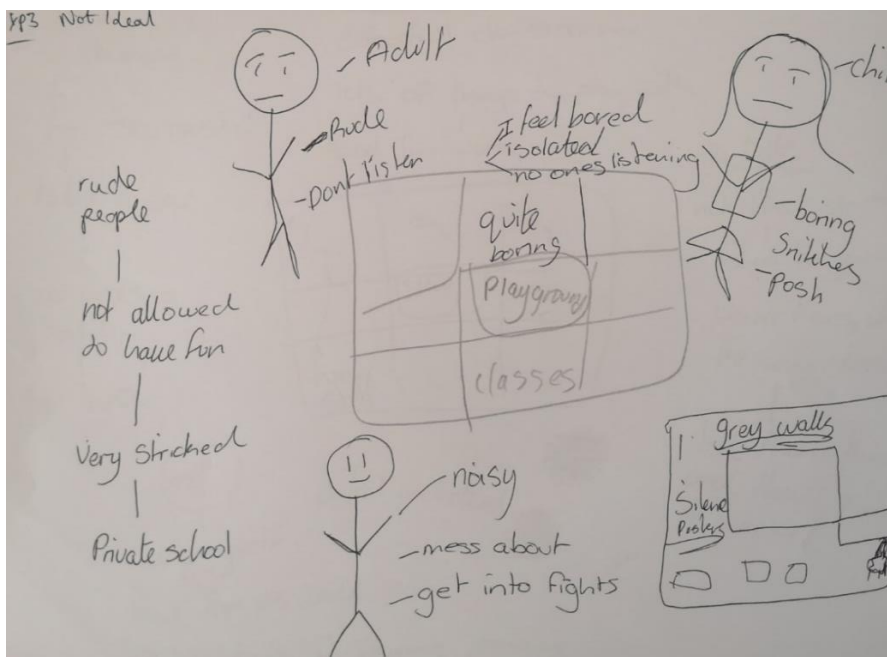
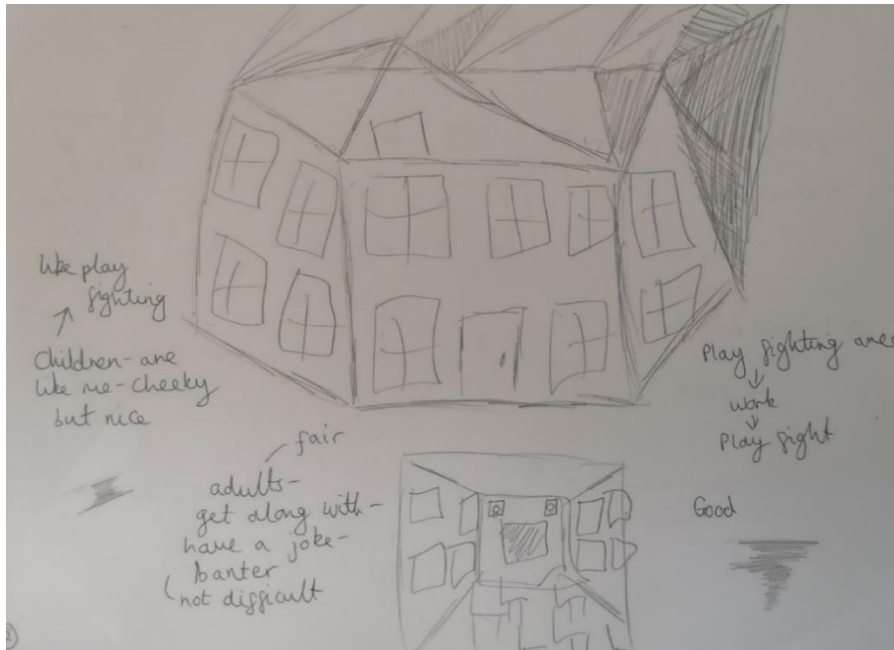


Figure 2. Anonymised examples of young people's Ideal and Non-Ideal Schools.

3.7.1.1 Designing semi-structured interviews

This study used semi-structured interviews as a way of exploring 'in depth' how the participants made sense of their experiences (Wengraf, 2001). The researcher designed and prepared a number of questions in advance but these were sufficiently open ended so that participants could control somewhat the direction of the questioning (Mertens, 2005). Separate interview schedules were designed for each group of participants (see Appendix H). These schedules were designed based

on the aims and research questions from this study and after reviewing similar research (e.g. McElduff, 2001).

3.7.1.2 Conducting interviews

Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to read the information sheet and sign the consent form. All participants were given the option of where and when they would like the interview to take place. The young people were also asked if they would like another adult present.

The semi-structured interviews with young people who had been excluded, asked questions about their experiences of being excluded, including the reasons, what could have prevented the exclusion, who could have/has supported. Then questions were asked about the future such as what could be done to support them. Three scaling questions were gathered at the end of the semi-structured interviews as a typical part of PCP techniques. The questions asked young people's views on their school experiences to date, how much they value education and how well supported they have felt by their schools. This data was used to gain further insight into their experiences and to facilitate and deepen discussion. Those young people who experienced exclusion in their past were asked to think about these experiences retrospectively. The SENCo, VSH and EPs were asked questions about how they support LACYP in a general sense, not based on individual CYP in order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the young people. For more information on conducting interviews see Appendix F.

3.7.1.3 Transcribing interviews

The interviews ranged in length from 27 minutes to 59 minutes for young people, 15 to 29 minutes with carers, 17 minutes for the VSH, 37 minutes for the SENCo, 15 minutes to 43 minutes for EPs. All 28 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.8 Data analysis

Thematic analysis, guided by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse the qualitative data. The analytical steps and methods are summarised in Appendix J and extracts from transcripts with initial codes in Appendix K. Initially, an inductive thematic analysis was undertaken to analyse the qualitative data from each sample group separately; the young people, carers, VSH, SENCo and EPs. This

enabled the researcher to identify the sub-themes and themes on a semantic level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the vast amount of data, the researcher initially used the Bronfenbrenner framework to group codes into the different ecosystemic layers (system, school, group and individual). Themes for the young people were uncovered first with the acknowledgement that their voices would take precedence in the narrative. Upon analysis of the other participant data sets, there was an emerging overlap and similarities among the codes/subthemes/themes in these groups with that of the young people. It was therefore decided to combine all the data sets together to provide a holistic understanding of all the participant voices with regards to LACYP experiences of exclusion. Any additional themes or contradictions between participant groups were weaved into the narrative. In approaching the analysis in this way, it was acknowledged that narratives from professionals and carers would be less of a focus. This could be seen as a limitation given that the BTHD gives equal weighting to all elements within the system not just at the level of the child. However, given the lack of research gaining the voices of excluded LACYP, it was deemed important to prioritise these voices and to avoid repetition and fragmentation across participant group findings. Furthermore, this was a study of LACYP's experiences of exclusion and given the relatively large sample size of young people participants and the large amount of data this yielded, it was important to weight it in this direction. Future researchers may wish to give greater weighting to professional or carer experiences.

Applying the Bronfenbrenner framework, the researcher uncovered codes at different levels of the system, relating to each theme but which related to positive experiences as well as ideas for support going forward (see Appendix L for thematic map). The researcher felt it necessary to separate the past experiences and the future hopes/suggestions for intervention within the findings. So positive experiences and ways forward were added in within each subtheme within the findings and these comprise the implications within the discussion.

Some demographic data was gathered from the young people to characterise the sample (see Table 2). Averages were also calculated from the scaling questions and used to triangulate narratives within the thematic analysis.

3.9 Inter-rater reliability

Following Yardley's (2008) suggestion that coding should be corroborated to ensure the codes and themes accurately represent the data set, the researcher discussed the codes in relation to the data with supervisors and two trainee EPs. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that this gives credibility and robustness to the themes derived. Alternative interpretations were reflected upon and adjustments made with the aim of reducing researcher bias.

3.10 Reflexivity

In carrying out this research, it was acknowledged that the researcher brings their own biases and prior experiences and that this can influence data collection and interpretation (Hammarberg et al., 2016). As a trainee EP within a London LA, ways in which the study influenced the researcher were reflected upon, such as the researcher's knowledge of provisions within different LAs (Yardley, 2008).

It was also anticipated that there may be an emotional impact on the researcher of hearing these accounts therefore appropriate supervision was arranged thereafter. Furthermore, the researcher kept a reflexivity journal throughout the research process. The researcher reflected on the potential of the research of reinforcing low expectations/stigma for LACYP by discussing these negative experiences. Therefore, solution-focused thinking was deemed important in highlighting the positive ways forward (Stobie et al., 2005).

3.11 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted by the UCL, IOE Research Ethics Committee in February 2019 (see Appendix N). The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2010) and Human Research Ethics (2014) were adhered to throughout.

3.11.1 Informed consent

Young people were approached by the SENCo/inclusion manager within their setting to find out more about the research and whether they would be willing to take part. All participants were given information sheets and asked to sign the consent forms. The information sheet highlights participants' right to withdraw at any time as well as their right to have their data removed from the project dataset. This was also explained to all participant groups at the start of the interviews.

3.11.2 Sensitivity of topic / vulnerable participants

A thorough assessment of the potential risks of harm against the benefits of this research was considered. With appropriate safeguards in place, the benefit of gaining an insight into the experiences of this extremely marginalised group was considered to outweigh to potential harm.

The following ethical measures were therefore taken.

- It was acknowledged that some of the young people may feel more comfortable to have a known adult with them in the interview. This option was made clear in the information sheet and in person.
- In order to support any anxiety the participants felt, they were reminded of their right to withdraw at any point and of the option to take a break at any point during the interview process.
- The young people and carers were debriefed verbally and prompted to speak to the SENCo/named adult or to contact the researcher directly via the email address provided if they had any questions or if they felt they experienced any level of harm due to their involvement in this study.
- The young people were reminded verbally, in the information sheet and consent form, that any disclosures made to the researcher indicating that they or someone else might be at risk of harm will be passed on to the relevant safeguarding officer within the provision.
- Risk analyses within each provision were carried out by the researcher alongside the school SENCo / link person in the school. LA procedures were adhered to where interviews took place in the young person's home.

3.11.3 Anonymity, confidentiality and data protection

All data was saved in encrypted, password protected files and backed up on an external E-drive. All interviews were recorded onto a Dictaphone and participants were asked to sign the consent form which detailed permission to audio record. All participants were also informed through the information sheet, consent form and verbally, of the confidentiality of their data. Participant numbers were used and kept separately from consent forms to ensure confidentiality of data. This research was

also registered with the Data Protection Office, in line with UCL's Data Protection Policy.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents a thematic analysis of data gathered from young people, carers and professionals (SENCo, VHS and EPs). It details young people's experiences of exclusion, positive experiences of effective support and ideas from participants of supportive ways forward.

4.1 Overview of themes

Three overarching themes and 12 subthemes were identified. Although presented separately, it is important to acknowledge that there is inevitable cross over between themes and subthemes, which will be explored throughout the discussion.

The multi-informant approach adopted in this research aimed to explore the different interacting systems in the context of the bioecological framework. However, it was acknowledged that each subtheme did not fit in with just one system. Rather, participants discussed difficult experiences as well as positive experiences and ways forward at different levels within the system. Therefore, each subtheme considers participant voices with reference to the different interacting systems.

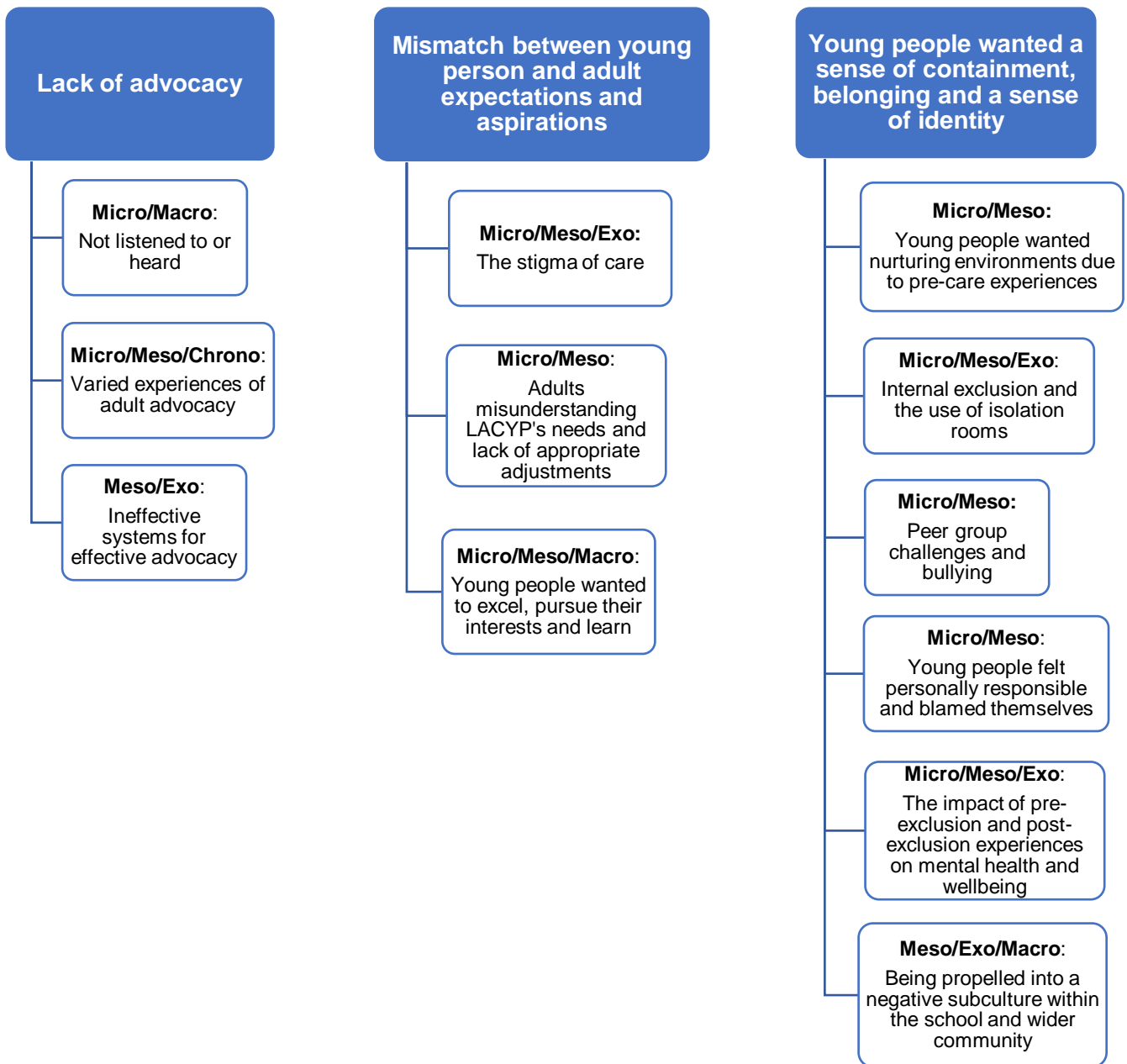


Figure 3. Thematic map of the themes and subthemes identified within all participant narratives.

4.2 Theme 1: Lack of advocacy

This theme represents the views expressed by young people in feeling that they were not listened to or advocated for by the adults (mainly teachers and social workers) and systems around them. The theme details system level flaws such as a lack of support for CIN as well as schools following zero-tolerance behaviour policies leading to exclusions. Young people talked about this lack of advocacy then leading to further social exclusion and isolation.

4.2.1 Not listened to or heard

Young people described not being listened to by adults around them and adults being dismissive of their difficulties:

...they don't listen. So, if they tell you off and you're trying to explain what's actually happening, then they're like no I don't wanna hear it, you're just in trouble. (FYP3, aged 13²)

The SENCo corroborated that the young people often say that they did not feel listened to:

...all young people when they come to us say that they are not listened to and the greatest barrier to maintain in their placement in a school, is that the teachers, and senior managers do not listen to them.

The importance of being listened to by adults also emerged as an important theme when young people were asked to imagine their 'Ideal School':

They'd listen to you more (adults). And they'll let you have your say. So, like, people are trained so that when they teach, they have to listen as well, so like they'll counsel you at the same time...(FYP3, 13)

Carers also highlighted that schools did not listen to the young person's perspective when being excluded. One carer spoke about the impact that not being listened to had on the young person's self-esteem:

For him he's thinking, at the end of the day, I've told you I'm nothing to do with it, and you still won't listen to me, so what's the point...(Carer 6)

² FYP=female young person, MYP=male young person and their age is given thereafter.

Young people also noted how not being heard meant that they felt not in control over the decisions affecting their lives, which also affected their mental health. One for example commented,

When I went to court and they told me I had a say, I was like what? It's really not fair how they make kids feel, 'coz I've looked myself in the mirror a lot, and I've said to myself, you're going insane...and that's the worst thing. (FYP2, 16)

The effects of not being listened while in care continued to affect participants in their adult lives as well. One young woman commented,

Like sometimes you just don't know if people are listening to what you're saying. For example, sometimes I call my old foster carer and say, "they're still not listening to me"...and she then says that she'll try to speak to them on my behalf. So, I think sometimes when it comes from someone more intimidating than just a care leaver, they listen more (FYP11, 20).

She went on to voice her frustrations about not feeling like she had a voice and when she did express an opinion, adults were often unsupportive which led to further social isolation in not being able to access supportive systems such as housing:

They put me into a course to get housing, then kicked me off 'coz apparently, I question things too much...and there we go again, we're not allowed to have an opinion us care leavers! (FYP11, 20)

4.2.1.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

At the micro level and thinking about the day to day interactions between young people and the key adults in their lives, all participant groups highlighted the importance of teachers listening more to CYP views, understanding their personal contexts, offering mediation when disputes arise, not giving up on them, taking an interest in them and providing consistency in support.

Young people noted positive experiences of being listened to in their PRUs, valuing having someone to talk to and being able to talk about their feelings. One young woman said:

You can like talk to them. They'll listen to you, they'll proper listen to you. And like...listening's always important. If you want, you can step outside the classroom, and like go and see someone. (FYP3, 13)

Young people and their carers also discussed the importance of being able to talk to adults who can relate and have experienced “real life struggles”:

There's nothing worse than tryin' to talk to someone about your problems and you can just see in their face that they totally don't get it. (FYP2, 16)

Another key supportive factor young people talked about was the way adults interacted with them and not “shouting” as many viewed this as a trigger for their anger. For example, in saying what could have prevented the exclusion, MYP6, 16 said:

The teachers' reaction. Basically, certain people don't like to be spoken to in a certain way. And some teachers feel like shouting is the only way.

Moreover, the importance of being given more “chances” emerged from young people’s accounts of their experiences in the PRU:

They made sure everyone was on the same page with it and they didn't just judge you from how you was behaving... they'd give you chances. (MYP5, 18)

On citing what could have made more of a difference and prevented the exclusions, many said, if adults had listened:

If the teachers had listened to me, for a start, like how I was feeling. (MYP5, 18)

The SENCo made an important distinction between adults and professionals listening to young people and really hearing them:

...there's so much more needs to be done in not just being present in the meeting, but hearing what's going on, problem solving, giving them the opportunity to talk to professionals....and acting on that (SENCO).

At the macro level, The VSH acknowledged the importance of listening to the child’s voice through the PEP meeting process and making adaptations to be able to hear their views based on individual need.

EPs talked about giving the young people a voice through platforms such as children's councils, where professionals can listen to their views and get their feedback. This was corroborated by some of the older young people who said that they are now in a place where they want to share their stories with others:

People say I'm resilient. I'm very open, see me, I'm one of the best people you can speak to...because, I'm very open, I can help you out with all this shit! (FYP2, 16)

The young people appeared to enjoy sharing what advice they would give to others in a similar situation. They talked about not relying on adults, not impressing friends or following a crowd, working hard and not worrying if adults do not listen (see Appendix M for full commentaries).

4.2.2 Varied experiences of adult advocacy

Young people talked about poor relationships with adults and these adults within their microsystem (particularly teachers and social workers) not advocating or "standing up" for them. EPs and carers also shared this view.

Young people discussed feeling let down by teachers, not feeling mutual respect, being targeted and singled out. They said they felt disliked by teachers and in turn, disliked them back:

Like a lot of teachers in this school ... they just don't like you, so they'll log you (detention) for no reason..... they don't treat you with respect. When I say respect...I just want like the way they speak to you, they'd be like, "get outta class!" rather than even be like, "can you leave the class for a bit"?..... They don't like me, so I don't like them. (MYP4, 14)

Young people also talked about a lack of adult advocacy from the school as a system:

Like one of the meetings I went to...this was before I got kicked out...and they said, "he's one of the naughtiest in the school and we can't really help him with anything". (MYP5, 18)

The young people also referred to social work input being "token" or "ticking boxes". They were in general referred to as poor advocates, with extremely high

turnover rates - on average the young people had three social workers in the last three years. For example:

I did get support, but they would quit their job or leave and someone else / a replacement would come in... so it's like, you do get somewhere with someone, and then they end up leaving. (FYP10, 17)

The parent of one of the young people talked about feeling let down by social care and said that her child's exclusion and subsequent entry into care could have been prevented if they had been more supportive:

I had been saying for a long time, I really need help, please don't leave me...like she's a difficult child. (Carer3)

EPs also talked about social workers often not knowing "how to question when a school excludes a child" (EP7). This lack of advocacy at "critical times" was cited as a key reason for these CYP's exclusions. EPs raised concerns that it often relies on the carer to be the child's key advocate during an exclusion and noted that this is often "hit or miss". They argued that this can be particularly concerning if the home placement breaks down alongside the exclusion.

Many young people confirmed that their carers were often the key advocates for them. For example:

In the end, I got put with a brilliant foster carer who I'm still in touch with now. It was her that would say, if you get kicked out of school, you'll be sat in the library for 12 hours, all day. I didn't get excluded after that! I needed discipline. I don't think I'd have got any GCSEs if it wasn't for her. (FYP11, 20)

The carers also felt that they had to be the main advocate for their child. For example:

I was in and out of that school constantly, complaining about the bullying... then it got to year 9...and she...started to self-harm herself... And then she said to me, "if you keep sending me to that school, I'm going to end up killing myself". And...I went into the school and I just said, I'm not bringing her back...you can't keep her safe. (Carer1)

Some young people talked about the lack of advocacy from key adults limiting their future prospects such as the ability to get a job / engage in further education.

For example:

The education advisor said she'd come with me to this open day...she turned up 2 hours late... So, I almost didn't get into this course coz of the negligence of these workers. (FYP11, 20)

Some of the older young people shared that they are still struggling with having people to advocate for them and feeling powerless, making it difficult to be included in mainstream society:

I actually had to use you (researcher) recently! We had no washing machine, and I had to contact the leaving care team...I went on for weeks and weeks, then I spoke again and said that I'm going to speak to someone who's going to write an article about care leavers...and then within 10 minutes they sent confirmation of a washing machine being sent out. (FYP11, 20)

EPs talked about a historic lack of adult advocacy within the chronosystem. They noted that the young people experienced a lack of adult advocacy in their pre-care and care experiences and exclusion then being “another form of loss...another break in their trust for adults”. The SENCo added that it then takes these children a long time to build up trust again for professionals and adults after being let down so often.

4.2.2.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

Many young people also talked about working towards relational repair at the micro level through strong relationships with teachers. They noted that some teachers were able to make a significant difference to their lives using “humour”, being “flexible”, being “able to relate” and by “listening”:

Yeah one teacher I do media with...he just teaches me about running businesses and stuff. (so practical stuff...) yeah, it's helpful. We grew up in the same barrier (MYP6, 16).

Two young people noted positive experiences with social workers and valued them listening to their problems. One talked about them buying them tickets to a

football game. Some talked about particularly good relationships with adults in the PRUs:

...that's why I loved it there so much...coz the teachers looked after me like I was...they didn't teach me like I was just a student. (FYP2, 16)

Many of the young people talked about it being better to talk to someone they already have a relationship with. They also noted that they did not want lots of adults to support them, just a few key teachers that know them well:

As long as I have like one teacher that I trust, it's all fine... I just don't like sharing my business with lots of people. (MYP4, 14)

Carers corroborated that these children need good quality relationships, rather than quantity and the importance of building on the relationships the child already has. In general, many noted that the schools had provided a lot of support but that sometimes there were “too many cooks” involved:

My concern is too many people being involved in his in his life... I don't know how many more people he needs to be involved, you know, you can have too many. (Carer4)

Some of the young people also cited DTs and key workers as being supportive in “checking in” on them:

I used to have a teacher, like she mainly works with care kids, and she was always having regular PEP meetings every term and it was a way for me to see how I've improved. And if I ever had an issue, then she would always try and solve it. (FYP9, 18)

Some of the young people did not know who the VS was and noted that it was hard to keep track as they had met so many different professionals. However, in general, the young people referred to the VS as being good advocates and valued the practical support. For example, supporting them finding college courses, and supporting their learning:

Virtual schools are like, are you getting the right support, are you being supported in this? Are you being supported by how you're learning the exam...making sure you're successful. (FYP9, 18)

A crucial distinction for the young people was not just having good relationships with adults but feeling that the adults had high aspirations for them and would advocate for them. An EP termed this desire for adults to “stand up for them” as “relational activism”.

EPs highlighted the importance of their role in working at a meso level to facilitate healing relationships at the micro level between young people and their teachers, carers and social workers so that these adults can successfully advocate for them. In doing so, they talked about the importance of supporting teacher wellbeing through providing spaces for them to reflect. They named two examples used in EP practice: ‘Reflective teams’ and ‘Circle of Adults’, which encourage group reflection and problem-solving. EPs talked about the importance of prioritising the wellbeing of staff and making these reflective spaces regular in order to provide containment:

It's important to realise the emotional toll it takes on teachers to support a child who's really struggling, that acknowledgement that they are doing the right thing, really empowered teachers... (EP10)

The VSH noted that they aim to work with the adults closest to the child and support them to deliver bespoke interventions for the individual. For example, they offer training to carers on reading and attachment and hold DT conferences. EPs corroborated that their VS did similar trainings in their LAs and commented on the positives of VS training.

EPs also talked about supporting strong relationships between the child and carer through training/interventions such as ‘therapeutic parenting’. They also shared that they provide support to VS caseworkers and social workers through supervision, consultations, training and drop-ins, giving them space to “think about how to support a young person”. EPs noted that more of this type of work would relieve some of the emotional and psychological weight that these adults often carry so that they can be more effective advocates for the young people.

4.2.3 Ineffective systems for effective advocacy

Many of the young people talked about a lack of advocacy at a wider, systems level and feeling that the systems are not in place to allow them to succeed.

Many young people talked about their schools not supporting them prior to going into care i.e. when considered a 'Child in Need (CIN)'. The immediate impact of excluding a CIN was that some then went into care. For example, three of the young people went into care *after* they were excluded and then had multiple exclusions whilst in care thereafter. Many talked about schools not providing support or understanding their home context and in turn provoking an escalation of their behaviour:

I got excluded in the end of year 8... it wasn't even a year after my dad had passed away... yeah, that broke me really... 'coz he was murdered. Yeah...it fucked me up basically..... it really changed me (the exclusion), it really fucked me up. It actually was like one of the reasons why I got put in care. (FYP2, 16)

The SENCo of the PRUs reiterated this problem by noting that the PRU has several children who went into care as soon as they joined the PRU (i.e. just after they have been excluded). She also highlighted the instability this creates for the young people with further placement moves and then subsequent school moves.

EPs also noted examples of further instability where exclusions led to placement breakdowns and this created further escalation of behaviour:

A lot of them, if they've been excluded then it often coincides with some kind of placement breakdown or move and then they're really unstable, everything's a bit up in the air. (EP9)

Many young people also talked about having 'managed moves' and this being another way for the system to show them a lack of care and advocacy. One participant described the unsupportive nature of her managed move:

So, it's like a trial period of six weeks, they say. I ended up failing my trial at the different school, so I came back. And then when I came back, things were still not that great. (FYP10, 17)

Professionals talked about frustrations with schools in knowing that they should not be excluding the young people and the importance of stability and yet many are using "underhanded" methods of exclusion such as off-rolling and managed moves. EPs talked about LAs not thoroughly tracking what is happening to this cohort of young people:

The VS have 'deep dive' meetings where they look at the progress of all the looked after children... but the more unofficial exclusions won't be discussed here...which is obviously a problem. (EP3)

The young people also talked about disengaging with education completely (becoming NEET) after feeling let down by the system. EPs discussed the difficulties in getting these children to then engage and them "going off the grid" with again little LA monitoring.

The young people talked about schools having strict behaviour policies and these not working for them. EPs also corroborated that zero-tolerance policies do not show understanding of these children's complex needs thus set them up to fail:

There are a lot of schools who have very strict policies...in terms of you know, any level of violence...but they don't look at the context, zero-tolerance policies do not work for looked after children. (EP9)

Many of the young people and EPs talked about these policies being driven by schools trying to "look good" and being "overly-results driven". One for example commented,

there's a focus on academic achievement and if they have these kids...they will bring their stats down, so they don't want to have those kids in their schools. (EP10)

A young woman similarly talked about her experience of being off-rolled because of the impact she might have on the school's results:

It was just all about how the school looked like... 'coz I stuck out like a sore thumb, they couldn't have me at the school anymore, so they took me off roll...because they didn't want their school to be known as a school to have excluded a kid. (FYP2, 16)

Young people and EPs talked about these policies demonstrating a lack of understanding around the young person's SEMH needs. EPs commented that they thought this was because schools do not know how to support them, and the young people said they felt the school just wanted them out.

4.2.3.1 Positive ways forward

At a school level, EPs, the SENCo and the young people talked about the need for mainstream schools to be less results driven and prioritise mental health resources:

...with all the political changes...we need to really be prioritising their mental health instead of having such a focus on the academic side. (EP4)

Improving the self-worth of someone and how they feel about themselves can be far greater than moving a grade on a bit of paper. (SENCo)

A carer argued that schools should be held more accountable for what is on a child's EHCP as well as ensuring thorough monitoring and updating of plans, especially if or when the child changes setting.

Many EPs felt that working within the VS enables the flexibility to be able to advocate for the child's education placement to ensure it is prioritised as they can work more long-term with a CYP:

I'm trying a lot more to make sure that we get in at the early stages...speaking to whoever it is in the Local Authority to make sure that education is considered within any placement move. Because I think sometimes it isn't considered enough. (EP9)

All EPs talked about prioritising LACYP during planning meetings with SENCos as a crucial way of ensuring their inclusion in mainstream schools. One EP shared that they give a list of all the LACYP they have on roll in each school to the link EP so they can discuss each child within planning meetings. The SENCo of the PRUs also said that they prioritise the LACYP, for example, for therapeutic support.

Young people and EPs highlighted the need for flexibility in the rules and better understanding of a child's context. EPs talked about trying to help schools review their behaviour policies to make them "more attachment and trauma informed" because often schools' "behavioural policies do not support traumatised children". Therefore, the child is excluded due to breaches in this policy, without adults "looking at what might have caused that behaviour". One EP talked about sitting down with DTs and trying to include more emotion coaching approaches in policies:

We're trying to encourage schools to change their behaviour policy...more attachment informed behaviour policy and emotion coaching. I think the EP role is critical in helping adults to make sense of a child's difficulties in a different way.
(EP10)

EPs talked about the need to improve multiagency working and needing clearer delineation of professional roles, better joining-up of services and subsequent clearer lines of responsibility in order to ensure system level advocacy. For example, one EP noted that social care has a different system which is not accessible to EPs so suggested there should be one system that all professionals can access.

EPs talked about a range of multi-disciplinary meetings they attend such as Team around the Child (TAC) and PEPs, usually when the "VS believe it will be a tricky meeting" or for "emergency PEPs". Within these meetings, the EPs noted that they try to advocate for the child. EPs said that often the PEPs are attended by just the SW and therefore EPs said they think more liaison with SWs around knowing the rights of the child within a school context and being able to advocate for them would be beneficial. It was also suggested that VS caseworkers were in a better position to lead the PEP meetings as they "understand school systems better".

Most EPs said that the PEPs in their services now had to be quality assured, happen regularly and be signed off by a senior in the team. The VSH noted that they now have a "challenge committee where the team can be asked to evidence 'day one' provision, quality of PEPs and quality of communication with the school".

EPs noted difficulties advocating for the child at times because within the current climate of traded services as "the schools decide how they want to use EP time, limiting our role". For example, many EPs also noted that they are mainly brought in after the exclusion, not before and this is reliant on the school SENCo/VS making them aware of the difficulties early on. Furthermore, EPs also noted that they would not be able to attend all PEP/LAC review meetings as most only work within the VS one day a week. Nonetheless, many EPs said they believe they should be more involved in these PEPs as both EPs and the VSH noted that they are an effective "preventative method, rather than waiting for the exclusion to take place".

EPs shared difficulties in tracking children who were out-of-borough, to build those relationships and to ensure the same level of staff training. EPs therefore highlighted the importance of “linking in with the adults around that child”, particularly the local EP.

EPs talked about positive ways forward at a LA level including the need for “collective care” from all the professionals involved with the young people. They talked about the importance of having strong LA relationships with schools and colleges but how this appears to vary from borough to borough and school to school. The VSH and EPs noted that the VS are raising their profile and are building good relationships with schools. Many EPs commented that this was due to “strong” and “proactive” VS leadership which enables them to support LACYP inclusion.

All participant groups commented that the stability of consistent professionals is fundamentally important to the young person. Furthermore, having professionals, particularly social workers, involved over the long-term was also seen as vitally important to both the young people, the schools and the families.

4.3 Theme 2: Mismatch between young person and adult expectations and aspirations

This theme represents the young people’s expressions of wanting to achieve but being met with low expectations and aspirations from adults. Some felt it was related to their care status, which led to either an under or over-identification of needs. This lack of understanding of LACYP’s needs meant that inappropriate adjustments were made in meeting both their SEMH and their learning needs. Some young people then talked about low expectations in APs, where academic work was not prioritised. This was despite many young people wanting to learn and wanting adults to hold high aspirations of their futures. Many young people expressed how many of their aspirations were related to extracurricular activities but that they often lacked these opportunities within their mainstream schools.

4.3.1 The stigma of care

Many of the young people referred to the negative connotations and perceived stigma attached to the care label. Young people talked about adults at school not being able to empathise with their experiences and not knowing how to interact with them, leading to further frustrations:

*These people were like soooo posh and so small-minded meaning they just haven't been through certain things to know how I was feeling...like they saw my behaviour and they thought (*posh voice*) "oh my gosh...she is out of control". (FYP2, 16)*

Many of the young people talked about private or boarding schools when referring to their 'Non-Ideal school' (see figure 7) as they said that these people would not be able to relate to them or vice-versa. Interestingly, none of them had any personal experiences of private or boarding schools. Many young people also talked about not wanting to be different from their peers and be surrounded by similar-minded people.

Many of the children talked about these low expectations and aspirations were inevitably projected onto them, making it difficult not to have low expectations and aspirations of themselves:

I've been told I'm a difficult human being by social workers...and these sorts of things are very personal and it's upsetting...it gets to you. (FYP9, 18)

All participant groups also talked about a lack of relatable role models and advocates:

They never ever tell you, to exceed expectations, it's actually about the bare minimal, so a lot of the advice we're given, it's sort of ...you feel a bit patronised. There's no goals given to care leavers. (FYP11, 20)

This young person also talked about "patronising" talks by care leavers and not seeing a range of care-leaver role models to aspire to:

I was told...you could be like them one day...and I'm like, I wanna be better than that! I wanna be told that I can own my own business, ... it's just again low expectations. It makes me feel like shit. (FYP11, 20)

At a wider level, they felt low societal expectations of their future prospects stating that adults "expected them to fail" or "go to prison" due to their care status:

Like a lot of these teachers have every certainty that we're going to end up below average in society...in terms of prospects and jobs...we kind of just get put in a closed category. Like no one gives anyone the idea to anyone that they can be anything other than just average. (FYP9, 18, 18)

EPs also talked about the negative narrative around some children in care and schools seeing their complex backgrounds on paper and feeling ill-equipped to take them on roll. They noted that if they did, then the expectations of them were low and the schools often did very little to keep them on roll.

4.3.1.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

At the micro level, a few young people talked about having high expectations and aspirations from adults around them and finding this motivating. Many also talked about not being singled out from their peers.

A couple of young people noted some positives of being in care such as being surrounded by similar peers. Furthermore, that they had more support when they were in care when compared to being a CIN, and were excluded less as they were protected by their care status:

I was obviously having issues at home and they weren't doing anything to like help me. Then when I went into care, it was, more comfortable in a way. Like if I had an issue, then the teachers would get involved... they'd be more understanding. (FYP9, 18)

Some talked about wanting to be placed in environments which promoted aspirational outcomes such as “a better school” and having good school facilities like “bigger play areas, football pitches and equipment”:

(Ideal School): I would want to go to a school where they have like, excellent facilities...when it comes to learning stuff. (FYP10, 17)

Young people talked about the need for relatable role models throughout their lives and exposure to a range of positive care leaver role models:

I've never actually heard of any successful care leavers! I didn't even know it was a thing. And it's really depressing... when I go to these meetings...I just feel miserable coz I'm like, this is the kind of bracket I'm in, this is how everyone ends up. (FYP11, 20)

The SENCo noted that the young people from the PRUs love going into primary schools and telling their story to try to help others make “healthy life

choices". She noted that this is important for them as it is a way of "saying how far I've come and I'm now proud of myself".

Young people also noted that they wanted to help others in similar positions to themselves:

...because now I've done all that I want to be different... that I want to help other people not do what I did. (MYP5, 18)

EPs talked about the need to promote aspirational outcomes for LACYP at a wider level, for example, through head teacher and DT conferences. EPs and the SENCo talked about using this platform to shift the stigma around those in care who have been excluded.

4.3.2 Adults misunderstanding LACYP's needs and lack of appropriate adjustments

The young people talked about adults not understanding their learning and SEMH needs and how best to support them. There was a contrast between some young people referring to schools under-identifying their needs and some over-identifying needs. Some felt that more adjustments could have been made, for example, more teacher support. Others felt that they were forced to have a label, for example "dyslexia", so that they could go to a certain school:

Under-identifying: after my dad died... they gave me counselling, and that was it...they just expected me to just be fine after that. (FYP2, 16)

Over-identifying: I was told I had dyslexia... they used to say you have to have some form of issue to go to that school. And I said what other option do I have? (FYP11, 20)

The researcher asked the young people whether they had any known special educational needs or whether they know whether they have / had an EHCP. Five out of the eleven said that they did but were unsure about the details around what areas of difficulty they had. As demonstrated in Table 3, there were many narratives around having the label of "dyslexia".

Table 3.

Young people's views of their SEN status

SEN status	Number	Details
EHCP	5	1 talked about “dyslexia”. 1 carer talked about “learning delay”. 1 talked about being “hyperactive”.
No EHCP	2	1 carer talked about “undiagnosed dyslexia” and “attention problems”.
Unsure	4	1 talked about “dyslexia”.

A young person also talked about adults having low expectations of their behaviour and this leading to an escalation of poor behaviour as she desperately sought boundaries from adults:

I wanted to be told no you can't throw things/ scream, act like a psychopath. It was like omg I've actually got attention from it... positive reinforcement...for bad behaviour. (FYP11, 20)

EPs talked about under and over-identifying needs in this cohort of young people. They talked about how both approaches can lead to low expectations:

Some professionals put everything down to trauma and attachment... “oh I've got low expectations of this child because they've experienced this so...of course they're behind”, and some others say “no it's not trauma and attachment, there's all these other underlying needs” and label them with ASD or ADHD, ADD etc. (EP9)

EPs thus highlighted the need for a greater understanding of individual need. This was corroborated by the young people saying that some found the pace of learning too fast and not being able to keep up, and some talked about it being too slow and not getting work done. Both finding the work too easy or difficult they cited as making them feel frustrated and making them “behave badly”. Some talked about not being helped at all, others talked about being singled out and not liking this.

They (teachers) need to be quicker...you can't be doing this waiting a long time for things...just no. They just take ages to do everything. (MYP7, 17)

(Ideal School): ...they'd slow down and make sure everyone's individual needs are met. (FYP9, 18)

EPs shared that schools often misunderstand the young person's needs. EPs and carers noted that part of the issue lies within a lack of funding for children with complex needs which includes staffing, facilities and time. The SENCo corroborated and argued that there is a lack of investment and future planning for mental health, and head teachers often only plan for the present year budget.

4.3.2.1 Positive ways forward

At the micro level, young people talked about wanting adults to show higher expectations of their behaviour, showing them discipline, structure and boundaries, the same as they would to their peers. They did however note that this discipline must be "fair", "reasonable" and "flexible" based on an understanding of their home contexts.

I think if someone spoke to us and said, we expect better of you than this and actually maybe putting us in our place a little bit...a bit of discipline is good! But we don't get discipline. I think it's a massive problem, the main problem. Coz if there's a lack of discipline, there's a lack of care. (FYP11, 20)

EPs shared that their involvement with this cohort of young people often involves "reactive approaches" such as carrying out individual casework and EHCP needs assessments. However, they also noted that they carry out more "direct", preventative work by working with the child to create individualised approaches to support their needs:

It's about looking at what their future aspirations might be...then looking at how they can work towards that with the support of lots of different people who are around them. (EP2)

Some of the young people talked about feeling empowered by understanding more about their individual learning needs through working with an EP:

You need to know how someone learns...Like for me, I'm a creative learner. I'm not going to learn by just telling me something, I like to draw, I like music. (FYP11, 20)

At the meso level, EPs talked about a range of “indirect” and “systemic” support they provide to schools in the form of training, to change the narrative around some of the LACYP and “help schools make sense of a child’s difficulties in a different way”:

...sometimes you know the traumatised children, they can present like they have autism... so raising awareness and knowledge within the network of professionals is the key. (EP10)

They noted that this training also aims to create a “positive” and “nurturing whole-school ethos” within secondary schools, largely based on attachment theory. Many talked about using training to “upskill staff” using psychological theory and research to talk about the teenage brain and trauma-informed practice. Within this, many talked about how the training would have a greater influence if they were able to do follow-up sessions, for example, workshops with staff. However, many talked about this being challenging as it depends on how well-valued SEMH support is by SLT and it needing to be prioritised “top-down”.

Carers also talked about the need for teachers to have training around the needs of LACYP. For example, with regards to the additional nurture they need:

I think a lot of the teachers are not really trained to work with kids in care. And they haven't got the patience we've got... our kids need a bit more nurturing. (Carer 8)

EPs also talked about using consultation with teachers and SENCOs to help them understand a child’s needs and whether there are any unidentified SEMH or learning needs. Two EPs also talked about using an ‘Inclusion Tool’ within consultations with teachers who are finding a child’s behaviours challenging in order to audit the steps taken and to think about what else could be done.

The VSH stressed the importance of prioritising sharing important information among secondary school staff so that all teachers understand that child’s triggers. He also said that the interventions they provide are carefully monitored. In doing so, the financial model they are using now is “based on individual need rather than a broad entitlement to a funding stream”. He noted that the impact of each intervention is monitored on a termly basis in order to inform future funding decisions.

A 'RAG' (Red, Amber, Green) rated system is used by the VS to identify those 'at risk' of falling behind academically in order to direct resources. However, identifying those 'at risk' of exclusion he noted relies on schools informing the VS and that relies on good relationships and communication between the schools and VS.

4.3.3 Young people wanted to excel, pursue their interests and learn

Against the backdrop of these low expectations, the young people expressed the desire to pursue extracurricular activities such as sports like boxing and drama. Music (particularly drill music) was talked about by 9/11 of the young people as being an important creative outlet, a way of building their confidence and way to express themselves. Many talked about wanting good music facilities in their 'Ideal School'. Many of the young people also talked about preferring their PRUs to mainstream as the PRUs offer more opportunities and time to pursue some of these interests:

I wanna make my music. Like drill or something. (FYP3, 13)

I fight (boxing) for a club. My future's there... my coaches say so. (MYP4, 14)

Young people also shared that they value education and want to learn. For example, when asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 how much they value education, the average score was 8/10. Young person 7 commented:

...10/10...I value it a lot but I just couldn't care that much. No that makes no sense, I value it a lot, just once I went into care... it was a lot of effort.

Despite having these high aspirations for themselves, many young people talked about their frustrations around a lack of reintegration back into mainstream once in a PRU and then the decline in their academic work. Some talked about not being given the chance to reintegrate, whereas others preferred their PRU:

I wanted to go to mainstream 'coz I felt I would flourish there but I was never given that opportunity... I had to sacrifice my education just to be in a comfort zone (in the PRU). 'Coz as someone in care, settlement is probably the most important thing for someone who moves around a lot. (FYP11, 20)

Many also talked about the difficulties of catching up on "missed learning" therefore many "gave up". They talked about the adults within the PRU having low

expectations of their academic work and this making them feel demotivated and “bored”. Young people talked about no work getting done in class whilst in PRUs and not being able to get above a certain grade for GCSEs and this limiting their future opportunities. Some talked about finding these low expectations frustrating, leading to further expressions of anger.

Young people wanting to learn and excel is best exemplified through the contrast between the two word clouds presented in figures 4 and 5 where the researcher asked young people how they would be feeling in their ‘Non-Ideal School’ and how they would be feeling in their ‘Ideal School’.

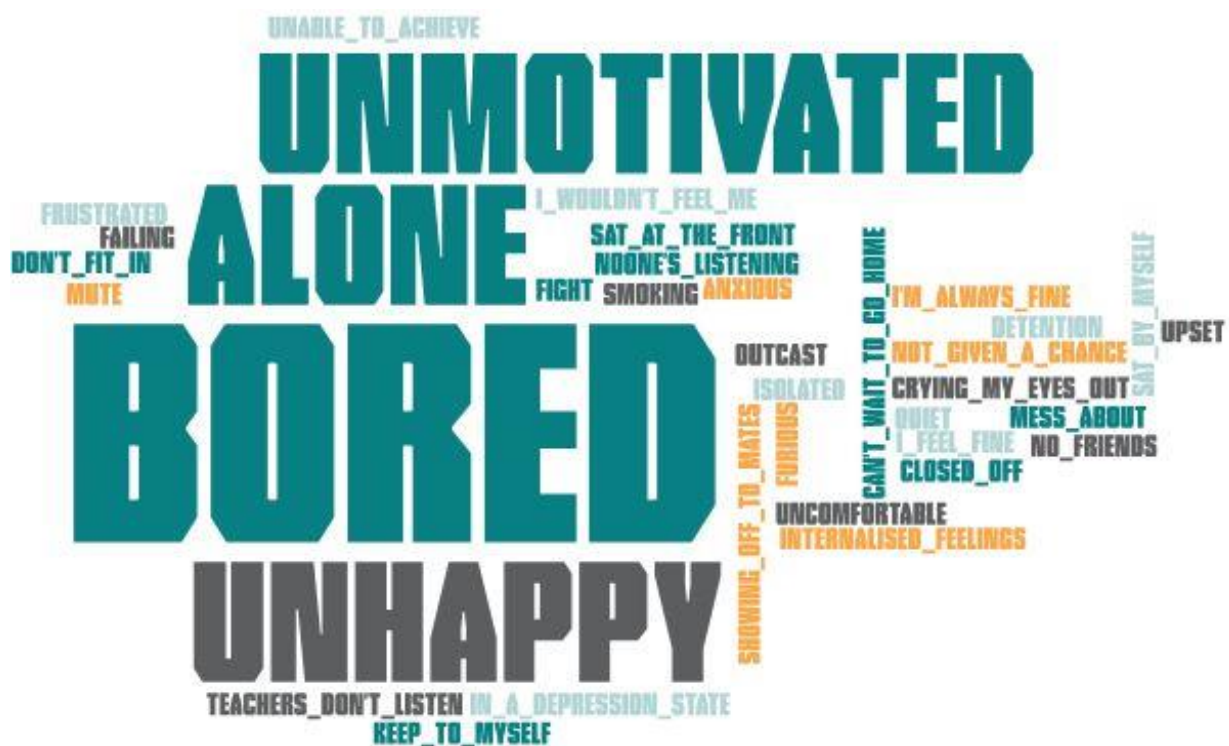


Figure 4. Word cloud of feelings in their ‘Non-Ideal School’.

Figure 4 demonstrates that many young people felt bored, unmotivated and alone in this ‘Non-Ideal School’. Many young people referred to this ‘Non-Ideal School’ as an education setting that they had attended, and many of these were their alternative provisions.

In contrast, figure 5 below demonstrates how they would be feeling in their ‘Ideal School’:

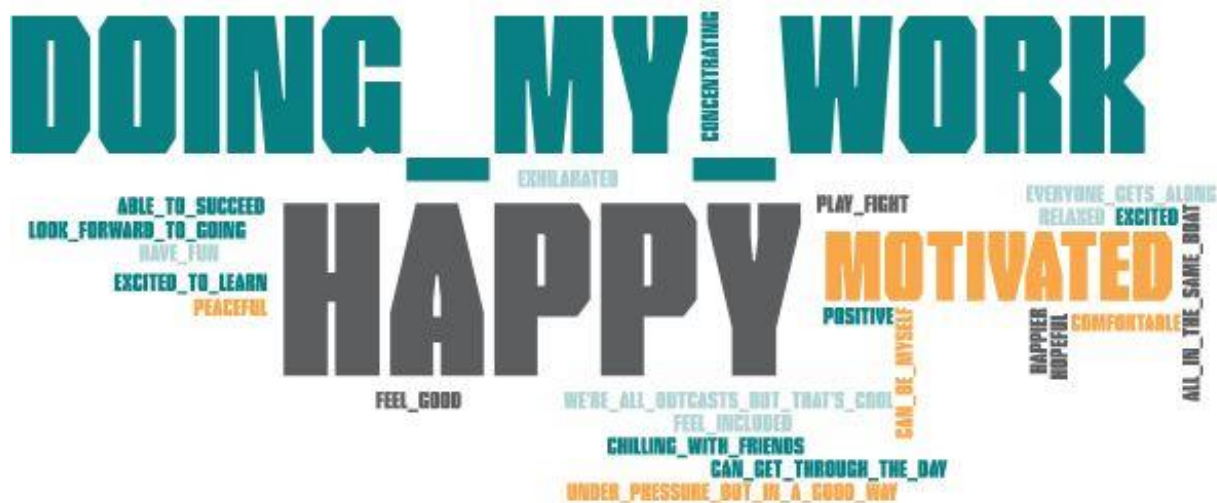


Figure 5. Word cloud of feelings in their 'Ideal School'.

This demonstrates the predominant feeling that the young people want to be 'doing their work' and that they would feel "motivated" to do so, which would make them feel "happy". These word clouds demonstrate young people's desires to work hard and excel.

4.3.3.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

The SENCo and some EPs talked about the importance of promoting extra-curricular activities with this cohort of young people. One EP talked about her involvement with young people and horses and how empowering it can be for the young people to build on their strengths and interests:

... we do school trips, university trips, to widen their horizon. I offer learning with horses sessions to primary and secondary kids ... I think it gives them an opportunity to explore their strengths and try something new. The feedback from foster carers is that it really helps them, at school as well. (EP10)

The SENCo also talked about successful interventions they are using within the PRUs, which build on the young person's skills including farm projects, fire service courses, equine and art therapy, mentoring, tutoring, clubs and sports. She

noted that these interventions boost young peoples' "self-esteem, resilience, self-worth and teamwork skills".

Carers also talked about the importance of in-school support such as clubs and extra-curricular activities for the child's wellbeing and confidence. Young people corroborated that they would like schools to be providing them with more extra-curricular opportunities such as "GCSE boxing", more "music studios" and "sports teams and equipment".

Young people, EPs and the SENCo also talked about the need for government funding to give young people opportunities to excel through their extra-curricular interests. Young people also expressed the importance of having outside agencies and community support available to them such as youth clubs:

There's a lot of things people can do in a youth club that's why I think the youth club is one of the best things they can do/to invest in. (MYP6, 16)

4.4 Theme 3: Young people wanted a sense of containment, belonging and a sense of identity

This theme details the experiences of young people who sought psychological containment and nurture through their secondary schools to support their negative pre-care experiences. However, instead they were met with unsupportive school contexts and punitive measures such as isolation rooms. Many also talked about seeking a sense of belonging and identity but being faced with peer group challenges and bullying. This lack of containment, sense of belonging and positive identity from their school contexts meant that many young people blamed themselves and felt personally responsible for their exclusion experiences. Lacking a positive sense of identity, belonging and containment from their schools experiences, combined with their negative pre-exclusion / in-care experiences as well as a lack of school or external support lead to mental health difficulties for many. Therefore, many sought a sense of belonging elsewhere, for example, in gangs, and were subsequently propelled into a negative subculture both within the school and the wider community.

4.4.1 Young people wanted nurturing environments due to pre-care experiences

Some of the young people talked about their pre-care experiences of abuse, neglect and loss of parents. They talked about how these difficulties were mismanaged and/or not understood by the school:

I was going through the abuse at home, and I was being bullied at the same time...the school kinda knew, but they didn't do anything about it...It was easier for them to get rid of me. (FYP9, 18)

They talked about multiple relationship losses pre-care and feeling rejected, isolated and not coping. Many young people talked about being labelled a “bad kid” very early on in their school career.

EPs noted that secondary schools can be more challenging for LACYP than primary as there are more relationships for the child to develop and “if they find establishing trust in relationships difficult then that’s a huge challenge at secondary school,” (EP8). They also noted that there is an incongruence between secondary school expectations and what the LACYP needs whereby secondary schools value independence, but the child often needs healing relationships / dependence.

This idea of primary school being a contrast to secondary was demonstrated through the scaling question, how would you rate your school experience. Most said towards 0 for the school they were excluded from, and up towards 10 for their primary experience, most therefore settled on around a 5/10 as they “had some good times and some bad times” (FYP10). The average of all their scores for their school experience was therefore 5/10.

The SENCo talked about many children coming to the PRU (i.e. being excluded) in Year 7 as they find the transition to secondary so difficult. She also talked about how children often find reintegration difficult:

... when he hit that rocky place again, there wasn't the small sort of place like here where there's a lot of nurture and support, and it wasn't picked up quickly... And he made a number of attempts on his life.

EPs corroborated that there seems to be more difficulties for LACYP in secondary schools as they are not providing the same level of containment and nurture as the primary system:

In primary schools, there's greater capacity for nurture...you have one teacher, one TAand the SEN processes in secondary schools are often too slow I feel. (EP4)

EPs also commented on the effects of trauma and changes in the teenage brain making things more difficult when they hit puberty. They talked about the young people then finding it difficult to self-regulate, resulting in externalising behaviours towards peers and adults.

4.4.1.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

Young people talked about strong relationships in their microsystem during primary school and often said this was when they were happiest at school:

I just had loads of fun. It was easy. No detentions. If you did anything, they'd just say don't do it again, work was really easy. (MYP4, 14)

EPs talked about training adults to support a young person's self-regulation skills through methods such as the 'Zones of Regulation' or 'Emotion Coaching'.

Many of the young people talked about valuing having someone to show that they care for them within school such as a keyworker. The SENCo noted that assigning the young person a keyworker who does an "emotional check-in" in the morning is an effective strategy used in the PRUs.

4.4.2 Internal exclusion and the use of isolation rooms

Young people sought nurture from their secondary schools but, were often met with the opposite in the form of isolation rooms. All the 11 young people talked about experiences of internal isolation or seclusion within their secondary school settings. Many talked about the conditions within these being degrading and spending prolonged periods of time in them with no breaks:

It was basically like cubicles, you had like a table, a wall each side of you, and a chair and a little door behind you. It was like little rooms all next to each other. (MYP5, 18)

I would literally have to stare at a wall for hours and just do textbook work. Like even your break and lunch they make you still stare at the wall, you're not allowed to talk to anyone. They used to make it really bad. (FYP10, 17)

You had to go there, every day, for the week. (and how long each day?) for the whole day...it felt like prison. (FYP9, 18)

Some of the young people described characteristics of isolation rooms in their 'Non-Ideal School', for example, no windows and having to sit in silence. Figure 6 demonstrates a drawing of an isolation room.

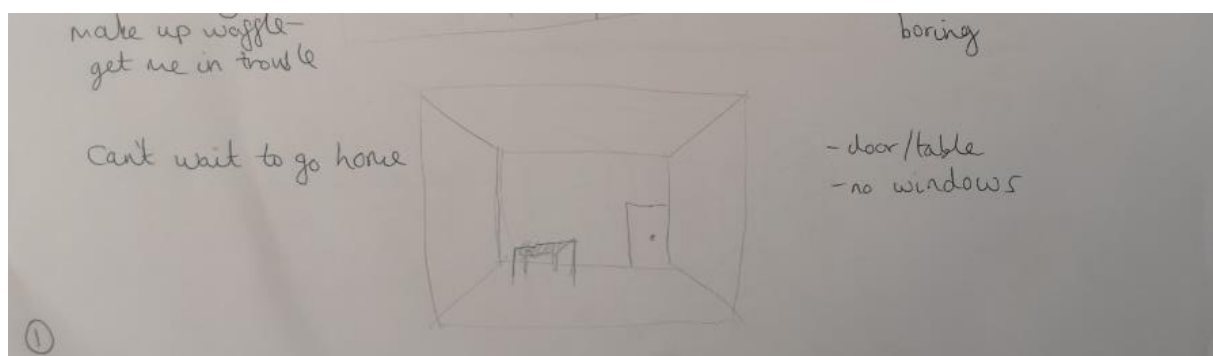


Figure 6. Part of YP4's drawing of his Non-Ideal School.

They talked about there being no real opportunities for learning when in isolation and instead having to do tedious or "boring" tasks such as writing out the code of conduct and copying from textbooks all day. Some of them talked about being excluded as a result of walking out of the seclusion room. They therefore referred to their exclusion being inevitable as the conditions were unbearable:

I knew I didn't want to stay in the room any longer. So, I walked out and they excluded me for five days... (FYP10, 17)

Many also said that after a while, they did not have to do much to be put into isolation and it not serving a purpose, making them "even naughtier":

And if I ever did anything slightly wrong, they'd put me in the isolation straight away... I just thought, I'm gonna be in there anyway so...I might as well. (MYP5, 18)

Some young people were subsequently excluded from decision-making processes, such as their PEP meetings due to being in isolation:

(Did you ever have PEP meetings?) yeah there was, but obviously 'coz I was always in isolation I never went. (MYP5, 18)

They talked about isolation making them feel like the adults in their life did not care or listen to them. This made them feel excluded from the school community, particularly when they were not given the right support or consideration for their individual context. Others talked about the negative emotional and psychological effects of the isolation rooms and feeling hopeless:

I felt like they gave up too easily... 'coz sometimes there was actually like, family stuff that would get into school life as well. (FYP10, 17)

4.4.2.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

Many talked about better measures of punishment in their PRUs and feeling safer knowing that they would have more chances before they would be put into isolation. Furthermore, this “isolation” looking very different in a PRU:

They wouldn't like send you to isolation straight away, they'd give you a chance, they'd take you out the room to talk to you on your own and they'd just try and help you...and in this isolation room, you wouldn't stay in there all day. (MYP5, 18)

Despite the negative seclusion experiences, some reflected on some benefits of isolation rooms. For example: “it taught me places I didn't want to be in life” (MYP5, 18). Most young people talked about understanding why schools have to have isolation rooms, but shared their thoughts on how they could be improved, such as having better tasks to do whilst in there, listening to young people's feelings, being less “prison-like” and being more like a classroom environment:

It would be nice in an isolation room not to have the big walls and door behind you. 'Would be better if it was like a classroom, but not being where you can't see anyone...It makes you feel like you're in a prison. (MYP5, 18)

Alarmingly, despite all 11 young people talking about experiences of isolation rooms, there was no mention of these by professionals or carers as a measure used by schools.

4.4.3 Peer group challenges and bullying

As previously discussed, the young people seemed to dislike the identity of being in care and expressed wanting to be treated the same as their peers, rather than a distinct category. Many of the young people talked about the strong influences of their peers, both negative and positive. Three of the girls talked about experiences of being bullied prior to their exclusion.

It was verbal but then it kind of turned physical when he pushed me onto a radiator. (FYP1, 14)

Two noted that their exclusions were directly related to their reactions to being bullied:

When I was being abused ... like my mum's boyfriend, shaved off my head. So, they used to call me like a boy and that stuff and names about that. And then like one of them tried beating me up and then obviously I had to react. So then, obviously coz I reacted, they put me in that seclusion. (FYP9, 18)

Two carers talked about negative peer experiences and bullying and how severely this affected their child's self-esteem and wellbeing:

She was having hallucinations; ...she was hearing their voices...telling her how useless she was and how she should jump out the window. (Carer1)

Many young people talked about having some difficult peer relationships throughout their school career and losing friendships as a result of the exclusion:

I had lots of friends at primary school... I couldn't keep in contact with any of my friends (after the exclusion). (YP1, 14)

They also talked about having to join the wrong crowds or face being bullied, particularly in their PRUs:

I realised the nicer I was the more bruises I had. I had to become one of them...I was really bullied, and the teachers did nothing to help me. (FYP11, 20)

A distinction was made between how the females and males described poor peer experiences. Four out of six young females said they had been bullied and the other two alluded to bullying. Only one of the males used the word "bullied". The

females were far more elaborative about the negative interactions than the males. Table 4 details their descriptions of their interactions.

Table 4.

Young people's descriptions of peers in their 'Non-Ideal School' or from experience

Male responses	Female responses
<i>MYP4: They're just annoying, they always tell me off for stuff that I do.</i>	<i>YP1: Mean girls...girls are the worst bullies.</i>
<i>MYP5: I felt a bit left out...I couldn't do what they could.</i>	<i>FYP2: They're bitching about people...they're fake, two-faced people.</i>
<i>MYP6: I wouldn't have any friends, so I'd just be doing work or detention.</i>	<i>FYP3: They don't have any emotions they're boring, snitches...posh".</i>
<i>MYP7: They'd be crusty.</i>	<i>FYP9: People'd be like</i>
<i>MYP8: I'd have no friends.</i>	<i>bullying...picking on me...say things they know would hurt me.</i>
	<i>FYP10: Rude, childish and immature</i>
	<i>FYP11: The nicer I was, the more bruises I had.</i>

Within this, both males and females talked about not being able to relate to certain peers and them being "rude", with "no life experience" and "ungrateful". Several young people talked about these people being those that go to private or boarding schools (see Figure 7).

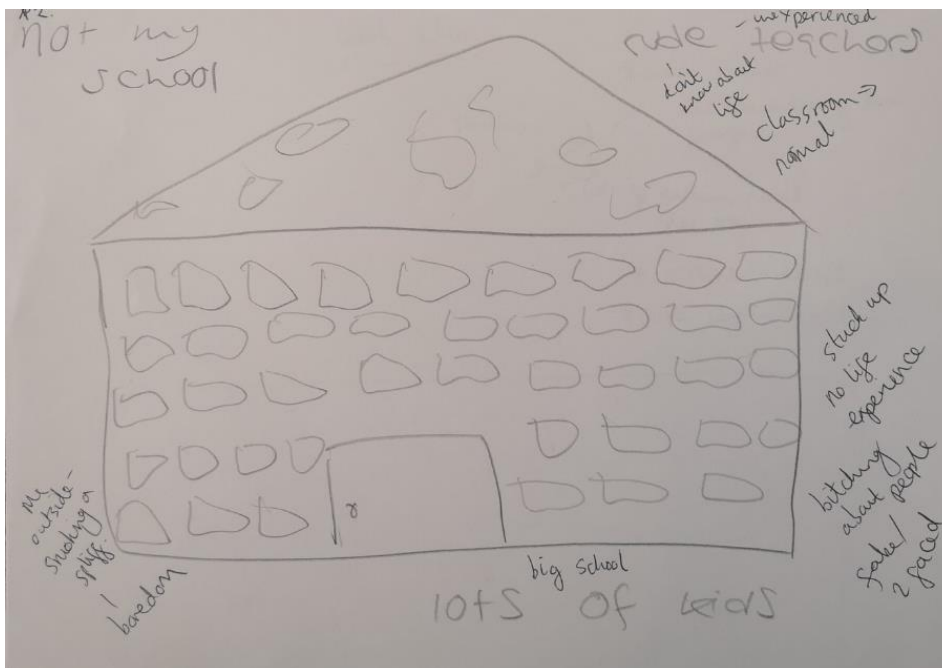
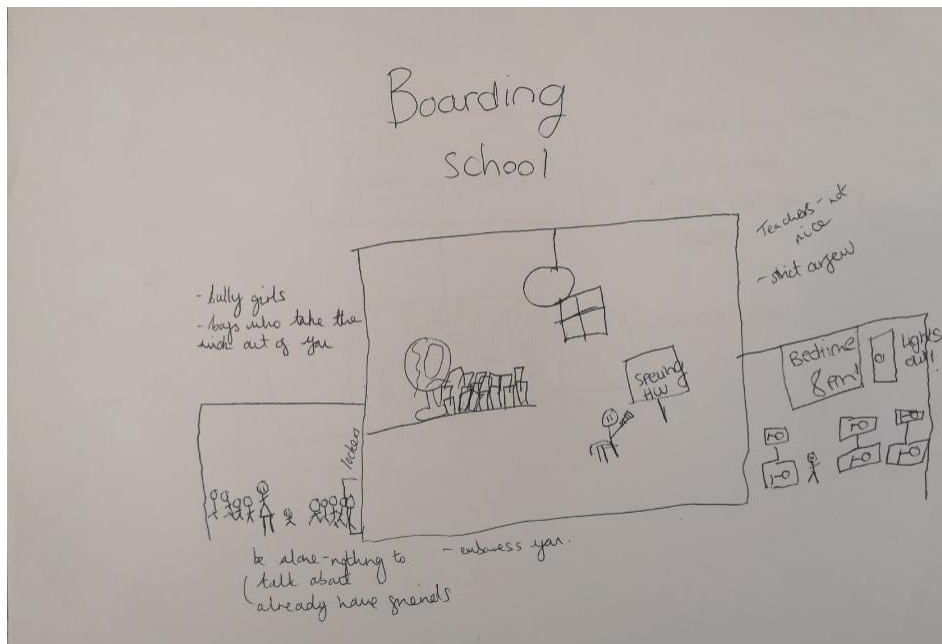


Figure 7. Non-Ideal Schools (YP1 and YP2).

4.4.3.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

Young people talked about having lots of friends in their 'Ideal School' and those young people being: "like me", "kind", "fun" and "friendly". They said that it would be a place where "everyone helps each other", their peers are "mature", and they feel "included" / "not outcast". Many young people talked about their PRU being their 'Ideal School' as it was "like a family" as they were surrounded by people with similar experiences.

Despite having many difficult peer relationships, when the young people were asked what they thought had helped them most at school, many cited their friends as a crucial protective factor:

They was there for me, they were never rude, and they listened when others didn't. (MYP7, 17)

Some carers and young people commented that the young person's friends can often provide those strong, supportive relationships as they are people they trust.

4.4.4 Young people felt personally responsible and blame themselves

Whilst reflecting on their experiences, many young people talked about self-responsibility and it being "all on me" to make positive changes in their lives. This was attributed to their experiences of being let down by multiple adults so having no choice but to rely only on yourself:

I was given a lot of support, but I just felt like I just felt like no one could help me at that point. Like I've gotta help myself before anyone else can help me. (FYP10, 17)

Many young people discussed the idea of this then leading to self-blame and frustration:

I did like blame myself for it. But at the same time, I thought like, well how can you give up on someone? (MYP5, 18)

When asked what could have been done differently regarding their exclusion, the young people found it difficult to think of what could have been done differently. Most of their answers were related to things that *they* needed to have done differently, not others, with many saying that they had lots of support. They talked about internalising some of that self-blame and it negatively impacting on their confidence and self-esteem:

It did knock my confidence. And I did sit there and think, well that's what they're saying every time...they can't help me and they don't wanna help me. (MYP5, 18)

Carers also shared the view that it was ultimately the young person's responsibility to make the changes themselves:

She's one of these children, you could throw all sorts of help at her but you have to want to help yourself, to be helped... It's down to her, yeah. (Carer3)

He gets distracted very easily...and that's a choice that he's making. (Carer4)

Many of the young people talked about not wanting help from professionals because they had been let down by adults so often in the past:

It's down to me, how I deal with things, it's not like someone who's just met me, or had an hour with me can really suggest anything coz they don't know me personally. (MYP8, 15)

Some of the young people also reflected on the feeling of guilt and regret with regards to their exclusion. Others discussed the difficulties of watching friends do well and feeling left behind and hurt:

That's what hurt me the most, seeing all my friends all As and Bs and I had Fs...that was horrible. (MYP5, 18)

Many voiced feeling like things cannot be changed leading to a sense of hopelessness and self-destruction and subsequently drawn into the wrong crowds:

After I was excluded...we would chill in like trap houses and chill with gangster people, like road men... it was some fucked shit... because the company you keep is kind of what you become. (FYP2, 16)

EPs also talked about young people not having a clear narrative around their experiences and this having a negative effect on their self-esteem:

Exclusion can impact on their personal narrative. So "I am someone who is bad, who is not worthy, who is not wanted." (EP2)

4.4.4.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

Many of the advice from young people to other young people in a similar situation talked about having a positive mindset, not being influenced by peers and ultimately about helping yourself first (for full accounts see Appendix M):

You've gotta wanna help yourself before you accept help from others... 'coz it's no good people helping you when you're not doing your bit. (FYP10, 17)

Some in their advice to others also talked about not relying on adults:

I wish I could say, go to your worker and they'll help you but I can't, you have to do it yourself. (FYP11, 20)

Some of the young people were able to express not wanting to be defined by their negative experiences and seeking a more positive identity, for example, through music, boxing, drama and/or sport:

You can still get as far with GCSEs or not... I wanna be a personal trainer...sports has just been my thing, since I was a baby. (FYP2, 16)

The SENCo shared that the young people often enjoy therapies like “animation” (narrative therapy) as they are “making up stories about their lives” and this is helpful as they can “change endings for things, which is quite powerful for these young people”.

4.4.5 The impact of pre-exclusion and post-exclusion experiences on mental health and wellbeing

As previously discussed, many of the young people shared several difficult pre-exclusion and pre-care experiences such as abuse at home, and some commented on how they internalised these difficult feelings, which negatively affected their mental health. A few reflected on how these adverse childhood experiences impacted their ability to cope in school. Three of the girls commented on self-harming to cope.

EPs noted that from their experience, difficult pre-care and in-care experiences, particularly trauma, can negatively influence a young person's mental health:

Children's experience of early trauma or continued, repeated trauma such as multiple losses can have such an impact, particularly in terms of their mental health. For example, their early attachment experiences can make it difficult for them to have a good blueprint to develop positive relationships with their peers or with adults. (EP2)

The SENCo also discussed difficulties that this cohort of young people have with self-regulation which often stems from their difficult early childhood experiences:

It's a dysregulation of their emotions... And unfortunately, we do see an awful lot of parents or carers that tell us some quite often upsetting stories about what's happened in their past.

EPs noted that the young people are often emotionally distressed and unable to concentrate or learn, which makes it difficult for them to cope with fast-paced secondary school environments:

...emotionally they are not there yet ...and they are very distressed...and how can you then say, ok "make academic progress?!" (EP7)

Young people talked about finding it difficult to control their "anger". They talked about factors that led to their exclusion as primarily being a build-up of anger and frustration over time, leading to violence / externalising behaviours directed at either peers or teachers. Negative interactions with either a peer or adult seemed to be the trigger for the event that got them excluded. Table 5 illustrates the reasons for their exclusions.

Table 5.

Young people's reasons for their exclusions

Reason for exclusion	Number
Physical assault towards a pupil or adult	6
Threat of physical assault	3
Persistent disruptive behaviour	2

EPs commented that excluding a child can then reinforce the negative narrative many young people already have about themselves:

Exclusion is replicating their experience...they've been rejected so many times and then they've been rejected again by the school...and this is reinforcing the idea that they are not good enough, they're damaged. (EP7)

Many young people noted that as soon as they were excluded once, they then had multiple exclusions from there. These exclusions further escalated their behaviour.

A conceptual map, demonstrated in Figure 8, illustrates a summary of these commentaries and the potential factors involved which can individually or cumulatively negatively affect the young people’s mental health. It does not aim to imply causation or inevitability but does highlight the vulnerability the young people have to potential mental health difficulties across different time points (the chronosystem), even before they have been excluded.

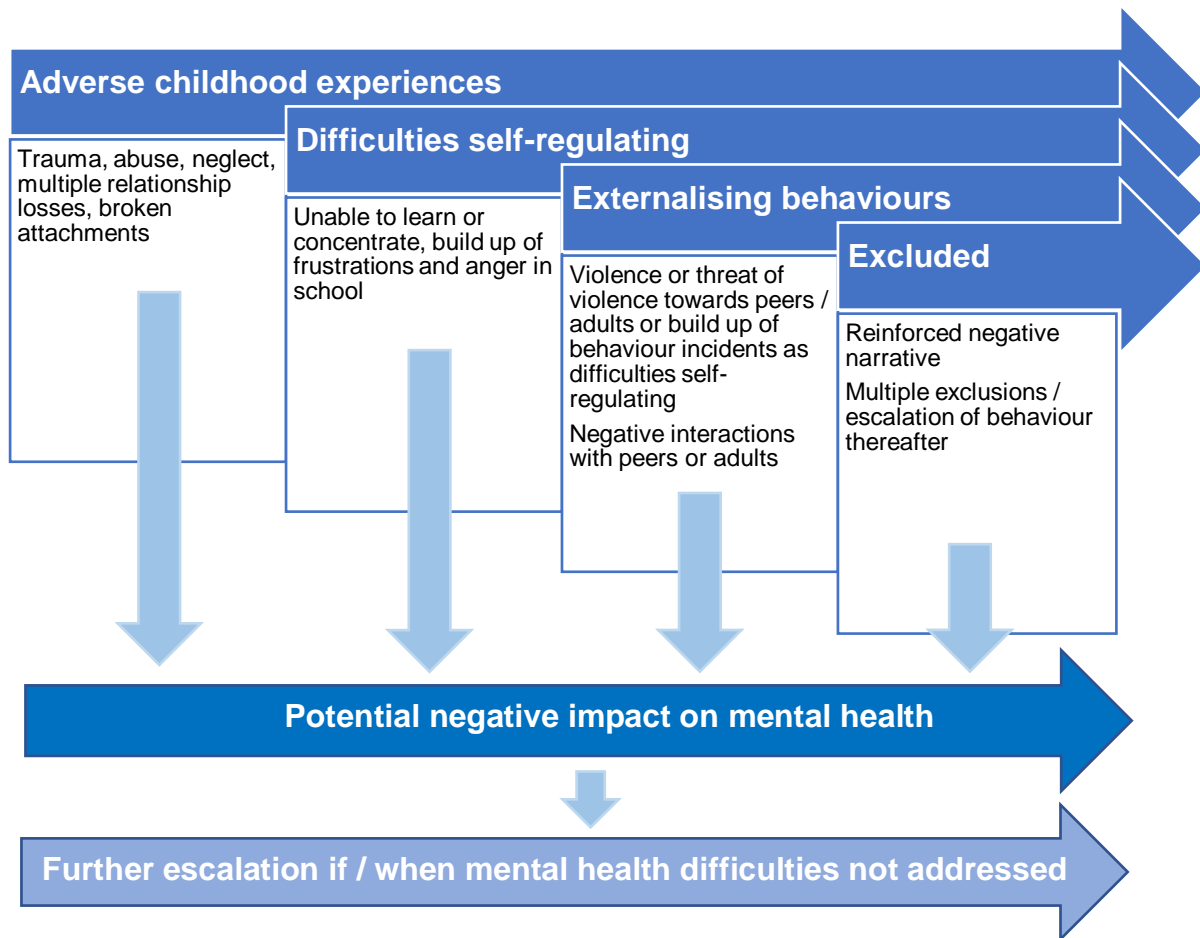


Figure 8. Diagram demonstrating pre-exclusion factors and the potential impact on LACYP’s mental health and wellbeing based on the participant data sets.

Participant groups also described young people not engaging with external agencies across the different time points meaning that many SEMH needs were left unsupported, often leading to an escalation of behaviour.

EPs noted that if these mental health difficulties were not addressed, it could lead to further escalation of mental health difficulties. However, the young people discussed a particularly strong distrust for CAMHS and not wanting to engage. Of

the 11 young people interviewed, 9 had received CAMHS involvement at some point (some pre-exclusion, some post). Five said that they had refused to engage with CAMHS for various reasons: bad reputation from other family members, worries that they would be taken away and thinking they could not help. YP 7 commented:

CAMHS were involved but they never got spoke to. I just feel that they were always tryin' to put me on a psycho ward.

Carers commented that one of the issues with CAMHS is the high staff turnover and not having enough sessions to build trusting relationships with the young people. A few young people also talked about a general distrust for the government, for example:

The government...whole new ball game, you could go missing, you could disappear, you know, these guys can do anything they want. (MYP7, 17)

The SENCo also talked about how varied and unequitable SEMH support is within secondary schools and how often it is “unclear how a school is using their Pupil Premium money”. For example, how variable school buy-in is of EP time making it a “lottery” how much SEMH support a young person gets.

EPs also commented on underfunded SEMH and therapeutic support within secondary schools and a lack of understanding from staff as to how best to support these children with externalising behaviours within a mainstream setting. One commented that there is a perception that there are alternative settings that would better meet the young people’s needs. However, the EP commented the following:

Lots of schools, social workers, sometimes foster carers talk about “this child needs a therapeutic environment”... and these places just don't exist... they need ‘experts’ to ‘sort them out’ and ‘therapy them’ and make them ok again...when actually, what a lot of these children need is...normality.... a stable place in a school, and a school where the people understand them. (EP9)

Many young people also reflected on post-exclusion experiences negatively affecting their mental health. Many felt that their exclusion was unfair, that they were not “given a chance”. Others however said that the exclusion was “fair”. Many talked about the immediate impact of being excluded being a lot of anger and frustration towards some adults in the system (teachers or the school and social workers

primarily) or towards themselves. Many talked about using drugs such as marijuana to help them cope with these mental health difficulties and out of “boredom”. One young woman commented about how she felt after the exclusion:

I couldn't sit in the house on my own, 'coz I'd just get like...lost in my thoughts... but when I smoke a spliff I'm just cool (laughs). (FYP2, 16)

Many young people talked about exclusion knocking their confidence and self-esteem and alluded to a lack of positive mental wellbeing, self-compassion and self-care:

I'm not sure what's going on behind the scenes, I'm here up in my room most of the time. (MYP8, 15)

The SENCo also talked about young people having strong feelings of “shame” post exclusion. She talked about the shame felt by families about their child being in a PRU and “children trying to hurt and even kill themselves due to this embarrassment”. Carers also talked about the mental health impact on the young person as a result of their exclusion. For example:

I don't think he's gonna admit that he's depressed...but it's a struggle even for him to do the tutoring at the moment... he stays in his room a hell of a lot. (Carer8)

Not having their voice heard post-exclusion or not being in control of their future decisions, again negatively affected their mental health. Many then referred to subsequent breakdowns in care placements post-exclusion, causing further instability, and further contributed to their poor wellbeing.

EPs commented on the significant longer-term impact of exclusion on a young person's mental and physical health:

Many of our looked after children have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences and if you then add in the layer of exclusion from school, I'm certain that that perhaps has an impact on long term physical and mental health. (EP8)

The SENCo also corroborated:

The huge effect it has on a young person is just... you can't explain it. And they can't explain it, but it hurts, physically hurts them. And it sits with them for years.

Another conceptual map, illustrated in Figure 9, summarises the impact of exclusion on mental health and wellbeing from the perspective of all participant groups. This diagram again highlights several vulnerability factors the young people detailed which have the potential at each stage to contribute to poor mental health outcomes.

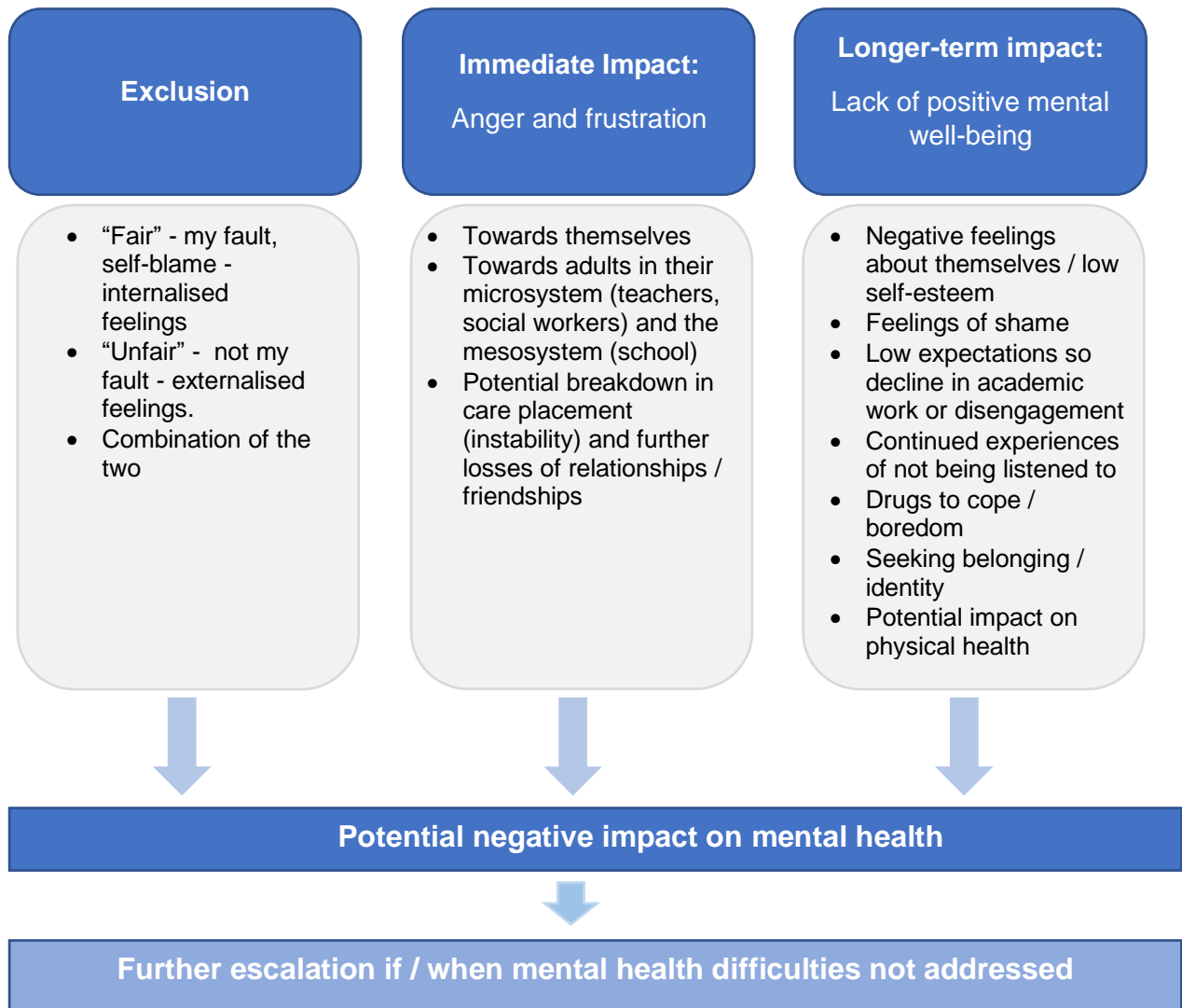


Figure 9. Diagram detailing the immediate and longer-term impact of school exclusion on LACYP’s mental health and wellbeing.

The SENCo and EPs highlighted that the combination of both pre-exclusion and post-exclusion factors can be incredibly detrimental to a young person’s mental health. As previously discussed, EPs noted that these difficulties can be exacerbated if left unaddressed.

4.4.5.1 Positive experiences and ways forward

Three female young people commented on their positive experiences of therapeutic support for their mental health difficulties pre-exclusion. These included Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). One commented that they would have benefited from this in school with someone they had a strong relationship with:

I don't believe in counselling to be honest...like therapy...I believe in, coz my therapist, she helped me out...because she spoke a lot about your brain and how to control it. But my counsellor, she was just like, get an elastic band and flick it on your wrist anytime you feel sad...I was like...?! Yeah it didn't help me one bit. (FYP2, 16)

When asked whether they had worked with an EP, most young people either said they did not know or no. However, through further questioning, a number had worked with EPs but were not able to articulate how they supported. One young person discussed a 'drug counsellor' being helpful, another had an 'advocate' in their care home who they said helped. One talked about not meeting the threshold for CAMHS so having to seek private therapy when she was older. Two said that they had found 'CAMHS in Schools' helpful because one commented that she found it useful learning more about how her brain works.

EPs shared that they sometimes carry out more "active, preventative work" with excluded / 'at risk' of exclusion LACYP. For example, planning for adulthood with older CYP to elicit their hopes for the future. They named specific person-centred techniques to seek these views such as a 'PATH' or 'MAP'. Some EPs also talked about therapeutic work they had carried out successfully with this cohort of young people such as CBT, narrative and play therapies.

One EP commented that she believes that the SEMH support they provide works well as it takes place within the child's school setting, rather than in a clinic, such as with CAMHS. The SENCo corroborated that CAMHS have an "uphill battle because the children respond better when it is done in school". Another EP argued that often EPs can provide the preventative support that is needed, when their presenting difficulties do not meet the threshold for CAMHS involvement. However, other EPs noted the difficulties working within a traded model of service delivery whereby in their services, the VS or schools valued individual assessments with

these young people rather than therapeutic interventions, making it difficult to carry out more creative and preventative work.

Overall, young people shared that having adults believe in them, listen to them, advocate for them as well as having a purpose or goal, can lead to more hopefulness about their future and better wellbeing.

4.4.6 Being propelled into a negative subculture within the school and wider community

Young people referred to the breakdown of relationships with both adults and peers after their exclusion, leading them into a negative subculture. The low expectations from adults negatively affected their identity and led them to seek a sense of belonging from other groups, such as gangs. They spoke of being easily exploited after they were excluded, as they were seeking to belong to something or somewhere.

Four young people talked about gang affiliations either personally or through their family members. Some talked about not wanting to be involved and feeling trapped with no way out. Many of their gang related experiences were both before their exclusion as well as after, and some were ongoing:

If I leave the gang, I'm still gonna have people after me coz I must have done something to get into the gang...to one of their people (MYP4, 14).

Some talked about their interest in drill music and one made links between the dangers of drill and gang violence:

...as the gang started to get bigger, more active with knives, drill started to come in. And now people are getting stabbed because of it (MYP4, 14).

One young person talked about the lack of support he had from adults in school to help him get out of the gang:

They (the school) said: "you're hanging around with gangs", and I kept on saying... "greaaaat, you can see what I'm doing"! (MYP6, 16)

Young people talked about wanting to feel a sense of belonging, but feeling constantly on the fringes within school, for example, through being continually placed in isolation rooms.

Young people referred to spending time with “bad influences” after they were excluded, particularly within some of the PRUs. For example, one of the females referred to being exposed to sexualised behaviours by “hanging around with people in trap houses”. Another talked about the people in her PRU as being “actual young offenders and criminals” but having no choice but to “become one of them” to survive within the setting.

A carer shared her concern about her daughter’s deteriorating behaviour since she started at the PRU last year and this being due to her involvement with the “wrong crowd”:

She’s not behaving as well as she was...but obviously that’s like the influence of the other children there. (Carer3)

A few young people also spoke about spending time with those involved in crime:

I was chilling with these other chavs from XX, who used to like rob the whole of central London. So, I was just doing all this shit. (FYP2, 16)

Many talked about them feeling drawn into criminal activities such as drug use and gangs and then facing custodial sentencing:

I was just beating up girls for no reason, and that’s why I got arrested...like I’ve been on tag and everything. (FYP2, 16)

Many of the young people also talked about their use of drugs, particularly “weed” and feeling pressured to do harder drugs.

EPs talked about how young people were seeking a sense of belonging through their involvement with criminal activities, such as “county lines” (illegal drug transportation from one area to another) and “sexual exploitation”. EPs also talked about a “snowball effect”, whereby the exclusion leads to a placement breakdown, and this sometimes leads to them living in a residential setting where they become “institutionalised”. Many EPs noted that they know of LACYP who have ended up in the prison system. They also highlighted that many of the young people “end up NEET...and there are also poor outcomes for this group”.

The SENCo raised concerns about young people going into colleges or FE, coming from nurturing PRUs and then not having any support thereafter. EPs raised similar concerns that colleges often do not have the same level of understanding of LACYP needs and are often not linked up with professionals such as EPs or the VS.

One EP commented that austerity measures mean that lots of community support systems have gone such as personal advisors who would support the young person into FE or training. She noted that this therefore leaves LACYP vulnerable once excluded.

4.4.6.1 Positive ways forward

At a macro level, young people, EPs and the SENCo talked about the need for better Post-16 services. The SENCo said that they have more recently tried to support LACYP transition to college by delivering training to college staff on SEMH difficulties because of patterns around them “dropping out of college within a month”.

EPs commented on the importance of supporting adults around the child to become aware of the child’s legal rights to an education. Young people also noted that they need to know their rights and options, particularly when they reach 16.

Another young person commented on the importance of meaningful support for care leavers:

I think that having support at this stage is actually the most important time ‘coz this is when we’re on our own and no longer part of a system. Which gets overlooked a lot. Sometimes I feel like I don’t have a voice when it comes to the care team...I feel like a one-woman warrior! (FYP11, 20)

4.5 Chapter summary

Thematic analysis of the participant data found three overarching themes. These themes demonstrated that young people felt a lack of advocacy from key adults within their microsystem and increasing frustration from not being heard by the systems in place to protect and support them. These experiences were associated with wider social and economic exclusion. The findings also revealed that young people have goals and aspirations, but when these were not supported by the adults around them, they became further demotivated. The findings illustrated how pre-care experiences and unsupportive school structures, such as isolation rooms,

could contribute to poor mental health for the young people and in some cases, propel them into negative subcultures. As a result of these experiences, young people felt that they had no alternative but to advocate for themselves and develop personal aspirations, in order to create a more positive identity.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Chapter summary

This study adopted a bioecological framework to understand the school exclusion experiences for LACYP. The study has uncovered factors across the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems which affected the lives of excluded LACYP. Whilst this framework has been useful to understand the multiple influences on the child, the inter-dependency of the different layers makes it difficult to assess the findings at each level of the ecosystem. Therefore, a more holistic discussion of the findings is presented.

The two research questions are discussed in relation to theory and literature. Research question one discusses the experiences of exclusion from the three themes from the findings. Research question two discusses the positive ways forward and thus the implications for what professionals are doing and could be doing to support LACYP's inclusion. Key implications for EPs, strengths, limitations and ideas for further research are then presented. The discussion ends with some concluding comments.

5.2 Summary of main findings

LACYP experience disproportionately high rates of school exclusion, yet there is limited research into this area, and little is known about the young people's experiences. Overall, the young people reported overwhelmingly negative accounts of their experiences. Several factors were identified as contributing to their exclusions as well as several impacts (see Appendix O). These fell under three key themes: i) Lack of advocacy, ii) Mismatch between LACYP and adult's expectations and iii) Young people wanted a sense of containment, belonging and a sense of identity. Despite these negative experiences, the narratives also spoke of some positive experiences of effective support and hopeful ways forward which the researcher wished to highlight in order to provide implications to inform policy and practice.

5.3 Research Question 1: What are the experiences of school exclusion for LACYP?

5.3.1 Lack of advocacy

One of the key narratives recurring in this research was that young people did not feel listened to by adults within their microsystem. Aligned with other research, not being listened to made young people feel a lack of control over decisions affecting their lives and a subsequent build-up of anger and frustration (McLeod, 2010; Morgan, 2006).

The young people also discussed poor relationships and feeling a lack of advocacy from adults, particularly social workers and teachers. There is a wealth of research demonstrating the importance of listening to LACYP's views (Holland, 2009). However, findings in the current study suggest that merely listening to their views was not enough in meeting their needs. Rather, the young people emphasised that listening needed to be accompanied by action from those around them. This important distinction was also made in Coates' (2011) study with LACYP which found that young people wanted adults to demonstrate that they had heard by "sticking up" for them and to advocate at critical times.

Young people also discussed poor advocacy from social workers, feeling like they could have prevented the exclusion. This is in line with other research which found that young people wanted their social worker to take action on things concerning them (Ridley et al., 2016). This study, alongside others, highlights that their views were not acted upon to bring about changes within their microsystem or at a wider level (Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2011; Morgan, 2012). The young people talked about several adverse early relationship losses and research suggests that these experiences can make it difficult for LACYP to build trusting relationships with adults and that it takes them a long time to build this trust (McLeod, 2007). In line with previous research, these poor relationships seemed to be a contributory factor to their exclusions (Sarmezey, 2004).

With poor advocacy from teachers and social workers, this research shed light on the vital role of carers in being the CYP's key advocate. However, not all young people had this support, demonstrating the vulnerability of these children when they do not have a carer advocate. LACYP are less likely to have family members who

can advocate for them as would be the case for other young people (Wood, 2017). Therefore, it has been argued that advocates have a key role to play in supporting LACYP and promoting their rights (Becker, 2011; Willow, 2013).

This research highlighted that teachers were perhaps experiencing 'compassion fatigue' when supporting the young people. Bion's theory of containment (1962) helps understanding of the proximal processes in the BTHD. Teachers were expected to "contain" the young person through emotional attentiveness which helps the young person self-regulate when finding the classroom challenging. However, containing the feelings of both the child and themselves can result in 'compassion fatigue' whereby a close relationship with the young person results in emotional exhaustion from the teacher (Showalter, 2010). Increasing pressures on teachers for academic attainment places a strain on their own wellbeing and possibly makes it difficult for them to reflect on what the child is projecting (Kalu, 2002). This may be one of the reasons for strained teacher relationships.

In line with previous research, young people's narratives spoke of a lack of advocacy from the systems which were there to protect them, making them feel powerless and creating instability (McElduff, 2001). Government guidance states that schools should avoid permanently excluding a LACYP (DfE, 2018a). However, the narratives suggest that this guidance was not adhered to by many schools. Of particular note was the lack of system level support and legislation to safeguard CIN when at risk of exclusion. Alarmingly, the study found that many of the young people were excluded as a CIN then went into care thereafter. Government statistics illuminate a worrying trend that whilst permanent exclusions are decreasing for LACYP, they are increasing for CIN and now stand at 0.28% compared to 0.10% for all children (DfE, 2020). Furthermore, CIN currently have lower attainment and progress scores than LACYP (DfE, 2020). Unlike LACYP, this group have no statutory protection against being excluded (DfE, 2017). The lack of system protection for this group and their subsequent risk of then going into care could be exacerbating the trend for LACYP exclusions.

This research also highlighted the growing concern that the young people are experiencing more discreet or 'unofficial' forms of school exclusion such as managed

moves and off-rolling. Behaviour is often the named reason and involves parents/carers being pressured to accept taking the child off the school roll (Ofsted, 2019). Given the finding that LACYP do not always have carer advocates, they may be particularly vulnerable to this practice. The study also demonstrated that schools are using managed moves as a way of giving the young person a 'fresh start' (Abdelnoor, 2007). However, this study aligned with others has suggested that managed moves are another form of exclusion and not always in the best interests of the CYP (Bagley, 2013). The trend for unofficial exclusions is particularly concerning given that there appears to be no research into the effects of these practices for LACYP nor is the government collecting data to track this (Thomson, 2018).

This research has highlighted that these unofficial practices by schools are driven by macro level pressures on schools for results. This pressure is making schools feel that excluding pupils will preserve their academic attainment scores. Schools are therefore implementing zero-tolerance behaviour policies which are arguably unsupportive to LACYP needs (HoCEC, 2018). These punitive measures appear to make young people feel more stigmatised and develop a negative view of authority (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015). It has also been found that inflexible systems and procedures were part of the reasons for disproportionate exclusions of LACYP (White et al., 2013). Ford et al. (2018) argues that 2016 statutory guidance around exclusion overemphasises zero-tolerance policies in response to behaviour difficulties which is counterproductive. They note that promoting positive behaviour as outlined in the NICE guidance (2013) would better support challenging behaviour.

5.3.2 Mismatch between young person and adult expectations and aspirations

Young people's narratives spoke about wanting to achieve but being met with low expectations and aspirations from adults within their microsystem. These low expectations were found to be driven by two key factors: their care status and an over or under identification of needs.

Stigmatising views about care, originating from the macro-level societal context were perceived as influencing how LACYP were understood within the microsystem of school. There has been extensive research into LACYP encountering stigmatising views of their care status and subsequent low

expectations of achievement (McLeod, 2010; Walker, 2017). Research has found that educational policies and practices alienate LACYP from educational achievement whereby they are “not permitted or encouraged to succeed academically due to their complex circumstances” (Mannay et al., 2017 p.683). This study has demonstrated that low expectations were a crucial contributory factor to the young people’s exclusions. This is in line with Turner (2003), Sarmezey (2004) and McElduff’s (2001) research which also found that low expectations from teachers contributed to LACYP’s exclusions.

This research highlights how adults misunderstood young people’s learning and SEMH needs which also led to low expectations. Narratives spoke of under-identifying needs; having low expectations due to the trauma they have experienced and subsequently not putting in the support required to maintain the child’s school placement. Versus over-identifying needs, giving them labels such as “dyslexia” to give schools extra funding and these labels also leading to low expectations.

There is ongoing debate concerning how to conceptualise the difficulties of CYP who have experienced early life trauma. Woolgar and Baldock (2015) argue that there is a tendency to ‘over-identify’ attachment difficulties in LACYP at the expense of identifying more ‘common disorders’ such as ADHD. He argues that the evidence base for treatment of attachment difficulties is underdeveloped compared to that for more common disorders meaning that those identified with ‘attachment disorders’ may miss out on access to the evidence-based treatments and educational support they need (Woolgar & Scott, 2013). He argued that ‘common disorders’ are significantly under-identified in assessments. However, others, argue that it is more helpful to formulate complex presentations as ‘attachment-trauma symptom profiles’ rather than multiple or co-morbid disorders (Tarren-Sweeney, 2010). In response to this argument, EPs in this study argued that they consider psychological, social and developmental factors within their assessments of LACYP. However, overall, they argued that over-diagnosing LACYP with ‘common disorders’ or labels such as autism was misunderstanding their attachment needs and leading to further stigmatisation and low expectations (Moran, 2010).

Professionals highlighted that low expectations from schools were also due to schools not knowing how to support a CYP’s SEMH needs or feeling ill-equipped to

do so. Professionals noted that this was a significant contributory factor to their exclusion. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) corroborate that the behavioural challenges and complex needs of LACYP have been inadequately understood which has led to insufficient provision and exacerbation of educational problems. This lack of understanding from schools was also attributed to a lack of training, system level funding and school ethos' lacking nurture. This research, aligned with others, highlighted that although generic training on LACYP needs is helpful, LACYP do not all present with the same needs (Statham, 2008). Therefore, assessments must be based on an understanding of individual need (Statham, 2008). Nonetheless, this research has highlighted the challenges of providing these types of involvement within traded services as EPs are reliant on schools making the decisions on how to use EP time.

Narratives highlighted that despite these low expectations from adults in their microsystem, the young people wanted to excel and achieve, particularly through their extra-curricular interests. However, they spoke of barriers to pursuing these interests at a systems level, both within and outside of school. Financial pressures on schools mean that school spending has decreased per pupil by 8% and often extra-curricular resources are not prioritised by schools (Belfield et al., 2018). Austerity measures have also led to the closures of local services including youth clubs and leisure centres (Davies, 2019). However, Pupil Premium for LACYP has increased in recent years which suggests that schools are not prioritising extracurricular activities within their budgets.

Music featured heavily in their narratives as being a supportive medium. There is growing evidence that music and music projects can support LACYP. An evaluation of the 'Youth Music Network' project suggested that LACYP developed their confidence, self-esteem and relationships with carers (Dillon, 2010). Research suggests that involvement in extracurricular activities in school can increase resilience (Gilligan, 2000), academic performance, a positive sense of self and continuing educational participation amongst care leavers (Darling, 2005). It has also been found to improve psychological and behaviour outcomes and inclusion (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). Research has suggested that prosocial interactions with peers may be the mediating link between extracurricular participation and positive adjustment (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). This is in line with participant voices who

valued supportive peer relationships. These studies and the present research thus suggest that extra-curricular activities could be a crucial protective factor against LACYP exclusion.

Young people's narratives also revealed how they value education and want to learn. This is in line with previous research which found that LACYP want more encouragement to achieve (Happer et al., 2006) and LACYP want to be challenged to reach their potential (Mannay et al., 2017). Many young people voiced frustrations that teachers provided SEMH support but took less interest in academic support. This is corroborated by Jackson and Cameron's (2012) research which highlighted that LACYP are often met with a lack of commitment and interest from professionals regarding their academic attainment. This study corroborates with Mannay's (2017) assertion that more differentiated understandings of LACYP's aspirations and capabilities should be embedded into everyday practices within their secondary schools (Hambrick et al., 2019). PALAC projects appear to be one way of supporting schools to achieve this.

Young people encountered even lower expectations of their learning and a subsequent decline in their learning once in PRUs. There is increasing national concern around quality of PRU provision particularly with regards to poor educational standards, lack of reintegration into mainstream school and low expectations (Ofsted, 2016). A recent report found that 80% of PRUs inspected had low expectations or the quality of teaching and learning required improvement (IPPR, 2017). Young people voiced frustrations at not being able to get higher than a certain grade at GCSEs, which limits their future options (Children's Commissioner, 2017). The young people thus talked about being bored and unmotivated. These feelings are supported by evidence which found that those excluded are often bored as they feel they are not doing 'proper work' (Children's Commissioner, 2017).

5.3.3 Young people wanted a sense of containment, belonging and a sense of identity

This research demonstrates that these young people wanted and arguably needed containment, a sense of belonging and a positive identity through their school experience. However, secondary schools were found to be places lacking nurture and where SEMH support was not prioritised adequately.

Bion's theory of containment (1962) highlights that emotional security is essential to provide containment for a child. However, as previously discussed, the young people often did not receive this emotional security from teachers at secondary school. This was viewed in direct contrast to the nurturing and containing environments they experienced at primary school where they talked about strong relationships with teachers and/or teaching assistants. Other research has also highlighted that primary school is often a positive experience for LACYP in comparison to secondary school (Levinson, 2016) and that they therefore find the secondary school transfer difficult (Brewin & Statham, 2011). Statistics show that more children are excluded in secondary schools than primary and that permanent exclusions peak over Years 9 and 10 (DfE, 2019a). It has been argued that many of the reasons for this lie at the macro level. For example, different cultures between primary and secondary with secondary schools being "inflexible" in comparison (Farouk, 2017; Levinson, 2016). Consistent with other findings, the young people also found secondary school to be more challenging than primary school due to the need to build multiple relationships, feeling less supported and difficulties connecting to the school and/or their peers (Jalali & Morgan, 2017).

The young people sought psychological containment and nurture in their secondary school to mitigate against some of their negative pre-care/in-care experiences. The young people in this study talked about potential mental health concerns prior to their exclusions due to their traumatic pre-care and in-care experiences such as loss of a parent, neglect and bullying. Many of the young people in this study commented on finding it difficult to cope and regulate their emotions in school. In line with developmental trauma theory, the young people talked about feeling sensory stress responses such as difficulties concentrating, being hyper-sensitive to noise and disliking when adults shout. They talked about these sensory experiences often being a trigger to their anger and not being able to regulate their emotions, yet this is what was expected of them in secondary schools. These could be indicators of neurological sensitivity to signs of threat in the brain regions responsible for executive functioning and self-regulation (Pollak, 2008; Shonkoff et al., 2012).

The difficulties young people had self-regulating then led to externalising behaviours (violence towards an adult/peer) which, in line with government exclusion

statistics, was the main reason found in this study for their exclusions (DfE, 2019a). However, conclusions made regarding developmental trauma are tentative as this study made no formal assessment of the young people's early attachments, neurological and/or executive functioning. These conclusions can also be deterministic generalisations about the impact of trauma which do not account for individual differences (Meins, 2017; Woolgar & Scott, 2013). Nonetheless, there is consensus that children who experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) need to be surrounded by nurture and positive relationships as this can buffer the early adversity (Merrick et al., 2017). However, this was not what the young people received.

Attachment theory also offers insight into the young people's exclusion experiences. LACYP often do not experience consistent, responsive parenting in their early years so miss opportunities to develop coping skills through co-regulation with their caregiver (Treisman, 2016). Crittenden (2017) argues that those who move between carers develop either 'Insecure Avoidant' or 'Insecure Pre-occupied' attachment styles. She argues that both mean that externalising behaviours are the only way to keep adults close by. Many of the descriptions of these attachment styles in school fit the profile of the young people such as difficulties with friendships, disruptive in class, always asking for help or finding information processing difficult. However, this theory alone can only partially explain exclusion experiences for LACYP. It has been suggested that only 55% of the general population might be securely attached (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Therefore, given that the remaining 45% are not experiencing school exclusion suggests that there are other factors involved other than attachment patterns alone, such as the number of ACEs LACYP have also experienced. Therefore, developmental trauma and poor attachment do not fully explain the exclusion experiences of the young people but are risk factors.

This research found that these SEMH difficulties were not addressed by adults within their microsystem due to macro level influences; a lack of SEMH preventative measures in schools, a lack of wider community support and young people's distrust for external support such as CAMHS. From this macro level, this study highlighted that socially constructed negative narratives around psychologists and stigma around mental health support denied some of the young people access to the support they needed. Previous research has suggested that CAMHS are not

prioritising LACYP (HoCEC, 2016). However, this research found that CAMHS attempted to support them but face significant barriers engaging them due to being located outside of the school system and their poor reputation. This lack of SEMH support led to an escalation of their behaviour, with young people reporting an inability to self-regulate or learn.

Within this study, it was acknowledged that children's concerns may be different or similar to those of the adults around them (Prout & Tisdall, 2006). However, the stark contrast between all eleven young people talking about experiences of isolation rooms in secondary schools and professionals nor carers making no mention of them is alarming. This study highlights how isolation rooms exacerbated LACYP's needs. Young people reported that they were often put in isolation for minor infringements of the rules, conditions were degrading, they were kept in there for long periods of time and they had no opportunities for real learning.

It has been argued that young people who have experienced trauma in their past are especially at risk of experiencing psychological harm from restrictive interventions such as isolation rooms (Centre for Mental Health, 2020). Trauma exposure has been found to lead to poor regulation of the stress response system which can lead to poor emotional control and behavioural problems (Greenon et al., 2014; Bright & Thompson, 2018). Therefore, putting LACYP in environments that echo past relational traumas place them at increased risk of psychological harm (Centre for Mental Health, 2020). This research, in line with other research, found that isolation rooms escalated challenging behaviours (Centre for Mental Health, 2020). For example, some young people in this study walked out of isolation leading to them being excluded. For others, the constant threat of being put in a punitive environment like an isolation room appeared to increase their anxieties and subsequent hostility to those putting them there (Ward & Delessart, 2014). It must be acknowledged that there is a lack of research into isolation rooms and many of the presented arguments are based on theory and media commentary not evidence. Nonetheless, the fact that all eleven young people then experienced a more formal exclusion thereafter is perhaps evidence of the ineffectiveness of this method.

The significance of this disparity with professionals making no mention of isolation rooms suggests that perhaps they are not being used openly by schools

and that professionals such as EPs are not being made aware of their usage. It further suggests that there is no discussion of their usage during PEP meetings. As previously discussed, the DfE collects and publishes national data on exclusions, however, there is no equivalent data on the use of seclusion/isolation rooms. It could be argued that there is some complicity for these methods at a macro level given that keeping these children in mainstream schools is cost effective; it would cost the government between £3000-4000 per pupil more if they were sent to an AP (DfE, 2018b). Given the widespread use of isolation rooms and similar methods, their consequences particularly for young people who have experienced trauma needs urgent empirical research (Centre for Mental Health, 2020). The neglect from macro level policies to address these concerns would be to disregard the early evidence of their potentially negative impact.

Young people discussed not having a clear sense of their identity. Much of the literature with LACYP has focused on the importance of relationships but issues related to identity have received less attention (Mcmurray et al., 2011). However, Selwyn et al. (2017) found that LACYP thought that having a coherent account of their histories and knowing why they were in care was crucial. Many young people talked about being labelled a “naughty child” and research has demonstrated that these labels stick for their school careers (Apland et al., 2017). Though there is recognition that identity formation is difficult for all adolescents (Erikson, 1968), LACYP appear to find it particularly challenging. This may be because adolescents compare themselves to others and where they fit into their historical and social context to make sense of who they are (Woodhouse, 1996). Therefore, the relational trauma many LACYP have experienced may make it more difficult for them to forge a positive identity.

Research has recognised the difficulties LACYP often face with peer relationships (Luke & Banerjee, 2012; McMahon & Curtin, 2013). Some of this has been connected to their care status and subsequent stigmatising interactions with peers (Emond, 2014; Benbenishty et al., 2018). A literature review from the DfE (2019b) suggests that lacking a sense of belonging in school was a crucial factor behind school exclusions (Craggs & Kelly, 2017). Coates’ (2011) study found that the impact of bullying on LACYP can be twice as hard to cope with as bullying represents the past repeating itself. In line with Turner’s (2003) research, this study

suggests that young people feeling different to others and not having relatable role models contributed to their poor school experiences (Turner, 2003). A gender distinction was made with females reporting more bullying experiences. This could suggest that female LACYP are more at risk of bullying than male LACYP or could be a result of females being more open to talk about mental health and/or difficulties in general (Hamblin, 2016). Research suggests that typically females report more verbal bullying and boys more physical (Wang et al., 2009). However, this research found that the females reported physical as well as verbal bullying.

Bullying experiences were found to contribute to a negative sense of identity and poor mental health. The young people talked about having suicidal thoughts and/or self-harming after experiencing bullying. Alarmingly, many shared that they were excluded as a result of their reactions to the bullies. It could be argued that these accounts are subject to self-reporting bias, but research by Coates (2011) suggests that due to their prior experiences of abuse/neglect, they may in fact be less likely to recognise when they are being bullied. Furthermore, the reviewed literature contained several examples of exclusions being applied to young people who had experienced bullying (Craggs & Kelly, 2017; Paget et al., 2018).

This research has highlighted that this reduced sense of belonging led pupils to seek it elsewhere. Narratives spoke of the young people being “easily led” and “wanting to fit in” perhaps due to their difficulties understanding their identity. Once excluded, many talked about being around people from similar backgrounds and feeling a sense of family. Other research has found that PRU environments can boost young people’s sense of belonging (Nicolson et al., 2016). However, others talked about being surrounded by the “wrong crowd” and being drawn into gang culture. An ethnographic study of young people in London who were being educated offsite found that once their education had started deteriorating, they started getting involved in ‘urban street culture’ which provided ‘sanctuary’ and a ‘sense of belonging’ to a greater extent than school did (Briggs, 2010). Outcomes for those involved in gangs are poor (Schofield et al., 2014).

Almost all the young people discussed their use of marijuana and yet the government suggests that just 4% of LACYP have a substance misuse problem (DfE, 2019). The study also found narratives around their potential involvement in

drug running ('county lines'). Previous research has highlighted the link between LACYP and prison as well as those excluded and prison (Gill et al., 2017). Another potential consequence of school exclusion for LACYP was that they become NEET and this research highlighted the relative ease for this to be their reality. Currently, 39% of care leavers aged 19-21 are NEET compared with around 12% of non-LACYP (DfE, 2019). The NEET participants made reference to criminal activities and without an effective adult advocating for them at a systems level, feeling they had few other options.

Another key impact of these exclusion experiences was that the young people felt personally responsible, engaged in self-blame and experienced/are still experiencing several negative mental health difficulties associated with a low sense of self-worth. Aligned with other studies, the present research highlighted how multiple relationship losses can lead to a feeling of 'self-reliance', seeing themselves as their main source of support (Prince's Trust, 2017). Literature suggests that feelings of guilt, shame and low self-worth are common among LACYP (Webber, 2017) and also among those who have experienced exclusion (Kulz, 2015).

Young people spoke of self-responsibility for achieving plans, in line with individualist thinking (Cameron, 2018). However, it appears that despite best intentions, the older young people talked about feeling socially isolated due to the loss of key systems of support such as carers and difficulties with social care (Adley & Kina, 2017; Barnardos, 2014a & b). The difficulties these care leavers discussed regarding housing difficulties is in line with current DfE statistics which state that 13% of 17-year olds are in 'unsuitable accommodation'. Axford (2008) argued that their care status does not produce social exclusion automatically. However, the combination of their care status with their exclusion status creates two crucial risk factors linked to social exclusion and subsequent poor mental health (Kelly et al., 2016).

This research highlights the mental health difficulties the young people faced after their exclusion. This was seen to be due to their internalised feelings of self-blame, feeling subsequent frustration towards themselves and adults in their microsystem and the impact of multiple relationship losses and lost opportunities. This study was able to understand some of the longer-term effects of exclusion

through some of the older young people speaking retrospectively about their experiences. They spoke of a whole history, across the chronosystem of repeated experiences of a lack of advocacy, not being listened to and low expectations and a subsequent lack of wellbeing.

There are currently no official figures or research into the mental health outcomes for LACYP who have been excluded. However, there is a known link between school exclusion and mental illness (Ford et al., 2018). Ford et al. (2018) highlights that this is a two-way relationship between mental health and exclusion, whereby young people who have poor mental health are more likely to be excluded and exclusion is associated with a decline in mental health. Likewise, it is estimated that 45% of LACYP have a diagnosable mental health disorder, compared to 10% of all children (Hughes et al., 2017). At a macro level, the economic cost of mental health has been widely documented and is currently the largest cause of disability in the UK (NICE, 2019), notwithstanding the potential impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic. This research demonstrates how negative proximal processes within several different microsystems, both familial and school based and over a long period of time (the chronosystem) can lead to greater risk of mental health difficulties at an individual level.

5.4 Research Question 2: What are schools and professionals doing and what more could be done to support the inclusion of LACYP?

Despite these negative experiences, many talked about positive ways forward and this study highlights that this cohort have the potential to be supported in a way that potential negative life trajectories do not become a reality for them. Within the findings from chapter 5, three key implications were drawn out of the positive ways forward: i) Relational activism, relational repair and social connection, ii) High academic expectations and ambitious outcomes and iii) Aspirational services promoting advocacy.

5.4.1 Relational activism, relational repair and social connection

Relational activism was a term used by an EP to emphasise the importance of advocacy for the young people, built on strong relationships with trusted adults (Dove & Fisher, 2019). The research highlighted that strong, healing relationships between adults in the child's microsystem (teachers, social workers and carers) can

buffer against some of the effects of negative prior relationships (Perry, 2006). These adults were able to support the child's emotional regulation and provide a secure base. A recent study in London with pupils who were at risk of exclusion, aged between 12 to 15 years, found that a pupil's relationship with an adult in the school was the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing (Obsuth et al., 2017). In line with this research, this study found that young people valued teachers caring about the holistic child, including both learning and SEMH needs. From a relational activist perspective, for the young people, "everyday aspects of life and small acts of emotional connectivity may appear routine, but actually represent important sites of regeneration" (Corntassel, 2018). Consistent with previous research, this study found that promoting these positive emotional and social relationships were crucial in repairing their self-worth, confidence and enhancing resilience (Mcmurray et al., 2011; Schofield & Beek, 2005). This highlights the need to provide relatable, consistent, adult advocates, such as mentors, who will take action on what the young person has said (Dubois et al., 2002; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Alongside other research, this study highlights the need for a systematic approach to promoting social and emotional wellbeing based on both the needs of the CYP and the adults supporting them (Weare, 2015). The importance of building on the relationships the child already has and supporting relationships with key practitioners has been identified as vital to the wellbeing of LACYP and care leavers (McElduff, 2001, Jobe & Gorin, 2013). The young people need a stable social worker given the evidence that lack of continuity contributes to the poor mental health of LACYP (Stanley, 2007). This research highlights that providing these young people with the most experienced social workers who can effectively advocate for them may support their inclusion further.

Social connection through peer relationships for the young people were also emphasised as being able to shield against more negative outcomes (Holland et al., 2005; Fernandez, 2008). This is perhaps because friendships are generally enduring relationships, which contrasts with professionals who are often transient figures (Mcmurray et al., 2011). The reported potential benefits include a sense of belonging (Emond, 2014), positive self-image and identity (Madigan et al., 2013), school success (Hedin et al., 2011) and social support (Aldgate 2009). This research demonstrates that encouraging social connection with mainstream peers, who can

act as positive role models, might be an area of support to consider from professionals going forward. The study demonstrates that proximal processes associated with positive relationships within these different microsystems can facilitate greater mental wellbeing and inclusion for these LACYP (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

5.4.2 High academic expectations and ambitious outcomes

Professionals also emphasised the importance of raising expectations and aspirations from the adults within the CYP's microsystem. There is a wealth of research demonstrating the importance of high expectations for LACYP (Martin & Jackson, 2002). The present study demonstrated that even when these children seemed disengaged, they wanted adults to show the same high standards they would to their peers. Many wanted adults to have high aspirations for them to be reintegrated back into mainstream schools where they could be surrounded by more positive role models. They wanted teachers to get the right balance between support and challenge and for teachers to show awareness of their difficulties regulating their behaviour, but for expectations to remain high. Both young people and professionals highlighted the need for PRUs to be prioritising their academic work and not having caps on what grades they can achieve as these are demotivating. The study demonstrated that young people rely on the projection of high expectations from adults in their microsystem to build their self-esteem and form a positive sense of identity.

This study has highlighted the importance of creating inclusive secondary school environments which encourage difference to increase CYP's sense of belonging (Emond, 2014). Professionals expressed the need to raise the profile of LACYP at a wider level such as DT and HT conferences and challenge the societal low expectations of young people in care. Improvements to care leaver forums were also suggested such as providing a range of role models and ensuring that these meetings are promoting high expectations and aspirations.

EPs are trying to raise expectations through the process of writing ambitious outcomes for LACYP as part of the EHCP process. This research found that EP learning assessments should be done in a way which helps the CYP's understanding of their strengths and difficulties. This was seen to empower them instead of further

pathologise or label them which is currently giving rise to further low expectations from their schools (Mannay et al., 2017). Young people also valued person-centred approaches used frequently by EPs which build on strengths and use solution-focussed techniques to create ambitious outcomes. These techniques have been shown to be effective also in supporting the reintegration of excluded young people (Corrigan, 2014).

This research found that high expectations and ambitious outcomes through training from EPs and the VS can support adults' understanding of LACYP's needs and reframe unhelpful narratives. Literature found support for the effectiveness of this training to carers (Sebba et al., 2015). Carers should continue to be supported in order to help them understand how to support challenging behaviour so that placement stability increases (Sebba et al., 2015). EPs are well placed to deliver this training given their in-depth understanding of the psychological theory applicable to LACYP needs (Boorne, 2008). Many are suggesting that there is now a need for attachment-based, trauma informed training and interventions as early as possible to give these CYP the attachment experiences they need to thrive at school (Scott, 2019). NICE (2015a) guidance flags the role of EPs in training school staff. However, several EPs noted that the trading of EP services can make prioritising these services challenging. There is emerging evidence for approaches such as Emotion Coaching in supporting behavioural management approaches in secondary schools (Rose et al., 2015). However, there is a need for more evidence on the impact of these systemic interventions.

The young people in this study were more willing to work therapeutically with EPs than with CAMHS and this could be due to EPs being positioned as supporting educational needs rather than mental health and also due to them being positioned in schools (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). EPs have a thorough understanding of school systems so could be doing some of the therapeutic work with LACYP given their current reluctance to engage with CAMHS (Atkinson et al., 2013). Professionals highlighted the importance of the young people having a better narrative and understanding of their past experiences and how these have shaped their present. Theories of identity (Kelly, 1955) suggest that it is important that the young people understand the impact that changes, such as exclusions, can have on their identity construction. Despite NICE & SCIE (2013) guidance stressing the importance of

enabling LACYP to develop a sense of their identity, evidence suggests that LACYP often receive very little support to make sense of their experiences (NSPCC, 2015). Narrative therapies and Life Story Approaches are known to be an effective treatment for trauma and have been used successfully with LACYP (Sutton, 2001; Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007). EPs could be delivering these interventions to help the young people remove blame, create a clearer narrative and construct a more positive identity.

As previously discussed, involvement in constructive activities such as school, leisure interests or employment have been found to be key protective elements from young people being involved in youth offending (Schofield et al., 2015). Fostering success through extra-curricular activities could be a crucial preventative method to the exclusion of the young people. Therefore, LACYP should be given these opportunities within their mainstream secondary schools.

5.4.3 Aspirational services promoting advocacy

This study highlights the need to promote LACYP advocacy at a whole system level. Professionals need to be working together to identify the stable adults around the child. Therefore, greater clarity should be given to delineate different professional roles and their unique contributions. This is important given the evidence that multi-agency work can prevent exclusions for LACYP and support reintegration (Fletcher-Campbell et al., 2003).

This research found that strong leadership in the VS and good relationships with schools is supporting LACYP's inclusion. Robust monitoring procedures for PEPs was also viewed as supportive which contrasts with findings from McElduff's (2001) study twenty years ago, before the VS were in place, which found PEPs to be a be an ineffective, bureaucratic exercise. Furthermore, this research acknowledged the positive influence of support from VS caseworkers providing emotional and practical support, particularly with regards to their education. The Timpson review (2019) highlighted that since the introduction of VSHs, the rates of permanent exclusion for LACYP have been falling, suggesting that they are supporting LACYP inclusion.

The study found that having EPs involved in PEP meetings when a CYP is 'at risk' of exclusion can be supportive as they can advocate for the child's stable

placement and reemphasise the legislation around not excluding LACYP. Research suggests that EPs have the skills to mediate within difficult consultations and are well placed within the LA to do this work (Sugden, 2013). EPs discussing all LACYP within planning meetings with schools also appeared to be supporting LACYP inclusion and this is recognised as established good EP practice (Norwich, Richards & Nash, 2010).

At a systems level, Timpson (2019) highlights that there should be an examination of the disparity between CIN and LACYP exclusions and further exploration of whether legislation and government policy should be protecting CIN in the same way as LACYP. Professionals also highlighted that the government need to be collecting data on 'unofficial exclusions', managed moves and off-rolling to understand the full extent of the issue of exclusion for LACYP. Publishing data based just on fixed and permanent exclusions and emphasising that LACYP permanent exclusions are declining is misleading and hides the true extent of the problem (Malcolm, 2018).

This study has highlighted that decisions at a macro level are contributing to the exclusion of LACYP, particularly the proliferation of zero-tolerance behaviour policies. Schools should be encouraged to review their behaviour policies with flexibility of the rules applied to LACYP (DCSF, 2009) and CIN. Within this, it would be timely to consider the use of isolation rooms as an unethical form of punishment for LACYP given the potential negative psychological consequences, and subsequent exclusions that were found in this study to follow thereafter. Young people's suggestions for changes such as making them more like a classroom should be implemented. In line with Timpson's recommendations (2019), this research highlights the need for the DfE to strengthen guidance, so that in-school units are being used constructively and monitored accordingly as well as further exploration of schools who are "using in-school units well" to guide future practice.

At a wider level, this study found that these policies within schools may be driven by pressure to produce academic outcomes alongside decreasing school budgets. This disincentivises schools to take on complex children (London Assembly Education Panel, 2019). Sebba et al., (2015) highlighted that LACYP educational performance is similar across LAs other than which is accounted for by individual

pupils. Schools should therefore be incentivised to take on challenging LACYP and reassured that this will not jeopardise their care performance data.

Professionals emphasised the importance of supporting the child's sense of containment by making them feel they belong in their secondary school. EPs noted that LACYP should be sent to schools that have been recognised as being effective in building strong and nurturing relationships. However, at present, there is no way of assessing this objectively. The new Ofsted framework (2019) now inspects 'personal development'. However, it appears that these changes still do not prioritise relationships and SEMH support enough (States of Mind Student Working Group, 2019). This study suggests that relationships make a difference to mental health outcomes for the young people therefore perhaps a measure of quality of relationships should be built into this framework.

The VS have responsibilities for LACYP who are Post-16 and remain 'looked after' but not for care leavers (National Association of Virtual School Heads, 2018). This study highlighted that the young people need support accessing housing and the transition to different social care teams and FE colleges. The young people in this study valued the support from the VS which makes them well placed to support these processes further. The VS could also take a key role in supporting Post 16s LACYP know their rights, to support their ability to self-advocate going forward.

This study found that the young people want to excel and fulfil their potential. It should be acknowledged that due to their difficult educational experiences, it may take them longer to fulfil their potential. The figure widely reported in the media of 6% of care leavers entering FE at the age of 18 misses out those who choose to attend FE later in life. Sebba (2015) highlights that taking exams aged 16 may be too soon for some of the young people and often their opportunities are restricted due to grade capping, as corroborated by this study. Therefore, systems should be in place to support those in care to take these exams later in life where necessary.

Consistent with a recent NAO report (2015), this study suggests that the government should be monitoring the lives of care leavers to understand the impact of its initiatives. It would also be beneficial to gather data to get a better understanding of the social problems care leavers face as raised in this research such as housing, mental illness and criminal activity (NAO, 2015).

Professionals also suggested that children in care councils could also support young person advocacy and thus inclusion in schools. LACYP should be able to inform decisions made about them but also contribute to the development of relevant policy and practice. The young people in this study offered significant insight into the factors that influenced their education therefore genuine efforts should be made to work alongside them to ensure that they can contribute to the development of relevant policy and practice (Sebba et al., 2015).

5.5 Summary of implications

Implications for policy and practice have been detailed as part of research question 2. Figure 10 summarises and maps these implications across the contextual layers of the child’s ecosystem. These implications are based on data from all participant groups and are listed in order of those which are most strongly supported by participants.

		Implication	Evidence
Microsystem (Child)	Schools / teachers /	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Young people to be supported to create a positive identity e.g. through extra-curricular activities. -Teachers to listen more and offer mediation when disputes arise. -Adults to advocate – meaning represent the CYP’s views and then act on what they hear. -Provide someone to talk to that CYP can relate to. 	Young people (x11), SENCo, carers (x4), EPs (x2). Young people (x10). Young people (x5), EPs (x5). Young people (x9).
	SWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SWs to listen and be consistent (“don’t leave”). -SWs to advocate for the child and build strong relationships. 	Young people (x5), EPs (x8), HoVS, SENCo. Young people (x2), EPs (x8), HoVS, SENCo.
	VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -VS caseworkers to continue to check in and give practical support e.g. finding college courses. 	Young people (x3).
	EPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Therapeutic support to be provided where necessary by an adult they are comfortable with (e.g. CBT, emotional regulation techniques). -Young people to be supported to understand their experiences e.g. Narrative therapy, Life Story approaches etc. 	EPs (x4), young people (x4), SENCo. EPs (x4), SENCo.

Mesosystem (School and home connections)	Schools / teachers / DTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Schools to promote and prioritise extra-curricular activities for LACYP e.g. music. -Schools to update and review behaviour policies – flexibility and consideration of psychological impact of placing LACYP in isolation rooms. -Create nurturing secondary school culture/ethos – e.g. attachment aware schools. -Isolation rooms (if used) to have better tasks and be more like a classroom. 	<p>Young people (x11), SENCo, carers (x3), EPs (x2). EPs (x5), SENCo.</p> <p>EPs (x5).</p> <p>Young people (x4).</p>
	SWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support the child to know their legal rights when turning 16. -Promote club attendance outside of school based on the young person's interests. 	<p>Young people (x2), carer (x1), EPs (x2). Carers (x2), EPs (x2).</p>
	VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to work with adults closest to the child – carers/DT e.g. through training. -Share a young person's triggers among secondary school staff. -Develop systems to monitor those 'at risk' of exclusion e.g. using a 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rated system. 	<p>HoVS, EPs (x4). HoVS, EPs (x2). HoVS.</p>
	EPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prioritise LACYP within school annual planning meetings. -Training to staff to change the narrative around LACYP, help understanding of LACYP needs/how to support and provide follow ups on training (e.g. workshops). -Provide consultations with teachers to understand if there are any unidentified learning or SEMH needs. 	<p>EPs (x9). EPs (x9).</p> <p>EPs (x7).</p>
Exosystem, Macrosystem, Chronosystem (Local authority and wider society)	Local authority/government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Government funding for extra-curricular activities / youth clubs. -Schools to be less results-driven and prioritise mental health resources. -Listen to the child's views in PEPs. -Get young people's feedback from children's councils. -LA / government to consider risk of CIN being excluded and going into care within policy. 	<p>Young people (x8), EPs (x3), SENCo. EPs (x5), young people (x4), SENCo. HoVS, young people (x2), EPs (x2). EPs (x3), young people (x1). Young people (x3).</p>
	Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CAMHS / therapeutic input to take place in school (rather than in clinic) where possible. 	<p>SENCo, EPs (x3).</p>

	VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prioritise stable school and home placement for the child. -PEPs to be quality assured by the VS. -Build strong VS and school / college relationships. -Prioritise stability of professional with the child. 	HoVS, SENCo, EPs (x4). EPs (x5), HoVS. HoVS, EPs (x4). Carers (x2), EPs (x2), SENCo.
	EPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -EPs to continue to be involved in TAC and PEP meetings to advocate for the CYP. -EPs to support SW knowledge of the child's rights within education and within the exclusion process. -EPs to be commissioned to do some of the therapeutic work with a CYP where CAMHS cannot. 	EPs (x6). EPs (x2), carer (x1), young person (x1). SENCo, EPs (x3), young person (x1).

Figure 10. Summary of implications based on participant narratives.

Further implications related to the microsystem included: the importance of using young people's friends to support them, being understanding of young people's individual contexts, for adults to show high aspirations of both their behaviour and their academic work and for teachers to "stick around". Further implications related to the mesosystem included: for schools to celebrate difference at a school level, to provide therapeutic support such as Equine therapy and for EPs to provide support to carers, social workers, teachers and VS caseworkers through training, consultations, drop ins and supervision. Furthermore, for EPs to use 'Inclusion tools' to audit what strategies have been tried and to advocate for a child's stable education placement. From a wider level, other implications included: improved post 16 services, professionals to be able to access one system which details important information about a CYP, better joined-up working between professionals, using DT/HT conferences to raise awareness about exclusions for LACYP and for EPs to liaise with out-of-borough EPs where necessary. Full details of all the implications found within the data can be found in Appendix P.

5.6 Key implications for EPs

The ways in which EPs and EPS' can support the inclusion of LACYP 'at risk' of exclusion or who have been excluded fall broadly within the established framework of their core functions: training, consultation, assessment, intervention and research (Scottish Executive, 2002). Figure 11 summarises and maps these key implications for EPs across the different systems in the child's ecosystem. These implications are based on data from all participant groups. However, given that most

young people and carers had a limited understanding of the EP role, the majority of implications are from professionals. These are again listed in order of those which are most strongly supported. The suggested 'research' is based on implications the researcher has drawn from these findings and implications.

	Child & Family	School	Local authority
Training	-Therapeutic parenting courses (EPs x3).	-Attachment, trauma-informed approaches (EPs x8, SENCo). -The mental health needs of LACYP (EPs x4). -To support staff wellbeing (EPs x3, SENCo).	-Supporting SWs understand the educational rights of LACYP and to promote school inclusion (EPs x3, young person x1).
Consultation	-Consultations with carers to problem-solve concerns (EPs x5).	-Consultations with SENCos and discuss LACYP in planning meetings (SENCo, EPs x9). -Consultations to review behaviour policies (attachment informed) EPs x5). -Consultations with teachers to provide strategies and identify needs (EPs x2).	-Ensure advocacy of the child's voice at PEP and TAC meetings (EPs x6). -Working with VS caseworkers – drop ins / consultations (HoVS, EPs x4).
Assessment	-Formulation of child's needs to be shared and explained to CYP (young people x2, EPs x2). -Individual casework e.g. as part of EHCP process (EPs x4)	-Supporting schools to self-assess their practice e.g. using 'Inclusion tools' or the 'attachment aware schools audit' (EPs x2).	-Ensuring LA monitoring of LACYP exclusions, managed moves, off rolling (EPs x3) as well as CIN and the use of isolation rooms.
Intervention	-Therapeutic work with the CYP e.g. Narrative approaches, Life Story approaches, CBT, emotional regulation techniques (young people x2, EPs x4, carers x2, SENCo).	-Facilitating reflective practice e.g. Reflecting Teams / Circle of Adults to contain staff anxieties and support staff wellbeing (EPs x5, SENCo).	-Facilitating EP and VS discussion groups within and across LAs (EP x1).
Research	-Action research with LACYP 'at risk' / excluded, care leavers and CIN to further	-Action research with teachers / DTs to further understand their views on LACYP's exclusions.	-Support LA to develop monitoring procedures for 'at risk' young people e.g. a

	gather their views on how to best support them.		LA pathway of support. -Contribute to system level monitoring and research into isolation rooms and unofficial exclusions.
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Figure 11. Summary of key implications for EPs and EPS' in supporting LACYP at risk of school exclusion or who have been excluded.

Full details of all the implications for EPs can also be found in Appendix P. Further implications related to each of the core functions included the following:

Training: follow up workshops and training for colleges on LACYP's needs and working alongside the VS to deliver training.

Consultation: supervision for DTs / teachers / mentors, supporting sharing of good practice between APs and mainstream schools, using person-centred approaches in PEP meetings, involvement in work discussion groups and special interest groups.

Assessment: person-centred approaches with the young person e.g. PATHs / MAPs and supporting the VS to audit their PEPs and impact of interventions.

Intervention: facilitating care leaver councils, Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), LACYP drop-in forums and supporting Nurture Groups or ELSAs.

Research: assess training needs of schools, support schools to implement evidence-based interventions, for example, through PALAC projects (Institute of Education) and continue to present research to raise awareness at a LA and wider level.

Figure 11 demonstrates the broadening role of the EP in providing a range of preventative as well as reactive approaches across several different system levels. Consistent with other research, the present study has highlighted the importance of EPs working within the VS in supporting the inclusion of LACYP (Norwich et al., 2010).

5.7 Strengths and limitations of the research

5.7.1 Strengths

Using a multi-informant approach allowed for child, school and system level factors to be explored in a more holistic way than previous research and created credibility of the findings (Tracy, 2010). The findings offer a rare insight into the lived experiences of the young people, whose voices are missing from present research. Another similar government funded study by Melkman (2017-present) aimed to identify factors leading to fixed-term exclusions for LACYP by gathering the views of young people, foster carers, social workers and DTs. This research is ongoing as they struggled to gain the views of more than nine young people with a much larger research team.

The findings significantly extend existing knowledge about LACYP's experiences of school exclusion which has previously relied on professional perspectives. The use of an inductive approach to analysis enabled the identification of narratives rooted in participant views. This was a purposeful decision to advocate for the young person's voice.

Giving the young people some control over the way the interviews were conducted seems to have led to the richness in data. For example, flexibility in whether to draw or not, whether to meet face-to-face or over the telephone enabled the young people to speak openly about their experiences. Furthermore, many did not know what an EP was which meant that they had no preconceptions about the researcher's role. The bounded context of it being a one-off interview also appeared to facilitate their openness to engage. The interview itself may have also been a therapeutic experience for many and a chance to finally have their voice heard.

The psychological skills gained whilst training as an EP have allowed the researcher to build relationships in short periods of time with CYP, carers, EPs and professionals in the LA. This is likely to have supported the recruitment process and made participants feel reassured about taking part. Furthermore, these skills enabled the researcher to approach interviews sensitively through empathic listening and curious questioning. Working as an EP across many layers of a child's ecosystem also ensured that the implications are relevant and realistic to practice. Using the Bronfenbrenner's (2005) BTHD framework has enabled a holistic understanding of

these different implications and how they apply to schools, EPs, policy makers and researchers.

5.7.2 Limitations

The recruitment process confirmed that these are a hard to access group. The researcher spent many months attempting to contact participants to little avail and had to use contacts made through the EP role to recruit. Future researchers may want to consider alternative methods to effectively access excluded LACYP, such as wider advertising avenues like LACYP charities and organisations.

This study does not attempt to generalise to all excluded LACYP and there is acknowledgement that the young people all came with very different experiences. In recruiting LACYP from London, it was acknowledged that lots of these children are moved around a lot, so the study is not just limited to London experiences. The study primarily aimed to inform practice therefore whilst the findings are not generalisable, they are transferable to the world of education and EP practice.

The study's design openly sought to promote the views of the young people above that of the other participants. This could be viewed as a limitation as the BTHD gives equal weighting to all elements within the system not just at the level of the child. It may therefore have improved the relevance and applicability of the school views if there were more participants from this part of the system, such as teachers or DTs. A school-based view could have been useful to gain a greater understanding of the proximal processes involved within this microsystem. However, as previously highlighted, the study wanted to focus primarily on the young people's narratives, and many gave views on school and system level issues which were previously unheard.

5.8 Further research

The significant difficulties the young people faced, and the subsequent negative consequences of exclusion demonstrates the need for further wide-scale investigation. Particularly pertinent is a need to understand the exclusion experiences of CIN in order to inform future policy. Another important area of enquiry would be to study relationships and nurture within secondary schools including methods such as Nurture Groups to explore how these influence LACYP's development and future outcomes. Furthermore, an assessment of whether factors

such as adults promoting extra-curricular pursuits (sports, music etc), having high expectations and being strong advocates in practice can influence more positive outcomes. Gaining a better understanding of relational processes may be a more realistic and achievable goal as opposed to the more ambitious whole-system reform at the macro level.

The study touched on excluded LACYP's Post 16 experiences but there is limited research in this area (Lipkin, 2016). Future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach and track the young people's experiences over time and understand the risk and resilience factors involved in different life outcomes. This area is particularly relevant with EPs now working up to the age of 25 years and the extended period that CYP can spend in the care system.

Given the huge challenges of recruiting, the researcher was not able to speak to young offenders, those who are self-excluding/school refusing or those considered persistent absentees who also comprise important voices. Furthermore, the researcher did not speak to primary aged students. Future study could also develop a greater understanding of the individual differences within LACYP cohorts who have experienced exclusion.

5.9 Concluding comments

This study explored the school exclusion experiences of LACYP to understand how these experiences can help inform policy and practice. It is one of few qualitative studies to access the voices of excluded LACYP as well as their carers and professionals, therefore it addresses a significant gap in the research.

Though there were notable individual differences, several common narratives were identified. The young people in this study spoke of unresolved early life and difficult in-care experiences which were often well met within their primary schools but were left unsupported within secondary schools. These unmet SEMH needs were exacerbated by poor relationships both with adults and peers, often driven by the stigma associated with being in care. Adults within their microsystem, including social workers and teachers, were viewed as people who did not listen, or advocate and had low expectations of LACYP's prospects. These difficulties were exacerbated by shared corporate parenting roles between social care and education being more fragmented when a child reaches secondary age. Secondary schools were

described as largely unsupportive environments which did not understand how to support LACYP's needs. This was largely attributed to wider system pressures such as a focus on academic attainment, zero-tolerance policies and a lack of funding for professional support such as EPs to provide SEMH support. System level flaws such as the possibility for 'unofficial exclusions' also meant that the young people were not protected from all forms of exclusion.

The research highlights that the young people in this study wanted to excel academically and to have adults to advocate for them. They sought a sense of containment, belonging and positive identity within their secondary schools but were met with unsupportive contexts. The findings indicate that removing a LACYP from access to education can have long lasting negative effects, particularly on their mental health and has the potential to draw them into a negative subculture.

Notwithstanding these risks of poor outcomes, the research highlighted that relationally rich contexts, high expectations and system level advocacy offer hopeful ways forward that may buffer against some of these adverse experiences. Promoting stable adult relationships and greater consistency in social work advocacy was seen to be imperative. The findings demonstrate the importance of preventing exclusions, of all forms, for LACYP and providing early intervention to enhance outcomes. The research has highlighted the vital role EPs play in being able to influence change at an individual, school and LA level. Therefore, centrally funding EP time to deliver this much needed SEMH support for this vulnerable group is essential in preventing LACYP's exclusions. Systems of support must actively collaborate to better understand LACYP's individual needs and promote aspirational outcomes to ensure their inclusion and subsequent participation in society.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Literature search

A comprehensive literature search was conducted by accessing the following databases (in alphabetical order):

- ERIC (EBSCO) and (ProQuest)
- Google Scholar
- JSTOR
- PsychINFO
- UCL, Institute of Education Libraries Explore service

The following search terms were used:

- Looked after child(ren), child(ren) in care, looked after young people, young people in care

AND

- School exclusion, exclusion, fixed-period exclusion, permanent exclusion

Additional searches were conducted to access literature with particular areas of focus, for example:

- Looked after child(ren), child(ren) in care, looked after young people, young people in care

AND

- Pupil Referral Unit, PRU, alternative provision, AP, managed moves, school experience, educational experience, isolation rooms, seclusion rooms, attachment, developmental trauma, mental health, Educational Psychologists

The research used the following inclusion criteria:

- Studies conducted in the UK, so they are relevant to the UK education system as referred to in this study.
- Studies including the perspectives of young people, carers, educational psychologists and other professionals due to the multi-informant approach in this study.

Given the rapidly changing socio-political landscape around looked after children and their care, only articles published since 2000 were used except for psychological theories referred to prior to this.

Relevant government statistics and publications were accessed from the GOV.UK website.

In addition to this systematic search, snowballing strategies were used whereby the researcher accessed relevant sources from authors' reference lists.

Appendix B: Exclusion timeline for young people

Young people participants

Exclusion timeline:

This timeline displays when the exclusion took place for the young people relative to when they were talking about their experience. It also details their gender and what they are doing now. To protect their identities, participant names are not displayed.

				Exclusion ↓							
	Historic – excluded/withdrawn (self-harm and harm to others)	Historic – was at risk and managed moved	Currently 'at risk' of exclusion	Excluded day prior to interview and multiple before	3 months ago – first exclusion (in care over the summer, now back with mum)	1 year ago	2 years ago - excluded then went into care	Historic exclusions (1+ year ago)	Historic exclusions (3 years ago)	Historic exclusions (3+ years ago)	Historic exclusions (3+ years ago)
Male / female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female
Where at now?	PRU	College	Mainstream secondary school	PRU	PRU	NEET	NEET	Apprenticeship	PRU then College	College	College

Appendix C: Young person information sheet and consent form

Children in care's experiences of education

January 2019 to March 2020

Information sheet for young people

Who am I?

My name is Juliette Thomson and I am inviting you to take part in my research project, 'Children in care's experiences of education'. I am a trainee Educational Psychologist at University College London, the Institute of Education.

Educational Psychologists work with children and young people between the ages of 0 and 25 to help them achieve their full potential. We work within the local authority and aim to bring psychology and education together to help children with their learning.

What is the research about?

I am hoping to find out about the educational experiences for children and young people in care. In particular, I would like to hear from those who have found education challenging and those who have been excluded. I believe that it is extremely important to hear your perspective on your education. I would also like to speak to carers to find out their views as well as school staff and Educational Psychologists to find out how they can support young people in care.

I very much 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 don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Please discuss with your carer whether or not you want to take part. Your carer will also have a similar consent form.

Who is carrying out the research?

I (Juliette Thomson) will be carrying out the research.

What will it involve?

The project would involve just one interview (for approximately 45 minutes) to hear your experiences of education. You do not have to answer a question if you do not wish to. The interview would take place on school premises or in your home at a convenient time for yourself. Questions such as: 'What did/do you enjoy about school?' as well as 'What did you find challenging about school?' will be asked. You have the option to have a member of staff present during the interview if you would prefer.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

No. We would like to assure you that your views/data will be kept securely and your name will not appear in the research. Your details will also remain confidential at all times.

You will be reminded of your right to withdraw from the research at any point. If you say something where the researcher feels that you are at risk, information will be passed on the relevant safeguarding officer.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

If you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, we can stop at any point. You are also welcome to ask for a break in the middle of questions if that would be helpful.

What will happen to the results of the research?

I will produce a report at the end of the research which will be finished in July 2020. I plan to share the results of the research with other Educational Psychologists and it may be published to a wider audience at a later date. You will be able to receive a copy of this report.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you. Speak with your parent or carer about taking part in this study, and maybe other adults you trust. You can also call me if you have any questions.
If you do not wish to be interviewed but you are happy for your carer to be interviewed, please contact the researcher and this can be arranged. Or if you are happy to be interviewed but do not want your carer to be interviewed then this can also be arranged.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice

The lawful basis that will be used to process your *personal data* are: 'Public task' for personal data and 'Research purposes' for special category data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake [this](#) and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at dataprotection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at: juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk or Teresa.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee [reference number: Z6364106/2019/03/54].

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

Kindest regards,

Juliette Thomson
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Children in care's experiences of education: Child/young person consent form

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to Juliette Thomson (at the email address below) or to Teresa.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.		
I agree to be audio recorded during the interview.		
I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me.		
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.		
I understand that I can contact Juliette Thomson at any time and request for my data to be removed from the project database.		
I would like to take part in this research.		
I agree for my carer to be interviewed.		
I understand that my personal information will be used for the purposes explained to me.		
I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing and 'research purposes' will be the lawful basis for processing special category data.		

Name _____ Signed _____

Date _____

For more information, please visit this website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>

Juliette Thomson
Juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix D: Carer information sheet and consent form

Children in care's experiences of education

January 2019 to March 2020

Information sheet for carers

My name is Juliette Thomson and I am inviting you and your child/young person to take in part in my research project, 'Children in care's experiences of education'. I am a trainee Educational Psychologist at University College London, the Institute of Education. Educational Psychologists work with children and young people between the ages of 0 and 25 to help them achieve their full potential. We work within the local authority and aim to bring psychology and education together to help children overcome any barriers they have to their learning.

I am hoping to find out about the educational experiences of children and young people in care. In particular, I would like to hear from children and young people who have found education challenging and from those who have been excluded from school. In addition, I would also like to hear your views about your child's educational experiences.

I very much hope that you and your child/young person would like to take part in the study. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know. Please explain the research to your child/young person and discuss whether or not they would like to take part. The child/young person will also have a similar information sheet and consent form and I will speak to them again before the interview to make it clear that they can drop out if they wish with no negative consequences.

Who is carrying out the research?

I (Juliette Thomson) will be carrying out the research.

Why are we doing this research?

I am doing this research in order to find out children/young people in care's perception of education. This will include speaking to young people who are finding education difficult and those who have been excluded. I believe that it is extremely important to hear the child/young person's perspective in their education, which is all too often lost. I would also like to speak to carers to find out your views.

Why am I being invited to take part?

I would like to speak to you about your child/young person's experiences of education. I would also like to interview your child/young person to find out about their views of education and their experiences.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

The project would involve one interview with the young person (for approximately 45 minutes) to hear their experiences of education. The young person does not have to answer a question if they do not wish to. The interview would take place on school premises at a time convenient to the young person. Questions such as: 'What do/did you enjoy about school?' and also 'What do/did you find challenging about school?' will be asked. The young person has the option to have a member of staff present during the interview if they would prefer.

I would also like to interview carers on a separate occasion for approximately 30 minutes to find out your views on your child/young person's educational experiences to date. You also do not have to answer a question if you do not wish to. The interview can take place at a time and place convenient to yourself. Questions such as: 'What do you think schools could be doing to support your child/young person in school?' will be asked.

Will anyone know I (or my child/young person) have been involved?

No. We would like to assure you that your views as well as your child/young person's views/data will be kept securely and fully anonymised so that names do not appear on any of the research. All personal details will also remain confidential at all times. You and your child/young person will be reminded of your right to withdraw from the research at any point. The Educational Psychologist has been DBS checked. If the young person says something where the researcher feels that the young person is at risk, information will be passed on the relevant safeguarding officer.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

If you or your child/young person feel uncomfortable during your interviews, we can stop at any point. You and your child/young person are also welcome to ask for a break in the middle of questions if that would be helpful. Any difficult subjects will be handled carefully and sensitively.

What will happen to the results of the research?

I will produce a report at the end of the research which will be finished in July 2020. You and your child/young person's name will remain anonymous and all names will have pseudonyms instead (fake names). I plan to share the results of the research with other Educational Psychologists and it may be published to a wider audience at a later date. You will be able to receive a copy of this report. I plan to retain data for two years and it will be kept secure on a password protected computer.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you whether or not you and your child/young person choose to take part. We hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience. I would however like to reassure you that if you choose not to take part there will be no negative repercussions for the young person. If you do not wish to be interviewed but you are happy for your child to be interviewed, please contact the researcher and this can be arranged.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: 'Public task' for personal data and 'Research purposes' for special category data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake [this](#) and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at dataprotection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

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

juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk or Teresa.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee [reference number: Z6364106/2019/03/54].

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

Kindest regards,

Juliette Thomson
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Children in care's experiences of education: Carer Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to Juliette Thomson (at the email address below) or to Teresa.

Please put a tick in the appropriate box below.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research.		
I agree for me and my child/young person to be audio recorded during the interview.		
I understand that if any of the words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me or my child/young person.		
I understand that I/my child/young person can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if we choose to do this, any data we have contributed will not be used.		
I understand that I can contact Juliette Thomson at any time and request for my data to be removed from the project database.		
I understand that the results will be shared with the Economic and Social Research Council and in research publications and/or presentations.		
I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Service. I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.		
I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.		
I understand that my personal information will be used for the purposes explained to me.		
I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing and 'research purposes' will be the lawful basis for processing special category data.		

Name _____ Signed _____

Date _____

Juliette Thomson
Juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix E: Professionals' information sheet and consent form

Children in care's experiences of education

January 2019 to March 2020

Information sheet for Professionals

Who am I?

My name is Juliette Thomson and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project, 'Children in care's experiences of education'. I am a trainee Educational Psychologist at University College London, the Institute of Education.

What is the research about?

I am hoping to find out about the educational experiences of children and young people in care. I would also like to speak to professionals to find out how they are involved with supporting children/young people in care who are at risk and/or have been excluded from school.

I very much 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 don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

What will it involve?

The project would involve just one interview (for approximately 45 minutes) to hear your experiences of working with children in care who have been excluded and/or are at risk of exclusion. This could also be over the phone if this is easier for you and at a convenient time for yourself.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

No. We would like to assure you that your views/data will be kept securely and your name will not appear in the research. Your details will also remain confidential at all times. You will be reminded of your right to withdraw from the research at any point.

What will happen to the results of the research?

I will produce a report at the end of the research which will be finished in July 2020. I plan to share the results of the research with other professionals including Educational Psychologists and it may be published to a wider audience at a later date. You will be able to receive a copy of this report.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice

The lawful basis that will be used to process your *personal data* are: 'Public task' for personal data and 'Research purposes' for special category data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at dataprotection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at: juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee [reference number: Z6364106/2019/03/54].

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

Kindest regards,

Juliette Thomson,

Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Children in care's experiences of education:
Professionals' consent form**

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to Juliette Thomson via email.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.		
I agree to be audio recorded during the interview.		
I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me.		
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.		
I understand that I can contact Juliette Thomson at any time and request for my data to be removed from the project database.		
I would like to take part in this research.		
I understand that my personal information will be used for the purposes explained to me.		

Name _____ Signed _____

Date _____

For more information, please visit this website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>

Juliette Thomson
Juliette.thomson.17@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix F: Extra methodology details

Recruitment difficulties:

Recognising the researcher's broad conceptualisation of the term exclusion, the inclusion criteria started off broad as 'children in care who have experienced secondary school exclusion'. However, it was quickly apparent that this was too broad and not understood by schools so it then became: 'children or young people who are looked after, and who have been subject to an exclusion (fixed-term or permanent) within their secondary school education and are currently residing within a London LA'.

This research then became predominantly based on fixed-period exclusions. The researcher was not able to access those experiencing more unofficial exclusions at first. This was seen to be because schools and social workers tend to be the gatekeepers to the young people, and many felt it was not the right time for the young person to be involved. However, many of the young people in the study also had experiences of these less formal forms of exclusion.

The caseworkers within the VS within LA X were able to say who they were concerned about as being 'at risk' of exclusion. Due to ethical reasons, it was decided that the researcher would not contact those 'at risk' of exclusion given the sensitivity around the young person's understanding of being 'at risk'.

After continued difficulties recruiting and after speaking with many of the adults closest to the young people as well as discussions with other researchers, it was suggested that the young people may benefit having a simplified, more "eye-catching" information sheet. This feedback was implemented, and a short poster version was created. Participants thereafter were still difficult to engage, and many would agree on a date and time then not turn up. Three further participants agreed, but thereafter the researcher was not able to make contact. Another participant agreed to be involved who was in a prison in the North of England. However, due to the YOT worker's limited time it was not possible to follow up. The researcher found that when they were able to meet or speak on the phone, the young person was put at ease through the rapport building exercises and many at the end commented on how much they had enjoyed participating in research. Others seemed much easier to contact via the phone and said that they preferred to speak in this way.

The researcher attempted to meet with several LACYP to build rapport in the PRU from LA X, however, many of the young people did not want to meet with an unfamiliar adult. The researcher considered conducting several interviews over time to develop a relationship with the young people but was concerned about the potential emotional impact of yet another relationship loss for the young people.

Sample choice:

The researcher chose to interview those LACYP in secondary school settings for the following reasons:

- It was felt that these participants would be able to reflect upon their experiences over time, including primary school experiences, enabling a useful comparison between different experiences.
- Research suggests that most school exclusions occur in secondary school (DfE, 2019a).
- Statistics show that the majority of LACYP are aged between 10-15 years (39%) and in the 16+ age groups (24%) (DfE, 2019).
- Pragmatic difficulties in that there was only one primary PRU setting in LA X and they only had one pupil on roll as of December 2019.

Conducting interviews:

Ice-breaker activities were planned. However, it quickly became apparent that the young people's time was limited, and most had agreed based on the interview only lasting for 30 minutes. Therefore, the researcher spent time at the beginning explaining the EP role, what the research was about and how it could help others in a similar position as this was deemed a good way of building rapport based on advice from the SENCo.

LACYP are almost four times more likely to have a special educational need than their non-LACYP peers (DfE, 2020). Therefore, following Thomas' (2009) recommendations for communicating with children in care and in acknowledgement of the range of potential SEN for LACYP, a range of flexible/person-centred approaches were planned to be used within the interview process with the pupils to elicit their views. Techniques such as a 'Lifegrid' of their experiences (Jalali & Morgan, 2017) were considered. However, after attempting this approach with YP1 it

was apparent that young people may not want to talk about these very personal and often traumatic life experiences with a new adult.

Previous research (Adrian-Vallance, 2014; Coates, 2011) has highlighted the heterogeneity of LACYP and how they all come with different life experiences and different strengths and difficulties. Lincoln and Guba (1985) affirm that building and maintaining trust is essential to qualitative inquiry as this is likely to generate accurate and candid data (Mercer, 2007). The researcher therefore acknowledged the importance of developing a level of trust and rapport with the young people so that they felt comfortable to talk about these difficult events.

Three of the face-to-face interviews with young people took place within the educational setting of the young person (the PRU, mainstream school and college) with a staff member in a nearby room. Two took place within their home and two within their care home in a quiet room with a family member in a nearby room. With the phone interviews, each participant was asked a time and date that would suit them, and the researcher requested that they find a quiet space to talk. Two of the carer interviews took place within their home / care home directly after my interview with the young person, and the other three over the phone. The interview with the SENCo took place in a quiet room within one of the PRUs. The interview with the VSH took place in a private room within the LA building. EP interviews took place over the phone at a time convenient to the EP. The researcher made brief notes throughout the interview and all interviews were audio recorded.

The young person who was talking retrospectively about her experiences of being 'at risk' had the same questions as those who were excluded but the researcher adapted some of the wording where appropriate. The young person who was at the time of interviewing 'at risk' of exclusion had different questions, such as 'can you tell me a bit about your school, what do you find challenging about your school, what do the teachers do to support you here' etc. Interviews with carers asked questions such as the factors leading to the exclusion, what could be done differently going forward and what they think the impact of the exclusion was based on whether their young person had already experienced exclusion or was at risk.

Questions to professionals and carers included: 'why do you think LACYP are being excluded from mainstream schools despite government legislation, what have been the reasons for the exclusions, what are professionals doing to support LACYP inclusion, what could be done going forward to support their inclusion and what has been the impact of the exclusions from their professional experience'.

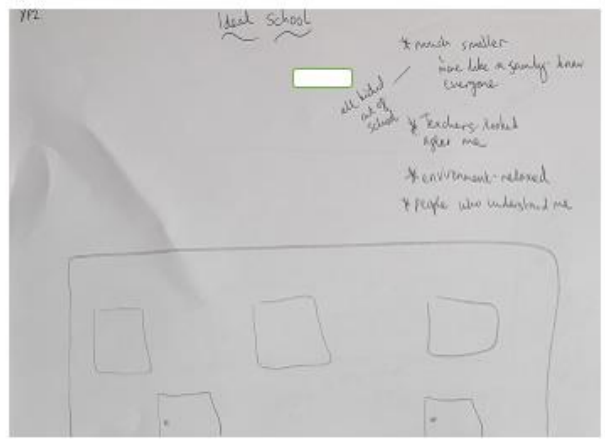
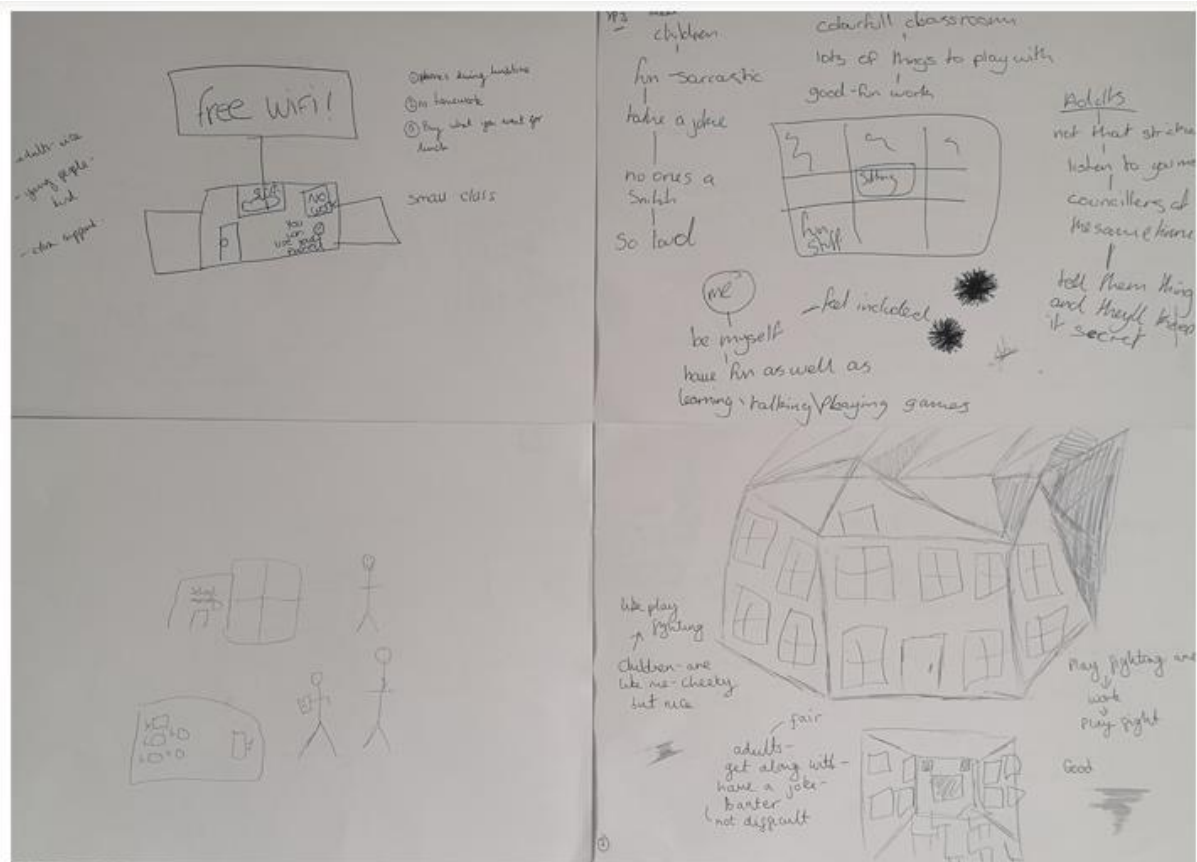
The researcher attempted to reduce any anxiety for participants by using a balanced interview schedule with discussions of both positive and negative experiences as well as conditional/future oriented questions. The researcher also reiterated that their views would be kept confidential and anonymously presented. It was acknowledged that the young people in this study were likely to have experienced adverse childhood experiences as well as the involvement of a large number and range of professionals.

Contextual data:

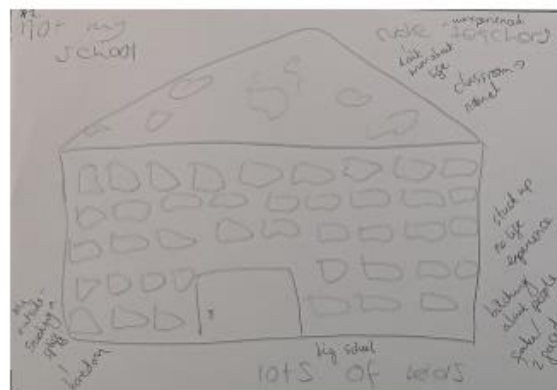
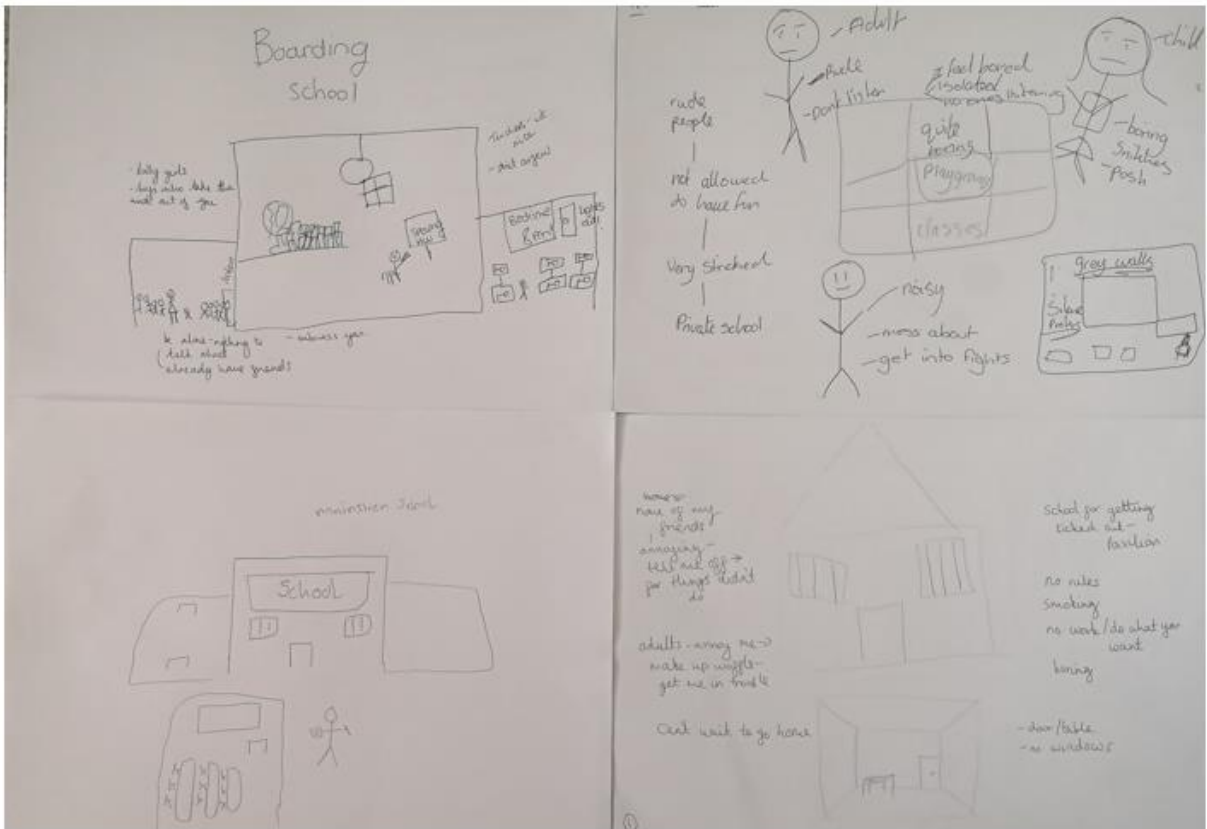
Quantitative data was gathered to gain information about characteristics of the young people (see Table 2). This data was gathered directly from the young person and in doing so the researcher acknowledged that this may not be concurrent with school/social care records. However, understanding the young persons' construction of how they recall certain events is equally valuable through a social constructionist and pragmatic lens and was deemed to be an important way to gain their views and interpretation of different aspects of their experiences. For example, why they thought they were excluded and how many exclusions they recall having had. It was also deemed unethical to request this sensitive information from social care, their schools and/or the VS.

Appendix G: All drawings from 'The Ideal School' task

Children's drawings of their 'Ideal School':



Children's drawings of their 'Non-Ideal School':



Appendix H: Interview Schedules

Interview schedule with excluded LAC: Overriding research question 1) What are the experiences of school exclusion for LAC?

Pre-recording:

Introduce self - Thank you very much for agreeing to talk to me about your experiences in school. Explain research to the pupil (showing information sheet). There are three parts to the interview:

- 1 – Just to gather some background information
 - 2 – Completing an activity called The Ideal School (see instructions below)
 - 3 – I'm going to be asking you some questions about the schools you have been to and your exclusion / move from (previous school) to (current school).
- There are no right and wrong answers, I just want to know what you think and feel about things.

Right to withdraw – If you do not want to answer any of the questions or complete a task you won't have to, and we can skip it. If you want a break at any time you can tell me or use the break card, if you want to stop you can tell me or use the stop card and we can stop the interview.

Explain confidentiality – I will not tell anyone else the things you tell me unless you tell me something which I think means you or someone else is unsafe. When I write about this research, I will use a different name so no-one will know what you have said so I would like you to tell me what you really think.

Ask for permission to record – Just before we start, I was wondering whether it would be OK to record the interview. It is often hard to listen and write at the same time and so it is helpful to tape record the interviews I do. The tape will only be listened to by myself. We will delete it when we have finished using it.

1. *Introductions:* Could you say: - what your name is, and what school / college you go to? (see further excel sheet for other contextual info questions).
2. Ideal School (see separate sheet).
3. Now we're going to think a bit more about the exclusion...
 - a) Can you tell me about your experiences of being excluded? (add to timeline and use visuals to support) (retrospective)
 - b) What were the reasons/reason for your exclusion (option to draw)?
 - c) What (if anything) do you think could have been done differently (what could have prevented the exclusion)? (retrospective)
 - d) Who could have supported you (to have prevented the exclusion)?
 - e) What could be done and who could support you to go back into mainstream school? (future)

- f) What would you say has helped you most at school – why do you think this?
- g) Which professionals have supported you so far? (CAMHS? EPs? Specific teachers? Virtual school? Social workers?) (use cards to support with this- create a relationship circle- young person to put each person in a circle of who they're closest to).
- h) What do you think the government/politicians could be doing to support you in school?
- i) What advice would you give to another young person in a similar position to you?
- j) On a scale of 1-10, where would you put your school experience so far (1 being really not good, 10 being excellent)?
- k) On a scale of 1-10, how much do you value education (1 being not at all, 10 being I value it a lot)?
- l) On a scale of 1-10, how supported do you feel by your school? (1-not well supported at all, 10- extremely well supported).
- m) Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences of education?

Interview schedule with LAC 'at risk':

Pre-recording:

Introduce self - Thank you very much for agreeing to talk to me about your experiences in school. Explain research to the pupil (showing information sheet). There are three parts to the interview:

1 – Just to gather some background information

2 – Completing an activity called The Ideal School

3 – I'm going to be asking you some questions about the schools you have been to and things you may be finding challenging at school.

There are no right and wrong answers, I just want to know what you think and feel about things.

Right to withdraw – If you do not want to answer any of the questions or complete a task you won't have to, and we can skip it. If you want a break at any time you can tell me or use the break card, if you want to stop you can tell me or use the stop card and we can stop the interview.

Explain confidentiality – I will not tell anyone else the things you tell me unless you tell me something which I think means you or someone else is unsafe. When I write about this research, I will use a different name so no-one will know what you have said so I would like you to tell me what you really think.

Ask for permission to record – Just before we start, I was wondering whether it would be OK to record the interview. It is often hard to listen and write at the same time and so it is helpful to tape record the interviews I do. The tape will only be listened to by myself. We will delete it when we have finished using it.

1. *Introductions*: Could you say: - what your name is, and what school / college you go to? (see further excel sheet for other contextual info questions).
2. Ideal School (see separate sheet).
3. *Current school*
 - a) How long have you been coming to this school?
 - b) Can you tell me a bit about your (current) school?
 - c) What do you find difficult about (current) school?
 - d) What do the teachers / school do to help you here (interventions/strategies)?
 - e) What is working well at the moment for you (at school/home)?
 - f) Is there anything else you'd like your teachers / school here to help you with / how could they support you better?
 - g) Who (any professionals-CAMHS, EPs, social workers, teachers etc) do you think could be supporting you more and how?
 - h) What do you think the government/politicians could be doing to support you in school?
 - i) When would you say you were happiest in school?
 - j) When did you find school hardest? Why do you think you found it hardest then?
 - k) What advice would you give to another young person in a similar position to you?
 - l) On a scale of 1-10, where would you put your school experience so far (1 being really not good, 10 being excellent)?
 - m) On a scale of 1-10, how much do you value education (1 being not at all, 10 being I value it a lot)?
 - n) On a scale of 1-10, how supported do you feel by your school? (1-not well supported at all, 10- extremely well supported).
 - o) Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences of education / add to your life grid?

Interview schedule with carer:

Introduction: Thank you very much again for being involved in this research. As you are aware, this research is trying to understand children in care's views and experiences of education.

This interview will give us a chance to get to know more about YOUR views and perspectives about your son/daughter's educational experiences.

I know that some of these issues can be quite sensitive. Please be assured that your responses remain confidential and that we can stop and take a break at any time, if you need.

Just before we start, I was wondering whether it would be OK to record the interview. It is often hard to listen and write at the same time and so it is helpful to tape record the interviews I do. The tape will only be listened to by myself. We will delete it when we have finished using it.

1. Introductions

- a) Could you say what your name is, and the name of the child in your care?

2. Rapport building

- a) Could you tell me a little bit about (child's name), how would you describe him/ her?
- b) What are his/her strengths/ what is he/she good at?

3. If child HAS been excluded:

- a) Could you tell me how long (child's name) has been at this school? And how long were they at their previous school?
- b) Could you tell me what factors do you think led to the exclusion of (child's name)?
- c) What do you think the school could have been doing (preventative) to avoid where we are now? (retrospective)
- d) What do you think that schools could be doing more of to support your child remain in school? (future)
- e) Which people/ professionals were involved in your child's move/ exclusion?
- f) Do you feel that the move has been successful? (why/why not?)- what made it successful? What could have helped make the move more successful?
- g) What impact do you think the move had on your child?
- h) What do you think professionals such as EPs could have been doing (preventative) to avoid where we are now? (retrospective)
- i) What do you think that professionals such as EPs could be doing more of to support your child remain in school? (future)
- j) Is there anything you think the government could be doing to support children like (child's name) remain in education/be supported better in school?
- k) What has been the impact of the exclusion on your child?

4. If child has NOT been excluded (is at risk):

- a) Could you tell me how long (child's name) has been at this school? And have they been to any schools prior to this (for how long)?
- b) What do you think the school could be doing (preventative) to support your child more in school?
- c) What do you think professionals such as EPs could be doing (preventative) to support your child more in school?
- d) Is there anything you think the government could be doing to support children like (child's name) remain in education/be supported better in school?

That's all my questions. Are there any issues that we haven't covered that you think are important? Thank you for taking part.

Interview schedule with VSH and SENCo (completed separately)

Introduction: Thank you very much again for being involved in this research. As you are aware, this research is trying to understand LAC's views and experiences of education/exclusion.

This interview will give us a chance to get to know more about YOUR views and perspectives about the educational experiences for LAC.

We know that some of these issues can be quite sensitive. Please be assured that your responses remain confidential and that we can stop and take a break at any time, if you need.

Just before we start, I was wondering whether it would be OK to tape record the interview. It is often hard to listen and write at the same time and so it is helpful to record the interviews I do. The tape will only be listened to by myself and other members of our research team. We will delete it when we have finished using it.

1. *LAC and exclusions*

- a. In your experience, why do you think LAC are being excluded from mainstream schools (what patterns have you noticed through your professional practice)?
- b. What have been the main reasons for the exclusion / managed move of LAC, from your experiences?
- c. What are professionals / the Local authority currently doing (proactively and reactively) to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?
- d. What is the VS doing to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?
- e. What strategies/interventions do you think are working well to support LAC/prevent exclusion?
- f. What do you think mainstream schools can/could be doing to support LAC, and prevent exclusion?
- g. What else needs to happen to enable schools to be able to provide that support?
- h. What else do you think professionals / the Virtual school / the local authority could be doing to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?
- i. Is there anything else that you think needs to be done at a wider level (e.g. systems level) that could support the inclusion of LAC?
- j. In your experience, what has been the impact of school exclusion on LAC?

That's all my questions. Are there any issues that we haven't covered that you think are important?

Interview schedule with EPs

Introduction: Thank you very much again for being involved in this research. As you are aware, this research is trying to understand LAC's views and experiences of education/exclusion.

This interview will give us a chance to get to know more about YOUR views and perspectives about the educational experiences for LAC.

We know that some of these issues can be quite sensitive. Please be assured that your responses remain confidential and that we can stop and take a break at any time, if you need.

Just before we start, I was wondering whether it would be OK to tape record the interview. It is often hard to listen and write at the same time and so it is helpful to record the interviews I do. The tape will only be listened to by myself and other members of our research team. We will delete it when we have finished using it.

1. *Introductions*

Could you say what your name is, what is your role, and how long have you worked in this role and within this LA/country?

2. *Current role*

- a) Could you tell me a bit about your role within the virtual school?
- b) Why do you think LAC are being excluded from mainstream schools (what patterns have you noticed through your professional practice)?
- c) What do you think are the barriers for getting LAC back into mainstream schools after they've been excluded?
- d) What are EPs currently doing (proactively and reactively) to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?
- e) What do you think the local authority is doing to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?
- f) Have you worked with many LAC who have been excluded/ are at risk of exclusion?
- g) What have been the main reasons for the exclusion / managed move of these pupils?
- h) How have you supported LAC who are at risk/ have been excluded?
- i) What else do you think EPs could be doing to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?
- j) In your experience, what has been the impact of school exclusion on LAC?

That's all my questions. Are there any issues that we haven't covered that you think are important?

Appendix I: Instructions for ‘The Ideal School’ Task

Introduction

The Drawing the Ideal School technique has been adapted from an approach developed by Moran (2001). Heather Moran has been a teacher and educational psychologist and now works as a clinical psychologist. The technique enables children to become actively involved in understanding themselves and expressing their views. It is based on ideas from Personal Construct Psychology, which was introduced by Kelly in 1955. This approach seeks to explore children’s important or core constructs about themselves and how they view the world. Children (and adults) behave in a way that makes sense to them according to their own view of the world. We are likely to understand children (and the sort of provision that is most likely to help them) more fully if they are able to express these core constructs to us.

In summary this type of work attempts to:

“understand the child’s unique perspective on life through the careful use of questions and extremely sensitive note of the child’s answers.” (Moran, 2001)

The technique itself is simple to use once the child understands what is expected. This sheet gives guidelines for the adult completing the technique to follow and the next two pages list how to complete the technique.

Guidelines for use

1. Equipment needed: a black pen and two sheets of plain A4 sized paper
2. Allow about an hour to complete the activity, perhaps with a short break if necessary
3. Explain to the pupil that you are going to be doing the writing today, acting as scribe. This is to take the pressure off the pupil and keep the process moving
4. The pupil is asked to make quick drawings or sketches (rather than detailed drawings). Reassure the pupil that it doesn’t matter if an error is made
5. It is important to record **exactly** what the pupil says using their own words
6. If the pupil is overly anxious about drawing, either model stick people drawings first or just record the pupil’s verbal responses
7. Allow time for the pupil to process the requests – repeat/reword/simplify the questions if not understood
8. Provide reassurance that there are no right or wrong answers or responses
9. Provide encouragement and praise for the pupil’s involvement with the activity
10. Be sensitive about sharing the drawings with others, ask the child’s permission and ensure that other adults understand that the child has trusted you in revealing such views, which must be respected
11. Talk to other colleagues about planning any follow-up work that might be indicated

Part 1: Drawing the kind of school you would not like

The school

Think about the kind of school you would not like to go to. This is not a real school. Make a quick drawing of this school in the middle of this paper.

Tell me three things about this school. What kind of school is this?

The classroom

Think about the sort of classroom you would not like to be in. Make a quick drawing of this classroom in the school.

Draw some of the things in this classroom.

The children

Think about some of the children at the school you would not like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these children. What are the children doing? Tell me three things about these children.

The adults

Think about some of the adults at the school you would not like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these adults. What are the adults doing? Tell me three things about these adults.

Me

Think about the kind of school you would not like to go to. Make a quick drawing of what you would be doing at this school. Tell me three things about the way you feel at this school.

Part 2: Drawing the kind of school you would like

The school

Think about the kind of school you would like to go to. This is not a real school. Make a quick drawing of this school in the middle of this paper.

Tell me three things about this school. What kind of school is this?

The classroom

Think about the sort of classroom you would like to be in. Make a quick drawing of this classroom in the school.

Draw some of the things in this classroom.

The children

Think about some of the children at the school you would like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these children. What are the children doing? Tell me three things about these children.

The adults

Think about some of the adults at the school you would like to go to. Make a quick drawing of some of these adults. What are the adults doing? Tell me three things about these adults.

Me

Think about the kind of school you would like to go to. Make a quick drawing of what you would be doing at this school. Tell me three things about the way you feel at this school.

Appendix J: Thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Stage of analysis	Actions completed	Purpose
1. Familiarisation with the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription of audio recordings by the researcher (see Appendix K for transcript extract). • Reading and rereading transcripts, listening to audio recordings, making notes of any observations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarisation with the data sets and developing understanding of the meanings within the data. • Thinking reflexively about any preconceptions or assumptions which may influence the analysis.
2. Generating initial codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inductive, systematic process of identifying and labelling relevant codes (see Appendix K) for each sample group separately (young people, carers, VSH, SENCo and EPs). • Highlighting key extracts in the text which are poignant/ may form quotes (see Appendix K) • Codes reviewed by researcher and discussed with research supervisors and trainee EP colleagues. • Refinement of codes and codes deleted where there was repetition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying anything and everything of interest. • Ensuring the codes are rooted in the narratives rather than the researcher's preconceptions. • Ensuring code names are relevant, clear and concise. • Identifying subthemes and themes on a semantic level (Braun & Clarke, 2012).
3. Searching for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes were clustered together (based on Bronfenbrenner framework (system, school, group, individual) to create a mapping of patterns in the data within one Word document for each participant group, starting with the young people. • The different word documents for each sample group with clustered codes were compared. Due to the similarities, the codes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Bronfenbrenner framework to support grouping of codes due to large data set. • Merging of all participant data sets to provide a holistic understanding. Differences between data sets were also noted. • Finding larger patterns of meaning relevant to the research questions. • Exploring relationships

	<p><u>analysis, but</u> keeping reference of which codes belong to which participant group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful groups of codes formed provisional subthemes / themes. • Supplementary codes were put in a 'miscellaneous' category. 	<p>subthemes and themes to ensure they fit with the overall analysis.</p>
<p>4. Reviewing and revising themes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking whether the themes exhibit a good 'fit' with the coded data and with the entire data set and each has a clear 'essence'. • Reviewing data extracts relating to each theme. • Re-reading of entire dataset highlighting data relevant to each theme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring there is enough data to support each theme / subtheme. • Exploring how data with each theme / subtheme fits to tell an overall story. • Ensuring the themes make sense within the context of the entire dataset and that they represent participant narratives.
<p>5. Defining and naming the themes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing theme definitions and selecting a theme name which is conceptually clear. • Names reviewed and revised alongside research supervisors and trainee EP colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To illustrate the essence of the themes and specifying the boundaries within themes (what is and what is not included within them). • Ensuring the theme names capture the central concept and represent fully realised themes rather than descriptive summaries.
<p>6. Producing the report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytic narrative is weaved together alongside compelling data extracts. Themes provide the organising framework for the analysis. • Illustrative examples of the data within findings (e.g. thematic map). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate breadth within each theme with compelling examples, ensuring that all participant voices are represented. • Ensuring the overall narrative tells a clear story.

Appendix K: Extracts from Transcripts with initial codes:

Questions		Codes
1. <i>Introductions:</i> Could you say: - what your name is, and - what school you go to?	XX. Went to X school.	
IDEAL SCHOOL – non-ideal school (see separate instructions for questions for the Ideal / Non-Ideal School)	<p>Big door, more windows everywhere, lots of kids. This is not the school I wanna be at. "not.my.school". So lots of kids. Erm...rude teachers that haven't been through real life experiences, like...basically just like people that have just like sucked on a silver spoon their whole life, and don't know, about like...real life struggles, do you know what I mean? And then just a load of like just shitty kids that have just had everything handed to them on a silver platter, that is NOT my school.</p> <p>(Q-people?) The people are just stuck up their arses, not experienced, they'd be bitching about people...that's what bored people do. Just fake, two-faced people.</p> <p>(Q-the classrooms?) erm...probably just a massive school, full of looads of kids ...majority of them I don't get along with.</p> <p>Erm...it's just a normal classroom. (Q-so the reason why it's not ideal, is more about the people?) – yeah it's nothing about the building, I don't care about the building do you know what I mean, it's about who I'm around, who I have to see and speak to every day.</p> <p>(Q-the adults?) just unexperienced...you know, I give it to the kids if they're young and they just have everything handed to them by their parents then, cool. But...adults, who just don't know about life...have never been through a struggle...but im not the same as them people.</p> <p>(Q-is that 'coz if they don't know much about life then they don't know how to relate to you?) – yeah...not one bit. And it've had it, even my ex-boyfriend, he's lived a very good, just happy life his whole life, he's never had anything serious go on and you know, he's just so small minded. He just doesn't know anything you know...you just don't know about ...he just doesn't know. You know most people are like that, too small minded.</p> <p>(Q- what would you be doing in this school?) I don't fit in, I'd be outside...probably...smoking a spliff to be honest. Yeah, that's me. (why do you think you'd be doing that?) well... obviously if I enjoyed my time there then I wouldn't have to, but when I'm on my own and shit...I roll up a</p>	<p>Lots of children Teachers – rude / no real life experience</p> <p>Children with no real life experience</p> <p>Stuck up / two faced (bullying?) Large school.</p> <p>Don't get along with peers</p> <p>Dislikes the people.</p> <p>Inexperienced Ts.</p> <p>Not able to relate to you.</p> <p>Small mindedness.</p> <p>Isolated. Drugs. – smoking to cope / boredom</p>

	<p>spliff I'm good (Q-so it's like a way of coping...but also boredom?) Yeah...generally boredom really.... Like I enjoy my own company, at first I didn't...I couldn't sit in the house on my own, coz I'd just get like...lost in my thoughts and shit, but when I smoke a spliff I'm just cool (laughs). But I find myself funny and it's a way to relax really.</p>	<p>Smoking as a way to feel better / relax</p>
<p>IDEAL SCHOOL – ideal school</p>	<p>Well...it'd be much smaller... (Q- what does that give you do you think, if it's smaller?) coz I mean...it's more just like...sort of like a family ish...when you're in such a big school, it's just like...half the people you don't know, you just get lost in there, it's just not a nice place to be. But when you're in a small school and you know everyone, and you're cool with everyone, coz you're all in the same boat, and you've all gone through the same things...that's why PRU X was the best thing for me. I mean, I would've been a different person if I didn't get kicked out of school, I know that...because the company you keep is kind of what you become, do you know what I mean? And yeah, like when I got kicked out of school, I didn't go to PRU X straight away, I went to XX...XX...academy...and it was just full of shit...I was just around really bad people. They weren't good people. There was like thieves and fucking drug dealers and yeah... just made people. And so I kind of became that. And then, I got kicked out of there and moved to PRU X. And PRU Xs just like more of a family. (answers phone)</p> <p>...I'm in a meeting...I totally forgot about it...naaa man I have to do it...it's not my F***ing fault...I didn't violate shit man. Alright allow. Little shit (hangs up). I was meant to meet him earlier. So I just text him telling him to come back later.</p> <p>(Q-people?) Yeah see PRU X was good. But the one thing about PRU X was that in the end...we wasn't really a family, everyone sort of went their own separate ways...and it can go either two ways, like everyone's close, you know, teachers and students...see me...I miss the teachers most...I'm going back there just to see the teachers...fuck the students I don't care about them. And that's why I loved it there so much...coz the teachers looked after me like I was...they didn't teach me like I was just a student...do you know what I mean? And that helps...coz they know, when you get kicked out of school, you get kicked out of school for a reason...but saying that I got kicked out of</p>	<p>Small size</p> <p>More like a family.</p> <p>People in the same boat.</p> <p>Bad influences.</p> <p>PRU like a family.</p> <p>Close rels with teachers.</p> <p>Teachers looking after her – nurture.</p> <p>Needed that extra nurture.</p>

	<p>school for some BULLSHIT...I didn't even really do nothing.</p> <p>(Q classroom?) Obviously I like the environment to look less like a classroom...more of a relaxed place...and everyone has to have been kicked out of school really, it is just like a unit...coz that was the main reason why everyone got along, everyone knew...that we had our own issues going on...we was all there for a reason, you know, yeah. We was all outcasts, but we was cool...coz we all got along. (Q-so that's about people understanding you then?) Yeah that's what I mean, there was people in there who was going through the same as I was, or worse or less...but...yeah, it's just good...and it's good to hear other people's stories as well ...and that's the other thing about care that I didn't mind...coz you're around...you're all in the same boat...you're all here for similar reasons.</p>	<p>Things in common – understand each other. All outcasts.</p> <p>People who understand you.</p> <p>Supported by others in care.</p>
<p>1. Can you tell me about your experiences of being excluded?</p>	<p>Well...I got excluded in the end of year 8...and it was literally...it wasn't even a year after my dad had passed away...and that was the most...yeah, that broke me really...coz he was, he was murdered, and it was a very brutal thing you know. Yeah...it fucked me up basically, I didn't actually do anything...I was at XX academy...and I didn't do anything, very bad...I didn't have no fights, I wasn't aggressive to people...I was just doing stupid things like being a class clown...I didn't really care...like after my dad died of course I didn't care...I didn't care about anything...so I'd be in school and they'd tell me oh M you have a detention...I'd be like ok cool, I'm not going...I just didn't care about anything. And you know, the school gave me counselling, but it was just full of shit...like, for a bit I was like self-harming and shit...so they helped me out with that...</p> <p>(Q-what sort of counselling?) it was just a school counsellor. But she was really nice, I didn't mind talking to her. I mean, I don't believe in counselling to be honest...like therapy...I believe in, coz my therapist, she helped me out...because she spoke a lot about your brain and your mind...and how to use it, how to control it. but my counsellor, she was just like are you ok? Yeah, get an elastic band and flick it on your wrist anytime you feel sad...I was like...yeah it was just full of shit, it didn't help me one bit. So yeah, I was there for about a year after my dad died. Then at the beginning of year 9 they said, if you carry on the way you're going, you can't be here anymore...and I think I took a picture...I had my phone, you're not allowed your phone in school, I took a picture</p>	<p>Excluded pre-care. Dad murdered. Didn't cope.</p> <p>Unfair.</p> <p>Disruptive in class / didn't care- self-destructive.</p> <p>Counselling – unhelpful. Self-harm</p> <p>Therapy vs counselling- liked therapy – learning about brain.</p>

	<p>and it had my head teacher's head in it, and I got reported back to the school and they excluded me for that. That is what made me go so downhill...because...I mean, I was bound to go downhill anyway, you know my dad just died...but if I was around good people, then I probably would have benefitted a lot more from them. Yeah, like, I didn't care about what I was doing...I started smoking weed off my own back...that was another thing...like...so my anger...and not even that though, it wasn't even really my dad's death, that brought the whole anger thing, it was more my brother ...coz my brother used to be very horrible to me... he used to pretty much abuse me in the house, especially after my dad died...coz that fucked him up more than it fucked me up...just coz Alfie's whole future depended on my dad, he thought yeah, me and my dad, we're going to do business together...then BOOM, that all got taken away from him...so....</p> <p>(When did you go into care?) – yeah after my dad died...course...I was a good person before my dad died, I was sweet...my mum and my dad had problems...my dad was a gangster...a seriously, like drug dealer, but he never let us involved in that side of his life...so for a whole year, I didn't even see him, coz he was on the run...he had people after him, he had the police after him...and so the only way I could contact him was through facetime...and yeah, one day my mum called me and I knew something relaly bad had happened the way she was talking...I knew someone had died, I just didn't think my dad. Even when my stepdad told me, your dad's been shot...I just like...even then I didn't think he was dead, I thought shit...and he was like...and he didn't make it...I was like huuuhhhh?? Like my whole like...I cant even remember after that...I remember being told...but what my mind was doing after that...I don't know. Im in a place now where I can talk about it...it would've been like...what the 4th year now? So...yeah I can talk about it better. I was living with my mum...the care came quite after...I got put in care, last year...like 2018, April...yeah, so...I've been here just over a year. And I got put into care mainly coz of my brother, he was beating me up, he was very gang related, he was bringing all different people to my house, and abusing my house really, smoking weed in my house, I did aswell, it got so bad, when my brother moved out, I thought, yeah, well Alfie got to smoke in his room so I get to. so I disrespected my mum to</p>	<p>Excluded for taking photo of head.</p> <p>Spiralled out of control after exclu.</p> <p>Impact – smoking weed, anger, abuse at home.</p> <p>Dad's death significant impact.</p> <p>Can talk about death now.</p> <p>Put into care coz of abuse from brother.</p>
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	<p>all levels, I just had people in my room every night, I didn't care...she'd say M please, they've got to leave, now, and I'd just ignore her....until she'd come upstairs screaming her head off...then id scream back...and it's just this whole...it was all fucked init. (-sounds really difficult...) yeah I mean, it was! But you know im cool...I've been through a lot...like if I wasn't to tell you all that shit would you've just thought I was alright? (yeah!) that's what I'm saying! (laughs...). People say im resilient. I'm very open, see me, im one of the best people you can speak to...because, I'm very open, I can help you out with all this shit!</p>	<p>Breakdown of home relationships.</p> <p>Breakdown of rel with her mum.</p> <p>Gone through a lot.</p> <p>Resilient. Wanting to help.</p>
<p>2. What were the reasons/reason for your exclusion (option to draw)?</p>	<p>Literally, for taking a teacher, of my head teacher, by accident, I didn't even mean to take a picture...of him...it was just a picture, it had his head in it. and I said "and a detention...so long" ...and I put it on my snapchat... and obviously one of the stupid, stuck up students must have seen me with my phone, or the mums must've seen me with the phones and must've reported me. (so you weren't in care when you were excluded?) na na... I got put in ...I got excluded in 2017. (so did that have a knock on effect...in terms of you going into care?) Yeah! Yeah...it was just the company I was keeping...but then again...we woz going through some next shit...I was telling my social worker...I cant be anywhere near Alfie, he beats me...like he was horrible to me, he beat me up...and that's what triggered the anger...coz like see me, im the type of person, who can't take small disrespects...I just it will make me flip out. Like little things, like being rude to my face, like doing something that's disrespectful to me, I'll go crazy over, and that's only coz the way my brother treated me...I just had to sit there and be scared...and take it. then like one day, I just switched and punched him back... it just got worse and worse and worse, obviously...erm...yeah, I used to be so scared of him. What I was doing I just couldn't help. This one time, he was smacking a wooden hair brush on me, so much, for so long, and I had a book next to me and I just grabbed it and smacked him over the face with it...then he put me into the corner and just punched me up...but I cant lie...it's made me a stronger person, I don't take shit from anybody, I've</p>	<p>Build up of events.</p> <p>Impact of exclu- going into care.</p> <p>Wont be disrespected. Anger issues.</p> <p>Violence at home.</p>

	<p>never been beaten up by anyone but that boy...coz I can defend myself...and I can fight. It's not a good thing. I went through a faze where I was just beating up girls for no reason, and that's why I got arrested...like I've been on tag and everything...but now im not like that. But I know I can defend myself, im not scared of anyone.</p>	<p>Abuse making her stronger.</p> <p>Arrested for violence. Has changed.</p>
<p>3. What (if anything) do you think could have been done differently (what could have prevented the exclusion)? (retrospective)</p>	<p>Well...the school were very unprofessional...they were just cunts...I'm not being funny yeah... it was just all about how the school looked like...how we all looked...coz I stuck out like a sore thumb, they couldn't have me at the school anymore, but they didn't take me off roll at XX academy...because they didn't want their school to be known as a school to have excluded a kid...so...they was just bastards, played me, and my mum...told my mum ahh, yeah M's going to be in PRU X...er a pupil referals unit...for three weeks, then she'll come back here...this is just like kind of an experiment to see what's best for me and whatever. And then yeah...I got put into XXPRU...and I just...and XX academy just left me...in the dark, forever...that's it...I'm still on...well, I;m not in school anymore but I was, but there's permanent exclusions, then there's...what's it called? Respite...and they said I was on respite...and I was on respite for like three years...(Q-so they didn't try to get you back in?) no- not one bit...the whole time they wasn't gonna have me back...but they just didn't want their school to look bad, and that they'd excluded a kid.</p>	<p>School unprofessional – bothered about appearances.</p> <p>Off-rolled to PRU X – but then stayed there.</p> <p>Left / let down by mainstream.</p> <p>Respite for three years.</p> <p>Didn't fight for her. School didn't want to be seen as excluding.</p>
<p>4. Who could have supported you (to have prevented the exclusion)?</p>	<p>(Q-so if you think about where the exclusion was and what happened just before...) well they just should of...you know, I got excluded for 1...the most stupid thing ever...2...it wasn't even a year after my dad's death...it was like 7 months or something...there ainst even 8 months in a school year, so... (Q-so do you think they knew about your dad?) Yeah!!! Oh course...I'm not being funny, it was all over the news, it was a very big thing...I didn't come into school for like a month ... after ...coz obviously I couldn't...and when I came in, they gave me counselling, and that was it...they just expected me to just be fine.</p>	<p>Lack of understanding from school.</p> <p>Lack of LT support.</p>

Appendix L: Thematic map

Theme	Subtheme	Codes and structural plan
1. <u>Lack of advocacy</u>	Not listened to or heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp not listened to by adults. • Ideal school- would like adults to listen. • Yp not given a voice in exclusion process- impact on self-esteem. • Not listened to – impact on mental health – not in control of decisions. • Carried this feeling into adult life-voice not heard as a care leaver – social isolation e.g. can't access housing support. <p>Positive/supportive experiences and ways forward</p> <p>Micro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ts to listen more, offer mediation, not giving up on them, taking an interest in them and consistency. • Adults to hear and then act on what they hear. • Listened to in PRU- valued having someone to talk to-feelings. • Talk to someone who can relate. • Adult interactions – not shouting. • Given more “chances”. • What could've prevented exclusion- adults listening. • Yp want to share their stories/advice to others. <p>Macro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to voice of child-pupil voice in PEPs. • Hear voice through children's councils – get feedback.
	Varied experiences of adult advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor adult relationships and these adults not advocating (Ts, social workers). <p>Lack of teacher advocacy in the microsystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt let down by teachers, lack of mutual respect, being singled out, feeling disliked by Ts and disliking them back. • Felt Ts were judging them. • Said teachers should have listened but not sure how. <p>Lack of advocacy in the mesosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of school level advocacy. • SW- poor advocates – high turnover rates – average 3 in 3 years. • Parents- let down by social care- could have prevented exclusion. • Yp said SW input-token. Carer-SWs can't always relate. • EPs said SWs-high turnover, hard to understand child's background and how to Q a school exclusion. • EPs said yp lack advocates at “critical times” e.g. through exclusion. Carers- hit or miss advocacy. No carer advocacy if placement breaks down.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp said their carer was main advocate. Carer said they were main advocate. • Lack of adult advocacy-impact on future prospects – job / FE. • Care leavers-still struggling for adult advocates. <p>Historic lack of adult advocacy in the chronosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already lack of advocacy in pre-care/care experiences. <p>Positive experiences and ways forward</p> <p>Towards relational repair at a micro level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some strong rels with Ts- valued humour, being flexible, able to relate and listening. • SW positive experiences – listening, buying tickets. • Want to talk to someone they already have a relationship with rather than profs. • Carers- they need quality not quantity of relationships. • Friends can be supportive. • Yp valued DTs and keyworkers checking in. • Some didn't know who VS was – others said good advocates – practical support. • Important distinction – adults having high aspirations and wanting to advocate for them (not just “good rels”). <p>Relational activism at a meso level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs facilitate strong rels – schools, carers, SWs so they can advocate. Support T wellbeing- reflective spaces. • VS work with adults closest to child-training to carers / DT conferences. • EPs support strong child-carer rels. Also support VS caseworkers / SWs- training, drop-ins – so can be more effective advocates.
	<p>Ineffective systems for effective advocacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp said lack of advocacy at a wider level – systems not in place to succeed. Professional concern about school “underhanded” methods of exclusion - offrolling and managed moves. <p>Lack of advocacy at a meso/exo level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support pre-care – CIN. • Impact of exclusion – into care. • Exclusion leading to placement breakdowns. • Managed moves – system doesn't advocate. • LAs not tracking these yp- e.g. man moves, unofficial exclusions/off rolling. • Yp ending up NEET – disengaged with system- and system doesn't monitor. • Schools – zero tolerance policies – don't work for these yp. • Schools – overly results driven-focus on academics. Lack understanding of how to meet the SEMH needs. <p>Positive ways forward at a school level:</p> <p>Meso:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for schools to be less results driven and prioritise mental health resources. • Schools to be more accountable for EHCPs. • Advocate for child's edu placement-can do this in the VS. • Prioritise LAC in planning meetings. • EPs working closely with the PRUs- strategies and contain anxieties. • Schools to be more flexible- review beh policies. <p>Meso/exo: improving multi-agency working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency working – needs clearer delineation of roles, better joined up services to allow effective advocacy e.g. different systems- SWs and EPs. • Multi-dis meetings – TAC, PEPs- EPs try to advocate. Where SWs do this, EPs say they should give more guidance or VS to lead these meetings. • PEPs- quality assured. • EPs – hard to advocate due to traded services climate and would like to attend more PEPs. • Out-of-borough chn – hard to monitor. Need to link in with local EPs. <p>Exo: Positive ways forward at a local authority level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate parenting responsibilities and “collective care”. Strong LA rels with schools/colleges. • Raise VS profile and build good rels with schools. Strong and proactive VS leadership- ensure stability for the child. • Stability of professionals. Longer term input from professionals e.g. SWs – all pt groups valued.
<p>2. <u>Mismatch between young person and adult expectations and aspirations</u></p>	<p>The stigma of care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp feel stigma of care label – adults “expected them to fail” / “go to prison”. • Schools seeing complex backgrounds and not feeling equipped to take them on. If they did- low expectations. • Yp said certain adults didn't know how to empathise with their experiences / how to interact with them-leading to frustration. • Non-ideal school – private/boarding- but hadn't been. Not wanting to be different to peers/around similar minded people- why they liked PRUs. • Carers- treat our children the same. • Lack of relatable role models/advocates. Patronising care leaver forums / talks. • Low expectations projected onto the young people. <p>Positive experiences and ways forward:</p> <p>Micro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults to have high expectations – motivating. Not being singled out from

		<p>peers. Yp to have high expectations of themselves.</p> <p>Meso/exo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrounded by similar peers – could support. • Better support when in care compared to a CIN. • Wanting to be in aspirational environments- better schools. • Wanting a range of relatable role models. • Talks by young adults who've had similar experiences. • Opportunities for the yp to share their stories with others in a similar situation. • Promote aspirational outcomes at a wider level-HT/DT conferences. Shift stigma of those in care and been excluded.
	<p>Adults misunderstanding their needs and inappropriate adjustments made</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults not understanding their learning and SEMH needs and how best to support. • Under identifying needs- wanted time out of class. • Overidentifying needs-had to have a label of dyslexia to go to this school. • Yp's understanding of their SEN status – 5/11 said they did but didn't know details. Lots of talk of "dyslexia". • Low expectations of behaviour – escalated behaviour. • EPs said over/under identifying can lead to low expectations from adults/the system. • Need for understanding of individual need. • Schools often misunderstand yps needs and schools feel they can't meet need within current resources / expertise. • Lack of funding for children with complex needs – staffing, facilities and time. Lack of future planning/ investment in SEMH. <p>Positive ways forward</p> <p>Micro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults to show higher expectations of behaviour and boundaries – same as their peers. – but fair, reasonable and based on their context. • EP reactive approaches – EHC needs assessments and individualised/direct approaches. Yp – empowered by understanding more about their learning. <p>Meso:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs- indirect/systemic support-training – change the narrative around LAC and help them understand needs. • Training to create a more positive/nurturing school ethos in secondaries – based on attachment theory. Psychoeducation in training e.g. time out – feel abandoned. • Training – better if follow ups e.g. workshops. Has to be valued by SLT.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRU have implemented MI and EC. Yp have fed back that they like EP suggestions e.g. Apps. • Ts need more training on LAC needs. • EPs-consultation with Ts – help understand if any unidentified SEMH or learning needs. reframe negative narratives and psychoeducation. Using inclusion tool when things are challenging. • VS share triggers with secondary school staff. Interventions monitored and individualised to yps needs. financial model – based on individual need. Monitoring impact termly. • VS use a RAG rated system to identify those at risk – but relies on schools informing them.
	<p>Young people want to excel, pursue their interests and learn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp want to pursue extracurricular activities – sports-boxing and drama. • Particularly music- builds confidence / express selves. • PRUs often have more opportunities for these. • They value education and want to learn - scaling questions – 8/10. • High aspirations – but not reintegrated into mainstream – decline in academic work. • Missed learning in PRU and not able to get above a C in GCSEs-limited opportunities. • Low expectations – further anger. • Yp want to learn/excel shown through word clouds – non-ideal school- bored, unmotivated. Ideal school – doing my work, motivated, happy. <p>Positive experiences/ways forward Meso/macro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting extra-curricular activities. • EP – work with horses. • Interventions in PRUs- farm projects, fire service courses, mentoring, tutoring, clubs, sports etc- boosting self-esteem. • Carers- importance of in-school support – clubs. Yp said they want extracurricular opportunities in school e.g. GCSE boxing, music studios, sports teams and equipment. • Need for govt funding to give these opportunities to excel. Community support e.g. youth clubs.
<p>3. <u>Young people wanted a sense of containment, belonging and identity</u></p>	<p>Young people seek nurturing environments due to pre-care experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-care experiences-abuse, neglect – not understood by school. • Relationship losses-“bad kid”. • Secondary school more challenging – multiple relationships – yp need dependence. • Scaling Q-school exp – 5/10. • Lots excluded in Y7.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less nurture / containment in secondary. • Can't self-regulate. <p>Positive experiences/ways forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships in primary – e.g. Ideal School. • Training adults to support yp self-regulation. • Yp want adults who care e.g. keyworker. • Emotional check-ins in the PRU work well-challenging in secondaries.
	Internal exclusion and the use of isolation rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 11 yp talked about isolation rooms in secondary settings. • Conditions – degrading, long periods of time, no breaks. • Non-Ideal School – no windows, silence etc. • No opportunities for real learning. • Walked out so excluded. • Escalated their behaviour. • Not given a voice in decision-making processes e.g. PEP because in isolation. • Felt adults didn't care/gave up. • Negative emotional / psychological impact-feeling hopeless. <p>Positive ways forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better measures of punishment in PRU. • Some benefits of isolation rooms – taught places they didn't want to be. • Yp said how they could be improved – better tasks, more like a classroom etc. • None of profs/carers talked about isolation rooms.
	Peer group challenges and bullying (identity and belonging)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp dislike care identity- want to be the same as peers. • Strong positive and negative peer experiences. • 3 females bullied pre-exclusion. 2 of which their reactions were the reason for their exclusion. • Showing off to peers – regret. • Carers-yp were easily led. Bullying leading to mental health challenges. • Loss of friendships post exclusion. • Wrong crowds in PRUs. • Non-Ideal school – negative experiences with peers. Females – 4/6 were bullied. 1/5 males bullied. Females- very specific about their negative interactions. Talked about not being able to relate. <p>Positive experiences / ways forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal School – young people “like me”, fun etc. • PRU – Ideal School for many – “like a family”. • Peers can help-protective factor.
	Young people feel personally responsible and blame themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “all on me” – multiple adult relationship breakdowns – so have to rely on self. • Self-blame / frustration. • Felt they needed to do things differently.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-blame – knocked confidence/self-esteem. • Carers- it's the yp's responsibility. • Yp don't have trust for professionals. • Post exclusion guilt – felt left behind. • Feeling that things cannot be changes – helplessness – self-destruction • Lacking a clear narrative. <p>Positive experiences/ways forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yp say to create a positive mindset, help yourself, don't rely on adults, don't be defined by negative experiences, create a positive identity through extra-curricular. • Narrative therapies can be useful – change endings.
	<p>The impact of pre-care and post-exclusion experiences on mental health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Pre-exclusion experiences impacting on mental health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult pre-care experiences – abuse etc-internalised these feelings. Impact on coping in school, e.g. females self-harming. • Difficulties self-regulating due to ACES- not able to learn. • Yp – hard to control anger- externalising behaviours- directed at teacher or peers. • Mental health difficulties due to pre-care experiences. • Excluded once then multiple exclusions. • Figure demonstrating pre-exclusion factors affecting mental health. • Unsupported SEMH needs – distrust for CAMHS and the government and varied SEMH provision in secondaries. Underfunded secondary SEMH provision. • Schools feel ill-equipped to support these SEMH needs and many think there are more appropriate “therapeutic settings”. <p>Positive ways forward:</p> <p>Micro/meso</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three pts talked about positive experiences of therapeutic support pre-exclusion – EMDR and CBT-has to be with someone they're comfortable with. • EP support unmemorable – but many had had this support. • Yp said drug counsellor and advocates helpful. CAMHS in schools helpful- liked learning how brain works. • EP- active, preventative work – person-centred -PATH, MAP. Therapeutic work, CBT, narrative, play therapies. • Better when in school-why hard with CAMHS. EPs fill in CAMHS gaps-but hard in traded model. • Some yp said would have liked more therapeutic support. Generally – they valued adults to believe in them, advocate, listen.

	<p>Being propelled into a negative subculture within the school and wider community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakdown of relationships after exclusion – low expectations impacted on them – sought belonging e.g. gangs. Many already vulnerable to gangs but after exclusion were easily exploited. • Four yp-affiliations with gangs. • Link between drill and violence. • No support from school to get out of gang. • Not belonging in schools e.g. in isolation. • Bad influences in PRU/once excluded – sexualised behaviours. • Spending time with those involved in crime. Then being drawn into crime. • Let to use drugs. • EPs said - drawn into criminal activities such as county lines. "snowball effect" – drawn into crime, prison/NEET. • SENCo said – go from supportive PRUs into colleges who have limited understanding of LAC needs, not linked with professional support. Lack of community support once excluded. <p>Positive ways forward</p> <p>Meso/exo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better post-16 services. SENCo offering training to colleges. • Supporting adults to support the child to know their rights when they reach 16 e.g. where to live. • Meaningful support for care leavers.
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Appendix M: Young people's advice to other young people in a similar position

Erm....(long pause)....in a similar position as in how? I'd just say....just do the best you can in....the PRU that you're in...**don't let anyone drag you down ... coz at the end of the day, the only one that's gonna be hurt, or sitting in jail, is you.** Like that's what I had to learn anyway. My friends used to tell me, oh M, go up to that man and smack him on the back of the head, and I used to be like "ok...smack"! get myself in one big fight over nothing, because I wanted to impress my friends. And the only person who'd be getting arrested after that was me...I was the one on tag...and when I was on tag, I had nobody, everyone left...so it's like...! **Yeah. just you know, do your own thing, don't follow a crowd. (YP2)**

Try and do your work, just get on with it, it's not that difficult. just like, I understand that you need to be hyperactive all the time, 'coz obviously I'm like that, but at least try and do your work...or just come and join me in the PRU X!
(YP3)

I don't know coz I'm not the greatest role model. If I'm a role model, I'll have to try to be good in front of them. But that's not me, so how am I being a role model. I'm not really the best person to look up to. (is there anything you've learnt from your experiences that you think others could learn from?) ...not sure. I probably won't be in school for long (YP4).

I'd tell them not to er, not to, lower your standards to impress anyone with your behaviour. The best thing to do, even if you don't like being there, just get your head down. Get your grades. Go to university, get everything you need to do for whatever career you choose, basically don't let people stop you from doing that over behaviour. Or if teachers are not listening to you, or if they tell you you can't do it, always think that you can do it. it's not good to be told that you can't do something when you want to do something. (and what would you say to yourself back then?) tell myself pretty much the same thing just put your head down, don't get involved with the naughty kids, obviously make friends but don't get involved with the troubled kids. Just get your grades basically. Do all of school, don't get upset if the teachers don't listen to you, it's not really worth it sort of thing, just get on with it. That's what I really wish I'd done to be honest (YP5).

Erm, I would say...whatever the situation was...even if it was their fault, just go back into school and focus. That's all you can do or try and bless it with the person that you had the problem with. To move forward (YP6).

Don't let anyone hit you and if they do, hit them back (YP7).

Try not to be fixed on that one thing. Because then you forget about everything else. You don't think about what could happen, you just think about what you're gonna do, and then the next thing you know, your life's a mess (YP8).

I'd just say like they should like carry on and not think about what other people have to say and not worry about like...**I know most students they get picked on or...like they feel like their life is quite hard right now, but, it does get a bit**

easier. And it's just the more that you think about, like if you just get everything done and be more successful in life... you'll start feeling better about yourself (YP9).

*I don't know. I just like, **you've gotta wanna help yourself before you accept help from others**...coz it's no good people helping you when you're not doing your bit. But the thing is not a lot of people actually have that mindset (YP10).*

*I would just say that people need to have goals for themselves. This is going to sound silly but reading self-help books has really opened my mind, just from having that advice, educating yourself and setting yourself targets even if it's just like personal life...gym...I have to go 5 days a week. **Just have a routine and structure. 'Coz for a care leaver, the one thing we're missing in life is structure, routine and feeling settled. So, make yourself feel settled. Set yourself boundaries, goals, and then prove to yourself that you can do it. it sounds cringey! I wish I could say, go to your worker and they'll help you, but I can't, you have to do it yourself.***

And just to speak on behalf of anyone who's left school with no qualifications, not just care leavers, but no one at 17, knows what they want. How can you decide that? Especially if you've never had the opportunities. You don't know what you wanna do until you've had experiences.

I just think, you've got a platform here, and if you can make even like a little dent in some of these issues then that would be a big help. Coz there's a lot that could be done. And I think the amount of money that goes towards these programmes, it could be done in a much better way to actually help those in care (YP11).

Appendix N: Ethics approval form gained for IoE, UCL



Ethics Application Form: Student Research

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

For further support and guidance please see accompanying guidelines and the Ethics Review Procedures for Student Research <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/research-ethics-committee/ioe> or contact your supervisor or IOE.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk.

Before completing this form, you will need to discuss your proposal fully with your supervisor(s). Please attach all supporting documents and letters.

For all Psychology students, this form should be completed with reference to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics and Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Section 1 Project details	
a.	Project title: Exploring the experiences of school exclusion for looked after children
b.	Student name: Juliette Thomson
c.	Supervisor/Personal Tutor: Vivian Hill and Elaine Chase
d.	Department: Psychology and Human Development
e.	Course category (Tick one)
	PhD/MPhil <input type="checkbox"/> EdD <input type="checkbox"/>
	MRes <input type="checkbox"/> DEdPsy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	MTeach <input type="checkbox"/> MA/MSc <input type="checkbox"/>
	ITE <input type="checkbox"/>
	Diploma (state which) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="text"/>
Other (state which) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="text"/>	
f.	Course/module title: Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology
g.	If applicable, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed. UCL, Institute of Education
h.	Intended research start date: January 10 th 2019
i.	Intended research end date: May 1 st 2020
j.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in: England

If research to be conducted abroad please ensure travel insurance is obtained through UCL http://www.ucl.ac.uk/finance/insurance/travel	
k.	Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
	External Committee Name:
	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ⇒ go to Section 2
	Date of Approval:
<p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application. - Proceed to Section 10 Attachments. <p>Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.</p>	

Section 2 Project summary

Research methods (tick all that apply)

Please attach questionnaires, visual methods and schedules for interviews (even in draft form).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interviews | <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled trial/other intervention study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of personal records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires | <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic review ⇒ <i>if only method used go to Section 5.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action research | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary data analysis ⇒ <i>if secondary analysis used go to Section 6.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observation | <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature review | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, give details: |

Please provide an overview of your research. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, your method of data collection (e.g., observations, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) and kind of questions that will be asked, reporting and dissemination (typically 300-500 words).

Purpose of the research: Looked after children (LAC) are five times more likely to have a fixed-period exclusion than non-LAC (March 2018, DfE). 11.44% of LAC had at least one fixed period exclusion in 2016, compared with 2.11 of non-LAC. They experience more school changes and exclusions than their non-looked after peers. From the limited research available, it is evident that it is professionals who are making judgements on the reasons for these exclusions. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand from young people's perspectives what could be done to avoid school exclusions and support them better in schools.

Aims: To understand looked after children (LAC)'s experiences of exclusion. This includes any challenges they face/have faced which may have led or already has led to school exclusion. In doing so, the research will seek to understand the factors which have contributed to these experiences as well as the impact on the child/young person. It also aims to provide positive ways forward which will help support implications for policy and practice.

Main research questions:

- 1) What are the experiences of school exclusion for LAC?
- 2) What are schools and professionals doing and what more could be done to support the inclusion of LAC?

Research design: The design will be a multi-informant design.

Research participants: There will be five groups of research participants:

- 1- LAC 'at risk' of exclusion
- 2- LAC who have already been excluded
- 3- School staff (including the virtual school heads)
- 4- Carers
- 5- Educational Psychologists

Sampling: I will use opportunistic sampling methods.

Sample:	Sampling from:	Sample size
LAC who have already been excluded	PRUs in local authority X (the school has 5 provisions across the local authority)	5-10
LAC 'at risk' of exclusion	Identified by the virtual school	5-10
School staff	Through the school link EP, virtual school and/or PRU	5-10
Carers	Through the school link EP, virtual school and/or PRU	5-10
Educational Psychologists	Through the London EP forum for EPs who work within the Virtual school. 2 EPs in LA X who will support contact.	5-10

Method of data collection: I will use semi-structured interviews with the young people, school staff, EPs and carers, one-to-one. I may also use drawings to elicit the voice of the young person. I will access data from the virtual school from their database to identify these children, with permission.

Kind of questions that will be asked:

To the excluded young people: Can you tell me a bit about your experiences of school? What did you enjoy about school? What did you not enjoy? -Can you tell me about your experiences of being excluded?

To the LAC 'at risk' of exclusion: What do you think the school could be doing to keep you in school (and avoid being excluded?)

To the school staff (mainstream school): What systems do you have in place to support children's inclusion?

To the EPs: What are EPs currently doing (proactively/reactively) to support the inclusion of LAC in mainstream schools?

Reporting and dissemination:

The thesis will be written up and potentially disseminated to a wider audience after July 2020. All participants will have the chance to have a copy of the report. The young people will have a tailored report, in a format which is friendly for them.

Section 3 Participants

Please answer the following questions giving full details where necessary. Text boxes will expand for your responses.

a.	Will your research involve human participants?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> ⇒ go to Section 4
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b.	Who are the participants (i.e. what sorts of people will be involved)? Tick all that apply.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Early years/pre-school <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ages 5-11 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ages 12-16 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Young people aged 17-18	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown – specify below <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults <i>please specify below</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify below
	NB: Ensure that you check the guidelines (Section 1) carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES).	
c.	If participants are under the responsibility of others (such as parents, teachers or medical staff) how do you intend to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study? (Please attach approach letters or details of permission procedures – see Section 9 Attachments.) Through their schools/PRU/Virtual school and carers.	
d.	How will participants be recruited (identified and approached)? LAC who have been excluded from school (and their carers) will be recruited through their PRUs/ the Virtual school with the support of the SENCo and via letters sent to carers. LAC who are 'at risk' of exclusion (and their carers) will be recruited through their schools and identified by the virtual school with the help of their link EP/EP working within the virtual school. EPs will be recruited through the help of two EPs within local authority X who work within the Virtual school and attend a regular meet-up with EPs working in Virtual schools across London.	
e.	Describe the process you will use to inform participants about what you are doing. LAC who have already been excluded (and their carers) will be approached by the SENCo at the PRU with information about the project, an information sheet and a consent form. LAC 'at risk' of exclusion (and their carers) will be approached by the Head of the Virtual School / their Virtual school caseworker with information about the project, an information sheet and a consent form. In order to ensure that the students have not changed their mind, I will ask them whether they are still happy to participate during my first school visit and then again before the interviews.	
f.	How will you obtain the consent of participants? Will this be written? How will it be made clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any time? <i>See the guidelines for information on opt-in and opt-out procedures. Please note that the method of consent should be appropriate to the research and fully explained.</i> The participants and their carers will be asked to provide written consent to take part in the study. Both the consent form and information sheet explicitly state that the participant is free to change his or her mind about taking part in the study at any point.	
g.	Studies involving questionnaires: Will participants be given the option of omitting questions they do not wish to answer? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
	If NO please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8. NA	
h.	Studies involving observation: Confirm whether participants will be asked for their informed consent to be observed.	

	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If NO read the guidelines (Ethical Issues section) and explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8. NA
i.	Might participants experience anxiety, discomfort or embarrassment as a result of your study? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If yes what steps will you take to explain and minimise this? If not , explain how you can be sure that no discomfort or embarrassment will arise? It is anticipated that the young people may experience some levels of discomfort and embarrassment from discussing their exclusions. I am aware of the sensitivities involved in asking about their difficult past experiences. As a trainee Educational Psychologist, I believe that we receive the appropriate training to navigate these difficulties as this is part of our professional role. I will ensure that I ask the participants if they would like to skip any questions they may not wish to answer and will be able to request for someone else they would like be present during the interviews (e.g. member of staff), if this is what they would prefer. They will also be reminded of their right to withdraw at any point during the process. The SENCo at the schools will also be able to offer assistance if any difficulties arise.
j.	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants (deception) in any way? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	If YES please provide further details below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8. █
k.	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If NO please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8. NA
l.	Will participants be given information about the findings of your study? (This could be a brief summary of your findings in general; it is not the same as an individual debriefing.) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If no , why not? NA

Section 4 Security-sensitive material

Only complete if applicable

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

a.	Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b.	Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c.	Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?		
* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues		

Section 5 Systematic review of research
Only complete if applicable

a.	Will you be collecting any new data from participants?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	No <input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Will you be analysing any secondary data?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> *	No <input type="checkbox"/>
* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues <i>If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) and if you have answered No to both questions, please go to Section 10 Attachments.</i>			

Section 6 Secondary data analysis Complete for all secondary analysis

a.	Name of dataset/s	Virtual school records Educational Psychology records	
b.	Owner of dataset/s	Virtual School Educational Psychology (Children's Services in Local Authority X).	
c.	Are the data in the public domain?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<i>If no, do you have the owner's permission/license?</i> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No* <input type="checkbox"/>	
d.	Are the data anonymised?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<i>Do you plan to anonymise the data?</i> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No* <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<i>Do you plan to use individual level data?</i> Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<i>Will you be linking data to individuals?</i> Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
e.	Are the data sensitive (DPA 1998 definition)?	Yes* <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f.	Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
g.	If no , was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
h.	If no , was data collected prior to ethics approval process?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues As part of my professional doctorate training, I am on placement within a local authority where I have access to the Educational Psychology databases. I have asked permission to look at these files from the Principal Educational Psychologist in this service. I have also gained permission to be sent data from the Virtual School, to an encrypted email address, within the same local authority. I may look at a child's individual Educational Psychology file (if they have one) which is available for all EPs in the service to see. I			

would do this to see whether they have had any EP involvement in the past and to see what their educational history is where appropriate. I will be linking this data to the individuals that I will be interviewing.

If secondary analysis is only method used and no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to Section 9 Attachments.

Section 7 Data Storage and Security

Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

a.	Confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998). (See the Guidelines and the Institute's Data Protection & Records Management Policy for more detail.)	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b.	Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> * No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
* If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with the DPA 1998 and state what these arrangements are below. NA			
c.	Who will have access to the data and personal information, including advisory/consultation groups and during transcription? Just the researcher and the research supervisors will have access to the data and personal information.		
During the research			
d.	Where will the data be stored? Data will be stored on a password protected laptop. Data will be encrypted.		
e.	Will mobile devices such as USB storage and laptops be used? * If yes, state what mobile devices: Data will be anonymously stored on the researcher's laptop and will be password protected. * If yes, will they be encrypted?: All participant data will be password protected.	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * No <input type="checkbox"/>
After the research			
f.	Where will the data be stored? The data will be stored in a secure location inside the researcher's house.		
g.	How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format? Data and records will be kept for 3 years. They will be kept as paper copies and typed up transcripts.		
h.	Will data be archived for use by other researchers? * If yes, please provide details. [REDACTED]	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> * No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Section 8 Ethical issues

Are there particular features of the proposed work which may raise ethical concerns or add to the complexity of ethical decision making? If so, please outline how you will deal with these.

It is important that you demonstrate your awareness of potential risks or harm that may arise as a result of your research. You should then demonstrate that you have considered ways to minimise the likelihood and impact of each potential harm that you have identified. Please be as specific as possible in describing the ethical issues you will have to address. Please consider / address ALL issues that may apply.

<i>Ethical concerns may include, but not be limited to, the following areas:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methods - Sampling - Recruitment - Gatekeepers - Informed consent - Potentially vulnerable participants - Safeguarding/child protection - Sensitive topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International research - Risks to participants and/or researchers - Confidentiality/Anonymity - Disclosures/limits to confidentiality - Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection) - Reporting - Dissemination and use of findings
<p>Informed consent: The participants and/or their carers will be asked to provide written consent to take part in the study. Both the consent form and information sheet explicitly state that the participant is free to change his or her mind about taking part in the study at any point. Within the information sheet, I have said that carers can decide whether they want to participate or whether they wish for just their child to participate. I have also said in the young person's information sheet that they can state if they do not want their carer to be interviewed.</p>	
<p>Sampling and potentially vulnerable participants: As the main participant group in the study consists of Looked After Children, it is important to be aware that this group is likely to have experienced significant disruption in their early lives, including involvement of many adults and professionals over short periods of time. Some participants may feel uncomfortable about being interviewed by the researcher on their own and in order to accommodate this, it has been made clear in the information sheet and consent form that the participants are welcome to have a member of staff present/friend/carer, if this is what the participant would prefer. It has also been made clear that the participant can change their mind about participating to take part in the study at any time and they may also skip any questions they do not wish to answer. The participants and their carers will also be provided with the researcher's email address, in case they have any questions they wish to discuss.</p>	
<p>Sensitive topics: It has been acknowledged that participants will be talking about potentially sensitive topics and events in their lives. Participants will be reminded of their anonymity and their right to withdraw. If a participant becomes anxious or upset during the course of the interview, the researcher will ask whether they would like to terminate the interview and seek support from the school.</p>	
<p>Disclosures/limits to confidentiality/safeguarding: In case of any disclosures indicating that the young person or someone else might be at risk of harm, the researcher will not keep the information confidential and this has been outlined clearly in the consent form. This will also be explained to the child/young person. The researcher will pass this information on to the relevant safeguarding team in the local authority where applicable.</p>	
<p>Data storage and security both during and after the research: The participants' completed questionnaires will be stored securely by the researcher under lock and key. Any digital data will be stored on the researcher's laptop and will be password protected.</p>	
<p>Potential risk to researcher: A risk analysis will be carried out prior to interviews with the young person. If interviews are to take place at the young person's home, local authority procedures will be adhered to and the researcher will inform two colleagues of their whereabouts.</p>	

Section 9 Further information

Outline any other information you feel relevant to this submission, using a separate sheet or attachments if necessary.

NA

Section 10 Attachments Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached

a.	Information sheets and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research, including approach letters	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Consent form	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>If applicable:</i>		
c.	The proposal for the project	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Full risk assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Section 11 Declaration

		Yes	No
I have read, understood and will abide by the following set of guidelines.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BPS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BERA <input type="checkbox"/>	BSA <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:			
The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.			
Name	Juliette Thomson		
Date	18.01.2019		

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor.

Notes and references

Professional code of ethics

You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:

[British Psychological Society](#) (2009) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and (2014) *Code of Human Research Ethics*

or

[British Educational Research Association](#) (2011) *Ethical Guidelines*

or

[British Sociological Association](#) (2002) *Statement of Ethical Practice*

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through UCL.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references

The www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk website is very useful for assisting you to think through the ethical issues arising from your project.

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury.

A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental use

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, you may refer the application to the Research Ethics and Governance Administrator (via IOE_researchethics@ucl.ac.uk) so that it can be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A Research Ethics Committee Chair, ethics representatives in your department and the research ethics coordinator can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the Research Ethics Committee.

Reviewer 1

Supervisor name	Dr Elaine Chase	
Supervisor comments	I have reviewed the application and feel confident that careful consideration has been made to the ethical issues likely to emerge from the research	
Supervisor signature	[REDACTED]	
Reviewer 2		
Advisory committee/course team member name	Vivian Hill	
Advisory committee/course team member comments	I have met with Juliette and Elaine, her other supervisor and we have discussed the ethical issues inherent in her project and now having reviewed her application I feel the ethical issues have been carefully considered and taken into account. I am second supervisor and also programme director for the DEdPsy.	
Advisory committee/course team member signature	[REDACTED]	
Decision		
Date decision was made	02.12.2018	
Decision	Approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Referred back to applicant and supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Referred to REC for review	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recording	Recorded in the student information system	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Once completed and approved, please send this form and associated documents to the relevant programme administrator to record on the student information system and to securely store.

Further guidance on ethical issues can be found on the IOE website at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/research-ethics-committee/ioe> and www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk

Appendix O: Summary of the factors leading to exclusion and the impact of exclusion

The table below details the factors leading to the exclusions of LAC based on all the participant data. Emboldened are the themes or subthemes and not emboldened are factors within these themes (but not exclusive to this theme). Highlighted in yellow are the impacts of the exclusions.

Theme	Microsystem (Child)	Mesosystem (School and home connections)	Exosystem, Macrosystem, Chronosystem (Local authority and wider society)
Theme 1	<p>Not feeling listened to or heard by adults and build-up of anger / frustration</p> <p>Anger and frustration towards themselves and towards adults in their microsystem</p> <p>Continued frustration at not being heard when Post 16 / as a care leaver</p>	<p>Lack of effective adult advocates</p> <p>Distrust for adults</p> <p>Subsequent breakdowns in care placements post exclusion and relationship losses</p>	<p>Ineffective systems for advocacy</p> <p>School budget cuts and lack of community support</p> <p>Schools being results driven and lacking SEMH support</p> <p>Exclusion leading some CIN into care then multiple changes (schools, home)</p> <p>Drawn into antisocial behaviour and crime</p> <p>Wider social exclusion e.g. difficulties with housing as a care leaver</p> <p>Exclusion from income / the economy due to ineffective support from social care</p>
Theme 2	<p>Young people wanted to excel, pursue their interests and learn but were met with low adult expectations of their academic work</p> <p>Low expectations of themselves and giving up</p>	<p>Adults misunderstanding their needs and inappropriate adjustments made (e.g. not enough support vs singling them out)</p>	<p>Young people dislike care label and feel they are treated different</p> <p>Punitive behaviour policies in schools e.g. zero-tolerance policies and isolation rooms</p>

	<p>Further decline / disengagement in their academic work due to low academic expectations (e.g. in PRUs)</p>	<p>Schools and teachers feel they lack the resources and expertise to meet LAC needs</p> <p>Lack of opportunities for extra-curricular pursuits and opportunities to excel at something</p> <p>Disengagement from education (NEET)</p>	<p>Insufficient training for social workers and schools around LAC needs e.g. trauma and attachment.</p> <p>Perpetuated negative narrative due to a lack of positive care leaver role models</p>
<p>Theme 3</p>	<p>Low self-esteem, self-worth and lack of confidence</p> <p>Young people felt personally responsible and blamed themselves</p> <p>Feelings of shame / low self-esteem</p> <p>Lack of positive identity so sought an identity e.g. in gangs</p> <p>Isolation rooms potentially leading to emotional and psychological difficulties / feeling hopeless</p> <p>Lack of personal narrative – “I am not worthy, not wanted”</p> <p>Poor mental / physical health and a lack of positive mental well-being</p> <p>Using drugs to cope</p>	<p>Pre-care experiences (developmental trauma) impacting on mental health and wellbeing meaning that many found it difficult to cope in school</p> <p>Feeling uncontained and a lack of nurture from secondary school.</p> <p>Internal exclusion and the use of isolation rooms escalating their behaviour</p> <p>Peer group challenges and bullying</p> <p>Friendships lost so further isolated</p>	<p>Being propelled into a negative subculture within the school and wider community</p> <p>Feeling that mental health services cannot help e.g. CAMHS</p>

Appendix P: Full summary of all implications from the findings

Summary of implications

		Implication	Evidence
Microsystem (Child)	Schools / teachers / DTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Young people to be supported to create a positive identity e.g. through extra-curricular activities. -Teachers to listen more and offer mediation when disputes arise. -Adults to advocate – meaning represent the CYP's views and then act on what they hear. -Provide someone to talk to that CYP can relate to. -Adults to consider the CYP's context, give “chances” and be flexible. -Give CYP opportunities to share their experiences to help others. -Use the young person's friends to support them. -Young people to be encouraged by adults to have high expectations and aspirations for themselves. -Adults to show high expectations of behaviour (based on context) and of their academic work. -Adults not to single out the young person in front of their peers. -Provide emotional “check ins” with young people from trusted adults. -Adults not to shout and teachers to use humour. -Teachers to take an interest in the individual and “stick around”. 	<p>Young people (x11), SENCo, carers (x4), EPs (x2).</p> <p>Young people (x10).</p> <p>Young people (x5), EPs (x5).</p> <p>Young people (x9).</p> <p>Young people (x5).</p> <p>SENCo, Young people (x4).</p> <p>Young people (x3), carer (x1).</p> <p>Young people (x4).</p> <p>Young people (x4).</p> <p>Young people (x3).</p> <p>Young people (x2), SENCo.</p> <p>Young people (x3).</p> <p>Young people (x2).</p>
	SWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SWs to listen and be consistent (“don't leave”). -SWs to advocate for the child and build strong relationships. 	<p>Young people (x5), EPs (x8), HoVS, SENCo.</p> <p>Young people (x2), EPs (x8), HoVS, SENCo.</p>
	VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -VS caseworkers to continue to check in and give practical support e.g. finding college courses. 	<p>Young people (x3).</p>

	EPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Therapeutic support to be provided where necessary by an adult they are comfortable with (e.g. CBT, emotional regulation techniques). -Young people to be supported to understand their experiences e.g. Narrative therapy, Life Story approaches etc. -Direct work from EPs with young person to be based on whether the individual is interested in understanding their learning needs (rather than it being enforced on them). -EP work to include person-centred approaches e.g. PATH, MAP. 	<p>EPs (x4), young people (x4), SENCo. EPs (x4), SENCo.</p> <p>Young people (x3).</p> <p>EPs (x3).</p>
Mesosystem (School and home connections)	Schools / teachers / DTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Schools to promote and prioritise extra-curricular activities for LACYP. -Use music to engage them e.g. clubs, opportunities to make music etc. -Schools to update and review behaviour policies – flexibility and consideration of psychological impact of placing LACYP in isolation rooms. -Create nurturing secondary school culture/ethos – e.g. attachment aware schools. -Isolation rooms (if used) to have better tasks and be more like a classroom. -Celebrate difference at a school level to shift negative discourses around being in care. -Schools to provide talks from young adults who have been through adverse experiences. -Continue to provide therapeutic support e.g. Equine therapy, through school. -Schools to be accountable for updating and reviewing EHCPs. 	<p>Young people (x11), SENCo, carers (x3), EPs (x2). Young people (x9). EPs (x5), SENCo.</p> <p>EPs (x5).</p> <p>Young people (x4). Young people (x2), EPs (x2). Young people (x2), SENCo. SEnCo, EPs (x2).</p> <p>Carer (x1), EP (x1).</p>
	SWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support the child to know their legal rights when turning 16. -Promote club attendance outside of school based on the young person's interests. 	<p>Young people (x2), carer (x1), EPs (x2). Carers (x2), EPs (x2).</p>
	VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to work with adults closest to the child – carers/DT e.g. through training. -Share a young person's triggers among secondary school staff. -Provide individualised interventions based on need and monitor impact. -Develop systems to monitor those 'at risk' of exclusion e.g. using a 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rated system. 	<p>HoVS, EPs (x4).</p> <p>HoVS, EPs (x2).</p> <p>HoVS.</p> <p>HoVS.</p>

	<p>EPs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prioritise LACYP within school annual planning meetings. -Training to staff to know how to support CYP's emotional regulation and to change the narrative around LACYP, help understanding of LACYP needs/how to support and provide follow ups on training (e.g. workshops). -Provide consultations with teachers to understand if there are any unidentified learning or SEMH needs. -Facilitate strong relationships between child and carer (e.g. therapeutic parenting), child and SW and child and schools so that these adults can be effective advocates. -Support teacher wellbeing e.g. through Reflecting teams (Hulsi & Maggs, 2015) and/or Circle of Adults (Turner & Gulliford, 2020). -Support VS caseworkers and SWs through training, drop-ins and supervision. -Work closely with PRUs to provide strategies and staff support. -EP teams to create and use 'Inclusion tools' to audit what strategies have been tried. -Advocate for the child's stable education placement as a priority. 	<p>EPs (x9). EPs (x9).</p> <p>EPs (x7).</p> <p>EPs (x5), SENCo.</p> <p>EPs (x5).</p> <p>EPs (x4).</p> <p>EPs (x3), SENCo.</p> <p>EPs (x2).</p> <p>EPs (x2).</p>
<p>Exosystem, Macrosystem, Chronosystem (Local authority and wider society)</p>	<p>Local authority/government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Government funding for extra-curricular activities. -Schools to be less results-driven and prioritise mental health resources. -Listen to the child's views in PEPs. -Get young people's feedback from children's councils. -LA / government to consider risk of CIN being excluded and going into care within policy. -Increased community support e.g. youth clubs. -LACYP to be sent to secondary schools considered to have a strong nurturing approach. -Provide drug counsellors and advocates where appropriate. -Improved Post 16 services e.g. training to colleges around LACYP needs. -Monitoring of LACYP dropout rates at Post 16 settings. -Continued monitoring and assessment of how to support care leavers. 	<p>Young people (x8), EPs (x3), SENCo.</p> <p>EPs (x5), young people (x4), SENCo.</p> <p>HoVS, young people (x2), EPs (x2).</p> <p>EPs (x3), young people (x1).</p> <p>Young people (x3).</p> <p>Young people (x3).</p> <p>EPs (x2).</p> <p>Young people (x2).</p> <p>SENCo, EP (x1).</p> <p>SENCo, EP (x1).</p> <p>Young person (x1), SENCo.</p>

	Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CAMHS / therapeutic input to take place in school (rather than in clinic) where possible. -Professionals to delineate their roles when working with LACYP. -Professionals involved with LACYP to have access to one system to access the child's history. 	<p>SENCo, EPs (x3).</p> <p>EPs (x3).</p> <p>EPs (x2).</p>
	VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prioritise stable school and home placement for the child. -PEPs to be quality assured by the VS. -Build strong VS and school / college relationships. -Prioritise stability of professional with the child. -Promote ambitious outcomes at HT/DT conferences and raise awareness of negative outcomes for excluded LACYP. -Provide a range of role models at care leaver forums. 	<p>HoVS, SENCo, EPs (x4).</p> <p>EPs (x5), HoVS.</p> <p>HoVS, EPs (x4).</p> <p>Carers (x2), EPs (x2), SENCo.</p> <p>HoVS, EPs (x3).</p> <p>Young person (x1), SENCo.</p>
	EPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -EPs to continue to be involved in TAC and PEP meetings to advocate for the CYP. -EPs to support SW knowledge of the child's rights within education and within the exclusion process. -EPs to be commissioned to do some of the therapeutic work with a CYP where CAMHS cannot. -EPs to liaise with out-of-borough EPs for a child out-of-borough's school placement. 	<p>EPs (x6).</p> <p>EPs (x2), carer (x1), young person (x1).</p> <p>SENCo, EPs (x3), young person (x1).</p> <p>EPs (x3).</p>

Summary of Implications for EPs

	Child & Family	School	Local authority
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Therapeutic parenting courses (EPs x3). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attachment, trauma-informed approaches (EPs x8, SENCo). -The mental health needs of LACYP (EPs x4). -To support staff wellbeing (EPs x3, SENCo). -Follow up workshops after training sessions (EPs x2). -Training for colleges and FE around LACYP needs (EPs x2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supporting SWs understand the educational rights of LACYP and to promote school inclusion (EPs x3, young person x1). -Working alongside the VS to deliver training (EPs x2).
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consultations with carers to problem-solve concerns (EPs x5). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consultations with SENCos and raising LACYP in planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensure advocacy of the child's voice at PEP and TAC meetings (EPs x6).

		<p>meetings (SENCo, EPs x9).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consultations to review behaviour policies (attachment informed) EPs x5). -Facilitating the update of EHCPs where appropriate (e.g. after a school transition) (carer x1, EP x1). -Consultations with teachers to understand if a child has any un-identified needs (EPs x2). -Consultations with teachers to provide strategies for challenging behaviour / containing conversations (EPs x2). -Using 'Inclusion tools' to monitor strategies (EPs x2). -Supervision with teachers / DT working closely with LACYP (EPs x2). -Support for identified mentors/tutors (SENCo, EP x1). -Facilitating sharing of good practise between APs and mainstream schools (SENCo, EP x1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Working with VS caseworkers – drop ins / consultations (HoVS, EPs x4). -Person-centred approaches such as a PATH used within PEP meetings EPs x3). -Consult with out-of-borough EPs for children in an out-of-borough placement (EPs x3). -Work discussion groups or special interest groups for LACYP (within borough and across boroughs) (EPs x2).
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formulation of child's needs to be shared and explained to CYP (young people x2, EPs x2). -Individual casework e.g. as part of EHCP process (EPs x4) -Person-centred approaches e.g. PATHs and MAPs (EPs x2). -Post-16 work to elicit hopes and identify support for transition to adulthood (EPs x2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supporting schools to self-assess their practice e.g. using 'Inclusion tools' or the 'attachment aware schools audit' (EPs x2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensuring LA monitoring of LACYP exclusions, managed moves and off rolling (EPs x3). -Supporting VS to audit PEPs and the impact of interventions (EPs x2).

Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Therapeutic work with the CYP e.g. Narrative approaches, Life Story approaches, CBT, emotional regulation techniques (young people x2, EPs x4, carers x2, SENCo). -Care leaver forums and councils (EPs x3). -Video interaction guidance (VIG) for carer and child (EP x1). -LACYP drop-in forums for secondary aged pupils (EP x1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facilitating reflective practice e.g. Reflecting Teams / Circle of Adults to contain staff anxieties and support staff wellbeing (EPs x5, SENCo). -Supporting Nurture Groups and / or ELSAs in secondary schools (EP x1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facilitating EP and VS discussion groups within and across LAs (EP x1).
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Action research with LACYP 'at risk' / excluded to further gather their views on how to best support them in school and beyond. -Action research with care leavers to understand what can support them better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supporting schools to identify, implement and monitor evidence-based interventions. For example, PALAC projects (Institute of Education). -Action research with teachers / DTs to further understand their views on LACYP exclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Present, review and disseminate research at local authority meetings (e.g. EP team meetings and VS team meetings). -Support LA to develop monitoring procedures for 'at risk' young people. -Assess training needs of schools and carers. -Create a LA pathway of support for those LACYP 'at risk' of exclusion. -Contribute to system level monitoring and research into isolation rooms and unofficial exclusions.