Exploring the Experiences and Perceptions of School Staff regarding their use of a Distance Travelled Tool as part of a new initiative.

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Abstract

The growing emphasis on the application of evidence based practice (EBP) together with an increasing pressure on Local Authorities (LAs) to demonstrate the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the services that they fund has lead to the introduction of evaluative tools across many of the public services. Distance Travelled Tools (DTTs) are considered to be a useful measure of progress made over time in response to an intervention and can therefore be used to provide this kind of evidence. A semi-rural LA in England developed a DTT for use across the services for children and young people. The implementation of the tool as part of the work undertaken by practitioners represented a significant change in practice. In this study I explored the perceptions and experiences of mainstream primary and secondary school staff in the implementation of this DTT.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with twenty members of staff from eight mainstream education settings (five primary and three secondary). I transcribed the interviews verbatim and analysed them using thematic analysis. The analysis revealed two super-ordinate themes, six themes and 25 sub-themes, which shed light on staff's experiences of applying the DTT. The first super-ordinate theme relates to the perceptions of staff regarding their use of the DTT to their work, specifically: in supporting holistic working; in enabling staff to elicit, share and understand the perspectives of stakeholders; and to formulate and support next steps. The second super-ordinate theme relates to school staff's experiences of implementing the tool, including: the issues associated with the tool's format; specific motivators and difficulties associated with the process of implementation; and the utility of the tool as a means of providing evidence for the LA. In highlighting the experiences and perceptions of the tool's users, this study has implications for the application of this type of tool in supporting the work undertaken by a range of practitioners who work with vulnerable pupils and their families. By exploring the perceived issues and benefits of implementing a DTT, this study also has implications for the work undertaken by Educational Psychologists to support organisational change associated with the implementation of new evaluative procedures and practices.

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

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Word count (exclusive of title page, abstract, acknowledgements, appendices and list of references): 34,995 words

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my husband, Mark, my parents, Mira and Paul, and my good friends, Tammy and Hannah, for their support, encouragement and proof reading my work. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Lynne Rogers and Helen Upton, for their support and advice throughout this project. Finally I would like to thank the staff members who participated in this project and made it possible.

In order to protect the anonymity of all persons involved in the study, the names of the schools and of the staff members who participated have been omitted.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Study Rationale

> "All young people are likely to be vulnerable at some time or other, but many of them will have recourse to protective factors which minimise the chances of poor outcomes."
>
> (p. 8, Walker & Donaldson, 2011)

In the United Kingdom, Local Authorities (LAs) prioritise the needs of vulnerable and at-risk children, young people and their families (McNally and Telhaj, 2007), and therefore fund a host of services and interventions in order to improve their chances of achieving positive outcomes (Munro, 2011; Walker & Donaldson, 2011). This work requires the commitment and expertise of a range of professionals (Taylor, 2012) and takes place in a variety of ways and on different systems levels (Walker & Donaldson, 2011, Munro, 2011). Despite the involvement of these agencies and the implementation of a range of services and interventions, many children, young people and families continue to experience poor outcomes (Stein, 2009; Hayden, 1996).

There is growing recognition that improving outcomes for children and young people necessitates the application of evidence based practices (EBP) (McHugh & Barlow, 2010). The incongruence between the provision of services and the outcomes of those in receipt of them has contributed towards an increasing emphasis on implementing EBPs in the public sector services provided for children and families (Aarons, Hurlburt & McCue Horwitz, 2011; Allen, 2011). By adopting EBPs, service providers can be more confident that the interventions that they fund will be beneficial (McHugh & Barlow, 2010) as well as cost-effective (Allen, 2011; Durbin, MacLeod, Aston & Bramley, 2011). One way of developing an evidence base for the effectiveness of a particular service or intervention, is to measure its impact on those receiving it (Dewson, Eccles, Tackey, Jackson, 2000). The importance of focusing on outcomes was also highlighted by the Munro Report (2011) as a means of providing better support for vulnerable children and young people. The report concluded that

service providers in the child protection system need to shift their focus from following procedures and providing services, to identifying and achieving outcomes.

One way to identify and measure these is through Distance Travelled Tools (DTTs), which have been designed to monitor and measure the impact of a service or intervention in terms of the progress or change experienced by participants over time (Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2003). DTTs are being increasingly implemented and have contributed to the evidence base for a range of services and interventions (Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004). However, despite the growing evidence base supporting or questioning the use of a range of interventions and therapeutic approaches, there continues to be a gap between the findings of research and the practical application of those findings (McHugh & Barlow, 2010; Aarons, Hurlburt & McCue Horwitz, 2011; Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009; Kazak, Hoagwood, Weisz, Hood, Kratochwill, Vargas & Banez, 2010).

Part of the reason for this discrepancy is that adopting a new procedure or way of working can be challenging (Roberto & Levesque, 2005). This process is considered to be an example of organisational change (Roberto & Levesque, 2005). The research into the acceptance of organisational change suggests that one of the biggest challenges is the way in which new practices are received by those responsible for their implementation (Kazak, et al., ibid.). Research in this area highlights the importance of understanding the perspectives and experiences of staff and suggests that their attitudes (most importantly ambivalence and resistance) are indicators of how well change is received and implemented in organisations (Piderit, 2000). Despite recognising the importance of understanding these perspectives, the research into the implementation of new procedures predominantly focuses on the perspectives of services users, and there is a dearth in the literature around the perspectives and experiences of service providers (Aarons & Palinkas, 2007; Kazak, et al., ibid.). Exploring the views of service providers can also provide valuable insight into the perceived barriers and facilitators of using and applying tools and techniques in real world settings (Aarons & Palinkas, 2007). This is important, as the poor implementation of an EBP could lead to it being perceived as an

ineffective tool, instead of recognising that the process of implementation was the barrier for its effective use (Hurlburt & Knapp, 2003).

This study focuses on the perspectives and experiences of mainstream school staff who had begun implementing a DTT as part of their work in supporting vulnerable pupils.

1.2 Personal Research Context

I undertook this research as part of my doctoral training and conducted it in the LA in which I was undertaking my professional placement. The LA had developed a DTT as a means of measuring effectiveness and identifying and evaluating outcomes. The application of the DTT formed part of the LA's new initiative and they asked me to undertake some research to provide them with greater insight into the way in which it was being applied by staff. Whilst I was happy to explore the practical application of the tool by staff, my personal interest in organizational psychology, prompted me to extend the aims of the research to include this. Therefore, this research looks to present insight into the perceptions and experiences of staff regarding two broad areas of using the DTT with vulnerable pupils: first, the practical application of the tool as part of their work; and second, the experience of adopting or implementing a new tool as part of the process of organisational change.

1.3 Relevance to the profession of Educational Psychology

Educational Psychologists (EPs) are amongst a range of practitioners who work to support vulnerable and at-risk pupils and their families so as to achieve positive outcomes (Cameron, 2006; Aubrey & Dahl, 2006). As previously mentioned, there is continued pressure on funded services to demonstrate both the outcomes and cost-effectiveness of the work undertaken with vulnerable groups (Munro, 2012), and across the country auditing tools such as DTTs are increasingly being implemented to monitor the impact of this work (Yardley, 2012).

As these tools become more prominent, there is a greater chance that EPs will need to use them to evidence the outcomes of their work or to evaluate others' involvement. By investigating the perceptions and experiences of staff around their use of the DTT, this research has the potential to develop our understanding of the perceived barriers to using the tool and the aspects of the tool which are perceived to support and facilitate its use. It will also be able to highlight different ways in which the tool can be used by staff to support vulnerable pupils.

This understanding could influence the work undertaken in several ways. Firstly, having a better understanding of how they work and the data they produce may help EPs to implement them in a more effective way. Secondly, whilst the primary function of DTTs may be to measure and monitor outcomes, the processes involved in implementing a DTT means that its application could be seen to be a type of intervention in its own right. DTTs provide both the client and the practitioner with a vehicle for setting targets, and then monitoring and tracking any progress made (Dewson, Eccles, Tackey, Jackson, 2000), both of these processes have been documented to contribute towards establishing and maintaining change (Locke, 1996; Gómez-Miñambres, 2012; Gröpel & Steel, 2008). Therefore, by highlighting the perceived benefits and pitfalls of using a DTT, this research might encourage EPs to consider using DTTs in their work as a type of target setting, monitoring and evaluation tool.

A third possible benefit of developing EPs understanding of DTTs is associated with the important multi-disciplinary work that they undertake (Farrell, 2004). As EPs often work alongside and collaboratively with other agencies, it is important that they are able to make sense of the records made that are kept on file regarding previous work that has been undertaken by them. These records may include completed DTTs or notes based around work using DTTs. Having an understanding of these tools may help EPs to interpret the records of children and young people with more accuracy and therefore better inform future work.

A fourth possible benefit of this research relates to the role that EPs play in offering insight into the processes that support organisational changes in

education, including the implementation of new practices and procedures (Farell, 2004). Having an understanding of the barriers and facilitators associated with DTTs may inform the work EPs do to provide more support to other service providers, including school staff and other agencies. Finally, the particular DTT implemented in this LA is underpinned by the theoretical frameworks associated with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2003) and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (DfES, 2005). Both of these approaches advocate adopting an holistic approach to understanding and meeting the needs of children and families. As a result, using the DTT encourages staff to consider the needs of children, young people and their families from this holistic perspective. In exploring the experiences and perceptions of staff regarding their use of this particular DTT, this research may help to shed further light on working in this way. In doing so it could inform the work of EPs who advocate adopting an holistic approach.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the literature which has informed the development of my research aims. It is based on a systematic review of the relevant literature and the search strategy used is described in Appendix 1. In order to provide the context for the application and implementation of the tool that I am exploring in this research, I begin by exploring the research around vulnerable pupils, the use of an holistic approach to supporting them and the legislation that advocates this approach. My next area of focus relates more directly to organisational change within the context of providing services for children, young people and families. I have discussed this with reference to measuring outcomes, both in terms of ensuring that the needs of children and young people are being met, and to inform the evidence base for the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of services and interventions. Finally, I explore ways in which to measure these outcomes. I have defined soft outcomes and distance travelled, explored the literature around measuring progress in these terms, given an overview of what a DTT is and described some of the direct benefit of using them. I have concluded the chapter by bringing together aspects of each of these strands that underpin the importance of conducting research in this area, and then presented my research questions.

2.2 Supporting Vulnerable Pupils through an Holistic Approach

Defining Vulnerability in the Context of this Research

The term 'vulnerable' is context specific and it can therefore be difficult to define it with regards to young people in education. It is generally agreed however, that vulnerable pupils are those who are likely to have additional needs and who will experience poorer outcomes if these needs are not met (C4EO, 2012; Vladek, 2007; Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; DfES, 2004; Stormont, Espinosa, Knipping, & McCathren, 2003; Kirby & Fraser, 1997). Pupils considered to be vulnerable include, but are not limited to: children in care; pupils with medical needs; young carers; pupils with Special Educational Needs; pupils from traveller

communities; teenage parents; pupils with low Socio-Economic Status; young offenders; pupils from ethnic minorities; pupils with English as an additional language and asylum seekers (DfES, 2004; Gillock and Reyes, 1996).

The term 'vulnerable' carries with it a host of powerful connotations associated with a need for protection and support. As such using the term can have implications for the way in which pupils are conceptualised when they are described as vulnerable (Aubrey & Dahl, 2006; Daniel, 2010; Halton Children's Trust, 2012; Sheehan, Rhoades & Stanley, 2012). The range of pupils described under this umbrella term may have significantly different needs, therefore it may be more useful to conceptualise the needs of vulnerable pupils in terms of their exposure to risk and resiliency factors.

Risk factors are those that are associated with an increase in the likelihood of negative outcomes and the research suggests that a young person's vulnerability increases in line with the number of risk factors that he or she is exposed to (Hawkins, Catalano & Arthur, 2002; Farrington, 2002; Kirby and Fraser, 1997). In contrast, resiliency factors or protective factors are those that help to reduce the impact of risk factors (Kirby and Fraser, 1997 Matsen, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Some researchers have looked to conceptualise both risk and resiliency factors by adopting an eco-systemic approach (Waller, 2001). The eco-systemic model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1999) proposes that we are influenced by socially organised sub-systems. The most immediate sub-system impacting on an individual relates to their biological and physical make up, whilst the broadest sub-system takes into account cultural attitudes and ideologies. In adopting an eco-systemic approach each sub-system can be explored in terms of the specific elements within it and the way that they influence the individual, but also in terms of the interactions that occur between factors in each sub-system (Dockrell & Messer, 1999).

Waller (2001) highlights some of the risk and resiliency factors that could be identified in different parts of an individual's eco-system:
- Factors can be found at the individual level, such as their biological make-up. For example, a neurobiological disorder may be perceived as a

risk factor, whilst a strong immune system could be seen to be a resiliency factor.

- Factors may relate to an individual's immediate social circle, such as their family. For example, parental alcoholism could be a risk factor, whilst flexible and supportive parenting could be a resiliency factor.

- Factors may come from exposure to the wider community, such as the school community or the neighbourhood. For example, a supportive school could be seen to be a resiliency factor, whilst exposure to gang culture might be a risk factor;

- At a broader level, factors may be associated with exposure to an individual's social environment. For example, experiencing poverty could be a risk factor, whilst having access to affirmative action legislation could be a resiliency factor.

- Finally factors may be associated with the attitudes and ideologies inherent in an individual's culture, such as bias towards particular groups. For example, in terms of the business world, gender expectations may act as a risk factor for women in the industry by increasing the likelihood of their experiencing discrimination, whilst at the same time presenting as a resiliency factor for men.

Those who adopt an eco-systemic approach would argue that in order to meet the needs of our most vulnerable groups it is important to try to investigate the risk and resiliency factors that affect them in each of their sub-systems, rather than focusing on a particular area of need in isolation (Dockrell & Messer, 1999; Waller 2001). This approach to identifying and meeting needs is comparable with adopting an holistic approach (Engelbrecht, 2004) which also requires practitioners to consider the person as a whole being rather than focusing on a specific problem (Korthagen, 2004). In order to do so, professionals working with a vulnerable pupil or family need to collaborate in order to develop a shared and broader understanding of their needs (Laming, 2003; DfES, 2003).

Adopting an Holistic Approach – A National Drive

In the last twenty years there has been a shift towards adopting an holistic approach to supporting and safeguarding vulnerable children and young people

to reduce the risk of negative outcomes (Davies & Ward, 2012; DfES, 2003). The shift was prompted by the Laming report (2003) which highlighted the fact that children were falling through the child protection net, partly due to a lack of communication between professionals. It also indicated the need for identifying vulnerable children as early as possible. The report raised issues around agencies working together more cohesively and ignoring the traditional boundaries associated with the provision of services for children and young people.

The government responded to the report with the ECM green paper (DfES, 2003) which recommended making significant changes to the services for children and young people in order to improve outcomes (Lewis, Chamberlain, Riggall, Gagg & Rudd, 2007). The Children Act 2004 (DfES, 2004b) made some of these recommendations statutory. The ECM agenda promoted adopting an holistic approach to education, safeguarding and wellbeing (Moss & Haydon, 2012). It shifted the focus of services towards proactive measures to safeguard children from harm and to promote their wellbeing and welfare (Wolstenholme, Boylan and Roberts, 2008). This legislation prompted structural changes in the way in which children's services were organised. For the first time, LAs were required to bring together services for children in one place and these services were overseen by one person (Blair, 2003). The Children Act placed a duty on LAs and their partners to work co-operatively to ensure the wellbeing of children and young people. This had implications for health services, youth justice teams, education, probation services, the police and housing services (Wolstenholme, Boylan and Roberts, 2008).

It became clear that information about children and young people needed to be shared between agencies and that a new integrated system of assessing the needs of young people was necessary when their situation required more than one agency's involvement. The CAF was developed to support this need (DfES, 2005). It looked to develop an holistic understanding of the child or young person, by identifying their individual, family and community needs (Brandon, Howe, Dagley, Salter, Warren and Black, 2006).

"CAF is underpinned by an integrated approach to support and has been designed for use by all professionals working with children and families with additional needs, but who do not meet the threshold for more intensive interventions such as those associated with children's social care or safeguarding"

(p.7, Holmes, McDemid, Padley & Soper, 2012)

It has been argued that the ECM agenda and the CAF initiative draw upon the theoretical concept that all children are positioned somewhere on a vulnerability spectrum (Brown, 2012). At one end of the spectrum are children considered to be "most vulnerable", who require statutory 'child protection' interventions, whilst other children, are just described as 'vulnerable' and are therefore supported through more general 'safeguarding' systems (Brown, 2012). The Every Child Matters agenda prompted the implementation of a range of initiatives to support vulnerable children, young people and their families. For example, the Vulnerable Children Grant was introduced by New Labour to target resources at improving the access of specific groups of children to education. These groups were identified as those considered to be more vulnerable due to their exposure to risk factors associated with their personal circumstances (DfES, 2004).

The CAF was one of three key practices promoted by New Labour and implemented across all LAs in 2008 to support multi-agency collaboration in adopting an holistic approach to meeting the needs of children and families (Holmes, McDermid, Padley & Soper, 2012). The other two were: Team Around the Child (TAC) working and Team around the Family (TAF) working. As the phrases suggest, TAC relates to a small team of professionals, family members and, where appropriate, members of the community to address issues and help the child or young person to make progress; whilst Team Around the Family working is used when there is a greater focus on supporting the whole family. The principles integral to the CAF and in particular the Common Assessment Tool often act as the driver behind both TAC and TAF working (IPC, 2012; Kendall, Rodger & Palmer, 2010).

In encouraging professionals to adopt an holistic approach, the ECM agenda echoes a range of theoretical frameworks, including Maslow's Heirachy of Needs. Maslow (1943) argues that our needs can be seen to fall into different categories on different levels - with our basic human needs at the bottom and the need for self-actualisation coming at the very top. He proposed that we are motivated to meet unsatisfied needs, but that the lower level needs must to be satisfied before the higher order ones can be addressed. Practitioners who apply Maslow's theory to their work with vulnerable pupils are encouraged to take into account a range of factors that may be influencing their pupils' ability to engage with their education setting. For example, if a child is not getting enough sleep, they are not having their basic physiological needs met. It then follows that they will struggle to learn new skills, as the need to develop these is at a much higher level of the hierarchy (Maslow, 1943).

Whilst this model is frequently cited, there is very little research to support it (Tay & Diener, 2011). Research conducted in 155 countries during 2005-2010, looked to explore the extent to which this theory could be supported. The researchers found that happiness correlated with the fulfilment of needs in individuals across different cultures, however, they also found that individuals could begin to achieve higher order needs, even if their basic and safety needs were not completely fulfilled (Tay & Diener, 2011). Whilst this research does not fully support Maslow's theory, it does lend support to adopting an holistic approach to considering needs.

Whilst legislation advocates adopting an holistic approach, the process of doing so can present challenges for both clients and practitioners. Firstly, adopting an holistic approach can represent a change to the patterns of working and an increased workload, with holistic assessments requiring practitioners to think beyond their specialist areas or engaging in new approaches (Brandon, Howe, Dagley, Salter, Warren & Black, 2006; Jones, 2006). Secondly, in order to inform an holistic perspective professionals must work collaboratively with others (MNDA, 2011). This carries a range of challenges, including funding issues, conflicts between agencies' priorities, perceptions about roles and

responsibilities, poor communication within and between agencies and differing professional or agency cultures (Atkinson, Doherty and Kinder, 2005).

Despite these difficulties, the researchers report that practitioners are committed to working collaboratively with their colleagues in order to inform an holistic perspective on their clients (Atkinson, Doherty and Kinder, 2005). They found that having an holistic approach helps to prioritise their clients' needs so that they can deliver "a needs-led approach to service delivery (p.15). These benefits and difficulties were raised in the literature which explored the integration of CAF and ECM, and have become even more relevant with the proposed introduction of the Education, Health and Care Plans described by the Children and Families Bill (2013). Pathfinders have reported that they have introduced more holistic elements in formulating these to ensure that they achieve outcomes-focused and co-produced plans (Spivack, Craston, Thom & Carr, 2014).

A crucial aspect of adopting an holistic approach is eliciting and taking into account the views of children and their families. For legal, ethical and evidence-based reasons, these views need to be considered when making decisions which effect the child (Shevlin & Rose, 2008). However, it is not always easy to make a pupil or their family feel that their views are valued and to ensure that their input is meaningful, particularly if the child has communication difficulties (Hayes, 2004). A number of person-centred planning approaches have been developed to facilitate this process (Claes, VanHove, Vandevelde, VanLoon &Shalock, 2010). An example of this is PATH, which places the pupil and their family at the centre of the planning process and utilises visual strategies for information sharing. The aim of using PATH is to help identify ways of moving towards a desired future (O'Brian &O'Brian, 2000).

Since the Coalition Government came to power, there has been a shift in the way in which the ECM agenda and the processes associated with CAF are viewed. In 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) released an internal memo which detailed key changes in terminology used within the children's sector, which included replacing the terms "Every Child Matters" and the "five

outcomes" with "helping children achieve more" (Puffett, 2010). The DfE also refreshed its website, removing and archiving the ECM content (Symonds, 2011). As part of the proceedings for the drafting of the Children and Families Bill (2013), the undersecretary of state for Children and Families, Edward Timpson stated that the new government reforms "could not reflect more strongly the principles of the Every Child Matters framework". Despite the shift away from the ECM agenda, there remains a widespread belief amongst those working in education that the priorities outlined in it are still relevant and "right" (Morris, 2013), as "helping children to achieve educationally…is inextricably linked to their overall well-being" (Dunkley, cited by Stewart, 2012).

Where the previous government specified a national approach to using the CAF, TAC and TAF, the Coalition Government has, so far, left "LAs to make their own judgements." (p.5, IPC, 2012). This reflects an overall drive towards local determination of priorities and spending, also known as localism. Localism is one of a range of national drivers that affects the way in which LAs support children, young people and their families. Although the Children Act (2004) means that LAs still have the statutory responsibility towards supporting them, the structures and processes around the way in which this support is delivered has changed since the act came into force (IPC, 2012). The IPC (ibid.) highlight a range of national drivers that contributed to this change, including the reorganisation of local government and health services. They also draw attention to a range of changes associated with financial factors, such as the cuts affecting most public services, an increased emphasis on councils arranging and trading (rather than delivering) services, the delegation of budgets for some services away from LAs to be allocated by education settings, and, as previously mentioned, localism.

2.3 Implementing Organizational Change in Services for Children and Young People

<u>Organizational Change in Services for Children and Young People</u>
The statutory services provided to children and families have been subject to change since their inception. This is reflected in the wide range of government

literature and legislations regarding these services and in the frequency with which they have been revised and replaced over time (Johnson, 2006; Shuayb & O'Donnell, 2008; Bell, Nash & Lindsey, 2012). It is not therefore surprising that the changes described in the previous section have taken place, however, what is notable is the scope of these changes. The impact of the Laming report was a widespread acknowledgement that significant reform was needed on a systems level (Cooper, Hetherington & Katz 2003) and (as previously mentioned) this rapidly led to huge structural and procedural changes which affected everyone working in the services to support children, young people and their families (Oliver & Mooney with Statham, 2010).

Implementing and managing change in organisations is difficult (Beer & Nohria, 2000) and there is a great deal of literature that has been generated in response to the changes that have taken place in Children's Services. Research forms part of this literature base and appears to be predominantly qualitative, adopting a more descriptive approach and presenting theories that are based upon the testimonies of stakeholders. This research highlights some of the challenges associated with making changes to procedures.

Public services are adaptive and complex systems, so the process of change has to be carefully managed (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). When reflecting on the implementation of new procedures and how successful their integration has been it is important to take into account the following points: implementing new initiatives takes time (Dawson, 2003); the process rarely follows a path of continual improvement (Dawson, 2003); the approach adopted needs to be tailored to each organisation (Baker et al. 2010); and adopting a new way of working can be expensive and may require extra investment (Durbin, MacLeod, Aston & Bramley, 2011).

The Process of Implementing Change
Implementing organisational change requires a shift in attitudes, practice and culture, which takes time (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). Not only that, but change is also an ongoing process, where "every change will lead to more change" (p.96, Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). This can be an

obstacle in itself as the uncertainty of what lies ahead can make practitioners feel anxious and so more reluctant to engage in the process of implementing change (Lunenburg, 2010).

Another difficulty associated with the implementation of a new procedure relates to the learning period that must take place in order to enable professionals to use the new approach. This learning period can be frustrating for professionals, who may have been familiar and comfortable with using older procedures and will need to take time to learn how to use new ones. These frustrations have been documented in the research around the implementation of the CAF, which reported that although applying the CAF did not necessarily involve spending longer recording objectives than previous procedures, practitioners' familiarity with the existing processes meant that they could use them independently and with more confidence. The introduction of the CAF as an unfamiliar format for recording was therefore initially perceived by professionals to be a barrier to integrated working (Brandon, Howe, Dagley, Salter, Warren, & Black, 2006). It should be noted that this research was focused on only 12 of the initial trialling areas prior to the CAF's nationwide implementation and carried out on behalf of the Department for Educational and Skills It could therefore be argued that their findings may not be representative of the wider populations and that results may have been skewed more positively by (unintentional) bias or loyalty to those funding the research.

It is important to remember that some of the research into the implementation of new policies in education is thought to be based upon a linearly constructed model, where the agent for change is an innovation or initiative that prompts the development of a new procedure or tool; this is then presented to and received by those who are expected to implement it (Hendy, 2007). This model has been criticised as it does not acknowledge the complex process through which change evolves (Hendy, ibid.). Presenting the new initiative may involve commanding, negotiating or persuading the receivers of the change initiative and this part of the process is considered to be the key to how successful the process is (Hendy, ibid.). The use of LAs as national trialling areas who develop and spearhead initiatives can be seen as an example of a more circular strategy

of innovation, which involves: innovation, evaluation and reflection (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004).

Involving practitioners in this circular approach of developing and implementing a new initiative can help to reduce resistance to it. Practical research into the use of collaborative working with staff to plan and implement a change was undertaken by Johnson (2006). He investigated the way in which structural changes were received by professionals in one London borough, and reported that professionals were more likely to accept the prescription of new procedures when they had been engaged in setting down and prescribing their own rules (Johnson, 2006). It should however be noted that Johnson undertook this research from the position of the principal manager responsible for implementing the change, and he acknowledges that he is therefore more likely to present the process of implementation more positively.

The involvement of stakeholders in planning and implementing change can help in three ways: First, in order to be involved in the process of setting aims, practitioners need to have a good understanding of the underlying rationale for the change. This effects the extent to which the change is perceived necessary by those who expected to implement it and therefore their motivation to do so (Fullan, 2001; Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). Indeed one of the best predictors of whether a new initiative in education will be adopted by teachers is their sense of ownership of the knowledge on which an initiative is based (Calder & Grieve, 2004). Secondly, involving the practitioners in the process of developing the procedures that they will be expected to implement encourages them to take ownership for the procedure itself and this also promotes motivation and commitment to applying it ("…our model works, we are proud of it and it will improve outcomes for children" (p.88, Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). Finally, understanding the intention behind new initiatives, how they will affect others and the way in which they will be carried out can overcome resistance to change that is associated with suspicion about what the initiatives might mean for those affected by it (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004).

Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss and Cleaver (2004) stress "the importance of involving people at all levels in the development process in practical and tangible ways that build on their existing understanding and capacity." (p.97) Adopting this collaborative approach helps to cultivate a new organisational culture which is aligned with the new procedures and actively accepts and promotes their use (Cooper, Heatherington & Katz, 2003). Consulting stakeholders during the planning phase, allows the instigators of change to gain an understanding of the existing culture and they are then able to build upon existing good practice and ensure that new initiatives complement existing procedures (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). Adopting this approach also demonstrates a respect for the work that practitioners have already done to develop effective strategies and procedures for meeting some of the organisation's existing needs. Schools in particular are often very reluctant to change established cultures that they consider to be working well (Peckover & Hall, 2009). It should be borne in mind that the research undertaken by Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver (2004), was undertaken with authorities who had been given additional funding in order to support them in making the change happen and therefore meet the DfES' requirements. Having additional funding may have increased their motivation to make change successful and therefore affect the integrity of the research findings.

Involving stakeholders early on also enables them to inform the planning and ensure that the process and expected outcomes are realistic and achievable within the context of the available resources (personnel, funding, time availability, etc.). Another benefit of involving stakeholders in the early stages of change is that they can then be involved in evolving a common language through which objectives, ideas, standards and procedures can be agreed. Involving stakeholders in the process of change also means that professionals can communicate the aims and expectations to the rest of their teams. This is particularly useful as messages can be better received from fellow professionals (Deeks, 2004), issues can be addressed and myths dispelled (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004).

It is also important to consider the political and geographical context in which new initiatives are implemented. This includes the presence of national guidance and local initiatives. For example, it is not uncommon for tension to build when national policy is implemented in local contexts (Brandon, How, Dagley, Salter, Warren, & Black, 2006). Peckover and Hall (2009) argue that more prescriptive national guidance based on successful use elsewhere will enable more successful local implementation, as it will encourage a uniform procedure for recording outcomes and sharing information. For example, one of the difficulties highlighted with the use of the CAF is that the variety of ways in which it is used and recorded is hampering the way in which the information collected can be compared and shared (Peckover & Hall, 2009). On the other hand, tighter national guidance might prevent LAs from being able to embed changes into existing, successful processes (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004), or give them the freedom to adapt it to meet their needs.

Another context related factor is the presence of flaws and problems in the existing systems. Sometimes, procedures and processes have been designed to offset these and the introduction of a new initiative may expose them and dishearten staff. Encouraging senior staff and practitioners to take ownership for the initiative by involving them in planning and implementation can mean that they are more motivated to work out solutions, rather than perceiving the flaws as fatally incompatible with the new initiatives (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004).

Whilst there is a considerable evidence base for the collaborative planning and implementation of new initiatives, this process can be time-consuming and costly (Durbin, MacLeod, Aston & Bramley, 2011). Despite this, organisations, such as LAs should not be tempted to merely adopt an initiative that is being used effectively by an organisation that has undergone this process, as there is no guarantee that it will transfer smoothly (Fullan, 2001). As the factors contributing to its successful implementation (such as a sense of ownership, an understanding of its importance and a commitment to its application) were fostered by the collaborative approach used in the previous setting.

A large proportion of the research into the implementation of organisational changes in Children's Services has been commissioned by governing bodies in response to the national drive towards providing an evidence base for practice (Allen, 2011). As such, it could be argued that it often reflects on ways to overcome these difficulties and minimises any emphasis on the difficulties of experiencing change or the negative lived experiences of those who have to implement it. The drive towards providing evidence has been associated with another national drive to shift the focus of funded services from the provision of services towards achieving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families (IPC, 2012; Munro 2011; Munro, 2012).

A Focus on outcomes

Outcomes have been described as the specific changes and effects that occur as a result of a service's involvement (Cupitt & Ellis, 2007), these can be individual, service-level or national (IRISS, 2012). The ECM agenda (2003) and the Children Act (2004) both stipulate that children's services must provide evidence of the progress refer to improving outcomes for children and young people through radical changes to the systems that deliver children's services. The government has attempted to improve the outcomes of vulnerable children and young people in several ways:

- They have introduced some key legislative frameworks and policies, such as the Children and Families Bill (2013), which places greater emphasis on achieving positive outcomes. The bill emphasises the importance of having clear and transparent rationale for the provision of support and the use of explicit outcomes and careful monitoring of progress.
- They have funded research into risk and resiliency factors (such as poverty (DfE & DfWP, 2011) and social inequality, (DfWP, 2012)) to help inform future policies.
- They have also funded research aimed at developing a better understanding of the services available to support vulnerable pupils and their effectiveness (Walker & Donaldson, 2011).

One such report was undertaken by Munro, who was asked in 2010 to review the child protection system in England (2011; 2012). In her report she recognises the importance of following procedures and keeping records as part of good practice. However, she also highlights the fact that this approach has led many professionals to focus on "meeting performance management demands...rather than meeting the needs of children and their families" (p.20, Munro, 2011).

There is growing pressure on services to demonstrate their efficacy in terms of the outcomes of their involvement with children, young people and their families (Allen, 2011; C4EO, 2010). Although part of the motivation for this comes from their duty of care, it is also associated with the tighter budgets available to fund these services. The cuts affecting most public services, localism and the delegation of funds have prompted a national drive which places an increasing emphasis on evaluating and evidencing the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of funded services (Allen, 2011; IPC, 2012; Durbin, MacLeod, Aston & Bramley, 2011). Budgetary constraints effecting LAs have put further pressure on LAs to put forward a good business case for the services that they fund and to justify their spending (Local Government Association, 2011). Despite all these pressures, children's agencies have admitted that they are struggling to provide meaningful figures (Axford & Berry, 2005).

The difficulties associated with producing these can be seen on several levels. Firstly, there are conceptual difficulties associated with the notion of 'outcomes'. Next, there are difficulties associated with developing an appropriate methodology for measuring outcomes which are not necessarily easily measured (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims & O'Donnell, 2004), and around identifying at which stage in the progress 'effectiveness' should be evaluated, or indeed where the end point is in terms of intervention (particularly when several agencies are involved). Then there are organisational problems, with different agencies focusing on their own priorities and interacting with partners rather than truly working together to meet an end (Hudson, 2005; Axford & Berry, 2005).

Educational Psychology Services are amongst those funded services who are being required to demonstrate effectiveness (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen, 2009) and who will have difficulty isolating the impact of their involvement. EPs often instigate the application of an intervention, but are not typically directly involved in implementing it (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). As a result, there are many factors associated with the way in which the intervention is applied which will be outside of the EPs' control, and which make it even harder to accurately attribute credit for a pupils' progress to the involvement of an EP (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen, 2009). Despite these difficulties, EPs do attempt to measure the impact of their involvement. Beaver (2011) describes the existing performance measures as involving a combination of: contextual information (number of EPs, pupils, statements, etc.); activity measures (time spent on tasks); hard data (SATs, attendance, exclusions); and qualitative evaluations (questionnaires and interviews with service users). He goes on to say that the first two measures cannot be used to measure the impact of our work and that although there is some potential with the third, it has very poor sensitivity.

Beaver (2011) also explores some of the existing measures for evaluating EP involvement and impact and reflects upon three of the most commonly used: Goal Attainment Setting (GAS), Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME) and Work Status Codes (See appendix 2 for more information). Each of these methods involves collaboratively setting targets, reviewing the extent to which they have been met, before considering future targets. This is known as the cycle of 'Plan, Do and Review' and has been highlighted as a key process in the draft Children, and Families Bill (2014).

2.4 Methods of Measuring Outcomes

Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled

One way of conceptualising the impact of services is in terms of soft and hard outcomes (Myers & Barnes, 2005). Whilst hard outcomes (such school attendance or weight management) can easily be measured and evidenced, soft outcomes are less tangible, cannot be measured directly and are

dependent on subjective judgements (WEFO, 2003). Soft outcomes include personal, interpersonal, organisational and analytical skills (Dewson, Eccles, Tackey, Jackson, 2000). Measuring soft outcomes can help to demonstrate a project's value when there are no hard outcomes to measure, or where measuring them may mean that subtle improvements are missed (WEFO, 2003).

Traditionally, soft outcomes have been measured in terms of the progress made as a direct result of some form of intervention (including training, support or guidance). This progress is referred to as the 'Distance Travelled' and the tools that measure it are known as 'Distance Travelled Tools' (DTTs) (Dewson, Eccles, Tackey, Jackson, 2000). Part of this process involves taking a measure of where the individual is functioning at the start of the intervention, comparing it to a measure taken at the end of the intervention, and, if appropriate at points along the way (Turner, 2001).

The use of these tools has been advocated as a means of measuring the progress made by children and young people following their involvement in interventions (e.g. C4EO 2010). As a result, these tools have been and continue to be developed and implemented by LAs across the country. There is, however, very little research into their effectiveness or into the way in which they are being implemented or used.

Whilst the terms Distance Travelled and DTTs may be unfamiliar to many professionals working with children and young people, the concepts that underpin DTTs are very familiar: Target setting; monitoring progress; and evaluating the progress made in response to an intervention. These processes are evident in a range of measures widely used in education, including: Target Setting, Monitoring and Evaluation (TMEs) (Hart 2009); Goal Attainment Scales (GAS) (Kiresuk and Sherman, 1968); the Plan, Do, Review Cycle advocated by the Children and Families Bill (2013); Individual Education Plans (IEPs); Individual Play Plans (IPPs); Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs) and Rating Scales, to name but a few. (Please see appendix 2 for more information on these different approaches.)

The research suggests that the processes of target setting, monitoring progress and evaluating impact can each support personal development and individual change (Cameron, 2006). There are particular benefits to undertaking this work as part of a collaborative process between the practitioner and the client (Cameron, 2006). Undertaking a DTT typically involves this collaborative approach (WEFO, 2006; Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004; Golden, Spielhofer, Sims & O'Donnell, 2004)).

Working collaboratively to identify needs, involves practitioners encouraging clients to think reflectively and develop their self-awareness, which has been positively linked to personal growth and improved psychological and general well-being (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010). The process of self-evaluation has also been found to motivate individuals to develop and use their skills and competencies (Kersh, Evan, Kontiainen & Bailey, 2011). Involving the participant in the process of identifying their needs can be empowering and working collaboratively in this way has also been linked to better outcomes in health care settings (Propp, Apker, Zabava Ford, Wallace, Serbenski & Hofmeister, 2010).

The process of setting targets can also contribute towards positive outcomes (Locke, 1996). Target setting has been found to improve motivation, focus (Locke, 1996) and self-control (Hsiaw, 2012). In addition to this, collaborative target setting enables both parties to demonstrate that they have accepted that change is possible (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen, 2009). This second stage also presents practitioners with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding to support participants in reaching creative solutions (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen, 2009)

Tools which include the monitoring of progress, (such as the DTT, GAS and TMEs) enable participants to receive feedback and self-monitor the impact of

their work. These are considered integral aspects of successful target setting (Latham & Locke, 2007).

Distance Travelled Tools (DTTs)

Measuring distance travelled is not an exact science (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims & O'Donnell, 2004, Dewson, Eccles, Tackey, Jackson, 2000). There is no single, prescribed, universal method or "off the shelf" approach (p.4 ,WEFO, 2003) to measuring soft outcomes (WEFO, 2006; Parkinson and Wadia, 2010). Each DTT must be designed to meet a set of individual needs and aims, and will have a different ideological and conceptual underpinnings which will dictate its' purpose as well as how 'outcomes' are defined (Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004). In 2003, Lloyd and O'Sullivan wrote a practical guide to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled. Their guide was based on an extensive review of the literature as well as their own survey into the use of these tools by different funded agencies (published by the DfWP, 2004). They found that DTTs were being used by a huge range of agencies funded by the European Social Fund, including those which:

- Promote social inclusion (such as the project in Portugal which focuses on building confidence in immigrant communities),
- Fight marginalisation ((like the project in Spain which is aimed at providing socially marginalised young people with professional training)
- Encourage lifelong learning (such as a project in England which helps young mums overcome barriers to learning),
- Support entrepreneurship (e.g a project in Poland which looks to support inclusive enterprise amongst disadvantaged people through and advice).
- Promote better public services (Such as the project in Romania which looks to empower the local public service providers through targeted training).

Lloyd and O'Sullivan (2003) note that the literature was dominated by practical approaches to using these tools and that in contrast, there were very few references made to the issues and theories that underpinned them. They argue that this suggests "that the academic and policy research literature on the subject has yet to catch up with current practice" (p. 4). My review of the related

literature that has been published since then suggests that the situation has hardly changed. With the exception of a few notable reports which I have cited here, there is still a greater focus on practical approaches than on the theory underpinning DTTs.

There are five common components of any DTT:

A set of target indicators: These relate to the specific outcomes that the agency want to track. The indicators will have a number of broad target areas each with a list of sub-indicators detailing a range of areas within it. It is crucial that these sub-indicators comprehensively capture all the intended benefits of a project, rather than just the main objective. So one area might be, 'Looking after my health' and this might then have the following sub-indicator: 'Dental health'; 'Hygiene'; 'Diet'; etc. There can be conceptual difficulties associated with defining the areas of these outcomes and the sub-indicators within them (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims and O'Donnell, 2004). Individual differences between participants (such as age and experiences) will have an impact on the type of indicators chosen and the way in which these indicators are phrased (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Discrepancies can be exacerbated when there are different agencies focusing on their own priorities, rather than truly working together to identify the needs of the client (Hudson, 2005; Axford & Berry, 2005)

A scoring system: This is typically in the form of a rating scale illustrating different degrees of complexity. It is the part of the tool that enables the practitioner to document the participant's baseline score and then any progress made over time. At each point, the scores can be identified by the practitioner, the service user, or as part of a collaborative process and can be recorded using a web-based program, a computer program, or on a paper-based form. It must be noted that these scores do not lend themselves to any meaningful statistical analysis, as the numbers allocated to each sub-indicator are ordinal (meaning that they allow clients or practitioners to identify progress along the scale, but the differences between adjacent scale values does not necessarily represent equal intervals on an objective underlying scale) (McDowell, 2006).

This must be borne in mind when considering the reliability and validity of any findings based on these scores.

Baseline and subsequent measures: The comparison between these is the basis for which progress (or distance travelled) can be ascertained. The time between each measure being taken will depend on the type of program, the client group being assessed and the outcomes being measured. The baseline measurement can be assessed by the practitioner or the client and can be taken over several weeks or even before the intervention begins. It can be difficult to identify which stage in the client's progress 'effectiveness' should be evaluated, or indeed where the end point is in terms of intervention (particularly when several agencies are involved) (Axford & Berry, 2005). Practitioners also need to have the time and capacity in order to establish and record accurate measurements at the starting point and then at subsequent and regular intervals (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims & O'Donnell, 2004). Individual differences can also present complications to accurately establishing baseline and subsequent measurements. These individual differences might include: the extent to which a participant engages with a program (both with regards to attendance and in terms of motivation), an individual's situation at the time of their initial involvement with the intervention and how much exposure the individual has had to it. These factors need to be considered by practitioners when they decide when to take measures (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims & O'Donnell, 2004; WEFO, 2006).

Training staff to use the system: this is essential to ensure that all practitioners are using the tool in the same way, which helps to improve the reliability of the tool in terms of consistency of use. This also provides organisations with the opportunity to explain to staff the motivation for using the tool, the theory underpinning its development and their aims in making use of it. These measures may be further compromised by personal motivations and perspectives on the intervention being measured (Ordonez, Schweitzer, Galinsky and Bazerman, 2009). Training is also essential when the measuring and recording of distance travelled relates to sensitive subjects and could therefore be perceived by some as intrusive (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims &

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O'Donnell, 2004). In these instances staff may require training in addressing sensitive subjects with clients or be briefed on available resources for overcoming obstacles.

A system for reporting results: This also varies between projects and may relate to the types of outcomes being measured, the nature of the program and the clients involved in it. It may also be dependent on the audience for the results. Using DTTs can be seen to benefit three core groups:

- *Clients:* by illustrating the change that they have made. Monitoring progress and demonstrating change in a tangible way can lead to improvements in clients' self-confidence (WEFO, 2003) have a motivating effect on individuals, which may make the intervention more effective (Younger, Warrington & McLellan, 2002).

- *Project managers and project staff*: by enabling them to show what they have achieved or informing the changes that they make to the services they provide (Lloyd and O'Sullivan, 2004). It can also help professionals to identify additional needs and therefore be used to signpost clients towards other services or programmes (Younger, Warrington & McLellan, 2002).

- *Funding bodies:* by helping them to gain a clearer idea of what programmes are achieving beyond hard outcomes (Burns (2000). It should also be noted that the methods used to measure soft outcomes appear to rely heavily on the subjective judgement of project and programme workers and they are not usually moderated or validated by others (WEFO, 2003; Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004). This is the main reason why measuring soft outcomes cannot be seen as an exact science (WEFO, 2003) and this has implications regarding the reliability and validity of the measures and therefore of the data collected and presented as evidence.

It therefore follows that the way in which results are reported will depend to some extent on the purpose for reporting them. In some instances a visual representation of progress may be more appropriate than written or numerical descriptors (Lloyd and O'Sullivan, 2004). However, it is important to remember that any analysis of numerical data gleaned from these tools is restricted by their use of ordinal measures (as previously mentioned). Another complicating factor in reporting results relates to the difficulty in reliably assigning change to any particular agent. As change is often the result of several factors present in an individual's ecosystem, there is no conclusive way to isolate and measure the impact of a particular intervention (Parkinson & Wadia, 2010; WEFO, 2006; Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2003).

Individual differences can affect the way in which each of these five components is interpreted by either the practitioner implementing the tool or the participant whose outcomes are being measured (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009; Axford & Berry, 2005). This interpretation could impact on the tools' effectiveness, reliability and validity. For example, the level of the client's involvement in the program, their starting point and other factors in their lives all need to be taken into account when measuring progress and therefore will make it difficult to draw comparisons within and between groups of participants (Golden, Spielhofer, Sims & O'Donnell, 2004).

2.5 Summary and Research Questions

The growing emphasis on the application of EBPs together with an increasing pressure on LAs to demonstrate the efficacy of the services that they fund has lead to the introduction of evaluative tools across many of the public services. DTTs are considered to be a useful measure of soft outcomes and the processes of target setting, monitoring and evaluation that they facilitate, have been found to be useful instigators and catalysts of personal development. However, the implementation of DTTs as part of the work undertaken by practitioners represents a significant change in practice.

The literature that explores organisational changes, such as changes in practice and procedures, highlights the importance of looking into the experiences of

staff, as their attitudes are clear indicators of how well changes are received and implemented (Piderit, 2000). However, the existing literature around the implementation of changes in education and children's services focuses predominantly on evaluating the utility of new procedures, rather than reflecting on the experiences of those who are embedding or implementing those changes. Similarly, whilst there are many reports describing the way in which DTTs can be developed and used, or which have looked to evaluate their utility, there is very little that explores the perceptions and experiences of practitioners who use and apply them.

The aim of this research is to address these gaps in the literature by exploring the perceptions and experiences of mainstream school staff regarding a) their application of the tool and b) the implementation of a DTT as part of their work with vulnerable pupils. In this context, application relates to the practical use of the tool as a means of supporting and evaluating the work that staff undertake with vulnerable pupils. Whilst implementation relates to the experience of the process of adopting a new tool as part of an organisational change that has been instigated by the LA. Therefore my research questions are:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of mainstream school staff regarding their application of a specific DTT as part of their work with vulnerable pupils?

2. What are the experiences and perceptions of mainstream school staff regarding their implementation of a specific DTT as part of a new initiative by a LA?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I give an overview of the methodology, staring with the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the research and the rationale behind the method of data collection and analysis. Next I described the scoping study that I undertook to develop my understanding of the DTT and I briefly described the findings from this preliminary study as they informed the methodology that I used in the main study. Finally, I describe the method of data collection and analysis that I applied in the main study.

3.2 Methodological Considerations

This is an exploratory, qualitative study into the experiences and perspectives of school staff regarding the implementation and application of the new DTT to support vulnerable pupils in mainstream education settings. I have adopted an inductive approach to addressing the research questions and as such have aimed to allow theories and ideas to emerge from the data (Lidttman, 2006). The analysis of qualitative research is heavily dependent on the researcher's interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2003). Indeed, it has been argued that the researcher's personal perspective fundamentally impacts upon his or her analysis of the data, their identification of themes, their interpretation of their findings and even on the conclusions that they draw from those findings (Creswell, ibid.). I have therefore aimed to be transparent about the theoretical and philosophical perspective that I have adopted in conducting this research. I have also tried to be explicit about the methods that I have adopted and the considerations that I took in choosing them, as this helps to support the validity of my research (Yardley, 2000).

Philosophical Underpinnings

There are a number of philosophical theories around the nature of truth and knowledge. A researcher's stance on these matters can affect their approach to conducting research and the way in which findings are presented and interpreted. The debates can be seen as relating to two key areas: ontology and epistemology (Bryman, 2004).

Ontology relates to our understanding of reality or truth and the debate around this topic can be seen as lying along a continuum, with positivism or realism at one end and relativism at the other end (Bryman, 2004). Positivists argue that there are truths or facts in the universe which are fixed or constant and can be objectively known. In contrast, relativists would argue that that the world is in a constant state of flux and that rather than truth being absolute, it is seen as being relative to its context and to the medium through which it is presented (for example, language) (Moore, 1995). In designing this research, the ontological stance that I have adopted is Middle Ground Theory as outlined by Held (2007). This stance is an approach adopted by some psychologists which aims to avoid the extreme ends of relativism and positivism by recognising the reflexive relationship between the nature of psychological beings, our beliefs about them and the context within which these beliefs are developed and held (Held, 2007). This adaptive approach allows me to investigate and consider the findings of research from across the continuum.

Epistemology relates to whether or how knowledge can be discovered or studied. The debate around the way in which something is studied (or whether it can be studied at all) depends on that which is being studied. It therefore follows that the approaches to the study of knowledge (epistemology) fall along a similar continuum to the perspectives on the existence of knowledge or truth (ontology). Thus, at one end of the spectrum are the positivists (or realists) and at the 'relativist' end, are the poststructuralists or postmodernists. The positivists, who view the world as having absolute and concrete truths would argue that knowledge can be discovered through the study of observable aspects of the world around us. The study of these facts can therefore be conducted by developing hypotheses through observations, testing these

hypotheses, refining them according to the findings of these tests, and then testing them again. This process continues until an approximate understanding of the underlying 'truth' or 'reality' is gained (Cutliffe & McKenna, 2002). In contrast, the postmodernist stance on epistemology is that the world is "ultimately unknowable" (Moore, 1995, p. 106). Instead they argue that the study of knowledge is actually a study of our understanding of the relationships between social organisation, language, subjectivity and power (Weedon, 1987).

An example of a less extreme interpretation of the poststructuralist approach is the Social Constructionist approach. As the name suggests, social constructionists argue that knowledge is constructed through shared perspectives, such as language, human perception, cultural values, power and social norms (Burr, 1995). Social constructionist thinking is underpinned by four main assumptions: taking a critical stance towards 'taken-for-granted knowledge'; considering the historical and cultural specificity of knowledge; understanding that knowledge is sustained by social processes and beliefs; and acknowledging that power and authority affect the production of knowledge (Burr, 1995).

Constructionists have presented a middle ground approach in epistemological thinking, which postulates that "*reality is socially constructed by cognitive structures that give meaning to the material world.*" (Adler, 1997, p. 319). This approach draws on the thinking behind social constructionism and the findings of more positivist research to make sense of the world around us. Middle ground theorists argue that "there is a real social and psychological world "out there" but deny that it can be known "in itself" in a way that is pure and true across both time and space, and independent of culture and discourse…" (p118, Martin & Sugarman, 2009). I feel that this approach is most similar to my own ontological perspective.

My epistemological approach is predominantly constructionist, but leans more heavily on the social constructionist side of the theory than the positivist side. This means that in selecting my research questions, I have focused on eliciting the experiences and perspectives of school staff regarding the implementation

of DTTs rather than looking for absolute truths or attempting to evaluate the utility of DTTs. Adopting a constructionist approach also impacts on my choice of method for data analysis and on the way in which I then interpret my findings. These considerations will be explored in more depth later in this chapter as these elements are described.

Rationale for the Method of Data Collection and Analysis

I adopted semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection for both the initial scoping study and the main study. I chose to use interviews as they enable researchers to gain insight into the thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences of others (Patton, 2002) and are commonly used to explore people's attitudes and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews are perceived to be an appropriate method of data collection to use in research where the researcher has adopted a social constructionist epistemological stance (Chamz, 2000) as the questions act as triggers to facilitate and guide, rather than drive the interview (Willig, 2001). In this way semi-structured interviews enable participants to engage in reflective dialogue, where the participants can qualify their responses as well as allowing the interviewer to clarify ambiguous comments (Morgan, 1997).

The characteristics of the researcher influence the interviewee's participation in the interview. According to Breakwell (1995), people disclose more when they perceive the interviewer to be more similar to themselves. In introducing myself, I tried to reduce some of the dissonance between the participants and myself by making reference to my previous experiences working in primary and secondary schools.

Interviews provide large amounts of rich qualitative data (Morgan, 1997). The purpose of the initial scoping study was to develop my knowledge and understanding of the DTT, so as to inform the design of some aspects of my main study. As such the interviews were not transcribed or formally analysed, as advocated by Hoepfl (1997). In the main part of the study, I analysed my interview data using a method of inductive thematic analysis (Hayes, 2000).. Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative analysis that involves searching

across a data set to identify repeated patterns of meaning or salient ideas in the data that are then analysed and reported. It is independent of theory and epistemology and can therefore be flexibly applied across a range of frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I chose thematic analysis, as my sample is heterogeneous in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the participants, and is also relatively large for a qualitative study, which made some other approaches such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) or narrative analysis inappropriate. Whilst Thematic Analysis focus on what has been said, IPA and narrative approaches pay equal attention to what has been said and the way in which it has been said (Riessman, 2003). When exploring data from a heterogeneous sample, it is useful to adopt a semantic approach to the analysis, whereby the "themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). This approach allows the researcher to consider unique aspects of participant accounts, rather than forcing them to focus on common features in order to be able to make generalisations (Braun & Clarke, ibid.). As a result, the prevalence of a theme is not necessarily how frequently it is mentioned, but rather how important it is in terms of the topic being investigated (Braun & Clarke, ibid). Therefore, in presenting my findings I have given very few indications of the proportion of responses that referred to a particular issue.

Using thematic analysis also allowed me to maintain a socially constructed perspective to my data analysis by enabling me to identify patterns in the data without conducting a discursive analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Indeed, adopting a social constructionist approach to conducting thematic analysis meant that I did not treat the participants' descriptions of their experiences as a *"transparent window on their world"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 26). Instead I was able to consider responses within the social and political context within which they were being presented (particularly in terms of the organisational changes taking place).

There are different approaches that can be used in the development of codes for thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose to adopt the inductive approach to data analysis that I feel best suits my theoretical research perspective. This approach to coding allows for the inclusion of data-driven themes without imposing the assumptions of previous research (Blank, 2004).

3.3 Scoping work to understand the DTT

Davies (2007) argues that undertaking an exploratory study prior to undertaking a piece of research can be a useful part of the research process, as it helps to educate the researcher on the subject area, and inform decisions around the best way to undertake the research.

I undertook a scoping study in order to gain a better understanding of the rationale and motivation behind developing and implementing the DTT, and the LA's aims for the DTT's use. I also wanted greater insight into the way in which the DTT had been launched within the context of other organisational changes that were taking place. I then used the knowledge and understanding from these interviews to guide the development of my main interview schedule. Due to the limitations imposed by the thesis, full details of the scoping study can be found in Appendix 3. My understanding of the DTT and its aims informed the formulation of my interview schedule which is in appendix 4. The key learning points were: The DTT was designed to enable practitioners to engage in a process of identifying needs, setting targets, monitoring progress and identifying outcomes of interventions or services. It included 50 discrete strands and could be arranged according to the five ECM agenda areas or the four areas of need highlighted in the CAF. Each strand ranged from 1- No Issues to 5- Critical Complex. I have included an example of a strand and a concrete example of how the tool was used in appendix 5.

3.4 The Main Study

The Piloting Phase

Once I felt confident in my understanding of the tool, I developed an interview schedule which would help me to answer my research questions. The questions aimed to elicit school staff's opinions and experiences of using the DTT as part of their work with vulnerable pupils, the first draft of the interview schedule can be found in appendix 6. As I was adopting an inductive approach to my data collection and analysis, I endeavoured to use open-ended questions that allowed participants to raise the issues that were important to them - rather than relating questions to particular areas of focus from the existing body of literature. I then reviewed the interview schedule with my academic supervisor, who recommended some changes to the order and wording of the questions. The changes were largely structural and enabled me to be more fluid in my interviewing technique. The amended interview schedule can be found in appendix 7.

I then piloted this interview schedule with a member of school staff who had been using the DTT as part of her work with vulnerable pupils at her school. I audio recorded this interview, transcribed it and used it as part of the data set for the main study. Following this interview, I was able to identify ways in which my interview schedule could be further improved. I decided that a specific question around the way in which the tool had been introduced to the participant should be included in the schedule. I also removed the broad questions about other interventions available at school, as this did not contribute towards my research aims. I then compiled a final interview schedule for the main study; this can be found in appendix 8.

The Sample

The sample for this study was made up of members of staff working in mainstream primary and secondary education settings, who had used the DTT to support their work with vulnerable pupils. Although the DTT had officially been rolled out across the whole of the LA in October of 2012, only a limited number of schools had actually begun using it when I began collecting data, in

December 2012. As described in the part of this chapter which outlined the outcomes of the scoping study, the LA had not introduced schools to the tool in a methodical way, but rather members of staff had heard of it from colleagues from other schools or from the Behaviour Support Team. This meant that the most effective way to identify participants for my study was by word of mouth. LA staff and members of school staff suggested schools that they thought may have adopted the DTT and I followed up on these suggestions. This approach to sampling is known as snowballing.

Adopting a pragmatic approach such as snowballing can be a feature of qualitative research (Davies, 2007). A difficulty with using these types of approaches is that you are not accessing a representative sample of the population. However, I would argue that snowballing was an efficient way of identifying a sample of participants who met the criteria of having implemented the DTT. In doing so I had had access to the perspectives of this group and am presenting these rather than that of the wider population (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Once I had a recommendation regarding a possible school to approach, I contacted the head teacher by telephone to confirm that they were using the DTT, then explained my study and explored the possibility of staff members from their school taking part. I then sent the head teacher an email outlining the project and attached a copy of the information sheet in appendix 9. Some schools then contacted me to confirm that they would like to take part in the study, or I then followed up the email with a phone call to ensure that any queries were addressed and to arrange a visit where more information could be given or when I could come in to interview the relevant members of staff.

The members of staff who participated in the interviews were only those who had been directly involved in the implementation or the application of the DTT at each school. The number of participants from each type of education setting is outlined in table one.

Type of setting	Education settings approached	Education settings that participated	Number of participants
Primary	9	5	8
Secondary	7	3	12
Total	16	8	20

As previously noted, the Local Authority is in the process of rolling out the DTT for the use of all professionals who work with children, young people and their families. It might therefore be inferred that by focusing my research only on staff members who are using the DTT within mainstream schools, my sample would be fairly homogenous - either in terms of the roles of the staff members who use the DTT or with regards to the systems used by the settings to support vulnerable pupils. However, this was not the case. Each school had a unique ethos which was reflected in the way in which they looked to address the needs of their vulnerable pupils. This determined the level of priority given to supporting vulnerable pupils and their families. Differences were also evident through the resources available to staff and pupils, and the roles, workload and responsibilities of the staff members who were responsible for supporting vulnerable pupils. Other differences between schools included: the age range of the pupils attending (primary versus secondary settings); whether they were Local Authority funded or had academy status; the size of the pupil population; and the communities that the settings served. To illustrate the heterogeneity of my sample, in table two I have presented the range of the participants' roles in both primary and secondary education phases and the proportion of staff in each setting that held non-teaching roles.

The differences between schools impacted on the demands on the school staff interviewed and the experiences that they had had. One such difference relates to the factors that correlate more highly with particular groups, for example, teenage pregnancy is a risk factor for increased vulnerability that can present

itself in both primary and secondary settings; it is however much more prevalent in secondary settings than primary school settings. Other differences also impacted upon the type of interventions available to vulnerable pupils (for example, a secondary academy that is part of a learning federation may have access to a greater range of in-house resources than an LA funded school). Schools also varied in how long they had been using the DTT, and there were differences between participants regarding how often they were using the tool and how familiar they had become with it. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participating schools and the staff who participating, I have not presented any of the information given to me regarding these differences.

Table two:

Participants' roles by school setting

Type of education setting	Participants' roles at school	Staff in non-teaching roles	Staff members interviewed
Primary	2 Assistant Head Teachers Deputy Head Teacher Family Worker 3 Head Teachers Learning Mentor Pastoral Support	7	9
Secondary	Assistant Head Teacher Behaviour Support Leader 4 House Co-ordinators 3 Heads of House Parent Liaison Student Support Worker	10	11
Total		17	20

Data Collection

As part of the semi-structured interview technique I used an interview schedule with open-ended questions that enabled participants to freely describe their

perceptions and experiences. During the interviews I explained my understanding of what had been communicated and then gave the participants the opportunity to correct, clarify or confirm their responses. This helped to reduce researcher bias and so improved internal validity.

School staff are often extremely busy during the school day, with a multitude of commitments to attend to. In order to accommodate these needs, all the interviews took place on school grounds and lasted between twenty minutes and an hour. Although the interviews were carried out in relatively quiet rooms, in almost every instance, the background noise of the school environment filtered through. Once I had gone through the aims of the project, and obtained informed consent, I began audio recording. I then established rapport with the participants with some informal conversation, before asking about the participants' role within the school and then proceeding with the rest of the interview. I audio recorded each interview and then transcribed them verbatim. A full transcript of one of the interviews is presented in appendix 10.

Data Analysis

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, I allocated each with an interviewee number. Throughout the findings chapter, I have used quotes to support the statements made, and labelled them with the interviewee number and the line number on which the quote begins.

As an inductive approach was taken, no pre-existing framework was used to guide the analysis; instead, themes were identified by thoroughly examining the data. Hayes' (2000) framework for conducting the thematic analysis dictated that I begin by carefully reading through the transcripts several times, highlighting any interesting or significant comments, words or phrases and labelling them with some tentative initial codes. To illustrate this process I have included an extract of an interview on the following page. Many of the highlighted sections of the text overlapped, so as to aid clarity. In table three I have illustrated this process with reference to a section of text from one of my interviews. Rather than highlighted the text, as I did in my analysis, I have

presented a table which indicates the lines that would have been highlighted as a set of line numbers along with the initial codes that I allocated to each quote.

In the next part of the analysis, I placed each quote and associated code in an Excel document and collated the related codes to form proto-themes or preliminary themes. I have presented one of these proto-themes in table four below, which includes some of its codes and the supporting extracts. In some cases, where a comment was relevant to more than one group, I duplicated it and placed it in both. Once I was happy with these proto-themes I re-read my data set to be sure that it was accurately represented by my codes and proto-themes. After that, I amended, developed and dispersed the proto-themes to form nine initial themes. I investigated each theme and gave it a provisional label and definition. These initial themes, sub-themes and codes are presented in appendix 11.

<u>An extract from interview nine</u>

66   …..there is a family who needs
67   some family intervention, so that's a good way of kind of getting a bit of a balance for
68   a bit of understanding of where the child is, where the mum is, and working out
69   exactly what needs to happen. From that, I would kind of then, you know what it's
70   like in the first meeting when you would know quite quickly whether or not you would
71   need to do a CAF(laughs), by that point I would absolutely know. But I think it's a
72   kind of standalone thing as well so it won't always lead to a CAF, but it can be mixed
73   in to making sure there is enough supporting evidence for an intervention. So
74   sometimes it goes with the referral to [LA], to show that it's being used, and
75   other times it's just used internally. I might suggest things to the parents. So with the
76   girl I was just talking about, I suggested a counsellor, and a referral to a consultant
77   for some other stuff. Um... But don't necessarily think it would have come out if I had
78   not used the [DTT] to be able to identify exactly what's going on.

Table three:

Some initial codes from the above extract and correlating line numbers

Line number	Initial Code
67-69	Getting a broader perspective
69-71	Staff's experience informs her ability to make judgments
70-71	Used to inform a CAF
71-73	Used independently of CAF
73-74	Providing evidence of use to the LA
75	Used Internally
76-77	Informs next steps
76-77	Supports a referral
77-78	Used to identify what's going on

Table four:

A Proto-theme with some of the codes and extracts from the data

Proto-theme: A Holistic Approach to working	
Codes	**Extracts from the data**
Wider picture/ holistic approach	I think it prompts people to think about everything rather than just school and education, ummm.... Because in the hierarchy of everything (laughs) before you even get to a point where a child is able to be educated effectively, there's all the other stuff that goes on around it. (Interviewee 9, lines 82- 85)
Holistic view that prompts next steps	You know it sort of puts all the cards on the table. It gives you the holistic view of everything to see where we can go from it. (Interviewee 10, lines 115-116)
Prompting parents to think holistically	…the [DTT] prompts that holistic approach or understanding. For parents as well, because parents might not necessarily think, oh yeah, that might have an impact. Or that might have an effect. (Interviewee 9, lines 88-91)
Provides a broader understanding of the child and the family	…that was a real eye-opener. Because going through all those things you learnt a lot about the family and the setup and what the child was like, things we didn't see at school… (Interviewee 10, lines 69-71)
Prompting conversation around the context of the issues	So if they've identified, I don't know, drug use for example, and it's moderate, you can kind of, write all over this sheet to say what's led to that and why they think it's there. I just find that useful... (Interviewee 9, lines 96-99)
Balanced perspective	…a good way of kind of getting a bit of a balance for a bit of understanding of where the child is, where the mum is... (Interviewee 9, lines 67-68)

I went on to systematically review each theme to see how it related to the other themes and to ensure that I had an exhaustive set of data to support each category. This was followed by exploring the themes and sub-themes further, which led to me developing, dispersing and amending many of them again. Finally, when I felt satisfied with my arrangement, I re-read the entire data set to see how well it fitted with the themes and I made some minor amendments. This process is illustrated in appendix 12 where I present three illustrations of the theme and sub-theme groups as they developed through my analysis.

3.5 Key constructs in Research: Reliability, Validity, Bias and Ethical Considerations

Reliability and Generalisability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the findings from research are consistent over repeated measurement and how accurately the research reflects the perspectives of the population it aims to represent (Johnson, 2000). In quantitative research this is equated with how replicable the results of the study are, but in qualitative research, this is not always deemed to be relevant (Stenbacka, 2001).

My epistemological approach dictates that our experience of the world is entirely subjective and therefore that experiences can never be replicated in their entirety (Yardley, 2000). For example, each of the schools adopted the tool at different times and in their own way. This created variation in the participants' experiences of using it which could be perceived to affect the study's reliability. The passage of time means that the particular elements of the social, economic and political climate in which the study was carried out could not be replicated exactly even if a researcher used the same participants and the same methodology. Therefore it will never be possible to recreate the exact context in which the experience of implementing this particular DTT in this particular Local Authority can be examined and reported on.

Some qualitative researchers have argued that rather than looking to provide standardised findings, it is possible to generalise findings by linking them to the existing literature (Johnson, 1997, cited by Yardley, 2000). However, it is also essential that the knowledge and understanding of the existing body of knowledge does not drive the data analysis, as this would prevent the researcher from identifying novel interpretations of the data which could contribute to it (Yardley, 2000).

Validity

The construct of validity typically relates to the extent to which a method or research tool is measuring what it is intended to measure or what it claims to measure. When using an interviews, the validity is affected by the sorts of questions in the interview schedule and the way in which the interview is carried out. For example, if an interview into a sensitive subject is carried out on a busy street, the researcher is unlikely to get valid answers to his questions - no matter how well the interview schedule has been designed. By carefully planning my interview schedule and ensuring that the interview was carried out at a convenient time for the participant and in an appropriate place, I was able to improve the validity of my data collection method. Another way to improve validity is to triangulate findings by carrying out multiple interviews (Patton, 2002) and therefore obtain many perceptions of a single reality (this falls in line with adopting a constructionist approach to reality).

In undertaking this research I drew on Yardley's framework (2000), which advocates the following essential qualities to improve the validity of the methodology adopted: Being sensitive to the context of the research; having commitment to the topic and using rigour in the data collection and analysis; being transparent and coherent in the description of the methods and the presentation of the data; and being aware of the impact and importance of the research. In conducting this research I have endeavoured to address each of these requirements. Although it can be argued that a checklist like this is not enough to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research, by adhering to it, I have tried to strengthen my research and address its shortcomings.

Response Bias

While response bias may serve to skew the results of a quantitative research, it can prove very useful when conducting qualitative research. Qualitative research does not seek to be representative of the whole group, but rather seeks to give greater insight into the experiences, expectations and understanding of a subgroup. Often, response bias may be indicative of strong feelings towards the research subject. For example, in this study, this may be schools that are proud of the way in which they are using or applying the tool, or

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feel strongly about particular issues that have either helped or hindered them to implement it.

It should also be noted that I only interviewed members of staff who were using the DTT in their work with vulnerable pupils. This means that I did not elicit the perspectives and experiences of members of staff from schools who had either rejected the tool or were unaware of its existence. This would be problematic in a study that sought to evaluate the tool as this bias would have huge implications with regards reliability and validity. As this study looks only to explore the perceptions of staff who have implemented the tool, this limitation is not problematic.

Research Bias and the Conflicting Priorities as a Practitioner-Scientist
My epistemological and ontological perspectives allowed me to take into account the social, political and historical context of the participants' responses. It also encouraged me to consider the influence of these contexts on my own work. One of the issues associated with qualitative analysis is that of interpretivism - an appreciation that our understanding of the data collected is based upon a personal interpretation, which may be effected by cultural and social norms as well as the researcher's previous experiences (Willig, 2006). In conducting a thematic analysis, my personal interpretation has affected the way in which I have decided on which themes are prevalent and the way in which I have reported them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although as a researcher, it is not possible to rule out these influences, the process of 'reflexivity' encouraged me to acknowledge my theoretical positions and values that relate to the research (Willig, 2001). Being aware of these assumptions enabled me to try to bracket them in order to reduce their influence on my work (Ahern, 1999).

Some of my assumptions and preconceived ideas come from my background in teaching and experiences as a trainee EP. There are also conflicting priorities affecting me as a practitioner-scientist: those of the scientific community that I adopt as a researcher and the loyalties I hold as I trainee psychological practitioner who works for the LA (Spoth& Greenberg, 2005). Both my assumptions and my priorities have implications at each stage of the research

process, from the interpretation of the literature reviewed, to my choice of methods and the conclusions drawn from the findings (Creswell, 2012).

In order to reduce this impact, I made every effort to reflect upon these influences and tried to separate my assumptions from my understanding of the data collected. This process is sometimes known as Bracketing. Bracketing my knowledge and understanding meant that I sometimes asked questions to clarify issues that I might otherwise have taken for granted as common knowledge. For example, during one interview the staff member said she worked with vulnerable pupils, rather than going on to ask about the way in which she did this, I first asked which pupils were considered to be vulnerable. Bracketing my knowledge in this way was particularly useful as it allowed the participants to explain their personal understanding and on more than one occasion, indicated a confused or incomplete comprehension of some aspects of the DTT. I also reduced the impact of my conflicting priorities by attempting to allow the data to drive the presentation of my findings. I also found that discussing these conflicting priorities with tutors and colleagues extremely helpful in ensuring that I managed these demands.

Ethical Considerations

Before undertaking the project, I sought ethical approval from the Institute of Education's Committee on the Ethics of Research. I then requested permission from the Head Teachers of each school to conduct the research and gained informed consent from each participant before they took part in the study. In order to do so, I explained the purpose of the study to members of staff both verbally (over the telephone) and through the information sheet before the meeting with them. When I met them, I gave them another copy of the information sheet and verbally explained the key points of my research and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw at any time without any justification. Before I began the interview, I gave each staff member the opportunity to ask any question and finally asked them to sign a copy of the consent form before beginning the interview (appendix 13).

At the end of the interview, I gave staff another opportunity to ask any questions about the study and to address any concerns that might have arisen from their involvement in the interview. I also reiterated that once I had completed the study and my thesis has been assessed, I will feedback to them on my findings. This feedback will take the form of a poster outlining key findings and will be sent out to the participating schools and members of the Local Authority. The email that will accompany this poster will give participants a contact email address that they can use to contact me and arrange an opportunity to further discuss the study and my findings.

To ensure confidentiality, I assigned all the participants with a number and I have used these labels to report my findings. In line with the UK's Data Protection Act, all data is being kept in a secure location and is stored in a separate location from the documents containing the names of the participants. I will also destroy the data and consent forms after 2 years.

3.6 Summary

In designing this project, I adopted a Middle Ground Theory ontological stance and a social constructionist epistemological approach. Both of these represent a compromise between the extreme ends of the approaches available. Adopting these perspectives enabled me to look at the interview data as subjective expressions of the participants' reality. My epistemological and ontological approaches led me to design a qualitative piece of research, which focused on eliciting the perspectives of participants rather than looking for any objective truths.

In line with this approach, I chose to use semi-structured interviews to collect my data as they are a useful tool for exploring people's attitudes and perceptions. The open ended questions I adopted together with the flexibility of the semi-structured approach allowed participants to explain their perceptions in their own words and then enabled me to clarify my understanding. I used this approach in both my scoping study and in the main study. I interviewed three members of the LA staff for the scoping study and this enabled me to develop a

good understanding of the DTT. This in turn informed the interview schedule which I developed in consultation with my supervisors and by piloting it with a member of school staff.

For the main study, I made audio recordings of interviews with twenty members of school staff from eight mainstream settings. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and analysed the transcripts using a method of inductive thematic analysis (as described by Hayes, 2000). Using an inductive approach meant that I let the data drive the codes and themes that emerged. I chose thematic analysis as it is a method of qualitative analysis which is not constrained by any particular theory or epistemology and was therefore easily applied to my own theoretical stance. In conducting the analysis I adopted a semantic approach. This allowed me to identify themes on a surface level rather than looking for the deeper meaning behind what the participant had said (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This also meant that in choosing codes I was not constrained by the frequency with which ideas were expressed, but rather by how the codes related to the overall discussion.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I have presented the findings of the thematic analysis of the interview data. Two super-ordinate themes, six themes and 25 sub-themes emerged from the analysis. Super-ordinate themes are over-arching themes which encompass several themes (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The first super-ordinate theme relates to the practical application of the DTT to the work undertaken by school staff. The first three themes which contribute to it describe the aspects of the staff's work that they felt was helped or hindered by applying the tool. The second super-ordinate theme relates to the implementation of the DTT as part of the LA's new initiative. There are three themes which contribute to this super-ordinate theme and these highlight the barriers that staff described in the process of implementing the tool, as well as the aspects of the DTT or the way it was implemented which encouraged them to use it in their work. I have presented the super-ordinate themes and the themes that contribute to them in table five.

I have explored the super-ordinate themes in the discussion chapter, and instead have devoted the bulk of this chapter to presenting each of the six themes in turn. So as to improve the clarity and cohesiveness of this chapter, the description of each theme is supported by a figure illustrating its sub-themes. There is a complete table of the super-ordinate themes, themes and sub-themes in appendix 14.

The super-ordinate themes and themes that emerged from the thematic analysis

Super-ordinate Themes	Contributing Themes
The practical application of the DTT to staff's work	*Theme one:* Using the DTT to Support an Holistic Approach to Working
	Theme two: Understanding the situation from different perspectives
	Theme three: Supporting Next Steps
The implementation of the DTT as part of a new LA initiative	*Theme four:* The tool's format
	Theme five: The process of implementation
	Theme six: Providing evidence to the LA

4.2 Theme One: Using the DTT to Support an Holistic Approach to Working

The developers of the DTT designed it so that its strands can be arranged in two ways: either according to the five areas of the ECM agenda; or according to the four areas used in the CAF. Both of these frameworks were designed with the intention of encouraging practitioners to adopt an holistic approach to working and to prompt them to consider the child's broader situation, rather than just looking at the presenting issues in isolation.

The first theme relates to the use of the DTT as a means of encouraging and facilitating a more holistic approach to the work undertaken with pupils and their families.

> "... it [the DTT] sort of puts all the cards on the table. It gives you the holistic view of everything to see where we can go from it."

<div align="right">Interviewee 10, lines 115- 116</div>

The sub-themes are presented in figure one. The first four sub-themes relate to the ways in which the tool helped: Firstly as a prompt for looking at the broader context for the child's needs; secondly, by encouraging school staff to identify and prioritise the child's needs; next with regards to their use of the tool as a means of supporting joint-working; and finally by facilitating work effectively within the CAF. The fifth sub-theme relates to the drawbacks of using this tool in the context of working holistically.

Figure one:
Theme one and its sub-themes
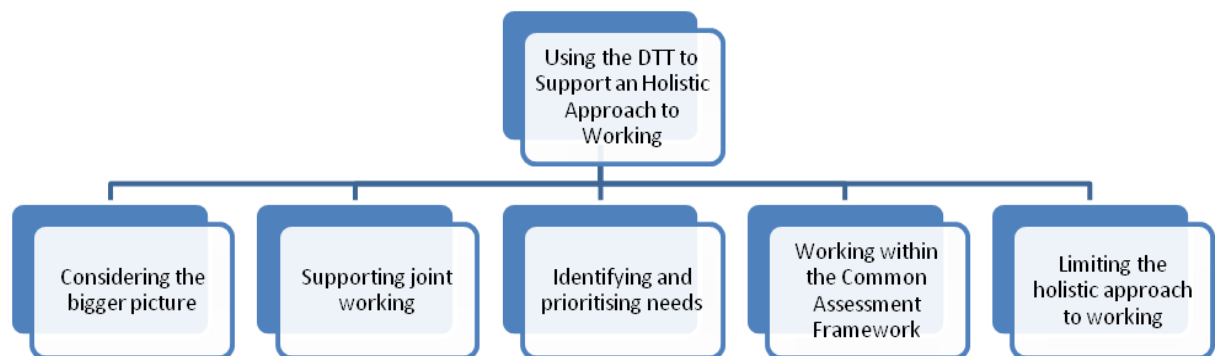
Considering the bigger picture

Staff members told me that they used the tool to prompt them to think about the child's needs within a broader context.

> "I think it prompts people to think about everything rather than just school and education, ummm... Because in the hierarchy of everything (laughs) before you even get to a point where a child is able to be educated effectively, there's all the other stuff that goes on..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 9, lines 82-85</div>

They said that sometimes this process was undertaken in isolation, by reflecting on their existing knowledge of the young person and their family. More often, however, staff used the DTT as a prompt for speaking to others, and used it as a framework for exploring the pupil's situation in discussion with the pupil or their family, or less often, by consulting with other professionals.

> "...you're getting the input from the pupils, or the parents, or whoever you need to..."
>
> Interviewee 5, lines 176- 179

School staff described the DTT as a framework which encouraged and enabled conversations into aspects of the pupils' lives that they might not have otherwise considered.

> "It gives you a different type of conversation to have with somebody and allows you to explore things that you wouldn't normally explore."
>
> Interviewee 5, lines 294-296

In doing so, they were able to prompt parents and pupils to consider issues that might not have previously considered.

> "... [The DTT] sometimes gives them an opportunity to think- oh, yeah, that is something that sometimes worries me. Whereas it might not be something that I would have thought to ask them for example. Or they might think, I didn't think that worried me, but actually, now I think about it, it really does..."
>
> Interviewee 15, lines 96-99

As a result, staff felt that the DTT enabled them to raise a range of possible factors with parents and pupils that they might otherwise have felt uncomfortable about.

> "It kind of opens the door for some practitioners who might find- actually, it's a bit personal talking about their [the family's] finances and I don't

want to ask that question. But you know if you're going through the form and you say, you know it's here, how are things at home? Is there anything here that you're worried about? Any particular areas? So it gives the opportunity to have the conversation."

Interviewee 16, lines 86- 91

Staff said that in situations where they wanted to raise an uncomfortable issue, they purposefully used the DTT as an obvious prompt sheet. They felt that this made it look less like they were prying, and more like they were just following a protocol.

"I think it makes conversations easier... it's very difficult to say about, how are things at home? Are you able to, sort of, afford different things? Do you need any support with parenting? It's very difficult to have those conversations. Whereas I think the [DTT] gives them a way of asking those questions. Well it's down here, so I think we must talk about it (laughs) kind of thing."

Interviewee 16, lines 80-86

Staff described the conversations that the DTT prompted with pupils and parents as helping them to develop a better understanding of the wider issues and they felt that this was very helpful to their work.

"In my opinion it's good because it allows you to have - to think, because you become so entrenched with pupils' problems and you can forget what other things are going on, and this allows you to sort of, think, oh yeah! Is this a problem perhaps?"

Interviewee 5, lines 296-299

In some situations the application of the DTT led to immediate actions being taken to ensure that the family had the appropriate support or benefits. This might be as the result of the discussion prompting the member of staff to get hold of particular forms and then helping parents or carers to complete them, or by ensuring that the school applies for the appropriate funding to enable them to access extra resources to support the pupil.

> "Um, I have spoken to a family, um and funnily enough it encouraged me - we've now got food vouchers at school. It's not a topic that I am necessarily comfortable with, but sometimes something is said in a conversation that prompts you to say, can I ask a little bit more, I'm sorry, did you say…? Ok, so how are you managing with that?"
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 12, lines 340-344</div>

<u>Supporting Joint Working</u>

School staff said that the tool enabled staff to gain a more holistic perspective by prompting them to work jointly with families and professionals in order to share their knowledge and understanding of the situation.

> "...it enhances our ability to share information..."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 7, line 219</div>

They said that they used the tool as part of the joint-working that takes place in multi-disciplinary team meetings.

> "[the DTT] is usually used at most Team Around the Child meetings..."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 13, line 52</div>

School staff said that in order to get the most out of the DTT it was helpful to develop a good relationship with pupils and parents, both prior to using the DTT and through the process of carrying out the DTT. This helped them to work together more effectively and to explore and address concerns more openly.

> "So a lot of time is spent... building up a relationship - because they have to trust you, because there's a lot of tricky stuff that has to be talked about which would be hard without their trust."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 4, lines 20- 23</div>

Some members of staff also described the process of sharing a concern with a family as an instigator for change in itself.

"...most of the time, it's enough to arrange a meeting with the family and say, look, we've noticed… Is there a problem? …Can we help?"

<div align="right">Interviewee 10, lines 245- 246</div>

School staff also felt that the DTT supported joint working by providing different professionals, schools and families with a common frame of reference and a shared language.

"[The DTT] is a unifying tool, it's a common language, so they see things in there that they [professionals] resonate with…"

<div align="right">Interviewee 13, lines 89-90</div>

It also helped different parties to have a shared understanding of the significance of a specific difficulty in terms of understanding the extent of a problem

"...it will help parents have a clear understanding of where they're at... the awareness that they have a problem- or an issue that they believe they have, once they go through it, we talk about it together- by using [the DTT] I'm wondering whether that will help them see, either, 'Oh Gosh! It's not as bad as I thought' or, 'Oh Gosh! It's worse than I thought.'"

<div align="right">Interviewee 11, lines 120-125</div>

This understanding also helped them to understand and communicate the extent to which a pupil's difficulty met the LA's thresholds for accessing or referring to other services and I will address this specifically as part of the theme on Supporting Next Steps.

School staff felt that the DTT supported joint working by enabling them to accurately collect and present the views of parents or pupils to other parties. This was described as particularly helpful when parents or pupils felt intimidated. In these instances, school staff described holding meetings prior to a team meeting, where they would discuss concerns with parents or pupils and

then work collaboratively to encapsulate their perspectives using the DTT's statements. These statements would then be presented at the team meeting either by the pupil or parent or on their behalf as part of their contribution to the meeting.

> "...the senior team will have access to them [completed DTTs] and will use them in meetings whether we're there or not, so that's the source of more information for them, because we tend to know the kids - the pupils - a lot better than some of the- the deputy heads or assistant heads and that's just another way of them getting to know the pupil if they're in a meeting."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 6, lines 43-47</div>

Identifying and prioritising needs

School staff spoke of the DTT as a means of helping them to identify and prioritise the most significant needs of the child or young person with whom they were working.

> "... the [DTT] is brilliant in showing- when you have multiple needs, say in health and in social and emotional wellbeing, um, it's knowing which one to go for first, because I think the down side of a CAF is you can highlight all of it, but there is a priority to things..."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 13, lines 68-71</div>

Many of the school staff interviewed had a self-imposed limit of specific areas of concern.

> "…the guidance is saying that six is a manageable amount, however if on the rare occasion…you've got more than six, just use the priorities."

However, some interviewees found the DTT's limit of six strands frustrating.

> "...it does limit you sometimes, that there is limitation in the fact you can only pick so many strands and so many headings under those strands. If you've got a real complex child with something really serious going on,

that's more than… You sometimes want to pick more but you can't, cause it won't physically let you on the [electronic version of the DTT].”

However, most staff members said that the restriction forced them to focus their thinking around the most important areas of need; for example, child protection issues. In some instances these were highlighted by the DTT’s inclusion of the LA’s social services thresholds or the thresholds for the involvement of health services. Staff felt that forcing staff to prioritise needs helped them to remember that until safeguarding issues were addressed many of their other concerns could not be addressed.

“...first of all we work on the premise, which is the old labour premise, which is to ensure children are safe, ok? That’s number one. So you deal with the safety aspect first, then the health aspects, then you can move to the sort of educational elements, the academic elements, that we would do that later, so the priority is for- this has to be done by us or collectively, these are the priorities that’s always relating to hugely safety and health.”

“In one family, there were problems in every strands, but the ones we picked out were more of the safeguarding ones really…”

On other occasions, school staff described the DTT as a prompt for making more sense of the pupil’s situation. They said that having to choose a limited number of concerns meant that they were forced to try to unpick the tangle of difficulties that the child presented with and to address the core difficulty rather than the symptoms it presented.

"...and sometimes those background issues that the [DTT] and the strands throw up are not necessarily distinctly to do with the behaviour at school it's an underlying issue"

<div align="right">Interviewee 6, lines 109-111</div>

Members of staff made reference to the ideas inherent in the ECM agenda (DfES, 2003) and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), specifically, that in order to enable a child to learn, they need to have other core needs met first (including feeling safe, being healthy, etc.). Some staff members specifically cited the ECM agenda as a framework that (with slight modification) helped them to prioritise pupils needs.

"...[the ECM agenda] it's right, it was exactly right. You cannot put into place any learning until the child is feeling safe in the school and in the home environment, they are fit and healthy, being nourished well, their emotional wellbeing is good- then they will be secure in their learning and have the confidence. The next two bits are also key, so at that point, when they're feeling- their confidence is flying, they're achieving, they're doing well in school, they will go on to naturally, to make a positive contribution to their community. That will happen, ok? And that's what we would be doing, is looking at opportunities to make that happen and economic wellbeing flows from that…. So the whole Every Child Matters agenda was exactly the right process for the child. I think the order a bit wrong, but if you put safety first, then you get the flow."

<div align="right">Interviewee 13, lines 78- 87</div>

Working within the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The LA is presenting the DTT to schools as part of the CAF process and as such almost all of the interviewees made some reference to CAF. Staff made reference to using the DTT in conjunction with the CAF, but also of using it independently of the CAF.

"...you know what it's like in the first meeting when you would know quite quickly whether or not you would need to do a CAF (laughs), by that

point [having done the DTT] I would absolutely know. But I think it's a kind of standalone thing as well so it won't always lead to a CAF."

I found no consistency between schools, or even between staff within the same schools with regards to the way in which the DTT was being used to support CAF working. This related to staff's perceptions of the DTT as a flexible tool that could be applied in different ways to meet their needs.

"...if you've got a CAF that's quite complex and six reviews over the period of the year for example, then if people think, oh we should be reviewing [the DTT] at every review, are they going to lose interest or is it about people saying, actually do we need to be using [the DTT] at every review? Or can we do it once every other review..."

Adapting the language used in the DTT, and applying it to an informal activity with a pupil, enabled schools to include pupils in the CAF process. They found the DTT to be a useful way of ensuring that they had elicited and recorded their perspectives for the purposes of the CAF.

"So what we've done in the past, with children who are having problems in social relationships, we have taken out that aspect and therefore, unpicked it a little bit. So some of the questions have been framed around the [DTT]. Therefore they can ... begin to get a sense of the child's voice within the CAF process."

<u>Limiting the holistic approach to working</u>

The previous four sub-themes have demonstrated staff's descriptions of the DTT as a means of supporting holistic working in a range of ways. It should however be noted that some staff also felt that sometimes the DTT limited their ability to work holistically. Staff felt frustrated that the descriptors did not extend to issues related to the pupils' families. For example, they could not use the

descriptors to document that a parent had a mental health illness or that a sibling was abusing drugs. In these instances, some school staff would annotate or extend the tool to meet their needs.

> "... there's nothing on there that's about the parent's drug or alcohol misuse...Or, um, mental health issues. Now I have used the strand about mental health issues and I have put: parent. I have a parent at the moment who is severally depressed and this is really important, so I've used this strand for the parent, but really it's meant for the child. So possibly, if you're building up this picture, there needs to be some parental questions in there, not just, parenting. Because parenting to me is a little bit different to the issues around the parent. So maybe a separate parent sheet would be nice, because the parent affects the child. If the child even has behaviour issues, 9 times out of 10 it's through something else. So it's just a shame, and I love the form, but to me it could do with a – this is very child and child's feeling of self image, there's nothing referring to parent's self-image, you know, parent's support, as in- is there any support available to the parent?"
>
> Interviewee 12, lines 325-336

The other problem described by staff was the way in which the tool only provided them with a snapshot of the situation, rather than a more dynamic description. This meant that a description given of the pupil's situation might not give any indication of potential difficulties. It also could not reflect other variables that might influence the perspectives shared, like the emotional state of the individual completing the form or the fact that the meeting took place after a family holiday.

> "They [parents] can be chaotic in nature and... It [the DTT] doesn't change them, they're still chaotic in nature, it's just like a snapshot in time."
>
> Interviewee 20, lines 163- 165

"If you've got a parent who is feeling, you know, very low, very complex situation, they're not very motivated, they're really tired, then they're automatically going to lean towards the negative side."

<div align="right">Interviewee 7, lines 386-388</div>

4.3 Theme two: Understanding the situation from different perspectives

Without exception, all the staff interviewed spoke about using the tool to gain a better understanding of their pupils' situation. The sub-themes broadly correspond to the four ways in which this happened and are summarised in figure two below.

Figure two:
Theme two and its sub-themes
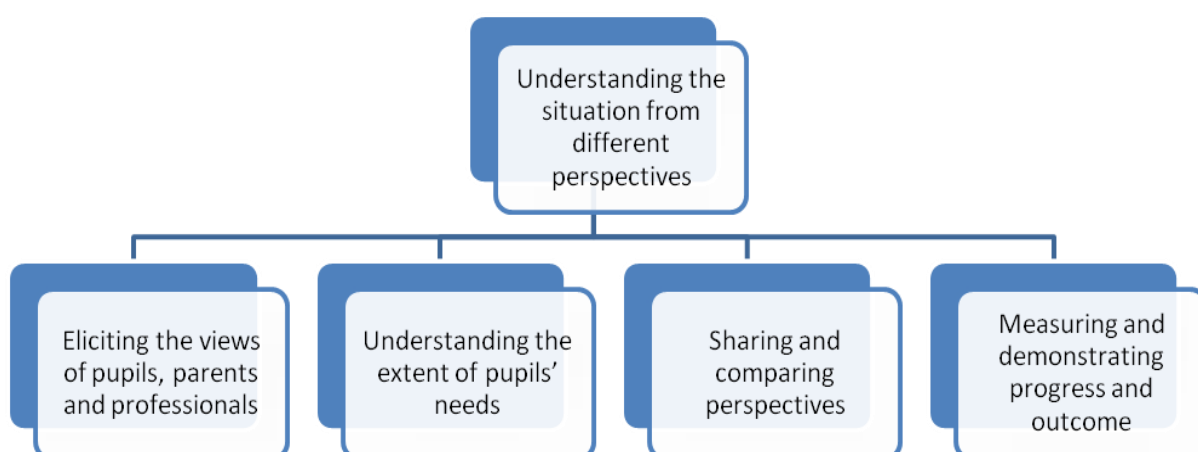
Firstly, the tool encouraged staff to have important conversations with pupils and/or their parents and carers to ensure that they had an understanding of their perspectives. Secondly, the tool was used to chart each person's perspective on to the DTT rating scales. As previously described, the DTT used in this LA contains 50 strands which can be arranged according to the four areas of the CAF or using the five areas described in the ECM agenda. Each individual strand is then presented as a rating scale with five descriptors – going from 1: No concerns, to 5: Critical or complex problem. This made it easier for pupils, staff and parents or carers to understand the extent of the difficulties or needs. Third, charting difficulties enabled staff to clearly illustrate differences in

opinion (which prompted further discussion). Finally, the tool enabled all parties to track any progress or identify a lack of progress over time.

Eliciting the views of pupils, parents and professionals

School staff described the DTT as a useful tool for eliciting and recording the voices of both pupils and parents around a range of issues.

> "...the [DTT] is sort of the young person's views of how she's feeling and where she is."
>
> Interviewee 8, lines 90-91

> "...[when working with parents] I try and just get [the DTT] and just bring it in and say, you know, you've said this, this and this, where abouts do you think [the pupil] would be on this bit?"
>
> Interviewee 12, lines 294-296

Staff described a positive aspect of using the tool to be the informal way that they could use it to understand the perspectives of parents and pupils.

> "... I like the fact that you can look at it together, and you talk...You know you're just having a conversation around what's on there. So as I say, for me it's really good."
>
> Interviewee 12, lines 185-188

Staff members felt that using it in this way enabled them to engage pupils and parents in the work they were doing, particularly in terms of the process of identifying needs and monitoring progress.

.

> "...this is something they take part in, when you discuss this at a meeting that's a positive thing for the child, because they've been part of the process [prior to the meeting], and I think, that, I don't know, it just helps them to engage a little bit more in the process. They think things happen without them a lot of the time and I think that changes things for them."
>
> Interviewee 5, lines 256- 260

72

"I think involving them in the [DTT] has helped mum and him to take ownership of the problem and actually, I think that's a good tool to work forward, when you take ownership of something."

<div align="right">Interviewee 15, lines 50-53</div>

Understanding the extent of pupils' needs

The tool was used by staff to help pupils and parents to understand that there was a need for some intervention.

"It's good at getting the kids to identify with, well to recognise the fact that there is a problem and to identify with some of the stuff that might be going on for them without them even having to say stuff sometimes."

<div align="right">Interviewee 9, lines 135- 137</div>

As well as recognising that there is a difficulty, school staff spoke about using the DTT as a powerful way of demonstrating the extent of a pupil's needs.

"...obviously it affects pupils in different ways, depending on their characters and personalities, but she was quietly taken aback by it and she said to me, well that's not good is it? And I said, no it's not the best situation to be, is it? So how are we going to get it down to moderate and then further down the scale, so that it's at no issues? So it opens up that type of conversation and therefore you can sit and listen, and go through ideas and use some kind of counselling, if need be…. And support them in that way really."

<div align="right">Interviewee 6, lines 97-103</div>

Staff spoke about the process of charting pupils', parents' and their own perceptions of the situation onto the rating scales (this process is sometimes referred to as scaling).

"...rather than just saying, look, your behaviour is not acceptable, you would say, where do you think you are? What d'you think the situation is in relation to these levels?"

School staff described the process of scaling the pupil's needs as helping them to gain a much clearer understanding of the situation.

"[the DTT] can help pupils to recognise that, you know, wow- ok this issue is coming out as a 4, so actually, this IS an area of concern for me...."

Some staff described going through the framework as a useful process for gauging the extent of the problem without having to impose their own values or opinions in order to make those judgements.

"I think it's brilliant. Because it's clearly defined, because you're not bearing on your own emotions, you're looking more at facts, because within any environment where you're working with people and you've got to make an informed decision, you need to be factual rather than rely on your own emotions. Particularly with children, if you're a parent, I think your own emotions are heightened anyway, because you can see your own child or you know, you can see how you've brought your own child up."

This was particularly important for situations where the DTT indicated that it was necessary to involve external agencies, such as social services, mental health services or Health Visitors. Elements of the LA's Safeguarding Thresholds have been amalgamated into the DTT. This means that when charting a problem on the DTT, parents can see if it falls close to, or meets the thresholds for involving these agencies. Some members of staff described the DTT as a user-friendly means of presenting the Safeguarding Thresholds to pupils, parents or carers.

" ...it helps [parents] understand the thresholds. If you get the threshold document out, it can scare them to pieces, ok? But this shows them, here's a sort of average child, here's the needs of your child and actually this may be what it will look like if nothing is done..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 13, lines 54-57</div>

Even when the pupils were not meeting thresholds, staff described the tool as helping them to put issues into perspective. They felt that where a parent or pupil perceived a worrying situation as being inconsequential, the tool enabled them to demonstrate that it should be considered to be a cause for concern. Alternatively, where a relatively small issue was causing parents or pupils to feel anxious, the tool was used by staff to help to put it into perspective.

"Then it's quite interesting to see that what they thought might have been a big problem, only comes out at a two- well actually, that's ok. Whereas with another pupil, she didn't feel that her risky behaviour was anything to worry about, however, when she plotted herself, she was a 5, and she was like, 'Oooh'. So it does help them see for themselves, it's not just us telling them, 'Oi!' They're actually seeing for themselves and it pinpoints that."

<div align="right">Interviewee 15, lines 58-63</div>

This quote also demonstrates the perceived value of presenting the extent of needs from the perspective of the LA, which helped some members of staff to appear to remain fairly non-judgemental when assessing the pupil or family's needs.

Sharing and comparing perspectives

Staff said that once they had used the DTT to elicit the views of pupils, parents and school staff, they could then use it to share these perspectives and chart differences between them. This often prompted further discussion which helped to bring pupils, families and school staff to a shared understanding of the pupil's current needs.

"I think her perception of where she's at and what she's coping with is different to her mum and stepdad's perception. And then mine is kind of somewhere in the middle of the two. So to get them to look at it [DTT] and kind of think about where they think she is, and for them to see where she thinks she is and then for me to kind of bring it so that there is a kind of meeting in the middle is quite a powerful thing to do."

<div align="right">Interview 9, lines 37-42</div>

Staff also spoke of the potential of using the DTT to share and compare the opinions of other professionals.

"...it would be quite good if all the agencies filled one in so then if we had a multiagency meeting like a Team Around the Child, then all the professionals could come with their [DTT] and we could see how things were different in different areas of their lives, cos lots of things are different outside school than they are inside. That might be quite interesting."

<div align="right">Interview 6, lines 160-164</div>

<u>Measuring and demonstrating progress and outcomes</u>

School staff described the tool as a means of measuring and demonstrating progress to both pupils and parents.

"I normally say, 'Look, this is where you said you were, and now we're, here!'"

<div align="right">Interviewee 12, lines 97-98</div>

"...you can turn round to the parents and say, ok, let's have a look at this and they can see as well, so it, it gives you, it gives both of you a starting point, which I think is good..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 12, lines 175-177</div>

The scales were described as being a relatively objective way of communicating progress too.

> "...but then seeing that move along the scale would not be your patronising them by saying good boy or good girl, but a more objective measure."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 4, lines 220-221</div>

Whilst I describe this aspect in greater depth as part of theme six (which looks at the tool's role in providing evidence), I have also included it in this theme, as the process of establishing and demonstrating progress is borne out of the consultative process of using the tool with pupils and parents, rather than decided upon autonomously by the staff member.

> "we use [the DTT], um, to try and measure impact between support plan meetings, um, so a week before a meeting is due, we would sit down with the pupil and see where they were at last time and have a look at what's happened since then and sort of re-evaluate where they are at now."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 5, lines 21-24</div>

4.4 Theme Three: Supporting Next Steps

Staff described the DTT as a useful framework for considering options either in their meetings with pupils or parents, or as part of multi-agency meetings. In this way it informed the decisions they made around the next steps that they took to support the pupils or families. This was particularly helpful when staff felt unsure of what to do to support a vulnerable pupil. The sub-themes incorporated in this theme are summarised in figure three below. These relate to the following areas of discussion: Staff's use of the DTT to work collaboratively with pupils and families, often in order to help them to set their own targets and support their efforts to achieve them; staff's use of the DTT to inform their decisions to refer the pupil or family to an external agency or to an internal support system (signposting); and the staff's frustrations at being unable to access the

resources that the discussion prompted by the DTT suggested would be most suitable.

Figure three:

Theme three and its sub-themes
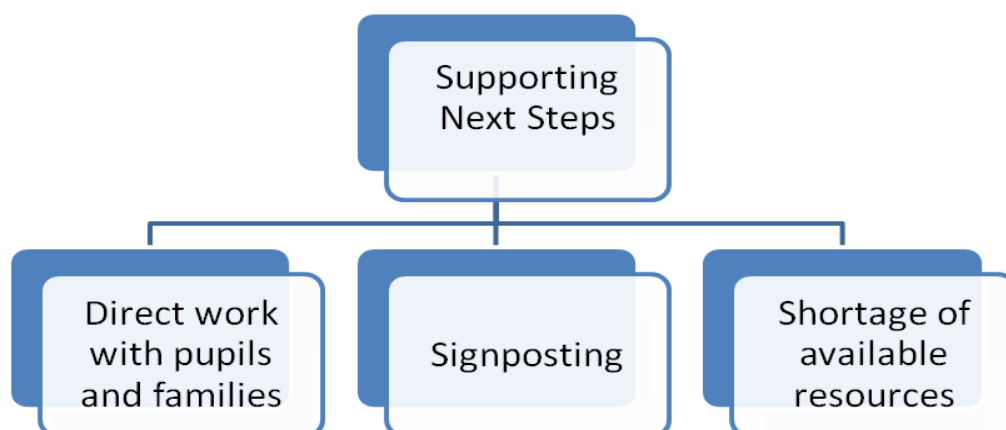
Direct work with pupils and families

Staff described the different roles that the DTT played in supporting and directing their work with pupils and families regarding the formulation of next steps. It was used to support the formulation of specific and individualised targets.

> "So once they've said where they are, we'll then choose a descriptor to work towards before the next meeting, as a target..."
>
> Interviewee 20, lines 35- 36

Staff also found it useful in their work developing an action plan with specific roles for particular stakeholders.

> " [the DTT] throws up things that we might need to do, and an action to be put in... It might be actions that we could do, or they [pupils] could do, or sometimes the parents could do, or an outside agency..."
>
> Interviewee 6, lines 107- 114

Working collaboratively with pupils and parents on formulating next steps was described by staff to be an important aspect of the DTT. They felt that involving them in this process empowered parents and pupils, gave them greater ownership over the next steps and as a result meant they were more committed towards taking the steps that had been agreed upon.

"I think involving them in the [DTT] has helped mum and him to take ownership of the problem and actually, I think that's a good tool to work forward, when you take ownership of something."

Interviewee 15,lines 51-53

"...the questions are really good and it helps students to be honest about different areas because it's worded clearly. So they can see what it involves and I think it helps them to self-evaluate in a way. So by them doing, it- I think if we tell a student we feel it's X, Y and Z, it's one thing, but if they've actually, you know what, that is me, then I think they are more eager to work with you because they've helped identify a need..."

Interviewee 15, lines 27-32

"...parents really like, from what I've heard, the feeling of empowerment from actually being able to fill that out, gives them. So the responsibility is being put back onto them, which some parents actually quite like, and again they can quite easily see where things are working, where things aren't working, where things have improved or haven't improved."

Interviewee 7, lines 295-299

Signposting

Staff felt that the DTT helped them to understand where to go next in order to support change.

"[The DTT] is not the vehicle for change, it's the signpost."

Interviewee 13, line 162

Staff described the holistic approach (previously described) as helping to inform their decisions regarding the steps they should take to address the pupil's needs and as a means of helping them to identify which agencies they should involve or contact for involvement.

> "...it sort of puts all the cards on the table. It gives you the holistic view of everything to see where we can go from it."
>
> Interviewee 10, lines 115-116

> "So with the girl I was just talking about, I suggested a counsellor, and a referral to a consultant for some other stuff. Um... But I don't necessarily think it would have come out if I had not used the [DTT] to be able to identify exactly what's going on."
>
> Interviewee 9, lines 75-78

School staff also said that they used the tool to help them to make decisions around whether to involve internal support systems and in-house services or whether support from external services was more appropriate.

> "...we are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of providing in-house support and that means, that, um, we have our Inclusion Support Team, who run small group interventions like anger management groups, but also we might actually feel that, well having looked at the pupil's ECM scores [on the DTT], actually some children might benefit from a CAMHS referral or from being seen by the Ed Psych or someone else."
>
> Interviewee 2, lines 82-87

Some professionals, particularly staff members whose role included the provision of in-house support or interventions, told me that they used the tool to help them to identify what their role would be in supporting a pupil or a family.

> "I use it as part of my initial assessment with families, so if I was going to work with the family, we would use this to identify the needs and then perhaps what my particular role in supporting the family would be."

Some descriptors on the DTT are highlighted in red as an indicator of meeting particular thresholds for the involvement of a particular external agency (such as Social Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the police or Connexions). Staff found this helpful when formulating next steps.

"I think it really clarifies, particularly now with all the funding cuts and everything else and the thresholds for some things are quite high, aren't they and I think this helps to show where we are with them."

Interviewee 10, lines 88-90

The presence of these thresholds as part of the descriptors was also seen as being a helpful way of evidencing the need for the involvement of external agencies. I will draw on this later in my discussion of theme six, which looks at providing evidence to the LA.

Shortage of available resources

One of the frustrations described by interviewees was associated with a lack of available resources and access to services. School staff reported that sometimes the process of using the DTT indicated that the involvement of a specific service or a particular intervention would be appropriate in helping a pupil, but that a lack of resources or availability meant that they could not access that help.

"There's the potential that issues are picked up and identified... but whether schools have the capacity is a different matter."

Interviewee 11, lines 468-469

4.5 Theme four: The tool's format

Staff commented on different aspects of the DTT's format. They spoke about their personal preferences and the ways in which the different interfaces affected their use of the tool. It could be argued that this theme could be

amalgamated with the next theme which highlights the factors affecting the tool's implementation and use. However, the way in which staff members spoke about the tool's format was quite distinct from the other aspects and should therefore be addressed separately. When speaking about the format of the tool, staff members expressed their opinions in a matter of fact way, presenting pitfalls and strengths as though they were objective facts. In contrast, when speaking about other factors that affected their implementation and use of the tool, staff members spoke about their personal engagement with it and the language they used was much more emotive. The subthemes are summarised in figure four below.

Figure four:

Theme four and its sub-themes
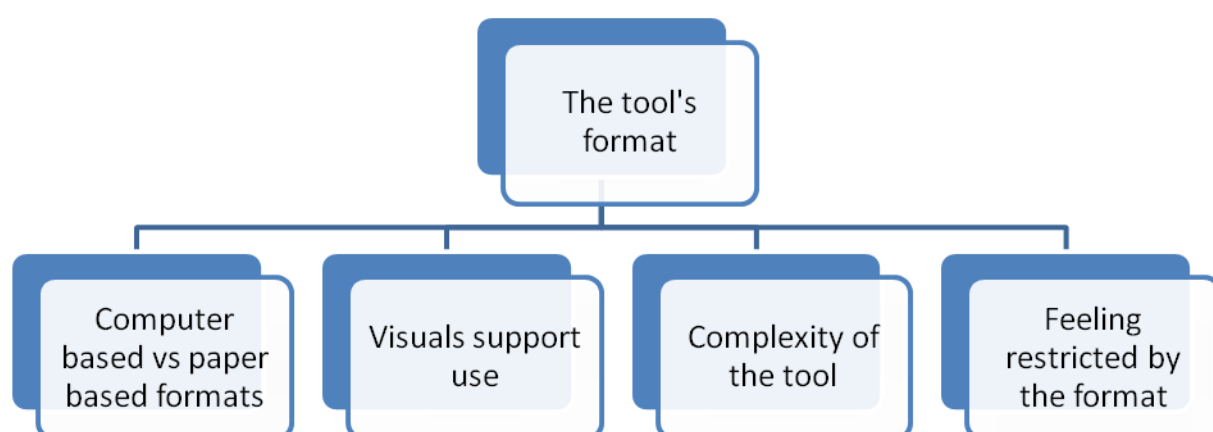
Computer based versus paper based formats

To enable staff to use the DTT more flexibly, it was presented to staff as both a PDF document that could be printed out and as an interactive webpage that they could access online. Staff often had strong opinions about the use of one method over the other and spoke at length about the strengths and pitfalls of each.

"...we've got an online thing which is great, very good visual, again that can be used with the child if the child is more into computers, then we can get in there and do it."

<div align="right">Interviewee 3, lines 107-109</div>

"...actually it's more useful to have the actual working [paper] documents, so you can have a really good look at it and the kids can have a really good look. It's more accurate..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 5, lines 119-121</div>

The most commonly raised reflections about using the electronic version of the tool related to it being an effective means of engaging pupils in the process of using the DTT. These comments were predominantly made by staff working in secondary settings.

"I do use the electronic copy, cos I find the students quite enjoy that and I take the iPad and they do it on there and they do, they enjoy that. So, I feel it's a bit more hands on and because they're involved in that, I'll help them to understand the wording and they'll help themselves along."

<div align="right">Interviewee 15, lines 55-58</div>

"...most of the kids they like it because it's- they like technology, they like computers, they like doing something online, again picking the categories, it's very user-friendly."

<div align="right">Interviewee 5, lines 121-123</div>

In contrast, staff complained of being frustrated by technical difficulties associated with using the tool online, which had motivated them to use the paper-based version.

"… I have to be honest, I haven't been a complete lover of it at the beginning, um, more because it was always crashing on the computer, it wouldn't let me download, it wouldn't let me save it, and it wouldn't let me pick more than so many strands..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 6, lines 121-124</div>

Whilst many of the comments about format were specifically aimed at a particular version of the DTT, the most salient comments were used by different participants to describe either version and so had been used to describe both the computer based and the paper based versions of the tool. For example, in advocating the use of one format over another, many members of staff described the other as being too formal or said that it shifted the focus of their meetings on to the tool itself rather than the conversations that they were having. These comments were used to describe both versions of the tool and appeared to be a greater reflection of individual differences rather than about inherent features of the tool itself.

"...what I don't like, is that you're then huddled with a parent around a computer and it's not really good. I like that you can sit beside them and you're doing it together, to me it's friendlier, it's more involved."

<div align="right">Interviewee 12, lines 285-287</div>

"...um, that's where the online version is better because you're not crowded around this huge document, and, you just, you just look at the parts which are relevant to you..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 2, lines 103-105</div>

Comments which were directed at a particular format, but could be applied to either, also shed some light on the way in which staff were using the tool. When staff members had an embedded understanding of the tool, they were able to use the website or pdf as a prompt for discussion, rather than using it to drive its use. Preference for a particular format was therefore a reflection of how comfortable they felt with using either of these formats as a non-invasive prompt, rather than relating to a specific aspect of the physical props. In the

following excerpt the teacher is advocating the paper copy over the computer-based version, but the comments she makes could easily relate to either format, with "I'll just bring it up online" being replaced with "I'll just find it on the form":

> "...[with the paper based version] You're not going, oh actually, I've got this form I need you to fill in…if you come over here, I'll just get it up online… or, you've told me they're not doing this, hang on a second, I'll just bring it up… it just, I don't think it's professional, that's just my point of view. You start putting a barrier, it's not, I don't think of it as a form, I don't say to the parents that I have a form. I say to them, oh actually, bear with me one second there's something I'd like to look at with you. Then we can really focus and look at what 'Charlie' needs. I do it that way, I don't say I'm getting a form or a booklet, I try and just get it and just bring it in and say, you know, you've said this, this and this, where abouts do you think they would be on this bit- have a read of this."
>
> Interviewee 12, lines 288-296

Visuals support use

This sub-theme relates to the way in which the tool incorporates visual illustrations to support its use. Each strand on the DTT has five descriptors of need and these ranged from one, which indicated that there were no concerns to five for a critical or complex situation. The DTT designers illustrated this scale with weather related pictures, so that one was illustrated with a sunshine and five was illustrated by a rain cloud with a lightning bolt. Staff felt that the pictures helped to make the tool appear less formal.

> "I wonder whether it [weather scaling] aesthetically feels less formal, by having it like that and I think the parents I work with are so worried sometimes about the formality of things, the judgement of other people that, um, are they good enough, that I suppose if you're- it's a distraction point, perhaps... I'm not sure."
>
> Interviewee 11, lines 189-193

Staff also felt that the use of visuals made it easier for them to explain the descriptors and enabled pupils and parents to understand the extent of the pupil's needs.

> "...we'll talk about clouds and the sunshine and the thunderstorm. I'll describe it to them, what it is. Then kind of explain what it's looking for and what it will help us to do. I think they quite like it because most of the time they aren't able to work out how significant something is for them, but they can look at the weather and identify really quickly. So today I feel cloudy, you know or when I feel like this, this is how I feel. Whereas at other times everything is fine and dandy and it's all sunny and happy. So I think they find that easier to identify with"
>
> Interviewee 9, lines 166-172

Staff also felt that visually plotting the child's needs helped them all to see patterns of need rather than viewing concerns in isolation.

> "... it pins things down- it grounds things so you actually can draw a picture and then you look at the flow and can see where the pattern lies, and the flow will give you a severity of need. So that's how, from a visual perspective, that's how we would work. So it does help provide the grounding for … next steps."
>
> Interviewee 13, lines 117-120

Complexity of the tool

The staff interviewed also commented on the complexity of the tool in terms of both the language used and the number of strands to be considered. They felt that this placed a greater emphasis on practitioners understanding the tool well in order to make decisions about which parts they would share with parents or pupils. This filtering process, together with the need to interpret the tool's descriptors, means that the use of this tool is more subjective.

> "I think it's lengthy. I think it can appear quite daunting. I think the risk is professionals, because of that nature, could pick and choose what they

present to the parents. You know, if you're thinking, I don't want to show them every strand, then, you know, I could be hearing what I think is the issue, ooh, let's look at this one... but actually, there might have been another strand that actually, they would have preferred to work on.."

<div align="right">Interviewee 11, lines 383-388</div>

Staff explained some of the tool's complexity by suggesting that it had been designed in this way to enable it to be used by a wide range of professionals for different uses.

"...it's a multi-purpose form, so it has to go to the likes of a social worker, a school nurse or whoever and we all want different things."

<div align="right">Interviewee 12, lines 353-355</div>

Staff also said that the language used in the descriptors could act as a barrier and that they would like the Local Authority to design parent and child friendly versions, or versions tailored for use with pupils or parents with lower levels of literacy or language comprehension (for example for those with English as an Additional Language).

"I think it's too complex, think there needs to be… It's almost as if there needs to be, not necessarily age brackets for different types of wording, but may be key stage, do you know what I mean? So you could have key stage two, key stage three, key stage four and then you could pick out whether or not- you know some kids in years seven would be able to deal with the wordiness of it, some kids in year 11 wouldn't be able to deal with that. So it absolutely depends on them..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 9, lines 149-155</div>

"...but if English is not your first language, or if your literacy skills are not particularly good, or your concentration skills are not terribly good, then it may not be useful tool..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 7, lines 404-405</div>

Members of staff spoke of having adapted the tool themselves - even if this was just by rephrasing the relevant parts - to enable these parents and pupils to access it. Some felt that this meant that in some cases the utility of the tool was dependent on how well the person using it was able to explain the descriptors to pupils and parents.

> "The [DTT] scoring system is very dependent on the language used to explain what the scoring means."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 11, lines 462-463</div>

Rephrasing the language used in the tool is just one of many ways that school staff had adapted the tool and these will be discussed in further depth as part of theme five on implementing the tool.

<u>Feeling restricted by the format</u>

Staff also commented that parts of the DTT were too prescriptive. They spoke of their frustration at not being able to document progress, if that progress (which may have been significant for that young person) was not in keeping with the next level descriptor on the rating scale.

> "Sometimes pigeon steps have been made that can't be illustrated on the [DTT], especially on behaviour. Um, you know, the description would say they're on a behaviour stage in school and then they're not. But actually huge amounts of progress may be made that doesn't fit that descriptor. ... Because yes, you can say that the scoring is the same, but actually they have made progress."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 16, lines 140-146</div>

One participant told me that a pupil had disposed of a blade that she had been using to self-harm for years. This was perceived to be an enormous step by the young person and staff member and had come as the result of months of mentoring. Yet this step could not accurately be demonstrated on the DTT. The member of staff found this to be hugely frustrating, as she was being asked to use the DTT to evidence the outcomes of her work and neither she, nor the

young person with whom she was working, felt that it was an appropriate tool to do so.

> "Now to her, actually to sit down and say this is where I am, she said, no way. (Laughs) I don't know why, I didn't want to ask why, that wouldn't have been appropriate to ask her why at that point. Which is not a good place..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 4, lines 89-92</div>

4.6 Theme five: The process of implementation

In this theme, I have presented the issues that are associated with implementing the tool. These fell broadly into five areas and included: Experiencing changes to procedures and its impact on motivation to use the DTT; the effect of having very little guidance regarding the DTT's use; adapting the tool to meet the needs of the school, its existing practices and its pupils; the skills and experiences affecting how the tool was implemented by staff; and the limited capacity that staff had to implement the tool as part of their work. These sub-themes are summarised in figure five below:

Figure five:
Theme five and its sub-themes
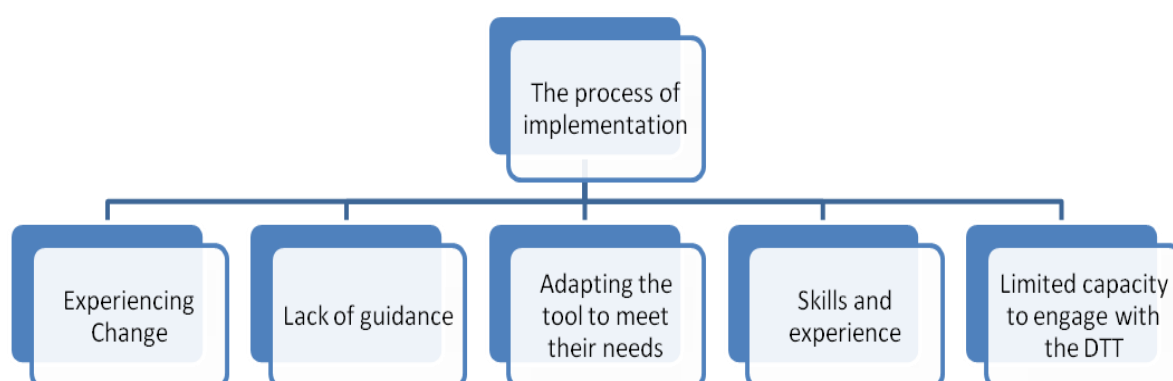
Experiencing Change

The DTT was introduced to school staff as part of a new initiative and represents a procedural change to part of the way they work with vulnerable

pupils and their families. The most commonly cited reason that staff gave for adopting the DTT was a feeling that they were obligated to do so as it forms part of the LA's new initiative.

"I feel I should. I feel I'll be brought up on it if I don't. Because it is an initiative that's been pushed by the Local Authority so I think we do need to be seen to be trying it..."

Interviewee 11, lines 259- 261

In some schools, the tool had been introduced as part of the training they received on the CAF, whilst for others it had been introduced by the Behaviour Support Team or by a member of staff at another school who had used it successfully. Staff spoke of feeling motivated to use it by the training that they had received or by hearing about its use in other settings.

"...when it came out and I went to the training I did think, 'this looks like it could be a really useful tool!'"

Interviewee 11, lines 435-436

In contrast, staff also spoke of feeling sceptical about implementing yet another new procedure as part of a LA initiative and that this made them feel less motivated to use the DTT.

"...if I'm cynical, which perhaps I am, I've been here for a long time and I suppose I've seen so many changes that- perhaps I'm just an old bag!"

Interviewee 4, lines 66-68

Staff also expressed their frustration at being expected to make repeated changes to the way they were working.

"The other frustration is, you know, the government seem to say, we're going to go this way next... but instead its changed, then it's changed again, then changed again and you just think, come on…"

Interviewee 4, lines 239-243

Staff described some of the teething difficulties that their schools had experienced with implementing the DTT. In some instances these were overcome by integrating the tool into their existing systems and procedures.

"...we couldn't find a way forward with that, so... It's just about using the systems we have in place to help us... there's a lot more that we could look into."

<div align="right">Interviewee 5, lines 162-165</div>

Despite these frustrations and the initial difficulties of implementing a new tool, staff members told me that they had since become familiar with it, so had become more confident using it and were now able to see its benefits.

"But I'm getting used to it now, because obviously it's a new thing for us, and it's becoming, I mean- I'm becoming aware now that it could be used as a good piece of work, more with the pupil, like I did the other day."

<div align="right">Interviewee 6, lines 125-127</div>

Lack of Guidance

One of the barriers for implementing or using the DTT was feeling uncertain about how to use it. The absence of a uniform introduction to using the tool meant that whilst practitioners understood some of the ideas underpinning the DTT, they were unsure of the best way to use it in their schools. This has led to some schools adopting a trial and error approach.

"...they said it's up to you how you use it. It can be used as a measuring tool, or an early intervention tool, for recognising or highlighting needs. My view was, right. Well, let's use it with every student, we have contact with. But that approach became too unmanageable, and we found ourselves doing more paperwork than face-to-face work, which is actually not a route we want to go down. So we've gone through a few phases with the [DTT]..."

<div align="right">Interviewee 3, lines 6- 11</div>

" So that is, that is it, where we're at. I don't know if that's any different, or crazy, or wrong, but that's where we're at."

Interviewee 3, lines 202-204

Staff described the uncertainty about using the tool as a source of anxiety.

"...until you start using the actual document, it's scary at first..."

Interviewee 5, lins171-172

Adapting the tool to meet their needs

The lack of guidance meant that staff were able to adapt and modify the tool to meet their needs and to make it fit with their existing school systems. Staff spoke enthusiastically about the ways in which they had done this.

"It's like anything that we have, if it doesn't work, we modify it, we tweak it, we change how we use it. So in effect, it works."

Interviewee 13, line 121-122

"I think it's a great tool, it just needs the right minds to fit it into the right systems. You can't use the same tool in different places and different systems without having it tweaked to fit into everyone's systems- that's the key."

Interviewee 3, line 318-320

"...there's different ways of using it, and we're trying to find the right way for us. Categories can change very quickly from review period to review periods and were just constantly trying to evolve the way that we use it..."

Interviewee 5, 93-96

Skills and Experience

Staff reported that when using the DTT, most of their decisions were based upon the exploratory discussions that they had had with pupils, parents and

other members of staff. They identified a range of skills that they felt were essential in enabling them to use the tool effectively by enabling them to engage in the kinds of conversations that the DTT prompted and in making the judgements that were required for scoring.

> "...if they are then going to be talking to parents or children in more depth about these issues [they] are going to definitely need more support and training in how you manage these kinds of conversations. How you challenge people effectively, without being threatening. How you- it's about engagement..."
>
> Interviewee 11, lines 472-476

Staff members spoke of using specific techniques, such as developing rapport, active listening, and using sensitive questioning techniques. Others made reference to specific skill sets such as counselling skills or using solution focused brief therapy approaches. Although none of the staff members had received any specific training in order to use the DTT, staff were described the skills that practitioners needed in order to use it most effectively.

> "So it's not as simple as, here's the tool, now use it. And I think if it were that simple, we could have rolled that out hundreds of times... and I'm sure some places do. But I suppose I just feel... as I've said to (the head), it's about building capacity in many skills, not just, you know, anyone can be taught to, like measure a line, how many centimetres, it's what you do with that, it's the questions you ask. And it's also the professional boundaries and all the other stuff that comes with it."
>
> Interviewee 20, lines 476-482

In describing the skills that they used to apply the DTT, staff referred to ones that they had developed through professional training that they had received before beginning work in their current role.

> "I've done lots of training, lots of courses related and I've had lots of- sort of- lots of other relevant experiences. I've worked in nursing and in sort of crisis centres- so it's sort of utilising those sorts of things."
>
> Interviewee 11, lines 33-36

Others reflected on personal experiences which had helped them to gain insight into some the difficulties that some of their pupils or families were experiencing.

> "Interviewee 12: ...in my personal life, I've had various issues around the family which have meant that I've seen the affects of drugs. My father passed away and I helped my mum nurse him with cancer.
>
> Interviewer: I'm so sorry-
>
> Interviewee 12: - Oh no, it's fine. But it means that I, that these are the little things that make you the person that you are and also, sometimes when you're then talking or listening to other people it just makes it a little easier, because you know where they're coming from. And even if they might not think that you understand, they can see that you do, even though they don't know why, you know- and I'm a great believer that you treat everyone the same. But effectively it's my life experiences that have given me the skills"
>
> Interviewee 12, lines 370-380

The message communicated through this sub-theme is that the DTT cannot be viewed as a standalone tool, but rather it is only as effective as the practitioners who put it into practice.

> "It's like anything, it's how you use the [DTT] that makes the difference, not the fact that it's there in the first place."
>
> Interviewee 13, lines 131-132

Limited Capacity to engage with the DTT

One of the biggest barriers to implementing the DTT in schools was a lack of available resources.

> "It's always an afterthought sadly, just because of time, and it's something I need reminding to do before support plan meeting. It's there, it's right by my desk, I know it, I've got it in my head. It would be nice to have a bit more time to work with it. It becomes a bit of a rushed event if you're not careful."

<div align="right">Interviewee 5, lines 340-343</div>

Staff also described it as unnecessarily complicating their work or increasing their workload by adding to the paperwork that they were expected to do.

> "We don't get the time to sit here logging all day."

<div align="right">Interviewee 8, line 97</div>

This additional paper work was perceived as a barrier to engaging directly with pupils and their families.

> "The [DTT] just seems another addition to more paperwork, which is less time with young people."

<div align="right">Interviewee 4, lines 113-114</div>

It should however be noted that there were also members of staff who did not find the DTT to be any more of a drain on time or resources than the approaches that they had previously adopted.

> "I find it easy to use. It doesn't take up a lot of time, it really doesn't."

<div align="right">Interviewee 9, line 223</div>

4.7 Theme six: Providing Evidence to the LA

Part of the rationale behind rolling the DTT out across the LA was to help to provide evidence of the impact of particular services and interventions. This potential was being utilised by staff in three ways: to demonstrate pupils' needs; to demonstrate the progress that the pupils had made; and to demonstrate that they were following the LA's protocol. These are the first three sub-themes that

contribute to this theme, the last one is associated with the difficulties that staff experienced with using the DTT to provide this evidence. The sub-themes are summarised in figure six below.

Figure six:
Theme six and its sub-themes
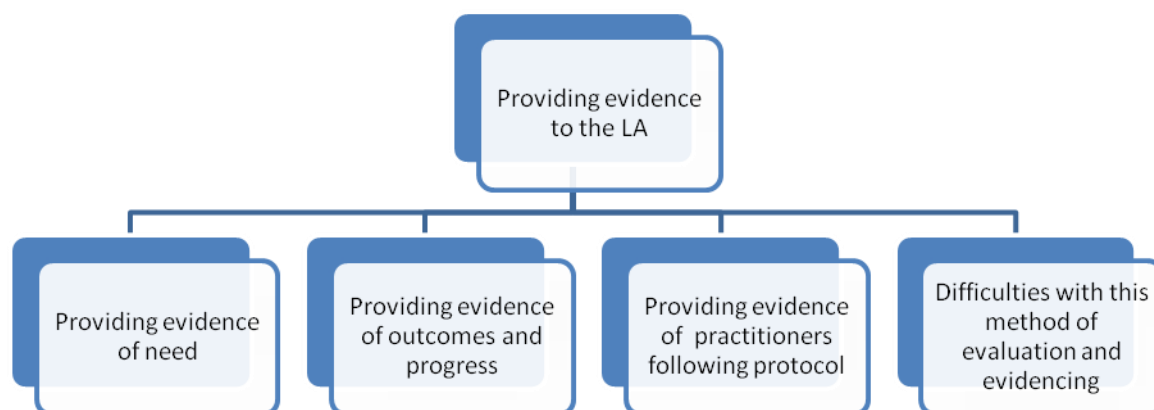
Providing evidence of need

Staff members spoke of using the tool to demonstrate the needs of a pupil or family. Sometimes this was simply a way of documenting their situation and any work that had been put in place to support it. In other cases, the completed DTT was used to accompany a referral to another professional or agency (this relates broadly to the sub-theme of sign-posting that was discussed in the previous chapter).

> "...so this [DTT] now is giving schools a way of evidencing that- so they can say, look, we have done an holistic assessment and identified the needs and it's clear that this is the agency we need. And again it all ties in, cos it's using the same wording and frameworks"

> Interviewee 16, lines 51- 54

"…if we were asked to provide evidence then the information from [the DTT] is on SIMS and is anonymous and can be used to provide evidence… "

<div align="right">Interviewee 2, lines 57-59</div>

<u>Evidence of outcomes and progress/ measuring soft outcomes</u>

As described earlier in the chapter, staff reported the benefits of using the DTT to illustrate progress or outcomes. The DTT was seen as an effective way of demonstrating this progress for a wider audience, particularly within the context of supporting the use of a particular intervention or course of action.

"I think the benefits also will be in this world of, really having to prove that what we're doing works, proving that funding is going to projects."

<div align="right">Interviewee 7, lines 65-67</div>

"So you know, OFSTED or governors, um, or perhaps someone from the Local Authority- it's there then to document the sorts of progress that pupils are making at school that might not, you know be immediately obvious otherwise- might not be monitored in any other way"

<div align="right">Interviewee 2, lines 63-66</div>

<u>Evidence of practitioners following protocol</u>

Some members of staff spoke of using the DTT to provide evidence that they were following the procedures or protocol that the Local Authority had dictated. Staff members spoke of using the tool to accompany or inform other forms (particularly associated with the CAF) to show that they were doing what they felt the school or LA thought they should be doing.

"So sometimes it goes with the referral to [the LA], to show that it's being used, and other times it's just used internally."

<div align="right">Interviewee 9, lines 74-75</div>

One member of staff reflected that it could be used to protect a school by providing evidence to show that the school had followed the protocol for supporting a pupil who was at risk of exclusion.

> "There is another angle of using this, and that's to form an evidence base around interventions that happened for a child. You can use it if the child is permanently excluded to say clearly this is what we'd done for this child, we've done this, this and this, because of these scores, we're now at a point where we aren't seeing any change. It hasn't been used that way, but it could be."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 3, lines 313-317</div>

<u>Difficulties with this method of evaluation and evidencing</u>
Staff members spoke of the difficulties associated with providing an evidence base using a tool based on subjective judgements. This meant that an evaluation could be affected by individual differences or even the user's mood on a particular day.

> "...the thing is with any kind of questions like this, but some of it is very subjective and again, I think that one of the concerns I have with this kind of approach is that I could fill this out on a Monday morning and I might score this very differently to what I would on a Wednesday afternoon..."
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 7, lines 408-411</div>

Staff also suggested that individual differences would also affect the way in which needs and progress were interpreted and recorded. Indeed, starting from one end of the scale was perceived to affect the way in which the descriptors were interpreted.

> "If you start [reviewing the statements] at the sunny side, you end up with a much more optimistic set of numbers than if you start, say, by reading the critical statements first!"
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee 19, lines 137-139</div>

Another argument put forward by staff was that such a subjective measure could easily be manipulated to demonstrate progress or the effectiveness of an intervention, when none had been made.

> "But, it IS a piece of paper, isn't it? And ... you could fiddle it, couldn't you? And say, look, they've moved."
>
> Interviewee 4, lines 172-173

Finally, staff were critical of being asked to provide this kind of evidence, and felt that it was an indicator that their professional judgements were being questioned or scrutinised.

> "… I suppose what frustrates me ...is that it feels like as professionals, we are not trusted, so that we have to have all these inanimate things to make a judgement on whether something is working or not."
>
> Interviewee 4, lines 162-165

4.8 Summary

In this chapter I have explored the six themes and 25 sub-themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews. The first three themes form part of a super-ordinate theme which relates to the practical application of the tool by staff in their work with vulnerable pupils and their families. The last three themes form part of a second super-ordinate theme associated with the implementation of the DTT as part of a new LA initiative.

The first theme highlights the use of the DTT as a means of developing the staff's understanding of the pupils' situation at different points in their work with the pupil and their family. Sub-themes highlighted the use of the tool as a means of eliciting, sharing and comparing the perspectives of different parties. Other sub-themes revealed that staff used the DTT to establish a baseline in terms of getting a good understanding of the extent of the pupils' needs and then as a means of tracking and recording any progress or outcomes achieved.

The second theme reveals the way in which staff used the tool in terms of adopting an holistic approach to their work with pupils and their families. The sub-themes were predominantly associated with the way in which the DTT facilitated this approach, but also touched upon some of the difficulties that using the tool presented to holistic working.

The third theme highlights school staff's perception of the DTT as a means of supporting the pupil's next steps, both in terms of the work that they undertake directly with a pupil or their family, and in terms of referring them to other professionals or services. Part of this theme also demonstrates staff members' frustration with the limited resources that are available to support pupils and families once their needs have been identified.

The fourth theme emerged from the views expressed by school staff around the format of the tool. Sub-themes were associated with: the perceived benefits and difficulties associated with using either the paper or computer based versions; the use of visual prompts to understand the extent pupils' needs; the complexity of the tool - particularly with regards to the language used; and a sense expressed by school staff of feeling restricted by the format.

The fifth theme demonstrates some of the issues described by staff regarding the implementation and use of the DTT as part of the LA's new initiative. With six sub-themes, this theme is the biggest and helps to illustrate some of the barriers and facilitators that staff associated with using and applying the tool. Sub-themes include: the motivation behind using the tool, the difficulties associated with experiencing change; feeling that there was limited guidance given in terms of how best to use the tool; the feelings of empowerment associated with adapting the tool to meet the needs of the school and other stakeholders; the skills and experiences that staff members relied upon to use the tool; and the feeling that they did not have enough time to apply the tool to its full potential in their work.

The last theme describes the different types of evidence that using the DTT provided staff with. This included: enabling staff to demonstrate need; the ability

to document progress in response to a particular outcome; and the evidence that practitioners were doing what was expected of them by the LA or management. The final sub-theme highlights the difficulties that staff expressed with using the tool as a method of evidencing

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Overview of the chapter

In conducting this research, I aimed to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of school staff regarding their implementation and application of a DTT to their work with vulnerable pupils as part of a new LA initiative. My research questions were:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of mainstream school staff regarding the application of a specific DTT to their work with vulnerable pupils?
2. What are the perspectives and experiences of mainstream school staff in their implementation of a specific DTT as part of their work?

In this chapter I address each of these questions by reflecting on my findings in the context of previous research and theories.

In order to address the first research question, I have drawn heavily upon the first super-ordinate theme as it relates to the practical application of the DTT. I have therefore structured the part of this chapter which addresses the first question by working through the following three themes: using the DTT to support an holistic approach; understanding the situation from different perspectives; and supporting next steps.

The second super-ordinate theme, which relates to the implementation of the DTT as part of a new LA initiative, relates broadly to my second research question. I have therefore used the three themes that this super-ordinate theme encompasses to structure the way I have addressed the second research question. These are: The tool's format; the process of implementation; and providing evidence for the LA.

Whilst each research question is broadly addressed by its corresponding super-ordinate theme, there is also some overlap between them and parts of each set of themes appear in the discussion around both research question.

5.2 Research question one: What are the experiences and perceptions of mainstream school staff regarding the application of a specific DTT to their work with vulnerable pupils?

The aim of this research question was to develop an understanding of how the tool was being used by staff and of what they thought of using it as part of their work with vulnerable pupils. Collecting this information could allow me to disseminate positive examples of using the DTT in mainstream school settings and this could then be used to inform planning for the inclusion of similar tools in other settings. The flexibility that schools were given regarding the way in which the DTT could be applied meant that there was variation between the different ways in which the tool had been used, both between settlings and amongst staff members at the same setting. The super-ordinate theme which groups the three themes most associated with the application of the tool demonstrates some of the key methods of implementation and views

Using the DTT to support the application of an holistic approach

My findings indicate that school staff felt that in implementing the tool, they were prompted to place a greater emphasis on considering wider aspects of pupils' situations, and that overall the tool supported their application of an holistic approach to supporting their pupils. Although most aspects of this theme support and extend existing literature around the use of DTTs and relating to the work done to support vulnerable pupils in schools, there is one element which appears to make a novel contribution to both of these fields.

My findings suggest that the application of the DTT may have prompted staff to consider some of its theoretical underpinnings. The tool's 50 strands can be presented according to the five areas of the ECM agenda (DfES, 2003) or according to the four categories of the CAF (DfES, 2006). In addition, the tool was presented to some staff as having the potential to support the CAF process. It is therefore unsurprising that in describing their use of the tool, school staff referred to both of these frameworks. However, I think it is notable that in describing their use of the tool staff talked about these frameworks informing their work. Staff also made reference to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

(1943), which suggests that prompting staff to consider the holistic approach associated with the CAF and ECM, encouraged them to think about other holistic theories associated with meeting the needs of children and young people.

One way of developing insight into the prevalence of factors that may be affecting pupils is through discussion with the pupils themselves and the relevant people in their lives (Wagner, 2000). Staff described the DTT as supporting an holistic approach to their work by facilitating these important discussions. This gave them insight into the aspects of their pupils' lives that might not have been evident from observing or assessing them at school. Adopting this approach in order to gain an holistic understanding of pupils' needs has been advocated as a particularly effective means of making sense of the function of some pupils' behaviour (Wagner, 2000).

Staff also described the tool as supporting their holistic understanding of the pupil's situation, by supporting multi-agency working. They felt that it could act as a shared frame of reference or as a shared language between the professionals who were working with the pupil or family. This falls in line with research on the use of the ECM agenda, which was also introduced for use by a range of professionals who work with children, young people and their families. This research found that it was being used as a means of constructing a common language between a range of professionals and that this was valued by them (Wilkins & Price, 2012).

The finding that the DTT can be used to present professionals with a common language or frame of reference suggests that DTTs could be used to facilitate more successful and effective multi-agency working. Indeed, an absence of a common language has been cited as one of the barriers for collaborative working between different agencies (for example, Taylor-Robinson, Lloyd-Williams, Orton, Moonan, O'Flaherty & Capewell, 2012; Weston, 2012). Multi-agency working can help to inform the eco-systemic understanding of the child or young person's situation and is also conducive to offering pupils and families an holistic approach to the support they receive (Gasper, 2010). By supporting

multi-agency working, the DTT could also have a positive impact on the safeguarding of children and young people, as the government advocates professionals working together as one of the core ways to prevent vulnerable individuals from being overlooked (HM Government, 2006).

Members of staff in my study also made reference to the DTT supporting the multi-agency working that is associated with the CAF, and it was clear from my interviews that there was no consistency between schools or even between staff within schools in the way they had adopted the DTT for use in this way. This is in line with existing findings that demonstrate that the way in which the CAF has been adopted varies greatly- both between schools and, perhaps more significantly, between different LAs (Holmes, McDermid & Soper, 2011).

My findings also highlight the staff members' use of the tool as a common framework to support the sharing of information between home and school. The home and school systems are two of the most influential systems in a young person's life (Dowling, 2003) and it is therefore vital that practitioners consider both when working with pupils - both individually and in terms of how they interact. This is all the more important when we consider that the level of agreement and support between these systems effects how secure the child feels in each part of their life (Byng-Hall, 2003). There is a wealth of research indicating the importance of schools working in partnership with parents to support pupils (Prater, 2010). My findings therefore suggest that DTTs could play an important role in facilitating clear communication between home and school and therefore supporting vulnerable pupils.

The value of good communication between school staff and parents is recognised by legislation; for example, the School Standards and Framework Act (1998) requires schools to have a written home-school agreement. However, these relationships can be challenging and one party may be perceived as threatening by the other (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Part of the reason behind these difficulties may be the power differential between school staff and parents/carers (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). My research suggests that staff felt that the DTT empowered families and, if this is the case,

this process could be useful in promoting a collaborative approach between home and school.

The utility of the DTT as a tool that supports these relationships is clearly demonstrated in the existing research, which suggests that making time to develop positive home and school relationships can go a long way towards overcoming perceived differences and difficulties (Hall and Santer, 2000 and Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005) and that developing a trusting relationship between schools and families facilitates conversations around difficulties in school and is associated with better outcomes for pupils (Adams, & Christenson, 2000), and particularly vulnerable ones (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Understanding the situation from different perspectives

One of the most important aspects of effective joint working is having a shared understanding of the situation (Prater, 2010; Kodner., & Spreeuwenberg, 2002), particularly for pupils with additional needs (Adams, & Christenson, 2000). School staff felt that the DTT fostered this shared perspective between them and family members by enabling them to share and compare each party's views. They felt it was a useful prompt for both eliciting and then recording the views of relevant stakeholders, including their own. There are statutory requirements for professionals to take into account the views of parents and pupils when making decisions that impact upon the pupils. The Children Act (1989), the SEN Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001), the Children and Families Bill (2013) and the new draft of the SEN Code of Practice (DfE & DfH, 2013) all place a responsibility on the professionals working with children and young people to elicit their feelings and wishes, keep a record of them and take them into account when they make decisions that may affect them and their care. Legislation has also highlighted the need to also take into consideration the views of parents and carers in making key decisions for vulnerable children and young people and this is particularly obvious in the new draft of the SEN Code of Practice (DfE & DfH, 2013) and the Children and Families Bill (2013).

It has been suggested that the power differential between school staff and pupils (Ravet, 2007) and between school staff and parents/carers (Delgado-

Gaitan, 1991) can prevent staff from effectively eliciting the views of pupils and their families. My research suggests that staff felt that using the DTT empowered families and pupils and thus reduces aspects of the power differential. Improving the balance of power could facilitate conversations that enable staff to develop a good understanding of the perspectives of pupils and parents.

There is a body of research which explores the power differential that exists between researchers and participants and suggests ways in which to overcome it. I feel that these findings and ascertains are also relevant to the process of school staff eliciting the views of families and pupils, and so have discussed these here. For example, the power differential that exists between participants and researchers can prompt participants to respond with *"what they think researchers want to hear"* (p. 31, The NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2005) or monosyllabic responses (Horner, 2000). Task based activities have been suggested as a way of alleviating some of these pressures and therefore are perceived to be a more effective means of eliciting the views of pupils (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2005; Sines, 2012). Some of the same benefits of using a task-based activity for research purposes could also be applicable to the work undertaken by school staff with pupils (Punch, 2002) and their families. It could then be inferred that as a task based activity, the DTT helps to reduce the power differential and therefore facilitate the sharing of perspectives between pupils, parents and school staff.

An important aspect of my findings relates to the tool's ability to share the LA's thresholds for referral to other agencies with pupils and their families. By integrating these thresholds into the DTT, the LA have made it easier for practitioners to recognise when they need to get additional support and so have facilitated referrals of this nature. Staff found that they were able to share this understanding with parents and therefore make a collaborative decision to make a referral. This is a particularly important aspect of the tool, as involving other agencies, such as social services or the police can be a trigger for the breakdown in relationships between home and school (Baginsky, 2007). My research suggests that DTTs enable staff to demonstrate and evidence the

rationale behind these types of referrals, and this could then help them to manage these potentially difficult scenarios.

Supporting Next Steps

My research highlights the utility of DTTs to support staff in sharing perspectives in order to develop a holistic approach that informed their thinking around next steps. This extends the findings of the research into the implementation of the CAF, which reported that having a broader perspective of the needs of children and families helped practitioners to propose next steps, which they felt helped them to achieve positive outcomes (Holmes, McDermid, Padley & Soper, 2012).

My findings also suggest that schools valued the DTT's use as part of target setting process and then to support them in monitoring any progress made by the pupils over time. The literature suggests that both of these aspects (target setting and monitoring progress) are important elements of instigating change. The literature into the utility of goal setting in education, suggests that schools, teachers and pupils benefit from setting targets (Flecknoe, 2001). Whilst research into using goals to instigate change has found that receiving feedback along the way is a crucial component in motivating individuals to work towards achieving their goals (Latham and Locke, 2007). This is partly because feedback allows the individual to monitor their progress and adjust their goals if necessary (Pearson, 2000; Mahoney, Moore, Wade, & Moura, 1973;).

School staff described the process of involving pupils and parents in the identification of needs and in setting targets as empowering the pupil and their families and enabling the pupil to take ownership over their learning and progress. They felt that this made them more engaged in the work they were doing together. This finding mirrors the work of existing researchers who have found that consulting and working collaboratively with pupils encourages them to take ownership for their progress (Wang, 2009; Flutter & Ruddock, 2004). This in turn makes them more likely to become their own agents of change (Wang, 2009). This finding also supports research which has found that involving the individual in the process of setting goals increases their

commitment to it (Bodenheimer & Handley, 2009) and that increased commitment contributes to their successful achievement of those goals (Locke and Latham, 2002).

A source of frustration for staff members was the lack of available resources for implementing next steps. Staff felt that once the tool had been used to identify the most appropriate next steps, their attempts to best support a pupil or their family were then thwarted by being unable to access a particular service or intervention. This mirrors the frustrations reported in the literature documenting the implementation of the CAF.

> "Both professionals and parents/carers reported that a number of services had either reduced their capacity or were no longer available. This potential shortfall in services coupled with any increase in the number of CAF referrals and an increased demand on children's social care emphasised the need for consideration of the allocation of resources and the longer term impact on children and families if they do not receive the support and services to meet their needs"
>
> (p7. Holmes, McDermid, Padley & Soper, 2012)

School staff also described the tool as a useful way of documenting the work they had done with pupils to justify the decisions that they had made regarding next steps and evidence any progress made by the child or young person. As this was perceived as a motivating factor for implementing the tool, I will address this in more depth in the next part of this chapter.

5.3 Research Question two: What are the perspectives and experiences of mainstream school staff in their implementation of a specific DTT as part of their work?

The attitudes of staff towards a new initiative has been found to be predictive of the extent to which it is implemented (Piderit, 2000). As such, this research question is focused on gaining insight into the perspectives and experiences of school staff towards the DTT and its implementation. Much of the discussion

around the DTT's implementation related to their emotive responses, particularly feeling frustrated or motivated by particular aspects of the tool and its application, or having positive or negative experiences of using it.

When staff have positive experiences of applying a new initiative they tend to experience greater motivation to use it again in the future (Dobbins, Ciliska, Cockrill, Barnsley & DiCenso, 2002) and so the factors that contribute to either positive and negative experiences can be seen to contribute to a tool or initiative's successful implementation.

The last three themes are most useful in developing our understanding of staff's experiences of the DTT's implementation and I have discussed these here.

<u>The tool's format</u>
Staff felt that the tool's format contributed to their ability to effectively engage pupils and parents The DTT introduces a task based element into their meetings, which they described as acting as a prompt for discussion. There is growing recognition in the literature of the importance of carefully considering the methods used to elicit the views of vulnerable children and young people (Institute of Child Protection Studies, 2006). It has been argued that visual or task-based activities can help to promote discussion as well as maintain pupil's interest (Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn & Jackson, 2000). Task based activities also reduce the pressure associated with the face-to-face elements of straightforward interviews or group discussions (Institute of Child Protection Studies, 2006).

All of the reflections made by school staff regarding their experiences of using either version of the tool have been reported in existing research that compares web-based and paper-based assessment or intervention tools (for example, Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004; Wantland, Portillo, Holzemer, Slaughter & McGhee, 2004). Whilst staff spoke positively about the format of the computer-based version of the DTT, they also spoke of the technical difficulties that they experienced using it. Previous research suggests that whilst computer based assessment can have an effect on the way in which pupils engage with the

assessment, their overall performance is largely mediated by the design of the online tools (Ricketts & Wilks, 2002).

The tool's complexity, both with regards to the language used and the array of strands to be reviewed was raised by users of both the paper and electronic formats. This placed a greater emphasis on staff being familiar with the tool so that they were then able to mediate its use, particularly with families or pupils with literacy difficulties or English as an additional language. Similar issues were raised in the research that has been carried out into the application and implementation of the CAF (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004).

<u>The process of implementation</u>

Some of the most emotive responses given by staff members were associated with the implementation of the DTT as part of an organisational change instigated by the LA. The LA's introduction of the DTT has required practitioners to change procedural aspects of the way in which they work with vulnerable pupils and their families. My research suggests that the tool was perceived by some members of staff as just one in a line of procedural and practical changes that they had experienced in their work over the years. A sub-theme from the findings, relates to staff's perception of the new DTT as a transitory process that had been imposed upon them. This attitude towards changes in education mirrors the findings of research into the implementation of other new approaches by teaching staff (Osborn, McNess, Broadfoot, Pollard and Triggs 2001).

Whilst there is very limited research regarding the implementation of DTTs, there is a wealth of literature drawing on the experiences of practitioners in implementing other local and national initiatives, particularly that of the CAF. This literature suggests that some of the barriers to implementing the CAF are similar to those associated with other types of organisational change (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004). My research raised some of the same issues associated with implementing the CAF and so I would argue that the process of implementing a DTT can be likened to other types of organisational change.

Of course, not all change is positive nor perceived as necessary and staff and negative perceptions can lead to staff resisting its implementation (Lunenburg, 2010). The literature suggests that in order to cultivate change, individuals need to be educated in the theoretical basis or rationale for change, and involving them in the process of planning its implementation (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss & Cleaver, 2004), rather than expecting them to passively accept it. This marries well with my finding that staff spoke positively about adapting the tool to meet their needs. The decisions school staff made around how to apply the tool to their existing systems involved them in the process of implementing change and so may have made it easier for them to accept it. Another factor affecting their positivity around adapting the tool may be that in doing so they took into account the existing organisational cultures and practices. Doing so has been found to affect the extent to which new initiatives are successfully implemented (Peckover, Hall, & White, 2009).

Enabling users to apply and adapt the tool to meet their needs can have specific benefits to the effectiveness of DTTs in particular. Burns (2000) argues that any generic system for measuring outcomes needs to be developed and adapted in order to meet the needs of specific stakeholders or to mirror the individual aims of each project. Doing so will ensure that the tool has appropriate indicators of progress and therefore impact on both compliance to using the tool and the quality of the assessment being made. Lloyd and O'Sullivan (2004) found that the majority of the users from their case studies periodically reviewed and tweaked their tools to ensure that they were suitable for their clients and their own objectives. This will help to ensure that the tool remains useful, as the effectiveness of a behaviour change technique is improved when it has been tailored to the individuals or group with whom it is used (Abraham & Michie, 2008). Enabling staff to tweak the tool so that it meets their needs and fits in with existing procedures may have resulted in more positive experiences of using it, which would have improved the individual's motivation to implement the tool (Dobbins, Ciliska, Cockrill, Barnsley & DiCenso, 2002).

Whilst the freedom to apply and adapt the tool may have had a positive impact on school staff's acceptance of it, some school staff also expressed insecurity about how best to apply it to their work. Similar findings were reported in the research looking at the implementation of the CAF (Holmes, McDermid, Padley & Soper, 2012) and it has been argued that the provision of firmer national guidance and more prescription about how to use it would have led to the more successful local implementation (Brandon, Howe, Dagley, Salter & Warren, 2006).

A perceived barrier to the implementation of the tool that was highlighted in the previous chapter is the limited capacity that staff have to engage with the DTT. These opinions also mirror some of the difficulties that are outlined in the research around the implementation of the CAF. In particular, practitioners reported that they needed extra time to engage in the CAF process (Peckover, Hall, & White, 2009) and that doing so meant an increase in "workload demands, in particular with regard to increased paperwork and additional procedures." (p.5, Holmes, McDermid, Padley & Soper, 2012). Some staff members felt that spending more time applying with the DTT would mean having less time with pupils and their families. An equivalent concern was raised by staff in the research around the CAF and presented by the researchers as a barrier to its implementation (McDermid, Padley & Soper, 2012).

Whilst it has been argued that there is no single, "off the shelf" approach to measuring distance travelled that will suit all projects (DWP, 2003), "the absence of an appropriate methodology" (p14, Lloyd and O'Sullivan, 2004) is the most commonly cited barrier to professionals using DTTs to measuring soft outcomes. In my research many members of staff described adopting a trial and error approach to implementing the DTT.

Another important resource that school staff made use of in implementing the tool was their own knowledge, skills and experiences. The findings highlight staff's perceptions that these helped to drive their exploratory discussions with

pupils, parents and other members of staff, which were crucial in informing their decisions. As previously mentioned, any measure of soft outcomes is highly subjective and therefore dependent on the skills and experiences of practitioners to ensure that they are making appropriate judgements (WEFO, 2003). The subjective nature of the tool means that the individual differences of the practitioner will also affect the way in which they apply and use the tool and therefore on the experiences that they have in using it. These individual differences and the impact they have on the implementation and effectiveness of DTTs has been highlighted in previous research (Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004) and would also have implications for the tools reliability and validity – particularly with regards to providing evidence.

Providing evidence for the LA

School staff described feeling motivated to adopt the tool by its ability to provide evidence of need, progress and outcomes to the LA. Indeed, research has found that the second greatest motivation for developing DTTs is their ability to demonstrate these things (Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004). Another difficulty associated with evidencing progress in this way is that the outcomes recorded with DTTs cannot be reliably compared or amalgamated despite their use of numeric values to demonstrate progress. This is because the numbers elicited from these types of rating scales are nominal - in other words they are merely short hand for a label rather than representing a specific quantity (McDowell, 2006), which means that any figures elicited from using DTTs cannot be interpreted quantitatively.

Lloyd and O'Sullivan argue that this is a huge drawback of using the DTT outcomes as performance indicators to drive the improvement of services. They say that there is a risk that "inappropriate use of these measures may perversely end up undermining those organisations whose performance they seek to improve." (p.5, Lloyd & O'Sullivan, 2004). They suggest that funding bodies avoid using DTTs to compare the outcomes of different projects, particularly where the measures are dependent on subjective judgements. Using a DTT to inform the evidence base for an intervention or a service may also be problematic as it increases staff members' motivation to manipulate

observable outcomes (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009). This false motivation appears in my findings.

Using DTTs to demonstrate efficacy is also difficult due to the collaborative approach adopted by the different services. This means that it is almost impossible to identify the impact of any particular service. For example, whilst EPs often instigate the application of an intervention, they are not typically directly involved in the process of implementing it (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). As a result, there are many factors associated with the way in which interventions are applied which will be outside of the EPs' control, and which make it harder to accurately attribute credit for a pupils' progress to the EP's involvement.

There is increasing pressure on EPs as part of the preventative services to present evidence for the practices and interventions that they are putting in place (Allen, 2011) and to make use of EBPs or interventions (McIntosh, Martinez, Tyc, & McClain, 2013). DTTs are being presented as a means of providing this evidence (C4EO, 2010) and it is therefore useful for us to have an understanding of the perceived difficulties and benefits associated with these types of tool. My findings help to enrich our understanding of the way in which evaluative tools are being received by school staff. Having some insight into the perspectives of service providers around collecting and providing evidence will help to provide a context for the information provided by DTTs.

5.3 Summary

Exploring the perceptions and experiences of school staff in implementing this DTT helps us to understand some of the factors which affect the extent to which it is being applied in this LA. In answering the first research question I drew upon the first three themes that emerged from the analysis and form the first super-ordinate theme. In this way I was able to highlight some of the perceived benefits to using this DTT. The findings demonstrate that the theoretical underpinnings of the tool manifested themselves in the approach that school staff used in applying it. They also suggest that the DTT is a useful way of

eliciting, recording, demonstrating and sharing the perceptions of relevant parties - which is a crucial aspect of the work undertaken with vulnerable pupils.

In answering the second research question I drew upon the last three themes that emerged from the analysis and form the second super-ordinate theme. In this way I was able to present some of the barriers and facilitators affecting the implementation of the tool, including the responses that staff had to being asked to apply it. As staff's attitudes have been found to drive the future use of new initiatives, these could be perceived as barriers and facilitators to use in themselves.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter I have described the contribution of my research and its implications for LAs and professionals who work with vulnerable pupils and their families. I have then reflected on the limitations of my study and made some recommendations for future research.

6.1 The unique contribution of my research and its implications for professional practice

In conducting this study, I hope to contribute to the literature on using DTTs as a means of managing and monitoring change, and to the literature on supporting vulnerable pupils in mainstream schools. I believe that my findings could serve to reinforce and develop the existing literature in both of these areas, but also could help to bridge the gap between them. In this way, my research can contribution to the extremely limited existing literature on the implementation and application of DTTs in supporting vulnerable pupils in mainstream schools.

There are five key potential contributions that my research makes to the literature:

1. It highlights the role of DTTs as a means of promoting and supporting collaborative work between stakeholders
2. It highlights the perceived utility of a task-based activity for facilitating joint working
3. It highlights the perceived utility of DTTs as a means of identifying needs, setting targets, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes by staff in mainstream school settings
4. It demonstrates positive examples of implementing and applying DTTs by staff in mainstream schools settings
5. It highlights the perceived benefits and limitations of using DTTs as a means of providing evidence

I have described these with reference to the implications that they have for professional practice by practitioners and LAs.

<u>Highlighting the role of DTTs as a means of promoting and supporting collaborative work between stakeholders</u>.

Not only do my findings reinforce the perceived utility of collaborative working between vulnerable pupils, their families, school staff and other practitioners, it also highlights the potential benefit of using DTTs to promote this collaborative approach. My findings highlight the use of the DTT as a means of eliciting, identifying, documenting and sharing the perceptions of different stakeholders, which is a crucial aspect of effective joint working (Kodner & Spreeuwenberg, 2002). When we consider that collaborative working between home and school promotes better educational outcomes (Epstein & Dauber, 199; Adams, & Christenson, 2000), it is clear that a tool that supports or facilitates this could be particularly beneficial for vulnerable pupils.

My findings also highlight the utility of DTTs as a means of engaging pupils and parents. I have suggested that this might be the result of the DTT being a task-based activity which helps to reduce the power differential and so encourage openness between school staff and the parents and pupils with whom they work. Whilst the existing literature acknowledges this in the case of task-based activities for research purposes, my study suggests that task-based activities may also have a role in professional practice. The findings may also contribute to the literature around the process of developing home and school relationships by highlighting some positive experiences of joint working from the perspectives of school staff.

<u>Highlighting the perceived utility of a task-based activity for facilitating joint working</u>

Although EPs are amongst a range of practitioners who already use task-based activities in their work with pupils, my research suggests that there may be benefits in using appropriate task-based activities as part of consultations with relevant adults too. DTTs present a possible format for this and can be used with both pupils and their parents or carers.

My research highlights the use of DTTs as a task-based activity which facilitates the process of referring vulnerable pupils and their families to external agencies. Previous research has found that this process, particularly referrals to social services, is perceived by school staff to be a trigger for a break down in home-school relationships and this can be a barrier to making referrals (Baginsky, 2007). My findings demonstrated that school staff found the referral process was facilitated by using the DTT as it integrated the thresholds for involving external agencies into the descriptors. They found that it enabled them to be more transparent about their decision making process and facilitated more open and clear discussion about the need to refer. Involving families in this type of discussion with staff, may be conducive to vulnerable pupils and families maintaining a greater sense of control over their situation, as well as helping to preserve important home-school relationships.

LAs who take these findings into consideration may wish to encourage practitioners who wish to refer a family or young person to an external agency, such as EPs or Social Services to use a task-based activity which demonstrates thresholds in order to facilitate this process and ensure greater transparency around their decision to refer.

Highlighting the perceived utility of DTTs as a means of identifying needs, setting targets, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes by staff in mainstream school settings

My findings make reference to the four key processes that using a DTT instigates: identifying needs; setting targets; monitoring change and evaluating change. In doing so my research may act to reinforce the understanding of DTTs as a means of applying these processes to instigate change, rather than just as a means of evaluating the change that has taken place. As such, my findings have implications for LAs, as they highlight that the process of applying a DTT can act as a confounding variable in measuring the impact of an intervention. EPs already implement a range of tools that utilise these four processes (see appendix 2) as such my findings may help to inform EP practice by highlighting DTTs as a possible tool that can be used alongside or in place of existing intervention and assessment practices.

My findings suggest that these four processes are also valued by school staff and perceived to be an important aspect of the work that they do with vulnerable pupils. The descriptions of the perceptions of service users in implementing these stages may therefore contribute to the existing research into the application of target setting, monitoring and evaluation as part of the change process, and also as an aspect of the work undertaken with vulnerable groups. A better understanding of the perceptions of practitioners in applying these processes could be useful to LAs who may wish to consider integrating similar tools more widely.

Equally important is the finding that staff described the tool as a useful framework for implementing these processes as part of that work. Whilst EPs often instigate the application of an intervention, they are not typically directly involved in the process of implementing it (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). Using a tool like a DTT to shape the process of identifying targets, and monitoring and evaluating progress may help to support the work that goes on between EP visits.

My findings suggest that the process of identifying needs was affected by the use and application of the DTT, as it encouraged staff to think more holistically in understanding pupils' needs. Working holistically is a principle which underpinned the tool's development. This finding may therefore be significant to LAs as it suggests that the theoretical underpinning of a DTT can influence staff's approach to their work as a result of a applying it.

Demonstrating positive examples of implementing and applying DTTs by staff in mainstream school settings

This research could serve to showcase some examples of successfully implementing DTTs as part of the work undertaken by school staff to support vulnerable pupils. In this way, it has the potential to contribute to both the literature around the implementation of new procedures and tools (particularly DTTs) and to the literature on supporting vulnerable pupils in mainstream schools.

By highlighting the perspectives of staff regarding both motivating factors and perceived barriers to implementation, my research findings could serve to reinforce and enrich our understanding of the way in which new procedures are received by mainstream school staff. This could enable management to pre-empt and prepare for some of the difficulties that I have described and help them to present some of the benefits associated with using DTTs to staff. In this way, my findings could inform future implementation of similar tools with vulnerable pupils.

By replicating some of the findings associated with the use of DTTs, I have been able to strengthen some of the inferences that have been made in the literature between the application of DTTs in other settings and their application in education settings. This may prove to be useful as LAs consider using DTTs more widely in schools to support vulnerable pupils - both by school staff and by external agencies.

Highlighting the perceived benefits and limitations of using DTTs to provide evidence

My findings highlight the perceived utility of DTTs as a means of providing evidence: both as part of the direct work undertaken with pupils and families; and as a means of reporting back to the LA. When using the tool in this way, LAs must bear in mind that even though using the tool results in the production of numerical values that demonstrate progress, these figures are not uniform in terms of the progress that they represent. Thus, moving from four to three on one strand could be an indicator of a much greater achievement than the same progress on another strand. Indeed, LAs need to be aware that some progress cannot be quantified or reported using the DTT's scales, even though it is significant to the pupil or their family (as in the case of the young person who discarded the blade that she was using to self-harm). As such, the figures produced by this DTTs cannot be compounded by LAs in order to compare the impact of different agencies or even different practitioners in terms of the progress or change that each has instigated.

These figures were perceived by staff to be powerful when used within the context of an individualised piece of work with a pupil or their family. Staff valued the numbered scales as a means of providing them with a point of reference for identifying the extent of a pupil's need, identifying a target, and for demonstrating their progression towards that goal.

My findings highlight other pitfalls and strengths of applying DTTs to the work undertaken to support vulnerable pupils. Having this understanding is important for practitioners who apply DTTs and who have to make sense of their output. For example, EPs may need to interpret information presented in a pupil's file that has been produced using a DTT. Having an understanding of the way in which the numerical values presented may have been produced and the possible context for using these tools, in terms of the barriers and facilitators to their use, will also help them to appreciate the validity of the information reported using a DTT.

As well as helping EPs to use and apply DTTs in their own work, having a good understanding of them will enable them to support other practitioners in adopting and implementing them in their work with vulnerable pupils. Encouraging and supporting peers in this way will help to promote the use of a shared perspective and thus further our ability to engage in multi-agency working.

My Role as a Practitioner-Scientist

As previously mentioned, in undertaking this research I was affected by the sometimes conflicting priorities of the scientific community that I adopt as a researcher and in my role as a psychological practitioner (Spoth & Greenberg, 2005). The findings of my research highlight both positive and negative aspects of implementing and applying a DTT. As an employee of the LA that had designed and implemented the tool, I felt some pressure to present the tool in a more positive light. However, I have made every effort to reduce the impact of this conflict through bracketing my knowledge, allowing the data to drive my analysis and presentation of my findings, and through discussion with colleagues and tutors.

Since conducting my research I have endeavoured to present a balanced view of my findings to the LA and have collaborated with the tool's developers to prompt them to consider ways to improve the tool itself and the way in which it is presented to others.

6.2 Methodological limitations

As with any study, this one has a number of limitations, which I have discussed here. Perhaps the most obvious limitation relates to the small scale of this enquiry, which needs to be taken into consideration when considering the contribution of my findings to the overall knowledge base. I limited my sample to staff members working in mainstream schools. Including other stakeholders would have enabled me to triangulate my findings, particularly with regards to the reported views of pupils and parents. However, I chose to focus on the perceptions of staff at the exclusion of others, as I wanted to focus on their perceptions as it has been suggested that the views of the practitioners who are responsible for implementing a new initiative are the greatest predictor of how well it will be implemented (Piderit, 2000). Therefore for the purposes of this piece of research it was not necessary to elicit the views of children and their families. Focusing on the views of staff alone also enabled me to explore their views as a heterogeneous group.

Due to response bias, my sample was limited to staff from schools that had adopted the DTT as part of their practices. Doing so meant that I was unable to shed light on the experiences of those who had either rejected the tool, either without first trailing it, or following unsuccessful attempts to implement or integrate it into their school systems. This research bias was a product of the social and cultural climate created within the LA in which this particular DTT was introduced.

Another limitation of my research relates to my subjectivity as a researcher. This would have affected the way that I designed my study, and then collected and analysed the data. I would argue that although it is not possible to rule

these influences out, I have tried to minimise the impact by adopting a reflexive approach. Indeed, adopting a reflexive stance helped me to develop a self-awareness of both my emotional and intellectual processes (Finlay, 2009) and this in turn helped me to bracket the knowledge and understanding which was influencing my work. Despite this, my personal history and circumstances will have affected my work as a researcher and I have tried to overcome this by attempting to be transparent in the approach I adopted, so that readers can follow the process of undertaking this research.

6.3 Directions for future research

Future researchers may wish to explore the application and implementation of DTTs from the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as pupils, parents, school staff from other education settings and other professionals who use the tool both directly and indirectly. As a tool that is developed to benefit vulnerable children and families, future research into its use and effectiveness should look to elicit these in order to gain insight into the aspects of the tool which make it most useful and those which are more problematic. This information could then be used to further develop the DTT in order to make it more effective. For example, I have reported that staff described the DTT as a means of engaging pupils and parents in the process of identifying needs and instigating change. I hypothesised that this is partly due to the DTT being a type of task-based activity, and that this helps to redress the power balance between home and school and therefore supports collaborative working. Future researchers may look to explore this hypothesis by exploring the use of task-based activities with both pupils and their families, and more specifically look to gain insight into the perspectives of stakeholders into the use of DTTs and other task-based tools in a variety of practical settings.

The DTT is amongst a range of tools that are being used to involve children and families in the process of identifying difficulties and instigating change. Future researchers may wish to explore and compare DTTs with alternative evidence based approaches, such as PATH (a person-centred planning tool) and family conferences.

Another possible area for research relates to the use of these types of tools to support the process of referring pupils to external agencies. I reported that staff felt that the incorporation of the thresholds for referral facilitated discussion around the need to involve external agencies. Future researchers may wish to explore this in more depth by eliciting the views of pupils, parents, school staff and other professionals at different points in the process of referral.

Future researchers may also wish to explore the experiences of staff who rejected the DTT as this will help to develop a better understanding of the barriers for implementing similar tools.

An aspect of my findings which appears to provide a novel contribution to the existing literature relates to staff members' descriptions of the tool as a prompt for adopting a holistic approach to their work. This suggests that the theoretical underpinnings of the tool manifested themselves through its application. This is a finding which does not explicitly appear in the literature on the application of DTTs. Further research into the use of these types of tools to disseminate their underlying principles may be able to shed more light on this finding. Indeed, the DTT used in this research reflects some of the social and political agendas of this time. When it was developed the ECM agenda and the CAF were prominent in the minds of those working to support vulnerable pupils. However, as time passes and the priorities of those in power shift, the approach adopted by these members of staff may change and the emphasis of the DTTs in use may well reflect that. Future researchers may wish to investigate the way in which particular principles for practice can be encouraged through the application of tools like DTTs.

Finally, although my research has highlighted the potential benefits and difficulties associated with using a DTT to support the work done with vulnerable pupils, it has not distinguished between the inherent value of using a DTT and the use of DTTs to support the implementation of other strategies and interventions. My research has highlighted the utility of DTTs as a means of supporting the identification of needs, the formulation of targets and then the

monitoring of progress. This suggests that DTTs should be considered as a system for instigating and supporting change- a form of intervention in and of itself. Whilst there is research into the three processes inherent to DTTs, there is a lack of research to evaluate the impact of using DTTs on both short and long term outcomes. Future research into the impact of DTTs- both as a standalone intervention and in term of the impact it has by supporting the application of other tools is essential for two reasons. Firstly, it will enable EPs and other practitioners to decide whether to apply DTTs as part of their EBP. Secondly, if DTTs are to continue to be used to evaluate other interventions, then it is essential that we understand the impact that they have, so that we can take this into account when reviewing the results that DTTs produce regarding the utility of other services.

6.4 Conclusion

By conducting this research I hope to contribute to the literature on the use of DTTs as part of the work undertaken by school staff to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Many mainstream pupils will be vulnerable at one time or another and it is essential that their needs are identified and that support is put in place to enable them to reach positive outcomes. My research suggests that DTTs are perceived by school staff to be a valuable tool in supporting this preventative and supportive work. DTTs can be used to elicit and share the views of relevant stakeholders, and then to support joint-working to identify needs, agree on targets and monitor and evaluate outcomes- all of these processes have been found to be important in the course of instigating and maintaining change. As such, the implementation of a tool that prompts professionals to engage pupils and their families in these processes could be extremely beneficial.

As the pressure to provide evidence of outcomes and so demonstrate effectiveness continues to grow, there is greater potential that tools like DTTs will become more widely used as part of the work done to support vulnerable pupils. As one of the biggest indicators of how well a tool is implemented is the views of those applying it, my research into the perceptions of school staff

provides could help us to understand some of the factors affecting the implementation of these types of tools.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Search strategy for the literature review

I methodically searched through electronic databases and also responded to specific recommendations from colleagues and supervisors. In order to find relevant literature, I entered key words and expressions into catalogues and databases, both individually and in combination with other key terms, in accordance with Boolean search logic. These key words and terms included, but were not restricted to: vulnerable children, risk factors, resiliency, evidence based practice, organisational change in children's services, CAF, Distance Travelled Tools and measuring soft outcomes. The databases I used were: British Education Index, ERIC, ETHOS, PsychInfo, SWETSWISE, and Science Direct. I also found relevant sources in the reference sections of reviewed articles and books. I selected and reviewed the articles that I felt were most relevant to the focus of this research.

Appendix 2: Brief description and comparison of tools for measuring impact

Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)

(Information from Beaver, 2011, Fredrickson, 2002; Hart, 2009; Dunsmuir et al., 2009 and Henderson, 2013)

GAS has been promoted as a model in Educational Psychology, particularly by Baxter and Fredrickson (2005). It is a means by which professionals can demonstrate the progress made in response to an intervention by regularly monitoring and evaluating the work undertaken. GAS employs 9 steps, which were outlined by Fredrickson (p108, 2002) as follows:

1. Identify the issues that will be the focus of the intervention; 2. Translate the selected problems into at least 3 goals; 3. Chose a brief title for each goal; 4. Select an indicator for each goal

5. Specify the expected level of outcome for the goal; 6. Review the expected level of outcome;

7. Specify somewhat more and somewhat less than expected levels of outcome for the goal;

8. Specify much more and much less than expected than levels of outcome for the goal;

9. Repeat the 8 scaling steps for each 3 small goals.

The outcomes are scored between -2 (much less than expected) and 2 (much more than expected).

Benefits	Difficulties
• Tailored to the client. • Goals clearly agreed at the start of the intervention. • Promotes a collaborative approach. • Progress is measured against the agreed goals.	• Requires subjective judgements • Potentially biased • Requires robust baseline data to inform realistic goal setting. • Can be difficult to define 5 different levels in collaboration with other stakeholders.

• Studies suggest good inter-rater reliability	• Practitioners must be trained in setting appropriate targets.

Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME)

(Information taken from Hart, 2009; Dunsmuir et al., 2009; and Henderson, 2013)

A modified version of GAS. Only two points need to be formulated: baseline and target. Progress is measured along a Likert scale from 1 to 10, with the baseline measure usually at the lower end of the scale, the expected outcome in the middle and any achievement exceeding expectation being charted further along.

Targets should be SMART (Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited)

Benefits	**Difficulties**
• Maintains the benefits of GAS. • Quicker than GAS and considered more user friendly. • Can be embedded into the consultation framework	• Requires subjective judgments • Practitioners must be trained in setting SMART targets

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

(Information taken from Cooper, 1996)

The DfE formally introduced IEPs in 1994 to help school staff to develop a clear framework for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with additional needs. They typically include:

1. An account of the pupil's needs
2. A summary of the evidence on which these needs are based
3. A set of goals or targets which take these needs into account
4. A clear plan for how these targets will be met, including specific approaches, support or tools.

The DfE guidelines state that IEPs should be developed in collaboration with parents and pupils.

Individual Behaviour Plans are similar to IEPs but with a specific focus on behaviour, whilst **Individual Play Plans** are used for children in the Early Years.

Benefits	Difficulties
• Can help to focus stakeholders on the child's needs and help them to consider next steps.	• Often regarded as an administrative procedure rather than a useful tool for informing practice.
• Can prompt joint working between home and school	• Staff need to be trained in setting appropriate targets.

Appendix 3: Scoping work to understand the DTT.

I conducted interviews with the three members of staff from the LA who had been involved in developing and implementing the DTT. All three members of staff invited me to contact them again should I have further questions or queries. I followed up one interview with another face to face interview to help me to understand the way in which it was being implemented by the LA. Another interview was followed up with a telephone consultation to help me to clarify my understanding of the theory underpinning the development of the DTT.

I undertook a total of five interviews with the three LA staff, each lasting between an hour and two and a half hours. I audio recorded the interviews to enable me to listen to parts of them again and so ensure that I had a more accurate understanding of what we had discussed. I also made hand-written notes during the interviews to help me to process the salient information and to act as an aide memoir. As these interviews were conducted as a means of developing my understanding, and did not contribute towards answering the research questions, none of these interviews were transcribed and they were not included in the data analysed for the main study.

Outcome of the scoping study

The interviewees informed me that the DTT was developed to identify, explore and monitor the needs of the children, young people and families with whom the staff working for the LA were involved. The developers wanted it to classify needs in terms of specific and discrete issues and each of these was described as a 'strand'. Each strand was given 5 descriptors ranging from 1 (no concern) to 5 (critical need). Practitioners were expected to use the descriptors on a strand to identify a client's current situation, to choose a target to work towards and to identify the client's progress over time by monitoring their movement between descriptors. The inspiration for these strands came from the ECM agenda (DfES, 2003) (which the LA felt had been embraced by professionals involved in supporting children and young people) and the areas of need highlighted by the CAF document. The developers perceived both of these to be

useful ways of making sense of a broad range of needs. The developers also took inspiration from the DTTs in use by other LAs (particularly that of a neighbouring LA).

The first draft of the DTT was then developed through consultation with a range of professionals from the LA and their partners, including, health visitors and members of the behaviour support team. In this way, descriptors were refined and additional areas of need were brought to light. For example, Health Visitors recommended the inclusion of a strand relating to sleep difficulties. It was essential to the developers that no strand overlapped with any other and that all the significant areas of need were covered by the descriptors. Eventually, 50 discrete strands of need were identified and the developers designed their DTTs to enable users to decide how they were arranged: either according to the five ECM agenda areas or according to the four areas of need highlighted by the CAF. I have included an example of a strands in appendix 4 along with a concrete example of how the tool was used.

The LA then piloted the use of the DTT in three secondary schools and by giving it to a small group of Health Visitors. The secondary schools were given very little guidance on how to use the tool and allowed free reign regarding how they applied it. In contrast, the Health Visitors were given a great deal of training on how to use the tool in their work. Interestingly, at the end of the piloting phase, the Health Visitors fed back that they had not been using it in their practice, whilst the schools were very positive about it. From the informal feedback that the LA received, each school had used it in a different way, making it meaningful to their work by embedding it into their existing systems. As the pilot project drew to an end, primary schools and additional secondary schools began to take an interest in the tool and the LA were happy for them to adopt it. One of the DTT's developers who worked in the LA's Behaviour Support Team began introducing the tool to the schools with whom she worked. She worked directly with key members of staff in these schools and sometimes ran training for groups of school staff to help them to explore the tool's potential in their setting.

At the same time, a change of government heralded changes in policy and a clear shift in the LA's financial position. A transformation team was established by the LA to ensure that funds were being economically used. These changes prompted changes of staffing structures and changes of responsibilities for existing staff. Those who had been involved in developing and implementing the DTT were increasingly unable to devote time to it. Instead, the DTT was picked up by the business portion of the transformation team as a tool that would form part of an internal process to evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided for children and families. The transformation team also developed a new process for reinforcing multi-agency working and the provision of services across the board. They earmarked the DTT as a part of this process as they felt it would enable the LA to make a good business case for the provision of their preventative services. They argued that in doing so, the DTT would help to provide a clearer understanding of the types of outcomes that are being achieved by children, young people and their families as a result of their involvement with services funded by the LA. They hoped that this would then enable the LA to begin to calculate how much money funded services are saving by preventing problems from occurring, escalating or becoming entrenched.

<u>Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview schedule for Scoping Study</u>

1. What is your role within the LA?
2. Were you involved in the development of the DTT?
    a. In what way?
3. What was the rationale behind the DTT being developed?
4. What role did you hope the DTT would play within the context of schools?
5. What role did you hope it would play within the wider context of the Local Authority?
6. Have you been involved in the tool's implementation? How?
7. How is the DTT intended to be applied in schools?
    a. By whom?
    b. For whom?
    c. How will they be identified?
8. How are the outcomes of the meeting expected to be recorded?
9. Are these monitored by the Local Authority?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say about the DTT?

Appendix 5: A concrete example of how the DTT can be used with an example of a strand

Situation:
Joe (a pseudonym) is a year 5 boy in a mainstream primary school. School staff were concerned about his academic progress, and the difficulties he experienced sustaining his attention and concentration. They noticed that Joe was frequently tired at school and felt that this could be a contributing factor.

Initial use of DTT:
The school's SENCo set up a meeting with Joe's parents and used the DTT as a prompt to raise potentially sensitive areas for discussion, such as: parenting, sleep patterns, and the family's economic situation. In doing so it became apparent that Joe was regularly going to bed very late and that his parents were struggling to put boundaries in place.

Through discussion and consultation the parents and SENCo used the DTT to identify the current situation: 4 for Sleep Patterns and at 3 for Parenting. They discussed the importance of bed-time routines, setting clear boundaries and using consistent consequences at home. They then agreed on some targets that they wanted to achieve over the next few months: 2 for Sleep Patterns and 2 for Parenting. In order to support the parents in achieving these targets, the SENCo made some suggestions and shared some resources. They also explored the possibility of Joe's parents attending a parenting course and they were given a flyer for it

Strand	Critical complex - 5	Significant - 4	Moderate - 3	Minor - 2	No Issues - 1
Sleep Patterns	Child has inadequate sleep on a regular basis	Either the child regularly does not get enough sleep or they regularly sleep at inappropriate times or both	The child's sleep lacks quantity, routines, or appropriate timing three or four times a week.	The child's sleep lacks quantity, routines, or appropriate timing once or twice a week.	Child has an good quantity of sleep with appropriate routines and timing
Parenting	Parenting is completely inconsistent with severe criticism and no warmth (5)	Parenting mostly experienced as low warmth and high criticism	Parenting often characterised by inconsistencies	Some inconsistencies in parenting	Parenting is warm and consistent

The number 5 in the Parenting strand's descriptor means that identifying a child at this level should trigger a consultation with the Social Care Duty Team.

Interim use of DTT:
The SENCo met with Joe's parents again after a month to review the situation and chart any progress using the DTT's descriptors. Together they agreed that the situation had improved, with Joe's sleeping situation now being more accurately described as a 3. Although parenting had improved it did not yet sit comfortably in the 2 category. They worked together to trouble-shoot some of the difficulties that were arising at home and agreed to meet again before the end of term. It transpired that his parents had not attended the parenting course as they did not feel that it was for them.

Evaluative use of the DTT:
At their next meeting, 4 weeks later, the parents were able to chart significant improvements and put both sleeping patterns and parenting at a 2. The improvement in Joe's sleep patterns had affected his involvement in curriculum based activities, but staff were still concerned about his progress. They therefore explored the strands from the Enjoy and Achieve section and identified Joe as at 3 on the Learning and development strand and at 2 on the Enjoyment of school strand. This triggered discussion around how best to support Joe's academic progress and they explored possible school-based interventions that Joe could take part in.

Strand	Critical complex - 5	Significant - 4	Moderate - 3	Minor - 2	No Issues - 1
Learning Development	Learning significantly below that expected in all areas (7)	Not meeting learning and progress expectations in nearly all areas of learning (7)	Not meeting learning and progress expectations in some areas of learning	Meeting expectations of learning and progress in all major areas of learning	Meeting or exceeding expectations and progress in all areas of learning
Enjoyment of school/ setting	Child hates school/setting and takes every opportunity to avoid it (7)	Child only shows enthusiasm or enjoyment for unstructured/social aspects of school/setting	Child shows little enthusiasm for school/setting and only enjoys limited aspects of their learning experience	Child is mainly enthusiastic about, and enjoys most aspects of school/setting	Child is enthusiastic about, and enjoys all aspects of school/setting

The number 7 in this strand's descriptors means that when the DTT is used by another agency, identifying a child at this level should trigger a consultation with staff at the child's educational setting.

Appendix 6: First draft of Semi-Structured Interview schedule for the main study

1. What is your role at school?
2. How much of your work is involved with supporting vulnerable pupils?
3. What does that work involve?
4. Where does the DTT fit in?
5. How do you use the DTT?
6. For whom?
7. Who else is involved in the process?
8. Are the outcomes of the DTT meetings recorded?
9. Are the outcomes shared?
10. Do you find the DTT useful?
11. In what way? OR Why not?
12. Is there anything else you would like to say about the DTT?

Appendix 7: Second draft of Semi-Structured Interview schedule for the main study

1. What is your role at school?
2. How much of your work is involved with supporting vulnerable pupils?
3. What does that work involve?
4. Can you tell me about the types of interventions that the school uses to support vulnerable pupils?
5. Where does the DTT fit in to your work?
6. How do you use the DTT?
    a. For whom?
    b. Who else is involved in the process?
    c. Are the outcomes of the DTT meetings recorded?
    d. Are the outcomes shared?
7. Do you find the DTT useful?
    a. In what way? OR Why not?
8. Is there anything else you would like to say about the DTT?

Appendix 8: Final Semi-Structured Interview schedule for the main study

1. What is your role at school?
2. How much of your work is involved with supporting vulnerable pupils?
3. What does that work involve?
4. Where does the DTT fit in to your work?
5. How were you introduced to the DTT?
6. How do you use the DTT?
   a. For whom?
   b. Who else is involved in the process?
7. Are the outcomes of the DTT meetings recorded?
   a. Are these outcomes shared?
8. Do you find the DTT useful?
   a. In what way? OR why not?
9. Is there anything else you would like to say about DTT?

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Leading education and social research
Institute of Education
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How is the [DDT's name] being used to support vulnerable students in mainstream schools

Dear School Staff,

My name is Shelley Braude and I'm an Educational Psychologist in training working for xxx. As part of my doctorate I will be conducting some research into the way in which staff in mainstream schools support vulnerable children and young people. I am writing to you to invite you to take part in this study.

As you probably know, the Local Authority has recently begun using a tool called [DTT's name] to help them to identify children and young people's needs and to help them to structure how those needs can be met. This project will look to explore the perceptions of staff and their experiences of using the [DTT].

Who is conducting this project?
I will be conducting this study under the supervision of Lynne Rogers and Helen Upton (both lecturers at the Institute of Education).

What will happen if I decide to take part?
I will interview you at school for around 30 minutes to one hour. During the interview you will be able to take breaks and you can even withdraw from the study at any time.

What will happen to the results of the project?
At the end of the study, I will send you a report describing the overall findings of the study. The report will make no reference to particular schools or members of staff. The information I collect is kept strictly confidential. School staff will be identified by their job titles only and all information and results are kept on a computer and in a locked filing cabinet.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you as to whether or not you want to take part. At the end of this information sheet there is a form for you to sign if you do decide to. Anyone who signs a form is still free to withdraw at any time and without giving any reason.

If you would like to discuss the research with me or if you have any questions at any time, please do not hesitate to get in touch:

Shelley Braude
shelley.braude@xxx.gov.uk
Tel: xxx
Educational Psychologist in Training

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your interest in my research

Appendix 10: An example of an interview transcript

Interviewee 12

1 **Interview 12**

2 I: What's your role in the school?

3 F███

4 ██

5 ██

6 ██

7 ███████████████████████████████████████

8 ██

9 ████████████████████ if you have an unhappy child or a child with other issues

10 going on, then they're not going to learn, so that's my role.

11 I: so what proportion of your work is with vulnerable students?

12 F: All of it, yeah.

13 I: What sort of work or interventions do you put in place?

14 F: I wouldn't say I do any particular interventions, but sometimes I just sit and listen

15 to what the child has to say, other times we might do some drawing, because a lot of

16 the children that are vulnerable seem to like that, they find that quite therapeutic. So

17 sometimes we just sit and draw and then it just helps them to maybe say something,

18 or something might crop up. It's quite low level, I'm not a counsellor or a

19 psychologist, I just try to get them to open up and also give them a safe- let them

20 know that they're safe where they are and they just have somebody.

21 I: It's important to have someone to talk to.

22 F: Yeah, some of them like to- I've got a boy at the moment, who is doing a story

23 telling and he's invited his mum, but he's put down that he also wants me to be

24 there. So, its small things, but I'll make every effort to be there. If that's what he

25 would like, then that's….

26 I: how much do you do is with parents and child together?

27 F: I probably don't do as much work with mum and child. I probably do work with

28 them, but sometimes separately, so, it might be a case whereby, the parents are,

29 say separating, um, and that's causing issues, so then I might do some work with the

30 child around the separating, also to see how they're feeling, um, but that might also

31 then involve me going back to the parents and saying, actually, your child is really

32 caught in the middle of this and its having an impact, but not in the way that you

33 thought it would. So I don't always sit with parents and child, but I do walk between

34 parent and child, sometimes, because obviously they both see it from different

35 perspective and sometimes they need to see it from the same perspective and that's

36   where I come in.

37   I: Where does [DTT's name] come into all of this?

38   F: Um, obviously I need to keep records of what I do, so, sometimes, I will get the

39   parent to fill in [DTT's name]- I keep a paper version, I also have it, uh, laminated.

40   Cos it looks a little bit nicer. And what I can do then, is I can sit and say, you were

41   saying that there is no boundaries, or they've got this, or that, so let's just sit and

42   have a look at this. Then you say, let's just have a look at this, right where do you

43   think you are? Then they just mark it down. Then what I tend to do is say, ok, I'll

44   hang on to this, I then photocopy it and keep that, I will then see if I can put into

45   place, um, some guidance on bedtime routine or whatever it might be for them, let

46   them have it and then see how they get on with that. Then obviously at the end of

47   that, their score will have improved. So, I use it in that way, but I also use it, um, I

48   converge the [DTT's name] into the pre-CAF, so, it's kind of a jumbled form, but to

49   me I know where I'm at with it. Because I don't quite see why the [DTT's name]

50   comes at the end of the CAF, to me I think it should come at the beginning,

51   personally. From the school point of view, the child's performance is starting to slip,

52   they're not really concentrating, I will go and look, get the pre-CAF, look at the pre-

53   CAF, look at my [DTT's name], put concentration on there straight away and then

54   that's the area that I'm working on, so that's personally the way that I'm using it.

55   I: You're not alone in using it as part of the pre-CAF, other schools are doing that

56   too-

57   F: It's just to me, it's just, it's there, isn't it? It's right there in front of you to go- ooh

58   look! That makes sense!

59   I: Who do you share the [DTT's name] information with?

60   F: I tend to keep the information, the students that I work with, I'm quite- I do tend to

61   keep it quite closeted, because obviously with some of the parents- because, if

62   you're- unless, there is a major issue- safeguarding- then obviously I would share the

63   info. But if I feel that the information is something whereby its taken a while to get the

64   family in, then no, I don't pass on the information, because that information is

65   between me and the family. Um, and you don't sometimes want to break down

66   something that you are trying to build up. So no, if I feel that it's relevant I might say

67   to the teacher, yep, I know all about that, I have seen the parent or I'm seeing the

68   child because of this, this and this. But they don't always know what the child has

69   said to me, because, again, that's breaking confidence. So if a child does come in

70   and they do have some issues, I always say to them, that what they've said between

71   these four walls is between me and them. If I feel that I need to tell somebody or if

72   they would then like me to tell somebody, I will do. But I don't think it's good to break

73   trust.

74   I: In terms of the scoring on the [DTT's name], is that shared with anyone?

75   F: Obviously, if the teacher has passed it over, sometimes you can look and think,

76   they're not doing their homework, they're not doing this, or they're not doing that.

77   Um, I'll have it marked down and I haven't gone back to the teacher and said, they're

78   this, necessarily, but it's all here and anyone could look at that bit. As I say, I keep it

79   on a file of each child, so.

80   I: So you use [DTT's name] for yourself.

81   F: Yes- for me.

82   I: You've said you sometimes share it with the teacher, do you share it with the

83   parents to show progress?

84   F: Yes, I have done for things like, um, routines and that sort of thing, it's a really

85   good, and very easy- when they come in and they say, I can't this or I can't that, and

86   they won't do this and they won't do that. You say, Ok, what's their routine like? If I

87   do a routine chart for them, and say right, try this or sometimes I'll say to the child,

88   rather than the parent, you know, this is for you and I'm going to put your name on it

89   and I want you to prove to your mum that you can do this. Cos at the moment, she

90   doesn't think you can, and I know you can, and then do it that way. Um, and then at

91   the end of it, the child's rushing in saying Miss, Miss, I did it all last night! Mummy

92   couldn't believe it- you're right. And you know it just sort of works like that. I

93   sometimes say to the parent, say just after the first few days: That's great, let's now

94   get rid of it. Wait until it's really embedded and then maybe slow it down a bit, but

95   make sure it's embedded, if it's not embedded then you know, you can't after the first

96   couple of days, say, oh that's great, lets get rid of the chart cos you're doing

97   brilliantly. They need that consistency, so it might need to stay for a while. Then I

98   normally say, Look, this is where you said you were, and now we're, here! So I- if

99   I've done that with them, I show them. Um, sometimes if I've done it on behalf of the

100   teacher, then I won't always share that back with them sometimes. But normally,

101   they can see, if I've had a chat to parents about some homework, or something

102   along those lines, and the homework starts to come in, then the homework- you can

103   sort of see it better, the teachers see it better than me having to show them. But I do

104   check and make sure that these things are still happening. So from my own point of

105   view, I know something's improving.

106   I: then what happens? Do you make new targets or do you leave it there?

107   F: I just tend to leave it at that, um, if that's working, if there's another issue as well,

108   then obviously, then we'll work on something else, so it depends what the issues of

109   the child are.

110   I: What skills are you using when you use the [DTT's name]?

111   F: an interesting question really….Obviously just listening to what the parents, or the

112   child, or the teacher has to say. Questioning just a tiny bit more, just to see if it does

113   fit. Then, I normally write just a little bit, so if it's boundaries, I'll normally put, [DTT's

114   name], Boundaries, 5 or 4, or whatever it might be. Then, needs simple bed time

115   routine put in place.

116   I: How do you know that that's the right thing to suggest?

117   F: Because I've sat with the child and I've sat with the parent.

118   I: what informs your choice of targets, actions or intervention?

119   F: Obviously it's what the parents have said, so I take it from what the parents have

120   actually told me. You start with, I suppose the easier of the things, so if its-

121   Sometimes the parents will only give you part of the situation. So you start with, it's

122   this that and the other, whatever, whatever, and I say, yes, their concentration in

123   school isn't- you know what time are they going to bed? Well… oh… and I say, they

124   need to go to bed at around 8 o'clock and this will help, whatever. So then you go

125   with that and you see how that goes and then, normally, having a chat to the child as

126   well to see how things are going. Children normally tell you, not always, but children

127   will say to you, um, yeah, I went to bed last night and then mummy and daddy

128   started screaming at each other and I couldn't sleep, or the neighbours' dog keeps

129   waking me or whatever. So you start with one thing, which you, um have questioned

130   and then it might be that it might be the case that you need to go, ok, well we've

131   done this, but it isn't going to work, because of this, this and this. So the whole time,

132   you're… even though you've got one thing in place, you have to keep an open mind

133   because there might be something else that's underlying or causing an issue. So

134   yes, it's not a case of well, here you go, there's a bedtime routine, that's it now. Um,

135   it's a case of, here you are, let's try this, see how you get on and then we might need

136   to sit down… and sometimes parents don't like to say… you know, which is- you

137   can't blame them. No one wants to say, I don't know what I'm doing, or it's all going

138   horribly wrong, but, you know, sometimes you just have to do a little bit more and

139   wait for them, when the time is right, they will sometimes open up more. And if they

140   don't, I can't press them, I can just say, look, this is where we are, you know, it's a

141 really important time for your child. I'm here for their benefit. I can help you and I'm

142 happy to help you with your child, but you know, you really need to be on board.

143 I: So what were you using before you used [DTT's name]?

144 F: Um, I wasn't really using anything, as I only started in this role in September, so I

145 started at around the same time as [DTT's name]. It's a new role to the school and

146 it's one that I kind of- to start off I used [DTT's name] in one way and I started off

147 with the photocopies, the bits of paper, and then I thought, well, I've got no- I had my

148 notes, you know, back up notes but it all just got a little bit, hit and miss, so recently

149 I've thought, well, fine, this makes sense, so now I've merged the two. Um, I still at

150 times use the [DTT's name] for people to highlight, if I'm dealing with the parent,

151 as I think that's really good. Then, now I've used the form that's merged. The form is

152 kind of a copy, I've copied it from the behaviour support team.

153 I: Jxxx?

154 F: Yes

155 I: did she train you?

156 F: No, I had a little bit during the CAF training, but that comes the other side and she

157 came along and just went through it a little bit. But the training had already been

158 done, so she just came to the school and went through a bit more. She said, you

159 know, you missed it, is there any help that you need in using [DTT's name]. And I

160 said, well, no, I think I'm alright- I'm doing this, and doing this and doing something

161 else. And she said, yeah that's fine and then she showed me what other schools

162 were doing. And another school had already sent me something that they did. Um,

163 so I just thought, actually, I worked with using the Pre-CAF as it was and then

164 adding, copying [DTT's name] across. Then, when I saw Jxxx form, I thought,

165 actually, I'm going to run with this for the moment, um and just handwrite, cos

166 sometimes I find that easier. So that's what I'm working on at the moment?

167 I: Would you have liked to receive more support?

168 F: I think it was fine for what it was- you know for the- I don't know, because as I

169 said, I missed the role out of [DTT's name], so I don't know how it was launched.

170 And me being new at the same time, I think I kind of missed the first bit. But I

171 personally think it's a good form. Um….

172 I: Why?

173 F: Because I think it's quite clear, I like the fact that it's quite clear.

174 I: What do you mean by clear?

175 F: It's very visual, so you can turn round to the parents and say, ok, let's have a look

176 at this and they can see as well, so it, it gives you, it gives both of you a starting

177 point, which I think is good. Um. Also. The opposite way, the parent, if you're sat

178 looking at it, the parent can say, but look, this is really good. You're sat there saying,

179 it's really bad, but this is really good. So I think you've got the negatives, I say

180 negatives but you've got the, you have the scale across the top from it being very

181 cloudy to the sun shining and to me that's very helpful- it's very easy to see. It's not

182 saying, you're bad, you know, it doesn't give you any of that, and you're not

183 completing a form with them. You know, you're not sitting there going, so, tell me…

184 you know, how did this happen, or when does this happen, or let's just fill this box in

185 and I just think that's, you know, so I like the fact that you can look at it together, and

186 you talk. So you're not being led by a form that asks you, is your child healthy, is it, is

187 it, is it, you know you're just having a conversation around what's on there. So as I say, for

188 me it's really good.

189 I: what's not so useful?

190 F: I think , um… I sometimes find the things too long. So if it's only affecting

191 boundaries, um, some of the other bits are- you don't really need. And I did think

192 about, you know, chopping it up into smaller chunks or something, um, but that's not

193 something I've got round to and I thought maybe I'd miss a bit, you're always worried

194 that if you chop it into chunks you're going to miss a section. So, I- that's the only

195 think I would say and it's- it would be handy if it was more of a, more for parents,

196 more for – rather than for- so for me it would be better if it was not designed for me,

197 but more designed for the parent.

198 I: do you mean-?

199 F: I mean the layout. I've laminated mine, and I can sit there and use it. The paper

200 one, if you run off the sheets in paper form, they're not quite so nice and to me, it's

201 not, it's been designed to be used by professionals, which is fine. But it needs to be

202 used by professionals for the people that they're dealing with… um and they haven't

203 made it user friendly. They've made it fine for me but not fine for the parents if that

204 makes sense.

205 I: So let me make sure I understand, I'll just recap if that's ok. You use [DTT's

206 name] either independently having worked with the child (on your own), or you'll sit

207 with some parents and talk through it with them and choose targets- how many do

208 you typically use?

209 F: I don't. There's no, there's no, um… limit. Obviously, if there were many issues, then I

210 wouldn't look at the [DTT's name].

211   I: what would you use then?

212   F: Um, if it came out that there were lots of problems, then normally you'd be looking

213   at starting a CAF process anyway. Um, I think the [DTT's name] is better at hitting

214   a couple of issues, you know the smaller issues and then maybe that might lead on

215   to the CAF process, but to me it's more, um… just the… identifying the smaller

216   issues to start off with, as opposed to and this is why I can't understand why it's on at

217   the end of a CAF, you have to show that they've achieved these things with a

218   [DTT's name] and I thought, this should be at the beginning, but that's just me.

219   I: Do you do it with teachers?

220   F: not always, one teacher, the child's performance has improved, so I've shown

221   them that the child- we've looked at it and said, ok, this is where the child was to

222   start off with. Now we're in this, um and… but I've not actually sat down with them

223   and said, ok, let's look at this [DTT's name] and this is what we're going to do.

224   I: So you use it at the beginning of your work with the child and then when do you use it

225   again?

226   F: When there is some change really, which I know sounds silly, but to me it doesn't

227   always, you're not going to straight away see it going from being slightly cloudy to

228   the sun shining- that can be a long process. It could be the case that it's cloudy

229   because the child can't hear, so that then means that you've got to have a word with

230   the parents and get speech and language involved, which might be another school

231   year.

232   I: So you're not using it specific time intervals, but rather when you're seeing some change

233   taking place-

234   F:-Yes, then you can look back and you can reflect on the – yeah. Some of them are

235   quicker, you know, some things, like the bedtime routine- you can see change in –

236   even in a few weeks. You can see that that's working and then, I'll normally, leave it

237   another month and check if everything's still ok. If everything's fine, then closed!

238   Done! You know, that one's quite happy.

239   I: then what happens to the [DTT's name] document?

240   F: it just goes into their file and it just stays here. There's nothing really that, you

241   know, even that their next school needs to know. It's not something that necessarily

242   anybody needs to know. It's so wide and varied, way beyond education, so…

243   I: Have you ever used it with other professionals?

244   F: No.

245   I: Is there anything else you like about it? That makes you use it?

246   F: Personally, I just find it quite helpful. It keeps me focused sometimes. So yes, it's

247   good to use, because you can use it with the parent. But it is good, the principle is

248   there with it. It keeps me focused sometimes, so if there is something that crops up, I

249   can think, hmm… and then I'll look down and think: ok, that's where that would fit.

250   You don't fit the child to it, but sometimes you think, oh, I forgot, Enjoy and Achieve,

251   yeah, that's that one. So it kind of focuses you, which is good and as I say, I'm quite

252   visual, so I like the symbols, that's just me. There's some things I find, you're wading

253   through it, but I never feel with [DTT's name]. I do keep each page separate, I

254   never have the whole booklet all together.

255   I: What motivates you to use [DTT's name]?

256   F: I think it's probably the only way sometimes to see, you can quite clearly see

257   academically how a child is doing. But some of the other things are not as easy to

258   see. Not as easy to measure. And, also from a parent's point of view, they can't

259   always see. So I think it just gives you that, sort of, starting block. That place that

260   sort of, um, so you know exactly where you are and where you want to go.

261   Otherwise you're trying things and you might not always know, perhaps what the

262   issues are. To me it just helps to focus.

263   No one has ever said, you have to use it. Or do it this way, or that way, or do

264   whatever. I am trying to use it to focus, to have a start and a conclusion as it were

265   and I do feel from that point of view, it does that. They've said, here's this and here's

266   that and I suppose, being new, and in the role that I'm in… in different schools it's

267   done in a different way, so there's no one that actually says, you need to do it this

268   way. I'm sure the acting head uses it his way in his other school… but I don't know

269   how he does it! So you've obviously got a completely different perspective here

270   which is obviously good… but no, I'm just muddling through with it.

271   I: Is there anyone else in school who uses it?

272   F: they all have a copy and they're supposed to write down their concerns in a file

273   and I can go and look at the concern, but what tends to happen is that they come to

274   me instead and say, I'm concerned about so and so, so it starts with me.

275   I: so have you done training for the staff about how to use [DTT's name]?

276   F: No, the old head who was here before, she went through some training when it

277   first came out with them, um… I wasn't party to that, so.

278   I: Okay-

279   F: sorry, I'm trying to be as honest as I can!

280   I: Oh no- that's fine! Is there anything else you'd like to say about [DTT's name]?

281 F: I personally think it's really good, I'd like to see it in a way that is nicer for the

282 parent. Um… rather than me having to laminate it, I think it is, you know, nicer if they

283 can have it in a nicer sort of, glossier, sort of, format.

284 I: Have you tried using the online version?

285 F: I looked at it myself and I find its not so… what I don't like, is that you're then

286 huddled with a parent around a computer and it's not really good. I like that you can

287 sit beside them and you're doing it together, to me it's friendlier, it's more involved.

288 You're not going, oh actually, I've got this form I need you to fill in…if you come over

289 here, I'll just get it up online… or, you've told me they're not doing this, hang on a

290 second, I'll just bring it up… it just, I don't think it's professional, that's just my point

291 of view. You start putting a barrier, it's not, I don't think of it as a form, I don't say to

292 the parents that I have a form. I say to them, oh actually, bear with me one second

293 there's something I'd like to look at with you. Then we can really focus and look at

294 what Charlie needs. I do it that way, I don't say I'm getting a form or a booklet, I try

295 and just get it and just bring it in and say, you know, you've said this, this and this,

296 where abouts do you thing they would be on this bit? Have a read of this.

297 I: How often have you used the [DTT's name]?

298 F: With parents. Four times. For children, all the time. I make sure that if I see the

299 child about anything at all, that I use it.   So just literally to just say, it could be

300 bullying or whatever, the child's said, so and so's bullying me or parents have called

301 in- I don't literally have to have seen them, I'll go and get my mashed form and put

302 the child's name on it and I'll find it on the strand and put bullying, four or whatever

303 because they've raised it as an issue, so in their mind it's not an issue, it's not sunny

304 cos it's an issue. Then I'll say, observed the child over a few days or whatever, and

305 um, at the end of it- so I'll write on the other side, observed child Tuesday, 10.15, in

306 the playground everything fine, playing with whatever- so write down at the end of it

307 you can go back and say, actually I've watched Charlie at these times and I haven't

308 seen anything. I've also spoken to Charlie and he's said, no, um, but you know, he

309 also said to me that at the moment Dad's working away. You know it might be

310 something as simple as that and he's feeling a bit lost with dad being away. Because

311 a child can say anything, you know, to try and get a reaction for something else. So,

312 you know, by me, I might put it down as that on my mushed form, but then it leads

313 into something else and we then need to be having a conversation about something

314 else. Or a conversation with Charlie about his dad being away. That's how it kind of

315 goes along and then that's closed and dusted, so… Is that ok?

316   I: More than ok! Thank you! Can I look at your mushed form?

317   (Shows me form and describes it. We compare it with the one from another school)

318   F: It's here, that's what I like about it, it's here all the time.

319   (talks me through one that she's done with a parent to illustrate how she used it)

320   It is wordy and I would say that the only thing that I feel that could be done, is that

321   there's not a lot about the parent.

322   I: what do you mean?

323   F: So the only strand that is about the parent is parenting, all the rest is about the

324   child. So there's nothing that says, that the parent is suffering illness, it is about the

325   child's drug or alcohol misuse, there's nothing on there that's about the parent's drug

326   or alcohol misuse. Or, um, mental health issues. Now I have used the strand about

327   mental health issues and I have put: parent. I have a parent at the moment who is

328   severely depressed and this is really important, so I've used this strand for the

329   parent, but really it's meant for the child. So possibly, if you're building up this

330   picture, there needs to be some parental questions in there, not just, parenting.

331   Because parenting to me is a little bit different to the issues around the parent. So

332   maybe a separate parent sheet would be nice. Because the parent affects the child.

333   If the child even has behaviour issues, 9 times out of 10 it's through something else.

334   So it's just a shame, and I love the form, but to me it could do with a – this is very

335   child and child's feeling of self image, there's nothing referring to parent's self-image,

336   you know, parent's support, as in is there any support available to the parent. It gives

337   a little bit about- you see on this page, it says suitability of home,- well I wouldn't

338   know, income, again I wouldn't know, but I can ask the parent-

339   I: Do you?

340   F:Um, I have spoken to a family, um and funnily enough it encouraged me- we've now got

341   food vouchers at school. It's not a topic that I am necessarily comfortable with, but

342   sometimes something is said in a conversation that prompts you to say, can I ask a little bit

343   more, I'm sorry, did you say…? Ok, so how are you managing with that? I'm not saying I

344   use it all the time, but I have used it.

345   I: Is it using the [DTT's name] that prompts those sorts of conversations?

346   F: No, it's the parents. The parents prompt the conversation, it's something that will

347   be said and you will suddenly think, ah! They've given you a key. So, like you, if I'm

348   seeing a parent, I do tend to scribble down notes, because, I would have no way

349   otherwise of remembering what they've said, or putting it in any kind of order, or I'm

350   always frightened I might miss something and what a parent might say to you at the

351   start of the conversation, sometimes you can go all the way down and then say

352   something which links back to that. So as I say, to me, the only thing that I would like

353   to see on here is a little bit about the parents. But that might be because it's a multi-

354   purpose form, so it has to go to the likes of a social worker, a school nurse or

355   whoever and we all want different things. But I think it is fantastic because I think it

356   looks really good. I'm happy to share it.

357   I: Have you had training on broaching difficult issues?

358   F: No. I would love to have training in that. There's one at the moment called mind

359   out, but I've missed it. I really wish I knew more, if I could have done psychology or

360   child psychology it's something I would quite like to do, it just is wonderful. But to do

361   it now and spend 3 years doing it and come out the other side, might be wasting my

362   time. I'd do it because I'd enjoy it, but do I need the stress of doing that kind of

363   course? It's also handy to go on courses, because sometimes I think, do I really

364   know what I'm doing? Or have I done that right? So it would be useful to go on

365   courses to make me feel more confident about what I'm doing. Even though working

366   for a building society is completely different, I did some of the mortgage interviews

367   when all this was done in branch and you had to ask difficult questions then, like the

368   fact that they'd been declined for a mortgage or the fact that they've written one thing

369   down when actually it's completely different. So I've had to ask difficult questions and

370   be completely honest with people and in my personal life, I've had various issues

371   around the family which have meant that I've seen the affects of drugs. My father

372   passed away and I helped my mum nurse him with cancer-

373   I: I'm so sorry-

374   F:- Oh no, it's fine. But it means that I, that these are the little things that make you

375   the person that you are and also, sometimes when you're then talking or listening to

376   other people it just makes it a little easier, because you know where they're coming

377   from. And even if they might not think that you understand, they can see that you do,

378   even though they don't know why, you know and I'm a great believer that you treat

379   everyone the same. But effectively it's my life experiences that have given me the

380   skills….

381

382   Debriefing

Appendix 11: The preliminary groupings of themes, sub-themes and codes

Proto-theme 1: Issues relating to the DTTs practical use	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Format	Easy to engage with
	A visual tool
Adapting/ Tweaking	To fit needs
	To fit existing systems
	Embedding into practice
	Embedding into own knowledge
Accessibility	It's huge- Making it manageable
	Complex language needs rephrasing
Use by others	Common language for other agencies
	Supports multi-agency working
	Supports information sharing
	Some accepted it more than others
	Used differently by staff in same school
	Used differently between schools
Time	Time constraints of own work
	Time consuming task

Proto-theme 2: Organisational Change	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Motivation for using it	The LA wants us to
	We're being told to
	I feel I should/ obliged to
	Something you have to do/ No choice
	Embedded in the system
CAF	As above
Multi-agency working	As above
Barriers	See separate table

Facilitators	See separate table

Proto theme 3: Barriers to use

Proto-sub-theme	Codes
Time	Time constraints of job
	It is time consuming to undertake
Change is difficult	Feeling resistant to using it
	Wary of using
	It's scary at first
	One of a range of government changes that haven't been properly investigated before implemented
Not instinctive	Don't think of doing it
Modelling	Not being modelled by LA
	Being modelled and supported by Senior Management
Uncertainty/ no prescribed way of using it	Unsure how to embed it into existing systems
	Unsure how to use it/ if you're doing it right
	Used differently by different members of staff in the same establishment
	Used differently by different schools
	Theory is good but unsure how to apply
	Trial and error approach
	Would be good to know how others are using it

Proto-theme 4: Facilitators for use	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Practitioner's knowledge of the tool	Being Familiar / embedding it into your self
	Adapting it to your needs
	Knowing which categories are relevant to your work

	An understanding of the different ways in which it can be used
	Understanding the procedure for use
Embedding it into existing systems	So it isn't tacked on at the end/ an extra piece of work
	Adapting it to current practices
	Shaping use within house
	Making it a part of practice
Flexible use	Used to meet needs of pupil/ family
	To meet needs of the school
	To meet needs of the professionals
	We change it until it works
Using existing systems to help use DTT	
Being modelled and supported by Senior Management	

Proto-theme 5: Skills employed when using the DTT	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Skills used by practitioners	Develop trust and supportive relationship
	Pastoral skills
	Solution focused approach (not trained)
	Analytical skills
	Interpersonal skills/ rapport
	Counselling skills
	Handling anxiety
	Ability to engage parents/ pupils in the process
	Being sensitive to needs
	Confidence to challenge parents and professionals

	Ability to make a good sales pitch of DTT
	Knowledge and understanding of the tool
Previous Experiences	Personal experiences to reflect on (death, drugs, debt, etc.)
	Previous roles that required similar skills (counsellor, mortgage advisor, nursing)
	Previous training that helps support use

Proto-theme 6: Holistic Approach to working with vulnerable pupils	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Multi-agency working	A common language for other agencies
	Common set of goals and measures
	Supports multi-agency working by stimulating dialogue
	A framework to support information sharing
	Can be used to evidence multi-agency working
	Can help form a joint perspective
	Can present other professionals with insight into the pupil
	Not yet used by many agencies
CAF	Can be used alongside the CAF
	Can be used as part of the Pre-CAF
	Can inform the writing of a CAF
	Provides a child's voice in the CAF process
	Has been used in place of a CAF
	Promotes a shared understanding in multi-disciplinary working around the CAF
Helps provide an holistic approach to working	Prompts conversation/ information sharing to develop a wider/ holistic picture
	The tool provides a context to situation/ difficulties
	An holistic view helps (professionals) to plan next

	steps
	A more balanced perspective
	Can help take a step back from the problem to take a broader perspective
	ECM outcomes provide a (familiar) framework
	Helps highlight underlying issues
	Helps you to see patterns
Still focused on the child	Doesn't provide scope for exploring parent or family issues

Proto-theme 7: Providing Evidence	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Evidence of outcomes	Can be used to evidence multi-agency working
	Evidence for outcomes following an intervention
	Evidence for progress
Evidence of Need	Evidence that there is a concern
	Evidence that an intervention is needed
	Evidence that support is needed (to support a referral to external agencies)
Evidence of following protocol	Sent along with a referral to show that it has been done
	Evidence that in house work is taking place beyond the CAF
	A form of record keeping
	Resent having to evidence
	Indicates a lack of trust
Evaluative	Evidencing your own efficacy
	Using it to evaluate your role
	Using it to evaluate the intervention
	Objective- based on facts
	Subjective- dependent on the professionals'

	perspective/bias
	Subjective- open to interpretation by others
	Open to interpretation
Difficulties with evaluating in this way	It doesn't reflect all progress – small steps or particular types
	Forced to choose whole numbers
	Forced to fit into a particular strand/ descriptor and can be prescriptive
	It can be manipulated to show what you want it to show/ fiddled
	Issues do not always reflect the descriptors accurately
Measures soft outcomes	Measures progress that is not being measured in any other way
	Provides numerical values that can then be analysed
	Can use this statistical data to support future working

Proto-theme 8: Identifying needs	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Empowers	Empowers parents by letting them identify needs themselves
	Empowers pupils by letting them identify needs themselves/ self- evaluate
	Encourages pupils to take ownership of the issues
	Helps pupils to name their feelings/ experiences
	Involves the pupil in the process of identifying needs
	Puts problems in perspective

Working together to support	Helps families/ pupils to recognise there is a problem
	Helps families/ pupils to recognise the extent of the need/ puts the problem in perspective/ scaling tool
	Helps families/ pupils understand the need for next steps
	Encourages joint working to identify areas in need of change
	Provides parents/ pupils with a voice for CAF/ review meetings
guide and focus thinking to support identifying needs	Promotes early identification
	Focus parent's thinking
	Focus pupil's thinking
	Focus practitioner's thinking
	Clarifies issues
Prioritise	Helps/ forces you to prioritise needs
	Only choose 3-4 areas
	Raises issues of safeguarding as priority
Only a snapshot of the situation	May change overnight and have different priority of needs

Proto-theme 9: Next steps/ signposting/ target setting	
Proto-sub-theme	**Codes**
Identify next steps	Identify what work is needed
	Identifies professional's role
	You may have identified needs but not have the capacity to provide the support
	Sometimes it's enough to say- we've noticed
	Helps plan next steps

Supports signposting	Provides evidence and rationale for signposting/ prompts referral
Target setting	Used as a basis for setting action points/ targets/ provides a framework
	No of targets/ areas of need chosen
	Use of appropriate skills to help develop targets
Perspective/ Insight	
Visual perspective	As a scaling tool/ to recognise extent of difficulties
	Can SEE the changes/ progress made
Can compare perspectives	Helps individual share their perspective
	Helps others understand pupil/ parent/ professional's perspective
Prompts discussion/ conversation	Presents framework for consultation
	Encourages you to get others' views also information sharing
	Prompts solution focused approach
	Forces you to discuss issues that may be sensitive/ uncomfortable
	Prompts discussion rather than filling in forms (CAF)
Understanding of progress	Helps monitor progress/ change
	Helps monitor actions/ support
	Identifies clearly when no progress has been made

Appendix 12: Three diagrams illustrating changes made to the groupings of super-ordinate themes, themes and sub-themes over the course of my analysis.

Arrangement 1:

Super-ordinate themes	Themes	Sub-themes
1. Using a DTT to support vulnerable pupils	Supporting holistic working with vulnerable pupils	Supports multi-agency working
		Working within the CAF process
		Supports adopting a holistic approach
		Focuses on the child rather than the family
		Only a snapshot
	Identifying needs	Empowers users
		Supports joint working
		Helps guide/ focus thinking
		Helps to prioritise need
	Providing perspective and insight	A visual perspective aids understanding
		A tool to compare user's perspectives
		Can compare starting point with progress made
		Prompts important discussion
	Next steps	Identifying next steps
		Signposting
		Target setting
2. Format	Visual	Scaling
		Informal
	Presenting the tool	Paper
		IT
	Complexity of the tool	Language
		Length
3. Implementing a DTT as part of a new LA initiative	Practitioner variables	Issues relating to individual use
		Skills used by practitioners
		Drawing on previous experiences
		Knowledge and understanding of the tool
	Facilitators for implementation and use	LA motivators
		A user-friendly format
		Adapting the tool to meet needs
		Embedding into existing systems
	Barriers for implementation and use	Time
		Experiencing change
		Uncertainty about use
		Inaccessible format
	Providing evidence	Evidence of need
		Evidence f outcomes and progress/ measuring soft outcomes
		Evidence of practitioners following protocol
		Dificulties wth this method of evaluation/ evidencing

Arrangement 2:

Super-ordinate themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Using a distance travelled tool to support vulnerable pupils	Understanding the situation from different perspective	Eliciting the views of significant parties
		Understanding the extent of pupils' needs
		Comparing the perspectives of pupils, parents and staff
		Sharing perspectives on progress and outcomes
	Supporting a holistic approach to working	Considering the bigger picture
		Supporting joint-working
		Identifying and prioritising needs
		Working within the CAF process
		Drawbacks of using this tool to support holistic working
	Supporting next steps	Individual work with students
		Signposting for external agencies and internal support
		Shortage of available resources
Practical implications of implementing a DTT as part of a new initiative	The format or user - interface	IT vs paper
		visuals to support use
		complexity of the tool
	Adapting the tool to meet the needs of the school, pupil or family	Understanding the tool and how it can be used
		Skills and previous experiences
	Systemic factors affecting implementation	LA motivators
		Experiencing Change
		Lack of guidance
		Workload/ Resources/ time
	Providing Evidence	Evidence of need
		Evidence of outcomes/ progress
		Evidence of following protocol
		difficulties with this method of evaluation or evidencing

Arrangement 3:

Themes	Sub-themes
Understanding the situation from different perspectives	Eliciting the views of pupils, parents and professionals
	Understanding the extent of pupils' needs
	Comparing the perspectives of pupils, parents and staff
	Understanding progress and outcomes
Supporting a holistic approach to working	Considering the bigger picture
	Supporting joint-working
	Identifying and prioritising needs
	Working within the CAF process
	Drawbacks of using this tool with regards to adopting a holistic approach
Supporting next steps	Individual work with students
	Signposting for external agencies and internal support
	Shortage of available resources
The Format	IT vs paper
	Visuals to support use
	Complexity of the tool
	Feeling restricted by the format
Implementation and use	Motivation for use
	Experiencing Change
	Lack of guidance
	Adapting the tool
	Skills and experience
	Limited resources
Providing evidence	Evidence of Need
	Evidence of Outcomes/ Progress
	Evidence of practitioners following protocol
	Measuring and evaluating soft outcomes
	Difficulties with this type of evaluation/ evidencing

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CONSENT FORM: Staff

Staff Copy - Please keep this copy for your records

I have read the information sheet by telephone (on 01454 868925)to about the research I am happy to discuss this study at any time take part in the study.

☐ (please tick)

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason..

☐ (please tick)

I understand that I can contact Shelley Braude by email (at shelley.braude@southglos.gov.uk) or

☐ (please tick)

Name :_____ _____
   (Forename)   (Surname)

Jobtitle:_____

School:_____

Contact email :_____

Signature: _____

Today's date:_____

Appendix 14: The Super-ordinate themes, themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis.

Super-ordinate Themes	Themes	Sub themes
The practical application of the DTT to staff's work	Theme one: Using the DTT to Support an Holistic Approach to Working	Considering the bigger picture
		Supporting joint working
		Identifying and prioritising needs
		Working within the CAF
		Limiting the holistic approach to working
	Theme two: Understanding the situation from different perspectives	Eliciting the views of pupils, parents and professionals
		Understanding the extent of pupils' needs
		Sharing and comparing perspectives
		Measuring and demonstrating progress and outcomes
	Theme three: Supporting Next Steps	Direct work with pupils and families
		Signposting
		Shortage of available resources
The implementation of the DTT as part of a new LA initiative	Theme four: The tool's format	Computer based vs paper based formats
		Visuals support use
		Complexity of the tool
		Feeling restricted by the format
	Theme five: The process of implementation	Experiencing Change
		Lack of guidance
		Adapting the tool to meet their needs
		Skills and experience
		Limited capacity to engage with the DTT
	Theme six: Providing evidence to the LA	Providing evidence of Need
		Providing evidence of outcomes and progress
		Providing evidence of practitioners following protocol
		Difficulties with this method of evaluation and evidencing