The experiences of school staff who work with emotionally based school non-attendance: a psycho-social exploration.

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May 2018

Abstract

This psycho-social study explored the experiences of school staff who have worked with emotionally based school non-attendance. There is a paucity of qualitative accounts of school staff's views in this area. Existing research focuses predominantly on the causes, risk and protective factors and the management of school non-attendance.

Six participants took part in two interviews where psychoanalytically informed approaches were employed. This included the Grid Elaboration Method and Free Association Narrative Interviewing. The interview transcripts were analysed using Thematic Analysis, which illuminated five overarching themes: relationships between home and school; school factors; conceptualisation and impact of school non-attendance; tasks and challenges of adolescence and individual journeys and emotions. The themes are discussed in relation to existing research and psychological theory. Consideration is given to the implications for the role of the Educational Psychologist in working with emotionally based school non-attendance. Strengths and limitations of the current study are discussed and ideas for future research are proposed.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Firstly, thank you to all of the participants who took time to share your experiences with me. Your stories were enlightening and made this research possible. For this, I will be forever grateful.

Secondly, thank you to my research supervisor, Jude. Your guidance and feedback was thoughtful, clear and constructive – exactly what I needed! Also, thank you to Dale for providing a space where I could think about, and reflect on, the research at a deeper level. This was truly fascinating.

Lastly, but certainly not least, thank you to my wonderful family, partner and friends. You have all been there when I have needed you most and I could not have made it this far without you. Your everlasting support means the world to me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information relating to school non-attendance. I will outline the long-term negative effects of non-attendance at school and argue that an Educational Psychologist (EP) is well placed to support non-attenders, their families and educationalists working with them. I will situate the information within a legislative context and present recent figures and trends, both nationally and locally. The terminology surrounding this area will be explored and links to young people's mental health will be made. I will then outline the reasons for adopting a psycho-social approach in this research, place the research within a theoretical framework and conclude with a discussion about my professional interest in the area.

1.2 Impact of School Non-Attendance

The Department for Education's (2016e) advice outlines the pivotal role of regular school attendance in academic achievement. It highlights the negative outcomes for children and young people who do not receive a suitable education and the importance of early intervention through effective information sharing. Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003) reported that all local authorities and teachers involved in their study believed that poor attendance related to underachievement, difficulties with peers, loss of confidence and disruptive behaviour. This study also found that most parents thought it was important for children to attend school regularly, as they associated regular attendance with higher achievement.

Section 1:7 of the Education Act (Parliament, 1996) states:

- The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

    o To his age, ability and aptitude, and

    o To any special educational needs, he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 6:2 of the Education Act (Parliament, 1996) states that parents who do not comply with this statutory duty can be served with a school attendance order, which can lead to significant fines and prosecution. However, prosecuting parents has not been shown to be effective in improving school attendance (Sheppard, 2011). In addition to the legal consequences for parents, school non-attendance is concerning for a number of reasons. Although it has been estimated that school non-attenders only comprise a small percentage of the population, the long-term consequences can be adverse. The British Psychological Society (BPS) Behaviour Change Briefings prepared by Apter (2016) reported that young people who are often absent from school are more likely to leave school with few or no qualifications, be unemployed, experience mental health difficulties and become homeless. Furthermore, school non-attendance is closely associated with crime (Audit Commission, 1996). This report found that a quarter of school-age offenders had low attendance at school and a majority of these offenders became adult offenders.

A report from the Department for Education (2016b) investigated the link between absence and attainment for pupils at the end of key stage four in mainstream schools from a national database of individually reported school census data. They found a

statistically significant negative link between absence and attainment, therefore the higher the levels of school absence, the lower the attainment levels. This was consistent with findings from the previous academic year (Department for Education, 2015a). The report concluded that pupils with high attendance are 2.2 times more likely to achieve five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* - C (including English and Mathematics) and 4.7 times more likely to achieve the English Baccalaureate than pupils missing 10 - 15% of sessions in key stage four (Department for Education, 2016b).

Longitudinal research has shown that persistent patterns of non-attendance over time impacts on an individual's social interactions with peers, their self-esteem and later mental health issues (Flakierska-Praquin, Lindstorm, & Gillberg, 1997). Taken together, these findings demonstrate that school non-attendance is a societal concern due to the wide-ranging negative effects on attainment, wellbeing and quality of life.

1.3 The National Context

Children in England are required by law to attend school from five to 16 years of age. The Education and Skills Act (Parliament, 2008) made it compulsory for young people at the age of 16 to stay in full-time education, begin an apprenticeship or spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering while in part-time education or training.

Department for Education (2016e) guidance titled 'School attendance: guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' details the

responsibilities of the local authority, school, parents and pupils. It states that the government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
    - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
    - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
    - Act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons

A separate document published by the Department for Education (2016a) titled 'Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities' states that schools have a legal duty to monitor pupil attendance through daily registers. They are also required to inform the local authority of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have missed ten school days or more without permission. In addition, schools have a responsibility to investigate any unexplained absences as part of their safeguarding duty.

Legislative requirements are contained in the following regulations:

- The Education Act (Parliament, 1996) - Sections 434 (1) (3) (4) & (6)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2010)

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2011)

1.3.1 Prevalence and Trends

National statistics indicate that overall absence rates have been steadily decreasing since 2006/07 when the rate was recorded as 6.4%. However, the most recent statistics highlight a small increase from 4.4% in 2015/16 to 4.5% in 2016/17 (Department for Education, 2017). This increase is reported in both primary and secondary schools, although the latter have consistently higher overall absence rates. In 2016/17, the overall absence rate for secondary schools was 5.2%, increasing from 5% in 2015/16. This is thought to be due to an increase in unauthorised absence, which rose from 0.9% in 2015/16 to 1.1% in 2016/17.

Authorised absence is when a teacher or an authorised representative accepts an explanation for the young person's absence, for example, illness or bereavement. Unauthorised absence is a failure to attend school without the permission of a teacher or an authorised representative, for example, holidays without permission, unexplained leave and truancy. Department for Education (2017) statistics distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences. However, it has been argued that these categories do not acknowledge the subgroup known as 'school refusers' and therefore, there are no official estimates on the extent of the problem because they could be misclassified (Archer, Filmer-Sankey, & Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; Thambirajah, Grandison, & De-Hayes, 2008). Furthermore, Malcolm et al.'s (2003) research found that many local authorities felt that schools authorised too many absences due to pressures to reduce rates of unauthorised absence. Therefore the

national statistics may not entirely reflect the current prevalence of unauthorised absence.

In September 2015, a revised persistent absence measure was introduced where a student is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more of their school sessions (Department for Education, 2016d). Prior to this, the classification lay at 15%. One in ten pupils were persistently absent from primary and secondary school in 2016/17. However, these combined figures could be misleading, as there are significant differences in the persistent absence rates for primary and secondary schools. In 2016/17, 12.8% of children and young people in secondary school were classified as persistently absent compared to 8.7% in primary schools. Evidence from national statistics and research studies has consistently reported higher rates of absence in secondary schools compared to primary schools (Archer et al., 2003; Department for Education, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015b, 2016d, 2017).

In terms of persistent absence by pupil characteristics, no gender differences were reported in the most recent national statistics (10.5% of boys and 10.4% of girls). However, the persistent absence rate for pupils who were eligible for free school meals was more than double the rate for pupils not eligible for free school meals (21.3% and 8.3% respectively). Pupils in years 10 and 11 have the highest persistent absence rate. Furthermore, the percentage of pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care plan considered as persistent absentees is more than two times higher than the percentage of pupils with no identified SEN. The highest persistent absence rates according to ethnic group

were Travellers of Irish Heritage at 58.5%, whereas Chinese pupils had the lowest absence rate at 3.6% (Department for Education, 2017).

1.4 The Local Authority Context

At the time of writing this thesis, I worked in a Local Authority where 'school refusal' was recognised as a priority area by the Educational Psychology Service. The aim was to develop guidance for primary and secondary schools on this topic with a focus on early identification and intervention. The overall rates of absence and persistent absence in the local secondary schools were slightly higher than the national average (5.3% compared to 5.2% for absence and 13.5% compared to 13.1% for persistent absence). Along with the increasing number of referrals of 'school refusers' to the service, this led to enhanced concern regarding the support and provision that is available for such pupils, particularly because school staff reported that they 'did not know what to do'.

Usually, local authorities have an Education Welfare Service to support school non-attenders. Malcolm et al. (2003) reported that most schools reintegrated poor attenders by utilising these services, alongside other interventions. However, the Education Welfare Service in this Local Authority had recently been disbanded due to funding cuts. There was only one Education Welfare Officer employed by the Local Authority and it is my understanding that their role tended to be restricted to dealing with the legal procedures, such as fining and prosecution.

1.5 A Role for Educational Psychologists

An EP's role can include assessment, consultation, intervention, training and research at the individual, group, whole school and Local Authority level (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Farrell et al., 2006; Health & Care Professions Council, 2015). In relation to school non-attendance, EPs are well placed to support school non-attenders due to their systemic role designed to initiate change in schools and with families. Pellegrini (2007) identified some of the ways in which EPs can support school non-attenders through working at different levels, for example, the provision of training on emotionally based school non-attendance; helping organisations to be more inclusive; mediating between home and school; parent training; modelling good practice in managing behaviour; planning, facilitating and evaluating social skills groups; delivering therapeutic interventions; and assessing children's needs to contribute towards multi-agency decisions on the most suitable interventions and how to implement them. Furthermore, some Educational Psychology Services have developed guidance for schools to raise awareness of, and good practice for managing, emotionally based school non-attendance, for example, West Sussex County Council (2004, 2018), Derbyshire County Council (2013) and North Somerset Council (2010).

1.6 Terminology

School non-attendance is often used as an umbrella term to capture pupils who do not attend school (Thambirajah et al., 2008). There are many terms used to describe this phenomena, which include, but are not restricted to 'school refusal', 'school phobia', 'extended school non-attendance', 'truancy' and 'emotionally based school refusal'. In line with the apparent lack of coherence regarding terminology, it is unsurprising

that Archer et al. (2003) found no clear definitions among practitioners in local authorities and schools to distinguish between 'school phobics' and 'school refusers'.

There is a growing body of literature regarding the terminology and dominant discourses in this area (Carroll, 2015; Gregory & Purcell, 2014). Pellegrini (2007) discussed the implications of the term 'school refusal' and argued that it promotes a within-child explanation for the behaviour. He said that it could be seen as an emotive and blaming label, which encourages assumptions about the cause and does not account for the heterogeneity of individuals. He discussed the lack of professional agreement on a shared language about this behaviour and the consequences of this - mainly confusion about roles and responsibilities. He advocated for the term 'extended school non-attendance' to describe the behaviour neutrally without prematurely attempting to suggest its underpinnings.

Emotionally based school refusal is "characterised by internalised problems such as fear and anxiety, misery, complaints of feeling ill without obvious cause, reluctance to leave home, or externalised problems including tantrums and oppositional behaviour" (West Sussex County Council, 2004, p.5). This guidance has recently been updated and now adopts the term 'emotionally based school avoidance' which is defined as, "a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school" (West Sussex County Council, 2018, p.4). The change in terminology hopes to detract from locating the problem within the young person and focus on environmental factors. For this research study, I have chosen to adopt the term 'emotionally based school non-attendance' which

incorporates the above definitions and remains relatively neutral. This allows the participant to direct the discussion without feeling led to a certain discourse, which is congruent with the chosen methodology (see Chapter Three).

West Sussex County Council (2004) devised a quadrant to illustrate the relationship between the presence of anxiety and non-attendance at school (Figure 1).

High / Good School Attendance

A   B

Low Anxiety   High Anxiety

C   D

Low / Poor School Attendance
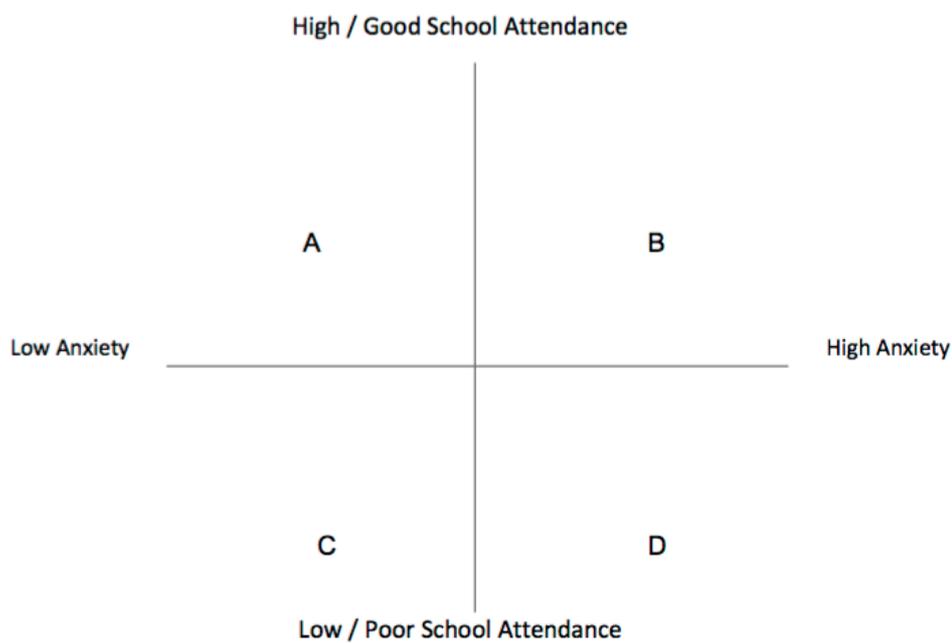
Figure 1 The Relationship Between Anxiety and School Non-Attendance

West Sussex County Council guidance states, "emotionally based school refusal is generally characterised by the following:

- Severe difficulty in attending school, which often results in prolonged absence;

- Severe emotional upset indicated by fearfulness, anxiety, bad temper, misery, symptoms of feeling ill without obvious cause and lack of self-confidence when faced with the prospect of going to school;

- Parents are generally aware of the young person's absence. Unlike truants, the child tends to stay at home when absent from school; and

- An absence of significant anti-social disorders such as stealing or destructiveness" (2004, p.7).

Here, mental health issues, particularly anxiety, can intersect with school non-attendance. Rates of mental health difficulties in adolescence, such as anxiety and depression, have increased by 70% in the past 25 years. Recent statistics state that one in ten children and young people have a clinically diagnosable mental health disorder and one in seven have less severe problems (Collishaw, Maughan, Goodman, & Pickles, 2004; Department for Education, 2016c).

As with school non-attendance, mental health difficulties have wide-ranging negative effects on educational attainment, social relationships, life chances and physical health (Murphy & Fonagy, 2012). However, only one in four children and young people with a diagnosable mental health condition are reported to access support (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford, & Goodman, 2005). Government initiatives have set out to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people for a number of years. This is necessary given the UNICEF report (2007) that placed the United Kingdom at the bottom of 21 developed countries for overall child wellbeing. A more recent UNICEF report (2013) ranked the United Kingdom 16th out of 29 developed countries.

National initiatives aimed at supporting children and young people with mental health difficulties include the No Health Without Mental Health agenda (Department of

Health, 2011), the Future in Mind document (Department of Health, 2015) and dedicated funding to develop the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme and the Targeted Mental Health in Schools Project. Despite these initiatives, Young Minds Charity report that referrals to mental health services nearly doubled between 2010/11 and 2014/15, adding that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have high thresholds to access support and are overwhelmed with long waiting lists. Recent government guidance advocates that schools can play a key role in identifying and supporting mental health needs (Department for Education, 2016c). The most recent government initiative funded by the Department of Health is to deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid training for designated members of staff in every secondary school.

1.7 Psycho-Social Research

Psycho-social research assumes that participants and the researcher are necessarily defended - meaning they are not fully conscious of their own feelings and motivations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Defended subjects invest in particular discourses to protect vulnerable aspects of the self and keep levels of anxiety down (Ashley, 2009). Therefore, they may not necessarily be able to 'tell it like it is' as some things are too difficult to talk about because they may stimulate unwanted emotions and feelings. As psycho-social methodologies assume that anxiety is inherent in all individuals, it not only produces a defended subject, but a defended researcher too, who is subject to unconscious biases that shape their actions and interpretations (Beedell, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Psycho-social research draws on psychodynamic theory to understand defences against anxiety and the emotional experience of the interview

encounter. It considers what is said in the interview and what is communicated between the researcher and participant (i.e. what is not said).

Prior to conducting this research, discussions with others and reflections from my own experience of working with school non-attenders drew out themes of 'feeling stuck', 'not knowing what to do' and 'starting from scratch every time'. These feelings were also reflected on in Tobias's (2017) research on persistent school non-attenders. Therefore, a psycho-social approach appeared to be most appropriate to enable the data collection process to go beneath the surface and provide rich narratives about the participant's experiences.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

As psycho-social research draws on psychodynamic theory to understand defences against anxiety, I will provide an overview of the concepts within psychodynamic theory that are relevant to this research.

1.8.1 Splitting and Projection

In psychodynamic theory, the related processes of splitting and projection are described as the primary defences against anxiety. When an individual experiences anxiety, they employ these defence mechanisms to protect themselves from unbearable unconscious feelings. EP's have successfully applied these concepts to the study of individuals, groups and organisations (Eloquin, 2016; Pellegrini, 2010).

Melanie Klein (1946) developed the Object Relations Theory in her clinical work with children and adults, where the term 'object' is used to describe people and the internalised images of them. She hypothesised that an infant begins by understanding the function of 'objects' as 'part objects' i.e. good or bad. For example, an infant experiences their mother as two separate entities – one whom is loving and satisfies their needs (all good) and one whom is frustrating and hated (all bad). Klein termed this the paranoid-schizoid position (Hinshelwood, 1998; Youell, 2006). When anxiety is high, splitting can be used as a defence mechanism for dealing with unpleasant parts of the self – qualities can be attributed to others that are all good or all bad in a process called projection (Eloquin, 2016). Therefore, anxiety is overcome by "ridding it of danger and badness" (Klein, 1946, p.101) i.e. projecting those parts of the self that are experienced as unacceptable onto others (De Board, 1978; Segal, 1988).

To contextualise this within the current research topic, an example of splitting and projection may be when the school is seen as all good/in the right and the non-attender and their family are viewed as all bad/in the wrong (or vice versa). When one is able to see the more nuanced things going on (that there is good and bad within the non-attender, family and school) and one can tolerate the presence of good and bad, this is a state of mind that Klein termed the depressive position (Hinshelwood, 1998; Youell, 2006). An example of this at a group or organisational level could be when external services are viewed as all good, "they can come in and fix the problem" or all bad, "they never help early enough and are all incompetent". A teacher may project their own feelings of incompetence at external services to protect themselves from experiencing these feelings.

1.8.2 Transference and Countertransference

Transference refers to the 'transfer' of feelings when someone enters into a new relationship with another person. It is an unconscious process in that the individual is not aware that the reason they feel a certain way about someone is connected to internal figures from the past. It is present in all relationships and influences what happens between people. It may be positive where the person is endowed with positive attributes or negative where they are endowed with attributes experienced as negative (Ayers, Clarke, & Murray, 2000). An example of this may be a teacher experiencing an interaction with a parent as aggressive due to a past experience.

Countertransference can be defined as an emotional response to transference. It is the way in which we recognise and think about what may have been projected into us (Youell, 2006). Following on the example provided, the parent might react in a negative way in response to the feelings that are being unconsciously communicated.

1.8.3 Containment

Bion (1961) developed his theory of the container-contained relationship, which originates between an infant and its mother. He proposed that babies are exposed to many sensations during their early life, which they do not understand and it is the mother's job to make sense of them. By remaining open to the baby's feelings, the mother is attuned to their needs and able to respond to them. If this occurs in the context of a 'good-enough' relationship, the baby can take in the experience of being understood (Youell, 2006). At a group or organisational level, an example of containment could be a Senior Leadership Team responding thoughtfully to staff's

frustrations about increasing pressures and fears of incompetence about supporting non-attenders.

1.9 Psychodynamic Thinking in EP Practice

There is scarce reference in the literature of EPs using and applying psychodynamic theory in their practice. A literature search of the PsycINFO database on 21st January 2018 for published articles using the search terms educational psycholog* AND psychodynamic OR psychoanalytic in the abstracts yielded only 12 results. Seven articles described how psychodynamic concepts had been applied in the author's practice as an EP (see Appendix A). Hulusi and Maggs reflect on the "defensive resistance within the school system and uneasiness within the profession to embrace psychodynamic theory" (2015, p. 37).

Pellegrini poses two hypotheses about the limited application of psychodynamic theory amongst EPs. Firstly, he suggests that psychodynamic theory is viewed as "unscientific, lacking consensus and an evidence base" and "the position of the EP as a scientist-practitioner may be adopted as a social defence against the messiness and complexity of casework" (2010, p. 257-258). Secondly, he proposes that an EP's ontological position may have some influence. He cites Fox who writes that, "most EPs follow a model that suggests that interventions are dependent on the individual client...This seems to work when the client's perception of the severity of the problem...the goal and the programme of intervention resembles the EPs. However, if the client constructs the problem differently then the EP may flip to a positivist position" (2003, p. 100, cited by Pellegrini, 2010). Pellegrini (2010) interprets this as

a defence mechanism and views the comfort of a positivist paradigm as a refuge to cope with the emotional impact of the work and the roles that EPs can be positioned in by others.

1.10 My Professional Interest

Prior professional experiences of working with children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs evoked a personal interest in the area of emotionally based school non-attendance. The vulnerability of, and poor outcomes for, these young people are evident in research and professional practice.

My training and practice in Educational Psychology have been underpinned by systemic and psychodynamic frameworks. The multi-disciplinary nature of the Educational Psychology doctoral training course at the Tavistock and Portman and my subsequent practice on placement have encouraged me to consider psychodynamic concepts. Therefore, I wanted the approach to this research to consider the unconscious and emotive world of participants, as well the socio-political context in which they live. In shifting from within-child explanations, I have become interested in the multi-factorial nature of child development and work with the systems in a child or young person's life – the two main ones being home and school.

I have found these psychological frameworks to be particularly helpful and enlightening when working with children and young people who are referred for social and emotional concerns. Therefore, this research embraces a psychodynamic

perspective (through a psycho-social approach to data collection) to explore the experiences of secondary school staff who work with emotionally based school non-attendance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

The original aim of this literature review was to explore the range and quality of literature available in relation to school staffs' views on emotionally based school non-attendance. However, due to the limited amount of published literature in this area, this was broadened to include the views of other professionals, school non-attenders and/or their parents. Befitting with the nature and methodology of this research, I also explored what psychodynamic and psycho-social studies had been carried out in this area. In this chapter, I will discuss the research findings, critically appraise relevant literature and justify the aims of the present study in light of the findings.

The search strategy is outlined to promote transparency and demonstrate that a systematic approach was undertaken in order to find all of the research articles that are relevant to the review questions (see Appendices B, C and D). For this literature review, I have chosen to include research not conducted in the United Kingdom because it is felt that the findings are transferable to this country. Furthermore, there are a number of different terms and definitions used to describe this phenomenon (historically and presently). I am mindful that restricting the search terms may limit the research articles found through the review and I chose to keep the search terms broad in order to find any relevant articles (see Appendices B, C and D for an overview of the search terms used for each literature review question). As a result of this decision, it has been even more important to clearly state the term and definition that this research draws upon, which is outlined in Section 1.6. To maintain

consistency across the articles that were included, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme was used to critique all of the articles (see Appendices E, F and G for the three versions that were applied).

The research findings are synthesised to provide an overview of the existing research in this area and exemplify that the research question posed in this current study can usefully contribute new knowledge to the profession of educational psychology.

The questions that this literature review sought to answer were:

1. What has already been explored with regard to educationalists' views on emotionally based school non-attendance?

2. What has already been explored with regard to parents' and young peoples' views in relation to emotionally based school non-attendance?

3. What psychoanalytically informed or psycho-social studies have been undertaken in relation to emotionally based school non-attendance?

2.2 What has already been explored with regard to educationalists' views on emotionally based school non-attendance?

The Education Source, PsycINFO, ERIC and PEP Archive databases were searched on 6th August 2017 (see Appendix B for details of the search strategy). The search resulted in 98 hits. However, 28 of these were duplicates across the four databases, therefore there were 70 articles remaining. Reading the titles and abstracts indicated that seven articles met the inclusion criteria and therefore they were read in full. One

was excluded because it did not report primary research. Therefore, 64 articles were excluded overall (see Appendix H). The remaining six articles were included in the review. Table 1 outlines the purpose, participants, methodology and conclusions of each of these papers. Each article was appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (see Appendix I). Following this, the research was synthesised to address the literature review question.

Table 1 Articles included in Literature Review Question 1

Author and year	Article title	Purpose	Participants	Methodology	Conclusions
Gren-Landell, Ekerfelt Allvin, Bradley, Andersson and Andersson (2015)	Teachers' views on risk factors for problematic school absenteeism in Swedish primary schools students	To investigate what factors teachers thought most contributed to school absenteeism and whether there are socio-demographic differences in how factors are rated	158 teachers in regular and special education	Online survey Descriptive statistics, ANOVA repeated measurement, independent t-tests and Bonferroni post hoc	Family factors given highest rating, followed by individual, school and peer domains Special education teachers rated individual factors significantly higher than regular education teachers and viewed school factors as contributing significantly more
Reid (2008)	The causes of non-attendance: an empirical study	To "brainstorm" the reasons for pupils' non-attendance	Range of professionals including school staff and professionals	Data obtained from three groups using a rotating carousel approach: Group 1 (60	3 categories for why children miss school: Dislike coming to school Experience home difficulties Psychological difficulties

			from the Local Authority and voluntary sector	participants) Group 2 (159 participants) Group 3 (62 participants) The lists were amalgamated and condensed by the author (no other details on analysis was provided)	Discusses a number of causes for non-attendance including individual difficulties, parents, schools and the wider society including the local authority, government and lack of research.
Reid (2004)	The views of head teachers and teachers on attendance issues in primary	To analyse and evaluate attitudes of head teachers and teachers towards attendance issues	210 Head Teachers and 210 Teachers	Focus groups Method of analysis not provided	Parentally condoned absence accounts for vast majority of unauthorised absence Not enough external support from Education Welfare Service

	schools	in primary and special schools across 2 Local Authorities in the UK			Not enough training, government initiatives focus on secondary and ignore primary schools
Reid (2006)	An evaluation of the views of secondary staff towards school attendance issues	To gather the views of secondary school staff towards attendance issues across 2 Local Authorities in the UK	160 school staff (40 head teachers, 40 deputy head teachers, 40 Heads of Year, 40 form tutors	Focus groups Method of analysis not provided	Management of attendance is complex, time-consuming and not systematic. Highlighted a number of concerns e.g. parentally condoned absence, being unfairly judged by league tables and OFSTED, little or no training, social problems increasing, rigidity of the National Curriculum, little confidence in court outcomes, too few vocational courses available

Reid (2007b)	Managing school attendance: the professional perspective	To find out about the views of different professionals on the best ways to manage school attendance	129 head teachers, 81 deputy head teachers, 178 middle managers and 91 form tutors	Questionnaire and semi-structured follow-up interviews with 30 respondents Method of analysis not provided	Biggest issues were parentally condoned absence and holidays in term time Biggest school issues were post registration truancy and specific lesson absences Best solution viewed as more alternative/vocational curriculum schemes Difference in views of who is in the best position to help reintegration (range from classroom assistants to external agencies) Many felt they had had insufficient training
Reid (2007a)	The views of learning mentors on the	To examine the views of learning mentors on their	88 learning mentors	Questionnaire Data analysed	Majority received very little, if any, training on attendance issues

	management of school attendance	understanding on the management of school attendance		using SPSS and cross-tabulated (no other information about the analysis was provided)	Most serious issues were parentally condoned absence and holidays in term time. Biggest school issues were post registration truancy and specific lesson absences Best solution viewed as more alternative/vocational curriculum schemes Considered classroom assistants to be in the best position to help reintegration

2.3 Findings from the Literature Review

A range of educationalists' voices has been explored in the literature: teachers' (Gren-Landell, Ekerfelt Allvin, Bradley, Andersson, & Andersson, 2015; Reid, 2004, 2006), senior management teams' (Reid, 2006, 2007b, 2008), learning mentors' (Reid, 2007a), form tutors' (Reid, 2006) and staff from local authorities (Reid, 2008).

2.3.1 Confidence and Support of School Staff

Two studies have examined the views of school staff towards school attendance issues (Reid, 2004, 2006). These studies, conducted across two Local Authorities in the UK, used focus groups with a range of staff from primary, secondary and special schools. Reid (2004, 2006) notes that the groups of participants were seen on a number of different occasions over a period of 20 days. There were a number of common themes that arose from the focus groups with secondary school staff. Many participants talked about the complex, time-consuming and demanding nature of school attendance issues, with some expressing feelings of uncertainty about whether the time and effort produced positive outcomes. It appeared as though the participants felt that daily practice was not systematised or uniformed, despite considerable effort (Reid, 2006).

Discussion also took place about the felt pressure from The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) and the league tables about attendance rate targets. Many participants seemed to express feelings of anger about being judged when some absences were out of their control, for example, term time holidays. There was consensus from staff across the different schools that they

received inadequate support from external agencies, for example, the Education Welfare Service. The primary school staff felt that the support was too secondary-oriented (Reid, 2004), although the secondary school staff did not feel that they received adequate support either (Reid, 2006). In the latter study, the secondary school staff felt that they had received minimal, if any, training on attendance issues. The rigidity of the National Curriculum was also highlighted as an issue amongst secondary school staff (Reid, 2006), but not amongst primary school staff (Reid, 2004).

2.3.2 Causes of School Non-Attendance

Other themes that arose from the primary and secondary study related to within-family factors. Both primary and secondary school staff identified a rise in parentally condoned absence (Reid, 2004, 2006). The participants in the secondary study discussed the changing socio-demographic picture, for example, the growing numbers of "dysfunctional families" (Reid, 2006, p.319). The Head Teachers in the primary study described an increasing number of parents who encourage their child to stay at home, which was believed to be due to poor parenting, parental substance use, family disputes and cultural/religious practices (Reid, 2004). However, caution should be taken with these findings as no information was provided about how the participants were recruited, the ethical considerations or how the data was analysed. Furthermore, the article does not outline what questions were posed to the focus group in the primary study (Reid, 2004). The questions posed to the focus groups in the secondary study seemed to revolve around the issues raised in Reid's (2004) study, but this was not explicitly stated.

Reid (2007a, 2007b) gave participants a questionnaire to ascertain their views on the most serious issues in school attendance by asking them to select from a list of possible factors. There was a high level of agreement between the two studies with the majority of respondents viewing parentally condoned absence and term time holidays as the most serious issues. In Reid's (2007b) study, the key issues also included socio-economic factors of the local area, post-registration truancy, limited resources within Local Authorities, specific lesson absences, pupils' low self-esteem, the lack of vocational opportunities and the paperwork/bureaucracy in chasing non-attenders.

Reid (2008) recruited school staff and professionals from local authorities and the voluntary sector using convenience sampling. 281 participants were surveyed over a four-month period. The participants were split into groups, asked to consider five specific issues, record their ideas on flipchart paper and rotate the paper until all groups had contributed. The issues that the participants were asked to consider were: the reasons for non-attendance; the role of society in absenteeism; what the government could do to reduce non-attendance; who the cause of non-attendance is; and the key issues which need to be resolved in order to improve school non-attendance.

The reasons for school non-attendance were grouped into three categories, which concurs with the four domains identified in Gren-Landell et al.'s (2015) research (see Section 2.3.4):

- Pupils who dislike coming to school (related to school and peer's domain)
- Pupils who experience home difficulties (related to family domain)

- Pupils with psychological difficulties (related to individual domain)

In Reid's (2008) research, suggestions about the role of society in pupils' absenteeism accounted for the impact of family, school and community issues. School related issues included peer pressure, specific learning difficulties, transition difficulties, poorly maintained school buildings and over-large comprehensive schools. In terms of the cause of pupils' non-attendance, parents and carers were listed as number one, although the author does not explicitly state whether it was thought that this was the most frequently cited cause, as reported in Gren-Landell et al. (2015) (see Section 2.3.4). However, caution should be taken with these findings as the way in which the data was analysed was not explicitly discussed, therefore one cannot be confident that a robust approach was taken.

2.3.3 Management of School Non-Attendance

Two further studies have investigated the views of school staff on the management of school attendance (Reid, 2007a, 2007b). The former study distributed a questionnaire to 129 Head teachers, 81 Deputy Head Teachers, 178 Middle Managers and 91 Form Tutors (Reid, 2007a). The latter research gave a questionnaire to 88 Learning Mentors (Reid, 2007b). The aim was to gather the participant's views on the best ways to manage school attendance and the obstacles that prevented school attendance being managed more effectively. Although Reid (2007b) conducted follow-up individual interviews with 30 selected respondents, it does not state how these participants were selected or what questions were posed to them. The relationship between the qualitative and quantitative data was not clearly described although it

appears as though more weight was given to the questionnaire data, as the findings from the interviews were not discussed.

Participants in both studies thought that the opportunity for more alternative/vocational schemes was the best solution to improve attendance (Reid, 2007a, 2007b). Reid (2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) investigated educationalist's perspectives on the use of court proceedings, fines and prosecution of parents whose children whose attendance was low. Overall, this yielded mixed views. Some felt that these methods could be helpful, but others considered them to be counterproductive with disappointing outcomes.

Using questionnaires, Reid (2007a, 2007b) asked participants their opinion on the level and nature of support that they felt should be provided to school non-attenders and who they felt was in the best position to provide this support. A large majority of staff ranging from 73.6% to 92.2% across the two studies thought that help should be given to school non-attenders to help them readjust (Reid, 2007a, 2007b). However, there were mixed perspectives about whether school non-attenders should be given extra classes and help to enable them to catch up. More than three quarters of Form Tutors and over half of the Middle Managers and Learning Mentors who participated felt that pupils who miss school should accept the full consequences of non-attendance (Reid, 2007a, 2007b). Furthermore, there was little consensus about who is in the best position to support reintegration. Head Teachers, Form Tutors and Learning Mentors felt that staff in school were in the best position to support reintegration, whereas Deputy Head Teachers and Middle Managers felt that external

agencies were in the best position, for example, Education Social Workers and/or Welfare Officers (Reid, 2007a, 2007b).

2.3.4 Risk and Protective Factors for School Non-Attendance

Gren-Landell et al. (2015) used an online survey to rate the importance of 16 risk factors, identified in the literature, as potential reasons for problematic school absenteeism. The response rate was relatively high (67.8%) with 158 teachers from mainstream and special education in Sweden completing it. The 16 risk factors were grouped into four domains – individual, family, school and peers. However, it is important to note that the survey used was not an established questionnaire and three of the four domains were shown to have low internal reliability (individual, family and peers).

Statistical analysis showed that the top five risk factors as viewed by this sample of participants were:

1. Adverse home situation

2. Permissive parenting style

3. Low mood or depression

4. Nervousness/worry/anxiety

5. Parental mental illness and/or alcohol abuse

Therefore, participants in this study appeared to view within-child and within-family factors as the most significant for absenteeism. The peer domain was viewed as the least important risk factor. Concluding comments revealed that teachers' viewed

absenteeism as multi-causal where family factors are considered to contribute most, whilst remaining mindful that the different causes tend to mutually influence each other. Caution should be applied when interpreting these findings within a UK context, as the research was not conducted with a UK sample. However, the finding that school staff tended to consider family factors as more important than school factors is supported by other research discussed in this review (Reid, 2006, 2007a, 2007b).

2.3.5 Summary

This literature review aimed to find out what has already been explored with regard to educationalists' views on emotionally based school non-attendance. The findings presented here indicate that the literature is sparse in this area with one author writing five of the six articles discussed. The main findings from this review indicate that the research has predominantly focused on causation, risk and protective factors and management of school non-attendance.

2.4 What has already been explored with regard to parents' and young peoples' views in relation to emotionally based school non-attendance?

A database search was carried out on 6th August 2017 using the following databases: Education Source, PsycINFO, ERIC and PEP Archive (see Appendix C for details of the search strategy). Overall, the search yielded 258 hits of which 63 were duplicates. Therefore, there were 195 articles to examine and, after the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, nine articles were included in the review. Table 2 outlines the purpose, participants, methodology and conclusions of each of these papers. The 186 articles that were excluded are provided in Appendix J. Each included article was appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme and details of this can be found in Appendix K. Following this, the research was synthesised to address the literature review question.

Table 2 Articles included in Literature Review Question 2

Author and year	Article title	Purpose	Participants	Methodology	Conclusions
Gregory and Purcell (2014)	Extended school non-attenders' views: developing best practice	To identify the concerns, and explore the experiences, of children and their families who have experienced school non-attendance in order to inform service delivery	3 young people and 5 mothers	Semi-structured interviews Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Terminology used is promoting within-child/within-family view as part of a medical model rather than social model (the article introduces Systems Theory as a helpful approach) No single contributory factor but a complex interplay between number of factors
Havik, Bru and Ertesvag (2014)	Parental perspectives of the role of school factors in school refusal	To explore parental perspectives on school factors related to school refusal	17 parents (15 mothers, 2 fathers)	Semi-structured interviews Thematic analysis	Many school-based factors perceived by parents to contribute to school refusal, including the learning environment, teachers' behaviour management

					methods, lack of teacher support and knowledge about school refusal, limited instructional and organisational support, poor communication between teachers, size of the school, transitions, difficult peer relationships and bullying
Baker and Bishop (2015)	Out of school: a phenomenological exploration of extended non-attendance	To explore how extended non-attenders make sense of their experiences in order to inform the practice of professionals seeking to support them	4 young people aged 11-16	Semi-structured interviews Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	The sense made by participants in relation to their non-attendance was highly individual. It was multi-factorial in causation; experiences of support were wholly negative and not informed by the evidence base. The terminology and language used to describe them was felt to be damaging.

Havik, Bru and Ertesvag (2015)	School factors associated with school refusal- and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance	To investigate how students' perceptions of peer relationships and teachers' classroom management are associated with reasons for school non-attendance	3,629 young people aged 11-15	Self-report questionnaire Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, confirmatory factor analyses and structural modelling	Poor peer relationships could be an important risk factor for school refusal. A direct association was found between teachers' classroom management and school refusal among secondary school students.
Wilkins (2008)	School characteristics that influence student attendance: experiences of students in a	To examine the reasons why previous school non-attenders were more able to attend an alternative	4 young people in grades 8-11	4 interviews with each participant over the course of 2-4 weeks Researcher observations	Four themes identified as positive factors in the specialist provision: *School climate* *Academic environment* *Discipline was fair and non-punitive*

				Student attendance data	*Relationships with teachers*
	school avoidance program	specialist provision in the United States of America		Thematic analysis	
Sheppard (2009)	School attendance and attainment: poor attenders' perceptions of schoolwork and parental involvement in their education	To investigate pupils' perceptions of parental involvement behaviours that might influence school attendance by comparing low, medium and high attenders.	57 students aged 12-13 16 low attenders, 20 medium attenders and 21 high attenders (matched on ability)	Structured interview involving a questionnaire Mann-Whitney tests, content analysis, Chi-square crosstabluations and Fisher's Exact Test	Low attenders liked school the least and avoided homework more frequently. They felt their parents were unable to help them with homework and perceived parents as less involved in their schoolwork.
Sheppard (2007)	An approach to understanding school	To compare high and low attenders' perceptions of	57 students aged 12-13 16 low attenders,	Structured interview involving a questionnaire	Low attenders made significantly more requests to be absent from school and were significantly more likely

	attendance difficulties: pupils' perceptions of parental behaviour in response to requests to be absent from school	their parents' responses to their requests to be absent from school	20 medium attenders and 21 high attenders (matched on ability)	Mann-Whitney tests, content analysis, Chi-square crosstabluations and Fisher's Exact Test	to have a request for absence approved by parents. Parents of low and medium attenders were more inconsistent in their response to requests to be absent from school.
Sheppard (2005)	Development of School Attendance Difficulties: An Exploratory Study	To establish the immediate determinants of school absence to gain more understanding of the nature of attendance difficulties and	209 students aged 12-13 were given a questionnaire 35 were individually interviewed (17 good attenders and 19 poor	Questionnaires and structured interviews Forced choice questions produced numerical data which was converted to	The number of young people requesting to be absent was substantially more amongst the poor attenders, mostly due to social reasons. Parents of poor attenders were more inconsistent and more inclined to give up trying to get their child to school.

		inform practitioner methods.	attenders)	percentage of children giving particular responses Content analyses were carried out on the two open-ended questions and data from the individual interviews	Parents of good attenders were more likely to react strongly and question their child about the reasons for non-attendance.
Place, Hulsmeier, Davis and Taylor (2002)	The coping mechanisms of children with school refusal	To examine the coping mechanisms employed by school refusers and whether these differed from a control group	17 families with children aged 12-15	Semi-structured interview and 3 questionnaires – 1 for the young person, 1 for the parent and 1 to be completed by both	Participants had a long history of being bullied and feeling socially isolated. Most school refusers had features of anxiety and depression with no effective coping strategies to resolve them.

				T-tests and multivariate analyses. Method of analysis for interview data not provided	

2.5 Findings from the Literature Review

Both the voices of school non-attenders and/or their parents have been explored in research using qualitative and quantitative methods. Research has highlighted a number of factors that contribute to school non-attendance, which are discussed below.

2.5.1 Relationships with Teachers

School factors were the most commonly attributed causal factor for non-attendance in research that explored the views of school non-attenders and/or their parents. This is interesting given that school staff often cited within-child or within-family reasons for non-attendance (Gren-Landell et al., 2015; Reid, 2008).

Relationships with teachers were frequently discussed in the literature as a significant factor for non-attendance, for example, harsh classroom management and style of relating to students (Havik, Bru, & Ertesvag, 2014). This is supported by a large-scale quantitative research study conducted with school non-attenders that found classroom management style was associated with school refusal (Havik, Bru, & Ertesvag, 2015). Similarly, in Gregory and Purcell's (2014) qualitative study, all three non-attenders spoke about fearing a particular teacher.

Teacher support in the form of good classroom management was directly linked to a reduced risk of school refusal (Havik et al., 2015). Wilkins (2008) interviewed four students who attended a specialist provision following a sustained period of absence from a mainstream school. The research aimed to examine the ways in which the

mainstream and specialist provisions differed and the impact of this on the young person's attendance. Interestingly, a positive and caring relationship with teachers was revealed as a theme, as the young people felt listened to and able to seek help.

2.5.2 Classroom/School Environment

At an organisational level, the parents of non-attenders talked about the unpredictability of noisy and disorganised classrooms which their children found challenging (Havik et al., 2014). In another study, young people identified aspects of the school climate that facilitated their attendance, for example, feeling comfortable and working in a calmer atmosphere (Wilkins, 2008).

2.5.3 Attitude Towards School

Sheppard's (2009) study compared high, medium and low attenders' attitudes to school and unsurprisingly found that medium and high attenders liked school more than low attenders. However, it is interesting that there were no differences found between the groups in terms of their avoidance of schoolwork. Reasons provided for avoiding schoolwork fell into the following categories – disliking the subject or teacher, the teacher permitting work avoidance through not checking or not punishing avoidance and the young person's mood. The reasons for participating in schoolwork were enjoyment and fondness for the lesson, prevention of punishment and aspirations for gaining qualifications. This is consistent with Sheppard's (2005) study which reported that a number of school-related factors contributed towards absence from school, including disliking lessons, teachers and not completing homework. The

most common reason that young people gave in this study for wanting to miss school was feeling tired.

2.5.4 Attainment

Parents of non-attenders raised academic demands as a challenge for their children, for example, feeling pressured to achieve and not accessing appropriately differentiated work (Havik et al., 2014). An American study with former school non-attenders reported that less pressure to complete work and more lenience with deadlines were cited as reasons that motivated students to attend school (Wilkins, 2008). However, academic demands were not raised as an issue by school non-attenders in other research (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Gregory & Purcell, 2014).

2.5.5 Peer Relationships

Social isolation and bullying were found to be strongly associated with school refusal in secondary-aged students in a quantitative study undertaken by Havik et al. (2015). This is supported by qualitative research that cited exclusion from social groups, feeling isolated, bullying and social difficulties as reasons for non-attendance (Gregory & Purcell, 2014; Havik et al., 2014; Place, Hulsmeier, Davis, & Taylor, 2002; Sheppard, 2005). The majority of young people in Baker and Bishop's (2015) study identified friendships as a positive element of school.

2.5.6 Parental Involvement

Sheppard (2005) interviewed young people with high and low attendance at school about their parent's reactions to attempted absence from school. She found that

parental responses fell into four categories – inconsistent, gave up, enforcing attendance and problem-solving. Two further studies compared high and low attenders in terms of their requests to be absent from school and perceptions of their parents' involvement in their education (Sheppard, 2007, 2009). The first study found that requests to be absent were perceived to be more successful in the group of low attenders than the group of high attenders. It also found that parents of low and medium attenders were perceived as more inconsistent in their responses to requests to be absent from school, whereas parents of high attenders were more consistent and examined the reasons for the absence (Sheppard, 2007). Sheppard (2009) found that low attenders felt their parents were unable to help them with homework and perceived their parents as less involved in their schoolwork. This was further evidenced by quantitative research that found a relatively weak, but significant, association between parental interest in schoolwork and school refusal (Havik et al., 2015).

2.5.7 Mental Health

Mental health difficulties, particularly anxiety and depression, were highlighted by school non-attenders and their parents when discussing their experiences of non-attendance (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Gregory & Purcell, 2014; Place et al., 2002). In Gregory and Purcell's (2014) study, all three of the young people participating had received a medical diagnosis subsequent to their school non-attendance (anxiety, depression and Asperger syndrome). The authors concluded that these conditions may have contributed to the young people's non-attendance. Furthermore, all four participants in Baker and Bishop's (2015) research reported nervousness and anxiety

as a cause of their non-attendance, with one participant reporting feelings of depression too. Place et al. (2002) found that the majority of young people in their study had features of mental health difficulties with no effective coping mechanisms to resolve them. Although these are small-scale studies, it raises an interesting question about the impact of a medical model on their experiences. By viewing the problem as within-child, it can deflect away from the environment and systems surrounding the young person. Gregory and Purcell (2014) discuss how a clinical discourse within a medical model can direct attention towards the child or family and away from the influence of the rest of the environment.

2.5.8 Summary

This literature review aimed to find out what has already been explored with regard to parents' and young peoples' views in relation to emotionally based school non-attendance. All of the articles focused on the causes of non-attendance and the research highlighted the role that the classroom environment/management, attainment, staff and peer relationships, parental involvement and mental health can play in school non-attendance.

2.6 What psychoanalytically informed or psychosocial studies have been undertaken in relation to emotionally based school non-attendance?

A database search was carried out on 6th August 2017 using the following databases: Education Source, PsycINFO, ERIC and PEP Archive (see Appendix D for details of the search strategy). Accounting for duplicates, the search resulted in 24 hits. The title of each article was read and when unsure of the relevance, the abstract was also read to ascertain the relevance to the current study. However, none of the articles met the inclusion criteria and the reasons for their exclusion are outlined in Appendix L. Some of the case studies and commentaries provided interesting insights from psychodynamic theory around school non-attendance, but they provided anecdotal accounts rather than empirical studies showing how educationalists', parents' or young people had experienced emotionally based school non-attendance and how this was understood by psychodynamic theory. This highlights the need for more robust research in this area.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review has synthesised the findings of research that explores the views of educationalists', young people and parents' on emotionally based school non-attendance. Current literature has focused on the causes, risk and protective factors and the management of school non-attendance, as well as highlighting the role of school factors in school non-attendance. The reviewed research suggests there are a number of reasons why young people struggle to attend school. It highlights that school non-attenders and their families tend to consider school-based factors as the main reasons for non-attendance, whereas educationalists' appear to view individual

and home difficulties as the most important factors. The family and school are the two main systems in a young person's life and the tendency for blame and some judgement seems prevalent in the literature.

With regard to the literature that was examined for this review, the quality of the articles that explored the young person's and/or parental views were deemed to be of higher quality than the research exploring educationalist's views (see Appendices I and K for a critical appraisal of all included articles). This was because many of the articles examining educationalist's views did not include sufficient details about how the data was analysed and/or information regarding ethical considerations relevant to the study. Furthermore, many of the articles employed quantitative methods of data collection such as surveys and/or questionnaires. In Reid's (2007b) study where questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used, more weighting was given to the quantitative data with little information provided about the analysis or interpretation of the interview data. There are some disadvantages of using surveys in research, for example, respondents may not report their beliefs and attitudes accurately (termed social desirability bias), there may be a misunderstanding of the questions and/or participant's may not treat the exercise seriously (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, Robson writes that survey data often "has a strong positivistic flavour" (2011, p.239). The current research employs a psycho-social approach to data collection, which assumes that participants are unconsciously defended against anxiety and will engage in dialogue to support their identity and reduce their anxiety (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). None of the studies in this literature review have accounted for the possibility of defended responses and consequently assume that participants are able to 'tell it like it is'. Therefore, this research draws on a method to

explore this by considering what is consciously said in the interview and what is communicated between the researcher and participant unconsciously.

2.8 The Current Study

As discussed above, research highlighted in the literature review has given more weighting to quantitative methods of data collection when exploring educationalist's views on this phenomenon. Therefore, the literature review has identified a gap in the literature for an in-depth exploration of school staff's experience of emotionally based school non-attendance using qualitative methodologies. Furthermore, it has highlighted that whilst the views of educationalists, parents and young people have been explored, none of the studies accounted for the possibility of defended responses. In addition, existing literature has mostly focused on the causes of non-attendance at the expense of the experiences of encountering it. Therefore, the current study adopted a psycho-social approach to data collection to explore school staff's experiences of emotionally based school non-attendance.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapters have highlighted the paucity of research that has explored the experiences of school staff who work with emotionally based school non-attenders. There has been no published research in this area that has attended to psycho-social processes. This chapter outlines how I have explored this in the current study. I specify the research question that I sought to answer, justify the rationale for the exploratory, qualitative nature of the study and describe my ontological and epistemological position. Information about the research participants, the interview method and data analysis are provided. Lastly, I discuss ethical considerations and factors affecting trustworthiness and credibility.

3.2 Aim of the Research

The aim of this research was to explore the experiences of school staff who work with emotionally based school non-attenders. I hope that professionals, including EPs, can use the insights gained to inform their hypotheses and formulations in their work with non-attenders, their families and schools.

3.3 Research Question

The overarching research question that the study aimed to answer was:

- What do school staff talk about when asked about their experiences of working with emotionally based school non-attendance?

The research question was broad in order to allow for an exploration of what the participants brought to the interviews through free association. This allowed participants' contributions to be prioritised rather than the researcher shaping the discussion.

3.4 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was exploratory, as these issues have not yet been investigated from this perspective or using psycho-social approaches. Therefore, it was the starting point from which to inspire future thinking. It sought to elicit unique experiences and uncover new ways of thinking about this phenomenon.

The research was qualitative with the purpose of bringing forth detailed experiences, where the data could be analysed in great depth and not confined to the rigidity of a structured method.

3.5 Philosophical Position

This section outlines my ontological and epistemological position as a researcher. The ontological position refers to how the researcher views the status of truth and knowledge in the world. The epistemological position relates to how one might discover this knowledge (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007). This research embraced a psychodynamic perspective on human behaviour and the concepts central to this theory were outlined in Section 1.8.

3.5.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The research is based upon a psycho-social ontology and epistemology (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). It assumes that research subjects are not only understood through their inner worlds, but also their experiences in the social world (Alexandrov, 2009). Therefore, it assumes that understanding and meaning are developed individually and in coordination with others. Other researchers have successfully employed this ontological stance to psycho-social research (Fleming, 2016; Keaney, 2016; King, 2016; Soares, 2017).

As the constructivist position tends to ignore the social world of the participants and the constructionist stance can ignore personal drives, psycho-social approaches offer an opportunity to explore both without reducing the focus to one or the other. Bibby writes, "We are psycho-social beings. In everyday life as well as in much social science, there is a tendency to drift into thinking about things as either internal and individual or external, social events. Such a distinction might enable us to decide, for example, to study *either* psychology *or* sociology. Yet this dichotomising is a form of splitting and misses the ways in which the internal and the external, the private and the public, the individual and social are deeply mutually implicated" (2011, p.9). She advocates that our unconscious shapes us and those around us, as society and culture shape our unconscious, which avoids the binaries listed above and allows for a psycho-social being. This ontological stance assumes that the research subject cannot be known except through another person, which in this case is the researcher.

Psycho-social research assumes that both the researcher and the participant are necessarily defended. It also assumes that neither are fully conscious of their reasoning or actions and both will engage in dialogue to protect against anxiety and support their identity by taking up a particular position (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Using the theory of the defended subject, one can explore the motivation to invest in particular discourses to defend against feelings of anxiety. This means that a psycho-social approach may illuminate anxieties and defended thoughts or feelings by researching beneath the surface and beyond the discourse offered (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). Viewing participants and researchers in this way could be seen as the opposite to positivist approaches in quantitative research where participants are thought to be consciously aware of their actions and the researcher can collect and interpret the data in an objective way. Robson critiques the idea of objectivity by stating, "what observers 'see' is not simply determined by the characteristics of the thing being observed. The characteristics and perspectives of the observer also have an effect" (2011, p.20). Psycho-social research takes this argument one step further in assuming that the unconscious significantly impacts on the generation and interpretation of data (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

3.6 Theoretical Framework

Please refer to Section 1.8 for a detailed outline of the theoretical concepts that this research draws on.

3.7 Procedural Stages in the Present Research Study

3.7.1 Participants

As highlighted in Section 1.3.1, there are more young people identified with attendance problems in secondary education than primary school, which is the main justification for focusing on secondary school staff in the current research study. School staff are usually the ones managing non-attendance at the earlier stages, therefore it is appropriate to explore the views of those working 'on the ground' with emotionally based school non-attenders.

In order to recruit secondary school staff for the research, I attended a secondary school locality meeting on two occasions to inform potential participants about the research. Following this, I sent an email to all of the Special Educational Needs Coordinators in the secondary schools outlining the research and inviting those interested to participate or pass the information on. I wanted to meet with people who were working with emotionally based school non-attenders 'on the ground' in their day to day practice. Due to the variety of job roles in secondary schools, I chose to keep my inclusion criteria broad to allow a range of school staff to participate. Therefore, participation was open to staff who:

- Were working in a secondary school in the Local Authority; and
- Had a recent experience (within the last 6 months) of working with an emotionally based school non-attender, which they were able and willing to talk about

Eight participants expressed, via email, an interest in participating. However, two participants declined to take part due to a lack of time to devote to two interviews. Therefore the final sample size was six: one male and five females from two different secondary schools. It was not necessary to recruit a set number of participants from each school, as I was not seeking a representative sample. Whilst the sample size for this research is small, it is typical for psycho-social research and has been used in previous research that has adopted these techniques (Boyle, Kernohan, & Rush, 2009; Guest, 2012; Moroney, 2014). This is due to the depth of analysis required (Hollway, 2004) whilst also considering practical considerations and timelines that the research needed to be completed within.

Participants that took part in this study were an Assistant Head Teacher, two Heads of Year, an Assistant Head of Year, a Learning Support Assistant and a School Counsellor. Their experience of working in schools varied from 5-20 years.

3.7.2 Data Collection

Two data collection methods were employed to capture the participant's experiences of emotionally based school non-attendance. I tried to ensure that participants spoke about this particular category of non-attenders through the task provided and questioning I used. I chose to combine two free association methods to collect the research data – the Grid Elaboration Method (Joffe & Elsey, 2014) and Free Association Narrative Interviewing (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). These were chosen because both methods take the unconscious into account and challenge the assumption that participants are transparent and do not have unconscious defences to

protect against things that are difficult to talk about (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). This approach also views the researcher and participant as co-producers of meaning and allowed me to attend to the unconscious dynamics in the room, which could not be put into words. I wanted to be led by participants' narratives rather than stilting them with structured questions. The rationale for combining the two methods is that researcher interference is reduced (Joffe & Elsey, 2014).

Following each interview, I wrote reflective fieldwork notes and further reflections were incorporated into a research diary. Psycho-social supervision was also used to capture my emotional experience of the interview encounters.

The Head Teacher of the schools in which participants expressed an interest signed a consent form for the research to be undertaken with the staff (see Appendix M). The participants were invited to attend two audio-recorded interviews that were conducted 1-3 weeks apart. This allowed time to listen back to the first interview for initial thoughts and reflections, but not be too long that the first interview was forgotten. Participants chose where they would like to be interviewed and all decided to be interviewed at the school in which they worked. For both interviews, participants were advised to allow an hour to give sufficient time to read the information sheet (see Appendix N), sign the consent form (see Appendix O), complete the interview and any necessary debrief.

3.7.2.1 The Grid Elaboration Method

In the initial interview, participants were presented with "a grid containing four empty boxes and requested to write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when they hear or think of the term under study" (Joffe & Elsey, 2014, p.178). The phrase written on the sheet of paper was, "Please write or draw in each box any word, image or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance." Appendices P, Q, R, S, T and U include the completed Grid Elaboration Method Data Captures for each participant.

As stated above, a benefit of using the Grid Elaboration Method is that it "minimises the extent to which the interviewer moulds the material elicited" (Joffe & Elsey, 2014, p.178), therefore getting as close as possible to the participants' free associations of their relationship to emotionally based school non-attendance. Furthermore, the Grid Elaboration Method provided an opportunity for participants to draw what came to their mind and psychodynamic theory advocates that individuals project their unconscious thoughts and anxieties onto their drawings (Moore, 1994).

Each participant was guided through the four associations using open-ended questions, encouragement and parroting in order to elaborate further on the first four things that came to their mind (see Appendix V).

The first interview was recorded and each participant's grid retained by the researcher (see Appendices P, Q, R, S, T and U). Due to time restraints, the initial interviews were not transcribed prior to the second interviews. However, the interviews were

listened to at least once to highlight pertinent areas that were talked about with a view to returning to these in the second interview.

3.7.2.2 Free Association Narrative Interviewing

This interviewing technique allows participants to follow their emotional experience and guard against the well-worn discourses and commonplace stories that rarely have emotional meaning or personal experience (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). It aims to give access to answers that reflect their own concerns that they may not be consciously aware of. Free Association Narrative Interviewing adheres to four principles, which aim to facilitate the production of the participant's "meaning frame" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p.34). These principles include open-ended questions, eliciting a story, avoiding the use of 'why' questions and using participants' ordering and phrasing. Open-ended questions encourage the participant to talk about the meaning and quality of their experience rather than evoking a yes or no answer. They allow the participant to choose which stories to tell, how they are told, the level of detail given, points emphasised and the moral drawn – the characteristics of which can reveal more than the storyteller intends (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). 'Why' questions are avoided as it is thought that they draw out intellectualised responses and can tempt an explanation. Using the participant's ordering and phrasing involved careful and attentive listening in order to ask follow-up questions using their words to retain their meaning frames and not impose my own interpretations and structure on their narrative (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

A list of guiding questions and prompts used in the interviews are provided in Appendix V. Open-ended questions were used, for example, 'can you tell me more about that?' as well as questions about specific times and events, for example, 'can you tell me about a time when that happened?' This aimed to connect their responses to their everyday experiences.

In Free Association Narrative Interviewing, the participant is encouraged to say whatever comes to mind. Emergent narratives are "not structured according to conscious logic, but according to unconscious logic; that is, the associations follow pathways defined by emotional motivations, rather than rational intentions" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.34). This approach assumes that the participant and researcher are defended against any uncomfortable feelings that the interview may evoke. According to a psychoanalytically informed framework, individuals unconsciously try to defend against feelings of anxiety. This approach to interviewing enables the researcher to recognise these anxieties and defences against them through identifying incoherence in their narratives. These could take the form of contradictions, avoidances and inconsistencies. As the researcher and participant are subject to these unconscious dynamics, tracking them through reflective fieldwork notes to share and explore during supervision was necessary.

Using this technique allowed the participant to recall and discuss specific experiences and events in order to elicit rich narratives. The second interview provided an opportunity to revisit pertinent themes and associations generated in the first interview that warranted further exploration and reflection. Participants were firstly asked whether they had any reflections from the first interview. They were

subsequently reminded of certain topics from the first interview and asked to elaborate further in response to questions such as, 'can you tell me about a time when that happened', 'tell me more about that', or 'can you speak more generally about that'.

All interviews were audio recorded using a Voice Record application on an iPad. The recordings were transcribed by a professional transcription service and checked twice by myself to ensure a high level of accuracy and immerse myself in the data.

3.7.3 Reflective Fieldwork Notes

Without reflexivity, our prejudices can dominate the research (Finlay, 2003, cited by Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). To mitigate this and aid the process of considering unconscious communications, reflective fieldwork notes were written immediately after each interview. This included initial thoughts, feelings and responses I had. The questions used to prompt my reflections were:

What are my hopes for this participant?

What are my fears for this participant?

What am I feeling?

What am I thinking?

How do I feel about myself as a professional?

Anything else?

Furthermore, any subsequent thoughts or images that arose in relation to the participants were written in a reflective diary. These notes provided the basis for discussions in psycho-social supervision.

3.7.4 Psycho-Social Supervision

Hollway defines the function of supervision as providing, "a confidential space…where all aspects of researcher subjectivity could be thought about and explored for their meaning and relevance" (2015, p.50). Supervision was used to help me to think about the unconscious processes that may have occurred during the interviews. My experiences of the interviews were discussed, alongside the reflective fieldwork notes.

Jervis (2009) wrote that researchers' feelings have only recently been recognised as a form of data; countertransference can usefully inform reflexivity and facilitate understanding. Therefore, remaining open to experiencing can help one "learn from respondents' "otherness" and reach "that which is beyond words"" (Clarke, 2002, p.149, cited by Jervis, 2009). Therefore, psycho-social supervision can be used as a space to differentiate between the researcher's own feelings and those emanating from the participant to "distinguish informative from unhelpful countertransference" (Jervis, 2009, p.151). Furthermore, having different perspectives can ensure researchers are not imposing their own preconceptions and are protecting against "wild analysis" (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p. 18).

3.7.5 Analysing and Interpreting the Data

Thematic analysis was chosen to identify, analyse and report patterns within the data because it organises rich data in a transparent way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, thematic analysis is not tied to a particular ontology, epistemology or theoretical framework unlike other methods, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis or Grounded Theory. Braun and Clarke (2006) wrote that thematic analysis can be compatible with psychoanalytic modes of interpretation and has been used in previous studies that used Free Association Narrative Interviewing (Capri & Buckle, 2015; Farrimond & Joffe, 2007; Reichardt, 2016). There are two types of thematic analyses – inductive and deductive. When the former approach is applied, the identified themes are developed from the actual data, whilst the latter approach to analysis is driven by the researcher's theoretical lens. This research utilised an inductive approach to the analysis.

3.7.5.1 Inductive Thematic Analysis

This was utilised to answer the research question:

- What do school staff talk about when asked about their experiences of working with emotionally based school non-attendance?

Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined six phases of a thematic analysis:

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data

Due to time constraints, all of the interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service with the finest details noted. This included pauses, cut-off

sounds and non-verbal utterances. Once I received the transcripts, each one was read twice to check them against the original audio recording for accuracy. Once this was complete, each transcript was read again to immerse myself in the data before I began coding.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

The transcripts were uploaded to MaxQDA 12.0 in order to record the codes electronically. The entire data set was systematically coded and an initial list of codes was generated. As advised by Braun and Clarke (2006), the data was coded for as many potential themes and patterns as possible and was coded inclusively by including context or words around the segments. Memos were created alongside new codes to note what they captured and any thoughts I had about that code, for example, if I thought it might link with another code. As new codes were identified in later transcripts, earlier transcripts were revisited to check that later codes were considered in earlier transcripts. For ease of finding potentially relevant codes for an extract of text, the codes were organised and colour coded. After revisiting all of the transcripts twice, all of the codes were reviewed twice to check their consistency within the code and with the code name. Notes were made to record any thoughts around them, for example, if they were specific to one participant. At the end of this process, there were 1538 coded segments organised into 139 codes.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Many of the codes had been colour coded in terms of broad areas of discussion. The different codes were then sorted into potential themes. This was achieved through

writing the name of each code on a post-it note and organising them into theme-piles, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

I reviewed the codes to check for overlaps between them and to see whether I needed to rework a theme, create a new theme or discard the codes from the analysis. At the end of this process, there were 1497 coded extracts organised into 131 codes. These were grouped into 5 overarching themes. Each theme had two or three subthemes, which are detailed in Chapter Four. Thematic maps were created for each subtheme using MAXMaps (the visual tool function of MaxQDA).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

In order to clearly define the themes, a few sentences were written to define the scope and content of it. A name was then chosen that best represented that theme. I was mindful of my active role in identifying and naming the themes; therefore the names were shared with my research supervisor as a way of mitigating this bias.

Phase 6: Producing the report

The overarching themes and subthemes are discussed in Chapter Four.

3.8 Credibility and Trustworthiness

Evaluating the validity of research involves judging how well the research has been carried out and whether the findings can be seen as trustworthy, credible and useful (Yardley, 2015). Due to the qualitative, psycho-social nature of this research, it would

not be appropriate to seek objectivity, reliability or statistical generalisability. Therefore, I have used Yardley's (2015) framework to demonstrate the steps taken to enhance the validity of the research.

3.8.1 Sensitivity to Context

To attend to this principle, firstly, I conducted a systematic literature review to examine existing relevant theoretical and empirical literature prior to formulating a research question to ensure that the research addresses a gap in current knowledge, rather than re-discovering what is already known.

Secondly, I considered the context in which the interviews were carried out to ensure that the participants felt comfortable. All participants were given a choice of whether they would like to meet in their educational setting or in a private room in the council offices. An offer to reimburse any cost that was incurred (i.e. parking charges) was made if they chose the latter option.

Lastly, the method of data collection was sensitive to the participant's perspectives in that open-ended questions were constructed and used to allow them to talk freely about what was important to them. This is befitting with free associative techniques and can avoid researcher bias being imposed through leading or closed questions. As described above, the Grid Elaboration Method reduces researcher interference (Joffe & Elsey, 2014).

3.8.2 Commitment and Rigour

This principle was considered during data collection and analysis, evidenced through a systematic approach to these stages (see Sections 3.7.2 and 3.7.5). The literature review identified that school staff's experiences and responses to working with emotionally based school non-attendance had not yet been sought, justifying the selection of this group as participants. The principle was met in the data collection stage through gathering and triangulating information from multiple sources (two interviews with each participant, reflective fieldwork notes and psycho-social supervision). Conducting two interviews allowed, to a certain extent, for 'member checking'. However, this was not done at the end of the analysis as this process can assume a fixed truth or reality, which is incongruent with the psycho-social ontology and epistemology of this research (Angen, 2000).

3.8.3 Coherence and Transparency

To address this principle, I adopted a psycho-social approach during the literature review and data collection. I searched for literature that applied psychodynamic theory to the area of study and used interview methods consistent with a psycho-social approach. I chose to use these methods over others, for example semi-structured interviews, because I hypothesised that some things are not openly discussed in this area. A psycho-social approach permitted me to consider that the story that is told is neither complete nor transparent, as some topics may be difficult to talk about because they may stimulate unwanted emotions. Befitting with a psycho-social approach, I used a research diary and reflective fieldwork notes to consider my contribution to the data collection and analysis. This noted my own

responses to the participants and the data, which were discussed in psycho-social supervision in order to track its influence on my interpretations.

To ensure transparency of how the themes arose, an electronic paper trail was kept in order to link the raw data to the findings. The generation of codes was evidenced by memos and notes kept during the process which served to detail the reasoning behind analytic decisions. In keeping with qualitative research methods, when reporting the findings, I took care with the language used so as to not present them as "concrete findings corresponding to reality" (Yardley, 2015, p.267). The findings have been presented in a transparent way using quotations and a table to summarise the themes in order to illustrate the basis of the analytic interpretations.

3.8.4 Impact and Importance

Qualitative research has the potential to be criticised, as the findings cannot be generalised beyond the current context due to small sample sizes. However, it is hoped that the findings could have some relevance beyond the current context due to a concept referred to as theoretical generalisability (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

I hope that an exploration of school staff's responses to emotionally based school non-attendance may contribute to a greater understanding of this phenomenon. Through applying psychodynamic theory, I hope to stimulate thinking and reflection on the role of emotions and how these can be communicated within interactions when working in situations where tensions are high. Furthermore, by adopting this theoretical stance, I hope that it might help EPs to generate hypotheses in their work

with emotionally based school non-attenders, their families and school staff. As school staff are usually the people who EPs work closely with, it seems sensible to start these explorations here. I hope that the research findings will stimulate thought and provide a different way of thinking about this important topic. Following the write up of this research, findings will be shared and made accessible to individual participants and wider audiences through on-going discussions, presentations and publication.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

3.9.1 Ethical Approval

The research was approved by the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee on 1 March 2017 (see Appendix W) and is compliant with the BPS's Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) and Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010). The following steps were taken to ensure that the research was carried out in an ethical way.

3.9.2 Informed Consent

The consent form and information sheet were reviewed with the request for ethical approval from the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee.

Prior to the interviews, written consent from the Head Teachers were obtained to ensure they were aware that the research was being undertaken with staff in their school (see Appendix M). At the secondary school locality meetings I provided the

information sheet to all who were interested (see Appendix N). This outlined the purpose of the study, what participation in the study entailed and how the data would be stored and used. As I could not be certain that all participants would have seen the information sheet, I took a copy with me to the first interview to ensure that participants were fully informed about the study before asking them to sign the consent form (see Appendix O). They were encouraged to ask any questions before signing the consent form.

3.9.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Details surrounding confidentiality and its limitations were provided in the information sheet. Any information shared with me was confidential, except where there are concerns about themselves or others being at risk. At this point, it was my duty to share this information with the relevant and appropriate people. I was clear that, if this were the case, I would discuss the plan with the participant first and involve them in the process.

All notes and records from the interviews were anonymised to omit any identifiable details. The participants were allocated a pseudonym to protect their identity. When the interviews were transcribed, all names and identifying details of individuals and the context were omitted. The audio files were deleted once the transcripts had been checked and uploaded to MaxQDA.

3.9.4 Protecting Participant's Interests and Debriefing

Emotionally based school non-attendance has the potential to be an emotive issue, for example, participants may have had personal experiences of school non-attendance. Therefore, I ensured that the participant was happy to continue before each interview began. I debriefed the participants at the end of each interview and offered further opportunities to talk with me if they appeared distressed.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research without providing a reason up until the data analysis stage. It was explained that their data could not be withdrawn after this stage, as their contribution to the analysis could not be removed. This information was provided on the information sheet, consent form and verbally before the first and second interview.

3.10 Data Protection

Participants were made aware of how the information would be used and how long it would be stored for in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act (Parliament, 1998).

3.11 Principles for Researching Psycho-Social Subjects

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) emphasised the need for honesty, sympathy and respect in order to conduct an ethical interview. I used active listening and tried to provide containment to create this environment during the interviews.

3.11.1 Honesty

This involves approaching the data openly and ensuring that judgements that are made are supported by evidence and consistent with a transparent theoretical framework. It also involves reflecting on personal responses to the data. This was supported through writing reflective fieldwork notes immediately after each interview and during the data analysis stage when I read the transcripts. Thoughts and reflections were discussed and explored during psycho-social supervision to help make sense of them.

3.11.2 Sympathy

This is about "sharing the feelings of another or others" and putting "ourselves alongside them" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.93). By using non-verbal signs of active listening such as eye contact, smiling and nodding, as well as verbal 'mm hmm' sounds to encourage the participants to continue, a non-judgemental and empathic approach was maintained during the interviews.

3.11.3 Respect

This involves paying attention to and observing the participants and data carefully. Honouring their contributions during the interviews was supported by the thematic analysis. Furthermore, in keeping with a psycho-social approach to data collection, reflective fieldwork notes were kept and discussed in supervision as a tool for understanding the research interview encounters at a deeper level.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has summarised the aim of the research and how this will be achieved by outlining the research question and purpose of the research. The ontological and epistemological orientation of the researcher was discussed and how this influenced the methods of data collection. The systematic process for analysing the data was examined and the credibility and trustworthiness of the research was demonstrated. Ethical considerations were outlined alongside additional principles specific to psycho-social research.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the themes identified following the thematic analysis. The codes were grouped to form subthemes and have been organised into overarching themes. Extracts from the participants' interviews have been provided to exemplify and evidence the theme. Appendix X shows the relationship between themes, subthemes and codes. The transcripts and codes are available on the disc provided.

4.2 Overview of Themes from the Thematic Analysis

Overall, the thematic analysis of participant's responses revealed five overarching themes and 13 subthemes (Table 3).

Table 3 The Relationship Between the Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Relationships Between Home and School	Working with Parents of School Non-Attenders
	Working with Young People
School Factors	Organisational Pressures
	Organisational Relationships (Internal and External)
	Support Strategies
Conceptualisation and Impact of School Non-Attendance	Within-Child Factors
	Contextual Factors
	Consequences Now and in the Future
Tasks and Challenges of Adolescence	Peer Group
	Identity
	Social Media
Individual Journeys and Emotions	Emotions Evoked
	Personal Life

Theme 1: Relationships Between Home and School

This theme captures participant's thoughts and feelings about working with school non-attenders and their parents. It encompasses the positives of these relationships, but also the challenges and barriers. More difficult relational aspects were discussed in terms of working with parents than the young people themselves, where more positive characteristics were emphasised.

Theme 2: School Factors

This theme encompasses the pressures of working in secondary schools. This includes external pressures, the nature of the current education system and the limited availability of resources. It also captures the relationships between colleagues and between school staff and external services. In addition, the theme includes participant's reflections on strategies implemented to support school non-attenders.

Theme 3: Conceptualisation and Impact of School Non-Attendance

This theme encapsulates the within-child and contextual factors that participants attributed as contributing towards school non-attendance. The current and future consequences of not attending school are also encompassed in the theme.

Theme 4: Tasks and Challenges of Adolescence

This theme captures some of the tasks and challenges faced by adolescents and were discussed specifically in relation to school non-attenders. Difficulties associated with being in groups and identity development was reflected in participants' discussions, in addition to the negative impact of social media.

Theme 5: Individual Journeys and Emotions

This theme encompasses the personal experiences and values that participants spoke about that related to the topic. In addition, the theme encapsulates the emotions experienced by the participants when working with school non-attenders.

4.3 Theme 1: Relationships Between Home and School

This theme has two subthemes – 'Working with Parents of School Non-Attenders' and 'Working with Young People.

4.3.1 Working with Parents of School Non-Attenders Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 2 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Working with Parents of School Non-Attenders'.
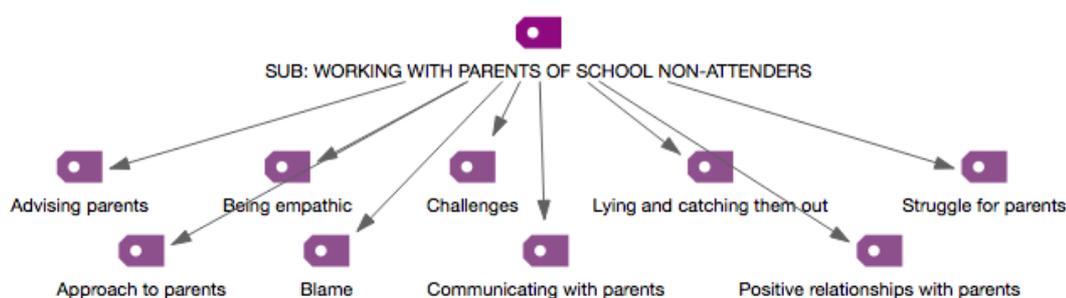
Figure 2 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Working with Parents of School Non-Attenders'

Participants spoke about the positive and challenging aspects of working with parents of school non-attenders. They reflected on how important it was to engage parents:

"Yeah, erm, makes, makes, makes a big difference really, you can see the kids who, erm, are like, the parents are engaged," (Jamie, paragraph 558)

"I think it's, you know, for us, home factors and building the relationship not just with the student but the carers and the parents is a huge thing" (Laura, paragraph 172)

Furthermore there were signs of empathy when they talked about how difficult and straining it can be for parents of non-attenders:

"Erm, and there's, so that's a little bit alien and, and have to just sitting there and thinking to, to myself, I feel really, really sorry for you [the parent] *cos you are, you're trying so hard [yeah] and, and it's not, it's not working at the moment,"*

(Jamie, paragraph 240)

"...but it was very sad and to see, you know, sort of mum and dad, sort of arguing every morning, the dad would say, "Look, I can't do this and I'm off to work," just get in his car and go, erm, mum crying but then she'd go to work" (Sam, paragraph 66)

"Yeah. I mean, the odd day where it's, you know, "I'm not feeling very well," "Get out of bed, get to school" is, you know, a battle that some parents have now and again, but if you've got that daily, constant, that must be wearing" (Nicola, paragraph 98)

Nicola spoke about the 'fight' and 'hassle' experienced by some parents, which she

felt could lead to parents giving up:

"...and mum, having been supportive, now is almost complicit in her behaviour because it's hard work, to fight against that every single day. And you can, you can understand it to some extent if you're living that as a parent or a carer" (Nicola, paragraph 96)

"Then mum almost, it becomes too much hassle, you know, to sort of fight that every day so then it becomes sort of the acceptable and then, but it's not acceptable because mum's breaking the law" (Nicola, paragraph 86)

Although participants placed great value on engaging parents and were empathic

towards them, they also described some of the challenges:

"O...oftentimes yeah, with, with, with parents, contacting parents at home and they, they, they, I, I always describe if they talk a good job, "Yes, okay we'll do that," then they don't. [Hmm] Yeah, we'll come in for meetings," and they don't turn up" (Ali, paragraph 126)

The difficulties of working with parents who appeared disengaged was specifically

talked about in respect of the home-school relationship and the impact on the young

person's engagement with school:

"...so, erm, yeah, it becomes a lot harder when the sch...when, erm, the parents and the school aren't on board with each other" (Jamie, 546)

"...but if the parents aren't willing to, kinda like, engage, it's harder as well cos the kids aren't gonna engage" (Jamie, paragraph 134)

The narratives shared by participants suggested that they sometimes felt lied to by parents:

"So, you've gotta be careful with the parents and the parents is another key one that will always cover for their kids" (Sam, paragraph 660)

"They talk about the child, erm, is now under CAMHS or they've gone to the doctors but there's no doctor's note and, you know, it just doesn't sound, nothing sounds true" (Ali, paragraph 664)

Nicola talked about how she has felt in these situations:

"Sometimes it can be...I dunno, is this the right word, erm, I dunno, joyful to catch a parent out when you know they're lying about why their child's not attending" (Nicola, 184)

"And there is an element of satisfaction (laughter), I have to say, when you know that parents are lying for their child" (Nicola, paragraph 192)

There were also times when participants seemed to attribute the cause of non-attendance to parents:

"There's some of these...I dunno, it's parent, parents, (whispers) parents. I think, a lot of the time" (Nicola, paragraph 86)

"So, it's not so much sometimes the kids, it's the parents as well" (Sam, paragraph 382)

"I can't [Yeah] can't tell anyone how to, like, parent or things but personally I, I don't feel that they should [hmm] like, lean on them in that way. [Is there a time that comes to mind when you think of that or is it just -?] Yeah. [Yeah] Yeah, yeah, yeah, erm, there's multiple, kind of, parents actually (laughter). [Yeah] Erm, that I think about and that's probably why and I think all of those par...all of those kids, they are school refusers" (Jamie, paragraph 151)

At times, this linked in with the participant's approach. The following extracts suggest that they became firmer with parents of non-attenders:

"...but also kinda having to be quite strict with parents about if they don't follow the plans, stuff like this" (Jamie, paragraph 196)

"So, I think it's being more assertive with her [the parent] *and certainly a lot more stern with her"* (Sam, paragraph 199)

Many of the participant's communications with parents occurred when parents would telephone to explain why the young person was not at school. At other times, this extended to meetings and could involve external services. At times, participants were advising parents when they did not know what to do or how to get the young person to go into school:

"...speak to mum or dad, whoever answers, you know, and they'll say, "Right, he's refusing to come into school." Okay, and then we have a, and then I, now, when I phone, I said, "Right, you now need to take his TV out of his room, you need to take his phone, he needs a consequence cos he's not come to school," and then, erm, he's just got a new games console, well, he refused to come to school the other day so I said to his dad, "Take it, just for the day, take it away. If he comes into school tomorrow, take, give it back." (Laura, paragraph 500)

4.3.2 Working with Young People Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 3 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Working with Young People'.
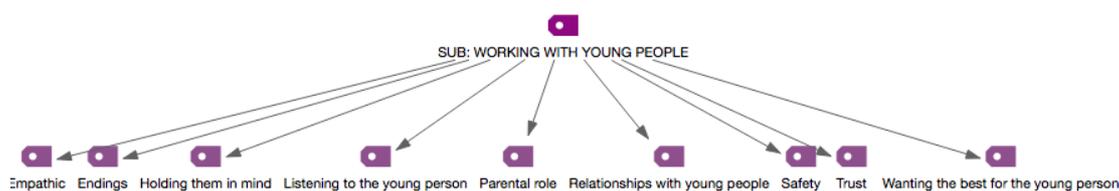
Figure 3 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Working with Young People'

Participants placed great importance and significance on building secure and trusting relationships with school non-attenders:

"So, I think you have to, for these children that are non-attenders, I think you do have to spend time with them" (Laura, paragraph 108)

"...because we're trying to build these really open relationships with them so we, we can help them. [Hmm] You, you know, we need to, to be able to trust" (Ali, paragraph 362)

Participants shared that these relationships helped the young people to express their

worries and concerns to them:

"Yeah, yeah, and I think, as well, that if you work with someone quite closely and they trust you as well, cos li…like I said before, like, when people trust you, they, they bring things to you" (Laura, paragraph 518)

"...going back into school they'd built some, like, great relationships and I think a lot of it is, is when you're working with kids, is you need to have that little bit of relationship with them, they need to know that somebody, somebody cares, erm, about them, someone cares that they're not there" (Jamie, paragraph 186)

The following extracts suggest that trust was seen as an important factor in promoting

engagement, safety and ultimately their attendance:

"They need to feel safe in school, they need to feel that they can trust people in school, they need to know who they can go to" (Laura, paragraph 392)

"It's building their trust. [Hmm] It, erm, and getting them to engage" (Sarah, paragraph 493)

"But the trust thing, it takes time and that plays a huge part on their attendance" (Laura, paragraph 386)

Other aspects of their relationship with young people included empathising with their

situation and understanding what it is like for them. Participants described ways of

showing the young person that they are thinking of them even when they are absent:

"They need to know that somebody, somebody cares, erm, about them, someone cares that they're not there and you need to show them that in a variety of ways and it might just be like a phone call to say, "I didn't see that such and such was in today?" erm, just wanting to know if they're alright, just checking in [hmm] making sure that they're ok, erm, wanna know if they'll be back tomorrow, erm, just that they can see that you, you do, you do know that they're still there or they haven't, like, faded into, like, the background" (Jamie, paragraph 186)

"It comes up as well because I'm a teacher and if I've got that blank pa...space in my room, "Where is that person?" you know, "How am I gonna help them to catch up?" erm, "How are they gonna catch up and if they don't catch up..." So, for instance, I always photocopy someone's book so I've got...in my box there I've got, erm, a student who...one student who was absent from my Year nine lesson so I will get somebody's book and photocopy that page and slot it in and give it to them so that they've got the work there so they don't feel that pressure to catch up." (Nicola, paragraph 48)

Furthermore, some participants shared how these relationships can evoke feelings of

a parental role towards the young person:

"Every day, I feel like their school mum" (Sarah, paragraph 302)

"I know so much about them that when they're not here, I sort of go into that parental role in a little way of worrying, the worry's there, okay, what's happening, what do I need to know, okay, you know, what happened last night, is, are they safe" (Laura, paragraph 581)

Participants reflected on how these relationships end when the young person leaves

school:

"She's just now cut adrift because she had me she could come and talk to, she had a TA that was with her all through her school the whole five years [mm hmm] and we're not gonna be there and she doesn't know what to do with herself" (Ali, paragraph 256)

Participants expressed that listening to the young person about their concerns and

what they want is important. In the following extracts, Jamie and Sam discussed how

they want the best for the young person:

"You, you, as, as like a, a member of staff, you just, you just want the best for those kids" (Jamie, paragraph 543)

"I care about these kids, I want the best for them" (Sam, paragraph, 797)

4.4 Theme 2: School Factors

This theme has three subthemes – 'Organisational Pressures', 'Organisational Relationships (Internal and External)' and 'Support Strategies'.

4.4.1 Organisational Pressures Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 4 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Organisational Pressures'.
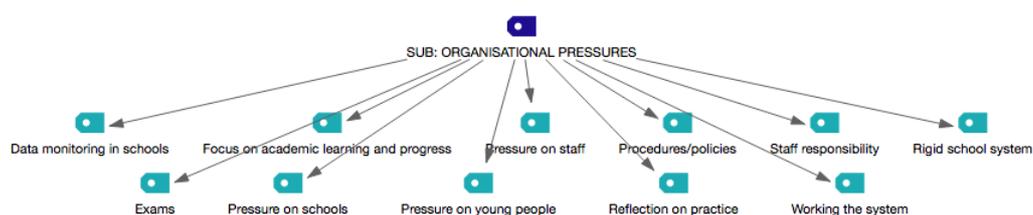
Figure 4 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Organisational Pressures'

Participants spoke about the pressure they felt in their roles. They shared stories about an increased workload and reduced time:

"Well, what, you know, and I think what I'm getting at is, is again, going back to the constraints that are upon us and the time sort of we have and that kind of thing [yeah] if there's someone who's just not coming in, how many times can we go round and see them at home and try to find out what the problem is and those kinds of things" (Ali, paragraph 863)

"Because obviously if you have had a day off or a d... it's, it's, you know, I know as a teacher if you have a day off you, you've gotta catch up, you duplicate; it's not as if your work just sits there, you know, you, everything's moved on in that, in that time period" (Nicola, paragraph 186)

"So sometimes you, you want to, like, really sympathise and you might not know what's going on in that child's head and like, you know, you need a little bit of time [yeah] erm, to come in but other people are pushing you to, kind of like, do, set things up, get certain like kids in" (Jamie, paragraph 339)

Participants also recognised the value of reflecting on their practice but felt that this was not prioritised due to competing demands:

"No cos I suppose it's what we do every day, sort of thinking, not necessarily thinking about it but it's a daily job, so you don't have time to reflect and think, you just do" (Nicola, paragraph 16)

"No, I, I think when I was explaining to you, I think, when we tried to get the students then and how we feel whether we've done it correctly, was there anything else that we could do [mm hmm] and it sort of does get you thinking cos normally you don't speak about it. [Yeah] Well, only minimal" (Sam, paragraph 4)

Participants also spoke about feeling measured and compared both internally and externally:

"And it, that's what gets you annoyed because here, not only is it school that attendance is important but, you know, as we all work for (groups), it all goes towards points" (Sam, paragraph 538)

"That's when we come back to school in September, we have, like, about an hour, erm, in our return to work briefings all about our results and how they and there's a million different ways to analyse the results and the government change constantly how they want to measure us" (Ali, paragraph 770)

Nicola and Ali spoke about particular pressures they experienced in terms of meeting targets and how school non-attenders affect attendance and attainment data:

"There is massive targets on that and, you know, for the, for the school and OFSTED and everything else" (Ali, paragraph 797)

"I suppose, erm, from a school's perspective it's frustrating if you've got non-attenders because, unfortunately, schools are very data-driven" (Nicola, paragraph 98)

"...so in terms of non-attendance, these individuals hit data hugely, absolutely hugely, because they're not gonna perform to their potential because they haven't been here to do the learning, er, with the best will in the world" (Nicola, paragraph 104)

"We're charged very highly on, on grades and that kind of thing and attendance is all measured...it's not, like, really about the student anymore, it's about numbers and figures" (Ali, paragraph 140)

This seemed to link into some participant's discussions about the focus on academic progress, learning and exams in schools. They reflected on how susceptible young people are to this pressure:

"They throw everything at getting the children to get as higher grades as possible"
(Ali, paragraph 779)

"It's almost, it's all about exams" (Ali, paragraph 526)

"There's pressure all the way down – and then obviously on to the students, of getting the best results possible" (Nicola, paragraph 104)

Laura, in particular, felt that the pressure on staff meant that teachers often did not know the information that they needed about particular young people in order to support them:

"So, they all look at the, their registers and say, "Oh, this kid's not in again, ahh, here we go again." They have no, they don't know what's happening [hmm] outside of their classroom" (Laura, paragraph 76)

For Nicola and Ali, it was felt that the focus on academic progress distracted from the young person's emotional wellbeing and potentially made them feel less valued in school:

"I think we are super-supportive, like, come after school and we'll help you with extra sessions to get you through and that kind of thing so it's all academically based and it's all very, sort of, very much committed to getting that student the best grades possible which is all great, we are a school [hmm] but I just think that sometimes the, the emotional side of that can get a bit left behind" (Ali, paragraph 170)

"Students that aren't gonna be, you know, very successful at, at GCSE's, are they as valued in a school like this as they are [hmm] in others? You know, it, it's, cos we are academically focused" (Ali, paragraph 442)

"Yeah, in terms of, erm, obviously academic it's your lessons, it's your work, it's your progress, erm, it's your attainments, you're missing out on those aspects, erm, and those key points of data information to sort of set you in, in position of where you are and how you're doing. [Mm hmm]. Erm, but I think we, we focus an awful lot in schools on the academic but actually there's this whole being in the pastoral sort of background, there's this whole pastoral welfare sort of situation as well." (Nicola, paragraph 26)

Participants also shared their thoughts on the rigidity of the school system and how it did not always suit young people who benefitted from some flexibility, for example,

around school uniform or particular lessons. Sarah felt that the policies and procedures in school were manipulated by some school non-attenders:

"And they'll get a detention which they won't attend and they'll get excluded which they're delighted about cos they don't have to come to school. So, they win all the way, do you see?" (Sarah, paragraph 412)

4.4.2 Organisational Relationships (Internal and External) Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 5 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Organisational Relationships (Internal and External)'.
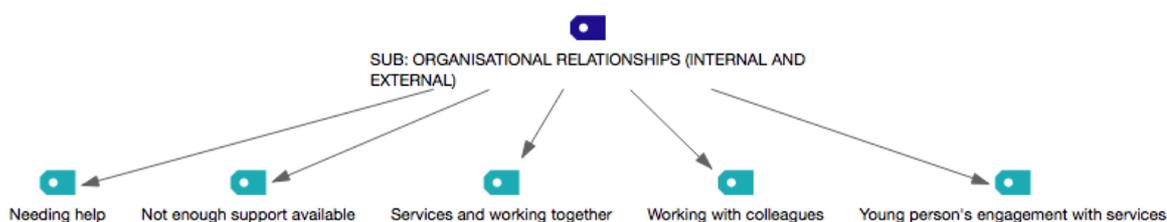
Figure 5 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Organisational Relationships (Internal and External)'

A main focus of this subtheme was about the lack of 'felt' support from external services, despite wanting their help to support school non-attenders. However, participants recognised that it is most beneficial when there is a team approach to supporting school non-attenders and spoke of times when they had worked well with other professionals:

"Erm, there were mental health issues so we obviously had CAMHS involved and did a lot of work with them between us, CAMHS, erm, the school counsellor, we used the school counsellor quite a lot" (Laura, paragraph 431)

"There are particular things I remember and have the, you remember sitting down and having lots of meetings with social workers and parents and individual, like, meetings to try and come up with ideas and strategies that you can put into place, erm, for those kids" (Jamie, paragraph 232)

However, this partly depended on the young person's engagement with services:

"She [the parent] *said, you know, "The doctors have tried to speak to him, you know, CAMHS have, a psychologist tried to speak to him, but he just won't speak," (Sam, paragraph 635)*

Despite some positive experiences of working with other professionals, participants shared that they felt there was not enough support available for them and they were being left to cope with school non-attenders, despite not feeling confident or competent to do so. This was attributed to a lack of funding and stringent criteria to access services:

"(Sighs) I think the teenagers today, I mean, we've got CAMHS, we've got (service) but today, the young ones, they don't, there's, there's not that much help out there for them" (Sam, paragraph 98)

"I mean, from my point of view, I am so...it's frustration that she [the young person] *is literally caught in the middle and everyone is doing what they can but nobody's getting to her because "Oh that's not... that's not what we do" or "She can't go there cos she doesn't reach this criteria." But surely (laughter)...you know, so I'm sort of shouting all the time, you know, so, erm, yeah." (Nicola, paragraph 72)*

"I don't think there is enough support for kind of those kids. They don't get enough help through, erm, like, CAMHS [hmm] things like that cos their, obviously, their threshold's are so high that it's tough for them to meet that unless they're having suicidal tendencies or [yeah] things like that, so if they're not, if they're generally depressed or anxious or they struggle to, kind of like, get seen by, seen by CAMHS or the waiting list is so long" (Jamie, paragraph 207)

Ali spoke about investing hope in professionals and feeling disappointed when they did not accept the referral:

"They don't meet the threshold so you, you refer it on and you think oh, yeah, it's gonna be people...real professionals that can really help and, and then they're like, nah, no further action. [And what is that like for, for you then back in that place after that?] Erm, you just feel disappointed, you just feel disappointed and you feel just worried for that child and, and it's almost like you have to wait for things to get broken before they can be fixed rather than stopping them getting broken in the first place." (Ali, paragraph 564)

There were also times when Sam felt disempowered to help school non-attenders:

"We had to leave it to the professionals because there was no, not much more that we could do." (Sam, paragraph 58)

"It was just trying to get inside his head [hmm] and, you know, obviously, the professionals can do that" (Sam, paragraph 74)

Due to the pressures on external services, Ali spoke about more pressure being put on school staff without additional guidance or support:

"Our link worker, she said they're just pushing everything down to schools, they're, they're pushing a lot of the, that kind of stuff, they, they're so overrun in Social Services [hmm] that they're, they push everything down cos to (service) and now they are overrun so now they pass it down to schools and I, I don't know if we're all set up to receive that [mm hmm] either in terms of training, in terms of time and expertise." (Ali, paragraph 60)

In addition to working with external professionals and services, participants spoke about relationships with their colleagues. Some described positive working practices and open communications:

"But everyone works really well together [hmm] it's just, it's a school that gels together really [yeah] like, everyone communicates really well if there's a problem." (Laura, paragraph 362)

"I can talk to the teachers and get things changed around" (Ali, paragraph 422)

"Erm, and she's been at the school a long time and I guess we just go and speak, especially in the pastoral team. I'll say, "Look, anybody else got any ideas because if something's worked for one student, hey ho, it might work for another." [Hmm]. Erm, and we do rely on each other a lot because it's sometimes it's not easy [hmm] and again, you know, somebody will say, "Look, well maybe try this or try, or say this and try that" and so we go and we just try and give it our best shot." (Sam, paragraph 557)

"You couldn't do this job without the support of your colleagues" (Sam, paragraph 778)

However, others shared the frustrations they encounter when working with colleagues:

"Or it might be something that you worked really, really hard at and somebody just hasn't listened to you and like they might be going into lesson or something and

someone hasn't listened to you, they do something like single them out, do something that sets that person right back." (Jamie, paragraph 210)

"So in your workplace, any workplace that really wants different things, like, people want the best, kind of like, attendance within the school cos the school like look good. Other times there might that there, they might try and just get shot of, shot of that kid because it's pulling them down" (Jamie, paragraph 378)

"There's, there's pressure from, erm, attendance officers, "This person's not in, you've gotta ring, you've gotta push, you've gotta nag,"" (Sarah, paragraph 523)

4.4.3 Support Strategies Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 6 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Support Strategies'.
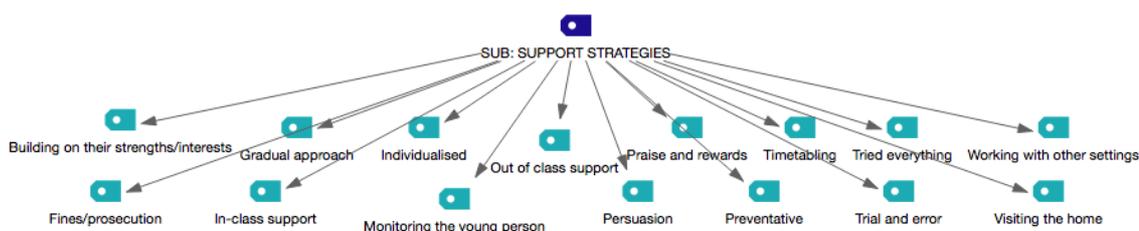
Figure 6 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Support Strategies'

There were a number of strategies and interventions that participants talked about. These included, but were not restricted to, adjusting start and finish times, using part-time timetables and removing certain lessons from their timetable:

"Sometimes we reduce their timetables to give them time to catch up [mm hmm] so, we'll, we'll get rid of lessons that aren't as important that, erm, they're additional curriculum really, they're what we're call soft subjects" (Sarah, paragraph 188)

"So, we, we find that attendance is affected hugely, erm, to do with if you, if you look at the timetable and you red, amber, green it and you'll say red is a lesson that you hate [mm hmm] amber is a lesson you can tolerate and green is one that's fantastic" (Sarah, paragraph 256)

Participants talked about the in-class and out of class support that was used to help school non-attenders. In-class support included exit cards, support from a teaching assistant, breaking tasks down into manageable steps, photocopying work when they were absent and differentiated teaching methods. Support outside of the classroom also incorporated a range of strategies, for example: mentoring; use of a specialised on-site provision; social skills groups; a sensory room; and counselling. Participants felt that an individualised and gradual approach was important as the contextual factors and reasons for non-attendance differed greatly for all young people:

"Erm, so, yeah, erm, I suppose it's just treating everybody as an individual, isn't it, and looking at their individual circumstances and cases" (Nicola, paragraph 160)

"So, she's [the young person] *doing really, really well so it is, it's just, it's different approaches depending on, depending on what, what works and what's best for that individual [hmm] and what's going on in their lives" (Jamie, paragraph 200)*

"So it's a case of we're gonna have to put boundaries in and expectations but we're gonna have to walk slowly with her" (Sarah, paragraph 120)

"As I was saying before, like, we just, we just try and take away all of that pressure as much, well, as much pressure as, like, we can [yeah] so that they can get in and they feel comfortable, right, then we start to bui...build that back up and demand more and more and more so that they can feel like they, they can cope and they don't realise that it's just a li...it's a little by little approach [hmm] and, like, it's building up and they don't notice it as much as they're going straight to lesson, "Now, you need to do this, this and this," (Jamie, paragraph 150)

Monitoring the young person and keeping an eye on them was discussed, particularly if they were seen to be vulnerable. At times, this began on the transition days from primary to secondary school where those children who had low attendance, mental health issues and/or child protection concerns in primary school were identified.

Participants also spoke about visiting the young person's home. Persuasion was used to try and convince them to go into school:

"The school would phone every day, erm, people from school would go over to the home to go and see if they could ask, convince him to come to school," (Laura, paragraph 62)

"...being on the phone to some of these kids, speaking to their parents calling in and one of the, the girl that's left, being on the phone to her, to try to convince them to, to come in, erm, come on, like, let's go, erm, just trying to say, "Well, why don't you come in, why don't you try this, why don't you just come in you don't need to come in, like, uniform." (Jamie, paragraph 238)

Praising and rewarding the young people when they were successful was used by some participants:

"Rewarding them as well, always a big part of working with the kids, erm, getting them like so...really, like, really small, erm, for example, some sweets, erm, that I, [inaudible 00:31:51] and I'd hate to think the amount of money I've spent on Haribo [laughter] over the last however many years, erm, but yeah, bringing the kids, like, rewards so they can say, yeah, you know, ask them if they wanted something in particular; there's one boy just wanted some time to go and play in the music room on his own and like, that's what he wanted and we're all kinda like, yeah, sort that" (Jamie, paragraph 192)

"So, obviously, when they're in school they get a lot of praise and, erm, we have little rewards for them when they come to school, erm, and it's an incentive for them to come in" (Laura, paragraph 80)

Participants reflected negatively on their experiences of fining and prosecuting parents. Although the following extract from Jamie suggests that, whilst it can work occasionally, on one occasion it required three fines before the young person was attending school:

"They [the parents] *have to engage otherwise we're left with what we, we have to kinda sometimes like fine, kinda like, parents and that's kind of put pressure on, pressure on them and we have done that and there's a particular other girl, erm, I've got, I got involved with her a small amount, erm, but she's, her parents were fined three times, erm, but now she's, she's in school and she hasn't missed a day in the last, like, term, I think it is" (Jamie, paragraph 198)*

The narratives shared by participants suggested that for the majority of school non-attenders, fining and prosecution were viewed as a last resort and an uncomfortable process:

"...and so parent is being prosecuted for a second time and we're literally going through a procedure of prosecuting the parent for a third time cos there's nothing else we can do and it's really frustrating" (Nicola, paragraph 68)

"You know, I've been to, I've been to [town] Court when we have taken a parent and it's not nice, it's horrible. [Hmm]. You know, to see them, I mean, don't get me wrong, nothing happened to them because it all went down as, erm, mental health and, you know, but that was, blimey, that was about five, six years ago but very rarely do we actually follow everything all the way through here" (Sam, paragraph 286)

"So I find that quite difficult, you know, that we're sort of having to go through a process that, I dunno, doesn't sit right perhaps. [Mm. Is there, what do you think it is that doesn't sit right with you?] Well it's not getting anywhere, is it? [Mm]. I mean, going through it for a third time but we have to" (Nicola, paragraph 142)

Some participants felt that there was a trial and error approach to the support and felt that they had tried everything:

"It's about trying everything [mm] you know, and even then some don't work even if you've tried for two years (laughter), like in that other case study I was saying about" (Nicola, paragraph 136)

"We'd offered work experience, we'd offered college, we'd offered everything" (Sam, paragraph 83)

Nicola expressed her experiences of working with other settings, for example, through managed moves. However, this was not viewed as helpful when the young person's attendance was so low as other schools were not willing to accept them:

"...so going to somewhere new is what they want but no school (laughter) is gonna take somebody who's got 3.6% attendance" (Nicola, paragraph 66)

4.5 Theme 3: Conceptualisation and Impact of School Non-Attendance

This theme has three subthemes – 'Within-Child Factors', 'Contextual Factors' and 'Consequences Now and in the Future'.

4.5.1 Within-Child Factors Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 7 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Within-Child Factors'.
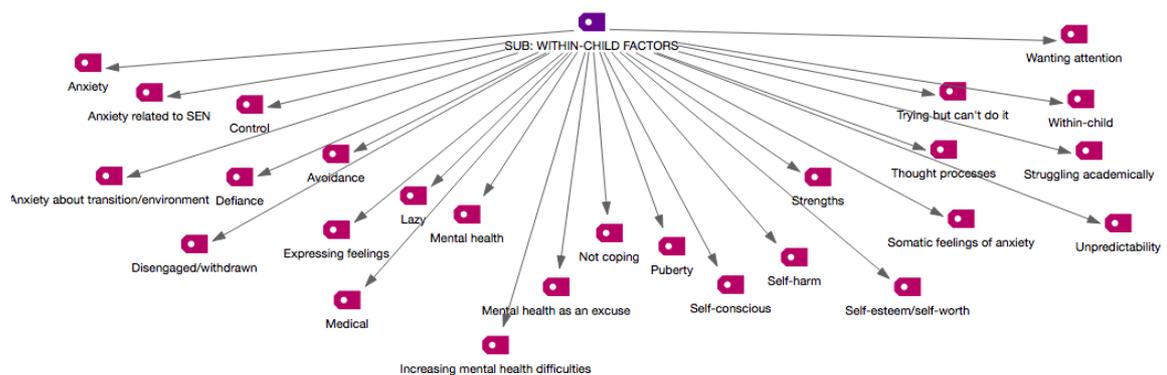
Figure 7 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Within-Child factors'

When reflecting on their experiences of working with school non-attenders, participants drew upon within-child factors as a way of making sense and attributing causality:

"I think it was the word 'school' that just put the fear of god in him [hmm] and along the way, whether it was an underlying problem that he'd had, for it to have come on and quick and sudden the way that it did then something serious had to be wrong with him" (Sam, paragraph 84)

"...it's not a problem but in this boy's head there is a problem" (Sarah, paragraph 250)

Participants spoke explicitly about individual factors that were seen as a barrier to attending school, for example, mental health difficulties. Their discussions centred on feelings of anxiety and low mood:

"So, mental he...just from, just from my experience of working with, erm, kids, sometimes they, they usually have a lot of, like, mental health issues and why they don't want to, kinda like, come to school. [Mm hmm] Erm, so, some...sometimes a lot of it links into there with the anxiety, erm, that they might be worried, erm, they might be, like, scared about coming into school, erm, for example, li...like, some of them they, they just feel really depressed as well" (Jamie, paragraph 8)

"...they'd have good days where they would come in, they'd be happy and then you'd get weeks where a low mood might throw them into turmoil and not come in" (Laura, paragraph 431)

"And she, erm, she basically didn't go out the house and became very sort of depressed" (Nicola, paragraph 152)

Jamie also shared his observations of an increase in mental health difficulties in recent years:

"I'd say, I'd say, within school I'm seeing, well we see, right, a lot more mental health issues than I think a few years ago" (Jamie, paragraph 38)

However, for some participants, the label of mental health issues were sometimes used as an excuse to avoid school:

"Because I think, as well, once kids have seen CAMHS, they, they label themselves that they're mentally ill and that's their ticket to not coming into school" (Sam, paragraph 681)

"Sometimes, some kids are, I think, might be quick to jump to that conclusion. I've worked with one girl and particularly she uses that as, as a bit of a card to kind of get away with things [okay] you know, she, she might say, "But you're affecting my mental health and you can't do this, you can't do that, you can't make me do that, this is bad for my mental health," blah, blah, blah" (Jamie, paragraph 44)

Participant's felt that escalating anxiety could be a barrier to attending school:

"...then it just escalates and it just gets higher and higher and the anxiety becomes bigger and bigger and bigger and then they won't come in" (Sarah, paragraph 265)

"When they're, when they're talking about anxiety, they might start off with just being a bit nerv...a bit scared and it builds up and builds up. If it's not, like, dealt with or tackled then it can, like, lead to, like, further, like, mental health kinda like complications where they might isolate themselves or withdraw themselves or they might slip into, like, depression" (Jamie, paragraph 100)

Laura viewed transition and the secondary school environment as a trigger for anxiety. She spoke about the increased number of people in secondary school, the change of teachers for each lesson, a new uniform, finding their way around, coping with crowds and anxiety about having SEN.

Anxiety was also talked about in terms of fixed thinking styles. Jamie spoke about how difficult it can be to challenge a young person's thinking to help them view the situation more helpfully.

"So, anxiety. This is, like, one, like, kinda like, we confront quite a lot where kids feel too anxious to come into school, erm, for whatever, or whatever reason, erm, where they're scared, alright, and might be, like in, in their head they play, play over all these scenarios of what, what could happen to them, erm, however, sometimes I feel like in reality, they, they build that up quite a lot within their minds and, you know, in fact the, the consequences are sometimes, like, they're nowhere near as, kinda like, catastrophic, as sometimes they picture it" (Jamie, paragraph 66)

"...it's very, very challenging and it can be difficult to kind of get them to change their mindset and see things from a different point of view at times cos they're, sometimes I think they're so, they're very fixed in what, in how they see things or perceive things, erm, so get, getting them to kinda like look at things a little bit differently and try to do this and try to make sure it, it is very challenging" (Jamie, paragraph 210)

The somatic feelings of anxiety were also raised in some participant's accounts:

"...someone that's got high anxiety or is feeling a bit emotional, it's really hard, it's really hard to concentrate, you know, they might say, "I've got a headache,"" (Laura, paragraph 449)

"We've had students who, erm, basically will come to school but can't get through the front door and just had massive panic attacks about even coming in through the front door and things like that, so" (Nicola, paragraph 122)

Participants described how young people with low self-esteem can have poor attendance. Some related this to not feeling successful in school, for example, having low confidence in certain subjects, while others emphasised the young person's struggle to see the positives in their lives:

"...building a feeling of, of, of being unsuccessful, you, it gets really ingrained if [hmm] you're constantly not doing well in something" (Ali, paragraph 174)

"So, confidence over subject knowledge. They have absolute fear" (Sarah, paragraph 256)

"Erm, that then has negative connotations so it sort of links in and I imagine that young person feels quite negative about themselves, their situation, but it's, it's almost perhaps "How do I get out of that?"" (Nicola, paragraph 18)

"Yeah, so, they're quite quick to jump on those failures" (Jamie, paragraph 474)

Participants also talked about how some young people cannot cope in school. Coping strategies, such as self-harm and avoidance, were felt to be used by some young people:

"...so to try and release the internal pressure she would cut herself" (Sarah, paragraph 58)

"I mean, since, since we spoke last week that, that young lady who's got the very, very, like the 3 point per cent attendance from last year is still not coming into school. She's self-harmed since then and, er, been taken to hospital" (Nicola, paragraph 72)

"I know we've got a young person who, who, who erm [clears throat] she avoids lessons massively" (Ali, paragraph 962)

"...sometimes I do feel that they [the young person] *try to run away from the problem and hide from the problem [okay] instead of confronting it"* (Jamie, paragraph 30)

Participants also conceptualised the reasons for non-attendance in ways that differed to mental health issues. All participants felt defiance was an underlying reason for non-attendance:

"But, you know, so there was, there was nothing wrong with him but he decided not to come" (Sam, paragraph 710)

"...and then you look at some other child and you think, "You've got nothing wrong with you, quite honestly, and you just can't get up in the morning" (Nicola, paragraph 212)

"...but these are people who are choosing to defy you [hmm] and not come in for that" (Sarah, paragraph 448)

For some young people, Sam and Ali attributed their non-attendance to laziness:

"...and you do get some students who just can't be bothered. [Hmm] Like, it's raining outside today, I can't be bothered going in" (Sam, paragraph 186)

"But we, we, I can think of quite a few children that they just don't wanna get up" (Ali, paragraph 616)

Disengagement and withdrawal were also viewed as reasons for school non-attendance. Participants described some young people as 'shut down'.

Jamie spoke about some young people not attending school because they wanted to regain a sense of control back in their lives:

"So, I think it's a bit like that, some kids realise that they have, they actually have control and can make decisions and that's a really big one that they can say, "No, I'm not coming into school," and, so yeah, that's, that's why I put down control and, and defiance, erm, on there, so, yeah......erm, it, it's, it is, we've taken away, like, all that kinda like, pressure to try and get him in but he still sometimes needs to have control and to say, "No, I'm not coming in, no, no." Erm, so, yeah, I, I do think a large part of it is just wanting to gain back that control" (Jamie, paragraph 176)

In addition to the discussions above, other within-child factors contributing to non-attendance could be grouped into puberty, medical reasons and those who were seen to struggle with the academic demands of secondary school:

"...whereas in the younger ones or the lower level ones, I think often it's because they just, you know, they, they can't, they just feel lost as if they're bobbing up and down in a sea of [okay]not knowing how this works thing" (Ali, paragraph 671)

"It, it could be, for example, that they don't, they don't have the knowledge or the understanding in that subject and they're never gonna get it. They've got an absolute barrier." (Sarah, paragraph 298)

4.5.2 Contextual Factors Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 8 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Contextual Factors'.
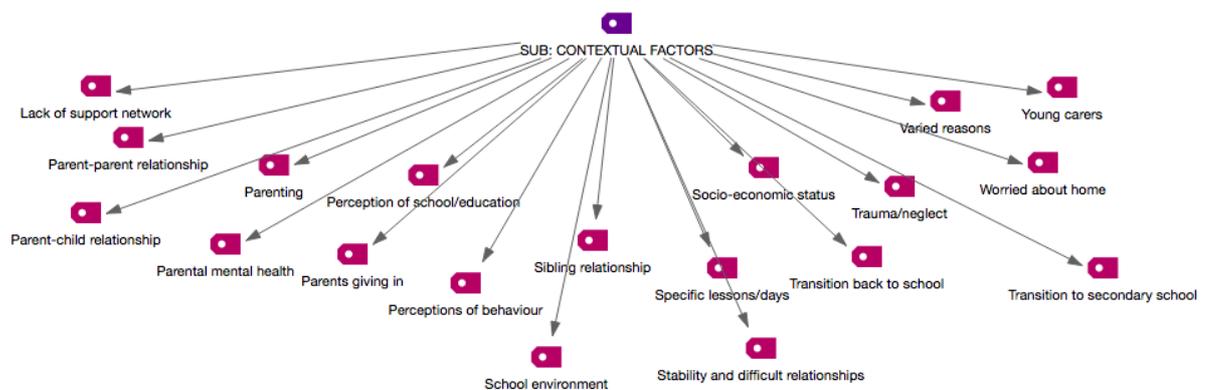
Figure 8 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Contextual Factors'

When reflecting on their experiences of working with school non-attenders, participants drew upon contextual factors as a way of making sense and attributing causality. All participants viewed parenting style as one of the reasons for school non-attendance:

"And, you know, this is a really bright, lovely young person who basically has got in this huge rut which has been supported by a parent – I think that's the key thing – erm, and now does not know how to get out of it." (Nicola, paragraph 64)

"Erm, sometimes I think that school refusers are, like...I wouldn't say generally are, are, I wouldn't say, like, ster...stereotype them but sometimes, depending on like parents and parenting, erm, we have a couple of really soft, soft parents and their kids know that, they know that there's no real consequences and boundaries at home and they, they take advantage, erm, of, of that so and they think well, I've got free choice here, you're not gonna make me go to school, why, why would I go to school, erm, so sometimes it comes down to, like, parenting, people not being, like, strict enough and getting them in." (Jamie, paragraph 134)

"...by just giving into that child continually when they're emotionally blackmailing you and saying, "Alright, you know what, if you do that, I will...," and they might say, "We'll go to the cinema, we'll buy the trainers," and then they still don't come. They get the trainers, they get the cinema, they get the holiday, they get all of those things but actually do they walk back through the door, no (whispered)." (Sarah, paragraph 238)

Some participants perceived that parents often allowed the young person to be absent

from school:

"...then again, a lot of those, I feel, those parents that are vulnerable will just say, "Okay, just have the day off." So, they don't bother coming to school" (Sam, paragraph 330)

"...they just don't come in that day. [Hmm] If they can possibly get away with it, if their parents are the sort that will, you know, oh, they won't be doing much today anyway kind of thing and they let them stay home" (Ali, paragraph 344)

"...when there's absolutely nothing wrong, nothing medically wrong with them [mm hmm] but, you know, mummy sort of panders to them and gives into them cos it's easier for her [hmm] otherwise she'll just get an ear-bashing." (Sam, paragraph 121)

Participants also talked about how parental mental health issues can impact on the

young person's attendance:

"So, erm, we have one particular student and her mum's mental health is particularly not, not great and, erm, she's, she's currently, like, not in cos she's so worried and anxious about mum, erm, and what will happen when she's not there, feels like she has to look after her and things like that." (Jamie, paragraph 24)

This linked with discussions about how some young people may stay at home as they

are worried about their parents, either due to mental health issues, substance abuse or

medical illnesses:

"...we've currently got a full, what I call full non-attender at the moment who hasn't come into school at all, erm, and we can't get him into school at the moment but they've got family issues at home [hmm] and refusing because he wants to be at home to stay with the parent that's having issues themselves" (Laura, paragraph 419)

Sarah, Jamie and Laura spoke about their experiences of working with young carers

and the duty or obligation that the young person may feel to stay at home:

"We have, erm, quite a few young carers at school [hmm] and their attendance, erm, and their refusing to come to school is because they feel obliged to be at home to care for their parents [hmm] who are poorly." (Sarah, paragraph 68)

"...sometimes they either don't wanna leave the family home or the home that they're

in because, you know, they might be a care...a young carer and they might feel that they're obliged to stay at home or help" (Laura, paragraph 248)

"...worried about parents so he's really worried about his mum thinks and, you know, sometimes when a kid has to almost take on the role of like a carer, it can lead to not coming into school because they feel they have more of a duty to look after whoever that is than coming in, erm, and getting an education" (Jamie, paragraph 146)

Participants also spoke about relationships within the family in the context of non-attendance. The following extracts suggest that this process was cyclical with non-attendance and difficult relationships impacting negatively on each other:

"I mean, if you're that, if you're that parent trying to get your child into school every day that's gonna cause fractious relationships, isn't it" (Nicola, paragraph 132)

"...she was a bit of a daddy's girl this girl and then dad kept letting her down and those kinds of things [mm hmm] and she just stopped, she stopped coming in" (Ali, paragraph 472)

The narratives shared by participants suggested that familial relationships were seen to contribute to non-attendance. Examples included arguments at home and divorce:

"Erm, or he might just say, you know, "I had an argument with my brother, I didn't wanna come into school today."" (Laura, paragraph 506)

"Erm, we have other children whose parents are, erm, divorcing and they don't want them to row so they wanna be at home so they refuse to come in." (Sarah, paragraph 160)

Participants reflected on the parent's perception of education. If school was not perceived to be very important, this was seen to impact negatively on a young person's attendance.

"...it becomes that cycle [hmm] where, erm, they might not like school or they might have not gone to school like, erm, they might not see the value in, like, education, erm, because they didn't have the best experience or [hmm] erm, it's erm, so then they might have a child and they bring up that child with similar kind of values." (Jamie, paragraph 522)

"...and if they are been told at home or the family life at home is to sit on their backside and you get benefits and you don't need an education for that so the kids think oh, I won't bother going." (Sam, paragraph 663)

"...sometimes they just, sometimes they take the attitude of I don't wanna get a job when I'm older, why do I need school, it's like complete opposite [hmm] you know, they might see a family member that doesn't work and says, well, you know, I wanna be like that person, I don't need a job, I can stay at home all day" (Laura, paragraph 227)

When reflecting on school factors that could influence non-attendance, the transition to secondary school and specific lessons were talked about. School was also seen as 'not right' for some young people:

"...some of them are do..., are doing really well and it was nice to see that one of my girls had flourished that much and it's just the whole pressure of not having to come into school and this was the girl that I think I spoke about that she'd been up the hospital and she'd self-harmed and she just really, school just wasn't for her really and how we got her through it, you know, I, I don't know." (Sam, paragraph 627)

"And sometimes school isn't right for somebody but that doesn't mean that we can't put support in to get them what they need" (Nicola, paragraph 160)

Laura spoke about the transition to secondary school as a trigger for non-attendance:

"So, the way we look at it is, is when they're in primary school, they're with the same teacher maybe all the way through primary school, they're in the same classroom, they're with the same children and they come to secondary school and they've got ten different teachers, ten different classrooms and many, many more students, erm, so they find that very, very difficult and that transition's not always easy for them" (Laura, paragraph 18)

However, she recognised that the transition to secondary school was an anxiety-provoking process for many young people:

"Erm, lots of kids are anxious when they come to school so if they're starting school, erm, it's anxious, you know, who's gonna be my new teacher, erm, am I gonna like it, you know, what are the big kids like, you know, it's all worries that every single kid has when they come to school, you know" (Laura, paragraph 128)

The transition back to school following a period of non-attendance was seen as something that was difficult for many young people and small, progressive steps were needed for it to be successful:

"And the longer you're off, it must be so hard to come in when you've been off a long time because you [hmm] socially and academically, it'd be really hard, wouldn't it?" (Ali, paragraph 648)

"...she's obviously very low and coming back into a school is a really daunting process for her [hmm] you know, coming back somewhere where people know her here is very daunting, hence she's not coming back. But trying to get into somewhere else is equally as daunting, you know, so, erm... yeah." (Nicola, paragraph 74)

"...we'll try and get them in, erm, and it just kinda like started them off just slowly, erm, like I said earlier, just building it up and taking them at, at time and like, erm, a speed that suits them" (Jamie, paragraph 190)

Participants emphasised the role of specific lessons or events that contributed towards non-attendance, particularly PE, sports day and non-uniform days. Accommodating the young people who felt anxious about this by, for example, removing it from their timetable was seen as something that improved a young person's attendance:

"...the lad I was speaking about, the one that came in last week for the attendance panel, I knew the reason that it was the PE lesson and that, that he was struggling with PE. So, look, okay, we'll take you out of that and then you'll find that he'll be in every day." (Sam, paragraph 840)

"...she said that it, it was to do with PE and I said, "If I waved a magic wand and took that away from you and you had that no longer on your timetable, would that make a difference to you?" and she said, "Yes," and her attendance is now as average as everybody else's." (Sarah, paragraph 613)

The socio-economic status of some families was also discussed in relation to non-uniform day with some young people perceived as feeling anxious about what they wear to school:

"I, I, I know children that don't come to school on mufti days because they, they don't feel that they, they don't know what to wear." (Ali, paragraph 338)

However, the socio-economic status of some families was also discussed as a more general issue relating to school non-attendance:

"You know, is the family struggling, you know, the kids, the, erm, that I work with, okay, so neither of the parents work so they're obviously on a very low income, you know, so the question was when he refused to wear a school uniform, can they afford school uniform? Do they need help? Which they did need help for school uniform cos he's got a sibling in school as well so they asked for a school uniform" (Laura, paragraph 646)

4.5.3 Consequences Now and in the Future Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 9 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Consequences Now and in the Future'.
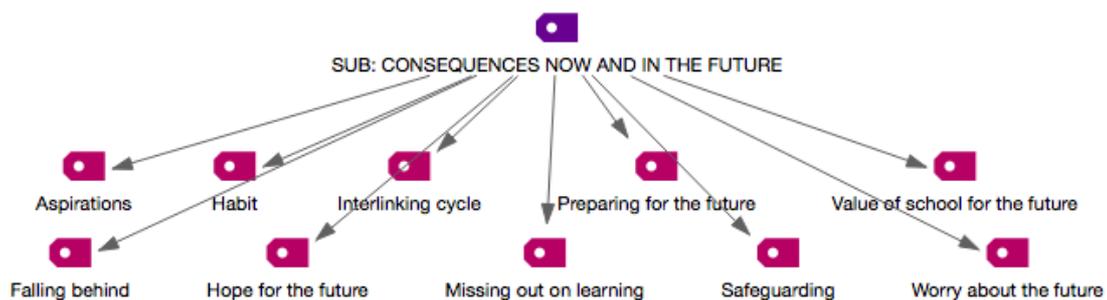
Figure 9 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Consequences Now and in the Future'

Participants talked about the current and future consequences of school non-attendance. They reflected on how young people can miss out on academic and social learning:

"...then it has a big impact on her education cos you're missing out and it's dropping, I think her attendance is now down the 50% mark, alright, erm, so if this continues for like another year, right, this continues around 50% for this year and it's 50% by next year, that's a whole year behind" (Jamie, paragraph 108)

"...that whole sort of growing up aspect, isn't there, of, of being in school, the social aspect of, of being in school, which teaches you a huge amount of lessons, not just the academic." (Nicola, paragraph 28)

Falling behind in lessons was seen as a consequence and maintenance factor of non-

attendance for some young people:

"...when she did come into school she didn't understand anything that was going on, she looked at the teachers as though they were talking a foreign language because she just hadn't been in the classes." (Sarah, paragraph 270)

Nicola raised that non-attendance can trigger safeguarding concerns too:

"Erm, but also there becomes a safeguarding issue as well so if those students are not attending school, why? What are they doing? Are they safe? So I suppose in terms of thinking about that it, it comes up a lot." (Nicola, paragraph 46)

Participants linked school attendance with increased opportunities in the future:

"...you want the kids to be engaged as much as possible cos I know, erm, that out there, not everybody gets, like, lucky like that and they need something to, like, substantial to fall back on and having, erm, good GCSE's it puts them like, ahead of, like, other people. [Yeah] They have more, more opportunities, erm, in life rather than, rather than coming away with, like, nothing." (Jamie, paragraph 537)

"So, it's giving her that, that opportunity and hoping that she'll come out with an English and a maths because everybody needs to have those skills" (Sarah, paragraph 124)

Nicola reflected on the emphasis of good exam results for future opportunities and

although it was not viewed as the sole determinant of future success, they were seen

as a stepping stone:

"And you just think, "What is your future?" Because everything is about exam results, isn't it, and what you get and things like that" (Nicola, paragraph 152)

"It, it doesn't meant that you have got no future cos it, people have, you know, you don't have to have qualifications to, to get on in life, but it will make that hard and you, you're creating extra barriers, stepping stones, time for yourself" (Nicola, paragraph 106)

Some participants expressed concern for the future for school non-attenders, but

aspirations were seen as a motivating factor to attend school:

"...we said, you know, "What do you wanna do? What do you wanna do? Do you wanna stay at home and live at home all the time?" "No." "Okay, so what do you need to do? You need to get a job, you need your qualifications."" (Laura, paragraph 308)

4.6 Theme 4: Tasks and Challenges of Adolescence

This theme has three subthemes – 'Peer Group', 'Identity' and 'Social Media'.

4.6.1 Peer Group Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 10 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Peer Group'.
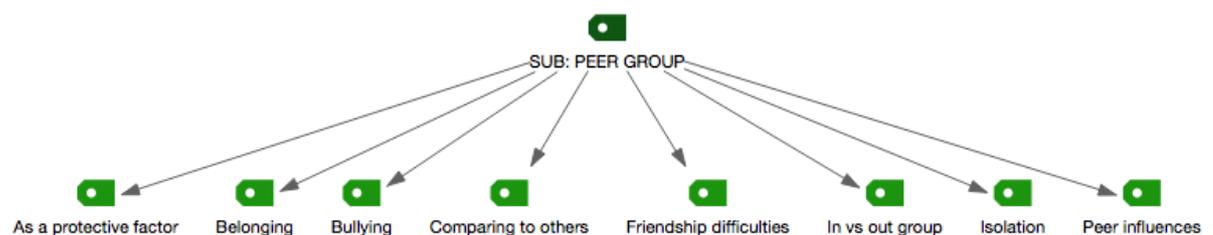
Figure 10 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Peer Group'

All participants talked about the feeling of isolation from their peer group that many school non-attenders experience. It was felt that isolation could lead to, and be a consequence of, not attending school:

"So, erm, the isolation being, you know, sort of gets bigger because that person finds it then perh...perhaps more difficult to come into school [mm hmm] once they...once sort of non-attending becomes 'normal' then it becomes more challenging to get back into school and therefore it creates even greater isolation." (Nicola, paragraph 16)

"...and now we've got to year ten and his attendance is 25% [hmm] and that's purely through, erm, the fact that he's isolated himself from his peers." (Sarah, paragraph 22)

Sarah talked about how not attending school can make some young people feel 'left out' as they have not had the same experiences as their peers:

"So, not only have they not learnt what everybody else has learnt in school that day but they haven't heard that joke, they didn't see that funny action, they didn't, erm, see in the assembly," (Sarah, paragraph 176)

Participants used an 'in or out group' frame when discussing peer relationships. Ali viewed the 'in group' as safer:

"I think that the, the children, they look at them and aspire to be part of it cos it's safer [hmm] to be part of it than it is to be on the outside of that group. You're vulnerable if you're on the outside of that group, you know," (Ali, paragraph 18)

"...when she's with her little group of friends she feels great" (Ali, paragraph 974)

Participants spoke about how many non-attenders can feel excluded and not part of something, which linked with feelings of belonging:

"...you've got your own little groups that people hang around in and you might feel not part of anything [hmm] you know, why would you want to come to school if you're not part of something?" (Laura, paragraph 86)

"Erm, it's quite often been that they don't feel part of the group." (Sarah, paragraph 10)

"And I think that's, that's part of her, her thing is she doesn't feel successful or, or part of anything." (Ali, paragraph 971)

Participants also talked about the impact of bullying in the classroom and out of school on non-attendance:

"...is it something someone's said to them, you know, someone might, it might just be a case of someone didn't say something very nice to them on the playground or in class and actually, they don't wanna come to school because they don't wanna be in the same class as them, you know, it's just, it might be a low-level bullying that makes them not attend school" (Laura, paragraph 413)

"...or it might be that they're too bright, that they're putting their hand up so they're getting picked on and then they don't wanna come to school" (Sarah, paragraph 80)

Participants discussed how influential peers can be during adolescence. Friends were seen as a protective or risk factor:

"Oh yeah, just there's almost two, two aspects to school, isn't it? So, you know, students come to school and they know that they, they're here to learn and they're here to do lessons but actually a lot of students will enjoy doing that but a lot of students enjoy coming to school because they see the people they know and they like." (Nicola, paragraph 32)

"...a lot of the time, sometimes, you, you know, it's when you, when you actually get them into school and then they see their friends, they can go around with them, they, they feel a lot more relieved and you don't hear anything else from them for the rest of the day" (Jamie, paragraph 68)

The risk factors were talked about in terms of young people wanting to fit in with everyone else, but to potentially dangerous lengths, for example, through self-harming:

"...you know and it's almost like self-harm becomes something that we do [mm hmm] it's our strategy [mm hmm] it's a 'we' thing rather than an individual thing" (Ali, paragraph 239)

"...the self-harming now, I mean, it was never heard of in my day but it seems like it's the in thing" (Sam, paragraph 218)

Comparing oneself to others was also discussed, whether that was physical characteristics, academic achievements or materialistic wealth.

4.6.2 Identity Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 11 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme

'Identity'.
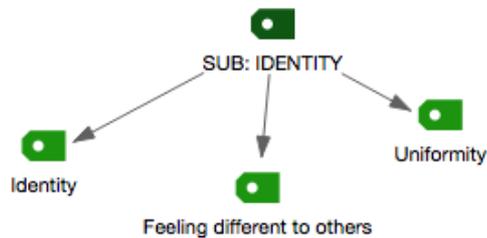
Figure 11 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Identity'

Participants described how school non-attenders can feel different to others and not

fit in:

"I think that that isolation does make children really, erm, that fear of isolation of being different, of [hmm, hmm, yeah] not fitting in [Clears throat] is so hard." (Sarah, paragraph 64)

"...and I don't think they can always identify why they can't fit in, they just know that they, they think there's something wrong with them, they think there's something wrong [hmm] they don't fit in, they don't, they're not right." (Ali, paragraph 20)

Laura spoke about how this is evident in the classroom when someone may need

extra help:

"So, what happens next; they don't come to school cos they don't want people to pick on them, they don't want people to point out that they've got, erm, support in class or they can't write properly or they don't wanna read and they can't read or they're dyslexic and they wanna, kids wanna know why they're writing on blue paper." (Laura, paragraph 454)

Ali and Sam spoke about uniformity in school, which had advantages in terms of

reducing bullying, but disadvantages in relation to expressing oneself:

"...we are quite lucky here that we have a school uniform, so there's no, you know, people that have got designer gear on" (Sam, paragraph 208)

"...our school's very, erm, regimented on uniform [hmm] so, it's quite hard to express yourself other than by the way you have your hair and even that's quite, quite, quite closely controlled and, and makeup again, quite closely controlled; there's not many ways you can show who you actually are." (Ali, paragraph 48)

"...but I feel it's very difficult to be an individual and to find out who you are [hmm] when you, you have to be all blom, blom, blom" (Ali, paragraph 64)

When reflecting on identity formation in adolescence, participants spoke about those

who were labelled by themselves or others:

"Because I think, as well, once kids have seen CAMHS, they, they label themselves that they're mentally ill and that's their ticket to not coming into school." (Sam, paragraph 681)

"...when you talk to them, actually that's, that's not what it is but they've looked it up, they've, someone's had, they've heard it and they've thought ooh, yeah, I get that, I get nervous before I do a presentation, I'm having a panic attack. [Okay] Or I was embarrassed walking into that classroom, I've got social anxiety. [Mm hmm] You know? The, they, they kind of label themselves quite readily." (Ali, paragraph 251)

"...yet when we see her round school she's as happy as anything and [hmm] you know, going and laughing but you try and say that to mum and it's, "No, well, she's not cos you know she's mentally ill," and oh, you're sort of putting a label on her, you know, and if you're telling your daughter that, she's gonna think that." (Sam, paragraph 633)

Participants also mentioned those young people who identified as transgender or

homosexual and there were mixed views on how positive this experience had been for

the young person.

4.6.3 Social Media Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 12 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Social Media'.
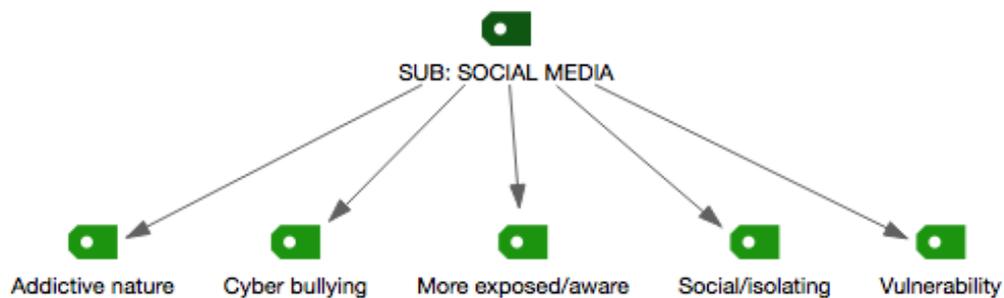
Figure 12 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Social Media'

Participants talked about the isolating nature of social media:

"And isolation, you're sitting and you're at home, you haven't gone and joined in a group at school, you're at home and you've seen them all having fun cos everybody's posting it on Snapchat, on WhatsApp, on Instagram, on Facebook, on wherever, their, their Twitter, they're posting look at me, look at me and everybody's very loud and very proud and actually they might be having a really terrible time but if you're sat at home and it's already a problem, it's getting bigger cos they've had a really, really great time and you haven't been there." (Sarah, paragraph 170)

The impact of cyber bullying on attendance was also raised:

"Erm, I think the, pretty much everybody I've worked with has been involved with social media in a negative sense. [Hmm] I think it's a massive, massive problem, erm, a lot of them have been the victim of bullying, a lot of them have got into spats with other kids [mm hmm] and then when you, you, you've got this kind of, erm, you know, it's, it's worrying thing to walk into school the next day and have to see these people face to face that you've been rah, rah, rahring the night before" (Ali, paragraph 286)

The following extracts suggest that social media can be addictive and negatively impact on a young person's sleep:

"Erm, again, on social media. And if these kids are up all night, they're not gonna wanna come in" (Sam, paragraph 282)

"Erm, then I think sometimes it can be quite nice to be in bed watching Netflix 'til 3 o'clock in the morning, erm, and it makes it very difficult to get up at 7 o'clock to get into school and I think they, they, sometimes they do, "I'm not feeling very well, mum," thing. And sometimes they, erm, don't perform at school because they're just exhausted (laughter)." (Ali, paragraph 284)

Social media and the Internet were described as exposing and potentially harmful for vulnerable young people:

"I think self-harm is becoming a lot more, kinda like, common and it's erm, I don't know if I mentioned last time like, but I think like the internet because kids are exposed a lot more to it and [hmm] know a lot more about it now" (Jamie, paragraph 263)

"It's (sighs) I think with the young girls especially, erm, and we had a case and it was actually a paedophile that was grooming one of my students, but to her, he was, I think he, he was, I think, he was 16 [hmm] erm, she thought he lived here but alarm bells started ringing when she started taking time off school [right] because he was abroad and the time difference." (Sam, paragraph 395)

4.7 Theme 5: Individual Journeys and Emotions

This theme has two subthemes – 'Emotions Evoked' and 'Personal Life'.

4.7.1 Emotions Evoked Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 13 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Emotions Evoked'.
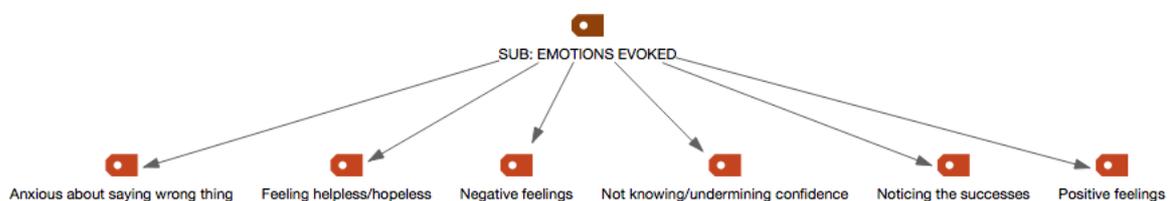
Figure 13 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Emotions Evoked'

All participants shared the emotional responses that they felt when working with school non-attenders and their families. The following extracts suggest that these were largely more difficult feelings. Five participants discussed their feelings of frustration when strategies are unsuccessful and the young person did not attend school:

"Well, when I left I thought [participant name], you spent an hour moaning and just waving your fist at the world really. I didn't think, feel that, like, when you, I felt that, erm, my frustration came over a little bit, you know, I did sound, I felt a little bit frustrated by the things that I was telling you" (Ali, paragraph 2)

"It gets frustrating cos what I've done previously just doesn't work that time" (Jamie, paragraph 230)

"...that was, that was hard, that was frustrating because it's, nobody could get through to him [the young person]*"* (Sam, paragraph 644)

"I get frustrated on the end of the telephone. "Why are you not here?"" (Laura, paragraph 595)

"...yeah, it is frustration of, you know, we've put everything in place for her [the young person] *but if she doesn't come through the door we can't implement anything......she's on roll here but she won't come here, so, (whispering) it's very frustrating......yeah, it is, it's really frustrating, cos, as I say, it's, it's her life and her future"* (Nicola, paragraph 78, 80, 82)

There were some emotions that were individual to each participant:

"Awful. [Hmm] It's really hard [hmm] to work with somebody who doesn't engage at all. [Hmm] So, this lad who won't even come to the door and, and if I, if I'm, I'm brought into the house, if his mum says, "Come in," he'll, he'll disappear [.] and that's really hard. [Yeah] That's really, really hard because you don't know." (Sarah, paragraph 508)

"(Sighs) It's hard because knowing the right tools to use." (Sam, paragraph 350)

"...sometimes [.] when, obviously, when you've put a lot, a lot of work into, like, one person or a lot of your time and a lot of your effort, erm, it can be really disappointing as well" (Jamie, paragraph 210)

"I don't think we got it right enough for her [the young person] *to keep her on board. I just don't think we, we, you know, I, and I take responsibility for that massively because I think I saw her a lot, wasn't able to give her enough of what she needed to,* (Ali, paragraph 476)

"...halfway through this, this school year, I thought I've failed, I've let this kid down, he's still not here, he's not learning, he's not getting an education" (Laura, paragraph 512)

Participants also reflected on feeling hopeless and helpless when working with some school non-attenders. For some, this related to the young person's disengagement, changing circumstances at home and feeling that change was only possible with support from professionals:

"So, one, one lad that I'm working really hard with has absolutely point, I...I'm working hard with his mum not with him, he won't even come to the door [.] erm, I'm at an absolute impasse (laughter)" (Sarah, paragraph 496)

"We can't, you can't really do much about the home life, can you, you can't change home lives. [Hmm] There's things, we, we can involve Social Services, we can tell them but we can't make them think different, we can't change anything" (Ali, paragraph 398)

"We had to leave it to the professionals because there was no, not much more that we could do." (Sam, paragraph 58)

"It's quite sad and it is upsetting as well, like, cos you can't really change, like, home life and that. You can put, you can do things that put support in place, erm, but ultimately…and that might lead to, like, changes but if, if you can't really change the home life, you can't really change anything as well, so, yeah." (Jamie, paragraph 166)

The following extracts from Ali and Jamie suggests that there are times when they feel they do not know what to do to support school non-attenders and their families:

"I don't know, I don't know what we could do (laughter) to be honest with you" (Ali, paragraph 902)

"...but we don't know, we don't know, we don't have the expertise to know if she really is troubled or whether it's just a case of she has anxiety about a particular thing [hmm] and she's avoiding it, erm, you know, and we, we, we just don't know." (Ali, paragraph 30)

"...when it isn't, isn't going, isn't going well and sometimes you can think like, I don't know where to kind of like turn now, I don't know what to do next. There's, one particular kid and we've tried everything" (Jamie, paragraph 212)

One of the participants also shared her anxieties about saying the wrong thing to school non-attenders:

"And the right things to say because the last thing that you wanna do is jeopardise or push or say something that could put some strain or stress under the vuln…vulnerable student." (Sam, paragraph 352)

However, there were times when participants talked of the pride and reward they felt when they 'got it right':

"We're so proud of him [hmm] cos at the moment, he, I think his attendance is at 98 whereas last year it was shocking (laughter)" (Sam, paragraph 764)

"But it's rewarding though when you get through and, and things turn round and you make a difference." (Laura, paragraph 290)

"But when you see them walking through that gate, Charlotte, that's the rewarding part when you think do you know what, I got that right" (Sam, paragraph 569)

In addition, participants shared the successes they had experienced in their work with school non-attenders:

"It is, it is rewarding when you can see that they are making progress and what you're doing and you know in the long term getting them in is, it's gonna have a massive impact on them and they're, they're gonna do a lot better than they would if they were sat at home." (Jamie, paragraph 210)

"...and to see him now and he, he finishes in a couple of weeks, it's just, yeah, and I guess for me, the day that I saw him walking back through that school gate with his uniform on was amazing. [Hmm] So, there are a lot of successes [hmm] a lot of successes and that makes you feel good [yeah] and that makes you think okay, I'll try that again" (Sam, paragraph 390)

"We'd say, "Right, come on, take one with you, let's get them in the kitchen," and, erm, eventually she, she did all her GCSE's cos she refused to come to school loads of times, did her GCSE's, did quite well, not great but she did enough to get into college and now, erm, she's doing an apprenticeship. So, there is the good out of the bad, you know." (Laura, paragraph 296)

"The little girl who, 47% is her best ever school attendance [hmm] since the day she started and I end this academic year with that child having attended 98% this year. So, have I done my job? Yes, I have. [Hmm] I took her on with 47% and she's ending on 98. [Hmm] So, yeah, I've done it and she got an award in assembly today with a great big smile and that's what you do." (Sarah, paragraph 262)

"...amazing thing happened yesterday; I heard him laugh for the first time ever (laughter) and I was like, "Oh, my god, he's laughing," you know and him and another student were laughing at something over lunchtime, whatever they'd said to each other it was funny and I was oh my god, I've actually heard him laugh. I've never heard him laugh in all this time I've worked with him. It's just like little things, like, sometimes you think oh, yes" (Laura, paragraph 518)

4.7.2 Personal Life Subtheme

A thematic map is provided in Figure 14 to illustrate the codes within the subtheme 'Personal Life'.
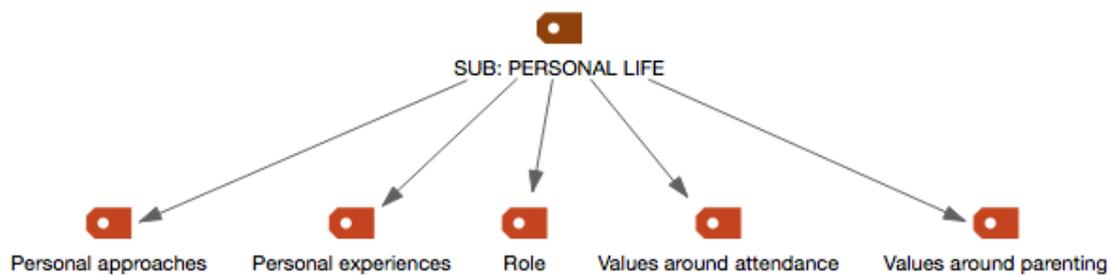
Figure 14 Thematic map for codes under the subtheme: 'Personal Life'

Participants shared some of their personal experiences that seemed to influence their approaches to working with school non-attenders and their families. Often, the stories shared by participants seemed to help them feel more empathic towards school non-attenders. For example, Ali spoke about her son's experience at a school who were flexible with his timetable:

"My eldest son is, he's got autism and he went to a mainstream school with a communication department, erm, and when he found things particularly difficult, they dropped him from French cos French for him was, he struggled with English so French was a step too far so they [yeah] took him, that out, out of his, erm, (clears throat) out of his timetable, erm, to go to the communication department and do homework or extra work on social stories, that kind of thing." (Ali, paragraph 10)

Jamie spoke about a time where he had felt anxious about doing an activity he had loved for years, which he felt was similar to how some young people feel about school:

"I think it is, it's very, very difficult sometimes to be, like, empathetic if [hmm] if you know what I mean, if you haven't experienced it on that level. I, I did, I, personally, I don't feel like I've really felt anxiety until probably, like, last year or the year before [mm hmm] and then I kinda like saw, I understood what these kids, kinda like, felt like, where [hmm] you don't want to go and do that, but you don't want to, like, something in the way you know that you kinda have to and it's difficult." (Jamie, paragraph 84)

Sarah, Nicola and Sam also spoke of personal experiences about bereavement, family friends who had children struggling with attendance and having limited extended family nearby who could support.

Through discussion, participants reflected on their personal values relating to attendance at school and work:

"I didn't take any time off, I'm not a sick person [hmm] erm, and yeah, I've got an excellent work record. [hmm] I don't do being off sick" (Sam, paragraph 863)

"So we're sending out things like that just to say, "Do you realise your child hasn't actually had a full week this term?" which is quite a big thing. I think, as a parent [hmm] if I received that I'd be like, "Whoa!"(laughter). Well hopefully I'd know cos my child doesn't have days off, but yeah (laughter)" (Nicola, paragraph 182)

Others also spoke about their values around parenting, particularly about protecting young people:

"As a, as a parent, they, I, I'm not a parent but if I, if I was a parent [mm hmm] there's certain things that you don't, I feel, that you don't share [hmm] with, with kids and you, you keep that separate from them. They don't have to know about that" (Jamie, paragraph 177)

"Yeah, but it's, it's their parents that are, that need to shield them from that really" (Sarah, paragraph 163)

"...they lean on that child to, for support and they sh…they shouldn't really be doing,

well, I feel that they shouldn't be doing it. I can't [yeah] can't tell anyone how to, like, parent or things but personally I, I don't feel that they should [hmm] like, lean on them in that way." (Jamie, paragraph 225)

Participants also spoke about their individual approaches to school non-attenders and their parents, specifically about trying to understand them, but being persistent and assertive:

"You know, by all means do the nicey, nicey but on the other hand, you know, don't leave it like that then become assertive and say look, this has to happen" (Sam, paragraph 48)

"...sometimes not like, not having, not shouting, like, because you're trying to understand them" (Jamie, paragraph 230)

Participants also reflected on their role in school and daily responsibilities.

4.8 Summary

This section summarises the overall findings in response to the research question:

- What do school staff talk about when asked about their experiences of working with emotionally based school non-attendance?

Participants talked about the importance and benefits of engaging parents of school non-attenders. They recognised how difficult it can be for parents and expressed empathy towards them. However, the challenges of working with parents were also raised and it was felt that parental disengagement negatively impacted on the home-school relationship and the young person's engagement with school. The narratives shared by participants indicated some feelings of blame towards parents and feeling lied to in some instances. High importance was placed on building secure and trusting relationships with school non-attenders to promote their engagement and attendance.

The increasing pressure and demands on school staff were raised, particularly in relation to academic attainments, school targets and data monitoring. On the whole, participants felt let down and unsupported by external agencies. There were mixed experiences when talking about support from colleagues. The range of strategies that were reportedly implemented to support school non-attenders yielded mixed success.

Participants spoke in detail about how they made sense of school non-attendance. Within-child, home and school factors were all highlighted, although the first two were reflected on more often. Some examples of how participants conceptualised school non-attendance included, but was not restricted to, mental health issues, defiance, parenting and specific lessons in school. School non-attendance was seen to be detrimental to the young person's potential opportunities and future success.

A young person's peer group was viewed as a risk and protective factor. Participants felt that school non-attenders often felt isolated, excluded or bullied, which impacted on their feelings of belonging. The use of social media was also seen as wholly negative in terms of its addictive and excluding nature.

Discussion around participant's emotional experiences of working with school non-attenders mainly centred on their feelings of frustration and how hard they found the work. However, they occasionally shared some of their success stories. Interestingly, all participants shared aspects of their personal life, values and beliefs when talking about school non-attendance, which seemed to influence their approach and views on the topic.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

Chapter Four outlined the findings of the current research and the experiences of six participants who work with emotionally based school non-attendance. This chapter will discuss the findings in relation to existing research with reference to psychological models and theoretical frameworks. Implications for EPs will be explored and the strengths and limitations of the research will be discussed. Some ideas for future research in this area will be shared. Lastly, the conclusion will summarise the aims of this research, the methodology and the key findings.

5.2 Aim and Research Question Revisited

The aim of this research was to explore the experiences of school staff who work with emotionally based school non-attenders. Based upon this aim, the following research question was devised:

- What do school staff talk about when asked about their experiences of working with emotionally based school non-attendance?

5.3 How the Findings Relate to Existing Research and Psychological Theory

5.3.1 What have we learned about student-staff relationships?

The participants in this research highlighted how important they felt it was to build secure and trusting relationships with school non-attenders, as this was thought to improve the young person's attendance. Out of the six studies in the literature review

that explored the views of educationalists, two studies found that poor relationships between the student and school staff could negatively impact on a young person's attendance (Reid, 2007a, 2008). However, student-staff relationships received comparatively little support or no mention at all in the remaining four studies.

The literature review also highlighted research that explored the views of school non-attenders and/or their parents. Two studies included in the review found that the quality of student-staff relationships was related to school non-attendance (Havik et al., 2014; Wilkins, 2008). The findings that emerged in Wilkins's (2008) study included a theme called 'relationships with teachers'. The young people interviewed in this research reported that when they felt that the teachers cared about them, they were able to talk to them, ask them for help and rely on them for both academic and emotional support. The young people appeared to value the opportunity to build informal, supportive and trusting relationships with their teachers.

5.3.2 What have we learned about home-school relationships?

Participants in this research recognised the importance of engaging parents of school non-attenders. Although Reid's (2008) study cited home-school communication difficulties as one of the potential reasons for school non-attendance, no other studies discussed in the literature review talked about the relationship between parents and school staff. Therefore, the present findings extend what is already known about home-school relationships by illuminating the positive and challenging aspects of engaging, and working with, parents of school non-attenders.

The current findings and reviewed research suggests that there are a number of reasons within the individual, home and school that can contribute to non-attendance. In this research, there were times when participants seemed to attribute the cause of non-attendance to parents. An example of this from previous research, identified through the literature review, can be found in Reid's study where the cause of pupils' non-attendance was sometimes attributed to a "'them' and 'us' attitude between schools and parents" (2008, p. 351). This tendency for blame and judgement between home and school was therefore present in the literature review. It revealed that educationalist's frequently cited within-child or within-family reasons for non-attendance at school (Gren-Landell et al., 2015; Reid, 2008). However, school factors were the most commonly attributed causal factor for school non-attendance in research that explored the views of non-attenders and their families (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Gregory & Purcell, 2014; Havik et al, 2014, 2015).

A possible interpretation about the function this blame and judgement may serve could be made using the concepts of splitting and projection from psychoanalytic theory (Section 1.8.1 provides an explanation of these terms). One interpretation could be that participants viewed the parents as 'all bad' and the school as 'all good'. Through attributing blame to others, participants can project uncomfortable feelings of incompetence or not being good enough onto others to defend against one's own anxieties of feeling incompetent or not good enough (as these feelings are too difficult to bear). This could be occurring in a vicious cycle with the feelings split off and projected back and forth between the family and school (which may explain the reciprocal attributes of blame between the two systems). The following extract from

my research diary illustrates my own thoughts and feelings about 'not being a good

enough researcher'.

```
                        Reflexive field note
                      (recorded after interviews)

       Worried that it wasn't a good enough interview
       Did I do it right? Was it good enough? Will it give me good
       data for the analysis?
       As a researcher, a bit unsure about whether I did a good
       enough job
       Wondering a lot about what will come from this/will it be
       helpful?
       Did I get enough out of them?
       Feeling I need to write the 'right' notes
```

Figure 15 A Research Diary Extract

This mirroring in my reflexive field notes could be a communication of how some of

the participants were feeling which were projected into me during the interview

encounters. This demonstrated to me how intertwined I became in the research

process and how important it was to remain mindful of this during the analysis and

interpretation stages.

5.3.3 What have we learned about the emotional impact of working with non-attenders?

The present research has highlighted an array of feelings that can be evoked when

working with school non-attenders. Although educationalist's in previous studies

have talked about the demanding nature of their work with school non-attenders, this

has been understood in terms of the time that is demanded of them, as opposed to the

emotional demands placed upon them (Reid, 2004, 2006). Therefore, this extends

what is already known about the impact of this work and has implications for the role of an EP when working with staff in schools (Section 5.6 expands on this further).

5.3.4 What have we learned about how school staff conceptualise school non-attendance?

As briefly discussed above, participants identified a number of reasons why a young person may not attend school. In the current research, the reasons were conceptualised in terms of individual and contextual factors (relating to home and school). These domains accord well with existing research that has investigated the potential reasons for school non-attendance (Gren-Landell et al., 2015; Reid, 2008).

How the participants made sense of school non-attendance can be further understood using Attribution Theory and Constructionism. Attribution Theory tells us that people attempt to understand the behaviour of others by attributing feelings, beliefs and intentions to them (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1972). This theory accords well with Constructionism that conceives that individuals and groups construct their own interpretation of events based on their expectations and the language that they choose to inform their views (Burr, 1995; Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis, & Carroll, 2003; Gergen, 1999). The discourses in which individuals choose to engage can tell us about how they are constructing their reality and how they may decide to act.

This has relevance to the current findings in terms of understanding how individuals make sense of school non-attendance. Participants seemed to differ in their responses and behaviours, which were influenced by how they constructed the reasons for non-

attendance at school. For example, when Sarah spoke about a young person whose parents had significant mental health issues (an external attribution) her approach was nurturing, sensitive and evoked feelings of a parental role. When Sam spoke about another young person who she believed was lazy and could not be bothered to come into school (an internal attribution), her approach was more stern. Therefore, an individual's constructions of a situation and attributions about the cause can influence their approach and ultimately, the support that is implemented. This has implications for EPs working in this area as it highlights how different constructions can impact on practical implications. For example, an EP's role may involve working with the young person, family and school to develop a shared discourse that is empowering and enabling to individuals. This could be achieved using the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action as a framework to underpin their work with school non-attenders, their families and school staff (Gameson & Rhyderrch, 2017).

5.3.5 What have we learned about the impact of organisational factors?

The present study revealed the pressures experienced by participants in their roles, for example, increased workload, reduced time and the demands of meeting attendance and attainment targets. This concurs with existing literature that described the pressures in secondary schools that directly relate to school non-attendance, for example, the role of OFSTED inspections on attendance and the adverse influence of league tables and targets (Reid, 2006). In this research, this seemed to link with participant's feeling measured, compared and ranked within and between schools.

Furthermore, this research has highlighted the lack of support and guidance felt to be available from external services, which meant that participants felt that they were left to cope with it. Similar pressures placed on external services were acknowledged (long waiting lists and stringent criteria to access them) and attributed to funding cuts. Brown (2008) talks about how societal pressures can create feelings of anxiety in school staff. In a time of increased demands, there are more anxious feelings to be projected onto, and introjected from, others. In the current study, the lack of felt support from external agencies seemed to evoke feelings of helplessness and hopelessness in that the participants could only do so much to support school non-attenders before they needed help from external services to move forward. Although my role in this study was as a researcher, all participants were aware of my role as a Trainee EP in the Local Authority service. The following extract from my research diary shows my internal battle between maintaining my role as researcher and wanting to help the participants.

Reflexive field note
(recorded after interviews)

Difficult to not fall into consultation mode and not provide a psychological perspective to challenge the within-child/family discourse
Feeling like I want to work with and support them
I felt pulled into give reassurance and tell her she is doing the right thing
They would be good to work with professionally
Wanting to offer containment/training/a group to support staff in this area

Figure 16 A Research Diary Extract

I noticed feelings of guilt that were evoked in me during and after the interviews that seemed to relate to me taking something from the participants (their time and experiences) and not giving anything back – I felt like I was like the other services and professionals who did not support them. A possible interpretation of why these thoughts and feelings were evoked in me could be understood in terms of an interaction between my own valency to want to help/rescue them and being a recipient of projections from the participants. At times, I felt pulled in to take up the expert role and fix the problem for them and at other times, I wanted to provide a space for them to think about the issues they were facing and problem-solve with them. Feeling pulled in to give them something seemed to arise as a consequence of anxiety within the participants and myself. This demonstrated to me how easily one can be positioned as the expert, especially when anxieties are high as this can inhibit one's capacity to think.

5.3.6 What have we learned about supporting school non-attenders and their families?

Participants spoke about a wide range of support strategies and interventions for school non-attenders. All participants gave examples of specific in-class and out of class support available in their setting. Overall, an individualised and gradual approach was thought to be most helpful as the circumstances for, and needs of, each young person varied greatly. Existing research identified through the literature review has identified the perceived value of more alternative/vocational schemes for young people, but less attention was paid to strategies that could support non-attenders in school. Therefore, the current research extends what is already known about ways to

support school non-attenders in their educational setting. This may be an interesting area to explore further in future research in order to establish good practice and 'what works' in improving school attendance.

Participants in the current research felt that fining and prosecuting parents was not felt to be a helpful method of improving attendance in most cases. It was often used as a last resort and felt to be an uncomfortable process, possibly because it negatively affected the relationship between the family and school. The existing research surrounding the topic of fining and prosecuting parents has yielded mixed views. In Reid's (2007a) study, significant fines for parents were ranked as the fourth best solution (out of 11) for improving school attendance. In Reid's (2007b) research, 15.5% of Head Teachers, 14% of middle managers and 16.5% of form tutors thought significant fines for parents were the best way to improve attendance. However, other studies highlighted concerns about taking children and parents to court as it could be counter-productive and often resulted in disappointing outcomes (Reid, 2004, 2006).

5.3.7 What have we learned about parental involvement in education?

Participants spoke about the value that parents of school non-attenders placed on education and linked this to a young person's attendance. Existing research has investigated the perceived level of parental involvement and interest in schoolwork for high and low attenders (Havik et al., 2015; Sheppard, 2009). The current findings may provide one explanation for the reported links between parental involvement, interest in schoolwork and attendance. It may be that if a parent views education as unimportant, this could result in less involvement and interest in schoolwork and

those parents may be more likely to condone absence from school. This corresponds with the findings from a large-scale research study that collected the views of pupils, parents, teachers and other professionals working with school non-attenders (Malcolm et al., 2003).

5.3.8 What have we learned about peer relationships for school non-attenders?

This research highlighted the risk and protective nature of friendships for school non-attenders. More specifically, the impact of bullying and exclusion from groups appeared to increase feelings of isolation and reduce a young person's sense of belonging in school. Previous research identified in the literature review has established a link between social isolation, bullying and school non-attendance (Gregory & Purcell, 2014; Havik et al., 2014, 2015; Place et al., 2002; Sheppard, 2005). We know about the importance of peer relationships in adolescence for the development of identity and sense of self in relation to others (Youell, 2006). Anxieties about 'fitting in' and comparing oneself to others are commonly experienced because rates of development are so varied. For school non-attenders, the opportunities that peer relationships provide (identity development and exploring the world around them) may be reduced.

An extension of existing findings is the consideration given to the negative impact of social media on friendships. Social media was wholly felt to be excluding and addictive in nature, thereby increasing a young person's isolation from others. Recent research has highlighted the positive and detrimental effects of social media. Social

media use has been linked to an increased risk of cyberbullying. For example, in Firth's (2017) study, extreme internet users were more likely to report bullying than moderate internet users (17.8% and 6.7% respectively). Furthermore, each additional hour spent online was associated with negative life satisfaction. Research by The Office of Communications (2017) reported that 12% of 12-15 year olds have been bullied online. The Office for National Statistics (2015) also found that 27% of children and young people who spent three or more hours per day on social media reported symptoms of mental health problems compared to 12% who did not use social media on a school day. Research conducted outside of the UK has highlighted similar concerns and linked this to school non-attendance. Beran and Li (2007) found that students who were bullied online were less likely to attend school than those who were not bullied.

5.4 Summarising the Findings Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bioecological Model

The findings from this research can be mapped onto Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model to summarise the findings in an accessible form (Figure 17). Firstly, I will provide an overview of the model and, subsequently, link it to the common themes that emerged from this research.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model encompasses four main components and the dynamic relationships between them (Process-Person-Context-Time). Proximal processes are at the core of the model and include the interactions between the child and their environment, which are viewed as the most powerful predictor of

human development. The influence of these processes on development varies according to individual characteristics of the person, the immediate and distant environmental contexts and the time periods in which these processes take place (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Rosa and Tudge, 2013).

From this viewpoint, the child or young person is situated within five subsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The interaction between factors in the individual, their immediate environments and societal contexts are seen to interact and influence development. Participant's discussions centred on aspects relating to the individual, family, school, relationships and the wider context:

- Individual Factors – There were many within-child factors that participants spoke about in relation to emotionally based school non-attenders, including mental health difficulties, anxiety, defiance and laziness.

- The Microsystem – This encompasses the relationships and two-way interactions a child has with their immediate environment. These are seen to have the greatest impact on a child. In the present study, this encompassed participant's discussions about relationships with young people, parenting style, parental mental health, specific lessons in school and a young person's peer group.

- The Mesosystem – This describes the connections between the micro-systems. In the current study this encompassed the relationship between school staff and parents of non-attenders.

- The Exosystem – This defines the wider social system in which the child lives and indirectly impacts the child through connections to the micro-

system. In this study, aspects of the exosystem that were discussed were the organisational pressures associated with working in schools.

- The Macrosystem – This is considered to be the outermost layer in the child's environment and is seen to have a cascading influence throughout the other layers. It incorporates the social and cultural contexts in which the child lives. Participants in the current study spoke about the socio-economic status of families within the local area and how this could impact on school non-attendance.

- The Chronosystem – This encompasses all of the environmental events and transitions throughout a child's life. These can be external (e.g. socio-political changes/parental death) or internal (e.g. puberty). In the context of the current study, it may include a young person's identity and the consequences of school non-attendance now and in the future.
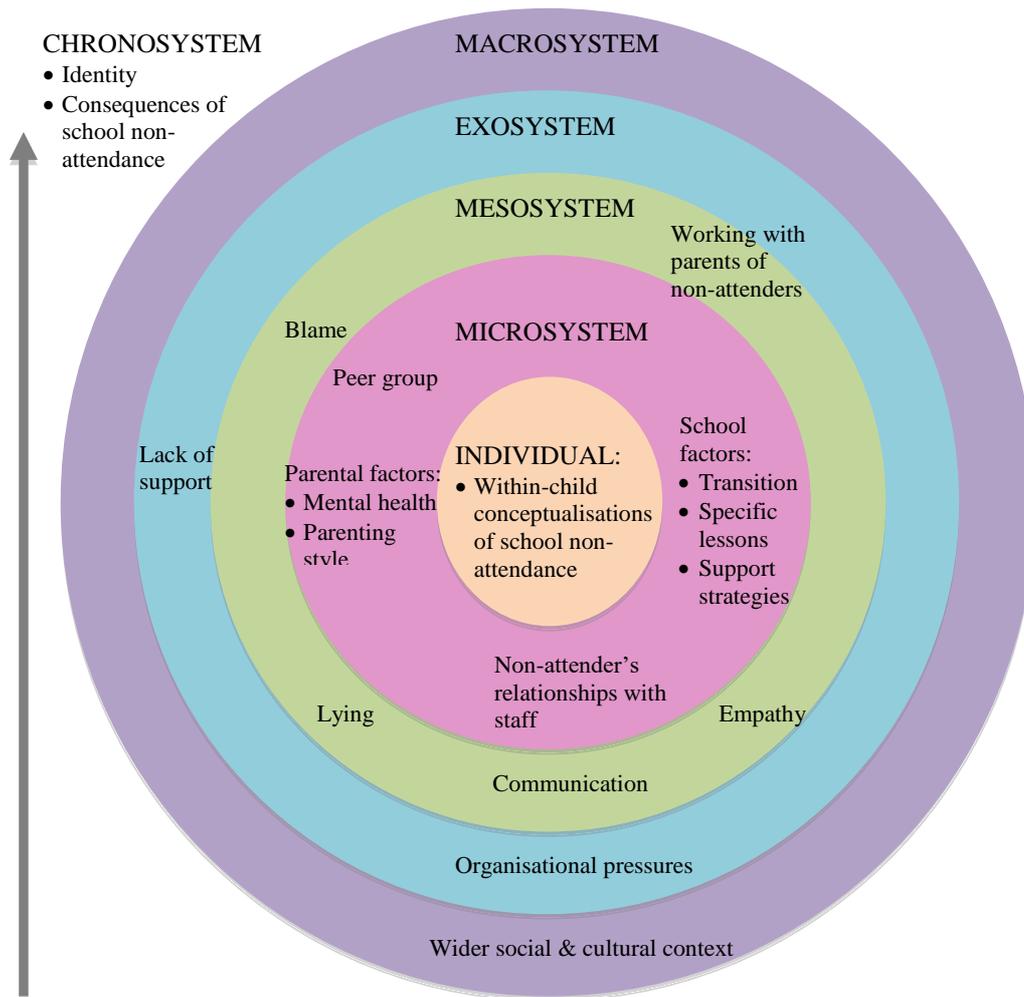
Figure 17 A Bioecological model summarising school staff's experiences of working with emotionally based school non-attendance (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

5.5 Summarising the Findings using Attachment Theory

The findings have highlighted the importance of relationships between the young person, their parents and school staff. Relationships are central to Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment is "a deep and enduring affectionate bond that connects one person to another across time and space" (Ainsworth 1973; Bowlby, 1969, cited by Bergin & Bergin, 2009, p. 142). John Bowlby posited that an attachment system is a biological disposition that keeps an infant oriented towards closeness with its caregiver and provides a secure base to use as a platform for exploring and learning.

He further suggested that this relationship is internalised as a working model for future relationships, for example, with school staff and peers (Bowlby, 1973).

Participants described how they tried to act as a 'containing figure' for school non-attenders, for example, empathising with them, listening to their concerns and holding them in mind when they were absent (for example, a phone call home to check in with them). They spoke about the importance of developing trusting relationships with school non-attenders to help them express their concerns, feel safe and more engaged in school. This can be explained using Bion's (1961) container-contained model of interactions between a mother and their baby. He proposed that it is the mother's job to make sense of the bewildering sensations that the baby experiences through attuning to the baby. Through this process, the baby begins to feel understood and thought about which is the basis for developing a capacity to think (Bion, 1962; Youell, 2006). In the context of the student-staff relationship, this may enable the young person to feel thought about, listened to and understood, which in turn, may help them to process their emotions and be more able to think. Some participants also shared how feelings of a parental role can be evoked when working with some non-attenders. In the same way that a parent acts as a 'secure base' for a child to explore and learn, school staff may be able to adopt this role in an educational setting, for example, being a safe haven where the young person can go when in distress or need of support.

As discussed earlier, peer relationships are important in adolescence for developing one's identity and becoming more independent from parents. Peer relationships and connections to different groups can provide a sense of security and a new emotionally

safe haven away from their parents to further explore the world (Heinz Brisch, 2009). Relationships with both staff and peers can foster a sense of belonging in school, which is a protective factor for positive mental health and resilience. If a young person does not have positive relationships with staff and/or peers, they are more likely to be at risk of developing mental health problems (Department for Education, 2016c).

The purpose of linking the current findings with Attachment Theory is to provide a greater understanding of the significance of relationships between school non-attenders and others within a school context (staff and peers). Through linking the common themes with psychological theory, it can enable EPs to use this as a framework to generate hypotheses in their work with school non-attenders. It may also inform the planning and implementation of strategies for school non-attenders that are based on sound psychological principles (e.g. mentors, a key adult, peer buddies, structured opportunities to interact with peers and/or social skills groups).

5.6 Implications of the Findings for EPs

The findings from this research have implications for EPs whose role can involve consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research. An EP is able to apply their skills at the individual, group and organisational level (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Farrell et al., 2006; Health & Care Professions Council, 2015). Therefore this section has been structured using these headings to demonstrate the implications of the findings for EPs:

Individual level

- Support from an EP could be sought for individual young people who are not attending school to assist schools in adapting their provision and support. Although the findings from this research cannot be generalised, transferability to similar contexts is possible. Therefore EPs can use these findings and enhanced knowledge to generate hypotheses about a young person's difficulties in school to inform strategies and interventions. Potential hypotheses may consider relationships between the young person, parents and school staff, as well as the impact of social media, bullying and isolation on a young person's non-attendance. Hypotheses around how staff are conceptualising the reasons for non-attendance may be relevant too.

Group level

- This research has enhanced knowledge about the impact of isolation and bullying on school attendance. One way in which EPs could provide support in this area is through the planning, delivery and evaluation of evidence-based interventions for young people with anxiety or friendship difficulties. This could include programmes informed by Cognitive Behavioural approaches or social skills training (Department for Education, 2016c). This may provide a space for young people to develop friendships, normalise their feelings and learn about more helpful coping strategies.

- This research has generated new knowledge about the difficult feelings that can be evoked in this work. Therefore, EPs could facilitate staff supervision and/or problem-solving groups to provide a space to think about and reflect on their work with school non-attenders. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines recommend that

secondary school staff should have "opportunities to reflect upon and develop their own social and emotional skills and awareness" (2009, p.14). Furthermore, this research has revealed some of the unconscious processes that may occur when working with school non-attenders and their parents. Therefore, EPs could facilitate groups that allow for the consideration and exploration of unconscious dynamics that may be present, for example, Work Discussion Groups (Jackson, 2008) or Circle of Adults (Wilson & Newton, 2006).

- These findings have placed great importance on building relationships between parents and school staff. EPs could employ a joint systems approach to facilitate communication between school staff and family members, to clarify how others perceive the problem, to think about common goals and explore actionable steps towards change (Dowling, 2003).

Organisational level

- This research has demonstrated how knowledge and application of psychological theory, models and frameworks can help to generate hypotheses regarding school non-attendance. In particular, it has shown how psychodynamic theory may increase understanding of the relational dynamics present within interactions. Through the collaborative processes of consultation and training, conceptualisations may shift from within the individual to consider the impact of the systems on non-attendance and plan support going forward.

- The findings have highlighted that participants felt largely unsupported by external agencies. EPs can indirectly support school non-attenders through

contributing a distinct psychological perspective and understanding of school systems to multi-agency working to help bring professionals, parents and school staff together to promote a joined-up way of working.

- This research has demonstrated how an EP can adopt a psycho-social approach to research in order to explore what is happening 'beneath the surface' and understand this phenomenon from a different theoretical lens. It has shown how useful it can be for an EP's practice with appropriate reflection and supervision.

5.7 Psychodynamic Thinking in EP Practice

In Section 1.9, I discussed the scarce reference in the literature to EPs using and applying psychodynamic theory in their practice and potential reasons for this were proposed and discussed. The use and application of psychodynamic concepts is an essential part of the Tavistock training to become an EP and is specifically linked to learning, teaching, group and organisational dynamics. This research has demonstrated the usefulness of these concepts, particularly the benefits of reflecting on feelings as a way of understanding what may be happening for an individual in that moment. I believe that it provides EPs with a unique perspective with which to think about a situation and one's own responses to it.

I hope that this research will encourage other EPs to be open to this way of thinking and curious about how it may fit with their current practice. Prior to the Tavistock training, I had no knowledge or understanding of psychodynamic theory, aside from my undergraduate course that touched briefly on Freud in a rather dismissive manner

(which I admittedly agreed with, possibly as a result of my own anxiety about the unknown and the way in which Freud's ideas were presented).

When I started the Educational Psychology training course at the Tavistock, at first, the concepts seemed abstract and difficult to understand in teaching seminars. However, I experienced the benefits of using and applying these concepts when I began placement. In the first year of my training, I had the opportunity to work with a child for eight sessions. I took some small world toys, paper, pencils and play-doh with me and I was encouraged to be completely led by the child. I wrote process notes after each session and engaged in small group supervision sessions facilitated by a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. The sessions were anxiety provoking due to the lack of structure but the group supervision sessions provided an opportunity to reflect on the work and consider what may be happening for this child using the process notes and reflections on my own emotional responses. When feeding back after the sessions to his mother and the Head Teacher of the school, this was when I was convinced of the added value that psychodynamic theory could offer. My observations and reflections were warmly welcomed and his mother said that she felt I had truly understood her child and captured how he was feeling.

I am aware that this opportunity is not something that many EPs would be able to offer. However, psychodynamic concepts can be helpful to reflect on within all interactions and relationships, which I believe are a core part of an EP's role. Individual consultations and problem-solving groups (e.g. Circle of Adults) provide an opportunity for EPs to help others consider their emotional responses and use their own feelings as a clue as to what might be happening for that young person. I have

found that this experiential learning has helped me to be more 'in touch' with an individual's experience and empathise at a deeper level. I acknowledge that this is not always an easy thing to do, as it requires a certain level of vulnerability. Therefore, I would emphasise the use of supervision as a safe space in which to think about, explore and begin to make sense of these feelings. Although I have experienced some dismissive and wary attitudes to working in this way, I truly believe that it can give EPs a unique perspective in their work with children, young people, families and school systems.

5.8 Strengths and Limitations / Reflections on the Process

This research adopted a psycho-social ontological and epistemological position where a person's experiences are thought to be a result of the interaction between their inner world and the social world. This ontological and epistemological stance, as well as the methodological approach, is in its infancy in research. Therefore there is not yet a gold standard with which to compare as one may find with more established approaches.

Through adopting a psycho-social approach to the data collection process, I hoped to be led by the participants to enable them to say whatever came to their minds. Using two interviews allowed me to build a relationship with each participant and I hope this made them feel more comfortable. The findings are presented in a tentative manner and not as 'truth', as this would contradict the ontological and epistemological position of the research. By allowing participants to talk freely with little structure, I believe that this elicited responses that did not lead them to saying

what they thought I wanted to hear. However, I acknowledge that the lack of structure in the interview may have felt daunting to some participants who expressed some discomfort and appeared self-conscious at times. Some participants used humour to try and mask their anxieties, for example:

"I think, kinda, quite felt like I was waffling a bit there"
"No, anything you would like to ask?" (Laughter).
"It's hard, it's hard to talk when there's no, like, questions surround (laughter) surrounding things"

I attempted to ease their discomfort by reiterating that I was there to hear about their experiences and what came to their mind when asked about this topic. I emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers.

A common criticism of qualitative research is that the sample size is small and therefore the findings are not generalisable. However, in line with the ontological and epistemological position of the research, the aim is not to be able to generalise findings. However, it could be argued that the findings are transferable as they could be relevant to similar contexts. I have aimed to enhance the transferability by thoroughly describing the research process to provide a detailed understanding of the context in which it was carried out.

With qualitative research, some researchers recommend personally transcribing the interviews. Due to time constraints in which the research needed to be completed, this was not possible and a professional transcription service was used. A number of measures were undertaken to compensate for this; for example, I ensured that the

same person transcribed all of the interviews to promote consistency across the transcripts. Furthermore, I read and listened to the transcripts both simultaneously and separately a number of times in order to immerse myself fully in the data.

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, which meant that the data was reduced to themes. It could be argued that this meant some of the individual data was lost. An area for future research may be to conduct more in-depth psychoanalytic analysis to provide a richer understanding of these experiences for the individual participants. In addition, as with all qualitative research, other researchers may interpret the findings differently. I have been transparent and systematic in my approach to the data analysis and as discussed above, do not present the findings as 'truth' but a reasonable interpretation. Although the interviews were not carried out by a qualified psychotherapist who has a comprehensive understanding of psychoanalytic concepts, I have triangulated the data from a number of sources - two interviews, reflective fieldwork notes and psycho-social supervision to explore my experiences of the interview encounters. This also encouraged me to consider my position as a researcher and role as a defended researcher to guard against "wild analysis" (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p. 18)

5.9 Dissemination

At the time of writing, feedback had not yet been provided to participants. Plans are in place to contact them in the summer term to offer them an opportunity to discuss the findings over the telephone or face-to-face, depending on their preference. I intend to share and discuss the themes derived through the thematic analysis. I plan

on producing a one page report or poster to share the findings with local schools, potentially through the Local Offer website where guidance produced by the Educational Psychology Service currently exists on 'School Attendance Issues'. The research will also be presented to the team of EPs working in the Local Authority at a team meeting in the summer term.

Following this, I plan to publish the findings in the hope that it can benefit the wider profession in their work with school non-attenders and draw their attention to the benefits of applying psychodynamic theory in their practice.

5.10 Directions for Future Research

This research adopted a psycho-social approach to explore what school staff talked about when asked about their experiences of working with emotionally based school non-attendance. It would be interesting for future research to explore the experiences of other professionals working with school non-attenders. It may be helpful to include parents in this study to further explore the themes of 'blame and judgement'. It may be appropriate explore this using psycho-social approaches.

Furthermore, in response to the increased focus on pupil voice, finding ways to explore the experiences of children and young people who find it difficult to attend school would be interesting. In addition, it would be beneficial to hear from those children and young people who have successfully improved their attendance. This would entail a shift in focus towards 'what works' and identifying good practice.

A key finding highlighted in this research was the array of feelings that can be evoked when working with school non-attenders, in addition to the lack of support for staff managing these complex issues. Therefore, it may be helpful to evaluate the effectiveness, and/or explore the experiences, of supervision groups for those whose role involves working closely with school non-attenders and their families.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

The current study aimed to explore the experiences of school staff who work with emotionally based school non-attendance. It followed on from identifying that existing research had predominantly focused on the causes, risk and protective factors and management of school non-attendance. This demonstrated the paucity of research that has explored the experiences of school staff working in this area. It also identified that no published research has attended to psycho-social processes when researching this topic. This seemed appropriate to explore as themes of 'feeling stuck' and 'not knowing what to do' were prevalent in discussions with other professionals, reflections from my own practice and in previous research (Tobias, 2017). A psycho-social approach enabled the data collection process to go 'beneath the surface' and consider the unconscious dynamics that may be present. Thus, the research aimed to contribute new knowledge to the profession on the topic of emotionally based school non-attendance. Through an in-depth exploration of their experiences, I sought to elicit the unique experiences of the participants and uncover new ways of thinking about this phenomenon.

Two data collection methods were employed to capture the experiences of six participants who worked in secondary schools in the local area. The Grid Elaboration Method (Joffe & Elsey, 2014) and Free Association Narrative Interviewing (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013), which involves two interviews with each participant, were chosen to enable participants to talk freely without feeling led to a certain discourse. In keeping with the psycho-social ontological and epistemological position of the research, these approaches to data collection allowed me to consider unconscious

processes and challenge the assumption that participants are transparent in the narratives or stories that they choose to offer. Befitting this philosophical position and approach, a psychodynamic framework underpinned this research.

A thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data inductively. Five overarching themes were drawn out from the data: 'relationships between home and school', 'school factors', 'conceptualisation and impact of school non-attendance', 'tasks and challenges of adolescence' and 'individual journeys and emotions'. The themes have been discussed in relation to existing research and psychological models. The findings were mapped onto Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model as the participants discussed their experiences in relation to the individual, family, school, relationships and wider contexts. Through mapping the findings onto an existing, theoretically sound psychological model, it is hoped that this can provide professionals, including EPs, with an accessible way to further understand the experiences of those who work with emotionally based school non-attenders. The findings have also been interpreted using Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) to provide a greater understanding of the significance of relationships between school non-attenders, staff and peers. I also hope that the research has shown how psychodynamic thinking can be applied within an EP's role to help make sense of the feelings evoked in order to try and understand what may be happening for a person in that moment.

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Appendix A: Application of psychodynamic theory in EP practice

Article	How psychodynamic theory was applied in practice
Every team matters: The contribution educational psychology can make to effective teamwork (Dennison, McBay, & Shaldon, 2006)	This article considers the complexities of multi-agency teamwork by drawing on psychodynamic, systemic and social constructionist theory. Psychodynamic concepts such as projection, countertransference, projective identification, splitting, containment and basic assumption groups are discussed.
Systems-psychodynamics in schools: a framework for EPs undertaking organisational consultancy (Eloquin, 2016)	This article outlines how EPs can apply a systems-psychodynamic framework to school systems. It outlines the theoretical underpinnings and presents two case studies to explore how these concepts can be applied.
Group Work in Schools: A process consultation approach (Farouk, 2004)	This article describes how an EP can use a group process consultation approach with staff in schools (based on systemic thinking and a psychodynamic approach).
Trauma in Schools – Understanding Staff Reactions Through The Application Of Psychoanalytic Concepts And Systemic Metaphors (Greenway, 2005)	This article discusses an EP's reflections on taking up a therapeutic role in schools following a traumatic event. The article is structured around three metaphors informed by psychoanalytic thinking at the individual and systemic level.
Containing the containers: Work Discussion group supervision for teachers – a psychodynamic approach (Hulusi & Maggs, 2015)	This article explores how Work Discussion Groups (based on psychodynamic theory) can be used with teachers for professional supervision.
Exploring pastoral staff's experiences of their own emotional wellbeing in a secondary school (Partridge, 2012)	This article explored pastoral staff's experiences of their own emotional wellbeing in a secondary school. Psychodynamic concepts, particularly containment, are applied at an individual and organisational level.
Splitting and projection: drawing on psychodynamics in educational psychology practice (Pellegrini, 2010)	The author reflects on the usefulness of being aware of unconscious dynamics in his practice as an EP, specifically the concepts of splitting and projection. He presents two case studies to illustrate their application in his practice.

Appendix B: Search Strategy for Literature Review Question 1

Search Term 1 (S1) included in the title	Search Term 2 (S2)	Search Term 3 (S3)
school attendance OR school attendance issues OR attendance issues OR emotionally based school non-attendance OR school non-attend* OR school absence OR school phobi* OR school refusal OR persistent absence OR persistent non-attend* OR school avoidance OR extended non-attend* OR school absenteeism OR extended school non-attend* OR chronic non-attend* OR non-attendance	teacher OR educator OR secondary staff OR professional	experience OR view OR attitude OR perspective

Date of search – 6th August 2017

Database	Search Terms	Limiters applied	Number of results
Education Source	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*1987-2017 English Academic journals reporting on primary data*	27
PsycINFO	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*As above*	45
ERIC	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*As above*	26
PEP Archive	As above	None	0

Included	Excluded
Professionals or school staff included as participants	Irrelevant to topic e.g. health related absence, teacher absence, truancy, general school attendance
Peer reviewed journals/empirical research	Unpublished work e.g. theses
Published in English Language	Study reports secondary data
Reports primary research	Not empirical research e.g. case studies/book reviews/books/editorials
	Intervention programmes (whether pharmacological/psychological)
	Anything published before 1987 (30 years ago) as not relevant to current practice
	Gathering others' views e.g. parent, young person

Appendix C: Search Strategy for Literature Review Question 2

Search Term 1 (S1) included in the title	Search Term 2 (S2)	Search Term 3 (S3)
school attendance OR school attendance issues OR attendance issues OR emotionally based school non-attendance OR school non-attend* OR school absence OR school phobi* OR school refusal OR persistent absence OR persistent non-attend* OR school avoidance OR extended non-attend* OR school absenteeism OR extended school non-attend* OR chronic non-attend* OR non-attendance	parent OR parents OR child OR children OR young person OR young people OR student OR students OR teenagers OR adolescent OR adolescence	experience OR view OR attitude OR perspective

Date of search – 6th August 2017

Database	Search Terms	Limiters applied	Number of results
Education Source	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*1987-2017 English Academic journals reporting on primary data*	58
PsycINFO	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*As above*	148
ERIC	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*As above*	52
PEP Archive	S1 AND S2 AND S3	*None*	0

Included	Excluded
Participant group includes and explores the views of school non-attenders and/or their parents	Participants include school staff/professionals
Peer reviewed journals/empirical research	Irrelevant to topic e.g. health related absence, teacher absence, truancy, general school attendance
Published in English Language	Unpublished work e.g. theses
Reports primary research	Study reports secondary data
	Not empirical research e.g. case studies/book reviews/books/editorials
	Intervention programmes (whether pharmacological/psychological)
	Anything published before 1987 (30 years ago) as not relevant to current practice

Appendix D: Search Strategy for Literature Review Question 3

Search Term 1 (S1)	Search Term 2 (S2)
School attendance OR school attendance issues OR attendance issues OR emotionally based school non-attendance OR school non-attend* OR school absence OR school phobi* OR school refusal OR persistent absence OR persistent non-attend* OR school avoidance OR extended non-attend* OR school absenteeism OR extended school non-attend* OR chronic non-attend* OR non-attendance	Psychodynamic OR psychoanalytic

Date of search – 6th August 2017

Database	Search Terms	Limiters applied	Number of results
Education Source	S1 AND S2	*Academic journals 1987-2017*	7
PsycINFO	S1 AND S2	*1987-2017 Academic Journals English*	21
ERIC	S1 AND S2	*1987-2017 Academic Journals*	1
PEP Archive	S1 AND S2	*1987-2017 Academic journals*	3

Included	**Excluded**
Peer reviewed journals/empirical research	Irrelevant to topic e.g. health related absence, teacher absence, truancy, general school attendance
Published in English Language	Unpublished work e.g. theses
Reports primary research	Study reports secondary data
Applies psychodynamic or psychoanalytic theory to school non-attendance	Not empirical research e.g. case studies/book reviews/books/editorials
	Anything published before 1987 (30 years ago) as not relevant to current practice

Appendix E: Appraisal Tool for Qualitative Research

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?			
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?			
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?			
10. Is the research valuable?			

Appendix F: Appraisal Tool for Quantitative Research

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?			
2. Was the cohort recruited in an acceptable way?			
3. Was the exposure accurately measured to minimise bias?			
4. Was the outcome accurately measured to minimise bias?			
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?			
6. Are the results reported clearly?			
7. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are?			
8. Do you believe the results?			
9. Can the results be applied to the local population?			

Appendix G: Appraisal Tool for Mixed Methods Research

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
3. Is a mixed methodology appropriate? Did the researcher(s) describe the qual/quant relationship?			
4. Are the results of the study clearly reported?			
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?			
6. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
7. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
8. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are? Is there a clear statement of findings?			
9. How valuable is the research?			
10. Can be results be applied to the local population?			

Appendix H: Excluded Articles for Question 1 and Reasons for Exclusion

Article Title	Reason for Exclusion
A brief report on the paradoxical effect of co-operative education on school attendance patterns – program effect or student effect?	Does not include the views of educationalist's
A conflict of responsibilities: a grounded theory study of clinical psychologists' experience of client non-attendance within the British National Health Service	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
A Qualitative Research Study on School Absenteeism Among College Students	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Academic continuity through online collaboration: mathematics teachers support the learning of pupils with chronic illness during school absence	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Acceptability of alternative treatments for school refusal: Evaluations by students, caregivers, and professionals	Focus on intervention
Addressing School Refusal Behavior: Suggestions for Frontline Professionals	Does not include the views of educationalist's
An Evaluation off Strategies and Professional Development Needs on Attendance Issues within an LEA	Does not include the views of educationalist's
An Interdisciplinary Model of a School Absenteeism in a Youth to Inform Professional Practice and Public Policy	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Assessing the connection between health and education: Identifying potential leverage points for public health to improve school attendance	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Behavioural management of school refusal	Focus on intervention
Bridging the gap among professionals who address youths with school absenteeism: Overview and suggestions for consensus	Discussion paper
Factors affecting the reliability of clinical judgments about the function of children's school-refusal behavior	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Family environment of youngsters with school refusal behavior: a synopsis with implications for assessment and treatment	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Forms and functions of school refusal behaviour in youth: an empirical analysis of absenteeism severity	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Health care professionals' views of paediatric outpatient non-attendance: Implications for general practice	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Household perspectives on school attendance in rural Tibet	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance

How can we prevent school avoidance and behavior problems in preschool children?	Focus on intervention
Implementing Nunavut Education Act: Compulsory School Attendance Policy	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Increasing Attendance via a School Attendance Review Board	Focus on intervention
Moving from Assessment to Treatment of School Refusal Behavior in Youth	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Non-attendance at an orthopaedic and trauma specialist outpatient department of a regional hospital	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Non-attendance for health care: When rational beliefs collide	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Non-attendance in general practice: A systematic review and its implications for access to primary health care	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Parental perspectives of the role of school factors in school refusal	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Perceptions of school environment among Japanese junior high school, non-attendant, and juvenile delinquent students	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Prediction of various degrees of vocational secondary school absenteeism: Importance of the organization of the educational system	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Professional models of school absence associated with home responsibilities	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Psychological and social characteristics associated with persistent absence among secondary school children with special reference to different categories of persistent absence	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Raising school attendance: a case study of good practice in monitoring and raising standards	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Reasons for non-attendance at a child guidance clinic	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Relationship between psychosocial variables and school absenteeism in kindergarten children	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Review of School Phobia, Panic Attack's and Anxiety in Children	Not empirical research
Review of Understanding school refusal	Not empirical research
Review of Understanding school refusal: A handbook for professionals in education, health and social care	Not empirical research
School (Non-)Attendance and "Mobile Cultures": Theoretical and Empirical Insights from Indigenous Australia	Does not include the views of educationalist's
School absenteeism and functional somatic symptoms	Not empirical research
School absenteeism as a perpetuating factor of functional somatic symptoms in	Does not include the views of educationalist's

adolescents: The TRAILS study	
School attendance in Hertfordshire	Does not include the views of educationalist's
School attendance problems and youth psychopathology: Structural cross-lagged regression models in three longitudinal data sets	Does not include the views of educationalist's
School Avoidance and Substance Use among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning Youths: The Impact of Peer Victimization and Adult Support	Does not include the views of educationalist's
School building condition, school attendance, and academic achievement in New York City public schools: A mediation model	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School Characteristics That Influence Student Attendance: Experiences of Students in a School Avoidance Program	Does not include the views of educationalist's
School factors associated with school refusal- and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance	Does not include the views of educationalist's
School Nurses' Role in Asthma Management, School Absenteeism, and Cost Savings: A Demonstration Project	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School refusal and the parent-child relationship: A psychodynamic perspective	Case study/not empirical research
School refusal: An overview	Discussion paper
School Refusal: Early Identification and Treatment	Not empirical research
Season of birth and school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Separation anxiety and school phobia: An intervention to revive the school bond	Focus on intervention
Solving High School Attendance Problems: A Case Study	Case study
Taxonomic systems for school refusal behaviour	Discussion paper
The Causes, Views and Traits of School Absenteeism and Truancy: An Analytical Review	Does not include the views of educationalist's
The impact of village-based kindergarten on early literacy, numeracy, and school attendance in Solomon Islands	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The National Behaviour and Attendance Review in Wales: Findings and Recommendations on School Attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The relationship between relative weight and school attendance among elementary schoolchildren	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The School Absenteeism among High School Students: Contributing Factors	Does not include the views of educationalist's
The School Attendance Officer 1900-1939: Policeman to Welfare Worker?	Not empirical research

The strategic management of truancy and school absenteeism: finding solutions from a national perspective	Not empirical research
The use of legal proceedings in cases of non-attendance at school: perceptions of education welfare officers	Focus on truancy
The views of primary pupils on school attendance at Key Stage 2 in Wales	Does not include the views of educationalist's
Transition and protective agency of early childhood learning behaviors as portents of later school attendance and adjustment	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Truancy, school refusal and anxiety	Discussion paper
Using a Preventive Social Work Program for Reducing School Refusal	Focus on intervention
Using brief strategic intervention to reduce the school avoidance behavior of seventh graders	Focus on intervention

Appendix I: Critical Appraisal of Articles Included in Literature Review Question 1

Article: Reid, K. (2007b). Managing school attendance: the professional perspective.

Teacher Development, 11(1), 21-43, DOI: 10.1080/13664530701194652

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	██		
2. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	██		
3. Is a mixed methodology appropriate? Did the researcher(s) describe the qual/quant relationship?	██		
4. Are the results of the study clearly reported?	██		
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?	██		
6. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	██		
7. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	██	██	
8. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are? Is there a clear statement of findings?	██		
9. How valuable is the research?	██		
10. Can be results be applied to the local population?	██		

NOTE: It was sufficient for analysing the quantitative data (questionnaires) but the analysis of the qualitative data (interviews) was not explained.

Article: Reid, K. (2008). The causes of non-attendance: an empirical study.

Educational Review, 60(4), 345-357, DOI: 10.1080/00131910802393381

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?			
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?			
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?			
10. Is the research valuable?			

Article: Reid, K. (2006). An evaluation of the views of secondary staff towards

school attendance issues. *Oxford Review of Education, 32*(3), 303-324, DOI:

10.1080/0305498060077555

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	🟩		
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	🟩		
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	🟩		
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?		🟧	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	🟩		
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?		🟧	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?		🟧	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?		🟧	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	🟩		
10. Is the research valuable?	🟩		

Article: Reid, K. (2004). The views of head teachers and teacher on attendance

issues in primary schools. *Research in Education, 72*, 60-76.

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	🟩		
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	🟩		
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	🟩		
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?		🟧	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	🟩		
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?		🟧	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?		🟧	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?		🟧	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	🟩		
10. Is the research valuable?	🟩		

Article: Reid, K. (2007a). The views of learning mentors on the management of school attendance. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 15*(1), 39-55, DOI: 10.1080/13611260601037363

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?	🟩		
2. Was the cohort recruited in an acceptable way?	🟩		
3. Was the exposure accurately measured to minimise bias?	🟩		
4. Was the outcome accurately measured to minimise bias?	🟩		
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?		🟧	
6. Are the results reported clearly?	🟩		
7. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are?	🟩		
8. Do you believe the results?	🟩		
9. Can the results be applied to the local population?	🟩		

Article: Gren-Landell, M., Ekerfelt Allvin, C., Bradley, M., Andersson, M., &

Andersson, G. (2015). Teachers' views on risk factors for problematic school

absenteeism in Swedish primary school students. *Educational Psychology in*

Practice, 31(4), 412-423, DOI: 10.1080/02667363.2015.1086726

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?	■		
2. Was the cohort recruited in an acceptable way?	■		
3. Was the exposure accurately measured to minimise bias?		■	
4. Was the outcome accurately measured to minimise bias?	■		
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?		■	
6. Are the results reported clearly?	■		
7. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are?	■		
8. Do you believe the results?	■		
9. Can the results be applied to the local population?	■		

Appendix J: Excluded Articles for Question 2 and Reasons for Exclusion

Article title	Reason for exclusion
'School refusal and emotional lability in a 6-year-old boy': Comment	Discussion paper
'Stop my pain, but don't send me to school!' A pediatric case of irritable bowel syndrome and school absenteeism.	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
"Here and Now": The Attendance Issue in Indigenous Early Childhood Education	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
A brief report on the paradoxical effect of co-operative education on school attendance patterns - program effect or student effect?	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
A case of mild school refusal: Rest-activity cycle and filial violence	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
A clinical psychological study of school refusal in adolescence: III. The features of the problem and the therapeutic approach from the point of view of self-esteem	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
A clinical psychological study of school refusal in adolescence: II. Case studies of the process of change from the viewpoint of individual psychodynamics and family relationships	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
A dynamical view of high school attendance: An assessment of short-term and long-term dependencies in five urban schools	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
A Qualitative Research Study on School Absenteeism Among College Students	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
A resumption of adolescent development: Discussion of 'School refusal and the parent-child relationship'	Case study/not empirical research
A strategic approach to tackling school absenteeism and truancy: the PSCC scheme	Focus on intervention
Academic Continuity through Online Collaboration: Mathematics Teachers Support the Learning of Pupils with Chronic Illness during School Absence	Focus on absence due to medical illness
Acceptability of alternative treatments for school refusal: Evaluations by students, caregivers, and professionals	Focus on intervention
Addressing School Refusal Behavior: Suggestions for Frontline Professionals	Not empirical research
Adolescent school absenteeism: Modelling social and individual risk factors	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Adolescent trauma in Japanese schools: Two case studies of Ijime (bullying) and school refusal	Case study
Adolescents' experiences of familial	Not related to the topic of Emotionally

involvement in their peer relations and school attendance	Based School Non-Attendance
Adolescents' school non-attendance and the spread of psychological counselling in Japan	Not empirical research
An analysis of the future management of school attendance in Wales	Not empirical research
An Evaluation of Strategies and Professional Development Needs on Attendance Issues within an LEA	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
An evaluation of the views of secondary staff towards school attendance issues	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
An exploration of the relationship between trait anxiety and school attendance in young people	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
An Interdisciplinary Model of School Absenteeism in Youth to Inform Professional Practice and Public Policy	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
An Investigation of Personality Traits in Relation to Adolescent School Absenteeism	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Anxiety-based school refusal: Helping parents cope	Case study
Are interim care orders necessary to improve school attendance in truants taken to juvenile court	Focus on truancy
Assessing reasons for School Non-attendance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Assessing the connection between health and education: Identifying potential leverage points for public health to improve school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Assisting with school absences for pediatric health conditions: Written information for families	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Associations of the Health Risk Behaviors with School Absenteeism. Does Having Permission for the Absence Make a Difference?	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Asthma-related school absenteeism, morbidity, and modifiable factors	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Barriers to School Attendance and Gender Inequality: Empirical Evidence from a Sample of Ghanaian Schoolchildren	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Behavioural management of school refusal	Focus on intervention
Beyond the taken-for-granted perceptions: the Akhdam and school attendance in Yemen	Not empirical research
Bridging the gap among professionals who address youths with school absenteeism: Overview and suggestions for consensus	Not empirical research
Can health insurance reduce school absenteeism?	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Changes in studies of school refusal: A comparison between U.K. and Japan	Not empirical research

Comparison of Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation between the Students with School Refusal Behavior (SRB) and the Students without (SRB), and the Relationships of These Variables to Academic Performance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Confirmatory analyses of the School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised: Replication and extension to a truancy sample	Focus on truancy
Confirmatory factor analysis of the School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised in an African American community sample	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised: Child and Parent Versions	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Current status of research on school refusal	Not empirical research
Does school attendance reduce the risk of youth homelessness in Tanzania?	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
DSM-III-R disorders, social factors and management of school attendance problems in the normal population	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Early Schooling and Childbearing Experiences: Implications for Postsecondary School Attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Education for children in sub-Saharan Africa: Predictors impacting school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Effects of computer-assisted telecommunications on school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Examining School Security Measures as Moderators of the Association Between Homophobic Victimization and School Avoidance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Factors affecting the reliability of clinical judgments about the function of children's school-refusal behavior	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Factors involved in the feelings related to school avoidance among high school students in Nagano Prefecture, Japan	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Factors Related to School Absenteeism in Adolescents With Recurrent Headache	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Family environment of youngsters with school refusal behavior: a synopsis with implications for assessment and treatment	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Food insecurity and its association with school absenteeism among rural school adolescents in Jimma zone, Ethiopia	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Forms and Functions of School Refusal Behavior in Youth: An Empirical Analysis of Absenteeism Severity	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Frequent Fliers, School Phobias and the Sick Student: School Health Personnel's Perceptions of Students Who Refuse School	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
From waiting room to mother's lap:	Not empirical research

Parameters in testing a psychotic, school-phobia child	
Functional Outcome of Adolescents with 'School Refusal'	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Functional school refusal subtypes: Anxiety, avoidance, and malingering	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Gender differences in the effects of Internet usage on high school absenteeism	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Getting In, Dropping out, and Staying on: Determinants of Girls' School Attendance in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Groundwater Scarcity Impact on Inclusiveness and Women Empowerment: Insights from School Absenteeism of Female Students in Two Watersheds in India 1	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Health care professionals' views of paediatric outpatient non-attendance: Implications for general practice.	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Health-related quality of life relates to school attendance in children on treatment for cancer	Focus on absence due to medical illness
"Here and Now": The attendance issues in indigenous early childhood education	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Household perspectives on school attendance in rural Tibet	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
How can we prevent school avoidance and behavior problems in preschool children?	Focus on intervention
How effective is parental prosecution as a method of improving school attendance among primary-aged children?	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Impact of asthma and air pollution on school attendance of primary school children: Are they at increased risked of school absenteeism?	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Impact of Poor Oral Health on Children's School Attendance and Performance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Implementing Nunavut Education Act: Compulsory School Attendance Policy	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Improved school attendance through adult volunteer reading partners	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Improving School Attendance in England	Not empirical research
Increasing Attendance via a School Attendance Review Board	Focus on intervention
Intensive (Daily) Behavior Therapy for School Refusal: A Multiple Baseline Case Series	Focus on intervention
International determinants of private school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Managing school attendance: the professional perspective	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Measuring the function of school refusal behavior: The School Assessment Scale	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents

Medical Versus Nonmedical Immunization Exemptions for Child Care and School Attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Mind the Gap: How Students Differentially Perceive Their School's Attendance Policies in Germany	Focus on truancy
Moving from Assessment to Treatment of School Refusal Behavior in Youth	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Non-attendance in primary care: The views of patients and practices on its causes, impact and solutions	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Parental issues contributing to school refusal: A case report	Case study
Perceptions of school environment among Japanese junior high school, non-attendant, and juvenile delinquent students	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Perceptions of Violence and Fear of School Attendance Among Junior High School Youths in Israel	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Physical activity of children ages 6-8: The beginning of school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Physical activity, screen time, and school absenteeism: Self-reports from NHANES 2005-2008	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Popularity, social acceptance, and aggression in adolescent peer groups: Links with academic performance and school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Positive practice routines in overcoming resistance to the treatment of school phobia: A case study with follow-up	Case study
Prediction of various degrees of vocational secondary school absenteeism: Importance of the organization of the educational system	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Predictors of severity of absenteeism in children with anxiety-based school refusal	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Prevalence of sleep problems and relationship between sleep problems and school refusal behavior in school-aged children in children's and parent's ratings	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Professional Models of School Absence Associated with Home Responsibilities	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Psychological and social characteristics associated with persistent absence among secondary aged school children with special reference to different categories of persistent absence	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Psychological Factors Behind Truancy, School Phobia, and School Refusal: A Literature Study	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Psychosocial interventions for school refusal behavior in children and adolescents	Focus on intervention
Quality of Life and School Absenteeism in	Focus on absence due to medical illness

Children with Chronic Illness	
Raising school attendance: a case study of good practice in monitoring and raising standards	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Reasons for non-attendance at a child guidance clinic	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Recent Perspectives Concerning School Refusal Behavior	Not empirical research
Reducing substance use improves adolescents' school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Relationship between psychosocial variables and school absenteeism in kindergarten children	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Relationship between School Absenteeism and Depressive Symptoms among Adolescents with Juvenile Fibromyalgia	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Responding to Chronic non-Attendance: A Review of Intervention Approaches	Focus on intervention
Rethinking welfare school-attendance policies	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Review of School Phobia, Panic Attacks and Anxiety in Children	Not empirical research
Review of School Refusal in Adolescence (No. 18 in the PACTS Series)	Not empirical research
Review of Understanding school refusal	Not empirical research
Review of Understanding school refusal: A handbook for professionals in education, health and social care	Not empirical research
School (Non-) Attendance and "Mobile Cultures": Theoretical and Empirical Insights from Indigenous Australia	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School absenteeism among children living with smokers	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School absenteeism and functional somatic symptoms	Not empirical research
School absenteeism and mental health among sexual minority youth and heterosexual youth	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School absenteeism as a perpetuating factor of functional somatic symptoms in adolescents: The TRAILS study	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School absenteeism in pediatric chronic pain: Identifying lessons learned from the general school absenteeism literature	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School absenteeism: An online survey via social networks	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School attendance and attitude to child labour: A comparison of in-school and out-of-school working children in Southwest Nigeria.	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School Attendance Demonstration Project: An evaluation of a program to motivate public assistance teens to attend and	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance

complete school in an urban school district	
School attendance in Hertfordshire	Focus on truancy
School Attendance Patterns, Unmet Educational Needs, and Truancy: A Chronological Perspective	Focus on truancy
School attendance problems and youth psychopathology: Structural cross-lagged regression models in three longitudinal data sets	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School attendance revisited: A study of urban African American students' grade point averages and coping strategies	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School Avoidance and Substance Use Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning youths: The Impact of Peer Victimization and Adult Support	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School avoidance behavior: Motivational bases and implications for intervention	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School avoidance form the point of view of child and adolescent psychiatry: Symptomatology, development, course, and treatment	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School avoidance: Implications for school nurses	Not empirical research
School based intensive exposure therapy for school refusal behaviour	Focus on intervention
School building condition, school attendance, and academic achievement in New York City public schools: A mediation model	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School non-attendance: Definitions, meanings, responses, interventions	Not empirical research
School Nurses' role in Asthma Management, School Absenteeism, and Cost Savings: A Demonstration Project	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
School Phobia: A Critical Analysis of the Separation Anxiety Theory and an Alternative Conceptualization	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School phobia: Patterns of family functioning	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School refusal and depression with school attendance in children and adolescents: Comparative assessment between the Children's Depression Inventory and somatic complaints	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School Refusal and Emotional Lability in a 6-Year-Old Boy	Case study
School Refusal and Emotional Lability in a 6-Year-Old Boy	Case study
School Refusal and Psychiatric Disorders: A Community Study	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School refusal and social conditions in Japan	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents

School refusal and the parent-child relationship: A psychodynamic perspective	Case study/not empirical research
School Refusal Behavior Associated with Separation Anxiety Disorder: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Treatment	Focus on intervention
School refusal behavior: Prevalence, characteristics, and the schools' response	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School refusal in Japan: The recent dramatic increase in incidence is a cause for concern	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School refusal: An overview	Discussion paper
School Refusal: Early Identification and Treatment	Not empirical research
School refusal: Issues of conceptualisation, assessment, and treatment	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
School-based intensive exposure therapy for school refusal behavior	Focus on intervention
Season of birth and school attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Separation anxiety and school phobia: An intervention to revive the school bond	Focus on intervention
Sleep and school attendance in adolescence: Results from a large population-based study	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Solving High School Attendance Problems: A Case Study	Case study
Study on feelings of school avoidance, depression, and character tendencies among general junior high and high school students	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Tackling truancy: An examination of persistent non-attendance amongst disaffected school pupils and positive support strategies	Focus on truancy
Taxonomic systems for school refusal behaviour	Not empirical research
Teachers' views on risk factors for problematic school absenteeism in Swedish primary school students	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
Tele-hypnosis in the Treatment of Adolescent School Refusal	Focus on intervention
Ten year follow-up of children with school refusal	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The association between school attendance, HIV infection and sexual behaviour among young people in rural South Africa	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The association of obesity and school absenteeism attributed to illness or injury among adolescents in the United States, 2009	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The causes of non-attendance: an empirical study	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The causes, views and traits of school absenteeism and truancy: An analytical review	Not empirical research
The Dilemma of Primary School Attendance	Not related to the topic of Emotionally

in Nigeria	Based School Non-Attendance
The impact of village-based kindergarten on early literacy, numeracy, and school attendance in Solomon Islands	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The lifetime effect of residential school attendance on indigenous health status	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The National Behaviour and Attendance Review in Wales: Findings and Recommendations on School Attendance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The non-sense of raising school attendance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The relationship between relative weight and school attendance among elementary schoolchildren	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The Relationship Between School Absence, Academic Performance, and Asthma Status	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The relationship between the school refusal and school education	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The relationship of placement experience to school absenteeism and changing schools in young, school-aged children in foster care	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The role of cognition in school refusal: An investigation of automatic thoughts and cognitive errors	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The role of poverty status and obesity on school attendance in the United States.	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The School Absenteeism among High School Students: Contributing Factors	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The School Attendance Officer 1900-1939: Policeman to Welfare Worker?	Not empirical research
The strategic management of truancy and school absenteeism: finding solutions from a national perspective	Not empirical research
The use of legal proceedings in cases of non-attendance at school: perceptions of education welfare officers	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The views of education social workers on the management of truancy and other forms of non-attendance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The views of head teachers and teachers on attendance issues in primary schools	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The views of learning mentors on the management of school attendance	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
The views of primary pupils on school attendance at Key Stage 2 in Wales	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Transition and protective agency of early childhood learning behaviors as portents of later school attendance and adjustment	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Treatment of school refusal: One-year follow-up	Focus on intervention
Truancy, school refusal and anxiety	Not empirical research
Understanding excessive school absenteeism	Participant group does not include school

as school refusal behavior	non-attenders or their parents
Using a Preventive Social Work Program for Reducing School Refusal	Focus on intervention
Using brief strategic intervention to reduce the school avoidance behavior of seventh graders	Focus on intervention
Using groups to reduce elementary school absenteeism	Focus on intervention
Welsh petition on school attendance	Not empirical research
What we have not learned from what we know about excessive school absence and school dropout	Not empirical research

Appendix K: Critical Appraisal of Articles Included in Literature Review Question 2

Article: Place, M., Hulsmeier, J., Davis, S., & Taylor, E. (2002). The coping

mechanisms of children with school refusal. *Journal of Research in Special*

Educational Needs, 2(2), 1-10, DOI: 10.1111/j.1471-3802.2002.00167.x

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	██		
2. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	██		
3. Is a mixed methodology appropriate? Did the researcher(s) describe the qual/quant relationship?	██		
4. Are the results of the study clearly reported?	██		
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?		██	
6. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	██		
7. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	██	██	
8. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are? Is there a clear statement of findings?	██		
9. How valuable is the research?	██		
10. Can be results be applied to the local population?	██		

NOTE: It was sufficient for analysing the quantitative data (questionnaires) but the analysis of the qualitative data (interviews) was not explained.

Article: Sheppard, A. (2005). Development of School Attendance Difficulties: An

Exploratory Study. *Pastoral Care in Education, 23*(3), 19-25, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-

0122.2005.00338.x

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
3. Is a mixed methodology appropriate? Did the researcher(s) describe the qual/quant relationship?			
4. Are the results of the study clearly reported?			
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?			
6. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
7. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
8. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are? Is there a clear statement of findings?			
9. How valuable is the research?			
10. Can be results be applied to the local population?			

Article: Sheppard, A. (2009). School attendance and attainment: poor attenders'

perceptions of schoolwork and parental involvement in their education. *British*

Journal of Special Education, 36(2), 104-111, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-

8578.2009.00413.x

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?			
2. Was the cohort recruited in an acceptable way?			
3. Was the exposure accurately measured to minimise bias?			
4. Was the outcome accurately measured to minimise bias?			
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?			
6. Are the results reported clearly?			
7. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are?			
8. Do you believe the results?			
9. Can the results be applied to the local population?			

Article: Sheppard, A. (2007). An approach to understanding school attendance

difficulties: pupils" perceptions of parental behaviour in response to their requests to

be absent from school. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 12*(4), 349-363,

DOI: 10.1080/13632750701664160

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?			
2. Was the cohort recruited in an acceptable way?			
3. Was the exposure accurately measured to minimise bias?			
4. Was the outcome accurately measured to minimise bias?			
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?			
6. Are the results reported clearly?			
7. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are?			
8. Do you believe the results?			
9. Can the results be applied to the local population?			

Article: Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvag, S. K. (2015). School factors associated with school refusal- and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance. *Social Psychology of Education, 18,* 221-240, DOI: 10.1007/s11218-015-9293-y

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?			
2. Was the cohort recruited in an acceptable way?			
3. Was the exposure accurately measured to minimise bias?			
4. Was the outcome accurately measured to minimise bias?			
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?			
6. Are the results reported clearly?			
7. Have the authors conveyed how precise the results are?			
8. Do you believe the results?			
9. Can the results be applied to the local population?			

Article: Wilkins, J. (2008). School Characteristics That Influence Student

Attendance: Experiences of Students in a School Avoidance Program. *The High*

School Journal, 91(3), 12-24, DOI: 10.1353/hsj.2008.0005

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?			
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?			
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?			
10. Is the research valuable?			

Article: Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvag, S. K. (2014). Parental perspectives of the role of school factors in school refusal. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 19*(2), 131-153, DOI: 10.1080/13632752.2013.816199

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?			
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?			
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?			
10. Is the research valuable?			

Article: Gregory, I. R., & Purcell, A. (2014). Extended school non-attenders' views: developing best practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 30*(1), 37-50, DOI: 10.1080/02667363.2013.869489

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?			
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?			
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?			
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?			
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?			
10. Is the research valuable?			

Article: Baker, M., & Bishop, F. L. (2015). Out of school: a phenomenological

exploration of extended non-attendance. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 31*(4),

354-368, DOI: 10.1080/02667363.2015.1065473

CASP question	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	🟩		
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	🟩		
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	🟩		
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	🟩		
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	🟩		
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately addressed?		🟧	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	🟩		
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	🟩		
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	🟩		
10. Is the research valuable?	🟩		

Appendix L: Excluded Articles for Question 3 and Reasons for Exclusion

Article title	Reason for exclusion
'School refusal and emotional lability in a 6-year-old boy': Comment	Discussion paper
A clinical psychological study of school refusal in adolescence: II. Case studies of the process of change from the viewpoint of individual psychodynamics and family relationships	Participant group does not include school non-attenders or their parents
A novel approach to decreasing bullying	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
A resumption of adolescent development: Discussion of 'School refusal and the parent-child relationship'	Not empirical research
Adolescent trauma in Japanese schools: Two case studies of Ijime (bullying) and school refusal	Case study
Brief hypnotherapy with passive children	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Counsellors' responses to clients' non-attendance at counselling sessions	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Enactment and play following medical trauma: An analytic case study	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Panic and nausea instead of grief in an adolescent	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Professional Models of School Absence Associated with Home Responsibilities	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Psychological functioning of children and adolescents with eosinophil-associated gastrointestinal disorders	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Relationship between scholastic and health behaviors and reading level in adolescent females	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Review of Treating attachment disorders: From theory to therapy	Not empirical research
Review of Treating attachment disorders: From theory to therapy	Not empirical research
School phobia and Internet addiction disorder in adolescents	Not empirical research
School phobia: Understanding a complex behavioural response	Not empirical research
School refusal and the parent-child relationship: A psychodynamic perspective	Not empirical research
The correlates and consequences of early appearing social anxiety in young children	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
The efficacy of psychoanalysis for children: Prediction of outcome in a developmental context	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance

The school phobic child and the counselor: Identifying, understanding and helping	Focus on intervention
The space to be: Commentary on 'School refusal and the parent-child relationship'	Not empirical research
The two-minute check-in at the beginning of psychoanalytic group therapy sessions	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
Transformation of narcissism and the inter subjective therapeutic exchange: A depressed adolescent patient shares his music and lyrics with his therapist	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
What is the Role of Pre-Assessment Questionnaires in Psychotherapy?	Not related to the topic of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance

Appendix M: Consent Form for Head Teacher

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Research Title: Secondary school staffs' responses to emotionally based school non-attendance: a psychosocial exploration

Researcher: Charlotte Ford

I ……………………………..………………….................... (Head Teacher) consent to the above piece of research being undertaken with the school staff here.

Signature …………………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………

I ……………………………..………………….................... (SENCo/staff member) confirm that the Head Teacher of this school has consented to the above piece of research being undertaken with the staff here.

Signature …………………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………………

Appendix N: Participant Information Sheet

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Information Sheet
Title: Secondary school staffs' responses to emotionally based school non-attendance: a psychosocial exploration

Who is doing the research?
My name is Charlotte and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am doing this piece of research as a part of my training.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the information carefully and decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the aim of the research?
The aim of the study is to find out about school staff's conscious and unconscious responses to working with emotionally based school non-attendance.

Who has given permission for this research?
I am studying at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. The Tavistock Research Ethics Committee has given me ethical approval to do the research.

Who can take part in this research?
I am looking for school staff who work in secondary schools and have had a recent experience of working directly with a school non-attender who issues are emotionally based. I would like to speak to the person or people who are at the forefront of this work in schools.

Do I have to take part?
You do not have to take part, and it is up to you to decide. You are free to withdraw during the data collection phase without giving a reason. If you wish, any data that you have contributed to the research can be destroyed at this point. It is important to note that there will be no adverse consequences as a result of withdrawing or not taking part in the research.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You will be invited to attend two interviews with me, no longer than one month apart. The dates and times can be arranged for when is most convenient for you. In terms of location, you can choose whether you would prefer to meet in school or XXX Council Offices. If you choose the latter option, any parking costs you incur will be reimbursed.

In the first interview, we will discuss your initial thoughts about working with EBSNA. In the second interview, we will meet again to think a bit more about this, if you have had any thoughts since and for me to feedback any thoughts or reflections I may have had since our discussion. I expect that each interview will last for one hour.

I will also be available after the interview to reflect on the process with you. As the topic of EBSNA can be emotive, it is possible that this may stir up some difficult feelings, therefore I will be available to talk to you about anything you may have found upsetting.

I would like to make audio recordings of our meetings to help me remember and think about things that were said during them. The recordings will be stored anonymously and deleted once I have submitted my thesis.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
There is not a lot of research that looks at how school staff experience and respond to EBSNA. It will hopefully allow you to have your voice heard and contribute to research that may help others to understand a situation more. This particular piece of research is completely unique (in terms of the focus, context and method) to my knowledge and participation can be included in your school development plan. You will also benefit from the findings via a personal presentation when the research is completed.

What will happen to the findings from the research?
The findings will be typed up in my thesis, which is part of my Educational Psychology doctorate qualification. I will share the findings with any schools and services in XXX that would like to hear about them, but individual contributions will be completely anonymised. Quotes from the interviews may be used when I present the findings, but these will be anonymised. We can talk about the way in which you would like to know about the findings, such as discussing them with you in person or sending them to you via a summary sheet.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with this research?
You can change your mind about participating in the research without providing an explanation. This applies up until I start to analyse the data, as at this point, I will not be able to retrieve your individual contributions, as the data will be completely anonymised and untraceable to everyone, including me.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes. I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence. All records related to your participation in this research study will be locked away in a filing cabinet, to which only I have access. Your identity on these records will be indicated by a pseudonym and the data will be kept for 5 years. Data collected during the study will be stored and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (1998) and the Tavistock and Portman's Data Protection Policy.

Are there times when my data cannot be kept confidential?
If you tell me something that makes me concerned about the safety of you or someone else then I might have to share that information with others in order to keep you or someone else safe. However, I would always aim to discuss this with you first when possible. As I am meeting with a few participants, there is a chance that you may recognise some of the things you said in my write up or presentations. To protect your identity, your name will be replaced with a pseudonym so that others cannot easily recognise you or your comments.

Further information and contact details
If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact me: Charlotte Ford
Email: XXXXXXX
Telephone: XXXXX XXXXXX
If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research project, please contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

Appendix O: Participant Consent Form

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Research Title: Secondary school staffs' responses to emotionally based school non-attendance: a psychosocial exploration

Researcher: Charlotte Ford

Please initial the statements below if you agree to them:	**Initial here**
I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. This includes the option to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.	
I agree for my interviews to be audio-recorded.	
I understand that my data will be anonymised so that I cannot easily be linked to it.	
I understand that my interviews will be used for this research and cannot be accessed for any other purposes.	
I understand that the findings from this research will be published and available for the public to read.	
I understand that the research findings may be presented to schools and services in the local authority, if requested.	
Any dissemination of findings may include anonymised quotes taken from my interviews. I understand that I may be able to identify my own contributions and quotes, but that pseudonyms will be used so that others cannot easily identify me.	
I understand that if I make a disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others, the researcher has a duty to pass this information on.	
I am willing to participate in the research.	

Your name ....

Signature ....

Date ....

Thank you for your help.

Appendix P: Grid Elaboration Method Data Capture

Interview Schedule

Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance.

1	2
Mental Health	Anxiety
3	**4**
Home life	Defiance / Control

Appendix Q: Grid Elaboration Method Data Capture

Interview Schedule

Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance.
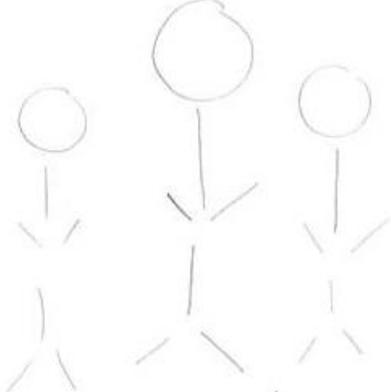
1	2
FRIENDSHIPS / PEOPLE TRUST	ANXIETY
3 FAMILY + HOME	**4** TRUST

Appendix R: Grid Elaboration Method Data Capture

Interview Schedule

Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance.

1	2
Isolation from peers	anxiety about parents
3	**4**
confidence over subject knowledge fear	"Hatred" of being asked to be somewhere when told / Defiance but with hidden emotion.

Appendix S: Grid Elaboration Method Data Capture

Interview Schedule

Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance.

1	2
Missing out on learning	Isolated.
3	**4**
Negative	What to do in the future

Appendix T: Grid Elaboration Method Data Capture

Interview Schedule

Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance.

1	2
Mental Health	lazy
3	**4**
Image Image	Sleep.

Appendix U: Grid Elaboration Method Data Capture

Interview Schedule

Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance.
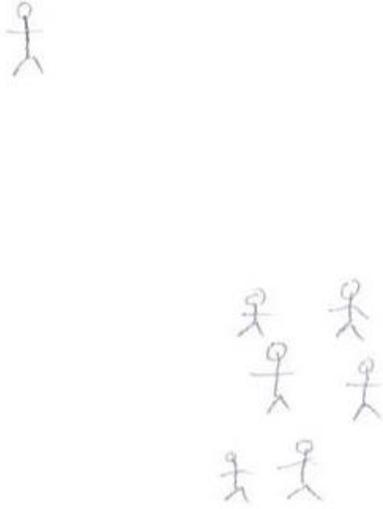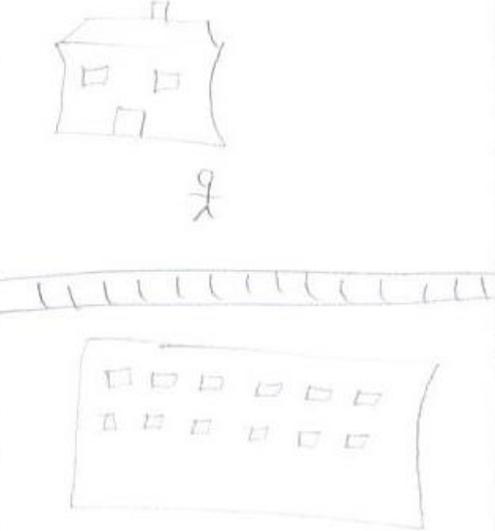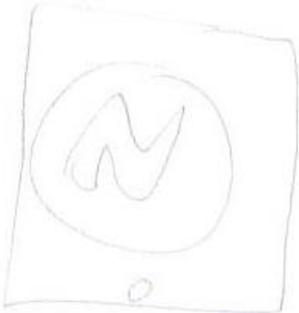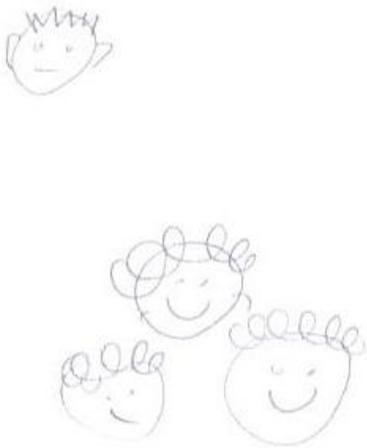
Appendix V: Questions and prompts used in the interviews

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am really interested in your experiences and I am here to find out more about them with regard to emotionally based school non-attendance. There are no right or wrong answers, I just want to hear what you have to say. I hope that by listening to yourself and others, it will help us to move forward in this area.

Grid Elaboration Method

"Please write or draw in each box any image, word or feeling that comes to mind when you hear or think of emotionally based school non-attendance."

Ask participants to elaborate on what they have written or drawn in each box in turn. Aim to elicit spontaneous and naturalistic pathways of respondent's thoughts and feelings. Guide them through their four associations in sequence and facilitate the fuller explanation of associations:

Simple requests for elaboration
- You said X, tell me more about that

Encouragement
- Please go on

Parroting
- Repetitions of their words that generally provoke further detail

Continue until no more associations. Move onto next response.

Free Association Narrative Interviewing Prompts

Purpose of psycho-social research is to go beyond the well-rehearsed, default narratives to the defended parts (actual event rather than abstract concepts).

Invite more information by saying 'yeah' 'hmm'

- Tell me about a time when you were involved with an emotionally based school non-attender...
- Tell me about when that happened…
- Can you describe a time when…
- Tell me about what happened in that event…
- Describe what was going on at that time…
- Tell me about this drawing…
- Can you tell me where that metaphor really fits for you…
- Can you tell me about an experience of working with an emotionally based school non-attender?
- What is it like day-to-day…
- What specific events stick in your mind? Can you describe them?

Appendix W: Ethical Approval Letter from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust Ethics Committee

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699
www.tavi-port.org

Charlotte Ford
01 March 2017

Re: Research Ethics Application

Title: Secondary school staffs' responses to emotionally based school non-attendance: a
psychosocial exploration

Dear Ms Ford,

I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Best regards,

Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
T: 020 938 2699
E: pjeram@tavi-Port.nhs.uk

cc.   Brian Davis, Course Lead

Appendix X: Themes, Subthemes and Codes

THEME	SUBTHEMES	CODES
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL	WORKING WITH PARENTS OF SCHOOL NON-ATTENDERS	Blame
		Lying and catching them out
		Being empathic
		Challenges
		Communicating with parents
		Approach to parents
		Positive relationships with parents
		Advising parents
		Struggle for parents
	WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE	Relationships with young people
		Listening to the young person
		Wanting the best for the young person
		Empathic
		Trust
		Holding them in mind
		Safety
		Parental role
		Endings
SCHOOL FACTORS	ORGANISATIONAL PRESSURES	Staff responsibility
		Focus on academic learning and progress
		Exams
		Pressure on young people
		Rigid school system
		Procedures/policies
		Working the system
		Pressure on schools
		Pressure on staff
		Data monitoring in schools
		Reflection on practice
	ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)	Services and working together
		Young person's engagement with services
		Not enough support available
		Needing help
		Working with colleagues
	SUPPORT STRATEGIES	Fines/prosecution
		Individualised
		Out of class support
		In-class support
		Persuasion
		Timetabling
		Working with other settings
		Gradual approach
		Praise and rewards

		Visiting the home
		Building on their strengths/interests
		Preventative
		Trial and error
		Tried everything
		Monitoring the young person
INDIVIDUAL JOURNEYS AND EMOTIONS	EMOTIONS EVOKED	Negative feelings
		Feeling helpless/hopeless
		Anxious about saying wrong thing
		Positive feelings
		Noticing the successes
		Not knowing/undermining confidence
	PERSONAL LIFE	Personal experiences
		Values around attendance
		Values around parenting
		Personal approaches
		Role
TASKS AND CHALLENGES OF ADOLESCENCE	PEER GROUP	Friendship difficulties
		Bullying
		Peer influences
		In vs out group
		Isolation
		As a protective factor
		Belonging
		Comparing to others
	IDENTITY	Identity
		Uniformity
		Feeling different to others
	SOCIAL MEDIA	Social/isolating
		Vulnerability
		Addictive nature
		More exposed/aware
		Cyber bullying
CONCEPTUALISATION AND IMPACT OF SCHOOL NON-ATTENDANCE	WITHIN-CHILD FACTORS	Within-child
		Lazy
		Defiance
		Disengaged/withdrawn
		Strengths
		Wanting attention
		Medical
		Control
		Avoidance
		Self-harm
		Self-esteem/self-worth
		Trying but can't do it
		Self-conscious
		Struggling academically
		Mental health

		Increasing mental health difficulties
		Not coping
		Mental health as an excuse
		Anxiety
		Thought processes
		Somatic feelings of anxiety
		Anxiety about transition/environment
		Anxiety related to SEN
		Unpredictability
		Puberty
		Expressing feelings
	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS	Transition back to school
		Transition to secondary school
		School environment
		Specific lessons/days
		Perceptions of behaviour
		Socio-economic status
		Trauma/neglect
		Perception of school/education
		Stability and difficult relationships
		Parent-child relationship
		Parent-parent relationship
		Sibling relationship
		Parenting
		Parents giving in
		Worried about home
		Young carers
		Parental mental health
		Lack of support network
		Varied reasons
	CONSEQUENCES NOW AND IN THE FUTURE	Missing out on learning
		Falling behind
		Safeguarding
		Habit
		Interlinking cycle
		Value of school for the future
		Hope for the future
		Worry about the future
		Preparing for the future
		Aspirations