

# A study of Educational Psychologists' use of consultation and users' views on what a service should deliver

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**PAPER 1:** Educational psychologists' perceptions of using consultation: An investigation of Educational Psychologists' perceptions of using consultation with schools.

**PAPER 2:** What do schools want from an Educational Psychology Service?

A qualitative case study of service users' perceptions of an Educational Psychology Service in Wales?

Submitted by James Cording to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Educational, Child & Community Psychology, September 2011.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

(Signature) .....

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## List of abbreviations and terms for Papers 1 & 2

- AEP – Association of Educational Psychologists
- ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- BPS – British Psychological Society
- CIF – Common Inspection Framework
- COMOIRA – The Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action
- CPD – Continuing Professional Development
- CYP – Children & Young People
- DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families
- DfE – Department for Education
- DfEE – Department for Education and Employment
- DfES – Department for Education and Skills
- EBD – Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties
- EP – Educational Psychologist
- EPS – Educational Psychology Service
- Estyn – The Education and Training inspectorate for Wales
- GAS – Goal Attainment Scaling
- LA – Local Authority
- LEI – Learning, Educational and Inclusion
- NBAR – National Behaviour and Attendance Review
- OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education
- PCT – Personal Construct Theory
- PDR – Plan, Do, Review
- PEP – Principal Educational Psychologist
- PIP – Planning in Partnership
- RQ – Research Question
- SA – School Action
- SALT – Speech & Language Therapist
- SEF – School Effectiveness Framework
- SEN – Special Educational Needs
- SENCO - Special Educational Needs Coordinator
- SEND – Special Educational Needs & Disability
- SI – Symbolic Interactionism

- SpLD – Specific Learning Difficulty
- SRB – Special Resource Base
- TME – Target Monitoring Evaluation
- UK – United Kingdom
- WAG – Welsh Assembly Government

# **PAPER 1**

## **AN INVESTIGATION OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Abstract**

Consultation is a widely used model of practice amongst Educational Psychology Services (EPS) in the United Kingdom (UK) as evidenced in the amount of research carried out on this practice (Leadbetter, 2006, p. 246). This paper attempts to supplement the limited evidence on how and why consultation is used.

This paper provides an account of Educational Psychologists (EPs) perceptions of using consultation in a Welsh Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The study uses a thematic analysis of interviews with EPs and 3 accounts of the practice of consultation are provided as examples of how consultation is used. Data analysis revealed that EPs' practice is dominated by the influence of Wagner's model of consultation, which is a result of both university, and service based training and not because they feel it is necessarily the best way of working and were vague about their reasons for using this approach.

Evidence emerged to suggest EPs were only aware of one model of consultation, which is the Wagner model. Evidence also emerged to suggest that EPs confused service delivery models with models of consultation and that EPs are unclear about their unique skills and role when using consultation and feel that schools do not understand the work they are trying to achieve when working in this way. EPs also considered that schools want more time with them, but burdensome bureaucracy hinders this.

These findings are discussed in more detail at the end of Paper 2 where the overall findings suggest there is a systemic problem in Pantysgawn EPS, where the dominance of the EP role to provide statutory assessments prevents EPs from working in a truly consultative way. The paper ends by discussing the key element of the EP's role, whether a consistent and rigid adherence to one practice model is practicable or desirable, and the various ways that EP services can monitor outcomes to alleviate some of the bureaucratic processes.

## **1.1. Introduction**

### **1.1.1. Purpose**

This paper is the first of 2 papers that looks at Educational Psychologists (EPs) use of consultation in a Welsh Educational Psychology Service (EPS). For the purpose of this research and to maintain anonymity, this authority shall be known as Pantysgawn County Borough EPS.

This paper seeks to understand and characterise the perceptions and working practices of EPs in terms of their experiences of using consultation with schools 2-3 years after this working practice was introduced to the EPS. This will be achieved through interviewing EPs in order to elicit their views and through examining examples of the consultation approach in practice.

The overall aim of this study (both papers) is to provide a study of the professional practice of consultation (paper 1) and how this attends to service users requirements by eliciting service users views (Paper 2). Pantysgawn EPS provides a case study within the context of the two papers combined and more explicitly in Paper 2. It is planned that the findings from both papers will be used to contribute to the overall development of consultation in Pantysgawn EPS and in turn develop and share good practice.

### **1.1.2. Context**

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) state EPs fulfil a number of key roles within a Local Education Authority (LEA) which include:

- Supporting children's education and development.
- Assisting with school improvement.
- Contributing to LEAs in a strategic role.
- Contributing to early identification and intervention.
- Contributing to statutory assessment.

(WAG, 2004, p. 5)

The WAG maintains a particular focus on the preventative role that EPs fulfil, which is the purpose of the consultative way of working. By seeking to develop, improve and share consultative working practices, this paper works towards both WAG and LEA priorities (see appendix 1), which include the following policies:

- National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) (Reid, 2006).
- School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) (WAG, 2008a).
- Common Inspection Framework (CIF) (Estyn, 2004, 2010)

### **1.1.3. Rationale**

This paper fulfils a requirement in the EPS development plan “to revise and review methods of service delivery. Developing a system of consultation with schools” (Pantysgawn County Borough Council, 2009a: p2). As consultation underpins the practice of all EPs working for Pantysgawn EPS, this research will feed into all aspects of the service plan aimed at working in partnership with children, families, schools and other agencies.

The paper seeks to provide examples of how consultation is actually practised. The wider body of literature provides examples of using consultation e.g. Wagner (1995; 2000), Munro (2000), Watkins & Hill (2000) or evaluates the use of consultation in EP practice e.g. Dickinson (2000), Kennedy, Frederickson, & Monsen (2008) and Farouk (1999). There are few examples of EPs experiences of using consultation and their influences behind their practice. By seeking these views this paper aims to explore why consultation is such a widely used model and provides examples of the practice of consultation in a Welsh context, which apart from a paper on Group Consultation (Evans, 2005) has never been attempted.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1. Selected Literature

A more detailed literature review covering both papers has already been marked (see appendix 2). This section focuses only on literature that provides the case for the research questions pursued in this paper.

The use of consultation in schools was popularised in the work of Conoley & Conoley (1982) who attribute their ideas on school consultation to the work of Caplan (1970). According to them, Caplan (1970) saw consultation as a non-supervisory, voluntary relationship between various professionals, which can aid them in their professional functioning. This idea of consultation encourages the consultant to work with the professionals involved and not necessarily directly with the child. An idea, which it is argued, improves the efficiency of consultation as the clients are best treated by those who work more directly with the children. This idea is still present with more recent work on consultation such as Wagner (1995; 2000), Farouk (1999; 2004) and Monsen (1998; 2002).

Consultation can be divided into four separate models (Larney, 2003):

Mental Health consultation (Caplan, 1970) is not a popular approach and is criticised for being overly psycho-dynamic. (Watkins & Hill, 2000). It is not widely supported by research evidence (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999), but Larney (2003) praises this model for it enabling the consultee to solve their own problems. Several assumptions underpin Caplan's model of consultation. The most important of these are those concerned with how intra-psychic and environmental factors can explain and change behaviour. A key feature of Caplan's model of consultation is the absence of a hierarchy in the consultation relationship, but it does require the consultant to have expert knowledge in the field of mental health. The model deems that there should be a coordinating relationship between the consultant and consultee rather than one that involves a hierarchical authority where tensions are more likely to arise. The models also recognises the importance of social institutions and the environment in determining behaviour.

Behavioural consultation is the most popular consultation model in UK EP services, which influences both the Wagner (1995) and Bergan (1977) approaches. Behavioural consultation shares its scientific roots with behavioural psychology and is therefore similar in many ways. The consultation process reflects a systematic problem-solving paradigm common to behavioural approaches e.g. problem

identification, data gathering, choosing an alternative etc. It has been criticised by Larney (2003) for its lack of focus on the nature of the consultant-consultee relationship (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999).

Process and Organisational/Systems consultation are 2 separate models of consultation that share similar features. Both models share roots in group and organisational psychology and aim to change schools at a systems level. Neither is popular as a model as each require detailed training of teachers if it is to succeed (see for example Gutkin & Curtis, 1999).

### **2.1.1. Patsy Wagner's Model of Consultation**

Wagner's Model of consultation requires special attention in this literature review as it is referred to frequently in the majority of works on consultation in British EP services. This model of consultation is discussed in three key works on consultation, which includes Wagner (1995, 2000, 2008).

Wagner's (1995) book *School Consultation: Frameworks for the Practicing Psychologist (A Handbook)* is perhaps the most commonly cited literature on the use of consultation in the UK. Wagner has provided training to over 20 EP services (Wagner, 2000) and this is likely to have increased, but there are no current figures available on how widespread the use of consultation is. Wagner's name is widely associated with her work on consultation and her 1995 handbook is familiar to EPs throughout the UK. The handbook provides a useful introduction to what consultation is and how services can implement it. It contains many useful resources that include recording templates for use in a variety of contexts and situations that include planning meetings, annual reviews, joint school family meetings and consultation follow ups. This current piece of work does not provide an evaluation of how effective the process is, but looks at EPs perceptions of using consultation with schools.

Wagner's (1995) model of consultation has its roots in behavioural consultation, but also derives features from Personal Construct Theory, Symbolic Interactionism and Systems Thinking derived from family therapy. Larney (2003) praises Wagner's model for it matching quite well with recommended approaches from research. This includes the need for consultation to be collaborative (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999), to involve shared assessment and intervention (S Turner, Robbins, & Doran, 1996) and to recognise and use the skills of teachers (Idol, 1990).

Wagner (1995) states "these three [underpinning] frameworks share a view of the person as actively involved in making meaning, and this being the major factor in making sense of a person's behaviour. An emphasis on sequence and the patterning of behaviour is also evident" (p12).

Personal Construct Theory (PCT) (G. Kelly, 1955) provides a theory that helps to understand individuals and encourages their participation in understanding, predicting and promoting change. It considers the notion of constructs, which Wagner (1995) describes as “the templates that an individual uses to make predictions about the world and therefore to inform his/her behaviour” (p12). Wagner sees PCT as a useful tool for EPs to explore the constructs effecting beliefs, thinking and behaviours when working with their client group.

Symbolic Interactionism (SI) was developed by the philosopher George Herbert Mead. It provides a more social framework to the development of meaning and behaviour (Wagner, 1995). It is particularly relevant in trying to make sense of behaviour in organisations such as schools. In this context Wagner sees SI as a focus for the role teaching and learning has on developing pupils’ learning and their personal development. Wagner maintains that the view of self that a child develops in school has a significant effect on behaviour as well as the important effect of the reputation and audience on the development of behaviour. Teachers’ perceptions of children should also be accounted for in this context and likewise teacher perceptions of teachers.

Systems thinking derived from family therapy is also an important element of Wagner’s approach to consultation. Wagner considers that it adds importance to the idea of sequences of behaviours and the establishment of patterns over time. With this the EP should be able to map these sequences and make sense of them over time. Although this idea has its roots in family therapy, Wagner (1995) believes that these principles can equally be applied to schools.

Kelly (2008) describes Wagner’s model of consultation as a practice/ service delivery framework, which is “a series of steps, stages or actions that support the application of a theoretical model or models” (p18). These practice frameworks bridge the gap between theoretical models e.g. Social Constructionism and their effective practical application. Consultation according to Kelly (2008) is not a prescriptive framework but is selectively informed by reference to a sound evidence base derived from skills developed within other practice frameworks.

Wagner’s approach to consultation works both at a service delivery level and within at the level of a framework for individual meetings Wagner (1995) expresses that schools are often confused between the terms “consultation meeting” and “consultation process”, the former being an element



of the latter. The next two paragraphs are an attempt to explain the similarities and difference between the two.

As both a service delivery framework and a framework for meetings consultation share the same three theoretical underpinnings (Personal Construct Theory, Symbolic Interactionism and Systems Thinking). Wagner (1995) provides guidance on how to implement consultation at a service level (see appendix 3a) and at an individual level (see appendix 3b). Both of these appendices provide an overview of the templates Wagner provides in her 1995 work. At a service level its focus is on how individual consultations are monitored and recorded, but it still applies the same principles around having a desire to promote change, empowering school staff regularly reviewing work. At the individual meeting level the principle of monitoring and reviewing remains and there is also a focus on promoting change through the use of solution focussed psychology and symbolic interactionism. It is at this individual level that consultation can fit into other executive training/ service delivery frameworks (e.g. COMOIRA), but consultation as a wider service delivery framework cannot exist unless it is practised at an individual meeting level.

Wagner's model of consultation claims to be a response to EPs dissatisfaction over a lack of preventative, creative and imaginative work with too much emphasis on individual assessment and report writing (Wagner, 2000). It is defined by Wagner (2000) as a "voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach, established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems" (p11). This broad definition allows for the possibility for different practices and models, but she feels that consultation requires a psychological model that matches closely with the social systems within which EPs work (e.g. the school, the family and professional systems).

In the context of an EPS, consultation aims to promote change at the level of the individual child, the group/class or the organisational/ whole school level. This is a process where concerns are raised which initiates a collaborative and recursive process where there is a joint exploration, assessment, intervention and review. Wagner (2000) does not see consultation as an item on a menu of services, but should provide schools with a more egalitarian, less instrumental, individualistic form of educational psychology. This is an attempt to remove the EP from their traditional gate-keeping role.

Wagner's approach to consultation places great emphasis on the equal role between EPs and consultees that they should inhabit within the approach. She sees the perceived expert role of the EP as being "deskilling" (Wagner, 2000: p12) as it places the EP in a position of power. She therefore

encourages the use of the expertise of the involved parties, preferring the term “bringing expertise from a psychological perspective” (p12), which she claims enhances the expertise of the EP.

Wagner (2000) highlights five principles in her approach to consultation that include the intrinsic nature of psychological processes in all aspects of the functioning of organisations; The purpose of the EP in helping schools to realise the differences they can make; Consultation is not a discreet item on the menu of service delivery where all interactions are therefore considered as consultation; EPs are most effective when they work with teachers collaboratively and with a sense of the school as a whole organisation; Transparency helps promote collaboration and skill transfer.

Wagner’s model has been widely adopted and adapted to meet the needs of individual services such as that of Dickinson’s (2000) whose service has introduced its own processes around transparency where they share all aspects of the consultation with the consultee and believe strongly in the importance of conversation and the idea that EPs do not have ownership of a case, but rather it is a shared process between the EP and the consultees. Other EP services such as Pantysgawn and Buckinghamshire include schools in the prioritising of work at the start of the school year (Munro, 2000), which is a move away from the term of referral and suggests the responsibility for the case shifting from the school to the EPS.

Despite Wagner’s (2000) claim on the popularity of her training, there is very little evidence that looks at why EP services have decided to use this approach. Wagner (2008) describes the popularity of consultation as a framework for practice due to the wish for services to move away from referral based systems and become more preventative in the focus of their work (Wagner, 2008). This has also reflected government policy where the role of the EP is considered as preventative (WAG, 2004). The rise in the popularity of consultation has been linked with the shift of focus of government policy to focus on the individual needs of the child, which is even promoted in a government sponsored study on the future role of the EP by Kelly & Gray (2000). This states “Consultation and Solution-Focussed approaches are seen as an important aspect of educational psychology services’ work” (D. Kelly & Gray, 2000, p. 43) as they have helped services achieve a shift in the nature of the balance of their work.

### **2.1.2. Implementing consultation**

The research reveals that UK EP services have responded well to adopting and implementing consultation practice in a variety of ways (Dennis, 2004; Dickinson, 2000; Farouk, 1999; Kennedy,

Frederickson, & Monsen, 2008; Kerslake & Roller, 2000; Larney, 2003; Leadbetter, 2006; Mac Hardy, Carmichael, & Proctor, 1998; Wagner, 2000; Watkins & Hill, 2000). Some services such as that studied in the work of Jane Leadbetter (2006) used a much slower process of adopting consultation where EPs working in the service were consulted to see about their understanding of the term consultation with the aim to adopting a more inclusive method of consultation that they had a part in shaping.

### *The Processes and mechanisms that lead to effective implementation.*

In order for consultation to be implemented effectively, Wagner (2000) believes services require a paradigm shift from working with individual models of psychology to working in a more interactionist systemic approach. This paper does not cite any figures to support its claims, but it discusses some of the pitfalls involved in introducing consultation to a service and some of the benefits to implementing consultation base practice.

A study which looked at the effectiveness in which EPs use consultation with teachers is the work of Farouk (1999). This revealed that EPs see themselves as working in a collaborative way with teachers who work with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Farouk's (1999) work identifies that EPs are aware of the personal qualities needed in an EP to engage in effective consultation, but there was no evidence of a coherent approach or enough time to engage in effective consultation. Farouk (1999) therefore recommends that EP services subscribe to a particular service wide form of consultation in order for it to become a part of its working practice. Farouk's (1999) paper investigated the perceptions of EPs of the effectiveness of their own practice and how it may be improved.

Farouk's (1999) paper also measures the effectiveness of consultation in terms of the extent to which teachers took up and followed EP strategies and new approaches agreed upon during a consultation. This was done by using questionnaires sent to 62 EP services in England and Wales with approximately 120 questionnaires returned. Data was then analysed using data reduction, coding and analysis as advocated by Miles & Huberman (1999).

As with many of the other papers cited here, Farouk (1999) cites some useful recommendations for improving the use of consultation within EP services. In particular it recommends services should have a clear idea about what model of consultation they are working with and a clear record keeping system as supported by Wagner (1995) and those teachers should be made to feel that they own

and feel responsible for any change that occurs. In order to achieve this Farouk (1999) recommends EPs should make notes during a consultation as teachers may see this as the EP taking ownership of the problem and thus encourage them to make their own notes. Farouk (1999) also identified that more time was needed for EPs to engage in effective consultations with school staff, with less time spent on administration tasks.

The work of Ruth Dennis (2004) has been particularly influential to this current study through it being a small scale research project carried out one year after the implementation of consultation in a local authority (Dennis, 2004). This study interviewed SENCOs from 22 schools and used a grounded thematic analysis to analyse the transcripts. It also provides a useful summary of how Dennis (2004) went about coding the data in the form of a concept map. This paper produced a hierarchy of development for introducing a successful model of consultation and a series of useful recommendations and advantages for services that wish to adopt this approach. This research highlighted that services need to publicise what exactly consultation has to offer service users and this will help them to no longer see EPs as gatekeepers and achieve the aims of consultation e.g. collaborative working with school staff and families and develop more positive relationships with schools.

Dickinson (2000) explores the issues he encountered when his EP service implemented consultation. The Dickinson (2000) paper is not a review of consultation, but it does describe how one service has implemented the use of consultation and systems to review the process. It does not provide any information on the outcomes of their system for monitoring and evaluation, but it does highlight the need for EP services to monitor outcomes in “these days of best value, quality assurance and high degrees of accountability to a range of stake holders” (Dickinson, 2000: p19).

The studies reviewed above share many findings and recommendations. The key message is that it is important for any service introducing consultation to have a clear idea about how they intend to use it and should have a clear plan and idea about the model of consultation they intend to use e.g. Farouk (2004) and Wagner (1995; 2000).

There has been very little work done on the effectiveness of consultation and there are even fewer studies that looked at the actual consultation process. The work of Emma Kate Kennedy and her colleagues (2008) recommend using the “espoused theory” and “theory in use” frameworks of Argyris & Schön (1974, 1996). Larney (2003) in her review of international and British literature on

consultation noted that the majority of the research has focussed on assessing the outcomes and process of consultation. These outcomes have been evaluated using qualitative techniques, but the process of consultation has been evaluated using quantitative techniques with a combination of qualitative data. Some of the quantitative techniques used include systematic analysis and the use of Consultation Analysis Record (CAR) (Bergan & Tombari, 1976; Gutkin, 1996) (Larney, 2003). Larney (2003) comments that both a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques are required to carry out evaluations of consultation. Larney (2003) points out that this has not been the case with most of the research on consultation, but this is arguably due to the difficulty in quantifying the quality of the outcomes of EP work and therefore justifies the use of qualitative approaches in this field.

### **2.1.3. Gap in current literature**

Larney (2003) reviewed research on implementing consultation, but none of the studies cite the views of EPs. This paper therefore aims to fill this gap by investigating why EPs use consultation and will investigate what principles guide their practice. The majority of studies I have come across in my search for literature have been accounts of how consultation has been developed in local authorities (Christie, Hetherington, & Parkes, 2000; Dickinson, 2000; Gillies, 2000; Munro, 2000), which contain very little evaluation and offer accounts of their experiences and what they have learned. Others have used more qualitative approaches such as the use of grounded theory (Dennis, 2004; Kennedy, et al., 2008), thematic analysis (Woolfson, et al., 2008; Woolfson, et al., 2006) and data reduction (Farouk, 1999) to assess the implementation of consultation.

## Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods

This section explains how the experiences and understandings of my interviewees were studied in order to address the research questions below. I drew upon a thematic analysis methodology as this allowed the voices of my interviewees to come to the forefront, so as to allow for their interpretation. The study is underpinned by a nominalist ontology as its purpose was to capture EPs experiences of using consultation in their everyday work. Participants' views of the world were captured using a constructivist epistemology. This view assumes that meaning is constructed by people as they engage with the world. This implies that the participating EPs in this study construct meaning as they live out their lives and go about their daily work routines.

The methodology that most comfortably fits the above ontological and epistemological positions is interpretivism (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). This interpretive approach would appear adept at uncovering a detailed understanding of EPs views on the consultation approach and thus a methodological approach that ought to be used to describe and characterise EPs views.

### 3.1. Research Aims and Questions

The literature reviewed above demonstrates that the Wagner model of consultation is the most well-known and dominant model in UK EP services. Wagner's definition of consultation is very broad and there is little evidence available in the literature about the level of influence her model has over the practice of individual EPs. Therefore there is scope for research that looks at EPs awareness of other models of consultation and to what extent they adhere to any chosen models. There are also opportunities for research to be carried out on how the practice of consultation can be used more effectively to make a difference for children, families and schools.

This research aims to expand on existing research on consultation by focussing on the use of consultation in a Welsh EP service and the experiences of the practitioners working within the service.

#### 3.1.1. Research Questions

1. How is consultation practised within the case study of Pantysgawn EPS?

2. Why was the consultation approach the preferred way of practising educational psychology in Pantysgawn?
3. Which definitions and models of consultation, if any, were preferred/used by EPs in Pantysgawn in their daily practice?
4. How do the EPs in Pantysgawn consider the EP service could improve its practice in general and its use of consultation in particular to make a difference for children, young people, families and schools?

### 3.2. Design

This study used a qualitative interpretive design. Interview data were collected, transcribed and analysed using a thematic analysis approach. In order to consider how consultation is practised (RQ1) and how the authority could improve its use of consultation (RQ4); I supplemented the interview data by capturing examples of consultation in practice.

### 3.3. Participants

Seven main grade EPs, 1 trainee (TEP), and 1 Principal EP (PEP) took part in this study, this constitutes all of the staff of the EP service involved in this study. All participants were employees of Pantysgawn EPS, which consisted of the following individuals:

**Table 1: Paper 1 - Participants Details**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Years working for Pantysgawn EPS</b>	<b>Number of Years Qualified</b>
<b>Psychologist 1</b>	<b>TEP</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Psychologist 2</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Psychologist 3</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Psychologist 4</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Psychologist 5</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Psychologist 6</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Psychologist 7</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Psychologist 8</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Psychologist 9</b>	<b>PEP</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>

The participants of this study represent all available practising psychologists in Pantysgawn EPS at the time of writing. The TEP included in this study was a TEP from another university and not the author of this piece of work.

### **3.4. Interview schedule**

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule was developed in discussion with the PEP. The questions intended to specifically address each research question. A semi-structured interview allowed for a greater degree of flexibility during the interview process. The interview schedule (see appendix 4) guided the interview, but did not dictate the path. Open questions allowed for a broader response from the participants, with sub questions provided to ensure all areas of enquiry were covered in the interviews.

### **3.5. Data Collection Procedure**

#### **3.5.1. Interview Data**

Interviews were conducted during January and February of 2011 at the offices of Pantysgawn EPS. The interview schedule and a summary of the research plan were given to the participants in advance in order for them to prepare their responses and relieve any anxieties. A semi-structured probing approach allowed for greater flexibility when exploring the themes that emerged in the interviews. This approach was chosen as it is an adaptable approach that allows for the interviewer to “follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motive and feelings” and the interviewer can develop and clarify responses (Bell, 2005, p. 157).

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the author. Copies of the transcripts were sent to all participants for them to review, no transcripts were returned.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the transcripts. Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as a way of understanding data that is preceded by an observation. “Recognising an important moment (seeing) precedes encoding it (seeing it as something), which in turn precedes interpretation” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1). Thematic analysis according to Boyatzis (1998) allows one to move through these 3 phases.

Themes were generated by the interviewees’ responses (an inductive approach). Thematic analysis relies on obtaining information from people involved in an organisation and then looking for patterns within the seemingly random data that might not be evident to others. Once this pattern is established the next step is to encode this pattern or give it a label or definition before proceeding to interpret it (Boyatzis, 1998).



A code is “an item that captured something important in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: p82). There is no set answer to how much of the data needs to show evidence of a theme for it to exist (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Their description of thematic analysis does not suggest that if a theme emerges in over half of the data set then it has to be a theme, themes are identified and based upon researcher judgement, therefore themes are based upon whether they captured something important in relation to the research questions.

Boyatzis (1998: p31) defines a good thematic code as having 5 elements:

1. A label (i.e., a name)
2. A definition of what the theme concerns (i.e., the characteristic or issue constituting the theme)
3. A description of how to know when the theme occurs (i.e., indicators on how to “flag” the theme).
4. A description of any qualifications or exclusions to the identification of the theme
5. Examples, both positive and negative, to eliminate possible confusion when looking for the theme.

Emerging themes in the data can be analysed at both a latent (underlying the phenomenon) and manifest (directly observable in the information) level. Themes emerged from the information in this paper at both these levels and were generated inductively (from the raw information). Examples of the codes that emerged using this inductive approach are presented in appendix 5 (Themes Paper 1). This demonstrates this approach to coding the data and how these were then interpreted to create broader themes. These themes are presented in appendix 6 (Examples of how themes were generated from codes in the interview data and contents of the consultation examples).

Boyatzis (1998) states that “knowledge relevant to the arena being examined is crucial as a foundation” (p7) in order to achieve a successful thematic analysis. As the author of this study was working as a TEP within the service at the time of conducting this research, they were aware of the culture of the organisation and the practice of their colleagues.

Thematic analysis is regarded as a flexible approach to analysing qualitative data and should be seen as a “foundational method for qualitative analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: p78). This was considered the most appropriate method due to its usefulness and flexibility as a method of qualitative data analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is considered a good starting point for conducting qualitative data analysis for researchers that are inexperienced with this type of data that is easy to use, offers flexibility, and accessible to the general public (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is criticised for lacking the “kudos” of other approaches such as Grounded Theory as it is often as an introductory method of qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can “produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions” (Braun & Clarke, p97), but if not conducted properly then it can have “limited interpretative power beyond mere description if it is not used within an existing framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). It is criticised for it not being able to “retain a sense of continuity and contradiction through any one individual account”, which have the potential to be revealing (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97).

Two randomly selected transcripts (Psychologist 4 &6) were sent to an independent rater in order to test the inter-rater reliability. In order to achieve a less subjective analysis a rater with no knowledge of the subject under investigation, with experience of qualitative research was chosen. Independent judgements from the same transcripts are necessary to help identify attributions that might otherwise be missed (Hayes, 1997). This enables the rater to extract causal attributions and identify whether an attribution has actually been made. Only 2/9 transcripts were selected for this test of inter-rater reliability due to the size of this study. There simply was not enough time or people available to seek further independent judgements.

The rater was given no information on the codes generated by the author in order to avoid any bias. This produced many similar codes to the author (see appendix 7 for a comparison of these themes). Once the codes were established they were analysed again to look at any emerging broader themes within the data.

### **3.6.1. Consultation examples**

As RQ1 required me to consider how consultation is practised in Pantysgawn and RQ4 required me to consider how the authority could improve its use of consultation, I supplemented the interview data by capturing examples of consultation in practice. Five consultation examples from Pantysgawn EPs were included. Two of these examples came from my own work as an EP, the others were provided by Psychologists 2, 3 & 7. All 5 were chosen because they demonstrate consultation in practice through the use of case notes and observation records. Also they demonstrate the processes these EPs worked through during their interventions. For each one I was able to provide detailed case notes and records of the intervention. All 5 examples represent the typical approach to casework taken by myself and other EPs in the Pantysgawn service.

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Conduct provides guidelines on issues regarding respect, confidentiality, safeguarding and informed consent (BPS, 2009), which were considered during all aspects of this study. All interview participants were issued with a summary of the research plan (see appendix 8) and a consent form (see appendix 9) before the interviews took place. Transcripts (see appendix 10) were also presented to the interviewees to review. Consent for the consultation examples was sought through the initial parental consent form at the start of the EP intervention and was approved by the PEP and EPs involved in these cases. In order to maintain anonymity all names of interviewees, subjects of the consultation examples and of the authority involved in this study have been changed.

## Chapter 4 – Analysis

### 4.1. Interviews

My purpose in this first part of chapter 4 is to gain deeper insights, from the perspectives of practising EPs in Pantysgawn, of (i) how consultation is practised in Pantysgawn (ii) which definitions and models of consultation, if any, were preferred/used in their daily practice (iii) why the consultation approach was the preferred way of practising educational psychology and (iii) the EPs' views on how their daily working practices could be improved to achieve better outcomes and outputs for their client group i.e. children, young people, families and schools.

My interview data strongly suggested that one model of consultation, the Wagner Model, influenced practice more widely than any other model. This is evidenced in the following extracts:

*[I defined consultation] very loosely I guess I'd say it is based upon the work by the likes of Patsy Wagner. (Psychologist 9)*

*I think I follow the Wagner model, which is the model we've worked within university ... It's what was presented to us really as a sort of standout model in university and from all the research, but I guess it depends on their experiences in their local authorities (Psychologist 1)*

I found that EP1's view on why the Wagner Model was so influential was typical in the sense that the impetus for using it came from others outside Pantysgawn in the form of initial and in service training, their reading around the subject and the fact that this particular model of consultation was popular amongst practising EPs throughout the UK. This is evidenced in the following interview extracts:

*Through the reading I did during my training. It [the Wagner Model] seems to be the one that's got the best evidence base and is the most widely used across the board. (Psychologist 5)*

*I suppose because we had interventions a few years ago about that particular model [the Wagner Model] and that would have been the basis for us thinking about how we could use consultation in Pantysgawn. (Psychologist 9)*

My interview data also evidenced that the Wagner Model was the most influential model because it was the model of consultation with which they were most familiar. The following extract is typical of this kind response:

*I suppose I am most aware of what the Patsy Wagner approach would be. We had a couple of days training with her here at [Pantysgawn] about 6-7 years ago and she gave us a lot of materials that which have shaped my thinking about consultation. (Psychologist 6)*

Alongside being more familiar with this model of consultation, some of my interviewees drew on evidence of the Wagner Model's effectiveness to justify why they preferred it. The following extract illustrates this:

*The influences are basically.... well there is the research that has been carried out using this approach, using consultation is meant to have better outcomes.... I use it because it is what they are using here in [Pantysgawn] (Wagner's model) and also because it is what I used last year in [another authority] and I found that it was a helpful way to work. (Psychologist 4)*

It should be noted that Psychologist 4's passing reference to the strength of the Wagner Model based on direct experience of using it in their day-to-day practice was not typical. However Psychologist 2 also drew on her own experience of using the Wagner Model to justify her preference for this model:

*I feel people get a lot of information and a deeper understanding about some of the issues that people bring to us and I think if you're trying to understand the issue, or why something is occurring, I think it is really useful to gather information from a wide variety of different sources to give you that in depth and deeper understanding, which would help you to make hypotheses about why something is occurring. (Psychologist 2)*

Psychologist 2's view that good quality information could be gathered from using this model suggested that she recognised the value of the Wagner consultation model from her own personal experience of using it. However only two of my interviewees, Psychologist 2 and Psychologist 4, drew on their own direct experience rather than the experience of others cited in the literature or during training to justify its use. More typical was Psychologist 6's justification for using the Wagner model, which seemed on the one hand to be referring to direct experience but on the other couching his views in general terms as found in the work of Larney (2003):

*... consultation gives in the context of our service gives schools, parents, families, children and young people the opportunity to contribute in a different way to how they would have previously contributed to solving a problem and it makes everybody involved an active participant in trying to solve a problem. (Psychologist 6)*

Likewise EP's justification seems to be in line with Wagner (1995):

*...using a solution focussed approach and is very much about valuing the experience and expertise that client may have in relation to any particular issue or any particular child. (Psychologist 7)*

Notably the PEP (Psychologist 9) echoed the definition of consultation provided in the service handbook to justify its use and failed to draw on her own experience:

*Consultation is used in [Pantysgawn] to enable joint discussions and facilitate problem solving or for identifying goals and as a framework to enable long term reviews of progress. It's a framework for enabling EPs to work with schools or children or teachers or other professionals and will enable EPs to think purely about where they need to go to support a school. (Psychologist 9)*

Even Psychologist 4 when pushed further moved away from drawing on her own direct experience to using textbook language to justify her use of the Wagner Model:

*Consultation is a way of exploring the various issues surrounding a difficulty, problem or concern, taking a holistic approach and looking approach and taking a systemic perspective in terms of looking at all the factors that might contribute to the difficulty being discussed. (Psychologist 4)*

These textbook views definitions and justifications for using the Wagner Model, contrast sharply with Psychologist 2's personal reflections and insights into its values:

*Consultation is used in [Pantysgawn] to enable joint discussion and facilitate problem solving or identifying goals and as a framework to enable long term reviews of progress. It's a framework for enabling EPs to work with schools or children or teachers or other professionals and will enable EPs to think purely about where they need to go to support a school. ....The way I personally use it, I guess a school comes to me and says I'm really stuck, I need some strategies I don't know where to go with this, then I would go into the school and sit down with the people involved and then I would gather all the information from the main people involved and ask them a series of questions about what is the problem at this point, what have you tried, what has gone well, what do you think has been effective out of what has been tried and then try to unpick the strengths that are there within the problem at that point to see whether the strengths can actually give an insight into what sort of strategies can help finally move forward. (Psychologist 2)*

Not one of my interviewees was able to demonstrate any in-depth awareness of any other models of consultation mentioned in my literature review. This is evidenced in this extract:

*I'm not aware enough or have really read widely. I just recognise consultation [Wagner] and I could talk about strategic and systemic models. Umm... I suppose that the Wagner model and what I think of consultation is an interactionist and systemic model. I don't know enough about other models. (Psychologist 8)*

Participants who attempted to name other models of consultation confused them with service delivery frameworks within which consultation can be used rather than being an alternative model of consultation:

**Psychologist 3:** *There's the Monsoon model*

**Interviewer:** *The Monsoon model...?*

**Psychologist 3:** *I mean Monsen [chuckles], Comoira and Wagner's model. I've read through her [Wagner] writings on consultation and using the consultative approach and models ... no not many. (Psychologist 3)*

No evidence, however, emerged from my data to suggest that EPs in Pantysgawn had to adhere to the Wagner Model of consultation to the exclusion of other models. As the PEP put it:

*I would say that all the EPs have a good understanding of what they are trying to achieve within the framework [they personally prefer to use] and the term framework is used in its loosest sense.....there is a broader aim in what you are trying to establish by using consultation and it doesn't matter how you get there, as long as everyone gets there eventually. We wouldn't particularly subscribe to one model of consultation in the service; it's evolving in terms of what we do fundamentally and is applied very broadly across the service. I think EPs will have slightly different expertise e.g. some may use PCP techniques or solution focussed methods and other systemic approaches and I think the advantage to that is you add something to the team of psychologists in terms of expertise as long as the team of psychologists you are working with understand the broader aims. (Psychologist 9)*

This extract suggests that there was no consistent approach to service delivery in Pantysgawn. Yet other EPs felt that this was a problem when it came to monitoring, recording and evaluating outcomes and outputs:

*The main issue in [Pantysgawn] at the moment is monitoring and evaluating our service and I do think that having more consistent approaches would help with this and get more valuable and reliable feedback you know as in what's been done, what's been done well maybe. (Psychologist 2)*

The PEP also recognised that a consistent approach would have advantages. For example, schools would have a better understanding of consultation if a more consistent approach were adopted, but she felt that EPs should be able to bring their individual skills to the process in order to achieve the broader aims of the service:

*I think the advantage to that (being free to develop your own approach) is you add something to the team of psychologists in terms of expertise as long as the team of psychologists you are working with understand the broader aims. (Psychologist 9)*

Others agreed that having to adhere to one prescribed way of working (that is, having a consistent approach to service delivery) would hinder the work of EPs:

*I do think certain individuals have particular skills they have picked up over the years and if they did not get to use them, then that would be a shame as we can all bring different things to consultation. (Psychologist 5)*

This view was also reflected in the responses of EPs who felt they could choose to interpret consultation in the way that best suited them. Psychologist 3's response typifies this view:

*It's up to the individual, I think it is as the individual sees fit and a lot of it depends upon the interpretation of the individual. I guess people don't like being restricted and they need to be able to work in a way that they feel more comfortable with and can feel, because of the different nature of problems that they may be dealing with every day. I don't think one model would necessarily be effective for every case and some things you just have to try and change as and when you see fit, so I don't think if you want to use a model that you could stick to it for all your cases and what kind of impact that would have. So actually a bit of variance, a bit of variety and flexibility are paramount. (Psychologist 3)*

This suggests that it is down to the EPs professional judgement how to practise and that it how they preferred things to be. However, evidence also emerged from a trainee EP to suggest that, at least at this stage in a career, EPs would benefit from having more direction:

*I don't fully understand or am particularly clear on what [Pantysgawn's] model of consultation is. [I feel] confused and I don't think it's good for [Pantysgawn] and I'm not sure everybody fully understands and it seems like there is lots of variation and that's just my own sort of view. I don't feel that I use the Wagner in its purest sense, it's the model that's out there as the dominant model of consultation and then services adapt it to meet their needs. (Psychologist 1)*



This can be interpreted as being indicative of the stage in their career that Psychologist 1 is at. Yet it might be that a more consistent approach to consultation would provide further clarity to all EPs, irrespective of their level of experience, on how best to practise consultation and what new skills and knowledge needs to be developed to obtain good outcomes and outputs.

The above extract from Psychologist 3's interview suggests confusion between principles guiding practice and the practices themselves and there was evidence that they were unclear whether consistency was necessary at either level or both. Psychologist 2 confused executive training frameworks such as Monsen et al. (1998), COMOIRA (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008), which consultation models such as Wagner's can work within. Wagner's model is considered as an overarching therapeutic framework in its own right (Wagner, 2008) that provides frameworks for consultations with teachers, other school staff, children and young people and with multi-agency groups. Wagner's model does not provide a problem solving cycle as executive training frameworks do:

*I wouldn't say I subscribe to one model in particular, but as part of my training course we used COMOIRA. (Psychologist 2)*

Whilst Psychologist 2 used the COMOIRA framework, others used the PDR (Plan, Do, Review) executive training framework within the Wagner model of consultation.

However, it was the Wagner Model of consultation that provided a template for recording consultation in Pantysgawn, and this might go some way to explaining why it emerged as the dominant, if not the only model, of practising consultation. Although there were no worked examples provided which would have demonstrated the specifics of how this template could be applied in practice. This is an issue I return to below.

When it came to reflecting on how their daily working practices could be improved to achieve better outcomes and outputs for children, young people, families and schools, my interviewees were unanimous in feeling that the main barriers to EPs working effectively with schools was due to schools perceptions of the role of the EP. Schools, they believed, perceive the EP as a gatekeeper to additional resources and statutory assessments as is evidenced in the following interview extracts:

*Some schools just see us as a hoop to jump through to try and get additional support so it's almost like when you go in, they just want an assessment percentiles, scores so that they can present that to the additional support panel. (Psychologist 1)*

*If a school's agenda is involving the EP to ensure that the young person goes through statutory assessment and receives additional support and neither of those things happens then the school might say this has not been a successful intervention, but from an EPs perspective that may not be the most essential outcome for the child and family. (Psychologist 9)*

Generally it was felt that this could be rectified by providing schools with more information and training in the consultation approach. The following extracts typify this view:

*We provided schools [3 years ago when we first started using the consultation approach] with a definition of consultation and summary of information about what would happen in a consultation and provided them with a feedback form so they could see what it is that we would be providing them with. (Psychologist 9)*

*Perhaps we do need to have more direct consultation or training with schools as a whole and as a team get together and talk to them about what it is that the service can offer, how we work and why we're choosing to work in that way, so they understand exactly why when an EP arrives at the door, that it's not always going to be get a BAS or get WISC, that it is going to be a more collaborative service. (Psychologist 2)*

The evidence suggests that my interviewees saw the problem of misunderstanding the EPs role as being due to schools' lack of understanding of the EPS rather than vice versa. That is, not one of the interviewees suggested that they may not always be giving schools what they want. On the contrary, they felt that schools were generally very happy with the service they received even although they did not fully understand the EP's role. Although one of my interviewees felt that more time spent working with individual schools would improve their perceptions of the EPS:

*I always feel that when schools get more time from us, they are more inclined to do what was agreed if they know you are coming back in a fortnight and when you've got that positive relationship with you they're more likely to go with you on that, whereas if you nip in on odd occasions and don't come in until the next term, then that relationship is just not there. (Psychologist 7)*

But there was also evidence that it was not just schools but some EPs themselves who did not fully understand their role and their own special expertise and skills.

*I see myself as not being in the position of being an expert, but more of a facilitator and a guide... and them (clients) needing somebody to facilitate them in clarifying their thoughts ... so I see myself more as a facilitator than an expert. (Psychologist 2)*

The problem of not seeing themselves as an expert with specialist expertise might well stem from their role as a facilitator, which is in line with the Wagner model of consultation. This might suggest a degree of deference to a way of practising rather than greater self-awareness of what they have to offer as a service. Whilst Wagner advocates that the EP brings a Psychological perspective to a problem (e.g. (Farrell, Woods, Lewis, et al., 2006), there is a strong emphasis on facilitating the expertise of others involved in a given case. As facilitators EPs are required to draw out and draw on the expertise of others, as Psychologist 7 put it:

*In some instances they want ideas and strategies and approaches and they would like to be prepared with those sorts of things, but they also need to recognise their own expertise individually and as a school, so they need to be made aware of the schools and the knowledge that they do have and they need to be encouraged to use that to tackle any arising issues. (Psychologist 7)*

This quotation recognises the importance of partnerships and schools not having solutions imposed on them. It is useful at this point to contextualise the above interview data and offer concrete examples of consultation in practice. The three examples that follow are intended to capture the detail of how EPs in Pantysgawn went about their daily work, the sort of cases they became involved in, and the kinds of problems and dilemmas they faced in their day-to-day practice.

## **4.2. Examples of Consultation**

My purpose in this second part of chapter 4 is to gain deeper insight into the role and expertise of the EP from a careful examination of examples of consultation in practice in Pantysgawn (see appendices 11a-8e for a more detailed account of each exemplar outlined below).

### **4.2.1. Exemplar 1: Example of my use of consultation**

Child A is a year 3 boy at the School Action Plus stage of the SEN Code of Practice. He had previously been involved with a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) teacher with little impact on his rate of academic progress.

EP involvement was agreed at the annual planning meeting, which is the usual opportunity for schools to prioritise the children they feel are most in need of EP involvement. Child A was identified as a key priority due to the level of input he had received from other agencies having very little effect on his attainment levels. School sought parental consent by parents signing a planning in partnership (PIP) form. This form also records the reason school requested EP involvement, information on other involved professionals, strategies attempted by school and current National Curriculum levels.

A classroom observation of the child and a meeting with school staff (SENCO and Class teacher) and parents was then conducted, where further background information and the outcomes of the observation were discussed. This was the opportunity for school and parents to expand on their concerns, discuss their expectations from EP involvement and identify their child's strengths through the EP's use of solution focussed techniques. The meeting closed by agreeing actions, which included obtaining more recent information from SALT on their involvement. This was recorded in a written consultation record with the family and school.

SALT identified Child A had expressive and receptive language difficulties, but a cognitive assessment was required to identify whether this was specific or representative of his general ability. The results of the British Ability Scales (2<sup>nd</sup> edition – BAS II) indicated a specific language impairment and identified his visual and spatial abilities as a key strength. These informed a set of recommendations for the school to implement into his IEP (Individual Education Plan) to be reviewed 6 weeks later by agreement between myself and school. Tragically during this period the boy's mother died unexpectedly, which significantly changed the focus of this intervention. The 6 week review date was reconsidered until Child A returned to school and I offered the school advice and support on childhood bereavement.

The eventual review of the visual/ spatial strategies revealed that they were successful when working 1:1, but he was unable to retain this in class without support. School were continually offered bereavement support as this would have an effect on his progress, but this was declined as he was coping well. It was agreed to conduct a multi-professional meeting as school had done everything they could with mine and SALT's recommendations. Here it was agreed further support was required and that he should remain in his current school with additional support despite him meeting the criteria for a Specialist Speech and Language class at another school, which was deemed

inappropriate given his recent bereavement. The decision on the application for additional support is currently pending.

This case represents an example of an EP working within a PDR framework (Beaver, 2003).

#### **4.2.2. Exemplar 2: Example of my use of consultation**

Child B is a year 8 girl excluded for 35 days from school for truanting and fighting. She had lived with her Granddad under a care order, but currently lives with a friend's family by her own choice.

I was introduced to her during a Social Skills group prior to her exclusion. She was not identified by the SENCO at the September planning meeting as she was no concern then. School became concerned the following March, but they did not request EP involvement as she was involved with the Behaviour Support Service (BSS). My concerns about her meant that I kept her on my case list for potential involvement.

A meeting was held with the Pastoral Head (PH), who divulged information about Child B's home life, circumstances leading to her exclusion, attempted strategies and key strengths. The female PH was identified as the key member of school staff in supporting her in school due to their positive relationship.

The PH briefed me on Social Service's involvement as there were concerns about abuse in the home. We agreed Child B would benefit from a nurturing approach given her traumatic childhood and unsettled home life and that I would meet Social Services and the Granddad. Granddad informed me, Child B did not like living in an all-male household. This meeting used solution-focussed approaches to help him identify his Granddaughters strengths and an Auntie as a positive female role model.

Social Services had no recent input since the exclusion. A joint EP/ Social Worker visit was conducted to her present home, where Child B said she missed school and wanted a fresh start. We agreed to meet the PH to discuss her return to school. The family she was staying with reported she was no longer engaging in any anti-social behaviour such as staying out late and substance abuse that had been a factor in the deterioration of the relationship with Granddad. However, due to previous Social Services involvement with the family, the Social Worker did not approve of this current placement.

I planned to use Psycho-dynamic techniques e.g. *The Blob People* (Wilson, 2004) or Personal Construct techniques e.g. *Drawing the Ideal Self* (Moran, 2008) as it would enable me to understand the causes of Child B's behaviour. EPS rules prevent this kind of work to be carried out without the presence of the carer e.g. Granddad (Pantysgawn County Borough Council, 2009b), which was not appropriate for this case. An attempt to carry out this work with Granddad present failed when he and Child B had an argument on their way to school, but was later completed by a female BSS teacher, without Granddad.

The BSS teacher agreed to continue her input and a final meeting was held with the PH where it was agreed that she would be the link person. Child B would have a phased return to school would contact the school when home from school. School agreed to engage in further training from the EPS on children from difficult homes.

#### **4.2.3. Exemplar 3: Example of consultation provided by Psychologist 2**

Child C is year 12 boy at a special school who has a statement of SEN for an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) with severe difficulties in the areas of communication and behaviour. This EP worked within a PDR framework.

The request for EP involvement was received in advance of planning meeting, where it was agreed to carry out a consultation with the Deputy Head Teacher and Class Teacher where school requested the EP's opinion on Child C. This consultation explored the teacher's opinion of Child C's progress in class, current successful strategies and the boy's interests.

School were concerned about Child C's social communication skills. School's primary concern was regarding the time of day that Child C was arriving at school due to a series of 'obsessional routines' he carried out before getting embarking in the taxi that to school.

A post-consultation classroom observation was conducted after the consultation followed by the EP sharing her thoughts with school staff. The EP helped school to identify Child C's strengths and areas for development. This resulted in the psychologist working with the Home Support Worker (HSW) to target the identified issues.

A consultation meeting with the HSW aimed to define how best to support their work with the family who was involved with the family for a number of years. Her concerns repeated the schools

and that he can be violent towards his mother. The HSW identified success in using visual timetables to manage changes to his morning routine. She expressed she would like EP advice to develop strategies to get Child C from the front gate to the taxi. The psychologist agreed to carry out an observation of Child C with the HSW at home.

This Second observation at home with the HSW observed Child C attempting to get into his taxi. The EP produced a time referenced account of the procedure Child C undertook before getting into the car. She used her psychological knowledge to inform Child C's motivation behind his actions. She hypothesised from this that Child C was experiencing anxiety about attending school. She recommended that Child C needed opportunities engage in a lengthy conversation with his mother to relieve his anxiety, but needed clear boundaries on the duration of this conversation. By drawing upon her knowledge of good practice for children with ASD, the EP developed an action plan in consultation with the HSW and boy's Mother. Visual aids and egg timers were used to create a rigid routine where Child C would be allowed some time for this anxiety relieving conversation rewarded by the taxi driver allowing him to choose a CD or book of his choice. The agreed actions stated the HSW should carry out the actions to implement the plan.

An annual review meeting was held later in the term with the parent, SENCO, HSW and EP present. This revealed that the agreed action plan was successful.

#### **4.2.4. Exemplar 4: Example of a consultation meeting provided by Psychologist 7**

Child D is a 14 year old boy for whom school had expressed concerns regarding his erratic behaviour. This consultation followed on from an initial consultation meeting with school. As a result of this first meeting, Psychologist 7 was aware that school had no concerns about this child until the current term. The purpose of this meeting was to prevent a potential exclusion that the school was threatening as a result of his bad behaviour which included the use of inappropriate language and "touching" other children. The first meeting with school also discussed how this boy was easily influenced by other students, lacked concentration and had underdeveloped comprehension and articulation skills.

Psychologist 7 asked a variety of questions that explored any social and environmental factors that may have led to this change in behaviour. She also asked school what the boy's current attainments were in order to establish whether there was any pattern to the boy's change in behaviour that might link to any changes occurring in schools or any patterns. Social and environmental factors were also discussed to explain school's concerns regarding Child D's poor concentration. This

revealed that the boy was able to maintain concentration on the computer so long as he was winning a game or if he was doing a more practical activity such as building a Lego model. She also explored the boy's strengths and interests.

As this child was in Year 9, Psychologist 7 asked questions about what options the boy wanted to take in Year 10 and whether he came across as anxious about progressing into year 10. This revealed that although the boy liked being independent, his mother felt that he was anxious about having less support as he moved into Key Stage 4.

The mother's belief that her son had Asperger's Syndrome was also explored further, which revealed that he was socially isolated and had an obsession about the cleanliness of eating implements. This had been previously investigated by CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) two years previously, but was turned down due to a lack of information. The mother also felt that there had been a change in her son's behaviour since a recent change in medication that the boy was on to manage his aggressive behaviour. Psychologist 7 also explored any potential environmental factors at home that coincide with this change in behaviour, which revealed mother had a new partner, but the Mother repeated that the change in behaviour coincided with the change in medication.

At the end of this meeting all parties agreed on a series of actions, which included strategies to address the concerns about Child D's concentration and some common strategies for supporting children with Asperger's Syndrome. Psychologist 7 also agreed to copy her report to CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) to support a re-referral to their service.

#### **4.2.5. Exemplar 5: Example of a consultation provided by Psychologist 3**

Child E was a year 9 boy who had been home educated for over 6 months at the time of the meeting. The Mother had withdrawn her son from mainstream school as she felt that school were unable to address her concerns about her son's diagnosed Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) and Dyslexia. The purpose of this meeting was to gather more information in preparation for the forthcoming transition review.

Pantysgawn EPS has a policy that an EP should be present at all Year 2, 5 and 9 key stage transition reviews, if a parent requests one. The mother of this boy requested EP involvement in order to seek advice on how to help her son with his concentration difficulties. This request was communicated to the EP by the school SENCO at his previous school.



A home visit was carried out where the EP intended to work through the standard format of a consultation meeting in Pantysgawn EPS. This starts by obtaining background information to establish which other services were involved and why the boy was home educated. The EP also discussed the mother's concerns and her son's strengths. The mother also provided examples of her son's work to demonstrate the level of progress made since he started home schooling. An important part of this meeting was to establish what the mother's hopes of EP involvement and what would indicate a successful outcome from this EP involvement.

This established that the mother wanted further guidance on how to address her son's concentration difficulties and what courses he would be able to access at the local college. The EP, Child E and mother discussed what it looks like when they are undertaking a lesson in the home. This revealed that there were often a lot of distractions due to the large number of pets in the home. Child E commented that he wanted to do more practical subjects as he was particularly skilled at wood work.

The EP was concerned that Child E was missing out socially from not attending school, but he explained that he still saw his friends in the evenings and weekends at played for a local football team.

The EP, mother and Child E then set about addressing their concerns about concentration by agreeing on a series of recommendations that used the boy's love of pets and practical activities as a reward. It also considered the home environment and set about establishing a set area for doing school work in order to avoid any blurring of boundaries between work and leisure time that may arose as a result of being educated in the home. The EP then agreed to come back and review these strategies in 6 weeks and agreed to contact the Careers Advisory Service for the transition review.

#### **4.2.6. Reflections on the unique role and expertise of the EP**

The EPs unique role and contribution is arguably unclear in the above Exemplars. The assessment in Exemplar 1 could be provided by another professional but might lack the detailed psychological interpretation of an EP. Ashton & Roberts (2006) survey reveals SENCOs highly value the experience and knowledge behind an EP's assessment.

All these exemplars demonstrate EPs drawing upon psychology to inform their hypotheses and intervention. This enabled them to highlight the factors e.g. social and environmental influencing a child's behaviour or strengths and develop appropriate actions. EPs use their consultation skills to empower class teachers/ service users to adopt these actions, by using a non-instructive consultative approach.

The EPS policy on parental involvement in assessments (Pantysgawn County Borough Council, 2009b) is due to the PEP's philosophy on promoting transparency. This encourages schools to engage in a dialogue with parents even where their relationship has deteriorated. It enables EPs to observe parent/child interactions during the assessment process. Exceptions to this rule do exist, but are not widely known by the EPS.

EPs are able to fulfil a more general role beyond the narrower scope of an Advisory Teacher due to their wider knowledge of SEN. EPs have unique skills when gathering information through consultation and coordinating other professionals whilst applying their psychological knowledge to generate action plans. These skills are best applied to gather information from individuals who have the most expertise and through their daily contact with these children, which is in the spirit of Wagner's approach to consultation. The EP works through this third party as they are best placed to implement these actions.

All five exemplars demonstrate the contributions schools/ service users value most from EPs including bringing expert advice, working closely with parents, having a close link with schools and providing an extra perspective (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Consultation is demonstrated as a unique skill in all 5 exemplars, but more explicitly in exemplars 2 and 3 where it was used at all stages from the planning meeting onwards. They also demonstrate the use of solution focussed techniques and elements of Symbolic Interactionism, PCT and Systems Thinking, which are elements of Wagner's (1995) approach to consultation, most notable in exemplars 4 and 5.

The alternative to consultation is the referral model of service delivery. This is where EPs work almost exclusively with individual children. It involves administering tests followed by a brief chat with the teacher about what the test revealed, then by a report containing some advice for the teacher. The difficulty for both teachers and EPs with this approach was in trying to make a link between the recommendations and their everyday practice (McNab, 2009).

#### 4.2.7. Measuring success through recording and monitoring processes and outcomes

A variety of templates were used to record the outcomes of these 5 exemplars. Planning meetings were recorded using a planning meeting record sheet, which was sent to the school to keep track of the children they had prioritised. For short meetings such as reviews of strategies and recommendations a shorter record of school visit was generated to record the outcomes of these review meetings. Longer consultations were recorded using a consultation record, which largely dictates the structure of a meeting. This includes sections on the background, aims and hopes of EP involvement, concerns of parents and school, strengths, hypothesis and advice given and actions to be taken and by whom and arrangements for the next meeting if required and reflects the consultation record supplied by Wagner (1995). All records were shared with the concerned parties and kept on a central database for all LEA staff to access.

The success (or otherwise) of an intervention is measured by reviewing the recommendations and strategies on a date agreed by the EP and other relevant parties. The degree of success an intervention has achieved is usually based on qualitative accounts of a child's progress by those directly involved or, where appropriate, is reflected in quantitative data such as any improvement in attainment or attendance levels, depending on the nature of the case. If there is no progress then the EP intervention continues. This again is in keeping with the spirit of Wagner's model of consultation.

The data emerging from all of the records kept and reviews held are then manually entered by the EPs on to a data base that records a large amount of personal information, including the child's name and address, their stage of the SEN code of practice, the date of referral, dates of all the meetings and details of the intervention. This is a lengthy process as the database requires the EP to repeat the same information for each visit, when the most important information required is the outcomes of the meetings and the methods used, as recommended by Wagner (1995).

## Chapter 5 - Issues Emerging

The findings presented in part 1 of the previous chapter indicate that the Wagner model of consultation heavily influenced EPs in Pantysgawn, although there was no rigid rule about how this model was to be put into practice. Whilst other models of consultation were available, there was little evidence to suggest that Pantysgawn EPs were aware of the details of these other models to a sufficient degree to put them into practice in their own work. It was also evidenced that this narrowing of focus onto one model of consultation was due the dominance of the Wagner model in EPs training (initial and in-service) and subsequent experience. In spite of the dominance of the Wagner model there was little evidence of 'ownership' of it as a way of practising in the sense that only one EP drew heavily her own practice to justify its value and point up its effectiveness. Others typically referred to guidebooks and other literature and give textbook replies to my questioning on definitions and models of practising educational psychology.

The lack of knowledge amongst EPs in Pantysgawn about other models of consultation is an issue of some concern and thus worthy of further reflection in this thesis, especially given that EPs were free to develop their practices and their own ways of working. A related issue, also worthy of some reflection here, was the degree to which there should be consistency across the EPS whilst balancing prescription with individual EP freedom to develop their own practices. There were mixed views amongst the EPs in Pantysgawn with regard to this latter issue.

A third issue that emerged from the data worthy of some reflection and discussion was the fact that, at least some EPs, denied their expertise. Partly because of this finding, a further level of analysis was conducted on five examples of consultancy in practice to tease out the unique expertise the EP brought to solving challenging problems in their day-to-day work.

Whilst it is recognised that there are limitations to having provided 2 examples of my own use of consultation (e.g. a degree of bias), this is justified by my use of consultation being shaped and developed by observing my colleagues within Pantysgawn EPS and is therefore representative of the practice of consultation in Pantysgawn EPS. This can be seen in the similarities in the processes and techniques that the examples provided by additional EPs share with my own consultation examples.

A fourth issue that emerged concerned how EPs can effectively measure success through recording and monitoring processes and outcomes in ways that are not over-burdensome and take EPs away from their front line work. To provide a context for mounting this discussion later in the thesis, how

this is currently done was described in some detail through reflecting on the three examples of consultation in practice.

Last, but by no means least, there was a view which was unanimously amongst Pantysgawn EPs that, at least some schools if not all schools, intentionally sought the involvement of the EPS in order to gain access to resources i.e. EPs perceived that they were perceived as the gatekeepers to certain resources needed by schools. EPs interpreted this as schools demanding that they continue in their traditional role of assessing individual children rather than the more progressive service that the EPs felt they are capable of offering using their preferred consultation model. It was of interest therefore to get the responses of the school personnel on this issue. It is this that is the focus of paper 2.

It is only when the views of this key client group (i.e. school personnel) are known and considered alongside the views expressed in this paper by EPs in Pantysgawn, that a fuller picture will emerge. It is for this reason that I have chosen to discuss the points raised above at the end of paper 2, rather than in this chapter, where the findings of both papers have been amalgamated.

## **PAPER 2**

# **WHAT DO SCHOOLS WANT FROM AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE? A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF SERVICE USERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE IN WALES.**

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### **Abstract**

Paper 1 study looked at EPs' perceptions of using consultation. Very few studies have looked at service users experiences in consultation based EP services. Paper 2 therefore looks at schools' perceptions of the EP service and considers the benefits and barriers to effective service delivery using a thematic analysis of interviews with staff from 5 primary and 3 secondary schools. Findings suggest that schools continue to regard the expertise of the EP as being a provider of individual assessments, but they also revealed an awareness of the wider systemic role that EPs can provide. This traditional view of the role of the EP is discussed in terms of a wider systemic pressure for schools to seek this kind of EP intervention due to the Local Authority's (LA) focus on statutory assessments.

Schools appreciated a greater continuity of EPS staff as this helped them to develop more productive working relationships and they wanted more time with the EP. The findings suggest that the level of bureaucracy and the statutory assessment requirements to gain access to targeted resources were a barrier to working more effectively with schools. The paper ends by integrating these findings with the paper 1 findings and discussing the key element of the EP's role, whether a consistent and rigid adherence to one practice model is practicable or desirable, and the various ways that EP services can monitor outcomes to alleviate some of the bureaucratic processes.

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

### **1.1.1. Purpose**

This second paper looks at school staffs' views on working with Pantysgawn EPS. It investigates what schools want from an EPS by eliciting key staffs' perceptions of working with the service. The findings will be used to contribute to the overall service development plan and will seek to develop consultation, develop methods of evaluating service delivery and sharing good practise in Pantysgawn EPS.

### **1.1.2. Context**

This paper is carried out in the same context as Paper 1 by adhering to the same WAG and LA priorities on school improvement and developing service delivery (see appendix 1).

### **1.1.3. Rationale**

Very little evidence exists in the research literature on schools experiences of working with EP services and what they actually want from the service. The literature strongly advocates consultation as a model of service delivery, but there are few examples of schools' experiences of working in this manner. This paper seeks to elicit these views from Head Teachers and SENCOs in order to explore what schools actually want from a Welsh EPS . It ascertains schools views on the role of the service, the benefits of EP interventions and barriers to effective working with the view to improving the way the service monitors and records these interventions.

## Chapter 2 - Selected Literature

### 2.1.1. School requirements from an EPS

There is very little research available on what schools actually want from an Educational Psychologist. From the available research it appears that schools value spending time with the EP. Authors who looked at service users perceptions of using consultation revealed that service users felt that more time was needed to carry out effective work with the EP service in which the research was conducted (Coopers and Lybrand, 1996; Farouk, 1999; Pennick & Lagunowitsch, 2010).

Dennis (2004) was the most prominent work on service users' experiences of working with an EPS that has implemented consultation as a service delivery model. Dennis (2004) interviewed SENCOs and analysed the data using a grounded theory approach. 22 schools were selected, where it was felt that consultation had been introduced most effectively.

In a study of EPs perceptions on the implementation of consultation, Farouk (1999) addressed many of the issues that Dennis (2004) commented on including that of the role of the EP and school attitudes towards the inclusion agenda. Unlike Dennis it did not directly seek the views of teachers working with EPs; rather it looked at EPs perceptions of working with schools from 30 EP services in England and Wales, producing 120 responses. Although Farouk (1999) did not specifically focus on the views of school staff, it did provide a useful account of what EP services perceive to be as the factors to promote effective service delivery to schools.

Farouk (1999) highlighted factors for delivering successful consultations such as the need for collaborative working, allowing enough time for consultation, teachers not seeing the EP as an expert and being empowered to take ownership of the presented issue and the need for more parental involvement. Farouk concluded that consultation is threatened by EPs not being able to invest enough time to consultation due to the time spent on administrative tasks. This could be reduced by adopting a more consistent approach to service delivery that would allow for more effective monitoring, evaluation and review of EP services.

Kelly & Gray (2000) conducted a national study of the services schools had received from EP services. This revealed that EP services were not very effective at marketing the range of services available to schools. The most common service received from schools was advice and assessment for children at stages 4 and 5 of the SEN Code of Practice, but there were far fewer references to EPs being involved in systemic and preventative consultation work. Whilst this is a national study and offers some ideas



of the types of work being delivered to schools, it does not say anything about the types of work that schools actually want from an EPS.

Ashton & Roberts (2006) surveyed 58 primary schools in one English borough, of which 22 schools returned responses and found that the advice giving role of the EP was the most highly regarded feature in the role of the EP. The SENCOs were asked what they value about the EP role, the most dominant responses being the EPs role as an advice giver and a provider of statutory and individual assessments. The more systemic role of the EP was a much less dominant theme in their study, which suggests that despite EPs regarding it in high esteem, schools might not necessarily have the same opinion.

### **2.1.2. Role of the EPS**

The most detailed study on schools perceptions of an EP service was conducted by Lancashire County Council in 2008. Key findings from their survey of 128 school staff revealed that the EP service is best known for its assessments of individual children, offering advice on managing behaviour and learning needs and producing statutory assessments (Pemberton, 2008). Given these findings schools were satisfied with the service they were receiving, but the report does not detail if the service was working through consultation at the time of writing. These findings indicated that it is not a consultation based service as they do not reflect the ethos of the types of work a consultation based service should normally be engaged with as recommended by the likes of Wagner (1995).

Pemberton (2008) revealed that schools in Lancashire generally wanted more time with their EP, easier ways of contacting the service, greater consistency in staffing, more EPs and for EPs to produce reports in a timely manner. This study was a quantitative study and only reveals statistical data on these features. It did not provide any evidence of the contents of users' individual responses so one cannot gauge the context of these findings. It however provided a limited yet useful idea of schools' perceptions of an EP service.

Other studies into schools' perceptions of the role of the EP repeated the themes of Pemberton (2008) such as their role being to carry out individual assessments and time pressures being a barrier to conducting systemic work in schools (Pennick & Lagunowitsch, 2010). This was considered as a valuable aspect to the role of the EP alongside the EPs relationship with the school, carrying out statutory work, providing advice and being an expert (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

There are many studies on the perceptions of EPs around their role and purpose, but none looked at the views of schools. With this in mind it is important to outline some of the key theoretical aspects that have emerged on the role of the EP that exist within the literature, although this represents the views of the EP profession.

### 2.1.3. The role of the EP

The DfEE (2000) defined the purpose of the EP is “to promote child development and learning through the application of psychology by working with individuals and groups of children, teachers, and other adults in schools, families, other LEA officers, health and social service and other agencies” (DfEE, 2000: p388).

This BPS defined the role through 6 generic criteria summarised below:

- Develop, implement and maintain personal and professional standards and ethical practice.
- Apply psychological and related methods, concepts, models, theories and knowledge derived from reproducible research findings.
- Research and develop new and existing psychological methods, concepts, models, theories and instruments in psychology.
- Communicate psychological knowledge, principles, methods, needs and policy requirements.
- Develop and train the application of psychological skills, knowledge, practices and procedures.
- Manage the provision of psychological systems, services and resources.

(BPS, 2006)

The key themes running through these 6 criteria are seen as central to the EP’s role in applying psychology to problems they meet in their everyday practice (Farrell, Woods, Lewis, et al., 2006).

Beaver (2003) discussed how the role of the EP is coming “under scrutiny” from central government and therefore “it is important to consider the effectiveness of the ways we deliver our service and ensure we are cost effective intervention agents” (Beaver, 2003: p1). Beaver (2003) described EPs as being “expensive” in the context of their role as “identifiers of children’s special educational needs, within the local authority” (p1). Beaver (2003) commented how in authorities where this is the case, there tends to be a reluctance to increase the number of EPs. If there is to be further delegation of

special needs resourcing to schools, then EPs “will need to demonstrate their effectiveness with casework, not merely represent a gateway to resources” (p1).

Beaver’s view on the role of an EP sees them involved in enhancing children’s learning and not in identifying problems and deficit in functioning. This view focuses on the problems in the system that prevents the child from fitting into it and looks at changing elements within the system to best suit the needs of the child. This means changing the system of influential adults and identifying the resources within this system to include these children. This does not require the drafting in of extra resources and can be seen as giving psychology away to those who work closely with these children e.g. school staff. The role of the psychologist can therefore be to “change the attitudes and behaviours of the adults rather than creating detailed interventions for the child” (Beaver, 2003: p2). In order to successfully achieve this, EPs should be adept at building rapport and hypothesising and information gathering. The EP is in effect the agent of change, using their psychological skills to bring this about by giving psychology to those best suited within the system to initiate it.

Norwich (2005) questioned whether the role of the EP is that of an expert with a privileged position in generating and validating psychological knowledge and comments “ It might be that we do as regards generating and validating but not using, which has relevance to the precarious position of professional psychologists” (Norwich, 2005: p389). Norwich (2005) drew on the work of (Schonpflug, 1993) to illustrate how there are two distinct traditions in Psychology, the ontological and the pragmatic traditions. The pragmatic tradition of psychology was developed before the establishment of psychology as an academic discipline in our universities. This existed in the form of trans-disciplinary psychology that was largely applied to education and medicine. This was part of the training of these disciplines, where it existed in the form of textbooks, largely to do with teacher training (Norwich, 2005).

Educational psychology has largely been influenced by other fields of practical psychology such as counselling and psychotherapy, along with practices and theories from education and mental health. Norwich (2005) saw the role of academic psychology “to generate basic theories as well as being a base for using scientific methods directly to address practical issues” (Norwich, 2005: p390). More recent work by Fallon et al. (2010) has looked at the overall literature on the role of the EP and made the following conclusions:

*EPs are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people (CYP), 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, Woods, & Rooney, 2010, p. 4).*

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods**

### **3.1. Research Aims and Questions**

The research highlighted above has revealed that there is very little evidence of what schools perceive as being the role of the EP or on what they want from EP services. The purpose of this current research is to provide an in depth qualitative study on schools perceptions of the role of the EP and what it is they particularly value. It will also be an attempt to look at what schools perceive as being successful outcomes when working with an EP with the view to looking at ways of improving service delivery.

This piece of research aims to supplement the aims of the Paper 1 of this study by exploring schools' perceptions of their experiences of working with the EPS in Pantysgawn.

#### **3.1.1. Research Questions**

This paper aims to address the following research questions:

- 1) What is the role of the EPS as perceived by school staff and what are their expectations of the service?
- 2) What are the benefits and successful outcomes of EP intervention?
- 3) How can better working processes be facilitated?

### **3.2. Methodology and Design**

As with Paper 1, this second paper used a similar methodological approach aimed at gaining a detailed understanding of interviewees' views and a similar qualitative interpretive design.

Interview data were collected, transcribed and analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

### **3.3. Participants**

Participants were selected by the PEP based upon obtaining a selection to represent both Primary and Secondary schools across the 3 regions in Pantysgawn County Borough, these are labelled as North, Central and South. Nine semi-urban schools were selected to take part in this study. These included three comprehensive schools and 2 primary schools from each locality. One primary school had to withdraw from the study due to not having the time available to participate.

**Table 2: Paper 2 -Participants Details**

Region	Type of School	Name of school	Details *	Number of pupils *	Member of staff interviewed	Length of time working in school
1 – North	Comprehensive	C1	Welsh Medium – mixed catchment	1450	Pastoral Head	30 years
	Primary	P1.1	Deprived Area	150	SENCO	3-4 years
	Primary	P1.2	Withdrew from study – Deprived	124	Head teacher	Approx. 15 years
2 – Central	Comprehensive	C2	Mixed area	950	SENCO	1 year as SENCO
	Primary	P2.1	Deprived area	220	Head teacher and SENCO	20 years
	Primary	P2.2	Mixed area	550	Head teacher	9 years in LA
3 – South	Comprehensive	C3	Mixed area	800-850	SENCO and Behaviour Manager	11 years
	Primary	P3.1	Deprived Area	193 pupils	Deputy Head	6 months

\*data provided by participating school and most recent Estyn report

Schools were selected by the PEP and their Senior Managers to represent a wide geographical and socio-economic cross section in Pantysgawn. These schools were then invited to take part in this study via email and telephone. The members of school staff that volunteered to take part were those who had the most contact with the EPS. These were all SENCOs or members of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

### **3.4. Interview Schedule**

The design of the interview schedule followed the same semi-structured approach outlined in Paper 1, Chapter 3. Questions were developed in discussions with the PEP and followed the same principles discussed in the previous paper.

### **3.5. Data Collection Procedures**

Selected schools were issued with a copy of the research summary (see appendix 8), the interview schedule (see appendix 12) and a consent form (see appendix 9) so that they could prepare for the interview in advance and thus address any potential anxieties.

Interviews were conducted during February and March 2011 in quiet offices of the participants' choice in their own schools. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the author of this paper. Copies of these transcripts were returned to the participants for them to review. No transcripts were returned.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using the same Grounded Inductive approach advocated by Braun & Clarke (2006) as described in Paper 1, Chapter 3. As with Paper 1, 2 randomly selected transcripts were sent to the same independent rater in order to seek a level of inter-rater reliability as advocated by (Hayes, 1997). The rater was able to identify many similar codes to those of the author (see appendix 13 for a comparison of these codes).

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

The BPS Code of Conduct provides guidelines on issues regarding respect, confidentiality, safeguarding and informed consent (BPS, 2009), which were considered during all aspects of this study. All participants were issued with a copy of summary of the research summary (see appendix 8) the interview schedule (see appendix 12) and consent form (see appendix 9) before the interviews took place. Transcripts were also presented to the interviewees for them to review (see appendix 14).

## Chapter 4 - Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the evidence emerging from paper 1, there was a unanimous perception in the EP service that, at least some schools if not all schools, intentionally sought the involvement of the EPS in order to gain access to resources i.e. EPs were perceived as the gatekeepers to certain resources needed by schools. EPs interpreted this as schools demanding that they continue in their traditional role of assessing individual children rather than the more progressive service that EPs feel they are capable of offering using a consultation model. It was interesting therefore to get the responses of the school personnel I interviewed when I asked them directly how they perceived the role of the EP. By and large, the evidence supported the view of the EPs I had interviewed for paper 1. EPs were seen as the gatekeeper to resources that were available to children with statements:

*Well I think the main priority for them is working with children with statements and a lot of time is spent undertaking assessment. (P3.2)*

However school personnel's views were more nuanced than this quotation, taken at face value, might suggest, and that the EPs interviewed in paper 1 generally thought.

*I see it [the EPS] as a support service and I see it to provide support for the school, the children in the school and the families of those children for when the normal range of services that we can offer as a school prove not to be effective. (P2.2)*

*Obviously, it's a supportive role, I would hope that the role is to facilitate us in getting the best out of the pupils we have in front of us. (C3)*

Whilst school personnel were aware of the wider and more progressive role to the EPS, they were also aware that that the problem of prioritising individual pupil assessment was imposed on them and beyond the control of both schools and the EPS:

*Here I think unfortunately many of the priorities from the school and the service come from outside, we can if we are not careful see the priority as the assessment of individual children and that's not because the school or schools are not enlightened by the fuller role that that educational psychology can provide... Sometimes the LEA puts pressure on its self for the EP to play this role, so for example sometime applications for additional support are considered to have more weight if there is a report from an EP. (P2.2)*



*From a school's point of view... very often EPS involvement is a gateway to further services, so there is that benefit if we can get agreement from Educational Psychology on whoever needs input. [Assessment of individual pupils by EPs to gain access to resources is] a useless waste of time and the time was obviously becoming increasingly squeezed, so in essence what you had was a rubber stamping process. That is not particularly useful; it's a waste of your time and a waste of mine. (C3)*

*[if I called in the EP to assess a pupil]...they then would take work off me and refer them on to OT or speech and language. (P3.2)*

The evidence therefore suggests that whilst school personnel understood the wider role of the EPS and the range of support services they could offer schools, due to pressure from the system, the traditional role EPs performed had to be a priority for schools as this was the only means to accessing the additional resources and specialist services that was targeted on a child who had a statement. But first the EP had to be called in to assess the child's suitability for receiving a statement and so gain access to these resources. As C3 put it, this was basically a 'rubber stamping process', which neither they nor the EP had any control over and would prefer not to be the case.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that the main benefits schools considered as obtained from EPs was perceived as being in the context of helping individual children and their families as well as the teachers who teach children needing specialist help:

*I guess the benefits [of the EPS] are being able to get more advice and support for the children to help meet the children's needs. (P1)*

*Sometimes um it's just the support, the thought that things are being done and that things are moving forward for every parent that is the most important thing for them and I think that can have a big impact. (C3)*

*With the pupil it's about helping them with whatever their needs may be and I suppose it's for them to know that we are concerned about them and through a team effort somebody is helping them by providing advice and support really. (C2)*

These responses suggest that the wider systemic context in which both schools and the EPS find themselves is influencing both parties' perceptions of one another, what needs to be prioritised and what is possible within the available resources. From a schools' point of view, the most valuable input from the EP comes from their gate-keeping role, hence the reason they emphasise this

traditional EP role. The corollary of this is that, if an EP intervention does not lead to additional resources being forthcoming, the intervention may be deemed unsuccessful by schools and this is problematic. Currently there is a proposal to do away with statements and for schools to seek EP interventions to gain access to resources to change (WAG, 2008b)

It was felt that since the EPS was external to the school and had a wide range of experience of similar problems and how others were dealing with these problems, this gave EPs a certain expertise that was lacking within individual schools. And in cases where EPs did not have the expertise themselves they would know where it could be found:

*So you can offer me that expertise can't you, so you might say, so and so tried this and you'll think great I didn't know that also you know exactly where to go to get help. (P2.1)*

And being 'an outsider' brought with it a certain status, authority and distance:

*Sometimes I think families will find it easier to talk to an outside person than to talk to us as it can help to supply more information and sometimes don't always see the seriousness of the issue with their child and talking to that outside person can help highlight those concerns. (P1.1)*

These two quotations evidenced schools' recognition of the intermediate role the EP can play for both schools and families. An important aspect of the EPs role, from the school's perspective, was their expertise in diagnosing specific difficulties with a view to targeting resources on the problem once diagnosed:

*Now if you can diagnose a syndrome or some "ology" and you put appropriate support in, then that is going to help a great deal straight away. (P2.1)*

Time emerged in paper 1 as an issue that might go some way to improving outcomes for children, their families and their teachers. Time also emerged as an issue when school personnel were interviewed but the focus was on the lack of availability of EPs due to the increasing amounts of bureaucracy involved in monitoring and recording practices. This the teachers felt left less time for EPs to work with schools and that this was a problem that needed to be alleviated through better communication about the service delivery model used by EPs in Pantysgawn.

*Well the referral process needs to be looked at because of the AMOUNT of paperwork and the AMOUNT of forms you have to fill in and every time you have a meeting you need to photocopy all the forms from the meeting before. (P3.2)*

As in this response, from school personnel's perspective, there was a time issue associated with the bureaucracy surrounding the referral process. It was felt that this took EPs and teachers away from their 'front line' work:

*I think the time on the ground [doing the important aspects of the job] is very important and I think to be generous with time and advice at the level with the classroom teacher and pastoral heads is important. (C1)*

It was clear from several of the responses that schools wanted EPs to prioritise what they (the schools) perceived as the important aspects of their job rather than spending time on the 'back office' bureaucratic processes. Schools wanted to use the EPs' expertise at both the individual child and whole school levels to help alleviate difficult and challenging problems:

*We would like you [to help] with the training and expertise you have developed to enlighten us as a school with what more can be done for that child, because then the focus is on about equipping the school to provide that service for the children rather than it being an unsustainable "you come you fix it and you go away. (P2.2)*

A further time-related issue, which is apparent in the above response and in the following one, is one concerning the need for continuity in working with the same EP over a period of time.

*... trying to retain staff, making sure staff are linked to children so they do see the bigger picture from start to finish. (P2.1)*

In Paper 1 Psychologist 7 also expressed this view. EP7 stated that outcomes and perceptions of each other's roles would be improved if "more time [were] spent working with individual schools". It would seem that some EPs too, such as Psychologist 7, also valued continuity of working with the same school, children and families over time as this was an important basis on which relationships could be built leading to better outcomes and outputs.

As paper 1 evidenced, in their wish to put themselves on a level playing field with their fellow professionals some EPs were playing down their expertise. But evidence in this study suggests that

schools value the EP's expertise in psychology, SEN and their knowledge of the support available to schools.

*More importantly, it's that expert advice of bringing knowledge and the wider picture of an evaluation, we talk about self-evaluation in school, but sometimes you need someone to come in from outside and ask if you have tried this or why don't you try that. So from school the support and the benefit is someone coming in with a fresh pair of eyes to look at what you have done and what more could be done if anything to help that child (P2.2).*

*Mainly because you share, you are far more knowledgeable on psychological issues than we are ... you have a grounding in psychology. (P2.1).*

Paper 1 also evidenced a degree of vagueness and lack of consistency in how consultation is practised in Pantysgawn. Only one interviewee mentioned consultation (P1.1), which might suggest a lack of a familiarity with this way of working which would concur with the paper 1's findings. EPs saw the main barrier to progression within their role as schools not understanding how consultation works.

*I know [Psychologist 5] has come in and had a chat with us about ways forward without doing any sort of formal assessment, so the conversation's we've had recently have been a lot more helpful as they have helped us to know whether we are on the right track and doing the right thing, so we've been engaged in what do you call it... consultations. (P1.1)*

There was also a time issue for schools around having to release staff to consult with EPs.

*I then think it comes into, well I think if there was time - which as I said is one of the hurdles in actually doing whole school and whole department training on certain issues so that the support in the school is sustainable, so that you are training up the staff in that school to do what needs to be done ...but I have to qualify that sometimes the pressure on schools is not that we don't know what needs to be done, we just don't have the resources or the time. (P2.2)*

*...I think the time on the ground is very important and I think to be generous with time and advice at the level with the classroom teacher and pastoral heads is important and I think that at the moment that time is not available. (C1)*

This suggests that EPs need to develop a greater understanding of their fellow professional needs, how schools work and what their priorities are particularly with regard to SEN. Thus whilst EPs in paper 1 felt that schools needed to develop a greater understanding of the EPS and the new role of the EP in the context of consultation, it would seem the reverse is also the case.

## Chapter 5 - Discussion (Paper 1 and Paper 2)

### 5.1. The role and expertise of the EP

Although the school personnel interviewed in paper 2 held similar perceptions of the role of the EP to those of the EPs interviewed in paper 1, the paper 2 data revealed how school personnel had no choice other than to use the service to gain access to resources. This, they put down to the wider policy context in which both EPs and schools operate, which requires them to get a pupil assessed and statemented by an EP before schools can get a formal diagnosis so as to gain access to resources aimed at helping that pupil's identified needs. So, despite being aware of the wider and more progressive role of the EP, schools are forced to prioritise this aspect of EPs work. One implication of this is that the service cannot engage in as much preventative work as schools and EPs might otherwise prefer. Farrell et al (2006) also made this point.

Whilst the EPs were inclined to play down or even deny their expertise, the school personnel valued their distinctive and effective role particularly with regard to diagnosing specific problems, alleviating these problems and/or identifying expertise that lay elsewhere. This was also apparent in the reflections on the EPs role in the context of the 5 examples of practice in paper 1 revealed whilst there is an element of overlap with related professionals; EPs have unique access to a range of psychological input. Also they are uniquely positioned to co-ordinate the skills and knowledge of their fellow professionals around the needs of individuals and groups.

The similarity of the role of the EP to other professionals has been the subject of much debate most notably in the works of Ashton & Roberts (2006) and MacKay (2002). Ashton & Roberts (2006) noted that other professional do a similar job, but the EP's unique role according to SENCOs was their ability to provide psychological advice for statutory assessments. Whilst they acknowledged that this advice and assessment could be offered by Advisory Teachers, the SENCOs in their study felt the resulting information lacked the quality and experience of that supplied by an EP. The EPs in their study suggested their unique skill was to provide consultation, but this was not recognised as a valued skill by the SENCOs. Ashton & Roberts (2006) suggest that the EPs approach and perspective are different to that of other professional, but the issue for discussion was whether this would be enough to justify the existence of the profession when Local Authorities seek to make spending cuts. Ashton and Roberts (op cit) argue that SENCOs value the EP's unique perspective, but they do not elaborate any further about what it is about this perspective that is valued or why a Clinical Psychologist cannot provide this role.

MacKay (2002) regards the position of the profession as “being rather odd” and questions why the profession exists. Despite this he sees a bright future for the role of the EP where they fulfil a role of being applied psychologists and have a link to academia and apply the latest developments in educational psychology through working with schools. This would address the trend of EPs spending more time on overly-bureaucratic processes. He sees psychology as being central to tackling the world’s problems given that education is central to society. He argues, “If educational psychology cannot carve a bright future out of that, then what profession can?” (MacKay, 2002, p. 248). According to Mackay, perhaps this in itself is sufficient justification for the existence of the profession.

MacKay (op cit) argues that the focus EPs have on statutory work is too narrow and that it is time for a broader role as more applied psychologists. With the current UK government’s focus on improving and measuring emotional health and well-being to steer government policy (Stratton, 2010), then EPs could make a significant contribution in this area with their educational and psychological knowledge. With this in mind EPs could be involved in fostering learning and achievement by raising literacy levels and improving behaviour in schools, which will bring about positive changes in society such as lowering crime rates, having a more skilled work force and therefore a stronger economy (MacKay, 2002).

Arguably Clinical Psychologists could carry out this role, but EPs have a greater knowledge of schools and school communities than their Clinical colleagues. The EP is therefore in a unique position to carry out research in educational settings in order to develop policy and practice, but in order to achieve this, services will require a strong research and development programme (MacKay, 2002). MacKay (2002) concludes that the professions future is in our own hands - it is time to take the lead and influence the influential and become instrumental in shaping educational policy and practice by using our knowledge of psychology and move away from the narrow focus on statutory work and bureaucratic procedures.

Paper 2 evidenced how schools are aware of the expertise EPs bring with them and hold the EPS in high esteem. This finding is in keeping with that of others (Ashton and Roberts, 2006). So why then were EPs in Pantysgawn so reluctant to point their skills and knowledge out when interviewed? One possible explanation is that the principles underpinning the Wagner model of consultation encouraged deference to the expertise of others. This is however a misinterpretation of their role in the consultancy process using the Wagner model, which will now be explained further.

Wagner does not advocate EP's deskilling other professionals. On the contrary, she advocates that the EP brings their expertise from a psychological perspective. This view of the EPs role in the consultancy process is reinforced by Farrell et al., (2006). However the problem may lie in the fact that Wagner does not go on to specify what "bringing their expertise from a psychological perspective" means in practise. By this it might mean that she is referring to consultation's three underlying principles of PCT, SI and Systems Thinking.

Wagner (1995) proposes that EPs should be experts in the skills of consultation, which arguably includes its three underlying principles. This therefore requires the EP to be alert to socio/environmental influences, establishing patterns of behaviour and the ability to explore a child's constructs of the world. Then if required, the EP should set about consulting with and coordinating the relevant associated professions, based upon the EPs interpretations and hypothesis from the consultation meetings.

A further problem is that the expertise that schools in this study wanted was the EPs ability to provide expertise on advice and strategies. It is this that Wagner (2000) potentially considers as deskilling and creates a position of power for the EP. EPs were evidently aware of the Wagner model through their training providers. Also Wagner's ideas on the EP as a facilitator of the expertise of others appear to have created a stigma amongst EPs that seems to be preventing them from valuing their own psychological expertise. It is argued here, however, that this is a misinterpretation of Wagner's ideas, which are more concerned with an acknowledgement of EP's unique expertise and unique ability to facilitate the expertise of others (professional and lay) in the consultation process.

The EP is able to draw upon their psychological knowledge and apply this to working within a range of settings. This includes their ability to coordinate other professionals such as advisory teachers who may have more specific expertise in areas such as literacy or behaviour. The EP is aware of the skills of others and can facilitate the expertise of others to solve highly complex problems. Farrell et al (2006) also identified this coordinating element of the EPs role.

Where the expertise of others is in short supply or not available within the school's local community, there is a danger that this coordinating role could result in the EP taking on expertise that is not primarily theirs. In this way they become "generic workers" (Farrell et al, 2006, p112) unable to develop their own expertise. There is little evidence to suggest that this is the case in Pantysgawn.



The evidence presented in this thesis highlights a conflict between the idea of EPs being experts in SEN related issues and the view that Wagner holds on the expert role of the EP using their psychological skills to help solve problems. Norwich (2005) suggests EPs should have an awareness of the latest theory by being the link between the academic theory and its application in schools, this effectively means they are experts in the application of psychological theory, which could satisfy the highly regarded expert role that schools in Paper 2 value. This has been recognised by Farrell et al. (2006) who referred to EPs' academic background and training in psychology as factors that enable them to make a distinctive contribution, which would be enhanced by the influx of doctoral level TEPs entering the profession. As Paper 2 suggests schools value this expertise so much then EP services such as Pantysgawn should encourage opportunities for EPs to develop their expertise further.

This study, in common with previous work (e.g. Ashton and Roberts, 2006); the EP is highly regarded as an expert advice giver. The responses from Pantysgawn suggest that schools value the unique skills of the EP to provide an extra perspective to a situation, but the role of the EP to provide individual assessments and provide access to resources are strong themes. The theme of improving the learning experience was frequent in this study, but was also vague and without specific examples that would help clarify what schools actually meant by this. Yet in this study and that of others (e.g. Kelly and Gray, 2000) there were hints of conflict between what schools want and what EPs want to offer. This situation is likely to be further complicated by EPs not always agreeing on what their role is or being able to state clearly what their role is.

Some (e.g. Kelly & Gray, 2000) have argued that the EPS needs to be clear about its role in order to work effectively with related professions. Perhaps this is even more important when there is a danger of pigeonholing the EPS. This study found that schools are most familiar with the EPS' ability to offer assessment and intervention and also recognised the service's aim to improve services to children, young people and families, but they were less aware of the more preventative and systemic work the EPS had to offer due to their perception of the role of the EP as a gatekeeper. The motivation on the part of schools to seek EP involvement around statutory assessments is likely to change altogether in 2013 when the outcomes of a consultation on reforming the statutory assessment process is published, which is likely to end the current system (WAG, 2008b). Should the proposed changes in Wales follow a similar model to that in England then schools will be responsible for their own SEN budgets, which they use to buy in services as they require. This has led to many services in England adopting a traded model of service delivery and has, in turn, led to much

reflection about what is valuable and unique about the role of the EP, when placed alongside other related professions.

## **5.2. Developing practice: Rigidity v flexibility**

Whilst the EPS in Pantysgawn took a flexible approach to service delivery by not prescribing any one consultation model, it emerged from the paper 1 data that one model, the Wagner model, was used to the total exclusion of other possible models. Evidence from the five exemplars and the interviews provides examples of the principles of Wagner's Model of consultation being adopted and applied to practice. This includes evidence from the interviews that suggests EPs in Pantysgawn consider themselves as facilitators that promote the expertise and skills of school staff, rather than being experts themselves. However, evidence from Paper 2 would suggest that schools value the EP's specialist and expert role.

All five exemplars demonstrate the EP working with school staff or, in the case of Exemplar 5, the parent in order to facilitate change. This again is where Wagner believes EPs are most effective in working at this level, rather than with the individual child. The exemplars also demonstrate elements of the three underpinning principles of consultation in action as well as solution focussed psychology, which are core to Wagner's model of consultation. This is evidenced in the Psychologists involved in these exemplars considering social and environmental factors in attempting to explain behaviour (Symbolic Interactionism), involving individuals in understanding their behaviour (PCT) most notably evidenced in Exemplar 2 and 5 and Systems Thinking notably evidenced in Exemplars 3 and 4, where the EPs have attempted to establish whether there are any patterns to the behaviour of the children in these cases.

Elements of Wagner's model of consultation are also used as a service delivery framework, such as the use of planning meetings, review meetings and in the templates that EPs use to structure these meetings. However the PEP demonstrated that this framework is used in its loosest sense and EPs therefore use a variety of problem solving and service delivery frameworks such as PDR and COMOIRA, but evidence from the interviews and exemplars suggest that Wagner's principles guide the delivery of the service in Pantysgawn.

Evidence from Paper 1 suggests Pantysgawn EPS have interpreted the Wagner (1995) approach to consultation in its own way, which puts emphasis on parent participation in the assessment process. This resulted in a policy of not carrying out any assessment or individual work with a child unless a parent is present. Yet there is no evidence in Wagner's work to suggest that there should always be

parent/carer representation during an assessment, but she does encourage transparency, which is one of the principles behind Pantysgawn's Assessment policy. In fact Wagner (1995) acknowledges the place of individual assessments done both directly and indirectly with a child. This suggests that the Wagner approach to consultation in its purest form is flexible and dynamic enough to appreciate the context in which an assessment should be carried out. Wagner's model of consultation advocates working at a more systemic level as this is where change can occur more effectively through the person who is most concerned, but she also allows for the provision of work to be carried out an individual level so long as there is a clear explanation to those involved about the procedures and purpose of the intervention.

There are circumstances in Pantysgawn, where an EP can carry out an individual assessment without a parent/carer present, such as if it is a piece of therapeutic work or through written consent from the parent/carer to allow a teacher, TA or SENCO to be present. But there was little or no evidence that EPs in Pantysgawn were aware of these alternative arrangements. As one of the cases discussed in paper 1 highlighted, Pantysgawn needs, to ensure that EPs are clearer about the principles behind this policy and the alternative arrangements that exist when parent/carer participation is not possible or not considered appropriate.

Some commentators have argued that a more consistent approach to consultation is necessary in order to developing practices (e.g. Dickinson, 2000; Wagner, 1995a). Some of the EPs I interviewed in paper 1 agreed but others did not arguing that too much prescription would stifle individuality and discourage EPs from tailoring the way they worked to individual needs and contexts. There was considerable evidence from both school personnel and EPs that Wagner's approach was not being practiced in Pantysgawn to its full potential. This was partly due to the continuing pressure at the time for writing for statements as part of the statutory assessment processes, which limited commitment to engaging in more systemic and preventative work. As indicated above, this is a situation that is currently under review.

Not sticking rigidly to the Wagner model may be a good thing as some (e.g. Larney, 2003) have argued that the processes EPs are required to operate within are too rigid. Pantysgawn uses group consultation approaches based upon Evans (2005) as an additional tool to use with school staff on a half termly basis. This approach has been widely praised in the Pantysgawn's evaluation reports of participants, but the service has experienced low attendance levels at these sessions. Pantysgawn EPS is currently reviewing this process to see how they can improve participation in these sessions.

There is also a fear amongst some psychologists that the dominance of consultation takes EPs away from individual child focused models of service delivery. Norwich (2005) sees this as “the proper domain for educational psychologists” (Norwich, 2005, p. 391). Wagner (1995 and 2000) however argues that consultation can work at all levels, but is more effective at a systemic level where the EP can change the system or the environment in which the child is placed.

Wagner (2008) believes that schools’ value the systemic approach using solution focussed, narrative approaches and appreciative enquiry more than an individual assessment. This, however, presupposes that the EP involved has sufficient training in consultation to be able to do this. The evidence from the interviews with the EPs in this study and a study of the service documents suggests that solution focussed approaches have been widely adopted in Pantysgawn. Wagner (2008) highlights “when a service has made a commitment to consultation, but there is insufficient on-going development of consultation, the relevant knowledge and skills will fail to develop and in those cases, inevitably, frustration will occur” (Wagner, 2008: p 159). It would seem then that Pantysgawn EPS needs to continually review how it practises consultation with the aim to develop it further to meet the wider needs of the LEA and avoid these potential frustrations if this is the model of service delivery with which they wish to work.

Whilst Wagner’s model provides frameworks for consultations with teachers and school staff, with children and young people and with multi-agency groups, it does not provide a problem solving cycle as the executive training frameworks do such as Monsen et al. (1998) or COMOIRA (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). There was some evidence in paper 1 that EPs confused these executive-training frameworks with models of consultation, but the principles of consultation were recognised by all of the EPs. This would have very little effect on the practise of consultation as it can be practised within these training frameworks.

### **5.3. How can the work of EPs be properly monitored and recorded without incurring undue bureaucracy?**

#### **5.3.1. Increasing time available for EP involvement**

The planned abolishment of the statutory assessment process (WAG, 2008b) poses a threat to one of the core roles of the EP. This could be embraced as an opportunity where removing the EP from this gatekeeping role severing links between funding and extra resources (Kelly & Gray, 2000) enables EPs to apply their psychological skills more effectively across settings most notably by doing more direct work with children (Farrell, Woods, Squires, Rooney, & O'Connor, 2006) and involves

them in more preventative work directly linked to school improvement (Kelly & Gray, 2000) and thus increases the amount of contact schools have with their EP.

More consistent working practices (Wagner, 1995) can help to reduce the amount of bureaucracy and reduce pressures on time. Pressures on schools to allow staff to consult with the EP must also be considered. Dennis (2004) suggests SENCOs having closer links with their Senior Management Teams (SMTs) to enable a greater understanding of SEN issues within schools so SMTs therefore appreciate the need to allow more time for staff to deal with them.

### 5.3.2. Monitoring Outcomes

The EP profession has developed various methods of monitoring the effectiveness of their work. This emerged as one of the keys to improving working practices in the present study. The models developed by fellow professionals (see appendix 15 for examples) include those by the AEP (2009), Dickinson (2000), Turner et al (2010), 360 degree feedback (Sharp, et al., 2000) and Target Monitoring Evaluation (TME) (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai, & Monsen, 2009). There are some problems with these. For examples, evaluations using service users perceptions of EP services depend on the quality and type of working relationships EPs have with their clients and may therefore influence their judgement on the effectiveness of the service (Sarah Turner, Randall, & Mohammed, 2010). This raises the question as to whether this is viable evidence or not. Taken together however, the five models of evaluation provide a variety of ways of communicating the outcomes of EP work at different levels of detail and to different audiences. Some provide more robust measures of outcomes using lengthy qualitative procedures e.g. 360° Feedback and Turner et al's (2010) model, whilst others such as TME are criticised as being too reductionist (Sarah Turner, et al., 2010). The AEP (2009) model is aimed at inspectors, whereas Dickinson's (2000) model is more transparent and aimed at schools. A system of evaluating outcomes should be manageable for EPs to complete alongside their other duties. If it is considered too lengthy a process or too labour intensive to complete there is likely to be little commitment to using this model of evaluation.

The adoption of more consistent approaches to service delivery aides the establishment of evaluation mechanisms and a greater appreciation of the consultation process (Dennis, 2004; Dickinson, 2000; Wagner, 1995, 2000, 2008). These services claim schools feel more empowered and less likely to want EPs to carry out more traditional types of work, whilst engaging more in the consultation process (Mac Hardy, et al., 1998; Munro, 2000). Consistency can be achieved with the use of scripts (Gillies, 2000; Kerslake & Roller, 2000) and time allocation frameworks as proposed by (Wagner, 1995).

Although Pantysgawn has made some attempts at monitoring its effectiveness, the measures it currently uses are based on quantitative data such as the completion of Appendix D reports on time and informal feedback from consultations. There is no formal mechanism for recording these outcomes, but an attempt has been made to establish a database of outcomes, which needs more time to embed itself before its usefulness can be judged. There are a variety of methods and procedures used by EP Services across The United Kingdom and this current study has outlined some of these, which could be used in Pantysgawn. Whilst TME (Dunsmuir, 2009) provides an easy to use method of recording outcomes, it has been criticised as being too reductionist (Sarah Turner, et al., 2010) and Pantysgawn should consider using a model such as Turner, et al's (2010) for monitoring the effectiveness of their casework. Some of the mechanisms for this such as peer supervision and line management are already in place in Pantysgawn, but the service would need to establish greater consistency in its model of service delivery and use of consultation evaluation forms, to achieve a more reliable and comparable method of evaluation

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

There were a number of key themes that emerged from the Pantysgawn schools involved in this research. There were no distinct patterns to schools' responses such as primaries having different perceptions on the role of the EP to secondary schools or any regional specific issues. This may have been down to the small sample sizes available to this study and would require further investigation. Service users in Pantysgawn recognise the benefits of EP intervention and there is a desire for more EPs and EP time. This may reflect the high esteem in which they appear to hold of the service. The wider systemic role of the EP is recognised by service users, but the dominance of the role of the EP as being seen as a gatekeeper suggests that they are prevented from working in this way due to a system that prioritises statutory assessment.

Paper 1's findings indicate that most EPs of Pantysgawn prefer not to establish a more consistent model of service delivery as they feel that this will stifle their individual skills. However, by establishing a more consistent approach, it was argued, would allow service users to be clearer about the role of the EP in Pantysgawn and provide the service with a mechanism for evaluating their work and demonstrate to stakeholders the effectiveness of their interventions.

It is recognised that although this is a small scale study carried out in a single Welsh Local Authority, no work such as this has ever been carried out in a Welsh context and it is interesting that despite the differences in Education Policy in the devolved powers of the United Kingdom, this study has

produced very similar findings to previous works such as (D. Kelly & Gray, 2000) and (Farrell, Woods, Squires, et al., 2006). It is also interesting that despite the work of Kelly & Gray (2000) that many of the issues raised in their much larger study still exist. One implication of this is, that at this time of greater accountability, EP services will need to work harder to prove their value by listening to service users and being adaptive, where appropriate to their needs and requirements. As services in England move towards a traded service model of service delivery EP services need to be clearer about what makes them unique and valuable compared to related services such as advisory teachers and behaviour support services. Pantysgawn can take from this research that it is a valued service in the eyes of the schools that provided information. But, at the same time, it needs to recognise that there are some frustrations around issues such as over-burdensome bureaucracy that prevents EPs from working in a truly consultative way.

#### **5.4.1. Personal/Professional Learning**

Paper 1 of this study has enabled me to develop my understanding of what consultation actually is, how it is practised in Pantysgawn and how Wagner suggests it should be practised. It has also enabled me to seek a greater understanding of the principles that underpin consultation and what it is about this practice that makes it such a widely used method of service delivery.

Paper 2 has increased my awareness of what schools want from an EP. Prior to this study I was curious about why schools were so keen to request individual assessments with an EP and appeared fixated with seeing the EP as a gatekeeper to resources. This study has enabled me to explore this further and has revealed that schools do value more preventative work from EPs, but are unable to access this, due to pressures on them to adhere to the statementing process. This has therefore changed my perception of schools, which led to me enquiring further about the plans to alter the statementing process and the way EP services have adapted to meet these changes. I have also expanded my awareness of the ways services monitor the effectiveness of their outcomes.

Prior to starting this research, my experience of qualitative research methods was limited. By choosing this approach it has enabled me to develop my skills in this area, through my experiences of conducting interviews, transcribing and then analysing and interpreting the data. These skills could be used in any future research projects that I may find myself involved in during my career. They are also valuable to my daily practice as an EP

### 5.4.2. Recommendations

Based upon the findings discussed above and their place in the wider body of research I have reviewed, there are several recommendations that emerge from these two papers:

1. EPs have a role that is often hard to distinguish from other services and therefore, given the potential changes to the role of the EP in the statementing process, which was considered by participants in this study as one of the primary roles for the service, Pantysgawn EPS needs to establish greater clarity with service users about the boundaries of their role and the wider services they are able to deliver. This could be communicated in the form of a service level agreement, which is shared with schools at the start of each academic year in the annual planning meetings.
2. Establishing greater consistency in the way the service is delivered may enable the service to monitor the effectiveness of its work with service users. This will also enable greater flexibility for the individual EPs in the service to cover one another's cases should there be any long term staff absences. This could be achieved by committing to a consistent service delivery model such as Wagner's (1995) example. Through being able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the outcomes of its work with service users it will enable the service to prove the value of its work and justify its existence alongside professionals that can offer similar services and enable service users to be clearer about what to expect from the service.
3. Pantysgawn EPS should conduct a skills audit in order to establish what interests and expertise currently exist within it. This will enable the service to identify any gaps and have more clarity about what the service can offer, should it face becoming a traded service.
4. Provide EPs with adequate opportunities for professional development in line with the recommendations of McKay (2002). The service could use its monthly team development sessions for at least one EP to summarise a research paper they have read containing ideas they recommend in order to share these with the rest of the team.
5. Establish greater awareness among service users about what the service can offer. Market the service through information leaflets or a termly newsletter that outlines its achievements and work it can offer to schools.
6. It should also be recognised that schools want more EPs, more from EPs and more EP time, but due to the current economic climate, it is unlikely that the service will be able to recruit more EPs. The service must therefore be more flexible in how it can deliver its service to schools with the resources it has. One potential solution might be to re-establishing its Group Consultation sessions with schools such as the service that was initiated by Evans (2005).



7. Seek links and advice from English EP services that have recently experienced the changes and challenges that Welsh EP services face as part of the proposed changes to the statutory assessment process in 2013.

## 5.5. Contribution to knowledge

Paper 1 provides new insights into what influences EPs to use consultation and offers new understandings of how EPs could work more effectively with schools. Paper 2 gave new insights into what schools perceive to be the role of the EP, the kinds of EP services they valued, and the ways in which EPs could make improvements in their work with schools.

Taken together these two papers offer fresh insights into the practice of consultation in one EP service. They offer an in depth view of the relevance of consultation to EP practice and reveal that what schools want from an EP service is linked to wider LA pressures, which, in turn, limits the ability of the EP to work in a truly consultative preventative manner.

This research comes at a time of potential great change to the role of the EP and EP services in the UK. English EP services have had to change the way they deliver their service as schools have been greater autonomy over their budgets and the control of the LA over schools has decreased. This has led to services being delivered in a traded manner where schools have more choice over the type of service they can buy into. This has increased competition in terms of what services can offer and has led to the erosion of geographical boundaries, where services have been offering work to schools outside of their traditional geographic areas.

As similar changes are proposed for Wales in the not too distant future, it is likely that services will face similar pressures and challenges and opportunities to those experienced in England. These two papers therefore offer fresh insights within a Welsh context of what schools want and find valuable from an EPS and pose questions concerning the extent to which the current practice of EPs will meet these new challenges and opportunities and how services will demonstrate their effectiveness in this new era.

## 5.6. Strengths and Limitations

The greatest challenge to this piece of work was the tripartite relationship between the university the LA and I. This means that this research has been largely shaped by the needs of the Local Authority (Pantysgawn EPS) in which I am placed. This authority is also the authority where I will be

continuing my employment in September 2011. There was thus a degree of pressure to produce a piece of research that is relevant to Pantysgawn EPS's needs, whilst at the same time meeting the requirements of the university. This has also meant that it has been more difficult to adopt an entirely unbiased or over-critical view of the processes used by the service, due to concerns over how this might affect my future career in the authority. Whilst every attempt has been made to be as objective as possible, this context will inevitably have influenced the degree of objectivity that has been possible.

In order to achieve a valid view of the effectiveness of consultation and what schools want from EP services, I originally planned to engage schools from more than one LA, but my placement service would not allow me the time to do this. Had I been able to do this, the study would have acquired the views of schools and EPs from a wider range of personnel and thus gained further insights into the practice of consultation and schools' views on EP intervention. However, it is acknowledged that whilst this would have almost certainly gained further insights into the profession as a whole, the data from other services would not have been of interest to Pantysgawn EPS who original commissioned the study.

Whilst the methods chosen for this study have provided a rich dataset on EP practice and the practice of consultation in particular, it is recognised that Larney's (2003) criticism of consultation research applies to this current work. Arguably, however, a quantitative enquiry would not have provided the richness of data provided by this study.

It is also acknowledged that there are limitations to having used my own examples of consultation for the purpose of this study. Three examples were provided by other EPs, but this was the maximum number of examples obtainable within the time available to complete this study. Although I have used my own examples, these are representative of the use of consultation in Pantysgawn as my practice has been shaped by placement in the service by observing other EP's in the service and through my supervision sessions and discussions with my colleagues.

The fact that the focus has been on just one EPS service might at one level mean that the study's wider applicability is limited. However at another level the study of one particular case using in depth interviews provides a microcosm of EP practice from which theoretical principles can be drawn. So, in conclusion, whilst this study does not seek to generalise the practice of consultation in Pantysgawn to all EPs in Wales and beyond, it does seeks to generalise the psychological theories

influencing consultation and its practice. These tentative generalisations are “...analytic, not sample to population...” (Miles & Huberman, 1999, p. 28).



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1- Relevant Policies

By looking at improving the work of EPs use of consultation it is intended that this piece of research will contribute to meeting the following EP Service, LA and Welsh Assembly Government priorities:

- Improving the overall practice of EPs to:
  - Facilitate the improvement of emotional health and wellbeing.
  - Facilitate the improvement of outcomes for vulnerable groups.
  - Facilitate the improvement of literacy and numeracy.
  - Facilitate the improvement of pre-school and primary school planning.
  - In meeting the recommendations of the National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) (Reid, 2006).
  - In meeting the principle aims of the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) (WAG, 2008a).
  - Achieving better learning outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people.
  - Reducing the variation in learning outcomes within and between classrooms, schools and local authorities.
  - Improving the practice of multi-agency working.
  - Improving the effectiveness of intervention and support.
  - In supporting the process of Self Evaluation in schools for the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) (Estyn: Her Majesties Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, 2004, 2010).



## Appendix 2 - Literature Review

# Literature Review

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### **Defining Consultation in the context of Educational Psychology Services.**

Consultation is an approach used by Educational Psychologists (EPs) and has become a widespread method of practice since the 1990s (Leadbetter, 2006). Patsy Wagner has been a keen promoter of the use of consultation within services in England and Wales, having carried out work with over 20 EP services in implementing consultation based practice (Wagner, 2000).

Wagner (1995) describes consultation as “a process in which concerns are raised and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated which combines exploration, assessment, intervention and review (Wagner, 1995: p2). According to Wagner, “there is no notion of a referral to a psychologist for assessment” (ibid: p2). Wagner’s model of consultation underpins Local Authority A’s method of consultation and involves working in partnership with schools towards promoting change.

Wagner (1995) describes consultation as working at three levels, individual, group and organisational, depending on the nature of the concern. These concerns can shift between the 3 dimensions e.g. schools raise concerns at the individual level and then this leads to work at the group and organisational levels. In order for a consultation to be effective, Wagner (1995) states:

“it needs to be clearly conceptualised firstly by the EP and then by the EP and the school. The EP will also need to have relevant and coherent frameworks for carrying out consultation which are accessible to the school and which support the work of the EP with the school and vice versa”

(Wagner, 1995: p3)

Jane Leadbetter (2006) states consultation has “a multiplicity of meanings” (Leadbetter, 2006: p20). Over the years since consultation was introduced to EP services, writers and practitioners have had the opportunity to develop and adapt the term to fit the environment in which the consultation takes place. Consultation shares characteristics with advice giving and psychotherapy, but the differences occur by consultation focussing on work related problems, in contrast to psycho-therapy, which focuses on the problem solving capacity of the consultee (Conoley & Conoley, 1990). Conoley & Conoley (1990) comment that consultation “is unlike psychothereapy in this narrower focus and avoidance of personal/intrapsychic material. Consultation is similar to therapy, of course in its use of an accepting, non-judgmental, empathic relationship as the mode of interaction (Conoley & Conoley, 1990: p85). They also comment “although advice may certainly be given by a consultant, the purpose of consultation is to enhance the problem-solving capacity of a consultee. This is not likely to be accomplished by merely providing new answers. In fact, over-reliance on advice may make a consultee quite dependent, this interfering with the empowerment goal of consultation” (Conoley & Conoley, 1990: p85). The goals of a consultant are to provide new knowledge, new skills, a greater sense of self-efficacy and a more perfectly developed level of objectivity in consultees. Advice giving does not achieve these latter three goals (Conoley & Conoley, 1990).

Consultation can be broken down into three categories, mental health consultation, behavioural consultation, and process consultation. The field of process consultation is largely dominated by the work of E.H. Schein (1999) and is mainly used in the business world and management consultancy. It attempts to make links between environmental factors and their effects on the working environment. It also focuses on the relationship between the consultant and the consultee and the changes in attitudes, behaviour, feelings and views, which occur as a result of the process. Leadbetter (2006) describes process consultation as “a useful model for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to adopt when aiming to work with and through teachers to improve children’s progress in learning” (Leadbetter, 2006: p20). Leadbetter (2006) thinks this model of consultation works well as EPs seek to effect change at a number of levels.

Wagner (2000) promotes consultation as a form of service delivery due to its ability to allow practitioners to be more creative and be involved in preventative action through joint problem solving work (Wagner, 2000). Leadbetter (2006) comments “there is little evidence of whether large-scale use of consultation has resulted in expanded practice for EPs” (Leadbetter, 2006: p21).

Leadbetter (2006) describes 3 uses of the term consultation within EP practice:

Consultation as a model of service delivery – huge variation exists in terms of how consultation is delivered.

Consultation as a defined task with agreed characteristics – e.g. as in process consultation where a SENCO or teacher is empowered via the process of consultation to promote change.

Consultation as a specific activity or skill – “bread and butter skill of EP work”, this is a less structured form of consultation and is described as “the most fundamental to the role of the EP in that when it is undertaken successfully, it can make the difference between an effective applied psychologist and one who is not listened to or valued by others they work with” (Leadbetter, 2006: p23).

Consultation is also defined as “interpersonal actions involving... an indirect problem-solving process between a [consultant] and one or more [consultees] to address concerns presented by a client” (Kennedy, Frederickson, & Monsen, 2008: p170). They comment that this can be a three way process, e.g. EP, Teacher, Child and identifies ten models of consultation including:

Mental Health Consultation (Caplan, 1970)

Behavioural Consultation (Bergan & Tombari, 1975)

Process Consultation (Schein, 1999)

## Theories underpinning consultation

Despite the variety of models of consultation, Kennedy et al. (2008), they all have common features e.g. “participation of consultees in problem identification/ analysis, working through consultees to bring about change and the belief that consultees acquire effective skills that can be subsequently applied to other clients” (Kennedy, et al., 2008: p170). There are also some differences in that models are underpinned by different psychological theories (e.g. psychodynamics and social learning theory), consultant, processes and responsibilities (Kennedy, et al., 2008). For example mental health consultation has its roots in psycho-dynamic principles and behavioural consultation comes out of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977b), whereas EPs in the United Kingdom are familiar with Patsy Wagner’s (1995,2000) models, whose principles stem from social-constructionist and systemic principles (Kennedy et al., 2008).

Wagner (2000) highlights several psychological models which are appropriate to consultation. These include symbolic interactionism (Hargreaves, 1972), systems thinking from family therapy (Burnham, 1986), personal construct psychology (Ravenette, 1997) and social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Macready, 1997).

Symbolic interactionism (Hargreaves, 1972) focuses on how meanings are negotiated and conveyed in social interactions. This looks at how people construct meanings of themselves and/or others and their actions and behaviour. The role of the EP is to understand this meaning the person has of themselves or others and their behaviour and actions. Symbolic interactionism sees behaviour as a function of the person and the situation and the persons understandings of particular situations are key to any change. Wagner (2000) comments:

At the classroom level, symbolic interactionism may draw attention to a range of features: expectations and attributions, social climate and groupings, views of self and others, reputations and audiences, styles of teaching and learning, curricular demands, and so on. This perspective also highlights a consideration for the EP role: whether working with the child or young person will contribute to possible imputations of deviance (Hargreaves, 1978). By working collaboratively with the significant others - teacher and then jointly with parents - ideas for making a difference to the situation develop.

(Wagner 2000: p13)

Consultation uses Systems thinking from family therapy by looking at repetitive patterns in social contexts, their development over time and how they connect to belief systems (Wagner, 2000). This



sees cause and effect as not being linear, but as a circular process where the person conceptualises a problem as a viewpoint or punctuation in of a sequence of behaviour. This punctuation can be self-defeating, especially if it is located within the child. Wagner (2000) states “ change occurs when individuals in the system make a paradigm shift to an interactionist and systemic viewpoint, so that the view of the problem changes from *within* the person to something that happens *between* people and, in this way, more possibilities emerge” (p13). This also looks at the interactions between members of the school community and the processes that occur between them. Systems thinking based consultation may highlight the developmental stage of the school, changes in the organisation, stressors on the school and so on, whilst using systems understandings to highlight the relations between school and EP (Wagner, 2000).

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (e.g. Ravenette, 1997) focuses on understanding an individual’s meaning of self and situations. Wagner comments PCP “is especially helpful when an EP is thinking about how to elicit a person’s constructs” (Wagner, 2000: p14).

Social Constructionism (Burr, 1995; Macready, 1997) looks at themes that emphasise the importance of “language in the construction of meaning, and how labelling, problem amplification and pathologising are constructed and can be deconstructed through language” (Wagner, 2000: p14). It also encourages professionals to avoid the language of deficit and seek more interactionist accounts of encountered phenomena.

Wagner (2000) concludes “For consultation to work in a complex context, a paradigm shift is needed from individual models of psychology to these interactionist and systems psychologies. Once that shift has been made, practices from other psychologies may be in use, but their style and the explanation of any impact they may bring will change” (p14).

The underpinning psychological theories of these models influence the actual process that takes place in the consultation and its content. Kennedy et al. (2006) use the example of behavioural consultation to highlight that behavioural consultants using applied behavioural analysis will engage in processes such as “identifying and analysing problems, implementing interventions and reviewing effectiveness” (Kennedy, et al., 2008: p170). This is investigated by analysing the content and style of the interaction otherwise “the what and how” of the process.

Extensive research in the United States (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999) has looked at the effectiveness of consultation but there are fewer investigations into the process of consultation. In order to

investigate this, Kennedy et al. (2008) recommend using the “espoused theory” and “theory in use” frameworks of Argyris & Schön (1974,1996).

### **Theory in use**

Argyris & Schön’s (1974, 1996) idea of “theory in use” involves looking at developing hypothesis and theory by looking at what people actually do. This involves looking at direct observable behaviour such as verbal messages to assess “theory in use”. Emphasis placed on what was actually said during the observation, which is essential to understanding the practitioner’s theory in use. The behaviour of these individuals in the consultation can be “congruent with a person’s” espoused theory (Kennedy, et al., 2008).

### **Espoused Theories in UK EP consultations.**

Kennedy et al. (2008) provides an excellent account of the espoused theories in use at the time of publications in UK EP services. They do not highlight staff consultation groups (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Farouk, 2004; Hanko, 1999) as they do not match their definition of consultation and are another branch of the consultation tree. They do go on to highlight Wagner’s (1995: 2000) work on consultation as being influential to several other pieces of research conducted by EP services such as Christie, Hetherington, & Parkes,(2000), Dennis (2004), Kerlake & Roller, (2000), Munro (2000)

### **How have services adopted consultation?**

EP services have adopted consultation using a variety of approaches. Some services have been radical and adopted it quickly whereas others have been much slower in bringing about change (Leadbetter, 2006). The service in which Jane Leadbetter (2006) worked adopted the slower approach to implementing consultation and the service carried out an investigation into the EPs understanding of the term as they found their understanding of the term was vague. This service wanted to promote an “inclusive” definition of the term consultation so asked staff “what does and does not constitute consultation?” This was carried out as a group activity where they drew up statements which participants were asked to rate in terms of whether the activities were considered part of a consultation approach and the frequency of undertaking the activity. The results indicated EPs were involved in certain activities, with a lot that were not considered as consultation e.g. collecting information through conversations and advising teachers on their practice. The service used this data to highlight future training activities for its staff. The EPs also managed to agree on a definition of consultation:

“Birmingham EPS provides psychology through a collaborative consultation approach. EPs and teachers take a social interactionist and environmental perspective, always viewing concerns raised in a wider context. Collaborative consultation is viewed as a flexible, negotiated activity through which the EP and the other party agree how they will work together and what the desired outcomes will be. Collaborative consultation is informed by activities such as conversations, data gathering and hypothesis testing”

(Birmingham EPS, Internal document, 2004 cited in Leadbetter 2006: p24).

This is a broad definition of consultation that has echoes of the Wagner (1995) approach to consultation. Leadbetter (2006) states that “agreeing what constitutes consultation is as important as the outcomes achieved” (Leadbetter, 2006: p25).

Leadbetter’s (2006) paper uses discourse analysis (DA) to highlight the themes, which emerged in the consultation meetings. This analysis allowed the transcripts to be broken down into conceptual groups and then analysed in terms of their effects on the development of the conversations.

Leadbetter (2006) also comments that this level of detailed analysis of a consultation meeting can act as “a powerful tool for personal professional development” (Leadbetter, 2006: p 25).

Leadbetter (2006) also highlights further research done on the importance of linguistics within consultation and how this is a growing area of interest for psychologists (Bacarese-Hamilton, Devonshire, Foster, Woliter, & Leadbetter, 2004). This describes the importance of the language one uses in consultation and how the training methods of other professions will influence the styles of consultation they adopt in multi-agency work. Leadbetter (2006) sees this as an important area of investigation as multi-agency work becomes increasingly more important in the future. As a result, Leadbetter (2006) highlights a series of issues that need to be highlighted if EP services are to maintain their skills:

1. How to maintain an interactional approach alongside the use of the dominant medical model in other services.
2. How to maintain an indirect service with the increasing emphasis on client-led services from government.
3. How to cooperate with other professional who use different tools and approaches with different perspectives
4. How to determine which skills are unique to EPs and can be shared with other professionals.

(Leadbetter, 2006: p28)

In light of these issues, Leadbetter concludes “it will be important for us to prepare ourselves and be clear how we want to develop, during such fast moving periods of change” (Leadbetter, 2006: p28). With increasing pressures on local government to make £6.2 billion in cuts (Bawden, 2010), services will be faced with having to change the ways they work and will be held accountable for their actions. Therefore monitoring the performance of services to ensure ‘Best Value’ (HMSO, 1999) has become increasingly important in recent years (Dickinson, 2000). Dickinson (2000) comments “Accountability, therefore, relies on clarity of the fitness for purpose of your work. Once that is established, you are on a firm platform to assure the quality of your psychological service” (Dickinson, 2000: p20)

## **Methods of Evaluation**

Psychological consultation by Duane Brown, Walter B. Pryzwansky and Ann C. Shulte (2001) provides a useful introduction to the theory and practice behind consultation. The book outlines some of the history and development of consultation and then accounts the development and processes of mental health consultation, behavioural approaches to consultation and Adlerian consultation (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956), organisational consultation.

The book discusses the limitations of each of the approaches to consultation and provides useful tips for the practitioners involved in the process. The final chapters of the book, looks at the stages and processes of consultation for example the importance of interpersonal processes, the skills of a successful consultant and the views of the consultee. The book also breaks down the process of consultation when working with parents and teachers and discusses the theory and practice involved in working with various individuals and how to apply the practice of consultation to working with these people.

The chapter on data-based decision making in consultation (Brown et al, 2001: chapter 10) is of particular interest to this piece of research, as it discusses methods of evaluating consultation. Brown et al. (2001) highlight how the large amount of research on consultation has become “cluttered with less than precise terminology” (p202). This creates the perfect conditions for creating myths and disillusionments and therefore they comment “if there ever was an intervention strategy that was suited to the practitioner’s closely monitoring of the process and outcome – consultation it is” (p202). They advocate the monitoring and evaluation of consultation leads to the improvement in the effectiveness of the consultant.

Brown et al. (2001) also highlight the importance in monitoring and evaluating consultation as it “validates the professional’s work” (p203) and they comment “it is difficult (and unreasonable) for such an administrator to consider supporting such a service let alone increasing its use” (p203). Gathering data on the process therefore aids the future development and improvement of this working practice.

Interestingly, Brown et al. (2001) recommend discussing the types of consultation models available with the consultee and asking them to choose which one they would like to work with. This seems an unlikely possibility in Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) where there are huge demands on time and resources preventing this from happening. The chapter provides several useful resources that can be used at the entry, process and termination phases of the consultation. These include an interview diary template, a consultation preference scale, an evaluation checklist, a consultee satisfaction form and several evaluation forms. These resources may prove useful in evaluating the practice of consultation within Local Authority A, but it is unlikely that the service will find the time to use all of these due to time and staffing constraints within the service.

Conoley and Conoley (1982) recommend the use of the consultee satisfaction form as it provides an open-ended evaluation form, which the consultee can easily complete. Brown et al. (2001) highlight the criticism applied the use of more case-study based interventions by Barlow et al., (1984) cited in Brown, Pryzwansky, & Schulte, (2001: p209) who viewed them “in a separate (and lower) class than experimental works”. Brown et al. (2001) recommend that this method of evaluating consultation is valuable as a “hypothesis generating tool” (p209). Brown et al. (2001) advocate the use of case studies for answering the “how” and “why” questions in evaluating consultation. This therefore justifies the use of the methodology in this piece of research as these are the types of questions it is investigating.

The case-study approach to evaluating consultation involves the collection of large amounts of data, which Brown et al. (2001) indicate as being difficult to determine when enough data has been collected. They therefore recommend that all data is used in a study to an extent that it is practical for them to manage.

Brown et al. (2001) discuss the merits of using formative and summative evaluation techniques. They recommend using formative evaluations for planning and implementing consultation processes, which enables the development of the process. Questions that might be answered using

this approach include, 'were objectives clearly identified, how did the consultee feel about his or her participation during the problem identification phase?' Summative evaluation looks at goal achievements, focussing on how successful an intervention has been.

The work of Suchman (1967) is also reported by Brown et al. (2001), who wrote about evaluation criteria. This has five areas of interest, Effort – the quantity and quality of inputs e.g. the effort of staff involved:

Performance – refers to the measurement of the consequences of the effort;

Adequacy – considers the relationship between effort and performance;

Efficiency which considers the ratio between effort and performance e.g. Output divided by input;

Process – which focuses on the mechanisms in which the effort becomes an output.

Another model of evaluation highlighted by Brown et al. (2001) is that of Perkins (1977) who listed six major purposes of evaluation, which include:

- *Strategic* evaluation, which is based on a needs assessment and takes place before the intervention. The purpose of this is to identify any objectives and this does not follow any particular format.
- *Compliance* evaluation which considers the correlation between the programmes objectives and the system which it is a part of.
- *Design logic* assesses the degree to which assumptions are clear that link available resources for the intervention to outcome considerations.
- *Management* evaluations focus on the use of resources applied to reach the goals that have been identified.
- *Intervention* evaluations assess the relationship between the intervention activity and outcomes whilst considering the intervention process.
- *Program impact* the evaluation of the degree to which the intervention program achieved its goal(s). This final category is considered a summative evaluation, whilst the others are all considered formative.

Brown et al. (2001) also highlight several steps in evaluating consultation. First, determine the purpose of the evaluation, then agree on the measurements to be made, identify the data collection techniques, set a data collection schedule and finally develop a dissemination plan.

Dickinson (2000) highlights the method of evaluation used in the service he works in, where each EP maintains a database of the agreed outcomes from every consultation they engage in. These outcomes are then reported annually to service users and are used as to influence future dialogue about the fitness of purpose of their work (Dickinson, 2000).

### *Goal Attainment Scaling (Kiersuk & Sherman, 1968)*

Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) is provided as an example of an outcome evaluation, which can be used as a monitoring device. The first step is to set a goal, then implement a programme and finally collect information on the goal attainment. This enables the participants to set clear goals and motivate those involved to meet them. GAS is unique as the target goals are placed at the continuum of possible outcomes instead of them being posited as either attained or non-attained. This requires the consultants to arrange their goals, or goal indicators along a Likert scale (most favourable and less than expected at one end, expected outcome in the middle and the more than expected and best anticipated at the other) (Likert, 1932). GAS then provides a quantitative measure of the effectiveness of the consultation and intervention.

GAS is criticised by Kirusek et al. (1994 cited in Dunsmuir, 2009a) as there are difficulties in judging whether the goal level was achieved due to vagueness or jargon used when goal setting, overlapping levels may mean outcomes are unclear, it is time consuming to conduct and there is little time to review the findings in services (Dunsmuir, 2009) .

### *Target Monitoring and Evaluation system (TME)*

Due to the limitations of GAS, Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen (2009) propose a more streamlined approach to evaluation in EP Services known as Target Monitoring and Evaluation system (Dunsmuir et al., 2009) This is similar to GAS, in that it retains many of the advantages such as the provision of data on whether progress is as expected, better than expected or worse than expected. Targets are set across a categorical scale and the facility to review is built into the process.

TME starts by completing an evaluation form at the first meeting where a review date is agreed and up to 3 targets or goals can be agreed. These goals should link directly to intervention plans and the activity. The baseline descriptor levels should then be defined and can relate to cognitive, emotional or behavioural targets. At the review, a score is allocated for the level achieved on each goal to mark to what extent the goal has been met. This then generates a statement linked to the baseline, detailing the actual outcome and the level to which it was met.

The advantage to using TME is that it can be used across professions and indicated progress over the time of the intervention. It also influences practitioners to develop clear targets and encourages collaborative approaches in multi-agency working through joint planning and review meetings.

## **Models of Consultation**

Kennedy, et al. (2008) carried out research into how models of consultation apply to the work of EP services. They examined EP practice to see to what extent the theories on consultation match the practice they are engaged in. The research used qualitative methods and found the EPs were using three espoused theories in their practice of which 70% of the consultants used a problem solving framework in their practice.

## **Problem solving frameworks**

### **Theory in use in consultation**

Kennedy et al. (2008) comment on how little research has been carried out in the United Kingdom on what is actually said in consultations. The language used in consultation is considered so important that Bergan and Kratochwill (1990) dedicate an entire chapter to verbal interaction techniques in consultation and comment “what is said in during consultation must be structured, because of its potential effects on treatment outcomes” (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990: p43). The language used in consultation is obviously an important component of this model of service delivery as it is commented on in so much of the research e.g. Wagner (2000), who as stated earlier in this review addresses the importance of social constructivism and language. Other researchers who support this idea of the importance of language, do so through the methodologies they used to investigate consultation. These include Leadbetter (2006) who used discourse analysis as a part of her study and Kennedy et al. (2008) who did a qualitative analysis of the ‘utterances’ participants used during consultation.

Monsen & Frederickson (2002) carried out research on Trainee School Psychologists (TSPs) on an accredited training programme in school psychology. This piece of research focussed on ten graduate school psychology students enrolled on a training programme and eight non-enrolled students as a comparison group. Actors were used to role-play teachers, which ensured comparability over time in consultee behaviour and problem difficulty. This research used three questionnaires, Questionnaire A, Background Information; Questionnaire B, Written Problem Understanding, Questionnaire C, Perceptions of Interview. Questionnaire A was only issued at the start of the research, whereas the others were issued at both times one and two.



A third of Monsen & Frederickson's (2002) questionnaire responses were independently rated by a course tutor who was unaware of the purpose of the research, but had experience of marking problem analyses. Cohen's Kappa (Fleis, 1981) was used to measure inter-rater agreement in the categorical data. The ordinal data used Spearman's rho to correlate the two sets of scores from the interview transcripts.

The interviews transcripts were coded for examples of Open Questions, Closed Questions and accessible reasoning statements. Open Questions were exploratory questions aimed to encourage the teacher to expand and elaborate on theory disclosed information. Closed questions were usually just "yes" or "no" statements. Accessible reasoning statements were defined as "Utterances, which express an understanding or interpretation of some aspect of the teacher's problem, which they have shared, supported by relevant evidence or argument" (Monsen & Frederickson, 2002: p203)

Questionnaire A obtained information on the participants' age, gender, number of years teaching and level of first degree honours. Questionnaire B looked at the participants' understanding of the teacher's problem/situation and assigned a score to 9 subscales. These scales assessed the match between the participants' written understanding and that provided in a model by the first author. These were cross-validated by 2 tutors experienced in assessing written problem understanding. Monsen & Frederickson (2002) used nine categories developed by Robin and Halliday (1988) using an 8-point Likert scale (1= high quality to 8 = low quality). The nine categories were split into 3 groups:

- Section 1 – Problem Identification
  - Accuracy – to what extent did the participant identify the facts in the case?
  - Completeness – the degree to which the participants had highlighted all aspects of the teacher's problem/ situation.
  - Clarity – how clear was the participants written understanding, how free was it from irrelevant detail?
- Section 2 – Problem Analysis
  - Agreement between participants and experts – views regarding the relative importance of the problem.

- Soundness of argument for relative importance of aspects. Sound arguments were consistent with knowledge of psycho-social theory.
- Soundness of argument for causes of priority. How well the participants explained the causes of the aspects of the problem they had identified as important.
- Section 3 – Plan Implementation
  - Specificity – to what extent were participants suggestions specific, e.g. who, what, where, when and how’s of the problem.
  - Appropriateness. How successful were the suggestions generated?
  - Completeness. What might affect the implementation of the suggestions?
- Section 4 – Overall Problem understanding rating.
  - Overall rating – a score for this was generated by adding together all the nine sub-scale scores.

(Monsen & Frederickson, 2002; Robinson & Halliday, 1988)

Questionnaire C looked at the participants’ perceptions of the interview task using 5 8-point Likert-type scales to assess their “familiarity and complexity of the interview task; the overall difficulty of the task; the extent to which the case was “like a real” one; and the degree to which the actor was convincing in their portrayal of the case” (Monsen & Frederickson, 2002: p205).

The Monsen and Frederickson (2002) paper provides an interesting example of how quantitative methods can be used to analyse interview data. The results indicated that during the course of the one year’s training the participants’ use of closed questions decreased and the extent to which they shared their reasoning aloud about the problem increased. Kennedy et al. (2008) comment, “while findings from simulation studies involving trainees may provide a valuable source of hypotheses, it is questionable whether findings relate to the actual practice of experienced psychologists” (p172). Monsen & Frederickson (2002) highlight the flaws in their own research by identifying the small sample size used and the extent to which it represents the general population of EPs practising in the UK today. They also suggested using similar techniques to look at real consultation interviews without the use of actors.

Kennedy et al. (2008) carried out a qualitative case study using ten EPs from three local authorities. In all, seventeen case studies were generated by these participants. All participants were issued with a pack with the materials they needed to complete the questionnaires, audiotape an interview and return it. Each EP completed a pre-consultation questionnaire and then the consultation was recorded and returned to the researchers along with the consent forms and questionnaire.

Pre-consultation questionnaires collected demographic information on age, gender, ethnicity, qualification and experience. These questionnaires also enquired about theoretical models underpinning participants practice and their working definition of consultation. The responses were analysed and coded for common categories.

The audiotaped interviews were transcribed by a research assistant and then analysed using the WinMax qualitative data analysis software. As with Monsen & Frederickson (2002) the content of the interviews were segmented into utterances “any clear segment of dialogue spoken by the interviewer during the course of the interview” (p174). Kennedy et al. (2008) used the qualitative data analysis framework of Pope, Ziebland & Mays (2000). This framework uses 5 stages and is considered “grounded” and “inductive” (Kennedy et al., 2008: p174). These stages are:

- Familiarisation:
  - Immersion in the raw data by listening to tapes, reading transcripts etc, in order to list key ideas and recurrent themes.
- Identifying a thematic framework:
  - Identifying the key issues, concepts and themes by which the data can be examined and referenced. This is carried out by drawing on a priori of issues and questions derived from the aims and objectives of the study as well issues that recur in the data.
- Indexing:
  - Applying the thematic framework or index systematically to all the data in textual form by annotating the transcripts with codes from the index usually supported by short text descriptors to elaborate the index heading.
- Charting:
  - Rearranging the data according to the appropriate part of the thematic framework to which they relate and forming charts.
- Mapping and interpretation:

- Using the charts to define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies and find associations.

(Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000: p114)

Pope et al. (2000) conclude that “good qualitative analysis is able to document its claim to reflect some of the truth of a phenomenon by reference to systematically gathered data” whereas “poor qualitative analysis is anecdotal, unreflective, descriptive without being focussed on a coherent line of inquiry” (p116). Therefore good qualitative analysis “relies on the skill, vision and integrity of the researcher doing that analysis” (ibid: p116), which requires trained, and, crucially experienced researchers (ibid: p116).

In the Kennedy et al. (2008) research, this framework was trialled on 23% of the sample and then amended to include accounts of the consultants’ verbal behaviour. Two levels of codes were applied, level 1 attaching labels to groups of words and level 2, grouping the initial codes into a smaller number of themes or patterns. The researchers had an 80-95% agreement on the 4 transcripts they analysed for the trial and came to an agreement on the ones on which they originally had disagreed.

The results indicated that the majority of respondents use solution-focussed approaches and the frameworks of Patsy Wagner (1995; 2000). The code of problem solving / analysis and systemic focus were the most frequent ones when analysing questions on defining consultation. The second research question of Kennedy et al. (2008) asked what do EPs say when they are engaging in consultation? The most popular code was problem identification. The third research question asked to what extent does practice map onto espoused approaches? All of the participants that claimed to use a problem-solving analysis model of consultation engaged in  $\frac{3}{4}$  stages of problem solving (Problem Identification, Problem Analysis and Plan implementation).  $\frac{7}{8}$  of the participants who espoused a systemic focus in their practice engaged in questions and comments, which were “indicative of systems work (e.g. exploring the influencing factors at the level of the individual, home, school and/or community)” (Kennedy et al., 2008: p177).  $\frac{5}{7}$  participants who espoused a solution-focussed model of practice were engaged in verbal behaviours indicative of this model. In total, 80% of respondents espoused using an approach to consultation or problem solving framework, which had a fairly robust evidence base, but most of them failed to reference these approaches in their definitions.

This research also found that most participants used at least one cycle of a problem-solving framework in their consultations. The paper also suggests the recommendations of Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan (1996) and Bergan & Kratochwill (1990), who recommended using a series of three meetings, where the first meeting is about identifying the problem, the second being a problem analysis meeting and the third is a problem evaluation interview. If the review is not successful then the consultant refers to an earlier stage of the process, until they successfully arrive at a solution.

Kennedy et al. (2008) highlights the differences with Wagner's (1995) model in that "at the full consultation meeting, both the concerns *and* "... current conclusions..." are discussed (Wagner, 1995: p27). The popularity of the Wagner (1995) model within British EP services suggests that this would be the dominant model of service delivery commented upon in research on this matter, but there is no more recent evidence on how popular Wagner's (1995) model is today. Kennedy et al. (2008) call Wagner's (1995) model "influential" (Kennedy et al. , 2008: p179).

Kennedy et al. (2008) also found that where frameworks such as Wagner's (1995) were used, "consultants less frequently worked through the plan implementation and problem evaluation phases" (p179). They also found the analysis of these phases to be less clear-cut than the problem identification phase.

The Kennedy et al. (2008) research proceeds to report on the most common second order codes e.g. plan implementation. This code was reported as being the most difficult to identify as it was difficult to define an intervention. Kennedy et al. (2008) cite Monsen et al. (1998) to define an intervention as something that "should relate to hypotheses and priority problem(s) agreed; it should be based on research/ sound logic and be ethical, developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive" (Kennedy et al., 2008: p179). Kennedy et al. (2008) were not able to determine whether all of the interventions met these criteria, as independent knowledge of the cases was unavailable. They also found it difficult to distinguish between actions, intervention possibilities and intervention planning as it was difficult to distinguish from the recordings if the consultant was making suggestions or just thinking out loud.

The following factors are identified by Kennedy et al. (2008) as being essential for consideration by consultants to ensure commitment to action. These include "consultee self-efficacy, treatment integrity, congruence with legitimate professional responsibilities, congruence with the consultee's perception of the problem and degree of 'fit' with the natural ecology of that teacher's classroom" (Kennedy et al., 2008: p180). They also explore the work of Gutkin & Curtis (1999) who supported

Bandura's (1999) hypothesis on the importance of "heightened self-efficacy and teacher's persistence in the face of difficult problems" (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999: p607). Very few of the EPs in the Kennedy et al. (2008) study explored the teachers' perceptions of their ability to solve the presented problem using their own skills and strengths, thus having undermined the purpose of consultation to aid the client.

Kennedy et al. (2008) highlight several limitations to their study. Once again there is an issue with the use of a small sample size and the implications of this in allowing their findings to apply to the wider population of EPs in practice. There is also an issue in how the data was coded by one author, then cross-checked by another on only 4/17 transcripts. The use of audiotapes to record interviews meant that there was no record of non-verbal communications that took place in the consultations. There was also no record on how successful the strategies discussed in these consultations were.

Despite these limitations, the Kennedy et al. (2008) paper provides a useful reference for one planning to conduct research into consultation evaluations. The types of questionnaires, methods of data collection and analysis and sample sizes are all very useful in the planning of the research the author will conduct. Their identification of the limitations of their research will aid the current researcher in planning to eliminate some of these factors and develop methods that can successfully evaluate the use of consultation in practice.

Although the Kennedy et al. (2008) research has its flaws, it has covered some of the gaps from other research on consultation. The paper actually used real life consultations with practicing EPs unlike the Monsen & Frederickson (2002) study, which used actors. The consultations also addressed real-life issues as opposed to fictitious ones as used in other research e.g. Monsen & Frederickson (2002). Their methodology of using a case study also allowed for a more detailed analysis of the verbal interactions between consultant and consultee. This increased the validity of this research and applies more to practice. Kennedy et al. (2008) conclude "the study presents a framework for further investigation of what many argue is the key to successful educational and child psychological services" (Kennedy, et al., 2008: p181).

Kennedy et al. (2008) highlight further issues for consideration by the EP profession. Their paper does not answer the question "does consultation make a difference for children, young people and their families" (Kennedy et al., 2008: p181)? They also highlight that at the time of writing no other research had answered this question had. The research conducted by the author of this review plans

to address this by examining the question how does consultation make a difference for children, young people and families? Kennedy et al. (2008) also recommend further investigation of how consultation effectiveness research is applied in the UK will be considered in the author's research by looking at how the authorities involved in the study evaluate consultation.

Kennedy et al. (2008) highlight further areas for consideration when conducting research into consultation. These include "future research ... to determine to what degree of accuracy and consistency each part of an intervention plan has been implemented" (p182). They draw attention to treatment planning protocols in development in the United States, which could be used for future research. They also highlight the importance of evaluating EP services in the context of local authority inspections. This enable services to demonstrate to commissioners the importance of applied psychological practice.

The Kennedy et al. (2008) study is a useful example of how to conduct research into evaluating consultation. Their methods and findings are influential in the planning of the author's research which will consider their ideas in evaluating the use and effectiveness of consultation in Welsh local authorities.

## **The Welsh Context**

The majority of the research I have come across on consultation has been conducted in English Local Authorities. The only piece of research conducted on consultation conducted in a Welsh Local Authority is the work on Group Consultation by Sue Evans (2005), *The Development of a group consultation approach to service delivery*. This paper outlined the development of a Group Consultation approach in a small, rural, Welsh Educational Psychology Service (EPS) as an alternative to carrying out direct assessment work.

The EPS in Evans' paper was influenced and guided by a variety of national perspectives and agendas. One of these was a Green Paper published by the Welsh Office in 1999, *The best for teaching and learning in Wales* (Welsh Office, 1999), which proposed "local partnerships and collaboration as an important means of sharing good practice and extending learning opportunities for teachers" (Evans, 2005: p132). This Green Paper also provided an economic influence for the authority to adopt this model by stating "services which are not cost effective for one small school may make sense when they are shared with other schools" (Welsh Office, 1999: p132). This service was particularly keen on developing local partnerships and collaboration and in sharing expertise

and services in small schools. This current research will also explore the rationales and influences for services adopting Group Consultation in their practice.

Further supporting this economic argument to influence this means of service delivery is the concept of 'Best Value' outlined in the Local Government Act (1999), which defined 'Best Value', where each local authority has a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness" (HMSO, 1999: p3). This improvement involves consideration of costs, making the most of money spent, and making sure that services meet the needs of communities and authorities' priorities. (Cabinet Office, 1999). The service therefore kept this 'Best Value' ethos core to their establishment of a Group Consultation model. These influences for the model adopted in this authority will also be investigated throughout this current research, now that five years have passed since the Evans (2005) paper was published and this method of Group Consultation was revealed to the world. This research will take into account the various influences on authorities to adopt a Group Consultation approach to service delivery and ask if it supports the 'Best Value' ethos.

The Evans (2005) paper carried out an evaluation of the group consultation approach, as it was an entirely new method of service delivery or history of EPs and teachers meeting in groups like these to discuss Special Educational Needs (SEN) cases. The service also wished to know if schools accepted and valued this new alternative approach to service delivery. Evaluation forms were handed out at the end of each session and Evans (2005) considered that just relying on this method of data collection would reduce the validity of this research. Evans (2005) therefore used information from three separate sources, session evaluation forms, information entered on a consultation database and notes made by EPs from participant observation in the session. This allowed for twenty-one group consultation sessions to be observed over three half terms amongst sixteen schools.

## **Conclusion**

This literature highlights that a great deal of research has been conducted into the use of consultation in British EP services. These include a variety of methods both qualitative and quantitative and looking at a variety of aspects of consultation, e.g. outcomes, content and models. This current research will be a qualitative study as the author feels that based on previous research; this is the most successful way of evaluating the use of consultation. This will provide an in depth analysis of the use of consultation in the Welsh EP services involved in the study. The study is unique



in that Welsh EP services operate under a different legislative agenda via the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to their English counterparts, so it will be interesting to see how research questions answered in an English context such is the case with most of the research address in this paper (Dennis, 2004; Dickinson, 2000; Farouk, 1999; Kennedy, Frederickson, & Monsen, 2008; Kerslake & Roller, 2000; Leadbetter, 2006; Monsen & Frederickson, 2002; Wagner, 1995, 2000; Woolfson, et al., 2008) apply to services in Wales.

Although there have been successful quantitative studies conducted using GAS and TME, the author is not using these evaluation tools as I feel that this will not get the level of detail required to successfully complete this study. The author is however aware that Local Authority A has been considering using GAS or TME as a way of monitoring and reviewing the service in the future.

Overall, consultation is seen as a successful method of service delivery providing it is conducted properly. Farouk (1999) found in her research that there are several important factors to ensuring a successful consultation. These include working collaboratively, avoiding the role of an expert/ advice giver, allow plenty of time to conduct the consultation and empowering the teachers to feel they have ownership of the solutions they come up with during the consultation process.

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## Appendix 3a – Wagner’s model applied as a Service Delivery Framework

SERVICE LEVEL – FRAMEWORKS USED BY THE EP TO SUPPORT AND FACILITATE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE CONSULTATION MODEL WORK IN SCHOOLS				
Planning and Review	Tracking	Summary and Planning	Monitoring	Transfer of Diagnostic Information
<p>Includes 2 separate frameworks used at the beginning of the school year. It enables an EP to establish the principles of consultation with schools and revisit them on an annual basis.</p> <p>This meeting is usually carried out with the Head teacher or link person and plans the work to be carried out during the rest of the year.</p> <p>Reviews are carried out on</p>	<p>This is a table completed by the EP to help them keep track of all the work in one particular school. It records what work is taking place within the school and enables the EP to plan any subsequent work.</p>	<p>Used at the end of each school visit to record the work carried out during that visit and any subsequent actions. It also provides an opportunity for the EP to make a plan for the next visit with the link person. It should also allow the EP to record the length of time spent on different stages of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, in order to evaluate the balance between statutory and preventative work.</p>	<p>This is another table that records data on consultations at all levels. Its purpose is to record the number of individual consultations, their focus and demographic data. This helps the EP/School to analyse any patterns at the end of the school year during the review.</p>	<p>This is to assist EPs when children move schools. Its aim is to summarise on one sheet the information that another EP may find useful</p>

<p>a termly basis where questions such as what has gone well are asked? More detailed reviews are carried out at the end of the year which focus on work at both organisational and individual levels. This is where data can be examined to look for any patterns occurring within the school.</p>				
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## Appendix 3b – Individual Meeting Level Consultation Frameworks

INDIVIDUAL MEETING LEVEL – USED BY THE EP DURING SCHOOL VISITS				
Initial Consultation	Full Consultation Request	Joint School/Family Consultation	Follow Up Consultation	Additional Consultation
<p>No set questions. Used to plan and prioritise work at the beginning of a school term at individual, group and organisational levels.</p> <p>Usually carried out with the Head of Year, SENCO or teacher most concerned.</p>	<p>Uses set questions, which the teacher is asked to prepare for. Questions include what are your concerns, what has been tried already, what effects occurred, how would you like things to change, what do you hope to get from this consultation and parent views?</p> <p>The answers to these are then discussed at the EPs next visit to the school, where there as an attempt to develop appropriate strategies and actions.</p>	<p>Used with parent/ teacher most concerned following a full consultation. Its purpose is to engage with the family and may include the child.</p> <p>It includes an overview of the work carried out since the full consultation was conducted, recording of any progress, parental views, any further concerns, further agreed strategies and a plan of action.</p>	<p>Purpose is to record the level of progress since the previous consultation.</p> <p>Discusses current concerns, objectives and targets and arrangements.</p> <p>Provides for whether any further work need be carried out.</p>	<p>No set questions – used for any other forms of meetings or observations.</p>



	<p>This framework is considered the most important as it sets the scene for all subsequent work.</p> <p>It is conducted with the teacher most concerned</p>			
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## Appendix 4 – Paper 1 Interview Schedule

# Paper 1, Interview 1

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### Research Questions:

Paper 1: An investigation of Educational Psychologists (EPs) perceptions of using consultation with schools?

- 1) Why does the service use consultation?
  - 2) How is consultation defined and used in Pantysgawn EPS in relation to the range of possible definitions and theorising available within the literature?
  - 3) To what extent do the participants interviewed feel they adhere to their preferred model of consultation in their everyday practice?
  - 4) How can the service work more effectively to make a difference for children, young people, families and schools?
- .....

### Interview questions:

1. What do you understand by the term consultation, can you give a definition?
2. Would you say you subscribe to a particular model of consultation?
  - a. Can you think of any other models?
  - b. Why do you use consultation/this model?
  - c. Would you use another model if possible, if so what would that be?
3. How is consultation used in Pantysgawn EPS?
  - a. Would you say the service subscribes to a particular model of consultation?
    - i. If so what is this model?
    - ii. How do you feel about using this model?
    - iii. How familiar do you feel with the use of this model? Have you received any training for using this model of consultation?
    - iv. Are there any ways you feel that this model could be changed to help improve your practise?

- b. Do you feel that there's any consistency amongst EPs use of consultation in Pantysgawn EPS?
  - i. Are there any common practices amongst you and your colleagues?
  - ii. Do you feel that there is any benefit to a more consistent approach to using consultation across the service?
  - iii. Is there anything that you can think of that might help improve the consistency of the use of consultation in Pantysgawn EPS? E.g. any training etc...
- 4. How can the EPS use consultation more effectively to make a difference for children, young people, families and schools?
  - a. What do you believe schools want/expect from the EPS?
    - i. How is/could consultation [be]used to meet these expectations?
    - ii. Do you think schools are happy with the service they receive?
    - iii. To what extent do you feel the service currently meets these expectations?
    - iv. How do you feel the service could develop to meet schools expectations?

## Appendix 5 - Themes - Paper 1

Research Question	Code	Code words	Examples	Theme
1. How consultation is practised in Pantysgawn?	One model of consultation (the Wagner model influenced practice more than any other model	References to the Wagner model of consultation.	[I defined consultation] very loosely I guess I'd say it is based upon the work by the likes of Patsy Wagner. (Psychologist 9)  I think I follow the Wagner model, which is the model we've worked within university ... It's what was presented to us really as a sort of standout model in university and from all the research, but I guess it depends on their experiences in their local authorities (Psychologist 1)	Developing practice - rigidity vs flexibility when using consultation.
2. Why was the consultation approach the preferred way of practising educational psychology in Pantysgawn?	Impetus for using consultation came from outside of Pantysgawn EPS	References to awareness of consultation from university/ service based training, research literature	Through the reading I did during my training. It [the Wagner Model] seems to be the one that's got the best evidence base and is the most widely used across the board. (Psychologist 5)  I suppose because we had interventions a few years ago about that particular model [the Wagner Model] and that would have been the basis for us thinking about how we could use consultation in Pantysgawn. (Psychologist 9)	Developing practice - rigidity vs flexibility when using consultation.

	Wagner’s model was influential as EPs felt more familiar with this model	References to training or familiarity	<p>I suppose I am most aware of what the Patsy Wagner approach would be. We had a couple of days training with her here at [Pantysgawn] about 6-7 years ago and she gave us a lot of materials that which have shaped my thinking about consultation. (Psychologist 6)</p> <p>“I don't feel that this is the model we must follow, it's really just one that I am more familiar with” (Psych 8)</p>	
	Effectiveness is evidenced in the research literature	References to the effectiveness of consultation referenced in research.	<p>The influences are basically.... well there is the research that has been carried out using this approach, using consultation is meant to have better outcomes.... I use it because it is what they are using here in [Pantysgawn] (Wagner's model) and also because it is what I used last year in [another authority] and I found that it was a helpful way to work. (Psychologist 4)</p> <p>“That’s the one that's been used in service training it's the one that has been presented as a useful and popular consultation model” (Psych 1).</p>	

	Wagner’s approach enables the acquisition of good quality information	References to the quality of the information gained from using the consultation approach.	I feel people get a lot of information and a deeper understanding about some of the issues that people bring to us and I think if you’re trying to understand the issue, or why something is occurring, I think it is really useful to gather information from a wide variety of different sources to give you that in depth and deeper understanding, which would help you to make hypotheses about why something is occurring. (Psychologist 2)	
	Few examples of personal experiences of using consultation	EPs quoting the service handbook definition of consultation or Patsy Wagner’s	Consultation is used in [Pantysgawn] to enable joint discussions and facilitate problem solving or for identifying goals and as a framework to enable long term reviews of progress. It’s a framework for enabling EPs to work with schools or children or teachers or other professionals and will enable EPs to think purely about where they need to go to support a school. (Psychologist 9)	
3. Which definitions and models of consultation, if any, were preferred/used by EPs in Pantysgawn in their daily practice?	Wagner’s model	Any reference to the use of Wagner’s model.	“Very loosely I guess I’d say it is based upon the work by the likes of Patsy Wagner” (Psych 9).	Developing practice - rigidity vs flexibility when using consultation.

	Limited awareness of other models	References to awareness of other models	I'm not aware enough or have really read widely. I just recognise consultation [Wagner] and I could talk about strategic and systemic models. Umm... I suppose that the Wagner model and what I think of consultation is an interactionist and systemic model. I don't know enough about other models. (Psychologist 8)	
	Confused consultation models with service delivery frameworks	References to executive training frameworks such as COMOIRA, Monsen or PDR.	<p><b>Psychologist 3:</b> There's the Monsoon model</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> The Monsoon model...?</p> <p><b>Psychologist 3:</b> I mean Monsen [chuckles], Comoira and Wagner's model. I've read through her [Wagner] writings on consultation and using the consultative approach and models ... no not many. (Psychologist 3)</p> <p>I wouldn't say I subscribe to one model in particular, but as part of my training course we used COMOIRA. (Psychologist 2)</p>	

	<p>It is down to EP s professional judgment how to practice consultation.</p>	<p>References to how EPs are allowed to practice consultation</p>	<p>It's up to the individual, I think it is as the individual sees fit and a lot of it depends upon the interpretation of the individual. I guess people don't like being restricted and they need to be able to work in a way that they feel more comfortable with and can feel, because of the different nature of problems that they may be dealing with every day. I don't think one model would necessarily be effective for every case and some things you just have to try and change as and when you see fit, so I don't think if you want to use a model that you could stick to it for all your cases and what kind of impact that would have. So actually a bit of variance, a bit of variety and flexibility are paramount. (Psychologist 3)</p>	
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	Wagner’s model is not the prescribed model	References to the prescription of any model of consultation in the service.	<p>I would say that all the EPs have a good understanding of what they are trying to achieve within the framework [they personally prefer to use] and the term framework is used in its loosest sense.....there is a broader aim in what you are trying to establish by using consultation and it doesn't matter how you get there, as long as everyone gets there eventually. We wouldn't particularly subscribe to one model of consultation in the service; it's evolving in terms of what we do fundamentally and is applied very broadly across the service. I think EPs will have slightly different expertise e.g. some may use PCP techniques or solution focussed methods and other systemic approaches and I think the advantage to that is you add something to the team of psychologists in terms of expertise as long as the team of psychologists you are working with understand the broader aims.</p> <p>(Psychologist 9)</p>	
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	No consistent approach to the use of consultation	References to consistency in EPs approaches to consultation.	<p>The main issue in [Pantysgawn] at the moment is monitoring and evaluating our service and I do think that having more consistent approaches would help with this and get more valuable and reliable feedback you know as in what's been done, what's been done well maybe. (Psychologist 2)</p> <p>do think certain individuals have particular skills they have picked up over the years and if they did not get to use them, then that would be a shame as we can all bring different things to consultation. (Psychologist 5)</p>	
<p>Research Question 4</p> <p>How do the EPs in Pantysgawn consider the EP service could improve its practice in general and its use of consultation in particular to make a difference for children, young people,</p>	Schools view of the EP as a gatekeeper is seen as a barrier to working effectively	References to gatekeeping or access to resources	<p>Some schools just see us as a hoop to jump through to try and get additional support so it's almost like when you go in, they just want an assessment percentiles, scores so that they can present that to the additional support panel. (Psychologist 1)</p> <p>If a school's agenda is involving the EP to ensure that the young person goes through statutory assessment and receives additional support and neither of those things happens then the school might say this has not been a successful intervention, but from an EPs perspective that may not be the most essential outcome for the child and family. (Psychologist 9)</p>	<p>The Role and Expertise of the EP.</p> <p>Increasing time available for EP involvement.</p> <p>Adopting a more consistent approach – monitoring outcomes without incurring</p>

	<p>Schools need further training on the consultation approach</p>	<p>References to schools requiring further training.</p>	<p>We provided schools [3 years ago when we first started using the consultation approach] with a definition of consultation and summary of information about what would happen in a consultation and provided them with a feedback form so they could see what it is that we would be providing them with. (Psychologist 9)</p> <p>Perhaps we do need to have more direct consultation or training with schools as a whole and as a team get together and talk to them about what it is that the service can offer, how we work and why we're choosing to work in that way, so they understand exactly why when an EP arrives at the door, that it's not always going to be get a BAS or get WISC, that it is going to be a more collaborative service. (Psychologist 2)</p>	
	<p>Schools wanted more time working with the EP</p>	<p>References to schools wanting more EP time</p>	<p>I always feel that when schools get more time from us, they are more inclined to do what was agreed if they know you are coming back in a fortnight and when you've got that positive relationship with you they're more likely to go with you on that, whereas if you nip in on odd occasions and don't come in until the next term, then that relationship is just not there. (Psychologist 7)</p>	

	<p>EPs undervalued their own expertise and skills in deference to the Wagner model of consultation.</p>	<p>References where EPs suggest they are not experts.</p>	<p>I see myself as not being in the position of being an expert, but more of a facilitator and a guide... and them (clients) needing somebody to facilitate them in clarifying their thoughts ... so I see myself more as a facilitator than an expert. (Psychologist 2)</p>	
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## Appendix 6 - Examples of how themes were generated from codes in the interview data and contents of the consultation examples.

Themes were initially identified using a semantic approach, where themes were recognised within the explicit or surface meanings of the data. At this point I was not looking for anything beyond what a participant had said in their interview. An attempt was then made to look for patterns within this semantic content, which led to them being interpreted. This is where there is an attempt to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings. These themes were then analysed beyond the semantic level – at a more latent level. Themes using this approach are not just a result of a more semantic description, but come as a result of theorising about the underlying ideas and assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies of the data.

<b>THEMES</b>		
<b>The Role and Expertise of the EP</b>	<b>Developing practice - rigidity vs flexibility when using consultation.</b>	<b>Adopting a more consistent approach – monitoring outcomes without incurring bureaucracy and increasing the amount of time available for EP involvement</b>
<b>Codes from P1 that contribute to these themes</b>		
Schools view of the EP as a gatekeeper is seen as a barrier to working effectively	One model of consultation (the Wagner model influenced practice more than any other model	Schools view of the EP as a gatekeeper is seen as a barrier to working effectively
Schools wanted more time working with the EP	Impetus for using consultation came from outside of Pantysgawn EPS	Schools need further training on the consultation approach
EPs undervalued their own expertise and skills in deference to the Wagner model of consultation.	Wagner’s model was influential as EPs felt more familiar with this model	Schools wanted more time working with the EP
Schools need further training on the consultation approach	Effectiveness is evidenced in the research literature	EPs undervalued their own expertise and skills in deference to the Wagner model of consultation.

	Wagner's approach enables the acquisition of good quality information	No consistent approach to the use of consultation
	Few examples of personal experiences of using consultation	
	Wagner's model	
	Limited awareness of other models	
	Confused consultation models with service delivery frameworks	
	It is down to EP s professional judgment how to practice consultation.	
	Wagner's model is not the prescribed model	
	No consistent approach to the use of consultation	
<b>Codes from P2 that contribute to these themes</b>		
EP seen as a gatekeeper to resources	EPs to use their expertise of SEN to equip schools with the skills they need.	More time with the EP
EP service provides advice and support	Continuity of staffing	Reduce the amount of bureaucracy
To provide individual assessments	Improve understanding of role e.g. a lack of understanding of what consultation is.	EPs to use their expertise of SEN to equip schools with the skills they need.
Helping Individual Children		Continuity of staffing
EP provides an impartial role between families and schools		Improve understanding of role e.g. a lack of understanding of what consultation is.

EP's ability to identify learning difficulties		
The expertise of the EP		
Access to resources seen as a benefit to EP intervention		
<b>Evidence from the 5 Exemplars also contributed to these 3 themes e.g. issues around seeing individual children that arose within them.</b>		

## Appendix 7 – Inter-rater reliability – Paper 1

The table below shows the comparison of themes between the independent rater and the author of this study.

Table 3

Question	Themes from independent coder	Author's themes
<b>Why does the service use consultation?</b>	<p>More inclusive, EP is seen as an integral part of the wider educational/ school based team.</p> <p>Produces more successful outcomes than when the EP takes an expert role or just performs individual assessments.</p>	<p>Familiarity with model</p> <p>Consultation is widely used with a proven successful track record.</p> <p>Produces more successful outcomes.</p>
<b>What models of consultation are being used?</b>	<p>Patsy Wagner is the preferred model.</p> <p>There is an awareness of other models, but EPs use the one they are instructed to use.</p> <p>Limited training and monitoring means that Local Authority A cannot be sure they are delivering a consistent service.</p> <p>Consultation is seen as a more collaborative approach.</p> <p>Not really known why Patsy Wagner's model is used.</p>	<p>No particular model used, but Patsy Wagner (1995) is the preferred model.</p> <p>Some awareness of other models.</p> <p>Lack of clarity as to whether the service subscribes to a particular model.</p> <p>Interpretation of consultation is down to the individual EP. Some references to this being influenced by the EPs training provider.</p> <p>Some EPs wanted a more consistent approach to using consultation, but recognised that there are disadvantages to this.</p>
<b>How is consultation used?</b>	<p>Used in conjunction with schools, parents and children to try and achieve the most effective result.</p> <p>Tries to impart knowledge to</p>	<p>Joint exploration, using a solution focussed approach where the EP is not seen as an expert.</p>



	the teacher/parents so that they feel empowered and part of the process - not just down to the EP waving his/her 'magic wand'	
<b>How can we use consultation more effectively to make a difference for children, young people, families and schools?</b>	<p>Train EPs</p> <p>Implement process that will help to ensure consistency (peer review/shadowing etc)</p> <p>Establish each parties expectations of what EP intervention can and will achieve</p> <p>Schools want more EP time.</p>	<p>Schools are generally happy with the service they receive.</p> <p>Need for clearer system to monitor the effectiveness of consultation.</p> <p>Schools need more training on the role of the service and what consultation can offer.</p> <p>Schools want more time with their EP.</p>

## Appendix 8 – Example of original Paper 1 and 2 research plan summary presented to EPs and Schools

### Research Proposal

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James Cording- *Trainee Educational Psychologist*

July 2010

Proposed Titles:

Paper 1 – An investigation into the use of consultation within Pantysgawn Educational Psychology Service: How can EPs use consultation to deliver better outcomes for service users e.g. schools?

Paper 2 – Using consultation to identify what schools want from Pantysgawn EPS and how better outcomes can be achieved.

#### **Context:**

This piece of research will contribute to developing EP practise and produce the following outcomes:

- Facilitate the improvement of emotional health and wellbeing.
- Facilitate the improvement of outcomes for vulnerable groups.
- Facilitate the improvement of literacy and numeracy.
- Facilitate the improvement of pre-school and primary school planning.
- Contribute in meeting the recommendations of the **National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR)** such as providing realistic support for children and young people that have been excluded and helping schools to develop pastoral support programmes for children at risk of exclusion by working in partnership with parents/ carers and schools to promote positive change for young people.
- Supporting the principle aims of the **School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)**:
  - Achieving better learning outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people.
  - Reducing the variation in learning outcomes within and between classrooms, schools and local authorities.
  - Improving the practice of multi-agency working.
  - Improving the effectiveness of intervention and support.

## Research Questions:

### **Paper 1: An investigation into the use of consultation within Pantysgawn Educational Psychology Service: How can EPs use consultation to deliver better outcomes for service users?**

- 1) Why does the service use consultation?
- 2) What models of consultation are being used?
- 3) How is consultation used?
- 4) How can we use consultation more effectively to make a difference for children, young people, families and schools?

### **Paper 2: Using consultation to identify what schools want from Pantysgawn EPS and how better outcomes can be achieved.**

Using consultation to find out:

- 1) What is the role of the EPS as perceived by service users / EPs? (Range of supplementary questions?)
  - a) Is there an agreed reality and if not what might be the implications / possibilities?
- 2) What do schools want from the EPS?
- 3) What are the benefits of EP intervention?
- 4) What are good outcomes for children?
- 5) How can better outcomes be facilitated?
- 6) What needs to change?
  - a) Use the feedback from the consultations in focus groups to find out how the service can improve outcomes for service users.
  - b) What might be the influence of the feedback / how will this inform developments?
  - c) What are the priorities?

## **Methodology**

### **Paper 1**

- Will use a series of semi-structured interviews with all Pantysgawn EPs to investigate their use of consultation. All interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder and the responses to these questions will be analysed using a grounded theory approach.

### **Paper 2**

- Paper 2 will be a series of semi-structured interviews with school staff. These Questionnaires will answer Paper 2 research questions 1-5. Phase 2 will involve

using focus groups and semi-structured interviews to answer research question 6 and revisit issues that arise from the questionnaire responses. As with Paper 1 all interviews/ focus groups will be digitally recorded and the data analysed using a thematic analysis. The focus groups will be held during the half-termly SENCO surgery sessions

## Ethics

Written consent will be sought from the participants themselves via a signed consent form presented at the time of interview and included with all the questionnaires sent to school staff.

All transcribed data will be made entirely anonymous and raw data will be destroyed on completion of this project.

## Outcomes

This research will:

Provide a snapshot view of what methods of consultation are currently being used within Pantysgawn EPS and see if there is a common model. This would enable us to see if there are any common features in each EPs use of consultation within the authority e.g. a common models or resources.

Will enable Pantysgawn EPs to share best practice amongst themselves and look at ways of making their use of consultation more effective at meeting the needs of children, families and schools.

- Provide a better idea of what schools want and expect from the EPS through its use of consultation.
- Provide a greater understanding of how the EPS can use consultation to meet the needs of schools.
- Provide a way of evaluating the effectiveness of EPS delivery through the use of consultation.

Information will be disseminated through:

- The full doctoral thesis report presented in the form of 2 papers
- A summary report for LEA, EPS, highlighting the results from both papers with a report of what the service does well and ways forward for improving service delivery.

## Appendix 9 – Consent Form

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation.
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me.
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications.
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form.
- all information I give will be treated as confidential.
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....  
(Signature of participant )

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s):.....

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....  
OR

.....

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

## Appendix 10 – Sample of Psychologist 6 – Interview Transcript

**Interviewer:** Interview 7 XX, so first of all XXXX, can you tell me what you understand by the term consultation and perhaps give me a definition please?

**Psych 6:** Ok, if I had the handbook in front of me I could give you a very concise definition [both chuckle]

**Interviewer:** That would be cheating,

**Psych 6:** But I'll just waffle a bit and then you'll know what I understand about it.

**Interviewer:** Ok

**Psych 6:** Um.... so consultation gives in the context of our service gives schools, parents, families, children and young people the opportunity to contribute in a different way to how they would have previously contributed to solving a problem and it makes everybody involved an active participant in trying to solve a problem. It's a framework for working as an EP.... and it does provide a useful structure for a dialogue to take place and within that dialogue... there's the opportunity to find out as much as is useful about a difficulty and then try to agree ways forward. That's definitely not what it says in the handbook. [chuckles].

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me what has influenced your practice of consultation?

## Appendix 11a - Exemplar 1: Example of my use of consultation

This is an example of consultation for a year 3 boy named Child A being used within a PDR framework (Beaver, 2003). Child A is at the School Action + stage of the SEN code of practice and receives no additional support in class. The numbers illustrate the different steps involved in this specific consultation case, but this is not necessarily the pattern all pieces of consultation work follow.

1. Planning meeting held in September 2010 – This is where this case was first prioritised by the SENCO. The school SENCO presented all of the children that were causing a concern and then asked to prioritise which ones needed to see the EP based upon their level of concern. This is also the stage where some of the presented cases can be allocated to other agencies such as behaviour support or the advisory teachers for literacy etc.
  - a. Child A was prioritised by the school as he had received input from both a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and the Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Advisory Teacher, but was still making little progress.
  - b. School was asked to send in a Planning in Partnership (PiP) form, which gave the parents' consent for EP intervention and more detailed information on what school had tried so far, people that had been involved and a basic overview of his national curriculum attainment levels.
2. Once the form was received by the EPS a meeting date was set.
3. Child A was then observed in his class setting by me immediately before the initial consultation meeting – key points outlined include; Child A was very forgetful, easily distracted, enjoyed school, and he used visual spatial approaches such as finger counting, difficulty seeing the board, poor speech and letter formation. This led to some of the questions asked later in the consultation such as are there any known sight issues?
4. Initial consultation meeting arranged by me. This involved me, class teacher, head teacher (SENCO) and both parents. This covered the following points:
  - a. Further details on the interventions of other agencies – names of SALT and SpLD teachers, length of interventions. Details of any support school had provided.
  - b. Aims and hopes of the consultation – what the school and parents want to achieve as a result of EP input. They wanted to see Child A progress and able to read and write more effectively.
  - c. School information– details of strategies used, what has been effective, Child A's strengths, attainment levels, social, emotional and behavioural information and their concerns explored in more details.
  - d. Parent concerns – Child A's strengths at home, hobbies and interests, social, emotional and behavioural information, details of parents concerns.

- e. What improvements would indicate a successful outcome from this consultation?  
This can involve the use of solution focussed techniques e.g. the miracle question – if we woke up tomorrow and this intervention was successful, what would this look like, what change would we see in Child A?
  - f. Agree actions – all of the information provided was taken into account and my hypothesis was that this child was bright, but his verbal abilities were holding him back. It was agreed that we needed to gain a more up to date picture from the SALT. Mum and Dad agreed that I could contact the SALT, so I set about obtaining copies of her reports. This was all written up in a consultation record that followed the same format as in sections A-F, which was sent to the parents and school.
  - g. My discussion with the SALT indicated there was a significant delay in Child A’s expressive and receptive language. This meant we needed to establish if this was a specific learning difficulty or a reflective of his general abilities. I therefore decided to carry out a cognitive assessment using the British Ability Scales (2<sup>nd</sup> edition – BAS II) to obtain this information. This assessment revealed that Child A was stronger in the visual, non-verbal & spatial clusters but his verbal abilities were much lower. This indicated that he has specific language impairment and that school should attempt more visual spatial strategies in both his 1:1 sessions and in class.
5. A series of strategies were agreed upon by myself and the class teacher and implemented into his individual Education Plan. It was agreed to set a review date 6 weeks from the implementation date. However during this time the boy’s Mum died unexpectedly of natural causes. This changed the focus of this intervention as this tragic event meant that Child A was not in school for a couple of weeks, whilst the family came to terms with the loss of their mother. During this time I offered school advice and support in helping Child A with his bereavement, but I did not see Child A during this time. It was agreed by school staff to postpone this review date by a month.
6. The review was attended by the Class teacher, Head/SENCO, SpLD teacher, SALT and Child A’s Grandmother. This revealed that school had tried to adopt visual/spatial approaches and had been successful when working 1:1 with an adult, but he could not retain information when working in class. It was recognised that the death of Child A’s mother would affect Child B’s performance in school, so support was continuously offered to school and to Child A around supporting his bereavement, which was not taken up as Child A seemed to be coping well.



- The class teacher had been involved with negotiating strategies with both me and SALT, but he felt he had delivered all he could. It was then suggested that we look at getting additional support for Child A as his BAS II scores and results from SALT assessments were low enough for him to attend a Speech and Language Special Resource Base (SRB) at another school. This is when it was decided to hold a multi-professional meeting to discuss what to do next with Child A involving everyone who had been involved to gain more clarity on what people had been working on with Child A. This meeting revealed that everyone involved in school had been providing appropriate strategies, but Child A was still showing little progress. School understood that the recent bereavement was likely to hinder his progress further, but stressed that progress was slow prior to this. Child A's Grandmother spoke for the family by not wanting to move him out of the school due to the recent death of his mother, so it was agreed that we would make a special effort to get Child A additional support in his current school, rather than unsettle him by moving him out of it to an SRB elsewhere. A solution focussed approach was used to determine what this support would look like for the purpose of the application form. This application is currently pending. If agreed the next step is to review how the support is being applied and what changes need to be made.

## Appendix 11b - Exemplar 2: Example of my use of consultation

Child B is a year 8 girl who attends a mainstream comprehensive school. Child B was excluded from school for 35 days following a series of events that included, truanting and fighting with other children. Child B lived with her Grandfather under a care order, which is a result of her mother being a known substance abuser, but had moved in with a friend's family at the start of the EP's intervention with her.

The EP's initial contact with Child B was through a year 8 social skills intervention group prior to her exclusion. This is where the EP was first alerted to the fact that she was a concern for school, but she was not the sole focus of this intervention. Child B had not been discussed at the September planning meeting by the SENCO as she had not been presenting as a child for concern at this point. When school informed the EP about Child B in March, they were still not asking for any EP involvement as they had referred her to the Behaviour Support Service (BSS). The EP felt that this child would benefit from EP involvement, so they maintained her as a priority child on their caseload. Eventually Child B was excluded for 35 days, so this instigated the EP involvement with this case at an official level.

The steps involved in this case are as follows:

1. Alerted to exclusion of child from school via PEP and BSS.
  2. Meeting with Head of Pastoral support (school staff) to discuss circumstances around exclusion and gather further background information on Child B. This revealed that Child B lives in an all-male household, her behaviour at home was described as being out of control e.g. staying out late, drinking, smoking and involvement with a group of older girls with a bad reputation and little respect for boundaries. There had been concerns over the level of care Child B was receiving based upon the state of her appearance in school. They attempted to discuss Child B's strengths, but school could only say that she is a very caring girl.
- Child B had a positive relationship with the Pastoral Head in her school, but she disengaged when questioned about events at home. Male members of school staff were also concerned that Child B would make false allegations against them, which was straining her relationship with the rest of school staff. Her relationship with her peers was also fractious as she was known to wind them and start arguments with them regularly.
  - School informed the EP that Child B had responded well to a more nurturing approach, which was expected given the level of care provided at home. However it is

difficult for a comprehensive school to provide this approach despite Child B being emotionally immature.

- The meeting revealed that there had been previous involvement with social services over 2 years ago when she moved in with Granddad, but she was discharged when she showed signs of positive improvement. School was suspicious that Child B was being abused by someone at home, which could mean either her Granddad or older brother were mistreating her as she had moved to an adult friend's house. It was agreed at this point that social services should be involved and the EP agreed to go and meet Granddad at home.
3. Conversation with Social Services –Social Services informed the EP why they had been involved in the past and that Child B had been part of a “chill out” group with Action for Children. They had not been able to make any contact with Child B to obtain her views at this point.
  4. Meeting with Granddad in the family home – Granddad was able to shed light on why Child B was living at her adult friend's house, which was linked to her not liking living in an all-male household.
- The focus of the meeting was to obtain what Granddad has found successful with dealing with Child B's behaviour, but this strict approach had not worked. He was also asked if Child B had expressed what she would like to do in life, how she gets on with authority figures, the level of her self-care skills and what she likes and dislikes about school. This meeting with Granddad adopted a very solution focussed approach where we tried to focus on Child B's strengths, which he struggled to identify, but eventually he talked about how she was good as a little girl and her like of music and makeovers.
  - Granddad was able to confirm that Child B would be upset if she had to leave her current school permanently, so they explored ways of helping her to succeed on her return to the school. The EP helped Granddad to see that in order for Child B to be successful in school she needed help to feel happy at home. Granddad agreed to do whatever he could, which include identifying a positive female role model in the family for Child B to spend time with. This led to him identifying his daughter who was a nurse, who had inspired Child B to also want to embark on this same career path. Granddad agreed to contact his daughter to see if this was possible. He also agreed that Child B

would need a more nurturing approach at school and would benefit from a phased return once her exclusion was lifted.

5. The EP was able to visit Child B at her friend's house where she was currently residing by accompanying a social worker. There were 6 other children in the room plus the 2 parents. Despite the room being busy Child B was able to engage in a conversation with the EP about how she misses her friends at school and wants a fresh start. The EP used this opportunity to arrange to meet Child B at school to discuss her return. The EP also found out that she was no longer staying out late at night and that the social worker did not feel this was an appropriate care arrangement.
6. From the start of this case the EP thought it was important to obtain the views of Child B about her exclusion and engage in some form of dialogue around how they could move her forward from her current situation through her successful return to school. The EP felt that by using psycho-dynamic techniques such as the *Blob People* (Wilson, 2004) or Personal Construct techniques such as *Drawing the Ideal Self* (Moran, 2008) it would enable them to ascertain a greater understanding of the motivation behind Child B's behaviour and lead to identifying ways for supporting her return to school. However due to the service's policy on not working directly with children (Pantysgawn County Borough Council, 2009b), this piece of work could not take place as it would mean the Granddad being present and this would not have been productive. An attempt was made to carry out this piece of work with Granddad present, but neither party made to the meeting as they had an argument on their way to school. This piece of work was then handed to a behaviour support teacher who could work individually with children.
7. The EP then met again with the pastoral head to develop a plan for Child B's return to school. This involved using the information they had gathered from Granddad and Child B to implement a plan. This meant Child B having a phased return to school, where she had a link worker in school, which was the pastoral head. Staff would be briefed about Child B's home circumstances and it was agreed to carry out some whole school training on managing children with chaotic family circumstances. It was also agreed that whoever Child B was staying with should contact school when Child B had got home to ensure she was going home and not heading elsewhere. This was to be monitored closely by school and any concerns shared with the EP. The BSS teacher (who was female) also agreed to work on a programme to support Child B in school.

## Appendix 11c - Exemplar 3: Example of consultation by Psychologist 2

Child C is a year 12 boy with a statement of Special Educational Needs, who attends a special school. Child C has an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) with severe difficulties in the areas of communication and behaviour. The case took the following steps within a PDR style framework:

1. Child C identified at planning meeting. Request for EP involvement in advance of planning meeting.
2. Initial consultation held with school attended by Deputy Head Teacher and Class Teacher – school expressed they would like the EP’s opinion on Child C. This also gathered further information on Child C’s progress in class and the teacher’s opinion on this. It also revealed what strategies school were using, what had worked well for them and what were Child C’s interests.
  - a. School outlined their concerns around Child C’s social communication skills and how they are currently addressing them. School’s primary concern was regarding the time of day that Child C was arriving at school due to a series of ‘obsessional routines’ he must carry out before getting into the taxi that brings him to school.
  - b. The psychologist carried out an observation in his class setting after the consultation and then shared her thoughts with school staff. This highlighted Child C had strengths in managing changes to his routine well, being at ease around others, responding well to his name and following teacher prompts well. It also highlighted areas for development, which includes his eye contact, although will do so with prompting. Child C does not initiate interaction, although will answer with support to do so.
  - c. The outcome from this consultation meeting was that the psychologist should work with the Home Support Worker (HSW) to target the issues regarding him getting into the taxi.
3. Consultation with HSW – this aimed to define how best to support the home support worker in working with Child C’s family. The home support worker had been involved with the family for a number of years. Her concerns were discussed, which repeated schools concerns around his rigid routines making him late for school in addition to this she expressed that Child C can be violent towards his mother. The HSW expressed that using visual timetables had worked in helping him manage changes to his morning routine. She expressed that she would like EP support advice to develop strategies to get Child C from the front gate to the taxi. The psychologist agreed to carry out an observation of Child C with the HSW at home, with an aim to gain a better understanding of the current situation.

4. Second observation at home – the EP observed Child C with the HSW getting attempting to get into his taxi. The EP produced a detailed time referenced account of the procedure Child C undertook before getting into the taxi. She then used her psychological knowledge to inform Child C's motivation behind his actions. This included Child C's lengthy repetitive conversation with his mother at the gate being a result of some anxiety about attending school. She hypothesised that Child C therefore needed opportunities engage in this conversation to relieve his anxiety, but he needed clear boundaries for the duration of this conversation. The EP had witnessed that Child C could cope with change and visual aids were a helpful way of supporting his needs. By drawing upon her knowledge of good practice for children with ASD, the EP was able to develop an action plan in consultation with the HSW and Child C's mother, which used visual aids and egg timers to create a rigid routine where Child C would be allowed some time for his anxiety relieving conversation and would be rewarded by the taxi driver allowing him to choose a CD or book based upon his likes and interests. The agreed actions stated that the HSW should carry out the actions required to implement the plan, such as taking the required photos for the visual aids.
  
5. The annual review meeting was held later in the term with the parent, SENCO, HSW and EP present. This revealed that the agreed action plan was successful as Child C was now getting to school on time.

## **Appendix 11d – Exemplar 4: Example of a consultation meeting by Psychologist 7**

Child D is a 14 year old boy who school have expressed concerns regarding his erratic behaviour. This example of consultation in practise is from a meeting with a parent by Psychologist 7 in May 2010. The author of this thesis was observing Psychologist 7 at the time as part of their own professional development and was focussed on the types of questions asked during a consultation meeting. It follows on from an initial meeting with school where Psychologist 7 found out there had been no previous concerns until this term, but at the point of this meeting he was at risk of being excluded due to his behaviour which included the use of inappropriate language and “touching” other children. The meeting with school also discussed how this boy was easily influenced by other students, lacked concentration and had underdeveloped comprehension and articulation skills.

This example will demonstrate the questions that were asked in this meeting with the Mother and School SENCO. These are not transcripts, but are based upon the observation notes taken at the time:

Psychologist 7 – How has he changed socially?

Mum had always felt that she knew Child D was different. He has always wanted to be independent but is anxious about not having any help.

School commented that this boy had made little progress in reading, which they felt was a result of his poor concentration skills. Child D was also being provided with 1 hours language support per week to develop his skills in this area.

Psychologist 7 – What barriers are there to maintaining Child D’s concentration?

Mum – he loses interest if he sees something as boring, he is easily distracted.

Psychologist 7 – what are his interests?

Mum – The usual – Xbox, TV.

Psychologist 7 -How long can he maintain his level of concentration on the Xbox?

Mum – so long as he is winning a game he will sit there for hours, but this can vary. He prefers more hands on activities such as making Lego models.

Psychologist 7 – has he spoken to anyone about what options he would like to take next year?

Mum - yes he filled out a form and sent it to school, but she could not remember which ones he was taking.

School – He will be taking entry level English, Science, Maths, Geography, ICT and History which will be in small groups. He will also be taking ASDAN Design Technology. School were looking at reviewing the funding for lower ability groups as they had previously not been able to offer as much support as they would like to.

Psychologist 7 – Mum, are there any other concerns that you have?

Mum – thought he might have Aspergers syndrome. She was awaiting appointments to follow this up further. This was based upon his Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (tendencies) around the cleanliness of eating implements. Mum said he was on medication for his aggressive behaviour, but could not name the prescription. She felt that since there had been a change his behaviour had become more aggressive. She also said that she had a rejection letter from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) as Child D did not meet their criteria due to a lack of information. School also commented that Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) were also asking for further information on how school was supporting Child D.

Psychologist 7 – has anything changed at home that coincides with his change in behaviour.

Mum confirmed that she had a new partner who Child D got on very well with and restated that his change in medication was to blame.

Psychologist 7 – explained that whilst there are some elements of Aspergers syndrome, Mum would need to follow up the medical appointments. She asked Mum if she could contact CAMHS) to find out the progress of their involvement with Child D. She agreed to write a report highlighting Mum and schools concerns in order to support the previously rejected referral to CAMHS and satisfy (SALT's) request for further information. In the meantime she offered some strategies and advice on supporting children with Aspergers syndrome such as the usual of visual aids and social stories. She



felt that she needed to gain a clearer perspective on Child D so she agreed to meet and observe him at a later date. She also provided some advice on developing concentration skills that were recorded by the school SENCO.

## **Appendix 11e – Exemplar 5: Example of a consultation with Psychologist 3**

Child E is a year 9 boy who had been home educated for over 6 months at the time of the meeting. This piece of work was done in preparation for an annual review of the boy's statement. Pantysgawn EPS has a policy that an EP should be present at all Year 2, 5 and 9 Key Stage Transition Reviews, if a parent requests one. The mother of this boy requested EP involvement in order to seek advice on how to help her son with his concentration difficulties. This request was communicated to the EP by the school SENCO at his previous school.

The EP visited the family home where the boy is educated and worked through the standard format of a Pantysgawn EPS consultation which starts with obtaining background information on who has been involved with the child and why Boy E was being home educated. This revealed that the boy had been feeling anxious about school with symptoms including anxiety, panic attacks and bed wetting. Mum's perceived benefits of home education Boy E were then explored as well as her concerns.

In a normal school based consultation it is possible to gain levels of academic progress through the wealth of assessment data that schools hold. However in this case this did not exist, so the Mum had to demonstrate progress through presenting specific pieces of work. This suggested that the boy was a lot more confident with his reading and writing as he had more time to devote to these skills. Mum was also using an approach where they would discuss and debate current affairs and link this to curriculum topics such as humanities where possible. Child E explained that this made subjects a lot more meaningful. EP also discussed what strengths the boy had with Mum and Child E, which revealed that he was good at practical activities such as wood work, which he then demonstrated with an example.

The mother was then asked to discuss her concerns with the EP, which revealed that she felt her son struggled to concentrate. The EP sought to explore any environmental factors that might explain these concentration difficulties, which revealed the boy sits near the patio doors when they work and often looks out of the window as he likes being outdoors. There were also a large number of pets roaming around the house, that mum mentioned accompany them during study time. The boy also wanted some guidance on what courses he could take, so it was agreed to seek the advice of Careers Wales at the annual review.

One of the main concerns for the EP was the boy missing out socially by being home educated, but he resolved this to an extent by commenting that he sees his friends in the evenings and is a member of a local football club.

Once these concerns had been established and the EP felt that they had gained a sufficient amount of information, they attempted to address the concerns using the resources available to the family. As the boy was very keen on the family pets it was agreed with Mum that they would try and remove the pets from the room when working and eliminate any outside distractions by closing the curtains and switching the TV off. These would be used as a reward once the set work was completed. It was also recommended that they use a set place/room when working in order to avoid any blurring of boundaries between leisure time and school time that may arise as a result of home schooling and that there should be a more structured timetable to the day. All of the action points were recorded for the mother and presented to her before the EP left.

The EP, Mother and Child E then set about addressing their concerns about concentration by agreeing on a series of recommendations that used the boy's love of pets and practical activities as a reward. It also considered the home environment and set about establishing a set area for doing school work in order to avoid any blurring of boundaries between work and leisure time that may arise as a result of being educated in the home. The EP then agreed to come back and review these strategies in 6 weeks and agreed to contact the Careers Advisory Service (Careers Wales) for the transition review.

# Paper 2, Interview 1

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### Research Questions:

**Paper 2: Using consultation to identify what schools want from Pantysgawn EPS and how better outcomes can be achieved.**

Using consultation to find out:

- 1) What is the role of the EPS as perceived by service users / EPs? (Range of supplementary questions)
    - a) Is there an agreed reality and if not what might be the implications / possibilities?
  - 2) What do schools want from the EPS?
  - 3) What are the benefits of EP intervention?
  - 4) What are good outcomes for children?
  - 5) How can better outcomes be facilitated?
  - 6) What needs to change?
    - a) Use the feedback from the consultations in focus groups to find out how the service can improve outcomes for service users.
    - b) What might be the influence of the feedback / how will this inform developments?
    - c) What are the priorities?
- .....

### Interview Questions (Framework)

1. What do you perceive to be the role of Pantysgawn EPS?
  - a. What is the role of the EPS?
  - b. What do you think are the priorities for EP work?
    - i. What should they be?
2. What would you like from the EPS?
  - a. To what extent do the EPS meet these expectations?
  - b. In what ways could the service develop to meet your expectations?
3. What are the benefits of EP intervention?
  - a. Benefits for schools?
  - b. Benefits for families?
  - c. Benefits for children?

4. What would you say is a good outcome for a child who has had EP involvement? Use examples if necessary.
  - a. Are there any barriers to achieving this?
  - b. What could the EPS do to meet these outcomes more successfully?
5. In what ways do you think the EPS could develop to work more effectively with children, families and schools?
  - a. What changes would need to occur to meet this?
  - b. What would EP intervention look like in an ideal world?

## Appendix 13 – Paper 2 Inter-Rater Reliability – Comparison of themes table

Question	Themes from independent coder	Author's themes
What do you perceive to be the role of Pantysgawn EPS?	Varies from school to school/party to party. Schools don't always fully understand the approach or their part in it. They tend to need success before they buy in to it. Not all schools have time for it – this affects the impact	Additional assessment Reduce exclusion Advice and Support
What do schools want from the EPS?	EPs could do with more time in the school Would like more balance between individual and group work Can be key to turning a child around It's about collaboration To help them sort the children out, make happier environments for all. To work with them in collaboration	More time in schools Early intervention Diagnostic role Advice and strategies Provide more positive learning environments
What are the benefits of EP intervention?	Can really turn a child around - can be life changing for the individual child, the family and the other children in the school Provide support to teachers	Change in behaviour, improve the learning experience, provide advice and support, identify issues, access to resources, impartial role between school and family.
What are good outcomes for children?	Stakeholders, including the child understand why they are feeling/ behaving the way they are and are given strategies/ support to remedy them. Ultimate outcome is that the behaviour/ challenge ie dyslexia is better understood and managed. Happier children, happier parents, happier children –it's a causal loop	Advice and strategies
How can better outcomes be facilitated?	Working together, training for the EPs, parents and teachers	More time, multiagency working, good quality advice
What needs to change?	More EPs, closer working with schools	More EPs, closer working with schools

Table 4

## Appendix 14 – Paper 2 Interview Transcript Sample

**Interviewer:** Interview 1 Paper 2 YGCW RL, first of all R please can you tell me about what you perceive to be the role of Pantysgawn EP service?

**C1:** We've tried to work very closely with Pantysgawn EPS over the years because I think it is a facet of the provision for the pupils that is very important. It's important from our point of view to ensure that the children get the provision that is required if there are any issues that are adversely effecting their education. It is that diagnostic aspect that we need professionals to provide, I'm just thinking of things like recall, short term recall for example can be detected diagnostically and advice fed back to the classroom teachers for the best way to provide the learning experience for the child, so the diagnostic element is very very important.

**Interviewer:** Are you referring to additional assessment?

**C1:** Additional assessments leading to um... pretty simple concrete recommendations about the best ways to deliver the curriculum effectively to a child who is struggling against some sort of background problem

**Interviewer:** Ok thank you. Do you see any other roles for the EPS at all?

**C1:** Certainly one of the roles that um er we have been aware of is again to try and ensure that every provision is provided for a child when there are discipline issues, certainly we have very low exclusion rates and our experience really is that we try and do everything we can prior to excluding a child and I think that in order to ensure that we are doing everything we can do avoid an exclusion is important we also cover our backs as well of course to ensure that we have done everything we should have done and I do feel that if a child is not performing well in school and behavioural issues being expressed that the EP can help us again to identify any underlying reasons for that and help bring about change. [Phone rings - interview paused]

**Interviewer:** Ok so what would you see as being the priorities for the EP service in terms of their work?

**C1:** Um I mean liaising with our SEN department is where the EP usually functions here picking up dyslexia or taking part in statementing, which is something we assume is happening in the primaries a great deal and also something that is carried out at secondary school as well. Um but again diagnostic assessments of reading issues etc is the way that we see the EPs working here, very closely with our SENCO.

## Appendix 15 – Methods of Monitoring Outcomes

### The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) model of evaluation service outcomes

The AEP (2009) proposes a model of evaluation that requires the EP to clearly define the EP's activity (what took place), the purpose of their intervention (why this took place), with whom it took place, its links with the *Every Child Matters Outcomes* (DfES, 2003) and provides options to evaluate the intervention. Whilst Every Child Matters is not relevant to Wales, as already mentioned Wales does have the 7 key drivers of *Rights in Action* (WAG, 2002), which enables services to provide data to OFSTED or ESTYN in the light of inspections.

This model of service evaluation allows for the service to choose how to evaluate the impact of the intervention. In the case of a piece of work such as using precision teaching then pre and post-test measures can be employed, which should be agreed upon before the intervention takes place. This method of evaluation provided a useful way of measuring the effect of an EPs intervention and provides clear links to the relevant service drivers such as *Rights in Action* and claims to be a robust measure for evaluating the outcomes of EP work that makes the EP think clearly about how the work will be carried out and measured before the intervention takes place.

### Dickinson's (2000) approach to monitoring outcomes

Dickinson (2000) is a more informal model of monitoring service outcomes when working through consultation that he claims "enables [them] to check the fitness for purpose of both [their] general approach and of the specific actions that and outcomes that are planned and reviewed with consultees" (p21). In order to achieve this, their service model of delivering consultation needs to have clear boundaries for both the service and the consultee. This is reported in a national survey by Farrell et al., (2006) who reported that when services are clear about their role and the role of other professionals in a piece of work then, other agencies were more willing to contribute and thus achieve more effective outcomes.

Each stage of the consultation is reviewed and recorded by having a conversation with the consultee where the agreed actions and key issues are written down on a discussion record form of which a copy is left with the consultee, which is repeated at each stage of the intervention. This is later reviewed by discussing each stage with the consultee, if one of the actions was not fit for purpose then the reasons behind this are discussed thoroughly with the consultee.



This model works within a time allocation based model of service delivery, where schools are guaranteed a minimum of 3 planning and review sessions per year. This is recorded in a database system that enables EPs to record the outcomes and nature of their on-going consultation work. By adopting this approach to consultation, Dickinson claims to have increased the amount of development work EPs engage within in schools with less focus on statutory assessment. This has also enabled greater transparency and understanding between EPs and schools.

Dickinson (2000) describes this model himself as a “tatty” model, but promotes the virtues of using consultation in this way. However as with other criticisms of consultation, it provides very little hard evidence for the effectiveness of consultation, but it does provide a model of evaluating and recording outcomes that is transparent, flexible and easy to implement.

### **360 ° Feedback (Sharp, et al., 2000).**

This approach makes a distinction between “output measures” i.e. what is done, which is data mainly from the EP database and “outcome measures” i.e. what is achieved, which are usually more contentious as they are often represent areas where performance was interdependent on working with other professionals. These measures therefore do not provide a robust enough measure on the effectiveness of EP involvement (Sarah Turner, et al., 2010). An attempt was made at creating a system of “360 degree feedback” (Sharp, et al., 2000: p104), which obtains feedback from a range of people including the individual, their peers, colleagues, managers and key stakeholders.

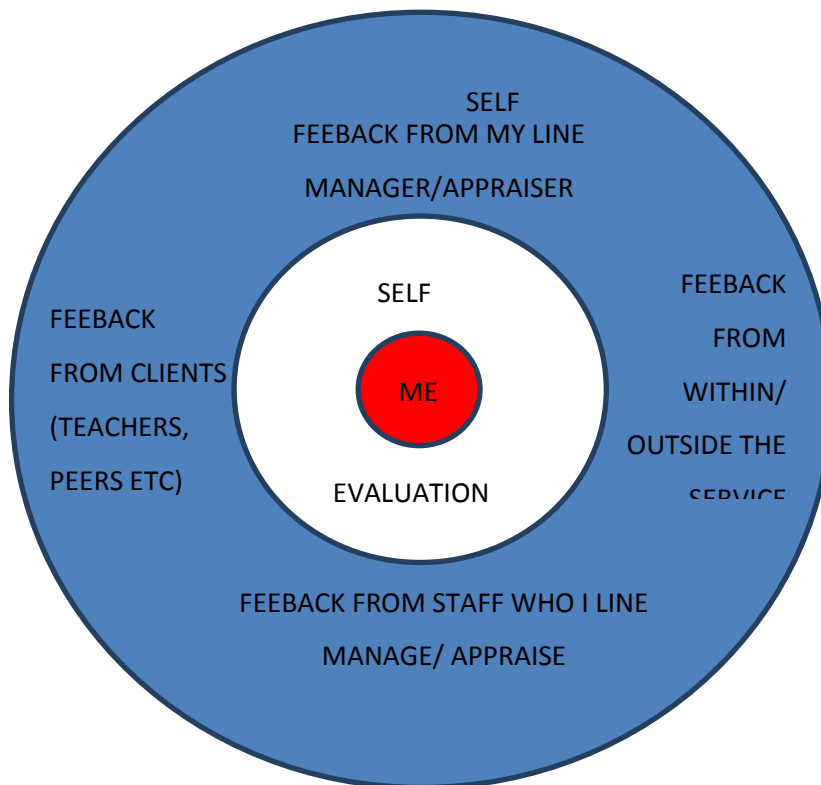


Figure 1: A 360-degree feedback model for an educational psychology service. (Sharp, Frederickson, & Laws, 2000: p105)

The advantage of using this method of feedback is that staff should be more willing to embrace feedback when it comes from multiple raters (Sharp, et al., 2000) and it has also received a lot of support in a number of studies such as (Bernadin, Dahmus, & Redmon, 1993), which found that staff were more willing to accept feedback when it came from their manager and their subordinates. However this method creates a lot of data and with that takes a lot of time to coordinate and analyse. This method of feedback is unlikely to work in Pantysgawn EPS as there are not the resources available to implement it.

This current study has been an attempt at finding out service users perceptions of the EP Service and is an attempt at obtaining 360 degree feedback. However, whereas this is a suitable method for the purpose of research project where someone has time to analyse the qualitative data, this would not work as a method to obtain an overall everyday measure of the effectiveness of the service at producing positive outcomes.

The current monitoring evaluation and review mechanisms that are in place in Pantysgawn include supervision through peer and line management, data collection on exclusions, attendance and completed Appendix D reports and from the service development plan where performance is measured against the plans and targets for the academic year. There is also some informal evaluation e.g. at the end of consultations and follow up consultations where the degree of success of the

intervention/ agreed actions is discussed. There is also feedback sought after training sessions, but there is no formal mechanism for bringing all this data together to monitor the impact of the service. The service has therefore considered ways of monitoring its effectiveness, which this current study intends to be a part of.

### **Target Monitoring Evaluation (TME)**

The effectiveness of the EP within a consultation model of service delivery is difficult to monitor as the EP does not have sole responsibility for the effectiveness of the intervention in achieving the intended outcomes (Dunsmuir, et al., 2009). Within consultation, Dunsmuir et al. (2009) highlight that “successful delivery of an indirect service depends to a large extent on the EP’s ability to exert interpersonal influence on consultees and use persuasive effort to address resistances” (p55), this is arguably a key skill of being an EP. They therefore proposed a system for evaluation outcomes that is robust and applicable across a range of EP activities and interventions, which led to the development of TME.

TME provides a more routine method of evaluating EP outcomes rather than output. Again it is acknowledged that it is difficult to define measurable outcomes such as time on task (Dunsmuir, et al., 2009) acknowledge that TME is a helpful way of evaluating interventions in terms of their quality, appropriateness and challenge of individual targets and measures of progress.

Turner et al (2010) criticise TME for being too reductionist as it only focuses on measurable outcomes for which they comment “looking at measurable pupil outcomes is an important part of investigating EP impact, but it is only a part” (Sarah Turner, et al., 2010: p315) and there remains the issue of truly being able to demonstrate EP effectiveness, which with EP work “there is a crucial difference between an identifiable outcome (concrete, measurable) and what is achieved (subjective judgement) (Sarah Turner, et al., 2010: p315) and all too often far more is achieved from EP intervention than can actually be measured e.g. if a pupil remains in mainstream education, the placement stays as the same, but there may be more un-measurable effects of the EP involvement. Turner, et al (2010) stress “for casework that is preventative and focussed on early intervention, one must ask about perceptions of achievements rather than simply about outcomes”(p315). They disagree that the real challenge is to define outcomes that are measurable and that the focus should be “to illuminate and record effective casework in a manner that is proportionate and conducive to professional development” (p315).

## **Turner, Randall and Mohammed's (2010) model for evaluating casework**

Turner et al's (2010) model of casework evaluation is an attempt to monitor and evaluate casework in a way that they claim is "owned and administered by EPs, which captured the impact an EP had on outcomes for pupils in the real world" (Sarah Turner, et al., 2010: p317). This model is also an attempt at bringing evidence from stakeholders and EPs themselves. They comment that although this model is "impressive in its range and rigour" (p317), the management team were aware that there was no specific evaluation of casework. Casework evaluation was therefore conducted individually by EPs in a spirit of reflective practice by using the existing structures such as peer supervision, line management and annual management reviews that provided a forum to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of their casework. Turner et al (2010) recognise that this was an assumption and not a formal procedure, describing it as a "striking anomaly in the well-established service evaluation framework the service had created as a team for other areas of work" (p318). This meant that the method of monitoring casework was ad hoc and not formally acknowledged at a service level where there was no measure of the impact on children and young people or procedures for monitoring the perspectives of EPs and stakeholders.

Turner et al (2010) used a casework evaluation form that monitored the impact of the intervention on four different stakeholders (pupil, school, parents/carer and other) by asking to provide evidence of this impact and allowing for the EP to contribute their own self-reflection and self-evaluation and any actions arising from the casework. At least two of these casework evaluation forms were requested at each quarterly management review for discussion with their line manager.

The results of this two and a half year study showed that "outcomes" were what happened with the case and the "impact" was the effect of any work that had taken place. Turner et al (2010) shares some common themes in terms of what are considered positive outcomes of EP intervention. The common themes include changes in pupil behaviour, progress in school, access to other agencies and support, appropriate placement of pupil (change in provision).

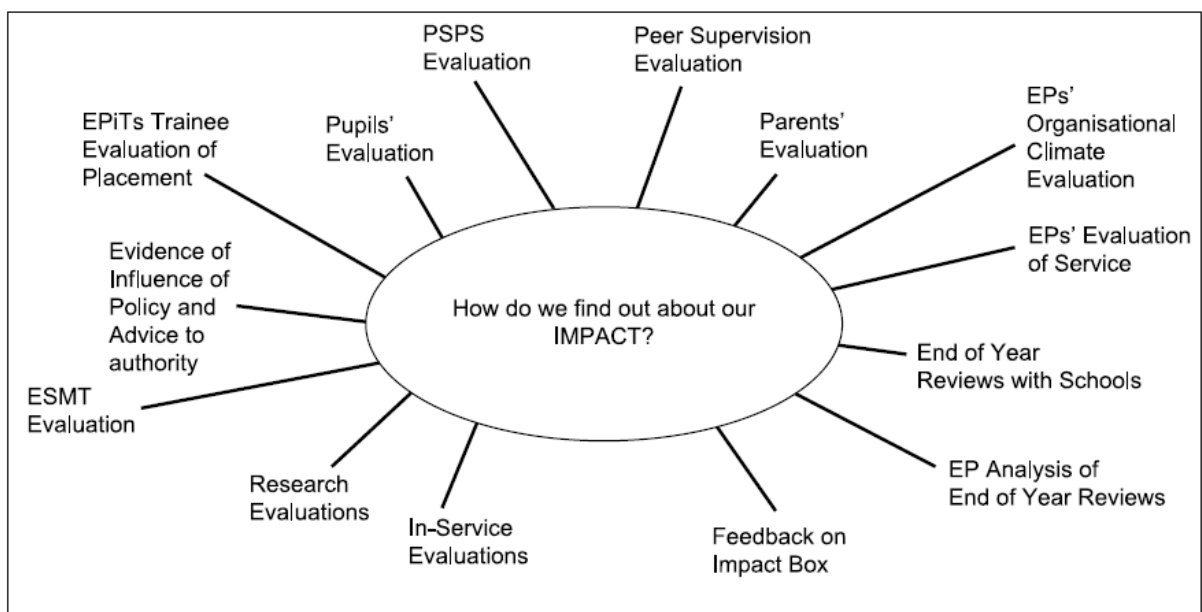


Figure 2. "Spider diagram" of service evaluation activities. Figure 1. "Spider diagram" of service evaluation activities.

Notes: PPS – Post School Psychological Service; EPIT – Educational Psychologist in Training; ESMT – Educational Service Management Team (Turner et al., 2010).

The advantages of Turner et al's (2010) model is that it can demonstrate the impact of an EP on producing outcomes for individual pupils. With a method such as Turner et al's in place for monitoring casework, Pantysgawn would be able to provide a more accurate measure of the effect of its interventions. They claim that this method does not get in the way of actually doing the work of an EP and provides a tool for self-reflection, performance management and quality assurance thus demonstrating accountability and value for money in a time when EP services have to demonstrate their existence.

However, there are also limitations to using this model such as it took a long time for it to become embedded into practice as the EPs involved needed time to develop an understanding of the importance of gathering this evidence and it not just being a case of them recording their own reflections. This method allowed for some flexibility within the service as to how evidence was gathered using existing resources and creating new ones. Pantysgawn already has consultation feedback forms that are based on the resources from Patsy Wagner (1995), but there is no formal policy on using these. Another mechanism for obtaining more feedback on outcomes could come in the form of discussing the success of previous year's work in following years planning meetings with schools

The advantage of this approach is its use of both outcome data and the perceptions of others, but it has not had its level of consistency tested yet. It is also acknowledged by Turner et al (2010) that

there was no consistency in the wording of questions on EP impact during their study, but this is addressed by them desiring a degree of flexibility so that EPs could try out this approach and finding a way that worked best for them. This system has now been embedded into the service in which it was trialled and Turner et al (2010) claim that their method has become more robust as they have identified a set of questions that are used to gather evidence. It should be noted that this method of evaluating outcomes is still in its development phase.