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Child and Adolescent Psychology
Programme Director: Vivian Hill*



**UCL Institute of Education
Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent
Psychology**

**Building a Better Understanding of How Educational
Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans*
Young People**

Jennifer Gavin

Student Declaration

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

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Signed:

Jennifer Gavin

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Abstract

There is an increasingly visible population of trans* young people of secondary school age in the UK. In an attempt to support these young people, legislation and guidance for schools has been published; The Equality Act (2010) and Human Rights Act (1998) provide protection for trans* young people, including their right to access education without discrimination, whilst the Government, national organisations and Local Authorities (LAs) have published policies and guidance. However, there is a lack of information regarding how many schools engage with these. Moreover, research suggests that educational professionals are not aware that guidance exists and feel ill-equipped to support trans* young people.

The current research aims to generate new knowledge about the way that educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people in secondary schools. Educational professionals' experiences and perceptions of best support, unsupportive practice and how support can be improved will be explored.

This small-scale qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of 32 educational professionals, including 22 secondary school staff and 8 Educational Psychologists (EPs) from one LA in South-East England and 2 key personnel working at a national level. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the interview data.

Four themes were identified which related to system readiness to change, ensuring a sense of safety and belonging throughout school communities, education and prioritising the voices of trans* young people. Themes are discussed in relation to previous literature, along with implications for LA policy, practice and research. Consideration of how the findings could inform the work of EPs is presented,

including applying the concept of readiness to change to ascertain what stage a school is in, in terms of their readiness to implement changes in their support of trans* young people to ensure that EP support is tailored accordingly.

Impact Statement

This research explored the experiences of educational professionals working in secondary schools, the Local Authority (LA) and at a national-level with regards to supporting trans* young people. The findings highlighted how best support includes ensuring a sense of safety and belonging throughout the school community, education and prioritising the voices of trans* young people. However, these themes are impacted by a system's readiness to change, with some schools being better able to make changes to their trans* support due to individual educational professionals and the school as a whole sharing high levels of readiness to change. These findings could inform LA policy, practice and research and more specifically, the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs) working with schools to develop their support of trans* young people.

Educational professionals identified a need for training about how to best support trans* young people in secondary schools. Whilst some EPs had received training input during their EP training qualification, secondary school staff did not, therefore highlighting a need for universities to develop the curricula for teacher training courses to ensure that budding educational professionals are prepared to support trans* young people. Moreover, EPs were found to be well-placed to support with the design and delivery of training for schools, with suggestions for foci to include language-use and potential links between gender diversity and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Despite the existence of well-meaning resources which aim to educate young people about gender diversity, findings showed that such resources are not accessible to all young people. Notably, it was found that resources are not

differentiated for young people with special educational needs (SEN), such as language or processing difficulties. As one of the key responsibilities of EPs is to remove barriers to education and facilitate inclusion for all, this highlights an opportunity for EPs to support schools with the differentiation of gender diversity resources to ensure that young people with SEN have equal opportunities to engage with and learn from them.

Educational professionals expressed concerns about the communication and relationships between schools and the parents of trans* young people, particularly when the latter are not supportive of their child's gender identity. EPs are guided by legislation such as The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) which stipulates that when planning how to support a young person, EPs should work collaboratively with young people, parents and educational professionals. Therefore, a role for EPs could be to collaborate with school staff and parents to support ways of working together to best support the trans* young person.

EPs are skilled in working systemically with schools and organisations to review policies and practices. Therefore, EPs could review policies and practices relevant to the support of trans* young people and support schools and organisations to ensure that these are inclusive, informed by research and evidence-based. EPs could also apply the system readiness to change framework found in this research to ensure that such systemic support is tailored to individual schools and organisations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Definitions

1.1.1 Sex and Gender

The terms 'sex' and gender' have often been seen as synonymous and used interchangeably in everyday language, however it is important to establish a clear distinction between these two concepts (Diamond, 2002). The term 'sex' has been defined in a number of ways, including suggestions that it relates to one's biological and anatomical structure, hormones, chromosomes and reproductive organs (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011; Yavuz, 2016). For example, an individual's sex is categorised according to their reproductive system (testes categorised as male and ovaries categorised as female) and production of gametes (spermatozoa categorised as male and ova categorised as female) (Diamond, 2002). However, it is important to note these binary categories of biological sex (male and female) can be contested as they do not account for all individuals (Pape, 2019); Kathrins and Kolon (2016) highlight the existence of wide-ranging genetic, anatomical and hormonal differences amongst individuals, thus suggesting that 'sex' is a multifaceted construct (Sagzan, 2019).

The term 'gender' has similarly been defined in various ways, including suggestions that it relates to traits derived from socialisation, categories defined by culture and the ways in which an individual expresses their masculinity or femininity (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011). Oakley (2015) posits that 'gender' is a psychological and cultural term which has a great deal to do with social constructionism. Diamond (2002) echoes this point, arguing that gender has

generally been used in social and cultural contexts and is particularly associated with language, with those whose sex is categorised as male typically being perceived and referred to as a boy or man, whilst those whose sex is categorised as female are typically perceived and referred to as a girl or woman. For some individuals, their sex assigned at birth does align with their gender identity and such individuals may be referred to as 'cisgender' or 'cis' (Connolly, Zervos, Barone, Johnson & Joseph, 2016). However, others feel that their sex assigned at birth does not align with their gender identity and such individuals may be referred to as 'transgender' or 'trans' (Donatone & Rachlin, 2013). As with sex, gender is commonly perceived as being binary, with individuals often being categorised as cismen or ciswomen or transmen or transwomen, however this does not account for individuals who do not identify as a man or a woman, such as those who identify as non-binary (Boddington, 2016). Importantly, there are many different ways in which a non-binary individual may identify, such as those who perceive themselves as both a man and a woman, neither a man nor a woman or having a fluid gender identity that changes and evolves over time (Boddington, 2016; Corwin, 2009). Notably, several cultures do recognise that gender transcends the binary categories of men and women, such as Polynesian cultures including fa'afafine individuals in Samoa and fakaleiti in Tonga; seen by some as a 'third gender' and others as identities which sit across the gender binary, embodying masculinity and femininity and a combination of 'males', 'men', 'not-women' and 'like-women' (Herdt, 1996; Howell & Allen, 2020; Schmidt, 2016). Furthermore, this highlights that the concept of gender is complex and multifaceted and can encompass wide-ranging identities.

1.1.2 Trans*

Gender identity is believed to form between the ages of 3-5 years (Szkrybalo & Ruble, 1999) and during this time, some begin to develop an understanding that their gender does not align with their sex assigned at birth (Olson et al., 2016). The term 'trans*'¹ is often used as an umbrella term to describe such individuals (Connolly, Zervos, Barone, Johnson, & Joseph, 2016) and has been used in online gender-community spaces, with proponents arguing that the asterisk opens up the term to a greater range of meanings, signalling greater inclusivity of new gender identities and expressions and better representing a broader community of individuals (Tompkins, 2014).

'Trans*' will be used within this research to emphasise the inclusion of a range of gender identities, such as those who make use of surgery or hormonal procedures, transition in less permanent ways and do not identify as male or female, including non-binary and gender queer people (Hines, Davy, Monro, Motmans, Santos, & Van Der Ros, 2018). However, it is acknowledged that each piece of research involving trans* participants will have its own individual characteristics and needs, thus like-for-like comparisons across research are not always possible.

1.2 Numbers of Trans* Young People in the United Kingdom (UK)

In June 2015, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) launched a public consultation around topics that the 2021 Census questionnaire might cover.

¹ Within computer science, an asterisk is used as a 'wildcard', a character in a search query that can stand for a variety of other characters (Ince, 2013). For example, when an asterisk is added to the end of '*trans**' this instructs the computer to search for the term (*trans*) plus any characters after (*e.g. transgender and transition*).

Respondents identified a need for information about gender identity. Furthermore, on 21st March 2021, the decennial 2021 UK Census, in addition to the mandatory sex question asked since 1801, '*What is your sex?*', included the voluntary question: '*Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?*'. It is hoped that responses to this question will allow charities, organisations and the Government to understand what services people need (ONS, 2019). However, initial Census findings will not be published until March 2022 and final findings until March 2023 (ONS, 2021).

Whilst awaiting publication of the 2021 Census findings, there is a reliance on estimations of the UK trans* population. The House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2016) referred to evidence submitted by Reed (2015) to the Transgender Equality Enquiry and estimated that around 650,000 people in the UK are "likely to be gender incongruent to some degree". The number of trans* young people referred to the Tavistock and Portman's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), a national centre offering support to trans* young people, has increased annually: 1408 (2015-16) and 2728 (2019-20) (The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, 2020). Of the 2728 referrals made in 2019-20, roughly 1897 were assigned female at birth (AFAB), roughly 723 were assigned male at birth (AMAB) and roughly 123 had a sex assigned at birth that was 'not known'; it is noted that for age ranges which received fewer than five referrals, the exact number of referrals were masked to prevent identification. With regards to age, 15-year-olds received the most referrals (653); followed by 16-year-olds (536); 14-year-olds (510); 13-year-olds (326); 17-year-olds (178); 12-year-olds (169) whilst all other ages received fewer than 100 referrals. Under the UK education system, young people in England usually start secondary school at 11-years-old and must stay in

full-time education, an apprenticeship, traineeship or work or volunteer while in part-time education or training until they are 18-years-old (DfE, 2018). For many young people in England, this means attending secondary school from ages 11-16 and then completing a post-16 course from ages 16-18 in a school or college. Therefore, GIDS referral figures indicate an increasingly visible population of trans* young people in UK secondary schools potentially needing support.

1.3 Legislation to Support Trans* Young People

In the UK, legislation protects the rights of trans* individuals, including The Human Rights Act (HRA) (1998), The Gender Recognition Act (GRA) (2004) and The Equality Act (EA) (2010). The HRA (1998) does not specifically mention gender identity, however certain articles do protect the rights of trans* young people. For example, Article 2:2 states that “no person shall be denied the right to education”, ensuring that all trans* young people have the right to go to school and should not be discriminated against due to their gender identity. The GRA (2004) provides legal recognition of trans* individuals’ gender identity, including a gender recognition certificate when they reach 18 years of age. Additionally, the EA (GEO, 2010) holds gender reassignment as a protected characteristic, which cannot be directly or indirectly discriminated against, including in school.

1.4 Systems to Support Trans* Young People

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (EST) (1979, 1994) provides one way of explaining how a person’s qualities and environment interact to influence

their development. Bronfenbrenner argued that people are contained in ecological systems (Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem) which influence their development. EST is discussed in further detail, including how it has been used as a conceptual framework for the current research in section 1.8.

Of particular interest, EST has been used within research involving trans* young people. Johns et al (2018) investigated protective factors for trans* youth across Bronfenbrenner's systems through a systematic review of peer-reviewed research. Twenty-one articles, involving trans* youth aged 11-26, were included from the United States (US), Canada and Australia. In Ireland, O'Donoghue and Guerin (2017) used Bronfenbrenner's model to explore the perceived barriers and supports identified by school staff in tackling transphobic bullying. Semi-structured interviews were completed with 15 secondary school staff from 3 Dublin schools. Whilst in the UK, Freedman's (2019) unpublished doctoral thesis explored how trans* young people's and their parents' experiences were influenced by systems over time through the use of semi-structured interviews with 4 trans* young people, aged 13-15, and 5 mothers. Findings from these studies will be discussed in relation to support available to trans* young people within each ecological system.

1.4.1 Microsystem

The Microsystem is the closest environment for a young person and includes the structures with which they maintain direct contact (Berk et al., 2000). This may consist of parents, teachers, siblings, friends or classmates (Härkönen, 2005). With regards to support for trans* young people within the Microsystem, Johns et al (2018) found that when support was available from educators this was associated

with fewer school absences, feeling safe at school, being less likely to drop out and having improved academic experiences. Peer support was correlated with improved mental health, a positive sense of self and being able to find information about trans*-supportive social services. Support from families and parents was associated with trans* young people having higher self-esteem, fewer depressive symptoms and improved life satisfaction. Similarly, Freedman (2019) found that parental support around transition led to trans* young people reporting fewer mental health concerns, having supportive friends encouraged school attendance and talking to school staff enabled positive school experiences.

1.4.2 Mesosystem

The Mesosystem comprises the interactions between two or more settings in which the individual actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Paquette and Ryan (2001) describe this as the layer producing the connections between one's Microsystems. For a young person, this could include relations between their parents and school staff. With regards to support for trans* young people within the Mesosystem, O'Donoghue and Guerin (2017) found that positive relationships within the school community supported secondary school teachers in addressing transphobic bullying. Conversely, negative teacher-parent relationships hindered this. This suggests trans* young people are supported by their parents and teachers having positive relationships.

1.4.3 Exosystem

The Exosystem consists of settings not involving that individual as an active participant, such as the Local Authority (LA) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Despite not being a direct member of the LA, and in some cases never working directly with anybody from the LA, events within this system can still affect a young person's development, such as policy development and decision making. With regards to support for trans* young people within the Exosystem, O'Donoghue and Guerin (2017) found that support from external organisations helped teachers in addressing transphobic bullying. This highlights how external organisations (e.g. LAs) can help school staff to support trans* young people.

1.4.4 Macrosystem

The Macrosystem is the outermost layer for an individual which contains cultural values, laws and traditions of a given society (Berk, Barr & Principe, 2000). With regards to support for trans* young people within the Macrosystem, Freedman (2019) found that the increased visibility of transgender supported trans* young people in coming out. This suggests trans* young people can be supported by changing perceptions, beliefs and acceptance within wider society.

Furthermore, research suggests that trans* young people are influenced by the ecological systems in which they exist with support being available to them across each system, from parents, educators, peers, parent-teacher relationships, external organisations and cultural beliefs. Notably, Educational Psychologists (EPs) work across each of these systems leaving them well-placed to use such research findings to inform their understanding and practice in this area (Yavuz, 2016).

1.5 The Role of Educational Psychologists

EPs working within the UK's LAs are described as 'scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people, psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners' (Fallon et al., 2010). The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (SENDCoP) (DfE & DoH, 2015) also stipulates that when planning how to support a young person, EPs should work collaboratively with young people, parents and educational professionals to agree evidence-based interventions and support, whilst also identifying the wider developmental needs of staff and how to address these. The breadth of this work places EPs in a pivotal position for supporting young people and promoting inclusion at an organisational and school-community level (Scottish Executive, 2002). Inclusion within education involves seeking to identify and dismantle barriers to education for all young people so that they have access to, are present, can participate in and achieve optimal academic and social outcomes from school (Slee, 2018).

One of the core functions of the EP role is to bring research and recommendations into schools to inform the development of policy and practice (Scottish Executive, 2002); Yavuz (2016) suggests this could include discussing gender with staff. Furthermore, Leonard (2019) argues that EPs are in a unique position to support schools' work with trans* young people as they have an understanding of the education system and can bring a psychological perspective to school consultations regarding trans* young people.

Bowskill (2017) included 3 EPs when researching how educational professionals can improve outcomes for trans* young people but argued there is still a research gap around trans* young people and a lack of specific guidance for EPs. Similarly, there is a gap in UK literature regarding EPs' views on supporting trans* young people. Sagzan's (2019) unpublished doctoral thesis addressed this gap through exploring 8 EPs' perceptions of their role in supporting schools to improve outcomes for trans* young people. Findings corresponded with Bowskill's (2017) assertion, with EPs feeling they knew little about gender identity, including whether guidance was provided by the Government or LA. However, when asked about their views on supporting trans* young people, EPs identified ways in which they could provide support, one of which included contributing to LA guidance and sharing information about government policy; yet if EPs are not aware of the guidance that is available, this raises the question of how they can share this with schools. Moreover, there is a need to explore what EPs are using to inform their work with trans* young people in schools and how to improve this. Bowskill (2017) suggests it would be useful to research what guidance is available in LAs, what is included in policies, how legislation has been interpreted and enacted and how this relates to good practice. Furthermore, I aim to build a better understanding of the strategies being used by educational professionals to support trans* young people within one LA. This will allow for investigation into how best to support educational professionals working with trans* young people and how this compares with published guidance.

1.6 My Own Interest and Position

When discussing the role of description within qualitative research, Popay, Rogers and Williams (1998, p.347) question, 'Is the description detailed enough to allow the reader to interpret the meaning and context of what is being researched?'. Similarly, Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999, p.221) identify 'owning one's perspective' as pertinent to qualitative research in psychology, with good practice including authors describing personal experiences or training relevant to the subject matter and their initial beliefs. Therefore, I will briefly describe my own experiences which have influenced the current research.

I previously worked as a teacher in a non-selective, co-educational secondary school for ages 11-18. During my time there (2015-2018) I became aware that an increasing number of young people identified as trans*, evidenced through school information management systems. As staff appeared uncertain and ill-equipped to provide support, a colleague established a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Coordinator role which involved the creation of an LGBT student club, staff mentors and school policy amendments. Through conversations with this colleague, I learned that these changes were prompted through engagement with guidance and policies at local and national levels.

In September 2018, I began a Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at The Institute of Education to train to become an EP. Throughout my training I have worked with a range of educational professionals, engaged with policies across three LAs and completed casework with trans* young people at an individual-level (e.g. individual casework) and systemic-level (e.g. gender diversity training for schools, EPs and social workers and a whole-school audit of LGBT inclusion in a single-sex secondary school). In the first year of my training (2018-2019), I conducted research involving a small-scale case study using

semi-structured interviews with 2 trans* young people (YP1 and YP2) and 5 school staff from a secondary school in the South-East of England to explore how secondary schools can be supported in the development of inclusive practices for trans* young people.

I have also volunteered for an organisation which supports trans* young people since November 2019. The training for this volunteer role developed my knowledge, understanding and confidence in providing support to those working with trans* young people, including school staff.

Having sought the views of two trans* young people in my small-scale research project in the first year of my training, I wanted to use their views to inform the current research. In particular, I was interested in YP1's belief that school staff could have *'quite a lot of impact depending on how they treat incidents that have happened'*, alongside YP2's belief that some staff in their school were *'not very knowledgeable on the subject'* and their reflections on why this might be, *'I don't know if they're shy of the subject...or if they just don't know what to do about it'*. When reflecting on my experiences in secondary schools as a teacher and trainee EP (TEP), I have observed attempts to improve support for LGBT young people, however I often felt that the support for LGB young people was more developed and established than the support for trans* young people. In a similar way to YP2, I too have pondered why school staff experience challenges with trans* support, noting that staff often appear to lack confidence, despite the existence of guidance at local and national-levels. This motivated me to explore the views of secondary school staff in relation to the support they provide for trans* young people and how this could be improved.

My previous research project focused on one secondary school and YP1 highlighted a discrepancy in trans* support across local schools, having moved to their current school due to its positive reputation for trans* support. This prompted me to explore a broader range of schools in the LA to account for potential differences. Of additional note, neither young person had experience of working with an EP, however I was aware of EPs supporting trans* young people in other LA schools and thus was curious to include the views of EPs alongside those of secondary school staff in the same LA.

Reflecting upon my experiences there have been key learning points. Whilst working as a secondary school teacher, I shared the feeling of uncertainty about how to best support trans* young people and had no experience of training in the area. However, communication with a colleague who did have this experience enabled me to learn about the changes being made to best support trans* young people and what was informing these changes at local and national levels. As I transitioned into the position of TEP, I felt better-equipped to develop my learning by exploring the support of trans* young people in my educational psychology practice, research and voluntary role for a trans* organisation. This demonstrates how my journey of professional development has informed my current position and motivation to support trans* young people whilst also highlighting the significance of having the opportunity to communicate with and learn from a teaching colleague.

1.7 Rationale for Current Research

Legislation appears to protect and encourage trans* young people's inclusion within UK schools. The HRA (1998) states that "no person shall be denied the right

to education” and gender reassignment is a protected characteristic which cannot be discriminated against (EA, 2010). However, research exploring how schools enact this and support trans* young people in the UK is limited (Bowskill, 2017; Charlton, 2020; Freedman, 2019). In the US, research is emerging focusing on the experiences of secondary school staff working with trans* young people (Wiltz, 2018, Curtis, 2019). However, whilst these findings are helping to fill a research gap and build an understanding of schools’ work with trans* young people, they may not be applicable to the experiences of secondary school staff in the UK due to international differences, including legislation and education systems.

One key difference between the UK and US education systems involves the role of psychologists. In the former, EPs are usually employed in LA children’s services and support a range of schools (AEP, 2020). Whereas in the latter, School Psychologists are predominantly employed within schools and thus support their school-employer (NASP, 2019). Therefore, EPs in the UK have the potential to support a wider range of schools with trans* young people. In support of this, research has highlighted that EPs can provide individual-level and organisational-level support, including training school staff, helping to coordinate action, contributing to guidance and signposting to external agencies (Bowskill, 2017; Charlton, 2020; Sagzan, 2019; Yavuz, 2016). However, Bowskill (2017) and Sagzan’s (2019) research identified that EPs feel that they lack knowledge about gender identity and whether guidance is provided by the Government or LA, which raises a question of how EPs are informing their individual-level and organisational-level support to schools. Therefore, further research is needed into how educational professionals are currently engaging with systems to support trans* young people in UK secondary

schools. Such information is likely to improve EPs' knowledge of how they can best work with secondary schools to support trans* young people.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

As discussed in section 1.4, Bronfenbrenner's EST (1979, 1994) accounted for the influence of systems on an individual's development, however Bronfenbrenner (2005) later acknowledged that this lacked focus on one's own active involvement in development. Subsequently, he created the Bioecological Theory, including the Process, Person, Context and Time (PPCT) Model. This accounted for a person's interactions with their environment, personal, resource and demand characteristics whilst continuing to acknowledge the influence of Context (Micro-Meso-Exo-Macrosystems) and Time (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

Despite these developments, organisational research has applied Bronfenbrenner's original EST (1979), including an international review of literature about inclusive education, something which EPs can play a pivotal role in. Loreman, Forlin and Sharma (2014) searched for international articles relevant to measuring inclusive education, including 28 within their review. Articles were examined for indicators of inclusive education across three levels: Microsystem (individuals and classrooms); Mesosystem (schools and the contexts in which they operate) and Macrosystem (broader systems, such as local and national government). Such use of Bronfenbrenner's Contexts in examining inclusive education within organisations has been widely accepted within national governments, particularly in Europe (Loreman et al, 2014; Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009).

Alongside Bronfenbrenner's Contexts, Loreman et al (2014) applied the inputs-processes-outcomes model (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009) to assess organisational performance and identify which areas might contribute to or detract from inclusive education. 'Inputs' refer to anything provided to an organisation (e.g. a school or a LA) to achieve inclusive education, such as financial resources, policies, training and curriculum. 'Processes' refer to the practices within an organisation that transform inputs into ways of working with students to produce an outcome, such as how funding is distributed. 'Outcomes' refer to the results of inputs and processes, such as academic achievement and post-school employment.

Loreman et al (2014) identified 14 indicators for measuring inclusive education: Policy (*e.g. policies which provide guidelines for practice*); Staff Personal Development and Teacher Education (*e.g. training which has a direct impact on the classroom*); Resources and Finances (*e.g. having access to appropriate staff and professionals*); Leadership (*e.g. providing support to teachers*); Curriculum (*e.g. a focus on individual needs*); Climate (*e.g. valuing and respecting all learners*); School Practice (*e.g. engaging with parents*); Collaboration and Shared Responsibility (*e.g. coordinating school approaches*); Support to Individuals (*e.g. meeting individual needs*); Role of Special Schools (*e.g. exchanging resources and best practice across schools*); Classroom Practice (*e.g. effective planning*); Participation (*e.g. including previously marginalised and excluded children*); Student Achievement (*e.g. managing social inclusion and tackling bullying*); Post-School Options (*e.g. supporting with access to careers*). These themes are interconnected across different levels (see Appendix 1), highlighting the dynamic and complex nature of measuring an organisation's educational inclusivity.

In reviewing this framework, the Exosystem (settings in which a young person is not an active member, e.g. LAs) was omitted however, as previously discussed, O'Donoghue and Guerin (2017) found that within this level, external organisations supported teachers in addressing transphobic bullying which is arguably a process within inclusive education that should be acknowledged. Additionally, the framework describes the Mesosystem as involving 'schools and the contexts in which they operate', however Bronfenbrenner (1979) described it as the interactions between two or more settings in which a young person actively participates, such as teacher-parent relations. Therefore, a clearer description of the Mesosystem may be needed, in particular highlighting the role of home-school interactions which arguably contribute to inclusive education. Additionally, Loreman et al's (2014) inclusion criteria for the 28 articles in their review stated that they needed to be 'primarily about inclusive education' and 'in some way about measurement, assessment, evaluation or indicators of progress'. Unlike the current research, this does not focus on inclusive education for specific young people. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the 14 indicators for measuring inclusive education that were identified by Loreman et al (2014) may not be applicable when the framework is applied to trans* young people.

Despite these areas for development, the combination of Bronfenbrenner's Contexts and the Inputs-Processes-Outcomes Model arguably provides a sound framework for exploring inclusive education. Bronfenbrenner's Contexts is informed by theory and has been applied to academic research around the inclusion and support of trans* young people (Freedman, 2019; Johns et al, 2018; O'Donoghue & Guerin, 2017). This can aid with the identification of key stakeholders at different levels who impact on inclusive education (e.g. school staff in the Microsystem,

teacher-parent relationships in the Mesosystem, LA EPs in the Exosystem and national-level individuals, such as policy-developers in the Macrosystem). Whereas the Inputs-Processes-Outcomes Model is informed by methods of assessing organisational performance which arguably reflects common practice in schools, as they are required by law to routinely engage with methods to assess their performance, such as Ofsted inspections (Ofsted, 2019). Therefore, this may aid with the dissemination of research findings to schools, as it helps to identify which areas might be contributing to or detracting from inclusive education and thus where further support should be applied. This highlights how a combination of Bronfenbrenner's Contexts and the Inputs-Processes-Outcomes Model strengthens the framework, the former ensuring that stakeholders from different ecological systems are accounted for and the latter providing a clear a way of assessing school performance that can be disseminated in an accessible way to schools.

Having reviewed this framework and its strengths, an adapted version will be applied to the current research which combines Bronfenbrenner's Micro-Meso-Exo-Macro systems and the Inputs-Processes-Outcomes Model (see Appendix 2). The former was used to identify participants and synthesise the literature, whilst the latter informed interview questions regarding the support provided by participants to trans* young people.

1.9 Aim and Research Questions

1.9.1 Aim

The aim of the current research is to explore and generate new knowledge about the way that educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people in secondary schools, to inform research, policy and practice.

1.9.2 Research Questions (RQs)

Some methodologists have tried to prescribe standard question formats claiming that RQs must always be framed in terms of what can be directly observed and measured (Robson, 2011). Whereas, Maxwell (2005) argues for the use of realist-type questions which can be about feelings, beliefs and prior behaviour and do not need to be reduced to questions about the actual data one collects. Similarly, Robson (2011) posits that researchers have freedom in framing RQs. Whilst acknowledging that there are a number of ways to write RQs, I felt that it would be useful to include RQs relating to each phase of the research, including the literature and fieldwork. In accordance with their foci, RQ1 will be addressed within Chapter 2, whilst RQ2 and RQ3 will be addressed in Chapter 5.

1. Drawing on existing literature, what has already been reported about how educational professionals best engage with systems to support trans* young people?

2. Through fieldwork with key professional informants, what are their perceptions of:
 - a. how they currently best support trans* young people?

- b. how they currently do not best support trans* young people?
 - c. how to improve the support of trans* young people?
3. Through a discussion of the findings, what are:
- a. the commonalities and differences between themes identified in the literature and those identified through fieldwork?
 - b. the implications for Local Authority policy, practice and research to inform EPs?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter outlines the literature in relation to the school-related experiences of trans* young people and educational professionals and the trans* support guidance available from national and local systems. A review of the literature in relation to RQ1 identified the following themes which will be discussed: training, engagement with school and LA policies and guidance, senior leadership teams (SLT), practices around language-use and seeking the views of trans* young people, inclusive school climates and the curriculum. Themes around how to improve support will also be discussed, including the importance of relationships and communication.

2.1 Methods for the Literature Review

2.1.1 Literature Search

The following databases were used for searching: British Education Index, ERIC, SCOPAS and PsychINFO. The following terms were used during these searches and attached to email alerts to ensure that I received email notifications when new literature containing these terms became available: 'gender', 'gender variant', 'gender non-conforming', 'trans*' 'young people', 'education', 'professionals', 'secondary schools', 'teachers' and 'educational psychologists'. Limitations were applied when searching for literature, including articles written in the English language and from the year 2000 onwards to ensure more up-to-date findings. Further research was also identified through the references of identified research articles.

Grey literature guidance was also explored. For government guidance, the aforementioned terms were used during searches on the UK Government website (Certification Officer, 2020). Limitations were applied using predetermined options including, 'education, training and skills' for the topic limitations, 'guidance and regulation' and 'news and communications' for the content type and 'updated after 2000' for the time frame. For civil society, professional body and LA guidance, the initial search started with guidance that I was already aware of through my professional experiences. Additionally, I consulted with the trans* support organisation which I volunteer for and obtained a private list of regional guidance available for schools. Further guidance was identified through the references of publications found in the initial search (see Appendix 3).

2.1.2 Literature Analysis

My interpretation of Loreman et al (2014) framework, including Bronfenbrenner's Contexts and the inputs-processes-outcomes model guided my review of the literature with educational professionals (school staff and EPs) and organisations (government, civil society and professional body organisations) being categorised according to which system they appeared aligned with.

2.1.3 Literature Synthesis

Literature was synthesised using a thematic organisational approach (Mertens, 2010). This included themes of positive and negative school-related experiences, school staff and EPs' experiences and national and local school

guidance. In accordance with my conceptual framework, Bronfenbrenner's Contexts also informed the synthesis of the literature.

2.2 School-Related Experiences of Trans* Young People

2.2.1 Positive Experiences and Wellbeing

Much research about trans* young people tends to focus on negative outcomes and experiences (Leonard, 2019). Thus, Leonard (2019) decided to investigate the positive school experiences of trans* young people through semi-structured interviews with 3 trans* young people aged 16-18 within one UK LA. Arguably, this is a limited sample size and age-range which could affect the transferability of the findings as participants may have had the opportunity to experience a wider range of school experiences and reflect upon these, which may not be applicable to younger trans* people's experiences of secondary school.

Five themes were found: 'The Importance of Language'; 'Individual Teacher Support'; 'Whole-School Approaches'; 'The Importance of Community' and 'My Own Best Friend'. Notably, trans* young people felt respected when others used their chosen name and pronouns. Relationships with teachers, including opportunities to talk with LGBT staff provided a sense of support, whilst clubs, gendered activities and whole-school training provided safe spaces and platforms for trans* young people to use their voices. Having a wider trans* community, supportive friends and family were found to be positive, as was being one's own best friend, humour and self-advocacy which provided coping strategies and empowered them to support others.

McCormack (2012) conducted a four-month ethnographic study exploring the experiences of four LGBT students, including one trans* student, at a Christian sixth form college with around 1000 students, aged 16-18, in the south of England. Information about the students' experiences was triangulated through the use of 22 semi-structured interviews, participant observation (during classes, free periods and breaktimes) and informal conversations with LGBT youth.

Findings relating to the trans* student highlighted that they felt generally supported by school administration, comfortable and safe at college, had a close group of friends and teachers used their correct name and pronouns. They did, however, critique the legal framework in which the college worked, including the college having no option about their birth name being used on examinations and they described difficulties in negotiating the use of toilets. They felt that college staff had good intentions, were helpful and sympathetic and instead, heteronormative, exclusionary government policy was to blame for their agency and opinions being ignored. Whilst McCormack's (2012) findings were collected over an extended period of time and through the triangulation of different data, it is acknowledged that the experiences of one trans* young person may not be transferable to those of trans* young people in the wider UK population, including those under the age of 16, those attending non-faith schools or colleges and those who do not identify as male. Additionally, no information is provided about exactly which legal framework or government policy was critiqued or whether the college had its own policy regarding trans* young people, meaning that the exact systems that staff were engaging with to inform their practice cannot be evaluated.

2.2.2 Negative Experiences and Wellbeing

Despite the existence of legislation designed to protect trans* young people and the potential for positive school experiences, many studies have highlighted they often encounter negative school experiences compared with their heterosexual, lesbian, gay and bisexual peers (Grant et al., 2011).

In the UK, research by Stonewall including 3713 LGBT young people aged 11-19, found that 33% of trans* young people felt unsafe at school; 61% experienced verbal abuse; 13% physical bullying; 9% received death threats; 6% experienced sexual assault and 4% were threatened with weapons (Bradlow et al., 2017). However, no information was provided about how participants were recruited and there is potential for self-selection bias, with those who had more experiences of bullying perhaps being more likely to respond to the online survey.

Ditch the Label, a UK anti-bullying charity, also carried out research with over 10,000 young people aged 12-20, and found that 65% of trans* young people had experienced bullying (Hackett, 2017). Whilst it is reported that this was a compulsory, online survey which young people completed during school Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) lessons, there is limited methodological information beyond 'the data was cleaned up and analysed using SPSS', thus creating difficulties in evaluating the research's validity. 1% of participants self-identified as trans*, however some may have chosen to not disclose their gender identity due to fear of others seeing it, thus affecting the accuracy of the statistics.

In 2018, the UK Government Equalities Office (GEO) commissioned a national LGBT survey of 108,100 self-identified LGBT individuals aged 16 or over (13% trans*) and found many had experienced a negative incident during education,

including verbal harassment and being 'outed' without their consent. However, the sample was self-selected and thus may not reflect the UK trans* population, especially those unwilling or unable to self-identify as trans*.

2.3 School-Related Experiences of Educational Professionals

2.3.1 Secondary School Staffs' Experiences

UK research exploring the experiences of secondary school staff relating to their work with trans* young people appears limited. Bowskill (2017) sought to explore how educational professionals can ensure better outcomes for trans* young people through the use of semi-structured interviews with 25 participants (15 trans* adults and 10 professionals) including three teachers and one teaching assistant. Findings highlighted that many teachers worry about teaching about gender and may reinforce gender stereotypes in the classroom. Curricula and textbooks lack diversity and teachers lack training, with one participant stating, *'there is still a lot of fear around trans issues'*. This suggests that staff may associate their experiences of working with trans* young people with 'worry', 'fear' and 'a lack of training'. However, it should be noted that recruitment information was not included, such as what type of schools the participants were from, thus caution must be taken in applying these experiences to specific settings, such as secondary schools.

More recently in Wales, Charlton's (2020) unpublished doctoral thesis explored the views of school staff about the role of EPs, the challenges experienced when working with or supporting trans* young people and what support was needed. A mixed-methods design was used, phase 1 involving an online questionnaire shared via social media forums (e.g. Facebook), professional forums (e.g. EPNET)

and the researcher's LA and phase 2 involving semi-structured interviews. In phase 1, questionnaire responses from 54 participants currently working in education and with experience of working with trans* pupils were analysed using descriptive statistics and clarified that for phase 2, secondary school staff would be best to recruit and 'Confidence/competency', 'Safety and inclusion', 'Perceived challenges' and 'EP involvement' would be the best topics to explore.

During phase 2, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 secondary school staff members (senior leadership, teachers and non-teaching staff) who had experience of working with trans* pupils, from three schools and two Welsh LAs and thematically analysed according to three RQs. For RQ1: *'What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?'* six themes emerged including, 'Language' which encompassed a fear of offending, finding pronouns challenging and confusion around terminology. 'Implications of not feeling knowledgeable' reflected staff having low self-efficacy, lacking understanding of what it means to be trans*, emotional responses (e.g. fear and anxiety) and having to seek information from outside sources. 'Challenges within the school system' included managing toilet and changing room facilities, senior leadership involvement particularly when hierarchical systems are not willing to change, trans* issues not being a priority, lack of information sharing and time. 'Challenges of transitioning' included the impact on the pupil and staff, varied roles of staff members, the reactions of parents and staff and male-to-female transitions seeming more controversial. 'Balancing Act' comprised managing peer responses, legal concerns and acknowledging that although LA-provided resources were helpful it was important to adopt an individualised approach beyond ready-made resources,

whilst 'Lack of information sharing' made reference to parents, pupils and other schools.

For RQ2: *'What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?'* four themes emerged including, 'A need for whole school training' reflecting a need to build staff capacity, a better understanding of terminology and what it means to be trans*. 'Information for all' included a need for information that staff can disseminate, is trustworthy, accessible and can be used to educate pupils. 'Need for expert advice' reflected staff identifying a need for readily available professional advice. Lastly, 'Need for transgender friendly schools' highlighted a need for peer support and positive relationships between both staff-pupils and staff-parents, with the latter working together for the benefit of young people.

Finally, for RQ3: *'What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?'* four themes emerged including, 'To work systematically to develop transgender friendly schools' including suggestions that EPs could deliver training, work with senior leaders, produce policies, facilitate consistent ways of working and support in the development of a more inclusive environment. 'EP as an advice giver' reflected suggestions that EPs could clarify, support legal concerns and provide specific guidance. 'Working at an individual level' included suggestions for EPs to work with pupils and staff. 'Varying constructions of the EP role' included school staff potentially misunderstanding the EP role, seeing them as the expert, not knowing their unique contribution and seeing them as inaccessible due to limited time.

Overall, Charlton's (2020) findings highlight prevalent issues and the support needed for secondary school teachers in Wales in relation to supporting trans*

young people. Some findings echo those of Bowskill (2017), including school staff having emotional responses to supporting trans* young people, such as fear and anxiety and feeling that they lack training in the area. Notably, school staff in Charlton's (2020) research identified EPs as well-placed to address both of these concerns, suggestions included EPs delivering training about key issues, the number of children affected and how best to support individual children, as well as completing individual work with staff to provide reassurance and feedback on how they have responded in specific situations. Charlton (2020) also noted that as EPs work within LA systems this leaves them well-placed to provide schools with information about what other services and charities they could access for further support. However, it should be noted that only two out of the seven staff members had experience of working with an EP which might have impacted on responses in relation to the roles that might be appropriate for EPs to undertake. Furthermore, these responses might not reflect the views of school staff who have more experience and knowledge of the extent of EPs' roles, a consideration which may be supported by some participants not knowing the unique contribution of EPs and lacking awareness of the types of work that EPs could undertake in the area of trans* support.

In the US, Wiltz's (2018) unpublished doctoral dissertation examined secondary school teachers' perceptions of working with students who identify as transgender through semi-structured interviews with six female secondary teachers in South-East Texas. Four themes emerged including, 'School-Wide Support' which highlighted the importance of having supportive administrators (school leaders) and school counsellors advocating for trans* students and communicating with teachers. 'Teacher Preparation and Training' reflected the shared view of participants that they

needed more training to support trans* students, whilst 'Teacher Behaviour' encompassed the importance of teachers being accepting and non-judgemental, such as checking how students would like to be addressed, building student relationships and understanding their needs. Although participants had not necessarily witnessed bullying of trans* students, they discussed the need to respond to bullying. 'New Normal' reflected beliefs that the diversity and views of students has changed over time, highlighting a need to be prepared to address changing populations. In support of this point, Gates (2017) argues that social acceptance of the LGBT community has increased dramatically in the US, with Millennials being twice as likely to identify as LGBT.

Whilst these findings provide valuable insights into the experiences of secondary school teachers working with trans* young people in South-East Texas, all participants were female meaning findings may not be applicable to the experiences of teachers who identify differently or who teach in different geographical locations, including the UK.

A further unpublished doctoral dissertation in the US examined the knowledge, attitudes, and perceived levels of competence of educators working with trans* young people in the greater Philadelphia Metropolitan area (Curtis, 2019). Reference was made to two documents published by the US Government's Department of Education (2016) which provided guidance to educators about their responsibilities towards trans* students. Curtis (2019) noted that this guidance was well-received and supported by national organisations representing school staff, such as the National Teachers Union, but also short-lived as the subsequent US Government revised and rescinded these in 2017. Consequently, Curtis (2019)

highlighted a lack of explicit national government guidance to help schools protect the rights of transgender students at the time of their research.

76 Kindergarten-12th grade teachers (5-18 age-range) completed an online survey. Over 84% of participants identified as female and less than 10% taught in rural areas, thus caution should be taken in applying the findings to teachers who identify differently and work in rural settings. Findings showed that almost two-thirds of teachers (64%) had worked with someone who identified as trans*. However, the majority (61%) had not received information about the LGBT community during teacher training, 15.8% had not received any training about trans* individuals and only 2.7% had received information about transgender individuals specifically during their teacher training. Teachers' knowledge did vary, with the majority (68.4%) being 'very familiar' with using a student's preferred name and over half (55.3%) with using gender-neutral language, which contrasts with school staffs' confusion and fear around language-use in Charlton's (2020) research. However, less than half were familiar with using a trans*-inclusive curriculum (48.7%), visual representations of trans* individuals (34.7%) and including books by and about trans* individuals (41.3%). In terms of school policy, despite the majority (88%) of teachers working in schools with a formal anti-bullying/discrimination policy, around one-third (37.3%) did not know who was protected by these. Similarly, around a quarter (23.7%) were unfamiliar with policy around building facilities for trans* individuals and almost two-thirds (64.9%) were unaware of policy around participation in sports. In relation to teachers' competence, all but one participant (94%) agreed they would be comfortable teaching an openly trans* student and the majority (78.9%) felt confident in their ability to do this effectively. However, almost one-third (31.6%) felt unprepared to address the needs of trans* students and the majority (71%) felt

unprepared to provide information about community organisations to trans* students and their parents. Furthermore, although 61.9% agreed that their school climate was welcoming and inclusive of trans* individuals, less than half (43.4%) felt that their school climate provided adequate support to trans* individuals.

Curtis' (2019) findings suggest that teachers are confident and prepared to support trans* young people and feel that their schools are inclusive, however are often unable to identify specific support for trans* young people within their school policies and feel that improvements could be made, bearing similarity to Charlton's (2020) finding that EPs could work with senior leaders to produce and improve school policies. Additionally, a shared finding across the UK and US is a lack of teacher training about trans* issues (Bowskill, 2017; Charlton, 2020; Curtis, 2019; Wiltz, 2018). As a result, teachers appear to be identifying training as a key area of development which could develop their ability to use trans*-inclusive curricula, visual representations, books and provide information to trans* young people and their parents.

2.3.2 Educational Psychologists' Experiences

Research investigating EPs' experiences of working with trans* young people in the UK is similarly limited, however Bowskill's (2017) aforementioned research did include three EPs. With regards to EPs' role in supporting trans* young people, findings suggested their focus should be on working around the systems within the school, including offering support to school staff, helping schools to coordinate action, challenging negative systems, giving reassurance and signposting to information and agencies. It was also suggested that EPs could occasionally do

direct work with the young person, such as seeking their views, but they need to have accessed 'good' information before supporting schools, including research evidence and understanding the work that the GIDS do. However, findings highlighted a concern that EPs often lack understanding of gender issues despite the existence of guidelines for 'psychologists working therapeutically with sexual and gender minority clients' published by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2012) which encourages psychologists to seek training in gender minority issues.

Whilst Bowskill's (2017) findings might be limited by a small sample size of 10 professionals and only 3 EPs, they suggest that although EPs' have the skills and potential to work across different levels with trans* young people they may be best-placed at a whole-school level, with other professionals being more likely to complete individual-level work with trans* young people. However, concerns about EPs lacking understanding of gender issues indicates that EPs may benefit from guidance about supporting schools with trans* issues. This mirrors the experiences of secondary school teachers feeling that they lack understanding and may benefit from additional input, both within and beyond the UK (Charlton, 2020; Curtis, 2019; Wiltz, 2018).

Yavuz (2016) shared three practice examples in which EPs in the UK had worked with trans* young people, one of which involved an 11-year old's transition to secondary school. In this case, the EP was 'very new' to the subject of gender identity. Coinciding with Bowskill's (2017) suggestion, the EP did engage in direct work with the young person, listening to their views, using solution-focused approaches to identify preferred futures and supporting transition meetings with their family and school. This was accompanied by school-wide work, such as providing a short input to secondary school staff to aid understanding and discourage the use of

gendered language and classroom practices. Additionally, the EP challenged staffs' views using research and disagreed with a referral to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) following concerns about the child's mental health, instead feeling that they needed to normalise the situation rather than pathologise it.

Yavus' (2016) research highlights how EPs can support trans* young people across individual and school-wide levels in line with the EP-role description provided by Fallon et al (2010): using solution-focused approaches and recognising a need to normalise experiences (psychological skills and understanding); meeting young people, families and school staff (consultation); eliciting preferred futures (assessment) and providing evidence-based staff input (research and training). However, these findings reflect only a single example of EP practice which may not be applicable to the experiences of EPs working with trans* young people across the UK, particularly those working within traded contexts in which schools purchase EP time from the LA. Arguably, such contexts create a power dynamic in which schools may not choose to contract EP time with trans* young people, particularly should they not consider EPs to be the best-placed professional to provide support, a possibility suggested by Sagzan (2019), or simply be unaware of the services and unique contribution that EPs could offer to schools in relation to trans* support (Charlton, 2020).

Sagzan's (2019) unpublished doctoral thesis explored EPs' perceptions of their role in supporting schools to improve outcomes for trans* young people. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 EPs from an outer-London LA. Similar to Yavus (2016), EPs' experiences of providing support included individual-level work (e.g. one-off learning assessments of trans* young people) and organisational-level work (e.g. staff and parent training about gender identity). Another parallel with

Yavus' (2016) findings included EPs drawing upon solution-focused approaches to elicit desired outcomes from stakeholders. However, EPs had limited experiences of discussing trans* issues with schools. Some felt that they knew little about gender identity, including research evidence, best practice and whether the Government or LA provided school guidance. Subsequently, all but one EP stated that they and/or their colleagues likely required professional development to improve their knowledge about the trans* community, corresponding with EPs' views in Bowskill's (2017) research. Nevertheless, EPs identified a range of ways in which they could support trans* young people in schools, including 'supporting systems around children', such as working with stakeholders, raising gender identity awareness in schools, sharing information about government policy, contributing to LA guidance and supporting schools to write policy and develop the curriculum. Sagzan (2019) noted that such examples corresponded with the BPS (2012) guidelines which encourage psychologists to support at an institutional level to promote positive outcomes for all gender minority individuals. Barriers identified to EP support of trans* young people included limited EP time in schools with other issues being prioritised, a lack of information about the young person, parental attitudes and the willingness of trans* young people, their parents and school staff to engage with EPs. Notably, the barrier of limited time and subsequent prioritisation of other issues echoes the views of secondary school staff asked about the role of EPs in Charlton's (2020) research, indicating that school staff and EPs are both aware of this barrier to EP support for trans* young people but may be unsure of how to address this. Potential facilitators included having accepting and open school staff, attitudes of senior leaders and EPs being trained or well-read around trans* issues.

Sagzan's (2019) research highlights that EPs are engaging with different systems, such as supporting young people, parents and school staff, mirroring Yavus' (2016) findings. EPs may also have scope to work with further systems, such as running support groups for a young person's peers, working alongside other professionals and engaging with government guidance. Despite this, EPs identified limitations in their knowledge, with some sharing experiences of other specialist professionals, such as charity workers, providing school support and being better placed to do so, a concern also raised by professionals in Bowskill's (2017) research. In turn, this may affect EPs' experiences of supporting trans* young people in schools, with those who have received specific training about trans* issues and believe this to be within their expertise being more likely to seek out such work in schools.

A critique of Sagzan's (2019) research relates to its limited sample of 8 female EPs from one LA in which the researcher was a TEP. Whilst pre-existing relationships and rapport may correlate with participant disclosure (Josselson, 2007), this may also have negatively influenced responses to questions, supported by the researcher's reflections that some EPs appeared to find the topics difficult to discuss. Therefore, caution should be taken in applying these findings to the experiences of EPs who do not identify as female and work in alternative LAs across the UK.

2.4 National Systems

Within the literature concerning the school-related experiences of trans* young people and educational professionals, references to national systems were found including, government policy and legal frameworks in research involving a

trans* young person (McCormack, 2012); legal concerns, charities and government guidance being well-received by national teaching unions in research involving secondary school staff (Charlton, 2020; Curtis, 2019) and charities, government and BPS guidance in research involving EPs (Bowskill, 2017; Sagzan, 2019). Therefore, grey literature relating to these national systems will now be discussed.

2.4.1 Government

Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2017) highlight the emergence of published guides, toolkits, policies and procedures, at individual and nationwide levels, which focus on supporting trans* young people in schools. Within the UK at a national level, guidance is available for supporting trans* young people in schools in Northern Ireland (EA, 2019) and Scotland (LGBT Youth Scotland & Scottish Trans Alliance, 2017). Both recommend developing individual plans for young people; supporting parents/carers; ensuring confidentiality and child protection. They also advise similar practical support including: toilet and changing room-usage; names and pronoun-usage; trips; uniform policies and Physical Education (PE) adjustments. Additionally, guidance for schools on responding to transphobic bullying was published by the Welsh Government (2011) and former DFCSF in England (2009). Both recommend staff training; whole-school approaches to bullying; addressing transphobia within the curriculum and recording and monitoring incidents of bullying.

The UK Government has also published other documentation outlining recommendations for schools and trans* young people. In 2011, two documents were published, 'Working for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality: Moving Forward' and 'Advancing transgender equality: a plan for action' (HM Government, 2011a, 2011b). Both included plans relevant to trans* young people in

education such as: simplifying anti-bullying guidance to help tackle transphobic bullying; reviewing PSHE education to include trans* content and guidance about the EA 2010. Subsequent publications evidencing the completion of some action points will now be discussed.

The DfE (2014) published advice for schools about the EA (2010). Advice relevant to the protected characteristic 'gender reassignment' stated: it is unlawful for schools to treat pupils less favourably because of their gender reassignment; pupils do not need to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender; schools need to ensure gender variant pupils or children of trans* parents do not receive less favourable treatment; schools should aim to address any issues early on in a proactive way and pupils undergoing gender reassignment should be allowed to attend the single-sex class that accords with their gender identity. Notably, some of the terminology could be criticised, including 'taking steps to live in the opposite gender' as this may not account for young people who identify as non-binary or gender fluid.

In 2016, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee published their inquiry into Transgender Equality. With regards to schools, it was suggested that more needed to be done to support gender-variant young people and their families. It was recommended that schools needed to understand their responsibilities under the EA 2010, ensure that all staff receive training about protected characteristics and that trans* issues be taught within PSHE. This suggests that despite schools having access to government guidance, more support is needed around staffs' understanding of their legal responsibilities regarding trans* young people. However, the Government's response to the inquiry (GEO, 2016) stated that they already provide guidance on how schools can comply with the EA

within the previously discussed DfE (2014) document. However, the inquiry might indicate that schools are not engaging with the DfE's (2014) guidance or that the guidance needs developing further.

In 2018, the GEO published an LGBT action plan informed by a 2017 national survey of LGBT people. With regards to trans* young people in education, they proposed to: work with the DfE to understand how best to support schools to tackle transphobic bullying; update Sex and Relationships Education guidance to support teaching relevant to all pupils, whatever their gender identity; publish school guidance on how to support trans* pupils along with updated DfE guidance about how to apply the EA 2010 and ensure that victims of transphobic incidents have access to trained staff and local specialist organisations (GEO, 2018a). This highlights that despite existing government guidance for schools about the EA 2010 and anti-bullying schools need further support. These areas for development were outlined as action points in the Government's 2011 plans, along with a need for trained staff and trans*-inclusive curricula. Of additional note, the Government did not provide information regarding how many schools have engaged with or applied their guidance or advice, raising the possibility that schools may not be using or even aware of its existence. Furthermore, whilst the Government has published a range of guidance and advice for schools and their support of trans* young people, it is clear that the existence alone of such documentation does not ensure support (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017).

2.4.2 Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations, such as national charities, operate distinctly from government and represent a wide range of interests, such as support for trans* young people. EPs in Sagzan's (2019) research identified charity workers as specialists who were better placed to provide school support, whilst Charlton (2020) suggested that EPs could provide information to schools about which charities they could access for additional support. Whilst there are a number of civil society organisations working in the field of trans* support, there are two, Gendered Intelligence (2020) and Stonewall (2019), which appear to have published recent guidance for schools about supporting trans* young people. However, as with the government guidance, information regarding how many schools have engaged with or applied the guidance from these two organisations could not be found.

Gendered Intelligence (2020), a charity aiming to increase the quality of trans* people's life experiences, published a Good Practice Guide which suggested committing to ongoing learning through training and reading; challenging transphobia and gender stereotypes; supporting access to gendered spaces and clothes that correspond with gender identity; respecting chosen names and pronouns; updating records; assigning a named support person; offering non-judgemental spaces; supporting access to social support groups and medical services; helping with transition plans; honouring privacy and confidentiality and recognising that being trans* is not inherently a safeguarding matter. Unlike government, Gendered Intelligence work with around 500 young trans* people and staff with lived experiences of being trans*, who inform the charity's work.

Stonewall (2019), a charity campaigning for the equality of LGBT people across Britain, recommends that schools use a young person's preferred name and pronoun and update this on school records; approve uniform items to be available for

all regardless of gender; offer gender neutral toilet and changing facilities; explore options for playing on sports teams consistent with gender identity; ensure young people can sleep in a room of their self-identified gender on residential trips and ensure that young people know how to access support services. Whilst this guidance is freely included on their website, Stonewall offers a range of chargeable school support. Therefore, schools looking for guidance may not visit Stonewall's website, particularly those who cannot afford to purchase support, and thus may not be aware that this is freely offered.

2.4.3 Professional Body Organisations

Professional body organisations, such as teaching unions and psychological societies, accredit professional qualifications and represent industries. Research involving EPs and their support of trans* young people made reference to guidance from the BPS (2012) (Bowskill, 2017; Sagzan, 2019) and research involving secondary school staff noted that guidance for schools around supporting trans* young people was well-received by national teaching unions in the US (Curtis, 2019). Whilst there are a number of professional body organisations which represent those working in the UK education sector, two trade unions, The National Education Union (NEU) and The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), and one society, the BPS, were found to have published recent guidance relevant to educators supporting trans* young people. It should be noted however, that information regarding how many schools have engaged with or applied the guidance from these professional body organisations could not be found.

The NEU, is a trade union which campaigns for educators, including teachers, support staff and leaders in the UK. Similarly, the NASUWT is a trade union which

represents teachers in the UK, offering professional advice, legal support and training. The NEU (2019) provides guidance about whole-school approaches, such as not assuming that the school does not have any trans* students; supporting staff to ask questions; including trans* issues in policies; using the curriculum to challenge gender stereotypes and celebrating trans* events. At a classroom level, they advise against using boy-girl seating or teams and keeping seating plans and registers up-to-date with preferred pronouns and names, especially for cover staff. The NASUWT (n.d.) similarly provide guidance around these areas but also provide information about legislation, medical issues and case study examples of trans* young people in schools. As with charity guidance, both of these were freely available, however union membership is not. It is also not clear how either union communicates the existence of their guidance to schools and whether this is exclusive to members. Therefore, non-member educators who are perhaps unfamiliar with the unions' resources may be less likely to seek guidance from these sources and unaware that such guidance exists.

Although no specific guidance was found for EPs supporting schools with trans* pupils, the BPS (2019), a representative body for UK psychologists, has published guidelines for psychologists working with gender, sexuality and relationship diversity (GSRD). Although not specific to trans* young people in education, guidelines state that psychologists should: default to respect for a client's identity during formal assessments; use language inclusive of diversity and preferred by the client; recognise the needs and issues of young people and have sufficient training in GSRD. However, these guidelines are aimed at applied psychologists working with mental distress and may not be readily engaged with by all psychologists, including EPs. Thus, there is a gap in the guidance for EPs (Bowskill,

2017; Sagzan, 2019) which may need to be rectified and made specific to the educational contexts in which EPs often work with trans* young people.

2.5 Local Systems

The literature concerning the school-related experiences of educational professionals not only identified references to national systems, but also local systems. Both secondary school staff and EPs made references to guidance available from LAs (Charlton, 2020; Sagzan, 2019). Therefore, grey literature relating to educational professionals supporting trans* young people from these local systems will now be discussed.

2.5.1 Local Authorities

At a LA level, guidance and policies are available. Individual examples have previously been published in Brighton and Hove (Brighton and Hove City Council & AllSorts Youth Project, 2019), Barnsley (BMBC, n.d.), Cornwall (Cannon & Best, 2015), East Sussex (ESCC, 2019) Lancashire (LCC, 2014), Leeds (LCC, 2018), Merton and Wandsworth (MC & WC, n.d.) and Shropshire (Crutwell, 2018). Whilst a collaborative example was published following contributions from organisations and LAs such as: Barnsley, Birmingham, Derbyshire, Doncaster, Kent, Leicester, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Sheffield and Warwickshire (SCC, 2018). Support, advised across all of these, includes guidance around: toilet-usage, changing room-usage, uniforms, staff training, inclusive curricula and confidentiality. Most also include guidance around: PE, examinations, pronouns and names, trips, working with parents/carers and medical interventions.

However, some policies differ through the inclusion of specific guidance around: the media, work experience, vaccinations, absence recording, school photos, single-sex schools and commemorative events.

Notably, some LAs have made the decision to remove their guidance. Shropshire Council (Healthy Shropshire, 2020) and Oxfordshire County Council (2019) published updates following the removal of their toolkits, both stating that the Equality and Human Rights Commission is currently writing guidance which they are awaiting as a replacement. Kent County Council (KELSI, 2019) similarly published an update, stating that their guidance is 'currently under review in response to recent developments'. Such recent developments might include legal challenges to LA guidance, including a High Court case surrounding Oxfordshire's transgender guidance (BBC News, 2020). Warwickshire County Council is also reported in the media to have removed their guidance (Coventry Live, 2019), however no updates were found on the council's website. Irrespective of individual LA's individual reasons for withdrawing their guidance, this raises the question of what systems and support educational professionals are engaging with in those LAs that have removed their guidance.

2.6 Summary of Themes Identified in the Literature

Some educational professionals engaged in training about supporting trans* young people, with a minority (2.7%) of school staff having received information about transgender individuals specifically during their teacher training in the US (Curtis, 2019), whilst EPs in the UK described how they had experience of delivering training about trans* support (Sagzan, 2019). However, UK research highlighted a lack of training for secondary school teachers resulting in teachers worrying and

feeling less confident about addressing transphobia and teaching about gender (Bowskill, 2017; Charlton, 2020). Similarly, research indicates that EPs lack training in trans* matters which in-turn affects their ability to support schools (Bowskill, 2017; Sagzan, 2019). This suggests inconsistencies in educational professionals' training experiences.

Research identified how some educational professionals engaged with policies and guidance focusing on the support of trans* young people. School staff in the US had a formal anti-bullying/discrimination policy (Curtis, 2019), whilst secondary school staff in the UK described LA guidance as being helpful (Charlton, 2020). However, many educational professionals were unaware of whether policies existed in their school or LA, with research involving school staff in US highlighting how a change in government administration resulted in trans* guidance for schools being rescinded and that school staff were unaware of which policies specifically protected trans* young people (Curtis, 2019). Similarly, EPs in the UK were unaware of whether the Government or LA provided school guidance on how to support trans* students (Sagzan, 2019). Moreover, whilst there has been an increase in published policies and guidance from national and local systems, information could not be found regarding how many schools have engaged with or applied these. Charlton's (2020) research showed that although secondary school staff found LA transgender resources helpful, they highlighted a need to go beyond these ready-made resources, emphasising the importance of an individualised approach. Despite government, civil society and professional body organisation guidance being identified, none of these were referenced by educational professionals, indicating that they may not be engaging with these national systems. Additionally, the trans* young person in McCormack's (2012) study critiqued government policy and the

legal framework in which their college had to work but did not specify exactly which policy and framework.

For some educational professionals, SLT presented a challenge to their support of trans* young people, especially when senior leaders were not willing to make changes to trans* support (Charlton, 2020), highlighting the importance of having supportive school leaders advocating for trans* young people (Wiltz, 2018). Secondary school staff in Charlton's (2020) research identified EPs as well-placed to work with SLT to develop support for trans* young people. This indicates that educational professionals are engaging with their senior leaders to support trans* young people, however the latter have the potential to influence whether that support is challenging or not.

The importance of trans*-inclusive language-use was highlighted, with school staff in the US describing their familiarity with using preferred names and gender-neutral language (Curtis, 2019) and checking how young people want to be referred to (Wiltz, 2018). EPs in the UK had previously provided input to secondary school staff to aid understanding and discourage the use of gendered language (Yavus, 2016). However as with previous findings, educational professionals' engagement with trans*-inclusive language-use was inconsistent. A lack of understanding and uncertainty relating to language-use was found, with school staff in the UK experiencing confusion around terminology, finding pronouns challenging and fearing causing offence (Charlton, 2020).

EPs were found to engage with practices to seek the views of trans* young people, including listening and using solution-focused approaches to identify preferred futures (Sagzan, 2019; Yavus, 2016). Accordingly, secondary school staff

in Charlton's (2020) research identified EPs as well-placed to work at an individual level with trans* young people. However, Bowskill (2017) highlighted the importance of EPs having accessed 'good' information before supporting schools and seeking the views of trans* young people.

References were made to inclusive school climates, with school staff in the US agreeing that their school climate was welcoming and inclusive of trans* individuals (Curtis, 2019) and highlighting the importance of being accepting and non-judgemental (Wiltz, 2018). However, for some educational professionals, their school climate was not felt to provide adequate support for trans* young people (Curtis, 2019). Moreover, secondary school staff in UK expressed wanting EP support to develop a more inclusive environment (Charlton, 2020).

The curriculum was a further way in which educational professionals supported trans* young people, with some school staff being familiar with using a trans*-inclusive curriculum (Curtis, 2019). However, this was not the case for all, with many being unfamiliar with using trans*-inclusive books and visual representations and feeling that curricula and textbooks lack diversity (Bowskill, 2017; Curtis, 2019). Notably, EPs in Sagzan's (2019) UK research identified curriculum-development as an area that they could support schools with.

Educational professionals reflected on how they could improve their support of trans* young people. One suggestion included the need to build relationships with trans* young people to best understand their needs, provide a positive relationship and create transgender friendly schools (Charlton, 2020; Wiltz, 2018). A similar suggestion included school staff building relationships with parents so that they can work together for the benefit of the young person (Charlton, 2020). Another

suggestion included a need for educational professionals to engage in communication and information sharing throughout the school, including information being shared between parents, pupils, school staff and EPs to ensure access to trustworthy and important information (Charlton, 2020; Sagzan, 2019). Bowksill (2017) and Charlton (2020) found that educational professionals experience fear, worry and low self-efficacy due to a lack of understanding around trans* support. However, by engaging with communication and information sharing, educational professionals could potentially develop their understanding and thus reduce their fear and worry.

In summary, the existing literature suggests that educational professionals engage with a range of systems to support trans* young people, including training, school and LA policies and guidance, SLT, practices around language-use and seeking the views of trans* young people, inclusive school climates and the curriculum. However, improvements could be made, including building relationships with trans* young people and sharing information by communicating with parents, young people, school staff and EPs. Despite the literature demonstrating the existence of guidance across national and local systems, educational professionals did not reference their engagement with the former, indicating that the presence alone of policies does not ensure support (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Approach

A research approach includes the plans and procedures for a research project. Informing the decision of which approach should be used are the researcher's philosophical assumptions and worldview, the research design and research methods for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, my philosophical worldview informing the current research will now be discussed, whilst the research design will be discussed in section 3.2 and research methods in section 3.3.

3.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology

A philosophical worldview is a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); others refer to this as ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge) (Crotty, 1998; Mertens, 2010). The current research adopts the ontological position of social constructionism which insists that there is no single objective reality which can be known, as meaning does not exist in its own right, it is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation, such as through the use of language, thus indicating that there are as many realities as there are human beings (Robson, 2011). The adopted epistemological position therefore seeks to explore the experiences of educational professionals supporting trans* young people in secondary schools and interpret their meaning. As reality is assumed to be constructed as human beings interact, it is acknowledged that my own position in the research, personal experiences and background will impact on interpretations.

The approach taken in this research opposes positivism, which argues for a single objective reality that is measurable and can be empirically known (Burr, 2015; Fletcher, 2017; Robson, 2011). Whilst positivism assumes that the nature of the world can be revealed through observation, social constructionism cautions us to be suspicious of assumptions regarding how the world and the constructs within it appear to be. One assumption that could be questioned pertains to perceived categories and divisions in the world and whether these represent real categories and divisions (Burr, 2015). For example, Burr (2015) posits that world observations could suggest that there are two categories of human being, men and women, however when one questions whether these binary categories reflect a real and naturally occurring division of human beings, we become aware of greyness, including gender-reassignment surgery and how to classify human beings as unambiguously male or female. By critically questioning these categories it becomes apparent that they are bound within gendered norms that are socially constructed within cultures. Furthermore, just because we perceive categories in the world, we should not assume that there is anything in the nature of human beings themselves that mean they have to be divided up in that way; Burr (2015) notes that we might equally have divided human beings into those who are tall and short or those with or without earlobes.

3.1.2 Axiology

Creswell and Creswell (2018) identify the explicit identification of how the researcher's biases, values and personal background have shaped their interpretations as characteristic of qualitative research. Having discussed my personal background in section 1.6, it is important to acknowledge the impact of my

values and biases on the research; this can be seen as my axiological position (the nature of ethical behaviour) (Mertens, 2010). In my role as a TEP I am guided by legislation, such as the SENDCoP which stipulates that LAs must have regard to ‘the need to support the child or young person, and the child’s parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood’ (DfE & DoH, 2015, p.19). Having identified the challenges faced by trans* young people in secondary schools both in the literature review and through my professional and voluntary experiences, the current research aims to explore how educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people, to inform research, policy and practice so that best possible outcomes can be achieved for this group of young people.

It is acknowledged that in taking a social constructionist approach, this research prescribes to the notion that we only have access to various representations of the world, which cannot be judged against reality for their truthfulness or accuracy, meaning they are all equally valid. Ergo, Burr (2015) highlights that some would question the right of researchers to decide which groups ought to be empowered (e.g. educational professionals supporting trans* young people) and insist that researchers give voice to all groups (e.g. those opposed to educational professionals supporting trans* young people). However, social constructionism regards objectivity as impossible, as human beings cannot step outside of their humanity and view the world from no position at all, instead they must acknowledge their intrinsic involvement in the research and how this affects the findings (Burr, 2015). Consequently, as discussed in Chapter 1, I acknowledge that

my personal interest and position have shaped the interpretations in this research, including the decision of which groups to include.

3.2 Design

3.2.1 Overall Design

A research design is a strategic plan of the procedures that will be followed during a study and can take a variety of forms (APA, 2020). In accordance with a social constructionist approach, which posits that accounts and what we know are locally specific (Burr, 2015), a small-scale qualitative design was adopted enabling in-depth information to be sought regarding participants' experiences in one LA (Mertens, 2010). This allowed for rich, detailed and complex data to be gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.2.2 Initial Pilot Case Study Research

As discussed in Chapter 1, I initially completed a small-scale case study with ethical approval from The Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee, University College London in the first year of my Doctorate training (2018-2019) to explore how secondary schools can be supported in the development of inclusive practices for trans* young people. This focused on a co-educational, mainstream secondary school in the South-East of England. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 trans* young people (YP1 and YP2) and a semi-structured focus group interview with 5 school staff. All interviews took place in private classrooms outside of learning hours between April-May 2019; interviews with the

trans* young people lasted between 15-25 minutes and the school staff focus group interview lasted 52 minutes.

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for thematic analysis. Four main themes emerged; firstly, 'Developing Understanding of Trans Issues', reflected YP1's belief that secondary school staff have the potential to have an impact on support for trans* young people, alongside YP2's feelings that some staff were '*uncertain*', '*not very knowledgeable*' and potentially '*shy of the subject*'. Secondly, 'Teacher Intervention with Discrimination', highlighted how both YP1 and YP2 felt protected by school staff in certain contexts, however felt at risk in others, such as during unstructured time. Thirdly, 'Building Relationships to Contain Young People', encompassed how YP2 described school staff checking-in with them and understanding their emotional state which boosted their confidence and empowerment and how YP1 felt able to discuss LGBT hate crime with school staff. Lastly, 'School Systems of Communication', reflected discrepancies in how the views of trans* young people were sought by school staff and how information was shared between school staff, e.g. YP1 had positive experiences of the latter, whilst YP2 had negative experiences in which teachers had incorrectly identified them in lessons due to a lack of information sharing.

Furthermore, the findings of this case study informed the development of the current research. I wanted to build upon the views of the two trans* young people, such as YP1's belief that school staff could have '*quite a lot of impact depending on how they treat incidents that have happened*' and YP2's belief that some staff in their school were '*not very knowledgeable on the subject*' to build a better understanding of how educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young

people in secondary schools. Notably, neither young person had experience of working with an EP and discrepancies in the support across local schools was identified, with YP1 moving to their current school due to its positive reputation for trans* support, which prompted me when selecting sites and participants for the current research, to include EPs and a range of schools in the same LA.

3.3 Methods for the Fieldwork

3.3.1 Sampling Methods and Recruitment Process

In applying a social constructionist approach, one implication of having multiple realities is that the perceptions of a range of persons must be sought (Mertens, 2010), as the meaning of 'support for trans* young people' has been constructed by a range of individuals with differing experiences, e.g. support staff, teachers, senior leadership, maingrade EPs, senior EPs and those working at a national-level. Therefore, my interpretation of Loreman et al's (2014) framework guided my sampling and recruitment process in that participants were recruited from each of Bronfenbrenner's Contexts, e.g. secondary school staff (Microsystem and Mesosystem), EPs (Exosystem) and national-level individuals (Macrosystem).

Whilst there are a number of random and non-random sampling methods, in this study purposive sampling was used. This is "a nonprobability sampling method in which the researcher selects participants based on personal judgment about which ones will be most informative" (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 739). Snowball sampling was also used where secondary school staff or EPs knew others interested in participating.

Information sheets outlining the research (see Appendices 4-6) and consent forms (see Appendices 7-9) were planned to be shared within monthly secondary school meetings, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cancellation of face-to-face working, amendments had to be made to the recruitment process. As a result, emails were sent out separately to secondary school special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and EPs across the LA outlining the research. Emails were also sent to national-level individuals with experience of supporting trans* young people across England, such as through charity work, academic research or policy development, inviting them to take part.

Inclusion criteria for secondary school staff and EPs included: experience of working with trans* young people (aged 11-18) in a secondary school context within the specified LA. For national-level individuals this included: experience of supporting trans* young people (aged 11-18) in England.

Exclusion criteria for all participants included: those who only had experience of working with or supporting trans* young people outside of the 11-18 year age-range. Additionally, secondary school staff and EPs who only had experience of working with trans* young people outside of the specified LA.

3.3.1.1 Selection of Sites

Secondary school staff and EPs were identified and invited to take part from across the LA's four geographical areas (Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4), each containing three districts. Whilst national-level individuals were identified from across England.

3.3.1.2 Selection of Settings

In order to reflect the LA's educational context and capture a variety of perceptions and thus realities, secondary school staff were identified and invited from a range of school contexts (see Table 1). Hines et al (2018) argue that a locally specific analysis of trans* people is crucial to avoid the pitfalls of universalism. Additionally, social constructionism highlights the importance of acknowledging that accounts and what we know are locally, historically and culturally specific (Burr, 2015). Therefore, by examining trans* people in one locality, we can seek to understand processes, social relations, identities and cultural values that shape discourse and practice around trans* people within a specific educational context Hines et al (2018).

Table 1

School Contexts

Selective	Non-selective	Special
8	8	2
Co-educational	Single-sex	
11	7 (5 girls' schools, 2 boys' schools)	
State	Private	
17	1	
Faith	Non-faith	
1	17	

3.3.1.3 Selection of Participants

32 participants took part in the research, including 22 secondary school staff (teaching, pastoral and SLT) from 18 schools and 8 EPs (maingrade and senior) who

had experience of working with trans* young people within the LA’s secondary schools. 2 national-level individuals also participated, including a research assistant from an LGBT support organisation and a trans* guidance-developer. Participants’ were also asked to identify their roles within their organisation; responses are included in Tables 2-4.

Table 2

Secondary School Staff (SSS) Participants’ Roles

SSS Participant	Role in School	LA Area (1-4)
SSS-1	Teacher	2
SSS-2	Teacher	2
SSS-3	SLT – Deputy Head	4
SSS-4	Teacher	2
SSS-5	SLT - SENCO	1
SSS-6	SLT – SENCO	4
SSS-7	Teacher	3
SSS-8	Pastoral Manager	2
SSS-9	Teacher	2
SSS-10	Pastoral – Assistant SENCO	3
SSS-11	Teacher	2
SSS-12	Teacher and SENCO	1
SSS-13	SLT – SENCO	4
SSS-14	SLT - SENCO	3
SSS-15	SLT – Mental Health Lead	2
SSS-16	SLT – Pastoral Lead	2
SSS-17	Pastoral - Mentor	2
SSS-18	SLT – Deputy Head	4
SSS-19	SENCO	3
SSS-20	Teacher	2
SSS-21	SLT – Pastoral Lead	4
SSS-22	Teacher	4

Table 3*EP Participants' Roles*

EP Participant	Role in EP Service	LA Area (1-4)
EP-1	Senior	4
EP-2	Maingrade	4
EP-3	Maingrade	4
EP-4	Maingrade	4
EP-5	Senior	2
EP-6	Maingrade	3
EP-7	Senior	1
EP-8	Maingrade	3

Table 4*National-level (NL) Participants' Roles*

NL Participant	Role
NL-1	Research assistant from an LGBT support organisation
NL-2	Trans* guidance-developer

3.3.2 Data Collection**3.3.2.1 Developing the Interview Schedule**

Semi-structured interviews were used as they aim to permit more of a natural conversation, support participant-ease and participant-researcher rapport. This type of interview is flexible in that the interviewer has a set list of topics, but a degree of freedom in sequencing questions, the exact wording and the amount of attention given to different topics (Robson, 2011). This was important due to the sensitive

nature of topics being discussed, including gender identity and professionals' experiences of supportive and unsupportive practice for trans* young people. The decision was made to conduct individual and focus group interviews; both methods draw on a similar technique for collecting data but differ in how they are structured (Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley & McKenna, 2017). Individual interviews take place on a one-to-one basis, with the researcher interviewing an individual participant; some argue that this offers insight into an individual's personal thoughts, feelings and world view, whilst also taking less time to conduct and analyse due to the inclusion of only one individual (Guest et al., 2017; Knodel, 1993; Morgan, 1998). Focus groups, however, can range in size with the researcher interviewing a group of individuals and capitalising on group dynamics to stimulate discussion; whilst this can take longer than an individual interview, Guest et al (2017) argue that the presence of peers may encourage individuals to disclose more personal and sensitive information. Similarly, Robson (2011) argues that group dynamics can help to focus on important topics and encourage contributions from people who may be reluctant or unable to attend an individual interview, whilst also being highly efficient as the amount of data is increased by collecting from several people at the same time. Furthermore, the same interview schedule was developed for both individual and focus group interviews; secondary school staff and national-level individuals were invited to the former as they were from individual schools or organisations and thus did not necessarily have pre-existing relationships with other participants, whereas EPs were invited to the former or the latter as they did have pre-existing relationships due to being part of the same team. Additionally, EPs had limited time availability and so they were given the option of attending a focus group or individual interview in order to correspond with their availability.

Questions were informed by different sources, some of which included my own research and practice-based experiences, thus acknowledging the impact of my position as the researcher. Importantly, Burr (2015) states that the researcher must view research as a co-production between themselves and the participants, as the researcher's assumptions inform what questions are asked, thus I am aware that my own assumptions informed the development of the interview schedule. Nonetheless, questions were also informed by interview questions used in previous research with educational professionals who had experience of working with trans* young people (Bowskill, 2017; Kull et al., 2019; Walzer, 2015). Additionally, questions were informed by my interpretation of Loreman et al's (2014) framework, specifically in relation to the inputs-processes and outcomes model. Lastly, research-based experience from my initial case study research and practice-based experience from my roles as a secondary school teacher and TEP also informed the questions. Appendix 10 outlines the interview schedule that was shared with participants prior to the interview, whilst Appendix 11 outlines the interview schedule for the researcher.

3.3.2.2 Piloting the Interviews

The use of piloting in research affords the opportunity to test for and resolve any problems prior to formal data collection (Robson, 2011). Therefore, pilot interviews were conducted with a secondary school teacher and an EP from outside of the target LA. This enabled me to explore the suitability of documentation (information sheets and consent forms) and how the interview questions were understood by interviewees.

After the individual pilot interviews, the teacher and EP were asked whether they felt any questions should be amended. Both felt that no changes were needed as the questions were open enough to allow flexible responses and relevant to both secondary school staff and EPs. Both were also emailed copies of the information sheet and consent form and asked whether they felt any changes were needed. The EP felt that a definition of 'trans*' could be included on the information sheet as they were unfamiliar with the term and unsure whether this included non-binary individuals (see Appendices 4-6). They also suggested that the consent form be condensed onto a single page for ease of reading; both suggested amendments were made (see Appendices 7-9).

3.3.2.3 Conducting the Interviews

Due to restrictions around face-to-face meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams or telephone call and audio-recorded for transcription. The use of remote means of conducting interviews did present challenges, such as the potential for subtle visual cues to be missed. During the focus group interview via Microsoft Teams, initially participants seemed hesitant to speak and conscious of interrupting or speaking over the other participants which may have been due to the reduced opportunities to pick up on visual cues indicating when a fellow participant was going to start or finish speaking. As a result of this, I felt that I had to direct the interview more at the start, however as the interview progressed, participants appeared to relax, becoming more confident in verbalising their thoughts and responses to one another, which allowed me to take more of a facilitator role.

Interviews with secondary school staff lasted between 14-45 minutes, individual interviews with EPs lasted between 21-45 minutes, the focus group interview with EPs lasted for 60 minutes and interviews with national-level individuals lasted between 34-38 minutes. These correspond with Robson's (2011) assertion that focus groups typically last at least an hour and that individual interviews should last a maximum of 45 minutes.

At the start of each interview, participants were welcomed and thanked for participating. It was then explained that individual interviews would be up to 40 minutes long and focus group interviews up to 60 minutes long, with a further 5 minutes to debrief at the end and would be audio-recorded using a password protected and encrypted laptop for transcription. Participants were informed that upon completion of the interview and data analysis, they would be invited to a follow-up Microsoft Teams session in which the identified themes would be shared, and their feedback welcomed. My current role as a TEP and previous role as a secondary school teacher was also shared to build rapport. Participants had received the information sheet and signed the consent form prior to the interviews, however they were given the opportunity to ask any questions about the documentation or research process. Lastly, participants were reminded of their ethical rights, including their right to withdraw from the research.

At the end of each interview, participants were debriefed which provided them with the opportunity to discuss how they felt about the interview and ask any further questions. Whilst no participants felt that they required further support following the interview, one participant enquired about possible continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for their school with a focus on trans* support and a second participant enquired about support for parents of trans* young people;

arrangements were made for me to respond to these enquiries via email.

Participants were reminded that the audio recording of the interview would be transcribed with all identifiable information omitted and asked if they were happy to be invited to a follow-up session in which identified themes would be discussed. Lastly, participants were thanked and reminded that they could contact me or my research supervisor via email with any further research-related questions, as stated on the information sheet.

Upon completion of data analysis, participants were invited via email to a Microsoft Teams follow-up session in which the identified themes were shared and discussed. This afforded participants the opportunity to share their perceptions of the data, highlighting that their contributions are valued whilst also addressing possible researcher bias (Robson, 2011). Four participants (SSS-1, SSS-18, EP-2 and NL-1) responded and each individually attended a 20-minute Microsoft Teams video call. The participants were asked what they thought about the findings, including whether they reflected their expectations and if anything surprised them. Participants' feedback is included in Appendix 12.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

Burr (2015) states taking a social constructionist theoretical position does not necessarily mean that one must use a specific analytic approach to their research, rather social constructionists may use a range of qualitative or even quantitative methods. For some social constructionist researchers, discourse analysis, a detailed examination of language (Robson, 2011), is a preferred analytic approach, however Burr (2015) highlights that there are a number of approaches in research, that in

some way or another, analyse language. Moreover, Gergen (2015) posits that it is not methods that are incompatible with social constructionism, but the claims made about universalistic truths that accompany them. Therefore, whilst acknowledging that there are a number of approaches which can be adapted and combined with a social constructionist perspective, the current research used thematic analysis (TA) due to its systematic, reflexive procedure for engaging with and analysing data, involving Braun and Clarke's (2006) six prescribed steps: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Importantly, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that TA is not linked to any epistemological position and thus can be informed by social constructionist principles, however a good thematic analysis will make clear the theoretical position of the research (see section 3.1). In accordance with a social constructionist position and the belief that meaning is constructed by human beings as they interact with one another, including through the use of language, the current research took both a semantic and latent approach when thematically analysing participants' responses; the former reflected the exact language used by participants, whilst the latter reflected potential underlying meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2013); further discussion of this coding process and the thematic analysis steps can be found in Appendix 12.

Braun and Clarke (2019) reflected on how researchers have applied TA and highlighted the need to use TA reflexively. Therefore, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using the TA framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2013) also describe how TA supports researchers to focus on participants' standpoints and how they experience and make sense of the world, this corresponds with social constructionist thinking that

individual participants bring their own experiences, views and thus realities of supporting trans* young people in secondary schools. Moreover, as social constructionism views objectivity as impossible, Burr (2015) and Braun and Clarke (2013) emphasise the need for researchers to acknowledge their intrinsic involvement in the research, which includes recognising how the researcher's own experiences and perspectives can shape data analysis. Consequently, I acknowledge that the themes identified in this research are likely influenced by my own experiences. Additionally, as previously discussed, Burr (2015) states that research must be seen as a co-production between the researcher and participants, as the former cannot be seen as an inanimate machine that records participants' responses uncontaminated by human interaction, thus I also acknowledge that the themes are likely influenced by the dyadic interaction between myself and the participants. Furthermore, the themes, subthemes and codes identified in this research could be interpreted in a different way if analysed by another researcher.

An abductive approach was taken, involving three interrelated ideas: phenomena is studied, patterns observed and a hypothesis put forward to explain this pattern; multiple hypotheses are considered as a form of comparative theory evaluation as one hypothesis may not explain all of the facts; the best possible explanation is given provided there is sufficient evidence available (Robson, 2011). This approach acknowledges that systems, structures and processes are constantly changing, thus making definite prediction impossible. Therefore, abductive reasoning seeks to find the most probable explanation for observed phenomena, whilst recognising that we cannot predict future phenomena (Robson, 2011).

As a social constructionist approach has been used, consideration was given to how best to justify the choice of TA. Taylor (2001) suggests that one way to

enhance the coherence and rigour of research is to evidence that the analysis has been carried out systematically and interpretations soundly argued. Therefore, in-depth information about the six TA steps can be found in Appendix 12, whilst examples of the codes applied to extracts can be found in Appendices 13-14.

3.4 Trustworthiness

As this is a qualitative piece of research, it would arguably be inappropriate to evaluate its trustworthiness using quantitative principles, such as reliability and validity (Robson, 2011). For example, most quantitative researchers aim to identify predictable, causal relationships that can be replicated in different contexts (reliability). Whereas qualitative researchers, would not expect their findings to be exactly replicated but would hope that the insights they provide would be useful to other contexts similar to the one researched (Yardley, 2015). Thus Yardley (2000) proposed four principles arguably better suited to evaluating qualitative research: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance.

3.4.1 Sensitivity to Context

Yardley (2000; 2015) highlighted three important aspects of being sensitive to context: exploring existing literature around the topic to identify gaps and inform research questions; acknowledging the socio-cultural context of the research; and acknowledging the relationship between the researcher and participants. Evidence of these can be found within the current research.

In Chapter 2, the school experiences of trans* young people and educators were explored across the UK and US. This highlighted a gap in the literature about the experiences of school staff and EPs supporting trans* young people in UK secondary schools. Subsequently, this informed the development of my research rationale and questions to explore these experiences further.

In Chapter 1, the legislation and systems available to support trans* young people were explored whilst highlighting that these are specific to the UK context. Linked to this, whilst research concerning educational professionals and their work with trans* young people is emerging in the US, it was acknowledged that these may not be applicable to the experiences of educational professionals in the UK due to differences in legislation and educational systems.

In Chapter 1, my own interest and position was discussed including my previous role as a secondary school teacher and current role as a TEP within the LA being researched. This information was also shared with participants as it was felt my shared experiences with both school staff and EPs may support with building rapport. This was particularly important due to the sensitive nature of topics being discussed and the potential for a power imbalance with school staff due to my current role within the LA.

3.4.2 Commitment and Rigour

Yardley (2000; 2015) highlighted the importance of commitment to the topic being researched and having data which is complete and in-depth in terms of collection and analysis. As discussed in Chapter 1, I had experience of supporting trans* young people in schools as a secondary school teacher, TEP and volunteer

for a trans* organisation. In my TEP role, I have also completed casework with trans* young people at individual-level (e.g. individual casework) and systemic-levels (e.g. gender diversity training for schools, EPs and social workers and a whole-school audit of LGBT inclusion in a single-sex secondary school). With regards to rigour, data was collected from each geographical area of the LA and included a broad range of school contexts to allow for a more holistic representation of educators' experiences. Moreover, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis involved a systematic procedure for my engagement and analysis of the data.

3.4.3 Coherence and Transparency

Coherence refers to 'fit' between research questions, theoretical perspective, methodology and analysis, whilst transparency entails disclosing all aspects of the research process, including detailing data collection and analysis processes (Yardley, 2000; 2015). The exploratory nature of this research fits with the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis due to its systematic, reflexive procedures (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019). Each stage of the research process is clearly described including participant recruitment, data collection and analysis. My own interest and position is also disclosed in Chapter 1 and appendices include information given to participants.

3.4.4 Impact and Importance

Yardley (2000; 2015) highlighted the importance of research findings having the potential to make a difference, this could include having practical implications for

organisations, such as EP services. Having identified a gap in research exploring the experiences of educational professionals supporting trans* young people in UK secondary schools, it is hoped that the findings of this research will develop EPs' understanding and inform their work with schools, as discussed in the impact statement. Additionally, I plan to share the findings of this research with school and EP participants to support their knowledge of current practice within their LA. Beyond this, I plan to share my findings with TEPs with the hope of informing their knowledge and work with schools.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The BPS' Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) was adhered to throughout this research. This code is based on four ethical principles: respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities; scientific integrity; social responsibility and maximising benefit and minimising harm.

3.5.1 Risk

Procedures were put into place to protect participants from harm. Participants had the option to terminate their participation in the interview at any time. Although the issue did not arise, should a participant have appeared to be uncomfortable during the interview, I would have stopped and checked whether they were happy to continue. Participants had the option to ask questions throughout and I was able to signpost to support groups and organisations.

3.5.2 Valid Consent

Information sheets detailing the aims and plans for the research with accompanying consent forms were emailed to participants and informed consent was obtained. Participants were also made aware that they had the right to withdraw their consent to participate in the research until interview data had been transcribed.

3.5.3 Confidentiality

Data was anonymised from the outset to protect participants' identities. With regards to confidentiality, I am aware that participants, particularly at a national-level, have unique roles which could make them identifiable. To tackle this, participant information that could enable them to be traced, e.g. contextual information or their connection to the researcher, has not been disclosed. NL participants were offered the opportunity to be informed about how they have been referred to and quoted to check that they were happy with role descriptions and direct quotes. They were then invited to amend and contribute to their role description and quotations, if desired. In order to protect the identities of the trans* young people with whom the participants supported in schools, inclusion criteria only specified that participants needed to have experience of working with trans* young people (aged 11-18) in a secondary school context. In most cases, participants only had experience of supporting a minority of trans* young people, in some cases only one young person, and thus they were not asked to specify the gender identity of the trans* young people they supported in case this revealed the identity of the young person, particularly as the secondary school and EP participants were all from a single LA. All data has been stored securely with password protection and encryption, accessible only to me.

3.5.4 Giving Advice

Advice was not given to participants, however I was able to signpost to relevant organisations. Should an issue have arisen, academic supervision provided a secure space to discuss this.

3.5.5 Deception

Participants were not deceived. As part of the recruitment process, they received an information sheet about the research detailing its purpose, aims and RQs. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions before and after the interviews.

3.5.6 Debriefing and Dissemination

To ensure full transparency, participants were debriefed and upon completion of the data analysis, invited to discuss the research findings. A summary sheet containing the findings was also shared and CPD sessions offered to the schools and LA to feedback findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Overview of Themes

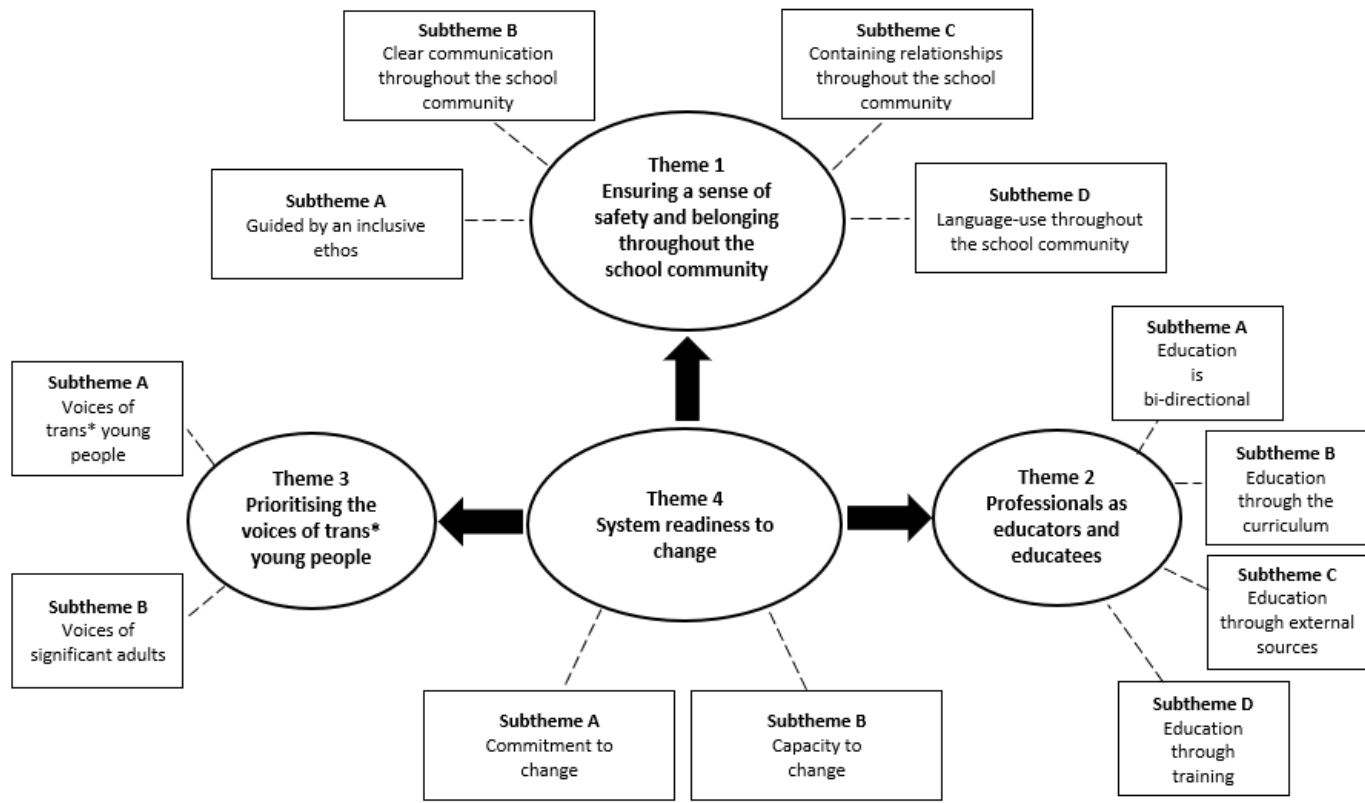
Data from the interviews was analysed across the three groups of participants using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six prescribed steps outlined in Chapter 3 in an attempt to answer RQ2 which sought to explore participants' perceptions of:

- a. how they currently best support trans* young people?
- b. how they currently do not best support trans* young people?
- c. how to improve the support of trans* young people?

Four main themes emerged: 'Theme 1: Ensuring a Sense of Safety and Belonging throughout the School Community'; 'Theme 2: Professionals as Educators and Educatees'; 'Theme 3: Prioritising the Voices of Trans* Young People and 'Theme 4: System Readiness for Change'. Each theme had corresponding subthemes, as illustrated in the thematic map (Figure 1). Theme 4 was identified as an overarching theme which impacted on all other themes; thick black arrows have been used to illustrate this. Throughout this chapter, a brief description of each theme will be provided, along with a pictorial representation of corresponding subthemes (Figures 2-5).

Figure 1

Thematic Map of Interview Analysis



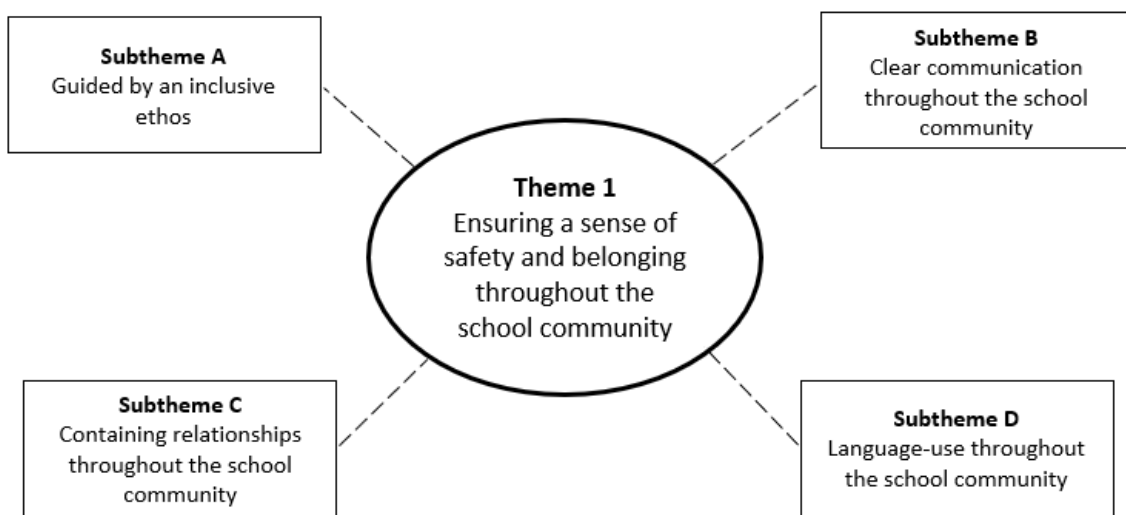
4.2 Theme 1: Ensuring a Sense of Safety and Belonging throughout the School Community

This theme encompasses participants' perceptions of the need for trans* young people to feel safe and that they belong within their school. Participants described examples of how this was currently achieved and how this could be improved, referencing the roles of different individuals throughout the school, thus reflecting the school as a community. Responses fell within four subthemes: 'Guided by an Inclusive Ethos', 'Clear Communication throughout the School Community', 'Containing Relationships throughout the School Community' and 'Language-use

throughout the School Community'. Figure 2 provides an overview of Theme 1 and its subthemes.

Figure 2

Thematic map of Theme 1



4.2.1 Guided by an Inclusive Ethos

SSS participants referenced their school's ethos and the impact that this had on trans* young people, including a reduction in bullying, trans* young people knowing that they can ask for help and feeling respected. SSS-1 also believed that their school's reputation for having an inclusive ethos increased the likelihood of trans* young people wanting to attend their school:

"We've had students who have moved from one school and come to us because they know that the work that we do with the LGBT plus community they if they were being faced with bullying or anything like that in their previous school they have moved to us because they know that won't

happen.” (SSS-1)

A common feature of inclusive ethe was the importance of taking a non-judgemental approach. SSS shared examples of staff listening to trans* young people without judgement and educating students to not judge others. SSS-12 suggested that a non-judgemental approach had a positive impact on trans* young people feeling that they can attend school:

“Those young people feel that they can come to school they can come to school without feeling judged they can come to school and participate in their learning.” (SSS-12)

Normalising trans* experiences was another shared feature across schools’ ethe. SSS-8 suggested that trans* young people often “*don’t see themselves as normal and fitting in*” and so it was important to normalise their experiences. However, SSS-6 shared that their focus around normalising gender expression was across the school community, with a particular focus on young people who do not identify as trans*:

“A couple of the boys said to us you know what would happen if we came in in a skirt and we’d be like well nothing.” (SSS-6)

Whilst a school being guided by an inclusive ethos was felt to be important, participants also expressed the need for support to be tailored to individual trans* young people. NL-1 posited that trans* young people are best supported by policies which are tailored to them:

“Some of the best school policies that I’ve certainly seen have involved trans young people in their development so it makes sure that the issues that they’re dealing with are tailored to what’s really impacting these students.”

(NL-1)

EP-7 and SSS-16 echoed the need to focus on individual trans* young people and their needs, rather than viewing trans* young people as a homogeneous group:

“Rather than go out and find the guidance you know we treat people as people and you know labels often can take you away from the actual needs of the individual so we’re always very led by what we think is best for the individual.” (SSS-16)

“It’s also really important as an EP that you don’t get too bogged down in looking at what’s going to be good for this these this group of people because actually each person is an individual.” (EP-7)

4.2.2 Clear Communication throughout the School Community

Participants acknowledged that supporting trans* young people required communication across the school community, including SSS, trans* young people, parents and the LA. When considering how SSS communicate with trans* young people, several participants referenced the Covid-19 pandemic and national closure of schools leading to adaptations in how they communicated with trans* young people at home. Examples included staff emailing young people, offering remote counselling sessions and talking over Microsoft Teams; SSS-8 described how this allowed them to remain aware of difficulties at home:

“I did actually email last week just to check how he was and he did say it’s still the same home mum and dad refuse to call me by my name.” (SSS-8)

Communication between staff across the school was also found to be

important. During the initial stages of a young person's transition, participants described how colleagues were briefed about preferred names, pronouns and who to speak to if they had any questions; electronic means of communication were also used, including information on the young person's SIMS record (a student information system used by schools). SSS-3 detailed the importance of consistent communication in which all SSS receive the same information and how this was achieved in their school:

“Departmental meetings we have whole staff meetings we have curriculum leader meetings so we try to sort of you know send all the communications and information through there so that everybody everybody's getting the same information and everybody's on board with what we're doing as a school and that tends to work really well.” (SSS-3)

Communication between the school and parents was also found to be important. When communicating with parents who may be unaware of their child's gender identity, SSS-14 described how steps needed to be clearly defined and taken only with the permission of the trans* young person:

“We've got a clarity in our key stage teams as to when we talk to parents how we talk to parents and how we ease that way for students and I think that's something that's really developed...the key stage team who then with that student's permission rang parents and explained.” (SSS-14)

During cases in which parents were aware of their child's gender identity, SSS-4 described how collaborative communication between the young person, their parents and SSS was a strength in their practice:

“School the student and parents were all in communication with each other

the fact that we discussed the different steps as to how to go forward both in terms of kind of practical day-to-day use but equally in terms of addressing issues.” (SSS-4)

Lastly, participants described the need for communication between schools and the LA. Concerns were found relating to how LAs communicate information about supporting trans* young people to all schools. SSS-12 highlighted that not all schools have connections to the LA’s EP Service and so might not receive the same communication as schools who do:

“How will this information kind of get out to schools if it’s coming from an EP service where a school might not buy into an EP service.” (SSS-12)

SSS-20 described how their school being independent might impact on how the LA communicates with them:

“I don’t know if that is the case but I would assume that it’s not as easy to get hold of information as if you’re a (local authority omitted) school for example.” (SSS-20)

Both SSS-12 and SSS-20 put forth suggestions of how communication between the LA and schools could be improved:

“If we’re saying that this comes under the remits of SENCOs then it would be going to things like to the (SENCO meeting omitted) meetings and the SENCO forums headteacher briefings if we don’t think it’s specifically down that route or maybe a mixture of both I would question if it went to head teacher briefings my only question would be how do we ensure that it gets from the headteacher briefings out of there you know through those people

because I don't know if the heads share everything that comes out from that."

(SSS-12)

"I guess more mainstream schools have more links I guess but I know our school there's I know there's independent head school meetings once a month there's lots of links like that so maybe shared through channels like that." (SSS-20)

4.2.3 Containing Relationships throughout the School Community

Participants referenced different relationships throughout the school community and how these supported trans* young people, notably elements of containment theory emerged, including trans* young people, SSS, parents and the school being contained. The concept of containment will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

SSS described how their relationships with trans* young people enabled them to provide emotional support and a sense of safety, such as when coming out as trans* to their family or when they were having a difficult day and needed a safe space. SSS-11 also described how a trans* young person asked them to communicate with other adults on their behalf:

"I hope I've got a pretty good relationship with the students that I work with so for whatever reason they thought it was me that they could come and tell just on a sort of one of those random popped up at break time and said there's something I need to tell you and you need to let other members of staff know and then it went from there." (SSS-11)

When reflecting on how they best support trans* young people, SSS-1 felt that their biggest strength pertained to their ability to build relationships:

“I’d say probably creating that relationship where they know that they feel safe I think whenever I deliver training at work teachers are always really surprised when I say that students aren’t gonna come up to you and tell you like can you refer to me with these types of pronouns or they’re not gonna open up to you...so I think that being able to create a relationship with any students is something like I feel like I’ve always been good at.” (SSS-1)

However, not all participants identified themselves as best-placed to build relationships with trans* young people, some emphasised the role of support and pastoral staff in relationship-building, with SSS-5 describing their school’s pastoral network as *“the backbone of our school”*. SSS-12 acknowledged that a young person had a better relationship with a member of support staff because *“they felt more able to speak to them because they weren’t a teacher”*, similarly, SSS-2 believed that young people felt more able to speak to them because they started working in the school in a pastoral role: *“I think I I’m kind of seen more as a supportive role because the teaching came later.”* SSS-17 currently worked in a pastoral role as a mentor and described how their relationship supported a trans* young person to come out:

“After talking to her and kind of gaining a relationship you know establishing a rapport with her she disclosed after about a month I think that she felt she was a female.” (SSS-17)

Recognition of the role of support staff was also echoed at a national-level:

“I don’t underestimate the power of those brilliant pastoral staff that we get in schools you know and you’ll see a lot as an EP probably as well a brilliant job

they do of holding young people.” (NL-2)

Whilst trans* young people were found to benefit from containing relationships, they were also thought to benefit from their parents having access to such relationships. Some SSS described how they had built trusting relationships with parents and in one case, provided *“almost a bit of therapy for mum”* (SSS-13), whilst others identified this as an area for improvement:

“I know it’s a young person as well and I know that’s what we’re focusing on but there are other people in this as well aren’t there that do need the support so I’m interested in what other support we can offer to parents as well that are going through this.” (SSS-8)

EPs described how supporting parents was a key part of their role and thus they may be well-placed to offer this:

“As much as we’ve got a huge role supporting the young people in school it’s also supporting the family with kind of their views on it and accepting of it and actually all those kind of attentive listening kind of almost counselling psychology skills that you know we’ve heard about kind of labelling emotions and kind of containing and validating things are potentially quite difficult.” (EP-6)

“If parents are finding it particularly difficult or school don’t know how to manage then that’s probably where we can help really.” (EP-3)

A further group of adults who were found to potentially need containment were SSS. From a national perspective, NL-2 described how schools can face difficulties and negative responses to their support of trans* young people and thus need ‘backup’ from their LA:

“It’s going to take quite a brave school to sort of stand alone when they’re faced with some of the negative media attention and the attention of some of the groups accusing us of you know not safeguarding young people... without any backup about how best to do that I think it’s a really serious and dangerous sort of situation really particularly you know where schools have been in local authorities who’ve been doing this work well and suddenly their guidance is gone and it’s sort of like well where does that leave your schools.”

(NL-2)

Whilst some SSS felt that their school had a supportive relationship with the LA and described instances of the LA providing reassurance and guidance about difficult decisions pertaining to trans* support, others identified this as an area for improvement:

“An ideal if there was somewhere we could go to as a go to and I suppose for us that would be for our (local authority service omitted).” (SSS-6)

4.2.4 Language-use throughout the School Community

Language-use was a common feature across participants’ responses when discussing how trans* young people were supported to feel a sense of belonging. In particular, reference was made to the importance of using preferred names and pronouns when taking the register:

“We allow them to be called whatever pronoun they want to be called by and by whatever name they want.” (SSS-10)

“So the first thing we would ask them is about their preferred name and we don’t have an issue with letting children on the register you know be known as

their preferred name.” (SSS-6)

However, some participants acknowledged that they and their colleagues did experience difficulties around language-use which could be seen as unsupportive, including worrying about saying the wrong name or pronouns, particularly when staff had known the young person prior to transition, as illustrated by SSS-18:

“The biggest thing that upset both of our guys was occasionally and it still does to this day when I say she rather than he and we had that conversation we really don’t mean this in any way it’s just because I’ve known you for 10 years it’s sort of automatic I’m not actually thinking about your gender when I’m saying these words.” (SSS-18)

Avoiding the use of gendered language was also identified as an area for improvement in some schools:

“We’ve got mixed success with the language that staff use so trying to not use phrases like ladies and gentlemen and things like that but some staff are better at that than others so trying to do some additional work on that.” (SSS-4)

The use of written language was found to be something that SSS and EPs alike had considered when writing reports, letters and referrals about trans* young people. SSS-9 described how young people attending their single-sex school highlighted the default use of ‘daughter’ on letters to be unsupportive:

“They wrote to the head and all the letters going home were like perhaps a trip or visit letter was like your daughter and they kind of well they wrote to say can the language be a little bit more inclusive if you’re not happy it being son slash daughter you know kind of your child would be more helpful.” (SSS-9)

EPs reported that whilst they did use the young person's preferred name and pronouns in their written reports, they had to balance this with parents' views and legal requirements around statutory assessments (also referred to as Education, Health and Needs (EHC) assessments) under the SENDCoP (DfE & DoH, 2015):

“The dad was furious about this young person identifying as male... but I chose to write the report in the gender that the young person had decided to be so that felt like a conflict for me in who had commissioned it but who I was kind of writing in sympathy with.” (EP-4)

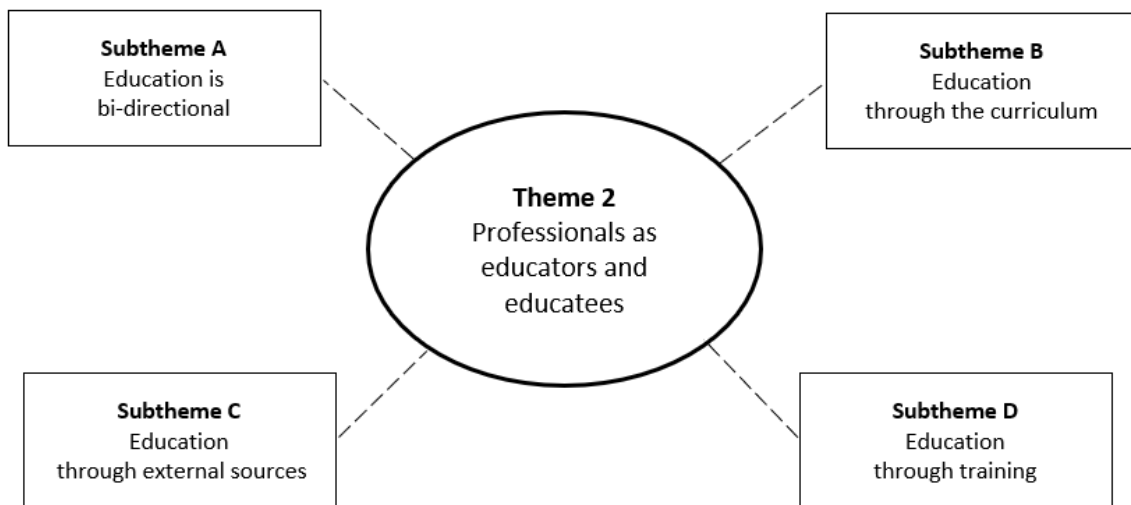
“Because of the legality I actually on the front cover I gave their birth name but in brackets the name...where it had gender I put down this young person given the name that they prefer identifies as male.” (EP-7)

4.3 Theme 2: Professionals as Educators and Educatees

This theme captures how participants discussed the role of education in supporting trans* young people. Participants distinguished between educating young people and educating themselves which appeared to reflect a dual-role of educational professionals being both educators and educatees. Responses fell within four subthemes: 'Education is Bi-directional', 'Education through the Curriculum', 'Education through External Sources' and 'Education through Training'. Figure 3 provides an overview of Theme 2 and its subthemes.

Figure 3

Thematic map of Theme 2



4.3.1 Education is Bi-directional

Participants described examples of how they educated the young people about the concept of gender, trans* rights and what it means to be trans*, however they also detailed how the young people played a role in educating staff:

“We learn loads from having our group because they are so happy to talk about their experiences...one of our year tens was really outspoken and they were like do you know what we find it really offensive that people are still using the word gay as like a slur and we didn’t even know that was going on.”

(SSS-13)

This dual-role of educational professionals being both educators and educatees can be seen as reflecting a process termed ‘bi-directional influence’; Bronfenbrenner proposed that this takes place within and between ecological

systems and is strongest in the Microsystem. Other examples of education taking place between ecological systems were found, including between SSS, EPs and other schools; SSS-16 described colleagues engaging in collaborative education about trans* support:

“It was collaborative for members of staff you who maybe didn’t know that much about what it means to be transgender or transgender issues so this was so it was kind of collaborative for tutors.” (SSS-16)

Similarly, EPs described how they could learn about how to best support trans* young people through opportunities to reflect and share practice with colleagues:

“That kind of peer supervision where you’re able to share experiences of working on those kind of cases and finding out what measures and so on other people have used and what approaches others have used.” (EP-8)

Some participants detailed how they had learnt about how to best support trans* young people through interacting with other schools:

“My HR manager contacted another school in our academy trust who had recently had a young person that had transitioned and they had obviously rearranged their policies and their framework and they had they were kind of in the same position as I was six months previously say so they sent me over all of their policy stuff.” (SSS-7)

However, others identified this as an area of improvement and felt that schools tend to look inward as it is difficult to find the time and space to share practice. SSS8 also expressed concerns about schools’ willingness to educate one another:

“I think some schools are quite like oh we’re going to keep this to ourselves I’m not saying this is necessarily I know a couple of schools they just want to keep the information to themselves where I think the information should be shared you know to help all young people.” (SSS-8)

SSS-15 did put forth a suggestion of how improvements could be made:

“I think maybe a person in each school who is identified as a champion who we could contact other schools so each school has an identified person.” (SSS-15)

4.3.2 Education through the Curriculum

The curriculum was frequently referred to when describing how young people were educated about gender and trans* matters. Several SSS identified PSHE as the main subject in which such education was provided to young people with curriculum content including gender, sexuality, identity and defining trans*. SSS-20 described how this was a key part of their role:

“As PSHE lead I need to make sure that trans awareness is covered throughout the curriculum from key stage one all the way to sixth form.” (SSS-20)

Some participants did identify strengths in cross-curricular education, including debating new schools being built with gender neutral toilets in philosophy, breaking down gender roles and swapping characters’ gender during plays in English and consideration of masculine and feminine adjective agreements in Modern Foreign Languages. Participants described how this was the result of steps taken to synthesise content across the school curriculum:

“I try to get members of staff to think about how they can plan more LGBT friendly either like case studies or scenarios within the curriculum to usualise it across the whole school curriculum.” (SSS-1)

“I put out to all staff and basically said these are the different equality act characteristics can you please make a comment under these different ones about where this is facilitated within your subject.” (SSS-4)

Other participants recognised a need for improvement when providing education about trans* matters through the curriculum:

“If you looked if you know you came in and you said right I want to do an audit on your curriculum about where trans issues are raised it would be very weak.” (SSS-6)

When describing how to educate about trans* matters, participants explained that part of their role was ensuring that curriculum content is appropriately differentiated by age, as certain activities and materials are better suited to certain ages:

“I was really really conscious of making sure that we had good solid information that was age-appropriate.” (SSS-7)

SSS-18 worked in a special school and identified a need to improve their differentiation of materials for young people with SEN, such as language or processing difficulties:

“That’s probably an area that we could do some more work in when we do get youngsters that are going through you know transitioning or anything like that we get the materials and we turn them into you know easy read and we explain with them and we do sessions and things like that.” (SSS-18)

Participants also expressed a need for the curriculum to prepare young people for adulthood, including the teaching of life skills, open-mindedness and supporting trans* young people to access opportunities beyond school, such as university. SSS-16 described how this was a strength in their school's support:

“As well as academically we’re also very committed to making rounded young people that are fit and ready to go out into a world that’s increasingly more complicated we want them to be critical and have the tools to make their way in an open-minded fashion in a way that is going to benefit themselves and benefit families future families society as a whole.” (SSS-16)

4.3.3 Education through External Sources

Participants' responses highlighted that beyond the curriculum, education about trans* matters was also provided through external sources, such as the internet, media and charities. SSS described how young people frequently use the internet to find information and educate themselves. However, SSS-5 felt that their school had to address some of this learning:

“It’s when the kids get these snippets through on the internet and they can’t piece it together so it doesn’t necessarily make sense in the grand scheme of things that’s where problems come from and that’s where the discussion is really needed.” (SSS-5)

With regards to the media, participants described how trans* people are increasingly present in the media. EP-3 felt that exposure to trans* celebrities had the potential to provide positive education to young people about gender identity being fluid:

“In the media as well there’s lots of celebrities currently saying they’re non-binary or you know so it’s kind of if yeah gender as a non-binary issue then if young people want to say well I want to be they for now but maybe I’ll be something else later but I’m not going to kind of put myself in a box then that kind of should be okay.” (EP-3)

However, SSS-16 raised concern around education from the media being influenced by agendas and subjectivity:

“As with many people we probably learn too much about trans issues from the media rather than from a source that perhaps is a bit more objective and doesn’t have an agenda so that’s one problem.” (SSS-16)

The role of charities as an external source of education featured throughout NL, EP and SSS interviews. Several participants referenced specific charities that had been helpful, such as Mermaids and Stonewall, and SSS described how charities informed education, including developing trans*-inclusive reading material for the school library, external trans* speakers delivering assemblies, training for staff and planning trans*-inclusive lessons. NL-1 and EP-6 described how in their roles they have signposted SSS to charities:

“I think sort of an obvious place to go is stonewall because I know that they work very closely with schools and they’ve got resources available and they can do training and all sorts of stuff.” (NL-1)

“I discussed things like it was more signposting thinking of people like mermaids.” (EP-6)

4.3.4 Education through Training

Throughout NL, EP and SSS interviews, participants referenced training as a source of education for SSS and EPs. NL-1 suggested that without training educational professionals would struggle to best support trans* young people:

“I think no one teacher no person can be expected to you know simply know the best way to respond to every situation in life especially if they haven’t had the opportunity to learn about that specific topic first so the same applies when working with trans young people unless teachers have had the opportunity to develop their understanding to increase their awareness then they probably are going to struggle in knowing what to do to best support that trans young person.” (NL-1)

EP-3 reported that training around how to support trans* young people did feature on their EP training course:

“I have attended training previously as part of my doctorate training so I think most EPs have some form of I guess because it’s quite a prevalent topic at the minute.” (EP-3)

However, this was not the case for teacher training courses, with several SSS stating that they received no training about how to support trans* young people. Many felt that training should be incorporated into teacher training courses with SSS-4 describing how they supported a local university to deliver such sessions:

“I’m very interested in teacher training because my teacher training wasn’t the best so I’m definitely as I say quite interested in teacher training because I want to make sure that trainee teachers receive the support that I didn’t necessarily get.” (SSS-4)

Beyond teacher and EP training courses, participants also identified the need for training once working in qualified positions. EPs described how their service arranged for a trans* EP to deliver training which was felt to be *'hugely powerful'* and *'helpful'*:

"That was very good because being an ed psych they were able to deliver training that was highly relevant to EPs and also being a trans person was able to I guess they did give a personal discussion about their own experience." (EP-5)

SSS participants similarly described their experiences of receiving training once qualified, including training delivered internally by colleagues with knowledge and experience of supporting trans* young people and externally by local charities and the LA. Whilst no SSS had received training from EPs, EP-6 said: *"I think there's lots of potential ways we could support whether it whole school staff training around gender identity exploration"*. With regards to the external training that SSS had attended, participants described how schools usually paid for one member of staff to attend and upon returning to school they would disseminate the information to their colleagues. Whilst this was thought to be helpful for some schools, SSS-19 described how investing in one staff member attending presented a risk to schools:

"We spent all of that about £600 on the training...and she sort of like left."
(SSS-19)

Participants put forth suggestions of how training about trans* matters could be improved, including a greater focus on trans*-inclusive language-use. Several SSS also expressed interest in training to explore the co-occurrence of gender diversity and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

“Because we have that SRP where we you know we have places for students on the autistic spectrum I personally would quite like more information around you know transgender and the link between being autistic.” (SSS-17)

“I don’t know whether it’s just my students but I can see a massive link so I don’t know whether there’s more research or more studies that is going on.” (SSS-14)

“I think what I have found really interesting is the link between or the ASD girls and trans-issues... I think that is an area that is worth further exploration.” (SSS-6)

NL-2 also referenced *‘intersectionality... with ASC and trans identities’*, although they did not specify a need for training around this. Similarly, five EPs described experiences of working with trans* young people with ASD, however they emphasised the importance of focusing on young people as individuals and questioning attempts to link trans* with ASD:

“I think what I’ve seen a lot of is the linking with that ASD and trans seem to be almost you know joined in a way and I’m not sure it’s as sort of it can be a sort of clear cut as that.” (EP-1)

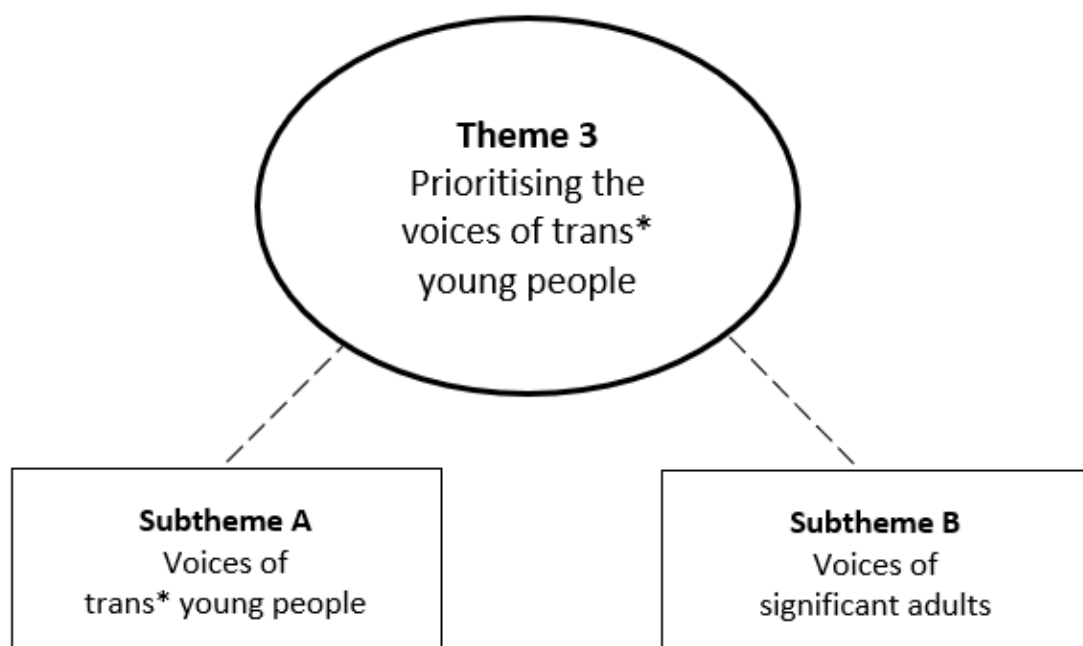
“A lot of issues raised in school were around kind of self-identity and peer integration and they linked it to the ASD whereas obviously through conversation I had wider thoughts about where that may be coming from.” (EP-6)

4.4 Theme 3: Prioritising the Voices of Trans* Young People

Prioritising the voices of trans* young people emerged as a main theme with participants describing the importance of using trans* young people's views to inform the planning, delivery and review of support. Participants also acknowledged a need to triangulate young people's views with those of significant adults in their life, such as parents and school staff. However, participants emphasised that the views of the former should take priority. Responses fell within two subthemes: 'Voices of Trans* Young People' and 'Voices of Significant Adults'. Figure 4 provides an overview of Theme 3 and its subthemes.

Figure 4

Thematic map of Theme 3



4.4.1 Voices of Trans* Young People

When discussing support for trans* young people, participants acknowledged that the views of young people and other stakeholders, e.g. parents and educational professionals may differ, however NL-1 emphasised that trans* young people should always be the main stakeholder:

“In any work you take into account the relevant stakeholders so whether that be parents or educational professionals or people from different sectors but trans young people should always be the main stakeholder in anything that’s going to directly affect their future.” (NL-1)

Several SSS and EP participants believed that they did prioritise the voices of trans* young people and implemented support that the young people had requested, e.g. bringing in external representatives, adapting the PSHE curriculum and managing how information was shared and with whom. Participants identified their ability to prioritise trans* young people’s voices, regardless of whether they conflicted with the voices of other stakeholders, as a strength in their support:

“I think the real strength was the fact that we managed to respect all the way through the fact that they didn’t want any information shared with anyone else I think that was a real strength that we managed to listen to the student’s voice all the way through.” (SSS-21)

“Just hearing the young person’s voice and listening to that young person’s voice even if it is even if we know it’s going to cause conflict the wishes the feelings of that young person are definitely heard in our school I think if yeah I guess yeah that’s probably a strength.” (SSS-9)

However, other SSS and EPs felt that improvements were needed, including

consideration of whose voices inform school policy and how to support trans* young people with anxiety, emotional or mental health needs to express their views:

“A lot of these policies are created by cisgendered adults who have probably not experienced a lot of discrimination in their life.” (SSS-1)

“I think there’s probably more of a role about how we access views and so on but I’m not really very sure how we would improve that but I just think we could be doing it better in particularly this young person I just couldn’t they were so anxious that engagement just didn’t really work.” (EP-8)

4.4.2 Voices of Significant Adults

Alongside the voices of trans* young people, participants expressed the importance of listening to the voices of significant adults in the young person’s life, including parents and school staff. However, participants at SSS and EP levels described how their experiences of this had been challenging, particularly when adults’ views conflicted with those of the trans* young person:

“It is a very difficult time trying to weigh up and consider everybody’s views.” (SSS-19)

“We write the report for the schools and the parents that’s how I see it generally but I chose to write the report in the gender that the young person had decided to be so that felt like a conflict for me.” (EP-4)

Several SSS described how the views of parents were sought in their schools, examples included parental meetings, questionnaires and regular phone calls home. Similarly, EPs described how a key part of their role was to seek the views of parents

through consultation. EP-8 and EP-4 acknowledged that whilst parents' views might differ to those of the young person, by listening to them this provided EPs with an opportunity to support the parents and hopefully get them 'on board':

"The young person came in to meet with me but then it kind of evolved into work with the family and dad wasn't accepting that the young person was trans well felt male so it was around getting the family on board." (EP-4)

"I think there's also a real role for us even if it is in statutory work about just being a sounding board for parents because I know that the case I did the parents were really you know exhausted and at the end of their kind of limit because it was just having such a big impact on the family and they're perhaps not able to talk about in the same way because it is such a taboo area and so on so I think it's you know it's support for the youngster as much as it is for the family themselves." (EP-8)

School staff were also identified as significant adults whose views were important to seek, as demonstrated by EPs' descriptions of how their 'usual' practice involved triangulating work with SSS, parents and the young person when completing statutory assessments. As previously mentioned, under the SENDCoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), this is an expectation of EPs:

"I saw them under the act as part of a statutory assessment so I would have done an assessment met the young person talked to parents and school."
(EP-5)

"That involved working with the child working with the parent school you know the usual sort of drill for statutory assessment in terms of the consultations."
(EP-1)

However, SSS-22 described how other professionals working with trans* young people did not always seek the views of school staff, which surprised them as the school did have helpful information:

“When the letters started going from the psych and GIDS I certainly saw all of those but it wasn’t something that the school was expected or asked to be a part of because we were wondering whether we would be called on to give I don’t know evidence or support or something but we weren’t.” (SSS-22)

4.5 Theme 4: System Readiness to Change

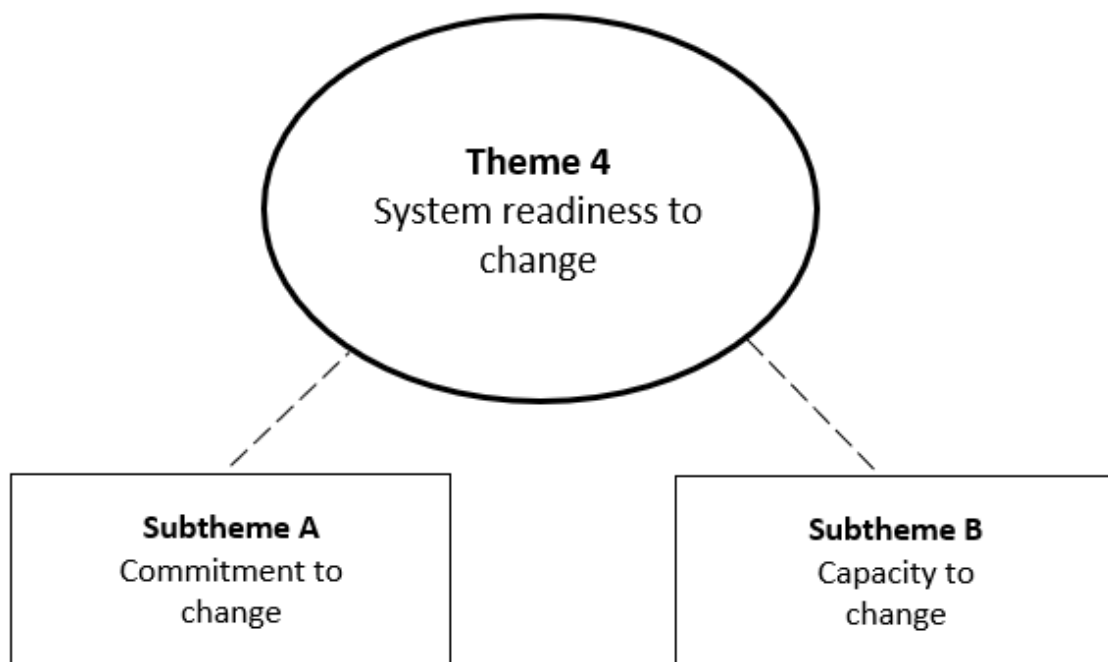
Theme 4 was identified as an overarching theme which impacted on all other themes. Readiness to change connotes a state of being both psychologically and behaviourally prepared to take action and is defined as a multi-level construct which can be present at an individual or organisational level; further discussion of this concept is included in Chapter 5.

Theme 4 captures how some participants described their own individual commitment and capacity to make changes in relation to support for trans* young people, whilst some described their organisation’s (e.g. school or LA) commitment and capacity, the combination of which reflects their system’s readiness to change. This was identified as an overarching theme as participants’ responses suggested that in order for educational professionals to provide the support identified across Theme 1 (ensuring that trans* young people feel a sense of safety and belonging), Theme 2 (staff educating and being educated) and Theme 3 (prioritising the voices of trans* young people), their system needed to have high levels of readiness to change (i.e. high commitment and capacity). Moreover, responses suggested that

systems with low levels of readiness to change (i.e. low commitment and capacity) were less able to provide the support identified across these themes. Responses fell within two subthemes: 'Commitment to Change' and 'Capacity to Change'. Figure 5 provides an overview of Theme 4 and its subthemes.

Figure 5

Thematic map of Theme 4



4.5.1 Commitment to Change

At an individual level, SSS, EP and NL participants were found to use terms such as 'advocate' and 'ally' to describe themselves and their commitment to supporting trans* young people. Some described how their commitment to such support was driven by their personal experiences of being trans* or having LGBT family members or friends, their own educational experiences and political or personal values.

"A lot of it does come from my personal experience so I'm trans myself...I

trained as a primary school teacher at university and the reason that I didn't go into primary school teaching is because I felt that I wasn't able to be authentically myself within those environments...I thought that wasn't right that I'd had to go through years of not being myself...so that was why well that's how I signed up for a masters in education and it was throughout that masters that my research really honed in on the educational experiences of trans young people.” (NL-1)

“We are there to advocate for the young person.” (EP-3)

“Having a gay brother I've kind of seeing his experiences and some of the homophobic attitudes that have been directed at him and comments that were made when I was at school...so it's just kind of through his experiences and my experiences of how people have directed things towards me that I kind of went you know what this is something important I want to be able to know what to say and to support students on this.” (SSS-4)

At an organisational level, participants described how support for trans* young people was influenced by how committed different stakeholders were throughout the school community, including SLT, school staff collectively and the Diocese. The importance of having a SLT who are committed to trans* support was highlighted by NL-2:

“Without senior leadership sort of sign off you know there's every potential for issues with parents or press or yeah worse being challenged legally so yeah those whole school approaches are imperative.” (NL-2)

This was echoed by SSS staff who felt that regardless of their individual commitment to trans* support, SLT commitment was essential as they control what

support is or is not provided, as illustrated by SSS-7: *‘in a secondary school I mean pretty much everything comes from SLT’* and SSS-12’s description of SLT having the power to *“shape what happens further down”*. Other SSS detailed how SLT’s decisions about trans* support directly impacted on their ability to communicate with parents about LGBT matters, teach students about LGBT topics and prioritise the wishes of trans* young people:

“I’ve been in talks with senior leadership about trying to create an event like in the evening where if any parents or carers have any questions regarding LGBT plus matters then I’d be able to provide that...they’ve been more than happy for kind of that to go underway.” (SSS-1)

“When I’ve had phone calls complaining about stuff I’ve taught in class...I think it was year eight it wasn’t appropriate to be teaching lessons on a certain topic on LGBT stuff the school has been really supportive and have backed me a hundred percent.” (SSS-9)

“I couldn’t do anything if I didn’t have the support from leadership because I have to take my guidance from them at the end of the day if they didn’t allow the name change for example because one of the parents haven’t given permission then I wouldn’t have been able to do that so definitely you need I need that support from leadership.” (SSS-20)

Conflicting views between SSS-4 and their SLT were identified around the importance of having a paid Equality Lead role in the school, resulting in SSS-4 opting to fulfil the role unpaid:

“I have asked my school to pay me for it and unfortunately their response was no because if I was to leave is it a role that we would employ someone else to

do in your absence probably not now I disagree with that because I think every school needs to have someone with an eye on equality.” (SSS-4)

Of the 22 SSS interviewed, 9 were members of their school's SLT; some acknowledged the impact that this had on developing the whole school's commitment to trans* support:

“Being in the leadership position it means that I am able to ensure that that kind of vision is across the whole school and that it is constantly spoken about...being there does make things easier because your voice is kind of immediately heard and you can get there before things are rolled out so yeah I think if you want to make a change you kind of have to be within that position.” (SSS-5)

“Being on the leadership team I get to be able to have an input and I always say this is something that we most definitely need and value so I get that put in.” (SSS-6)

School staffs' collective commitment to trans* support was also found to impact on how support was provided throughout the school. Some participants described having colleagues who were not 'on board' and would 'criticise' the resources and teaching material used when educating young people about trans* matters. SSS-16 felt that an area for improvement in their school was supporting staffs' collective commitment to trans* support in order to facilitate best outcomes for young people:

“We would need to just make sure that our staff are all aligned in the way that means that the best possible outcomes for our trans students of the future.” (SSS-16)

SSS-5 worked in a faith school and described how despite their individual commitment to trans* support, their ability to implement this was influenced by the Diocese, including how young people are educated through the curriculum and what staff are and are not allowed to recommend:

“I think the one thing that I think we do fall down on and ironically enough it comes from that Catholic area because we are dictated by the Diocese in terms of sexual education so our sexual education is very much focused it’s very much scientific and anatomical.... I think the Diocese is very much it’s one of those areas that is a bit outdated for us and things that we’re not there are certain things you’re not allowed to recommend as a Catholic school and certain things that you are and I think I’ve just never really understood that as to why.” (SSS-5)

For many participants, they believed that their organisation was committed to best supporting trans* young people and this was felt to be evidenced through the visibility of trans* support increasing in their schools. SSS described ways in which their schools were increasing the visibility of trans* including having assemblies with a focus on trans* matters, school awards recognising their support of LGBT young people, celebrating events such as Pride and LGBT History Month, information on the school website, inviting in external LGBT speakers, LGBT student clubs or societies, staff mentors for trans* young people, staff wearing rainbow lanyards or shoelaces and having openly LGBT staff and visual resources such as posters, library displays and noticeboards.

“We’ve got the team there’s like a healthy number of other teachers who are mentors who wear the rainbow lanyards because that’s spread out across most of the departments it’s really visible across the whole school.” (SSS-1)

“We’ve got kind of a student-led equality group within school and we have various equality activities throughout the school year and special events and things like this so trying to be as kind of visibly equality minded as possible.”

(SSS-4)

EPs also detailed how referrals from secondary schools to the LA about how best to support trans* young people have increased:

“It seems to be an issue of increased prevalence at (SENCO meeting omitted) meetings...it’s something that seems to come up more than it used to.” (EP-1)

However, EPs also acknowledged that despite referrals visibly increasing, many EPs in the LA did not have experience of supporting trans* young people in secondary schools. EP-2 reflected upon why this might be:

“Do you think that’s something to do about how people see our role and see the way that we work and perhaps like it’s when it does impact on learning then they feel like that’s the EP role whereas when it’s more around that maybe that young person’s functioning fine in their learning but they’re questioning their gender identity maybe schools perhaps see that as a different professional’s role I don’t know.” (EP-2)

4.5.2 Capacity to Change

Accessibility of resources and support was found to impact on the capacity of individual participants and their organisation (school or EP service) to support trans* young people. Some SSS described having access to resources which enabled

them to support trans* young people, including some having school visits from local LGBT charities and universities:

“We’ve had the (local LGBT Charity omitted) come in a couple of times and do some talks and things like that.” (SSS-15)

“We have the (name omitted) team of students coming from the (local university name omitted) now that’s a team of students from their LGBT+ society that are trained to come in and do an open honest and frank Q and A session with sixth formers and that’s fantastic.” (SSS-4)

Several SSS also described how their school had access to LA guidance about how to best support trans* young people; some referenced paper-based guidance, whilst others had service-level agreements in which the school paid the LA to provide tailored support:

“We use a lot of the (local authority omitted) materials because the school’s obviously in (local authority omitted) so you know anything any of the advice that we get you know we’re always looking at that consulting with that.” (SSS-3)

“To be fair to (local authority omitted) actually the advice and guidance that they’ve given to us is good we’ve got a service level agreement with the (local authority service omitted) and they’ve given us some really good training and have identified things for us to do and are working with us on our equality and diversity plan.” (SSS-6)

However, other SSS were found to experience difficulties with accessing resources. Accessibility was found to be impacted by support being heavily based in London, SSS-1 and SSS-12 were aware of national support from Mermaids and

Stonewall but described how most *'happens in London'* and that they had not had *'anyone local that was shared with us'*. Additionally, SSS, EP and NL participants shared concerns around the accessibility of LA support, including schools not being able to find paper-based guidance, afford service-level agreements and EPs not having the time and capacity to support all schools with trans* young people:

"Where schools have been in local authorities who've been doing this work well and suddenly their guidance is gone and it's sort of like well where does that leave your schools." (NL-2)

"This is an issue with capacity because our capacity at the moment is taken up with statutory assessments the only other capacity we potentially have is traded work if that particular school isn't buying our time in then that school won't have any EP time." (EP-5)

"An ideal if there was somewhere we could go to as a go to and I suppose for us that would be for our (local authority service omitted) but I worry that because not every school has a service level agreement that there are young people that are missing out." (SSS-6)

"Like if things could change I think it's all money driven...it's not that schools won't find the money because it's that group of people you know it's yeah I don't know I just think yeah I think if we need provision to support young people and it's not there or not freely accessible then it becomes a barrier." (SSS-13)

Participants' capacity to support trans* young people was also found to be impacted by their awareness and knowledge of what resources were available to them. SSS and EP participants described how before accessing resources, one has

to be aware of what is available. However, participants described how they did not 'personally know of any organisations' (SSS-5), felt 'at a loss of where to point to for specific information' (SSS-14) and questioned whether colleagues were aware of guidance:

"A lot of people when it comes to trans issues they don't know where to start there's no like there's no pinpoint where you can be like ok well if I contact this charity first it's going to be a lot easier and I think for some people those kind of systems might be invisible because they've never heard of them before." (SSS-1)

"I'm quite conscious that I wouldn't really know what support networks are available for children and young people that are transgender." (EP-8)

"(LA name omitted) have got this policy I wonder if EPs know that (LA name omitted) has a policy document on it... I would question whether other people know it's there." (EP-5)

Awareness of schools' legal obligations was also found to differ amongst participants. Five SSS participants reported that they were aware of their school's legal responsibilities to support trans* young people, with references made to The Equality Act (2010) and Human Rights Act (1998):

"As a school obviously we have to protect all students based on all of the characteristics of the equality act and erm with gender reassignment being one of them.... the human rights act as well because that kind of goes hand-in-hand with the equalities it's all about students not facing any type of discrimination and feeling like they are not meant to be in the school because they might have a different gender identity." (SSS-1)

“I’ve done a piece of online training about the equality act specifically and then trying to kind of disseminate that and kind of go so these are the characteristics.” (SSS-4)

However, other participants were found to lack knowledge and awareness of schools’ legal responsibilities, as illustrated by SSS-7’s response: *‘I didn’t have a clue what legally we needed to do or policy wise I had absolutely no idea’*. Similarly, SSS-11 described how being unaware that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act affected how their school supported trans* young people to access toilet facilities:

“I didn’t know that equality act that yes you can use a toilet for the gender that you identify.” (SSS-11)

Furthermore, schools being supported to develop their awareness of their legal obligations to support trans* young people was suggested as an area of improvement by SSS-9:

“I’m not a hundred percent you know clear on the exact legislation so definitely that would that would be helpful.” (SSS-9)

Fear was also found to impact on the capacity of individual participants and their organisation (school or EP service) to support trans* young people. EP-7 described how they experienced fear around language-use as they *“worry about what we’re going to say and you know being correct and not offending”*, whilst SSS-9 feared criticism about educating young people through the curriculum:

“I personally had felt quite nervous in the past of being seen to not being wanting to be to seen to kind of championing it too much because I’ve had criticism in the past.” (SSS-9)

NL and SSS participants also described fear of being legally challenged for using LA's guidance about supporting trans* young people after hearing about such cases in the media:

"There's every potential for issues with parents or press or yeah worse being challenged legally." (NL-2)

*"The toolkit that we were sent we were given in the training well apparently that's been in the news lately...some girl has taken them to court or something like that so this member of staff got in touch with me and said should we even be following this guidance if and things like that so that whole thing at the moment is quite difficult when I've been kind of using that as my bible to be honest....definitely that is a fear with some members of staff."
(SSS-20)*

"I'd followed the advice of the local authority and the charity mermaids but then somebody else found some information from another local authority and another sort of legal side...there's lots of conflicts for schools I think." (SSS-6)

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Overview

This research was developed following an initial small-scale case study with two trans* young people and five school staff from one secondary school in the South-East of England. Findings highlighted that the young people felt that secondary school staff have the potential to have an impact on the support for trans* young people, however some staff appeared uncertain about how to achieve this. Neither of the young people had experience of working with an EP, however one had previously attended another local school and felt that discrepancies existed across local schools in how staff supported trans* young people. As discussed in Chapter 1, the voices of those two trans* young people informed the aim of this research which was to explore and generate new knowledge about the way that educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people in secondary schools, to inform research, policy and practice. This research focused on the same LA in the South-East of England in which the initial case study was conducted and aimed to explore the following research questions:

1. Drawing on existing literature, what has already been reported about how educational professionals best engage with systems to support trans* young people?
2. Through fieldwork with key professional informants, what are their perceptions of:
 - a. how they currently best support trans* young people?
 - b. how they currently do not best support trans* young people?

- c. how to improve the support of trans* young people?
3. Through a discussion of the findings, what are:
- a. the commonalities and differences between themes identified in the literature and those identified through fieldwork?
 - b. the implications for Local Authority policy, practice and research to inform EPs?

This chapter will provide a discussion of how the main research findings link to RQs 2 and 3, with RQ1 having been addressed in Chapter 2. Discussion of the findings will also make reference to my conceptual framework, including Bronfenbrenner's EST (1979, 1994) to explore how educational professionals engage with ecological systems (Micro-Meso-Exo-Macro) to support trans* young people and Kyriazopoulou and Weber's (2009) inputs-processes-outcomes model to explore which areas contribute to or detract from support. Finally, this chapter will also consider the strengths and limitations of this research and possible directions for future research.

5.2 Findings in Relation to RQ2

A key finding from this research related to the concept of readiness to change, a state of being both psychologically and behaviourally prepared to take action (Wang, Olivier & Chen, 2020). Whilst the concept of readiness to change is gradually being applied in research investigating change in schools and the education sector, to my knowledge, it has not been applied to research focusing on schools' support of trans* young people. Due to this lack of research, this finding was unexpected, thus

readiness to change was not discussed in Chapters 1 or 2. However, the abductive approach taken in this research recognises that systems, structures and processes are constantly changing making a definite prediction of findings impossible (Robson, 2011). Therefore, when patterns were found during the data analysis, with several participants describing how they and/or their organisation were committed to supporting trans* young people (e.g. support for trans* young people being valued, visible and supported by key stakeholders and leaders) and how capable they were of providing such support (e.g. having awareness of and access to organisations and resources but being fearful of legal challenges), I discussed these patterns with an EP who had experience of completing doctoral research with trans* young people in an attempt to explain them. When discussing 'commitment' and 'capacity' we identified similarities with cognitive behavioural approaches (approaches which help people to identify and change thought patterns) and how when using such approaches, EPs attempt to ascertain the individual's readiness to change (how ready an individual is to change their thoughts). This prompted me to consider whether readiness to change could feature at an organisational level.

The databases outlined in Chapter 2 were searched for literature containing the terms 'readiness to change', 'schools', 'capacity', 'commitment', 'organisation' and 'organisational change'. The literature identified highlighted that readiness to change can feature at an individual or organisational level; the former reflecting the extent to which an individual is prepared to participate in a different organisational activity (Huy, 1999) and the latter reflecting a shared psychological state in which organisational members feel committed to implementing change and have confidence in their collective abilities to do so (Wang et al, 2020). Moreover, individual and organisational readiness to change also interact with one another to

reflect system readiness to change (Wang et al, 2020). In light of these findings, I put forth a hypothesis of system readiness to change to explain the patterns that were found around commitment and capacity to support trans* young people.

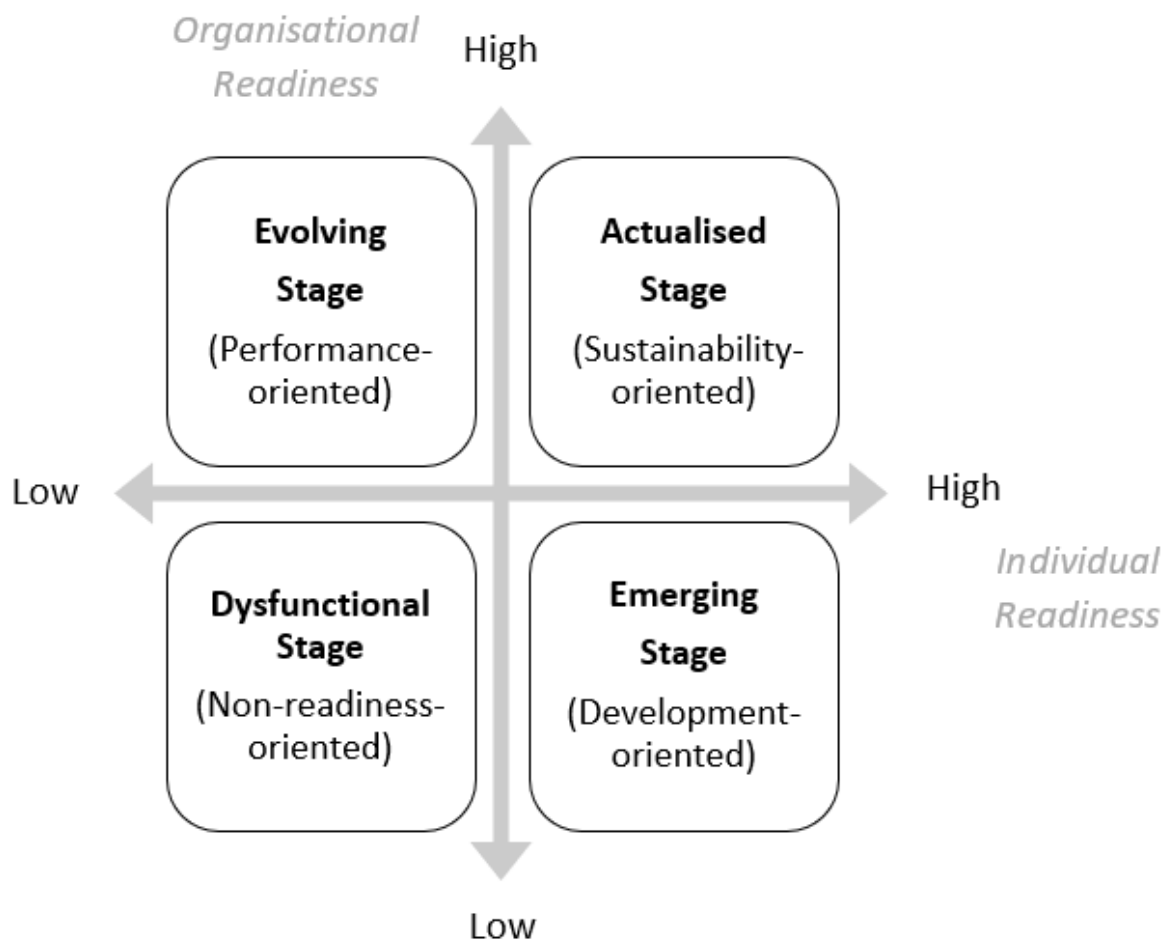
Findings showed that whilst most participants described being individually committed to supporting trans* young people (e.g. SSS-4 being motivated to support trans* young people due to their brother's school experiences), this did not always correspond with their school or LA's commitment to supporting trans* young people (e.g. SSS-4's SLT not paying them for their Equality Lead role and SSS-9's teaching colleagues criticising how they educated students about trans* matters through the curriculum). Similarly, whilst some participants were found to have a strong capacity to support trans* young people (e.g. EP-5 being aware of LA trans* guidance and SSS-20 accessing LA guidance to guide their support), this did not always correspond with their school or LA's capacity to support trans* young people (e.g. EP-5 questioned whether the EP team was aware of the LA's trans* guidance and SSS-20's colleagues were fearful of legal action around LA guidance).

Findings pertaining to differences between individual participants and their school or LA's commitment and capacity to support trans* young people can be seen to reflect their individual readiness to change and their organisation's readiness to change. This is an important finding as Datnow and Stringfield (2000) posited that schools are organisations which are continuously expected to change, however changes in schools do not result from an individual (e.g. teacher or EP) or an organisation (e.g. school or LA) acting in isolation, but rather through an interaction between the two. Wang et al (2020) propose that this interaction reflects the overall system's readiness to change; with individuals' and organisations' change commitment, leadership, valence and self-efficacy contributing to readiness. Notably,

commitment, leadership and valence reflect this research’s findings relating to commitment, whilst self-efficacy reflects this research’s findings relating to capacity. Moreover, they proposed a framework which demonstrates how this interaction is non-linear, not necessarily progressive and can move downward or upward (see Figure 6):

Figure 6

Wang, Olivier and Chen’s (2020) Conceptual Framework of System Readiness to Change



When applying this framework to this research’s findings, it is apparent that participants’ systems could be identified as being at different stages; SSS-4’s system could be identified as being in the ‘Emerging Stage’, as their individual commitment

to their Equality Lead role conflicted with their SLT's commitment to the role, whereas SSS-1's system was arguably in the 'Actualised Stage', as SSS-1 was individually leading trans* support in the school but they also described having a *'team'*, a *'healthy number of teachers'* and SLT support across the school. Importantly, the application of this framework also suggests that in order for a secondary school or LA to be best able to implement changes in their support of trans* young people, individual educational professionals and their organisation as a whole (e.g. SLT, whole-staff body, Diocese or EP team) both need to have high readiness to change and their system be in the 'Actualised Stage'. This demonstrates the overarching nature of the theme as systems with high readiness to change should be best able to implement the support and suggested improvements that will be discussed in the next section, whereas systems with low readiness to change may be less able to implement these, which could be problematic if current practice is unsupportive of trans* young people.

5.2.1 How Educational Professionals Currently Best Support Trans* Young People

Many participants identified strengths in their current support of trans* young people. For some participants, this was linked to how they ensured a sense of safety and belonging for trans* young people throughout their school community. Findings showed that one way in which educational professionals best support trans* young people to feel safety and belonging was through being guided by an inclusive ethos that normalised gender diversity, took a non-judgemental and individual approach to each trans* young person. Language-use was also found to be important, including

using preferred names and pronouns and avoiding gendered language. Findings also highlighted how a sense of safety and belonging can be best supported through clear communication, containing relationships and inclusive language-use.

Participants described how different members of the school community played a role in achieving these factors, including young people, staff, parents and the LA.

With regards to young people, it was found that educational professionals need to clearly communicate with trans* young people in order to check-in with them and provide emotional support, this also included remotely communicating with young people through email and Microsoft Teams whilst learning from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff providing containing relationships to trans* young people was also found to be important. The concept of containment was developed by Bion (1962) originating from the idea that infants lack the capacity to deal with difficult and upsetting feelings, such as anxiety, and thus project them onto their mother. In turn, the mother absorbs the infant's distress, understands their emotions without being overwhelmed and provides emotional comfort, thus containing the negative feelings so the infant can explore the world safely and engage in learning. As children begin formal education, school staff take over the containing role (Youell, 2006). In doing so, Salzberger-Wittenberg (1970) stipulates that adults must demonstrate a willingness to try and understand the child's feelings, listen and respect them and show that they have the courage and integrity to face the emotional pain. Moreover, Youell (2006) highlights that it is important for a school as an organisation to provide a containing structure in which young people observe and experience their issues being taken seriously, staff talking to one another and their school evolving in the face of new challenges. The current research findings highlighted the importance of trans* young people being contained, such as when

they are struggling to deal with feelings relating to their gender identity and discuss this with others. Notably, support staff were identified as well-placed to offer such relationships due to their ability to establish rapport and hold the young people during times of distress. Findings also showed that trans* young people disclosed their feelings to support staff over time after having established trust, this may reflect a point at which support staff had demonstrated their willingness to understand, listen and that they had the courage and integrity to face the young person's emotional difficulties (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1970).

With regards to staff, it was found that key information about a young person's preferred name and pronouns needed to be clearly communicated to all relevant staff, such as through staff briefings and electronic communication. With regards to parents, communication and containing relationships between educational professionals and parents were found to be important, particularly in cases where parents might be struggling with their child's gender identity. Notably, containment theory was developed beyond mother-infant relationships to include containment and emotional support for the mother, such as between mother-father or another supportive adult, known as the nursing-triad (Winnicott, 1960). This process of containment restores the mother's ability to think and learn and thus be better able to offer containment to their child. Linked to this, EPs were found to identify themselves as being well-placed to provide such containment to parents who are experiencing difficulties relating to their child's gender identity.

Lastly, with regards to the LA, communication and containing relationships between school staff and their LA were found to be important, this included the LA sharing available guidance with all schools, including those who do not have service-level agreements or are independent, and supporting schools to develop their trans*

support and manage any legal challenges around this. As previously discussed, school staff take on the role of containment when young people are in formal education and struggling with difficult emotions, however as with parents, they too may require containment and emotional support in order to think, learn and thus provide containment to trans* young people. Moreover, Bion (1961) stipulated that groups of individuals working together for a purpose can be affected by anxiety that cannot be contained, arguably this could include groups of SSS working together in a school to support trans* young people. Furthermore, findings identified that the LA would be ideal to provide containment to schools, with some having already received reassurance and guidance from the LA about difficult decisions pertaining to trans* support.

Education was found to play an important role in best supporting trans* young people. Findings highlighted the bi-directional nature of education with professionals holding a dual-role of being both educators and educatees. Participants described how educational professionals can provide support to young people by educating them via the curriculum and external sources, such as the internet, media and charities. Participants did reference engagement with the civil society organisation, Stonewall, however they did not specify whether they had engaged with Stonewall's (2019) recommendations for schools. Findings suggested that education through the curriculum should be cross-curricular, differentiated by age and SEN and prepare trans* young people for adulthood; whilst education through external sources might need to be addressed in case of potential agendas. However, participants also described how educational professionals receive education themselves, including learning from trans* young people and attending training. Whilst discussing these findings with NL-1, they agreed that educational professionals need to commit to

continuous learning and that young people could support with this, however emphasised the importance of not placing the responsibility on trans* young people to educate those around them. Furthermore, this suggests that whilst it is important for educational professionals to both educate and be educated about trans* matters, this needs to be carefully balanced ensuring that young people have the option, but not the responsibility, to educate others.

Prioritising the voices of trans* young people was another important feature of best support, with several participants identifying their ability to do this as a strength. Participants described how their support of trans* young people was informed by the wishes of the young people, regardless of whether they conflicted with others' wishes. Findings showed that the views of significant adults were also important for educational professionals to seek, including those of parents and school staff; EPs identified this as a normal part of their practice, particularly when completing statutory (EHC) assessments for trans* young people under the SENDCoP (DfE & DoH, 2015).

When considering participants' perceptions of how to best support trans* young people in relation to my conceptual framework, findings highlight support relating to inputs, processes and outcomes in the Microsystem, Mesosystem and Exosystem. In the Microsystem, best support was found through inputs (education for staff and young people through the curriculum and training), processes (being guided by an inclusive ethos, inclusive language-use, clear communication and containing relationships between staff and young people and prioritising the voices of trans* young people) and outcomes (education should prepare trans* young people for adulthood). In the Mesosystem, best support was found through processes (clear communication and containing relationships between staff and parents and schools

seeking parents' views). Similarly in the Exosystem, best support was found through processes (clear communication and containing relationships between schools and the LA and EPs seeking the views of significant adults). These findings have a degree of alignment with the 14 indicators for measuring inclusive education identified by Loreman et al (2014), including Curriculum, Staff Personal Development and Teacher Education, Climate, School Practice, Participation and Post-School Options, however as previously discussed, Loreman et al's (2014) research did not focus on the inclusion of a specific group of young people in schools. Therefore, despite some degree of alignment, the current research also highlights new findings that are specific to the support of trans* young people, such as inclusive language-use, clear communication and containing relationships between schools and the LA and EPs seeking the views of significant adults.

5.2.2 How Educational Professionals Currently Do Not Best Support Trans* Young People

Participants also identified aspects of their existing practice which could be considered unsupportive for trans* young people. For some, language-use contributed to difficulties in creating a sense of safety and belonging throughout the school community. Findings showed that school staff sometimes used gendered language, such as *'ladies and gentlemen'* or incorrect pronouns, especially when they had known the young person prior to their transition, which caused upset for trans* young people. Difficulties with the communication and relationship between schools and the LA were also found to impact on educational professionals' abilities to ensure a sense of safety and belonging for trans* young people. With regards to

communication, concerns were raised around the LA not sharing what support was available to all schools, such as LA guidance, with independent schools and those who did not have a service-level agreement feeling that they would be less likely to hear about such support. With regards to relationships, some participants did not feel that their school had anyone to go to but felt that the LA would be ideal to provide this. Moreover, at a national level, NL-2 described how LAs that had removed their guidance for schools could be seen as being unsupportive, raising the question of *'where does that leave your schools?'*. Furthermore, these findings highlight how the communication and relationship between a school and their LA can impact on the support of trans* young people in secondary schools.

Whilst findings indicated that educational professionals have a dual-role, being both educators and educatees, for some participants aspects of education were seen as unsupportive. With regards to educational professionals providing education to young people, participants raised concerns around some sources of education. SSS-18 highlighted that whilst attempts are made to be supportive by providing resources aimed at educating young people about gender diversity, they are often not differentiated for young people with SEN, such as those with language or processing difficulties. Moreover, such educational resources were unsupportive as they precluded certain trans* young people from accessing them. Another concern around education being unsupportive related to the potential for external sources of education for young people, such as the media, presenting subjective information about trans* matters based on agendas. Consequently, educational professionals sometimes had to address what young people had learned through external sources. With regards to educational professionals receiving education themselves, several SSS participants described how their teacher training

qualification did not include any education about trans* young people and thus had not prepared them to best support trans* young people once working in secondary schools.

Participants at national, EP and school levels acknowledged the importance of seeking the views of significant adults, such as parents and teachers, when supporting trans* young people, however one participant described how their views had not been sought by external professionals when a trans* young person began receiving GIDS support. The school expected to give evidence but were not asked to be a part of the process, suggesting that opportunities were missed to triangulate information from the school context. Unlike EPs, these external professionals may not have been required to adhere to legislation such as the SENDCoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) which stipulates that professionals should work collaboratively with young people, parents and educational professionals when identifying needs and support. Furthermore, suggesting that whilst EPs may be well-practised in seeking the views of significant adults when supporting trans* young people, other external professionals may not consistently do so.

When relating participants' perceptions of how they do not best support trans* young people to my conceptual framework, findings highlight examples of unsupportive practice relating to inputs and processes in the Microsystem and Exosystem. In the Microsystem, unsupportive practice was found through inputs (education through the curriculum not being appropriately differentiated for SEN, education through external sources being influenced by agendas and education about supporting trans* young people not featuring on teacher training courses) and processes (difficulties with language-use). Whilst in the Exosystem, unsupportive practice was found through processes (LA not communicating information to

schools, LAs not having a supportive relationship with schools and external professionals not seeking the views of school staff).

5.2.3 How to Improve Educational Professionals' Support of Trans* Young People

Having identified examples of supportive and unsupportive practice across educational professionals' current support of trans* young people, suggestions of how to improve support were also found. In order to ensure a sense of safety and belonging throughout the school community, participants highlighted a need for improvements in educational professionals' language-use, including moving away from gendered language. Another finding related to the need for improvements around how the LA communicates information about trans* guidance and research with all schools, regardless of whether they are independent or have a service-level agreement. Participants suggested that Headteacher or SENCO meetings across the LA could provide helpful spaces for the LA to communicate clearly with schools, however they also acknowledged that it would be helpful to consider whose remit trans* support was in when deciding who the LA should communicate with. This indicates that the LA needs to work with schools to ascertain the best way to communicate information about trans* support equitably. Another need for improvement for the LA and some schools related to the need for containing relationships between the two, in which the former supports the latter to best support trans* young people. Of particular importance was the need for the LA to 'backup' their schools when faced with legal challenges around their trans* support, especially when LAs have removed their own trans* guidance. Similarly, for some participants a

need for improvement in containing relationships between parents and educational professionals was also found, with one participant expressing interest in exploring what other support their school could offer to parents; notably, EPs identified themselves as being well-placed to offer parental support.

Areas for improvement were also found in relation to educational professionals' dual-role of being both educators and educatees. With regards to their role as educators, findings highlighted a need to ensure that education about trans* matters is cross-curricular, with one participant describing the presence of trans* issues in their school's curriculum as '*weak*'. Moreover, findings also suggested that educational materials need to be improved in terms of how accessible they are to trans* young people with SEN. SSS-18 worked in a special school and described how despite well-intentioned educational resources about gender diversity being used in their school, many of these were not differentiated for trans* young people with language or processing difficulties and thus educational professionals had a role to improve this by adapting materials. With regards to educational professionals' role as educatees, findings also highlighted a need to incorporate information about supporting trans* young people into teacher training qualifications and for schools to share their knowledge about trans* support with one another, with a suggestion to have an identified '*champion*' in each school who is responsible for sharing practice. Whilst most participants had received some form of training once qualified, suggestions were put forth by SSS of how training content could be improved, including a greater focus on language-use and a potential link between being trans* and ASD. However, EPs did not feel that such a link was '*clear cut*' and were found to have '*wider thoughts*' about the difficulties that such young people might be facing.

Furthermore, this suggests that any training about trans* and ASD may need to be carefully managed, avoiding a reductionist approach.

Whilst prioritising the voices of trans* young people was found to be an example of best practice, participants identified ways in which this could be improved. Firstly, it was found that their voices could be used to inform school policies in some schools, as concerns were raised that these were often written by cisgendered adults. Secondly, it was found that when seeking the voices of trans* young people, improvements could be made by EPs in supporting young people with anxiety or emotional difficulties to express their views. One EP described how a young person was so anxious that they were unable to engage with attempts to seek their views, raising concerns about how that young person's views were reflected in the support that educational professionals provided. This suggests that differentiation is essential when seeking the views of trans* young people, including exploring ways in which all young people can express their views.

When linking participants' perceptions of how to improve support for trans* young people to my conceptual framework, findings highlight examples of improvement areas relating to inputs and processes in the Microsystem, Mesosystem and Exosystem. In the Microsystem inputs (cross-curricular education, differentiation of educational resources for SEN and developing training for teachers) and a process (educational professionals avoiding gendered language-use) were found to require improvement. In the Mesosystem a process (educational professionals providing containing relationships for parents) was found to require improvement. Similarly, in the Exosystem processes (LA communication with all schools, LA providing supportive relationships to all schools and schools sharing practice) were found to be in need of improvement.

5.3 Findings in Relation to RQ3

5.3.1 Commonalities and Differences between Themes Identified in the Literature and those Identified through Fieldwork

A key difference between the themes identified in the literature and those identified through the fieldwork in this research is how the latter identified 'system readiness to change' as an overarching theme. To my knowledge, the concept of readiness to change has not been applied to research focusing on schools' support of trans* young people. However, whilst previous research has not explicitly named readiness to change as a contributing factor to educational professionals' support of trans* young people, aspects of readiness to change are evident in the literature. For example, this research identified 'commitment' as a subtheme, which encompassed individual educational professionals seeing themselves as advocates for trans* young people alongside their organisation's control over trans* support through stakeholders such as SLT, the collective school staff and Diocese. In a similar way, previous research referenced educational professionals advocating for trans* young people (Wiltz, 2018) and how hierarchical systems, such as SLT not being willing to change can impact on trans* support (Charlton, 2020). Moreover, this research identified 'capacity' as a subtheme, which reflected individual educational professionals and their organisation's access to and awareness of resources and fear relating to language-use, criticism and legal challenges. Correspondingly, previous research referenced schools experiencing difficulties with accessing EP support (Sagzan, 2019; Charlton, 2020), lacking knowledge and awareness of what

it means to be trans* or what support, guidance or research is available (Bowskill, 2017; Curtis, 2019; Sagzan, 2019; Charlton, 2020) and experiencing fear, worry or emotional responses around a lack of training, language-use and legal concerns (Bowskill, 2017; Charlton, 2020). This highlights commonalities between the literature and this research with shared examples of educational professionals' commitment and capacity to support trans* young people in secondary schools, however this research appears to be the first to conceptualise these findings as reflecting system readiness to change.

'Ensuring a Sense of Safety and Belonging throughout the School Community' was identified as theme through the fieldwork in this research. The subtheme 'Guided by an Inclusive Ethos' encompassed how educational professionals could best support trans* young people through normalising gender diversity, taking a non-judgemental and individual approach. Similarly, the literature found examples of inclusive school climates, with school staff highlighting the importance of being accepting and non-judgemental (Wiltz, 2018), taking an individual approach (Charlton, 2020) and how this supported trans* young people to feel welcome (Curtis, 2019). 'Clear Communication throughout the School Community' reflected the need for clear communication between school staff, young people, parents and the LA. The literature too found a need for educational professionals to engage in communication and information sharing throughout the school, including parents, pupils, school staff and LA EPs (Charlton, 2020; Sagzan, 2019). However, findings from this research that were not reflected in the literature included educational professionals' concerns around inequality in how the LA communicates with all schools, such as those which are independent or do not have service-level agreements and the importance of remote communication between

educational professionals and trans* young people during the Covid-19 pandemic. 'Containing Relationships throughout the School Community' demonstrated the importance of containing relationships between school staff-young people, school staff-parents and school-LA. The literature echoed some of these findings, including the importance of school staff having positive relationships with young people (Charlton, 2020; Wiltz, 2018). Relationships between school staff and parents were also found to be important in Charlton's (2020) research, with school staff positing that working together benefits the young person's wellbeing. However unlike the literature, this research highlighted the importance of a containing relationship between the LA and schools, including support around legal challenges and the removal of LA guidance. Lastly, 'Language-use throughout the School Community' corresponded with the literature, including examples of educational professionals using preferred names, pronouns and gender-neutral language (Curtis, 2019; Wiltz, 2018), alongside a need to improve language-use, with educational professionals experiencing confusion around terminology, finding pronouns challenging and fearing causing offence (Charlton, 2020).

'Professionals as Educators and Educatees' was another theme in this research, which encompassed subthemes about education being bi-directional, provided through the curriculum, external sources and training. Commonalities between these and the literature include how some educational professionals were familiar with using a trans*-inclusive curriculum (Curtis, 2019), whilst others were unfamiliar with trans*-inclusive materials and struggled to engage in trans*-inclusive curriculums (Bowskill, 2017; Curtis, 2019). However, this research went further and identified a need to differentiate curriculum material by SEN, age and preparation for adulthood. Additionally, unlike the literature, this research highlighted the role of

external sources of education, such as the internet, media and charities. Participants in this research did reference engagement with the civil society organisation, Stonewall, however they did not specify whether they had engaged with Stonewall's (2019) recommendations for schools. In accordance with the literature, participants did not reference engagement with guidance or recommendations from the Government or professional body organisations, suggesting a lack of engagement with the national systems discussed in Chapter 2. Another commonality between this research and the literature pertains to how some educational professionals had received training about gender diversity (Curtis, 2019), whereas others expressed a lack of training (Bowskill, 2017; Charlton, 2020). This research identified how training for educational professionals could be improved by focusing on specific topics, such as language-use and a potential link between trans* and ASD. Importantly, whilst previous research has found examples of educational professionals providing education to young people through the curriculum and receiving education through training, it has not explicitly named the bi-directional nature of education for educational professionals, whereas this research identified this as a dual-role, highlighting how trans* young people can educate educational professionals, whilst also emphasising that this should not be their responsibility.

'Prioritising the Voices of Trans* Young People' was identified as a theme in this research. The subtheme 'Voices of Trans* Young People' reflected how educational professionals best supported trans* young people by seeking their views and using them to inform support, regardless of whether they conflicted with the views of others. In a similar vein, the literature found examples of educational professionals engaging in practices to seek the views of trans* young people, including EPs using solution-focused approaches to elicit desired outcomes or

futures (Sagzan, 2019; Yavus, 2016). Whilst EPs in this research were also found to routinely seek the views of trans* young people, a suggestion for improvement was found relating to the need for EPs to differentiate how they elicit young people's views, particularly when working with those who may have anxiety or emotional difficulties which impact on their ability to express themselves. The subtheme 'Voices of Significant Adults' demonstrated the importance of seeking the views of parents and school staff when supporting trans* young people. Aspects of this theme were mirrored in the literature, including a need for educational professionals to communicate with parents and school staff (Charlton, 2020; Sagzan 2019). However this research expanded on this, emphasising the importance of seeking adults' views even when it might be challenging to do so, such as when their views conflict with those of the young person.

Aspects of each theme identified in this research are echoed in previous research, indicating that ensuring a sense of safety and belonging, education, the views of trans* young people and readiness to change are key themes in educational professionals' support of trans* young people. However, this research expands upon the literature, through the application of previously unused concepts, such as readiness to change and bi-directional education. Distinct areas of improvement have also been identified, such as the need for differentiation of trans*-inclusive material in the curriculum by SEN, age and preparation for adulthood and of practices for seeking the views of trans* young people who may experience anxiety or emotional difficulties. Additionally, this research shone light on the role of the LA, highlighting the importance of clear communication and a containing relationship with schools, particularly when LAs have removed trans* guidance or when schools face legal challenges. As this research was completed during the Covid-19 pandemic,

novel findings demonstrated the importance of educational professionals communicating with trans* young people through remote means whilst learning from home to check on their emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, this indicates that the themes identified through the fieldwork in this research provide a distinctive contribution, building upon those identified in the literature.

5.3.2 Implications for Local Authority Policy, Practice and Research to Inform EPs

The findings from this research have a number of implications for LA policy, practice and research which subsequently inform the work of EPs. With regards to policy, findings highlighted the importance of LAs having containing relationships and clear communication with their schools. This was found to be particularly important when LAs have removed their trans* guidance for schools. Several LAs have removed their guidance, including Shropshire, Oxfordshire and Kent which SSS participants and their colleagues were aware of, leading to concerns about their school using LA guidance. Accordingly, a national-level participant in this research asked the question: '*where does this leave your schools?*'. This highlights a need for LAs to communicate the current context to schools and provide reassurance, with EPs being potentially well-placed to support with this. Notably, this research found that one EP questioned whether their colleagues were aware of LA guidance, echoing Sagzan's (2019) findings that EPs were unaware of whether the LA provided school guidance, indicating that EPs may need to gain clarification of the context surrounding the LA and trans* guidance so that they can best support the schools that they are working with. However, previous research has shown that

whilst LA guidance is helpful, there is a need to go beyond ready-made resources and take an individualised approach to support (Charlton, 2020), highlighting that for LA contexts in which guidance has been removed, EPs can still work with schools to best support trans* young people by using an individualised approach.

The findings from this research also have implications for LA practice and research, in particular the overarching theme of ‘system readiness to change’ which suggests that individual educational professionals’ (e.g. school staff or EPs) readiness to change interacts with their organisation’s (e.g. school or LA) readiness to change (Wang et al., 2020) to reflect the overall system’s readiness to change. Thus, as changes in schools do not result from an individual or organisation acting in isolation (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000), this indicates that in order for schools or LAs to be best able to implement changes in their support of trans* young people, individual educational professionals and their secondary school or LA as a whole, both need to have high readiness to change. This could inform the work of EPs as they are likely to have experience of applying the concept of readiness to change at an individual level when engaging in work involving cognitive behavioural approaches. However, this could be developed, with EPs applying Wang et al's (2020) framework of system readiness to change to their work with individual educational professionals (e.g. school staff and LA colleagues) and organisations (schools and the LA) to ascertain what stage each system is in (‘Dysfunctional’, ‘Emerging’, ‘Evolving’ or ‘Actualised’) in relation to their readiness to make changes to the support of trans* young people and subsequently tailor their support accordingly. To my knowledge, this research is the first to apply the concept of readiness to change to research focusing on schools’ support of trans* young people, yet one of the core functions of the EP role is to engage in research (Fallon

et al., 2010). This highlights an opportunity for EPs to build upon this research by applying Wang et al's (2020) framework of system readiness to change to future research.

Further implications for LA policy are evident which could inform the work of EPs. Firstly, findings identified EPs as well-placed to support with clear communication and containing relationships between parents-schools and LA-schools. Secondly, whilst EPs reported strengths in their ability to seek the views of trans* young people, findings highlighted a need for EPs to differentiate how they seek the views of trans* young people who may be experiencing anxiety or emotional difficulties which impact on their ability to express themselves. Moreover, findings indicated a need for curriculum materials to be differentiated for young people with SEN, such as language or processing difficulties. EPs are in a pivotal position to promote inclusion and dismantle barriers for young people (Scottish Executive, 2002; Slee, 2018) indicating an opportunity for EPs to support schools with such differentiation, to ensure that trans* young people with SEN have equal opportunities to access curriculum materials. Findings also showed that improvements could be made to the training offered to secondary school staff, with participants suggesting a focus on a potential link between trans* and ASD. Notably, EP participants did not feel that such a link was '*clear cut*', suggesting that any training may need to be carefully managed, avoiding a reductionist approach. As one of the core functions of the EP role is to deliver training and previous research has shown EPs delivering training about trans* support to schools (Yavus, 2016), this indicates a potential role for EPs to support with the design and delivery of such training for schools.

5.4 Review

The current research will now be reviewed, including a discussion of its strengths and limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.4.1 Strengths

Whilst trans* young people were not interviewed in this research, the design was directly informed by the voices of 2 trans* young people in my initial case study research. The young people felt that secondary school staff have the potential to impact on the support of trans* young people, but some staff appeared uncertain about how to achieve this. Neither young person had experience of working with an EP and discrepancies across local schools' support of trans* young people was suggested. This informed the aim of the current research and influenced the decision to complete the research in the same LA; demonstrating how this research process has prescribed to one of the key findings that the voices of trans* young people should be prioritised and used to inform work.

There is limited UK research which explores the experiences of educational professionals supporting trans* young people in secondary schools. Additionally, the research that is emerging tends to have limited sample sizes. Therefore, the inclusion of 32 educational professionals, including 22 secondary school staff, 8 EPs and 2 national-level individuals enabled a broad range of experiences from different ecological systems and thus realities to be explored. A broad range of settings were also included, such as mainstream, selective, state, independent, faith, single-sex and special schools, which captured differential experiences of educational

professionals working with trans* young people in varied settings in one LA, thus reflecting the LA's educational context.

The use of semi-structured interviews enabled participants to discuss issues that were important to them and identified themes that had not been predicted, such as the concept of readiness to change. Whilst previous research had referenced aspects of readiness to change, to my knowledge, the concept has not explicitly been applied to schools' support of trans* young people, highlighting a unique contribution of this research to the field. Additionally, participants were invited to discuss the identified themes to check suitability. This proved particularly helpful in relation to the finding around the bi-directional nature of education, as a national-level participant agreed with the subtheme but emphasised the importance of not placing the responsibility to educate adults on trans* young people.

5.4.2 Limitations

Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used, involving emails being sent to secondary school SENCOs and EPs in the LA and national-level individuals with experience of supporting trans* young people across England. Therefore, the sample may have been biased, with participants who felt more confident or experienced in their support of trans* young people being more likely to respond. Thus the sample may not reflect the experiences of the wider population of educational professionals supporting trans* young people in secondary schools.

As part of my EP training, I am currently completing a placement within the LA in which the research was completed. In line with a social constructionist approach, it is important to acknowledge how my position may have impacted on the research,

such as how participants related and responded to me during the interviews. Participants were aware of my affiliation with the EP Service in the LA which may have impacted on what they were willing to discuss or withhold, particularly as some discussion focused on the role of the LA in supporting schools.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not possible. Instead interviews were conducted via telephone or Microsoft Teams. Whilst this can be substantially quicker and cheaper than face-to-face interviews, there are disadvantages (Robson, 2011). Firstly, telephone interviews remove the opportunity to observe visual cues, including facial expressions and body language, which could be important when discussing a sensitive topic, such as unsupportive practice for trans* young people or fear of legal challenges. Moreover, whilst Microsoft Teams interviews allowed for video interaction, this does not mirror the exact experience of in-person interactions, due to the potential for technological difficulties.

5.4.3 Future Research

To my knowledge, this research is the first to apply the concept of readiness to change to research focusing on schools' support of trans* young people. However, the concept is gradually being applied to research investigating change in schools. Therefore, there is an opportunity for future research around the support of trans* young people in the UK's education sector to apply this concept, with Wang et al's (2020) System Readiness to Change providing a helpful framework to do so.

This research focused on educational professionals' support of trans* young people in secondary schools, however during the recruitment phase it became apparent that some EPs did not meet the inclusion criteria and thus could not

participate because they only had primary school experience. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to investigate the experiences of educational professionals supporting trans* young people in the UK's primary schools.

Whilst this research did include the voices of 2 national-level participants, it focuses on one LA. Tavistock and Portman's GIDS supports trans* young people from across the UK, highlighting the existence of trans* young people in schools across different LAs. As some LAs have removed their trans* guidance for schools, this indicates that the experiences of educational professionals and thus the trans* young people that they support, may differ depending on which LA they are based. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to explore the experiences of educational professionals supporting trans* young people across the UK, by including a broader range of LAs and national-level voices.

5.5 Researcher Reflections

I acknowledged that my professional experiences working as a secondary school teacher, TEP, volunteer for a trans* organisation and researcher in the initial pilot case study had developed my knowledge and confidence in relation to the support of trans* young people. However, the process of carrying out this research helped to develop this further, broadening my knowledge and awareness of the experiences of educational professionals with backgrounds that differed to my own, including those working in different school contexts and positions. I hope to be able to apply this to my practice as there is the potential for me to work with schools and educational professionals from a similar range of backgrounds who may be supporting trans* young people.

The process of conducting this research has supported me to identify how aspects of my existing practice could be used when supporting trans* young people. The concept of readiness to change was found to impact on educational professionals' ability to support trans* young people in their schools. Whilst I had experience of applying this concept during individual work with children focusing on cognitive behavioural approaches, I was not aware that it could be applied at an organisational level. Therefore, I hope to expand my application of readiness to change within my practice, perhaps exploring what stage a school system is in terms of their readiness to change trans* support. Of additional note, findings identified the importance of educational professionals communicating with trans* young people whilst they were learning from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, examples included the use of remote counselling sessions, emails and Microsoft Teams video calls. During the Covid-19 pandemic I have developed my own remote working skills which could be applied to my practice when working with trans* young people who are not currently attending school.

5.6 Conclusion

This research provided an insight into the experiences of a wide range of educational professionals working in secondary schools, an EP service and at a national-level in the UK. Findings demonstrated how educational professionals best support trans* young people by ensuring a sense of safety and belonging throughout the school community, education and prioritising the voices of trans* young people. However, this research also highlighted how each of these themes are impacted by a system's readiness to change, with some schools being better able to make changes to their trans* support due to individual educational professionals and the

school as a whole sharing high levels of readiness to change. Findings also demonstrated how educational professionals engage with support in the Microsystem (e.g. education for staff and young people, language-use, clear communication and containing relationships between staff and young people and prioritising the voices of trans* young people), Mesosystem (e.g. clear communication and containing relationships between staff and parents) and Exosystem (clear communication and containing relationships between schools and the LA).

This research carries implications for LA policy, practice and research which could subsequently inform the work of EPs. With regards to LA policy, EPs need to have a clear understanding of the LA's context, including whether LA trans* guidance for schools exists or has been removed. This then needs to be clearly communicated with schools. With regards to practice and research, EPs could extend their practice by applying Wang et al's (2020) framework of system readiness to change to their work and research with schools supporting trans* young people. Further implications for practice were also identified, including EPs supporting with schools' communication and relationships with parents, supporting to differentiate trans*-inclusive material for young people with SEN, supporting all trans* young people to express their views regardless of emotional difficulties and delivering training for school staff. Furthermore, whilst this research has commonalities with the existing literature, it has built a better understanding of how educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people in secondary schools through the identification of distinctive findings and application of new concepts.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Bronfenbrenner's Contexts and the Inputs-Processes-Outcomes Model (Loreman, Forlin and Sharma's interpretation)

Level	Inputs	Processes	Outcomes
Macro (e.g. national government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Staff Personal Development & teacher education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources and finances • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate • School practice • Collaboration and shared responsibility • Support to individuals • Role of special schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Student achievement • Post-school options
Meso (e.g. whole school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Staff Personal Development & teacher education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources and finances • Leadership • Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate • School practice • Classroom practice • Collaboration and shared responsibility • Role of special schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Student achievement • Post-school options
Micro (e.g. classroom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources and finances • Leadership • Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate • School practice • Classroom practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Student achievement • Post-school options

-
- Collaboration and shared responsibility
 - Support to individuals
-

Appendix 2: Bronfenbrenner's Contexts and the Inputs-Processes-Outcomes Model (my interpretation)

Level	Inputs	Processes	Outcomes
Macro (e.g. national government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation • Government guidance and/or policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and shared responsibility between Government and external organisations, e.g. LAs, charities, researchers • Support available to LAs and schools 	<p>Nationally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation – students, parents, schools and LAs • Wellbeing – students, parents, schools and LAs • Achievement – students • Post-school options - students
Exo (e.g. local authority (LA))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA guidance and/or policies • Training for LA staff • Resources and finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and/or ethos • Collaboration and shared responsibility between LA and other professionals, e.g. schools, external organisations • Support available to schools 	<p>Across the LA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation – students, parents and schools • Wellbeing – students, parents and schools • Achievement – students • Post-school options - students
Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for school staff and parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and shared responsibility 	<p>Within the school:</p>

(e.g. parent-teacher relationships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> between teachers and parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation – students and parents
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support available to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellbeing – students and parents
Micro (e.g. classroom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School guidance and/or policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate and/or ethos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement – students
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training for school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-school options - students
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum and education for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole-school practice 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support available to students 	

Appendix 3: Grey Literature Search Steps

Step	Description of how the search was completed
1 – LA guidance	<p>I was already aware of two examples through my professional experiences. This included guidance from Brighton and Hove (Brighton and Hove City Council & AllSorts Youth Project, 2019) and Cornwall (Cannon & Best, 2015). Both referenced their guidance informing that of other LAs which prompted a search for LA guidance referencing these two examples.</p> <p>Individual examples were found from Barnsley (BMBC, n.d.) East Sussex (ESCC, 2019) Lancashire (LCC, 2014), Leeds (LCC, 2018), Merton and Wandsworth (MC & WC, n.d.) and Shropshire (Cruttwell, 2018). A collaborative example was found from Barnsley, Birmingham, Derbyshire, Doncaster, Kent, Leicester, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Sheffield and Warwickshire (SCC, 2018).</p>
2 – Professional body guidance	<p>I was already aware of an example for EPs through my professional experiences and consideration of literature involving the school-related experiences of EPs supporting trans* young people (Bowskill, 2017; Sagzan, 2019). This included BPS guidance for psychologists working with GSRD (2012; 2019).</p> <p>In terms of professional bodies for secondary school staff, my professional experience as a secondary school teacher meant that I was aware of the largest UK teaching union, the NEU, whilst a search on the</p>

UK Government's list of active trade unions (Certification Officer, 2020) identified the second largest, the NASUWT. A search on both of their respective websites identified guidance for schools.

Smaller teaching unions identified on the Government's website were also searched, such as the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA), however no guidance was found.

3 – Civil society
guidance

Having considered LA and professional body guidance references to a group of civil society organisations were found, the most common being Stonewall, Gendered Intelligence, Mermaids and the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIREs).

This prompted a search for school guidance that was available from these organisations, resulting in the identification of two recently published examples (Gendered Intelligence, 2020; Stonewall, 2019).

Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Educational Psychologists

Participant Information Sheet For Educational Psychologists

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number:

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study:	Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People
Department:	Psychology and Human Development
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher:	Jennifer Gavin –
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher’s Supervisors:	Ian Warwick – Frances Lee –

1. Invitation Paragraph

My name is Jennifer Gavin and I am inviting you to take part in my research project – ‘Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People’. I am a Year 2 Doctorate student at The Institute of Education (University College London) currently training to become an educational psychologist.

The term ‘trans’ is often used as an umbrella term to describe individuals whose gender does not align with their biological sex or ‘sex assigned at birth’. The use of the asterisk in ‘trans*’ emphasises the inclusion of a range of gender identities, such as those who use surgeries or hormonal procedures, those who transition in less permanent ways and those who do not identify as male or female, including non-binary and gender queer people.*

Prior to this role, I was a secondary school teacher with experience of teaching across KS3, KS4 and KS5. This put me into daily contact with a wide range of children and young people whilst giving me insight into their diverse strengths and needs. In light of both my professional experience and existing research, it is suggested that there is a need for better support for those working with trans* young people in secondary schools.

Before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part and thank you for reading this.

2. What is the project’s purpose?

- Access the voices and experiences of secondary school staff and educational psychologists in a local authority in the South East of England

to build a better understanding of the ways in which they engage with systems to support trans* young people.

- Access the voices of individuals supporting trans* young people at a national-level to build a broader understanding of national systems of support.
- Compare the experiences of professionals in the field with the support being advised within the literature.
- Consider the implications for local authority policy, practice and research and how this can inform the work of educational psychologists.

My research questions that I aim to answer are:

1. Drawing on existing literature, what has already been reported about how educational professionals best engage with systems to support trans* young people?
2. Through fieldwork with key professional informants, what are their perceptions of:
 - a. how best to support trans* young people?
 - b. how best to improve support?
3. Through a discussion of the findings, what are:
 - a. the commonalities and differences between themes identified in the literature and those identified through fieldwork?
 - b. the implications for local authority policy, practice and research to inform EPs?

3. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been chosen due to your experience of working with trans* young people in secondary schools in LA X. I have chosen to focus on this sample due to my experiences of working as a secondary school teacher and trainee educational psychologist in LA X (2014-2020).

Should you agree to take part in the research, you will be invited to a focus group interview with other educational psychologists in a LA X County Council building. Specific details regarding time and location will be arranged at a later date.

Who else has been invited to take part?

Other educational psychologists and secondary school staff with experience of working with trans* young people in LA X's secondary schools have also been invited to take part. Individuals with experience of supporting trans* young people at a national-level, such as charity workers, policy developers and academics, have also been invited to take part.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw from the focus group interview at any point without giving a reason and with no consequences. You can also withdraw your data up to four weeks after the interview. If you do decide to withdraw, you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point.

5. How will I be involved?

You will be invited to attend a focus group interview with other educational psychologists to answer some questions about your experiences of working with trans* young people in secondary schools. If you are unable to attend a scheduled small group interview, an individual interview can also be arranged, this can be face-to-face or over the telephone.

The focus group interview will be around 1 hour long and, with your consent, will be audio recorded using a password-protected and encrypted laptop. I will then transcribe (put speech into written form) the recording for my analysis within four weeks of the interview. Within this four-week period, you have the right to withdraw your data from the research.

Should you need to attend an individual interview (face-to-face or over the telephone), this will be around 30-40 minutes long and, with your consent, will be audio recorded using a password-protected and encrypted laptop. I will then transcribe (put speech into written form) the recording for my analysis within four weeks of the interview. Within this four-week period, you have the right to withdraw your data from the research.

Upon completion of the small group or individual interview, you will be invited to a follow-up session. This will be around 30 minutes long and I will share my interpretations of the interview data, including themes that have been identified. During this follow-up session, your feedback and contributions would be greatly valued to ensure that I have interpreted the interview data as accurately as possible.

6. Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio recordings of the focus group interview made during this research will be used only for analysis and for use within my research report. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

7. What if something goes wrong?

Should you wish to comment or make a complaint during the process of the research, this can be sent to the Researcher's Supervisor, Ian Warwick. Should you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, please send an email to the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee on ioe.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk. You can also contact the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee by telephoning +44 (0)20 79115449.

8. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All data throughout the research will be anonymised from the outset to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity, such as 'EP1'. Quotes may be taken from the interview and referenced within my final report, however pseudonymisation will be used to ensure that any individuals discussed within the interview are not identifiable. The local authority in which you work will also be anonymised to ensure confidentiality and will be referred to as 'a local authority in the South East of England'. This will also be verbally explained prior to the start of the focus group interview.

Whilst your taking part in this project will be kept confidential, other educational psychologists within the small group interview will be aware of your participation. All data will be stored securely with password protection and encryption on my laptop so that it cannot be accessed by anyone other than me, as the researcher.

9. Limits to confidentiality

Please note that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that you cannot be identified unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached, such as where serious harm to oneself or others has been revealed. If this was the case, the researcher would inform you of any decision that might limit your confidentiality.

10. What will happen to the findings of the research project?

The audio recordings of the focus group interview made during this research will be used for analysis and presentation within my report. In accordance with UCL ethics and data storage regulations, data will be kept and stored securely for 10 years. The results of the research project will be presented within my Doctoral thesis report. A copy of this will be available through the UCL library. All data throughout the research will be anonymised from the outset to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity. Pseudonymisation will be used to ensure that you are not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

11. Local Data Protection Privacy Notice

Notice: The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL).

The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice: For participants in research studies, click [here](#)

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: 'Public task' for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project (ending August 2021). If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

12. Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me, Jennifer Gavin.

You can also contact my Research Supervisors:

- Ian Warwick
- Frances Lee

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.

Appendix 5: Information Sheet for Secondary School Staff

Participant Information Sheet For Secondary School Staff

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number:

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study:	Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People
Department:	Psychology and Human Development
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher:	Jennifer Gavin –
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher’s Supervisors:	Ian Warwick – Frances Lee –

1. Invitation Paragraph

My name is Jennifer Gavin and I am inviting you to take part in my research project – ‘*Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People*’. I am a Year 2 Doctorate student at The Institute of Education (University College London) currently training to become an educational psychologist.

The term ‘trans’ is often used as an umbrella term to describe individuals whose gender does not align with their biological sex or ‘sex assigned at birth’. The use of the asterisk in ‘trans*’ emphasises the inclusion of a range of gender identities, such as those who use surgeries or hormonal procedures, those who transition in less permanent ways and those who do not identify as male or female, including non-binary and gender queer people.*

Prior to this role, I was a secondary school teacher with experience of teaching across KS3, KS4 and KS5. This put me into daily contact with a wide range of children and young people whilst giving me insight into their diverse strengths and needs. In light of both my professional experience and existing research, it is suggested that there is a need for better support for those working with trans* young people in secondary schools.

Before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part and thank you for reading this.

2. What is the project’s purpose?

- Access the voices and experiences of secondary school staff and educational psychologists in a local authority in the South East of England to build a better understanding of the ways in which they engage with systems to support trans* young people.
- Access the voices of individuals supporting trans* young people at a national-level to build a broader understanding of national systems of support.
- Compare the experiences of professionals in the field with the support being advised within the literature.
- Consider the implications for local authority policy, practice and research and how this can inform the work of educational psychologists.

My research questions that I aim to answer are:

1. Drawing on existing literature, what has already been reported about how educational professionals best engage with systems to support trans* young people?
2. Through fieldwork with key professional informants, what are their perceptions of:
 - a. how to best support trans* young people?
 - b. how to best improve support?
3. Through a discussion of the findings, what are:
 - a. the commonalities and differences between themes identified in the literature and those identified through fieldwork?
 - b. the implications for local authority policy, practice and research to inform EPs?

3. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been chosen due to your experience of working in a secondary school with trans* young people in LA X. I have chosen to focus on this sample due to my experiences of working as a secondary school teacher and trainee educational psychologist in LA X (2014-2020).

Should you agree to take part in the research, you will be invited to an interview with me at a location most convenient to you. Specific details regarding time and location will be arranged at a later date.

Who else has been invited to take part?

Other secondary school staff and educational psychologists with experience of working with trans* young people in LA X have also been invited to take part. Individuals with experience of supporting trans* young people at a national-level, such as charity workers, policy developers and academics, have also been invited to take part.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw from the interview at any

point without giving a reason and with no consequences. You can also withdraw your data up to four weeks after the interview. If you do decide to withdraw, you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point.

5. How will I be involved?

You will be invited to an interview at a location most convenient to you to answer some questions about your experiences of working with trans* young people in secondary schools. If you are unable to attend a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview can also be arranged.

The interview will be around 30-40 minutes long and, with your consent, will be audio recorded using a password-protected and encrypted laptop. I will then transcribe (put speech into written form) the recording for my analysis within four weeks of the interview. Within this four-week period, you have the right to withdraw your data from the research.

Upon completion of the interview, you will be invited to a follow-up session. This will be around 30 minutes long and I will share my interpretations of the interview data, including themes that have been identified. During this follow-up session, your feedback and contributions would be greatly valued to ensure that I have interpreted the interview data as accurately as possible.

6. Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio recordings of your interview made during this research will be used only for analysis and for use within my research report. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

7. What if something goes wrong?

Should you wish to comment or make a complaint during the process of the research, this can be sent to the Researcher's Supervisor, Ian Warwick. Should you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, please send an email to the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee on ioe.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk. You can also contact the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee by telephoning +44 (0)20 79115449.

8. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All data throughout the research will be anonymised from the outset to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity, such as 'Teacher1'. Quotes may be taken from the interview and referenced within my final report, however pseudonymisation will be used to ensure that any individuals discussed within the interview are not identifiable. The school and local authority in which you work will also be anonymised to ensure confidentiality and will be referred to as 'a local authority in the South East of England'. This will also be verbally explained prior to the start of the interview.

All data will be stored securely with password protection and encryption on my laptop so that it cannot be accessed by anyone other than me, as the researcher.

9. Limits to confidentiality

Please note that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that you cannot be identified unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached, such as where serious harm to oneself or others has been revealed. If this was the case, the researcher would inform you of any decision that might limit your confidentiality.

10. What will happen to the findings of the research project?

The audio recordings of your interview made during this research will be used for analysis and presentation within my report. In accordance with UCL ethics and data storage regulations, data will be kept and stored securely for 10 years.

The results of the research project will be presented within my Doctoral thesis report. A copy of this will be available through the UCL library. All data throughout the research will be anonymised from the outset to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity. Pseudonymisation will be used to ensure that you are not able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

11. Local Data Protection Privacy Notice

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

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice: For participants in research studies, click [here](#)

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: 'Public task' for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project (ending August 2021). If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

12. Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me, Jennifer Gavin.

You can also contact my Research Supervisors:

- Ian Warwick
- Frances Lee

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.

Appendix 6: Information Sheet for National-Level Individuals

Participant Information Sheet For National-Level Individuals

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number:

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study:	Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People
Department:	Psychology and Human Development
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher:	Jennifer Gavin –
Name and Contact Details of the Researcher’s Supervisors:	Ian Warwick – Frances Lee –

1. Invitation Paragraph

My name is Jennifer Gavin and I am inviting you to take part in my research project – ‘*Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People*’. I am a Year 2 Doctorate student at The Institute of Education (University College London) currently training to become an educational psychologist.

The term ‘trans’ is often used as an umbrella term to describe individuals whose gender does not align with their biological sex or ‘sex assigned at birth’. The use of the asterisk in ‘trans*’ emphasises the inclusion of a range of gender identities, such as those who use surgeries or hormonal procedures, those who transition in less permanent ways and those who do not identify as male or female, including non-binary and gender queer people.*

Prior to this role, I was a secondary school teacher with experience of teaching across KS3, KS4 and KS5. This put me into daily contact with a wide range of children and young people whilst giving me insight into their diverse strengths and needs. In light of both my professional experience and existing research, it is suggested that there is a need for better support for those working with trans* young people in secondary schools.

Before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part and thank you for reading this.

2. What is the project’s purpose?

- Access the voices and experiences of secondary school staff and educational psychologists in a local authority in the South East of England to build a better understanding of the ways in which they engage with systems to support trans* young people.
- Access the voices of individuals supporting trans* young people at a national-level to build a broader understanding of national systems of support.
- Compare the experiences of professionals in the field with the support being advised within the literature.
- Consider the implications for local authority policy, practice and research and how this can inform the work of educational psychologists.

My research questions that I aim to answer are:

1. Drawing on existing literature, what has already been reported about how educational professionals best engage with systems to support trans* young people?
2. Through fieldwork with key professional informants, what are their perceptions of:
 - a. how to best support trans* young people?
 - b. how to best improve support?
3. Through a discussion of the findings, what are:
 - a. the commonalities and differences between themes identified in the literature and those identified through fieldwork?
 - b. the implications for local authority policy, practice and research to inform EPs?

3. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been chosen due to your experience of supporting trans* young people at a national-level in England. I have chosen to focus on this sample due to my experiences of working as a secondary school teacher and trainee educational psychologist (2014-2020).

Should you agree to take part in the research, you will be invited to an interview with me at a location most convenient to you. Specific details regarding time and location will be arranged at a later date.

Who else has been invited to take part?

Other individuals with experience of supporting trans* young people at a national-level, such as charity workers, policy developers and academics, have also been invited to take part. Secondary school staff and educational psychologists with experience of working with trans* young people in a local authority in the South East of England have also been invited to take part.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw from the interview at any point without giving a reason and with no consequences. You can also withdraw your data up to four weeks after the interview. If you do decide to withdraw, you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point.

5. How will I be involved?

You will be invited to an interview at a location most convenient to you to answer some questions about your experiences of supporting trans* young people in England. If you are unable to attend a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview can also be arranged.

The interview will be around 30-40 minutes long and, with your consent, will be audio recorded using a password-protected and encrypted laptop. I will then transcribe (put speech into written form) the recording for my analysis within four weeks of the interview. Within this four-week period, you have the right to withdraw your data from the research.

Upon completion of the interview, you will be invited to a follow-up session. This will be around 30 minutes long and I will share my interpretations of the interview data, including themes that have been identified. During this follow-up session, your feedback and contributions would be greatly valued to ensure that I have interpreted the interview data as accurately as possible.

6. Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio recordings of your interview made during this research will be used only for analysis and for use within my research report. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

7. What if something goes wrong?

Should you wish to comment or make a complaint during the process of the research, this can be sent to the Researcher's Supervisor, Ian Warwick. Should you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, please send an email to the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee on ioe.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk. You can also contact the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee by telephoning +44 (0)20 79115449.

8. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All data throughout the research will be anonymised from the outset to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity, such as 'Charity Worker1'. Quotes may be taken from the interview and referenced within my final report, however pseudonymisation will be used to ensure that any individuals discussed within the interview are not identifiable. The organisation in which you work will also be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. This will also be verbally explained prior to the start of the interview.

All data will be stored securely with password protection and encryption on my laptop so that it cannot be accessed by anyone other than me, as the researcher.

9. Limits to confidentiality

Please note that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure that you cannot be identified unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached, such as where serious harm to oneself or others has been revealed. If this was the case, the researcher would inform you of any decision that might limit your confidentiality.

10. What will happen to the findings of the research project?

The audio recordings of your interview made during this research will be used for analysis and presentation within my report. In accordance with UCL ethics and data storage regulations, data will be kept and stored securely for 10 years.

The results of the research project will be presented within my Doctoral thesis report. A copy of this will be available through the UCL library. All data throughout the research will be anonymised from the outset to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity. Pseudonymisation will be used to ensure that you are not able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

11. Local Data Protection Privacy Notice

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

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice: For participants in research studies, click [here](#)

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: 'Public task' for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project (ending August 2021). If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

12. Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me, Jennifer Gavin.

You can also contact my Research Supervisors:

- Ian Warwick
- Frances Lee

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.

Appendix 7: Consent Form for Educational Psychologists

CONSENT FORM FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Title of Study: Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Department: [Psychology and Human Development](#)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher: [Jennifer Gavin](#)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher's Supervisors: [Ian Warwick](#) and [Frances Lee](#)

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number:

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form (✓ to indicate a yes or no response) and return to Jennifer Gavin.

		Yes	No
1	I have read and understood the information sheet about the above research.		
2	I voluntarily agree to take part in a focus group interview.		
3	Should I not be able to attend a focus group, I voluntarily agree to take part in an individual interview either face-to-face or remotely.		
4	I consent to my interview being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Stored anonymously and securely using password-protected software.</i> - <i>In accordance with UCL ethics and data storage regulations, data will be kept and stored securely for 10 years.</i> 		
5	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 4 weeks after the interview.		
6	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. Any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted.		
7	I understand that my personal information (<i>audio recorded interviews</i>) will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing. <i>*This is because the university is a public authority and personal data is being processed to facilitate and carry out research which is looking to address challenges and provide benefits to educational professionals working with trans* young people.</i>		
8	I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified <i>unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached, such as where serious harm to oneself or others has been revealed.</i> If this was the case, the researcher would inform me of any decision that might limit my confidentiality.		
9	I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will be anonymised and not be attributed to me, thus it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.		
10	I confirm that I have read and agree to the Local Data Protection Privacy Notice.		
11	I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University (Researcher's Supervisors – Ian Warwick and Frances Lee) for monitoring and audit purposes.		

Participant name:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 8: Consent Form for Secondary School Staff

CONSENT FORM FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STAFF IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Title of Study: Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Department: [Psychology and Human Development](#)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher: [Jennifer Gavin](#)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher’s Supervisors: [Ian Warwick](#) and [Frances Lee](#)

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number:

Enter text

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form (✓ to indicate a yes or no response) and return to Jennifer Gavin.

		Yes	No
1	I have read and understood the information sheet about the above research.		
2	I voluntarily agree to take part in an individual interview, either face-to-face or remotely.		
3	I consent to my interview being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Stored anonymously and securely using password-protected software.</i> - <i>In accordance with UCL ethics and data storage regulations, data will be kept and stored securely for 10 years.</i> 		
4	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 4 weeks after the interview.		
5	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. Any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted.		
6	I understand that my personal information (<i>audio recorded interviews</i>) will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, ‘public task’ will be the lawful basis for processing. <i>*This is because the university is a public authority and personal data is being processed to facilitate and carry out research which is looking to address challenges and provide benefits to educational professionals working with trans* young people.</i>		
7	I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified <i>unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached, such as where serious harm to oneself or others has been revealed.</i> If this was the case, the researcher would inform me of any decision that might limit my confidentiality.		
8	I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will be anonymised and not be attributed to me, thus it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.		
9	I confirm that I have read and agree to the Local Data Protection Privacy Notice.		
10	I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University (Researcher’s Supervisors – Ian Warwick and Frances Lee) for monitoring and audit purposes.		

Participant name:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 9: Consent Form for National-Level Individuals

CONSENT FORM FOR NATIONAL INDIVIDUALS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Title of Study: Building a Better Understanding of How Educational Professionals Engage with Systems to Support Trans* Young People

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Department: [Psychology and Human Development](#)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher: [Jennifer Gavin](#)

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher’s Supervisors: [Ian Warwick](#) and [Frances Lee](#)

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer: data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number:

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form (✓ to indicate a yes or no response) and return to Jennifer Gavin.

		Yes	No
1	I have read and understood the information sheet about the above research.		
2	I voluntarily agree to take part in an individual interview, either face-to-face or remotely.		
3	I consent to my interview being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Stored anonymously and securely using password-protected software.</i> - <i>In accordance with UCL ethics and data storage regulations, data will be kept and stored securely for 10 years.</i> 		
4	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 4 weeks after the interview.		
5	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. Any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted.		
6	I understand that my personal information (<i>audio recorded interviews</i>) will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, ‘public task’ will be the lawful basis for processing. <i>*This is because the university is a public authority and personal data is being processed to facilitate and carry out research which is looking to address challenges and provide benefits to educational professionals working with trans* young people.</i>		
7	I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified <i>unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached, such as where serious harm to oneself or others has been revealed.</i> If this was the case, the researcher would inform me of any decision that might limit my confidentiality.		
8	I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will be anonymised and not be attributed to me, thus it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.		
9	I confirm that I have read and agree to the Local Data Protection Privacy Notice.		
10	I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University (Researcher’s Supervisors – Ian Warwick and Frances Lee) for monitoring and audit purposes.		

Participant name:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule (for research participant)

1. Could you tell me about your organisation's purpose and its key aims?
2. Could you tell me about your role and responsibilities within your organisation?
3. Could you tell me about the work you do/have done with trans* young people?
4. Given what you said about the strengths of this work, why was this?
5. Given what you said about areas for improvement, what led you to this view?
6. What do you think is needed to improve practice with trans* young people?
What led you to this view?
7. Given the aim of the study (***“to generate a better understanding of the way that educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people in secondary schools”***), is there anything else you think it would be useful for me to know?
8. Thank you for participating. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 11: Interview Schedule (for researcher)

1. Could you tell me about your organisation's purpose and its key aims?
 - *School? Local authority?*
2. Could you tell me about your role and responsibilities within your organisation?
3. Could you tell me about the work you do/have done with trans* young people?
 - *What, when, how? (Reactive/Proactive?)*
 - *At which level? (Micro/classroom? Meso/local? Macro/national?)*
 - *At which stage (Inputs? Processes? Outcomes?)*
 - *What lead you to do this work? (Background, context, networks, values?)*
 - *How did it go? (Strengths? Areas for improvement?)*
4. Given what you said about the strengths of this work, why was this?
 - *How to evidence this?*
 - *Inputs? (Was anything provided to strengthen this work?)*
 - *Processes? (Were any practices used to strengthen this work?)*
 - *Outcomes (Were there strong outcomes from this work?)*
5. Given what you said about areas for improvement, what led you to this view?
 - *How to evidence this?*
 - *Inputs? (Could anything have been provided to strengthen this work?)*
 - *Processes? (Could any practices have been used to strengthen this work?)*
 - *Outcomes (Could any outcomes have been improved to strengthen this work?)*
6. What do you think is needed to improve practice with trans* young people?
What led you to this view?
 - *At which level? (Micro/classroom? Meso/local? Macro/national?)*
 - *At which stage (Inputs? Processes? Outcomes?)*
 - *Other schools/local authorities have suggested X – what do you think?*
7. Given the aim of the study (***'to generate a better understanding of the way that educational professionals engage with systems to support trans* young people in secondary schools'***), is there anything else you think it would be useful for me to know?
8. Thank you for participating. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 12: Thematic Analysis Steps

Step	Description of how the step was completed
Step 1: Familiarisation with Data	<p>I conducted each interview, thus a level of familiarity with participants' responses had already begun when starting the data analysis. After each interview points of interest were recorded, such as common features or interesting differences.</p> <p>Interview recordings were transcribed into written form, which involved listening to each interview and typing the data into Microsoft Word. In cases where participants mentioned others' names or provided information that could identify them or others, substitution phrases were used that helped to retain contextual information, thus rather than including the specific name of a charity that participants had used, the substitution phrase '<i>local LGBT Charity omitted</i>' was used as this allowed the retention of important information whilst protecting the identity of the local area and charity.</p> <p>Transcriptions were checked several times by relistening to recordings, reading aloud the transcribed data and correcting errors. The interviews were then 'actively' read, which involved looking for meaning, patterns and further points of interest.</p>
Step 2: Generating Initial Codes	<p>NVivo12 (a qualitative data analysis computer software package) was used to support with this step. Firstly, a folder titled 'interviews' was created in NVivo into which interview transcripts were imported. The</p>

next step involved reading through each transcript and highlighting meaningful chunks of data which were then assigned a 'code' (a way of defining what the data is about). Codes were produced semantically and latently; with the former some codes reflected the exact language used in the extract to ensure that it reliably represented the participant's response, whereas with the latter some codes reflected potential underlying meanings in the participant's response (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The use of both semantic and latent coding corresponded with a social constructionist approach, with participants' surface-level and underlying meanings giving insight into their individual realities.

One transcript was shared with my research supervisor for them to code and another shared with a peer reviewer for them to also code. Codes from the same transcript were compared in both instances, discussion about similarities and differences took place via email and research supervision for the former and a 30-minute Microsoft Teams call for the latter. This process of quality assurance and peer review enabled codes to be mutually agreed upon to ensure that they best reflected the data and were clear to understand. For example, the code 'ASD link' was changed to 'EP questioning ASD link'.

Step 3: Searching for Themes

Once all of the data had been coded, relationships between codes were considered. Similar codes were grouped together in NVivo12 to produce possible subthemes. This process took place over two weeks to allow for reflection time and opportunity to develop and change the groupings. Next, subthemes were grouped together to produce potential

overarching themes thought to capture something of importance or interest to the research questions.

Step 4: Reviewing

Themes

To reflect upon my interpretations and gain different perspectives the identified themes were initially discussed with my research supervisors, before being discussed again via a 30-minute Microsoft Teams video call with a qualified EP experienced in completing doctoral research with trans* young people. This allowed me to check for potential researcher bias and check that themes were rooted in the context of the data. This process resulted in some themes merging together and one theme being identified as an overarching theme which impacted on all others.

All participants were invited via email to attend a video call to share and discuss the themes as a form of member checking. Four participants (SSS-1, SSS-18, EP-2 and NL-1) responded and each individually attended a 20-minute Microsoft Teams video call. The participants were asked what they thought about the findings, including whether they reflected their expectations and if anything surprised them. EP-2 described the findings as *'really interesting'* and thought that they could be used to inform how EPs developed their support for trans* young people in the LA. SSS-18 also felt that the findings were *'useful'* and hoped to use them to inform how their school could best support a young person who recently came out as trans*. SSS-1 said that they *'agreed'* with the findings and described how their school was already trying to improve their support of trans* young people in ways which corresponded with them, including reviewing language-use across

school policies and auditing to what extent trans* matters are cross-curricular. Similarly, NL-1 felt that the findings made sense and was particularly interested in theme 4 and how this impacted on all of the other themes. However, NL-1 did raise an important point about theme 2 and the importance of not placing the responsibility of educating others onto trans* young people.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme and subtheme was given a title which defined what they represented. A final review of the themes and their names was completed with research supervisors to ensure that they represented distinct findings that were exclusive of one another, whilst also fitting together to answer the research questions. Once finalised, the themes were represented in a thematic map.

Step 6: Producing the Report

A structured account of the findings has been presented in Chapter 4, whilst a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions has been presented in Chapter 5.

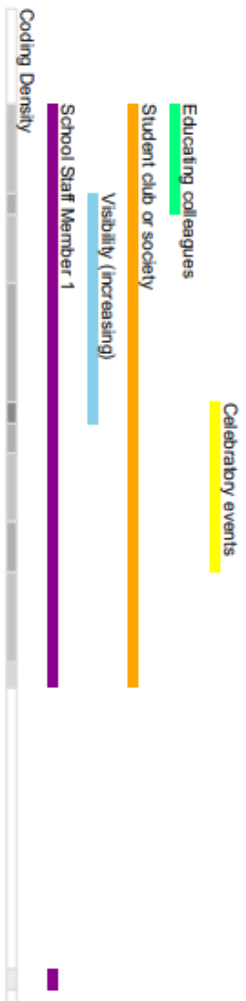
Appendix 13: Example of Codes Applied to Extract of Data (SSS-1)

Researcher: Brilliant okay and you mentioned as well a pride club what do you mean by that

School Staff Member 1: So every Thursday at lunchtime there is a pride club that I hold in my classroom and it's just for anyone they don't have to be a part the LGBT plus community it can be if they want to find out any more information but any students or members of staff can come along and then they can just meet up with students like themselves we get a pretty good turnout every week I'd say on average between 10 and 20 every single week which is really good and it seems to be growing in size I've been doing it for a couple of years now and it just seems to be getting bigger and bigger and we're getting more younger students involved as opposed to when we first started it was mostly the older students who had more awareness of their own identity but now it's a lot of the younger students who are turning up like year sevens and eights which is really nice to see that kind of like diversity and how it's changed over time so it could be getting ready for LGBT history month like we did in February so we was doing assemblies and that was all organised within the club it could be putting together certain activities within the school so maybe when it's coming up to the pride month we might decide to put something out there basically any activities that we do within the school we're given that time together to then organise that and it's really nice because other members of staff will turn up and show their support and I think that for some students when they see other members of staff who they maybe didn't necessarily think would be very supportive of that when they see them there it means quite a lot to them so I think it kind of its very practical but it's really good on the emotional side of things as well

Researcher: Okay so providing emotional support as well so in terms of summarising what the club does then and work there then on the one hand you've got sharing information with LGBT plus students but also people who just want information around that you also do preparation for LGBT history month and pride month and preparing activities in the school teachers can also come along and they can seek information and it builds those relationships between students and teachers who perhaps they would are a bit surprised that that teacher is there is that right

School Staff Member 1: Yes definitely



Appendix 14: Example of Codes Applied to Extract of Data (Focus Group with EP-1, EP-2, EP-3 and EP-4)

<p>EP 3 And I guess on the next kind of best level for if we can't represent in a range of ways is that we are there to advocate for the young person and that we can understand their experiences as best we can from our perspective because can you ever really understand someone else's experiences</p> <p>EP 1 Exactly yeah</p> <p>EP 2 Absolutely</p> <p>Researcher: I mean we've identified a few people that might be best placed to you know support with some of these ideas so we've said perhaps getting the lived experiences of a trans person to come in as we had with the EP who did that are there any other organisations or bodies at any level of society really that you think would be well placed to support EPs to support trans young people</p> <p>EP 1 I'm sort of thinking in a way we should be able to support ourselves with the training and the skills that we have we're mental health professionals we should have it feels like we should have it in our locker to be able to sort of go and do that sort of work but I think whether systemically we have the resources to enable us to go and do it properly and to the the degree that the young people will see that we're worth investing in we're not just going to be listening for the day of a statutory assessment and then we're often gone again I think that was one of the things that came from certainly the young person that I saw as part of that process there was you know he in different situations has shown an unwillingness to sort of trust or to open up to professionals and I think the sense that we took from that was that because you know somebody's there one minute they're going to be gone the next you know is it worth almost them investing taking a chance that somebody's actually going to be there in that position sort of for a while so yeah there's some real challenges I'm not sure yeah how to manage those aspects</p> <p>EP 4 But isn't that around explaining that we're not going to be around for a while and it's about our role is affecting you know supporting change in those people that are going to be around for a while</p> <p>EP 1 But the irony there though it feels like we're the people that should be around for a while because we have the skills to do that stuff and therefore we try and encourage those that are to sort of do some of that work when those people are sort of they're almost like maybe they are emotionally involved in that young person the systems around that young person and maybe what can be needed is that sort of external voice sometimes</p>	<p>Training for EPs</p> <p>Balancing different views</p> <p>Trans voices educating</p> <p>EPs reflecting on representativeness of service</p> <p>Assessment of YP</p> <p>Coding Density</p> <p>Mis-trust of professionals</p> <p>Supporting change</p> <p>EP skills set (holistic, prioritising)</p> <p>EHCIP assessment</p> <p>EP one of work</p>
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