



# This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from Explore Bristol Research, http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk

Author:

Macro, Ellice

An Exploration of Young People's Experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their Perceptions of the Transition to Post-16

**General rights** 

Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

**Take down policy**Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk and include the following information in your message:

- · Your contact details
- Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
- An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

# An Exploration of Young People's Experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their Perceptions of the Transition to Post-16

## Ellice J. Macro

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

University of Bristol

September 2020

Word count: 44,994

### **Abstract**

In the UK, Young People (YP) leaving Alternative Provision (AP) at the end of Key Stage 4 (KS4) are more likely to have negative post-16 outcomes than their mainstream peers. Government reports and wider literature suggest that AP pupils may find the transition to post-16 difficult, however a review of the literature revealed few studies which specifically explored YPs' experience of this.

The overarching aim of the present research was to understand YP's experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transitioning to post-16 and the perceived impact that attending an AP has had on them. The study was located in one Local Authority (LA) in the North West of England. An Interpretative Phenomenological methodology was adopted which involved a two-part approach to data collection and analysis. Part one involved interviews with Year 11 pupils from two APs which were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Part two involved focus groups (FG) with staff from three APs which were analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). Findings from both analyses were drawn together in the discussion to address the research aim.

The analyses indicated that the YP experienced a 'fundamentally different' environment in the AP, compared to mainstream. This was characterised by their relationships with staff, a sense of belonging and an understanding of mental health (MH), which had a largely positive impact on the pupils. However, there was divergence in how the YP perceived their transition to post-16 and the notion of a 'trade off' (between qualifications and MH support) was identified in their accounts. Perceived barriers to transition were considered from both pupil and staff perspectives. Staff perceived that more could be done to support pupils' transitions. To respond to this, the study concludes by offering a model to support YP in their transition to post-16. The implications for practice are discussed.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to my research supervisor who has supported me in carrying out this thesis and to the rest of the DEdPsy team for your care and insight over the duration of the course. I also want to thank my placement colleagues, in particular my placement supervisor, whose endless words of encouragement have been invaluable.

I further want to thank my cohort who have provided so much laughter, unwavering support and friendship, all of which has made the past three years truly special.

Thank you to my family, friends and Ricky who have believed in me and supported me in my journey to becoming an Educational Psychologist.

My sincere thanks also go to the key staff members who made this research possible and to the staff who took part.

Lastly, but by no means least, a special thank you to the YP who afforded me the privilege of listening to their unique experiences. This enabled me to gain an interpretation of what AP is like for them and has undeniably shaped my own professional practice for the better.

## **Author's declaration**

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work.

Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:E.J. Macro
DATE:3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2020

# **Table of Contents**

A	bstract		2
A	cknowle	edgements	3
A	uthor's	declarationdeclaration	4
L	ist of ab	breviations	9
	•	ıbles	
	•	gures	
1	,	oduction	
1			
		Introduction	
	1.2	Overview of research	
	1.3	What is Alternative Provision?	14
	1.4	Personal interests in the research.	15
	1.5	Professional relevance and contribution	16
	1.6	National context	17
	1.6.1	Demographic of AP pupils	
	1.6.2	Outcomes for YP leaving AP	
	1.7	Legislative context	19
	1.8	Chapter summary	21
	1.9	Outline of thesis	21
2	Liter	rature review	23
	2.1	Introduction	23
	2.2	Literature review strategy	24
		Structure of literature review	
	2.4	Critical appraisal	
		• •	
	2.5 2.5.1	Section 1: YPs' experiences of AP  Teaching and learning environment	<b>26</b>
	2.5.1	Relationships	
	2.5.3	Challenges or barriers	
	2.5.4	Gender differences	
	2.5.5	Attributions and perceived futures	
		Section 1 summary	
		Section 2: Transitions	
	2.7.1	Transition	
	2.7.2	Transition to post-16 for YP with SEMH needs	
	2.7.3	Reintegration	
	2.7.4	Transition to post-16 for pupils leaving AP	

	2.8	Limitations	48
	2.9	Chapter summary	49
	2.10	The current study	49
3	Met	hodology	51
,			
	3.1	Introduction	
	3.2	Ontology and Epistemology	
	3.2.1	- ······ ov	
	3.2.2	1 &	
	3.3	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	
	3.3.1	Phenomenology	
	3.3.2 3.3.3	HermeneuticsIdiography	
		0 <b>1</b> •	
	3.4	Rationale for choosing IPA	55
	3.5	Alternative considerations	56
	3.6	Research design	56
	3.6.1	Timescale	
	3.6.2	Sampling	
	3.6.3	Recruitment	
	3.7	Methods of data collection	60
	3.7.1	Semi-structured interviews	
	3.7.2	Creative method	
	3.7.3	FGs	63
	3.8	Ethical considerations	63
	3.8.1	Informed consent	
	3.8.2	Confidentiality and anonymity	64
	3.8.3	Doing no harm	
	3.8.4	Power imbalances	
	3.8.5	Dual role	66
	3.9	Data collection and sample	
		Interviews with pupils	
	3.9.2	FGs with staff	67
	3.10	Data analysis	68
	3.10.	J. T.	
	3.10.	Part 2: Analysis of FGs using TA	70
	3.11	Reflexivity	71
	3.12	Quality assurance	72
	3.12.		
	3.12.	·	
	3.12.	S .	
	3.12.	1	
	3.12.	5 Impact and importance	74
	3.13	Chapter summary	75
1	Fine	lings	76
	4.1	Introduction	
	4.2	Part 1: IPA of pupil interviews	78

	4.2.1	Pen Portraits	78
	4.3	Analysis across cases	83
	4.3.1	Overarching Theme 1: Fundamentally different experience to mainstream	
	4.3.2	Overarching Theme 2: Perceived impact of attending AP	93
	4.3.3	Overarching Theme 3: Perceptions of transition	101
	4.4	Part 2: TA of FGs with staff	107
	4.4.1	Theme 1: Relationships	108
	4.4.2	Theme 2: Getting pupils ready for the 'real world'	
	4.4.3	Theme 3: Barriers to successful transition	
	4.5	Chapter summary	120
5	Disc	ussion	121
	5.1	Introduction	121
	5.2	RQ1: How do YP experience KS4 in AP?	122
	5.2.1	A fundamentally different experience to mainstream	
	5.2.2	Impact on self	
	5.3	RQ2: How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?	
	5.3.1	Impact on post-16 outcomes	
	5.3.2	Preparedness	
	5.3.3	Opportunity for change	
	5.3.4	Perceived challenges and support needs	
	5.4	RQ3: How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-	169 141
	5.4.1	Getting pupils ready for the 'real world'	
	5.4.2	Relationships	
	5.4.3	Post-16 embedded into practice	
	5.4. <i>3</i>	Broadening horizons	
	5.4.5	Holistic development	
	5.4.6	Building resilience	
	5.5	RQ4: How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?	151
	5.5.1	Getting there	
	5.5.2	High level of support not replicable	
	5.5.3	Underdeveloped transition practices	
	5.5.4	Gap in support	
	5.5.5	Relationships	
	5.6	A model for structuring post-16 transition preparation	157
	5.7	Summary of research findings	159
	5.8	Emergent thesis	
	5.9	Implications for practice	160
	5.9.1	Implications for APs	
	5.9.1	Implications for EPs	
	5.9.2	Implications for other stakeholders	
	5.10	Critique of the present research	
	5.10.1 5.10.2		
	5.11	Suggestions for future research	
	5.12	Concluding reflections	171
6	Rofo	roncos	173

7	Appendices	. 187
	Appendix 1. Search strategy	. 187
	Appendix 2. Ethical approval	. 192
	Appendix 3. Letter to headteacher	. 193
	Appendix 4. Information sheet for school	. 194
	Appendix 5. Information sheet for staff	. 199
	Appendix 6. Consent form for staff	. 203
	Appendix 7. Flyer for students	. 205
	Appendix 8. Information sheet for students	. 206
	Appendix 9. Consent forms for student	. 210
	Appendix 10. Information sheet for parents	. 212
	Appendix 11. Interview schedule	. 217
	Appendix 12. Focus group topic guide	. 218
	Appendix 13. Confidentiality protocol	. 219
	Appendix 14. Detailed account of the process of IPA	. 220
	Appendix 15. Initial noting and emergent themes for Kiara	. 223
	Appendix 16. Initial noting and emergent themes for Lily	. 229
	Appendix 17. Example of thematic maps with emergent themes for Kiara and Lily	. 235
	Appendix 18. Detailed account of the process of TA	. 240
	Appendix 19. Example of coding transcript	. 242
	Appendix 20. Example of Extracts and Codes	. 246
	Appendix 21. Example of Themes and Codes	. 250
	Appendix 22. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)	. 253

### List of abbreviations

AEP Association of Educational Psychologists

AP Alternative Provision

BPS British Psychology Society

CoP Code of Practice

CYP Children and Young People

DEdPsy Doctorate in Educational Psychology

DfE Department for Education

EBD Emotional Behavioural Difficulties

EP Educational Psychologist/Psychology

FE Further Education

FG Focus group

GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education

HoC House of Commons

IPA Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

KS Key Stage

LA Local Authority

MH Mental health

NEET Not in education, employment or training

NFER National Foundation for Educational Research

NHS National Health Service

PEx Permanent Exclusion/Excluded

PRU Pupil Referral Unit

RQ Research Question

SEBD Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

SEMH Social Emotional and Mental Health

SEND Special Educational Need and Disability

SSS Short Stay School

TA Thematic Analysis

TEP Trainee Educational Psychologist

ToL Tree of Life

UK United Kingdom

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

YA Young Adult/s

YP Young Person/People

# **List of Tables**

Table 1. Table showing timescale of research	p. 58
Table 2. Aspects of the ToL	p. 62
Table 3. Six steps of IPA (Smith et al., 2009)	p. 69
Table 4. Level of analysis in IPA (Smith, 2019)	p. 70
Table 5. Six phases of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	p. 71
Table 6. Recommendations for engaging in reflexivity, taken from Hollenbeck (2015, p.163)	
Table 7. Quality criteria for IPA studies (Smith, 2011, p.24)	p. 73
Table 8. Themes across cases	p. 83
Table 9. Divergence and convergence in Theme 1	p. 84
Table 10. Divergence and convergence in Theme 2	p. 94
Table 11. Divergence and convergence in Theme 3	p. 101

# **List of Figures**

Figure 1 Graphic illustrating the two-part design of the research	p. 57
Figure 2. Finlay's ToL	p. 78
Figure 3. Lauren's ToL	p. 79
Figure 4. Freddie's ToL	p. 80
Figure 5. Lily's ToL	p. 81
Figure 6. Staff members grouped by FG	p. 107
Figure 7. Themes for staff FG	p. 107
Figure 8. Subthemes for Theme 1: Relationships	p. 108
Figure 9. Subthemes for Theme 2: 'Getting pupils ready for the 'real world''	p. 113
Figure 10. Subthemes for Theme 3: Barriers to successful transition	p. 117
Figure 11. Overview of themes for RQ1	p. 123
Figure 12. Aide memoire for theme Sense of Belonging	p. 124
Figure 13. Aide memoire for theme Supportive Relationships	p. 127
Figure 14. Aide memoire for theme Understanding of MH	p. 130
Figure 15. Aide memoire for theme Learning Environment	p. 132
Figure 16. Aide memoire for theme Impact on self	p. 134
Figure 17. Themes and subthemes from FGs relevant to answering RQ3	p. 142
Figure 18. Aide memoire for theme Relationships	p. 143
Figure 19. Aide memoire for theme Post-16 embedded into practice	p. 145
Figure 20. Aide memoire for theme Broadening Horizons	p. 147
Figure 21. Aide memoire for theme Holistic development	p. 148
Figure 22. Aide memoire for theme Building resilience	p. 150
Figure 23. Interlinking subthemes which address RQ4	p. 152
Figure 24. Aide memoire for theme Getting there	p. 153
Figure 25. Aide memoire for theme High level of support not replicable	p. 154
Figure 26. Aide memoire for theme Underdeveloped transition practices	p. 155
Figure 27. Diagram illustrating how transition practices can reduce barriers	p. 156

# 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 aims to provide the reader with the context for the current study, including the motivations behind the research topic. It begins with a brief overview of the research before moving on to discuss my personal and professional rationale for conducting the research. It then goes on to discuss the term AP and the 'current context', including destinations and outcomes for YP leaving AP. Finally, it gives an overview of the wider socio-political context, detailing relevant legislation and guidance for AP providers, which provides further rationale for the topic. The chapter will end by outlining the structure of this thesis.

### 1.2 Overview of research

This research was conducted as a requirement for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy). The overarching aim of the research was to understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transitioning to post-16 provision and the perceived impact that attending an AP has had on them. The study was located in one LA in the North West of England, where I was undertaking my practice placement. An Interpretative Phenomenological methodology was adopted for this research which involved a two-part approach to data collection and analysis in order to meet the research aim. Part one involved interviews with six Year 11 pupils from two APs, which were analysed using IPA. Part two involved FGs with staff from three APs, which were analysed using TA. The findings from the analyses were brought together in the discussion to address the research questions (RQs). The study concludes by offering a model for practice to support YP transitioning from AP to post-16.

### 1.3 What is Alternative Provision?

In the UK, AP is a term broadly used to describe educational provision that is not a mainstream school or special needs school (Mills & Thomson, 2018). This includes state-maintained provision such as Pupil Referral Units (PRU), Short Stay Schools (SSS), hospital schools, AP academies and AP free schools. There are also Independent APs which are not maintained by the state; however, this research focuses only on PRU, SSS and AP academies.

AP is arranged by LAs or schools for pupils up to the age of 16 who are not able to attend mainstream or special school. This can be full- or part-time and for long- or short-term periods. There are multiple reasons for Children and Young People (CYP) entering AP. CYP who are awaiting a placement in another setting may enter AP as a temporary placement or CYP may be directed off-site to an AP for short-term intervention. CYP who have physical or MH needs, and who are not able to learn in a mainstream setting, may go to AP on a 'medical placement'. Medical placements are usually referred by the NHS and commissioned by the LA (DfE, 2018a). Within the local context of this research, medical placements must be referred by the mainstream school alongside supporting evidence from a relevant senior medical practitioner

who has knowledge of the YP's medical needs. The referral is then considered and approved by a panel within the LA. If offered a placement in AP, the pupil will remain on roll with their mainstream school but will also be dual rolled with the alternative provider. However, the most common reason for CYP entering AP is permanent exclusion (PEx) due to behaviour (DfE, 2018b).

Whilst the aim for many APs is to reintegrate their pupils back into a mainstream or special school, this is often not the case for all (Mills & Thomson, 2018). In the UK, pupils in KS4 rarely reintegrate back into school and instead complete their final years of compulsory education in the AP (Timpson, 2019). This is reportedly due to a variety of reasons including: schools refusing to reintegrate YP because they have missed too much or it will affect their GCSE results; being too disruptive for the pupils; or because the parents and YP themselves did not want to return (Mills & Thomson, 2018).

In order to provide the reader with an understanding of the origins of this research it is important to first highlight the factors which were influential in its development including my personal interests, its professional relevance and the socio-political context. Each will now be discussed in turn.

### 1.4 Personal interests in the research

Before training to be an Educational Psychologist (EP), I had 'indirect' experience of AP through previous roles working with Looked After Children who attended AP and children in mainstream school who also accessed AP. I was always curious about the practices in AP and its effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for the CYP who attend. My curiosity was roused when a child I supported was excluded from secondary school and referred to AP. During their time in AP, the child's behaviour deteriorated and they developed a negative attitude towards school and others. I began to wonder what attending AP was like for the child and what effect it had on them.

In later years, as a Trainee EP (TEP), I was involved in completing an assessment for a YP in Year 11 who was soon to transition to post-16 provision. As part of my involvement, I spoke

to the YP's parent to gather their views. The parent expressed that the AP was not equipping her child with skills to prepare him for life after school, a concern which is reflected in wider literature (Mills & Thomson, 2018). This parent's concern led me to wonder about the child's own views about AP and whether they felt it prepared them for post-16.

At this point, it is important to highlight that RQs are not developed in a vacuum and are generated by the researcher who is influenced by their own social context (Oliver, 2004). The experiences described here have inevitably contributed to any preconceptions I hold about AP. As such, reflexivity will be integral to acknowledge my position as a researcher and be transparent about the experiences and assumptions I bring.

### 1.5 Professional relevance and contribution

The EP role is ever evolving, something which is the subject of constant reflection within the profession (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). Whilst it is not within the scope of this research to debate the role of the EP, I understand it to involve applying psychology in supporting CYP, and the systems around them, to achieve positive outcomes. Within the context of this LA, the EP Service's current priorities include supporting CYP at risk of exclusion, reintegration from AP and reducing the number of YP who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

EPs' role in supporting inclusion and reintegration from AP is well documented in the literature (Lawrence, 2011). This is reflected in the Association of Educational Psychologists' (AEP) stance on the EP role within AP. The AEP, in their response to the Government's call for evidence about AP (2017), stipulate that EPs have an important role working with APs, particularly with regards to improving outcomes and practice. However, they do not make any recommendations for supporting the post-16 transition of pupils leaving AP, which suggests the issue is overlooked.

One possible reason for this is that working with YP over 16 is relatively new to EPs; EPs' role was extended to include working with YP up to age 25 following the revision of the SEND Code of Practice (CoP, 2015). Unsurprisingly post-16, and transitions in particular, are now receiving increasing interest in EP research (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). Morris and Atkinson

(2018) carried out a literature review of EPs' role in supporting post-16 transition. They suggested that EPs' could support post-16 transitions by working at an individual, systemic and organisational level. However, none of the studies in their review explored YP leaving AP. The limitations of the literature will be considered further in Chapter 2.

Given these issues, it is argued that the present research is crucial in activating the conversation amongst EPs about their important role in supporting YP leaving AP, particularly with regards to their transition to and inclusion in post-16 settings and society. Furthermore, this research hopes to contribute to the emerging evidence-base around supporting transitions to post-16 and respond to the priorities of this LA. I will now situate these concerns within a national context.

### 1.6 National context

PEx has been steadily rising in the UK over recent years. A review of exclusions by Timpson (2019) reported that an average of 40 children were PEx every day from schools in England in 2016/17. Secondary school PEx outweighs PEx in primary schools by a considerable margin, with 0.2 percent of secondary pupils PEx compared to 0.03 percent of primary pupils (Department for Education; DfE, 2018c). Furthermore, most PEx occurs when YP start KS4 in Year 10 which is a crucial time in their educational journey (Timpson, 2019), an indication of the importance of this study.

As schools must provide AP after five consecutive days of exclusion, the rise in exclusions has led to an increased demand on APs (House of Commons; HoC, 2018). This issue is exacerbated by few YP in KS4 returning to mainstream school, with just 10% reintegrating in Year 11 (Timpson, 2019). As such, APs which were once asked to educate a small number of pupils temporarily are now required to provide long term education for an unprecedented number of YP (Gill et al., 2017).

### 1.6.1 Demographic of AP pupils

The DfE (2018b) describes most of the children in AP to be from economically poor backgrounds. Looked After Children and Children in Need are also disproportionately

represented. Most of the children are White British, however many ethnic minority groups are overrepresented. The DfE (2018b) also reports that 77.1% of CYP in AP have SEND and 10% are identified as having a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEND) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Most of the CYP have SEND relating to their Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). The majority of pupils in AP tend to be boys (Malcolm, 2018). Furthermore, many CYP in AP have one or more of the aforementioned risk factors, which are often complex and interacting (Gill et al., 2017), therefore are likely to experience additional social and educational barriers.

Of particular relevance to the present study, almost half (47%) of YP in AP are in Year 11 (DfE, 2018b), arguably the most significant school year in determining post-16 destinations. To explore this further, I will now consider the outcomes for YP leaving AP.

### 1.6.2 Outcomes for YP leaving AP

Statistics indicate that educational outcomes for YP in AP are considerably poorer than their mainstream peers. Timpson (2019) revealed that only 4.5% of YP in AP achieved 9-4 passes in English and mathematics at GCSE, compared to 65.1% of YP in mainstream (DfE, 2018b). These statistics are particularly significant given the perception that GCSEs are considered "essential to succeeding in adult life" (Timpson, 2019, p.8).

Longer term outcomes for these YP appear similarly bleak. The DfE (2016) reported that "very few YP [in AP] achieve the qualifications that will help them succeed in adult life" (p.102) and are more likely to become NEET. The DfE (2018d) data for the destinations of KS4 and KS5 pupils in England indicates that only 56% of pupils leaving AP went on to education, employment or training compared with 94% from mainstream schools. Furthermore, 37% did not remain in their post-16 destination. 11% of YP leaving AP did go straight into employment, compared with 3% of mainstream pupils. However, it is argued that this is perhaps an indication of their lack of opportunities in entering FE and is reflective of limited social mobility for this group (Gill et al., 2017). Excluded YP are also more likely to develop severe MH problems or go to prison (Gill et al., 2017). Critically, tracking the post-16 destinations of YP leaving AP is problematic (Mills & Thomson, 2018) and therefore it is unclear whether this is an accurate picture.

Given the bleak personal, social and economic outcomes for this population, it is not surprising that the Government have recently steered their focus towards improving AP.

### 1.7 Legislative context

The HoC Education Committee acknowledged YP leaving AP as "an area of policy that has had a neglect of action and oversight in recent years" (2018, p.5). However, improving AP and reducing the number of YP leaving AP who are NEET has now become a priority for the Government (DfE, 2018b). Although it is not possible to cover the entire legislative context here, the following documents were considered important in demonstrating the current relevance of this research.

Current Statutory Guidance (DfE, 2013) sets out the duties which APs must regard in relation to YPs' education, engagement and emotional development. It states that there must be "clearly defined objectives, including the next steps following the placement such as reintegration into mainstream education, further education, training or employment" (DfE, 2013, p.10). For YP leaving AP at the end of Year 11, the guidance states that "school should work with the provider to ensure that the YP can move on into suitable education, or employment alongside part-time study or training" (DfE, 2013, p.10). At the time, there was little guidance around what this might look like in practice. However, in recent years, the Government have responded to the discerning statistics for this group and have increased their focus on improving outcomes for these YP.

In 2018, the Government published a policy paper (2018b) which set out plans for the reform of AP and made recommendations for YP leaving AP. This included generating an evidence base, developing and sharing effective practice within AP, launching the AP Innovation Fund and improving YPs' transition out of AP at 16. The AP Innovation Fund was set out to explore how to best support AP pupils who leave AP and go on to post-16 provision, indicating their commitment to improving this. The impact of this has yet to be reviewed.

With regards to preparing YP for post-16, the DfE (2018b) state that APs should provide aspirational and well-informed careers guidance for pupils from the age of 14. APs should include support YP to have contact with potential employers or have opportunities through

work experience; provide a curriculum which supports YPs' progression into post-16 education, training and employment; support YP to develop 'soft skills' which employers value including behaviour and people skills; and actively support YP through their transition into their post-16 destination.

Perhaps most significant in influencing the development of this study was a report by the HoC Education Committee (2018). The report highlighted the challenges which these YP face even before attending AP. They are likely to have missed work in school, have studied under different exam board requirements and, in the case of YP in KS4, join AP very late into their educational journey and are already behind. In addition to these academic challenges, the report recognises the personal and social difficulties pupils face when entering AP, including poor attendance and disengagement. The HoC also recognise that upon leaving AP, the YP face limited post-16 opportunities as a result of the limited qualifications achieved and their poor educational journeys. Furthermore, it states that pupils who do move on to FE can struggle to "integrate as the college is too large and presents challenges that pupils are unable to navigate and cope with" (p.37). They propose that the Government must provide resources so that post-16 support can be given to pupils through outreach to colleges or by offering their own post-16 AP.

The following quote taken from the HoC raises a significant concern for YP leaving AP, which has emerged only recently:

"It is extraordinary that the increase in the participation age was not accompanied by statutory duties to provide post-16 alternative provision. Pupils neither stop being ill at 16, nor do they stop being in need of additional support that would enable them to access education. These pupils are being denied access to post-16 education because the system is not designed or funded to accommodate their additional needs."

(HoC, 2018, p.43).

This quote draws attention to the issue that when AP pupils reach 16, they are expected to transition from an alternative environment to a mainstream environment which they have been unable to cope with previously. This highlights the need for further support for these YP to manage this transition and was instrumental in my decision to carry out this research.

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter highlights the challenges YP face when they leave AP and the poor outcomes

associated with the group. Although the issue is receiving increased attention, more needs to

be done to understand how to support these YP when they leave AP (DfE, 2018e). This chapter

provides the context for this study and demonstrates its relevance and importance in the UK at

this time. As such, this study aims to:

Understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transitioning to post-16

provision and the perceived impact that attending an AP has had on them.

The RQs stemming from this aim are:

1. How do YP experience KS4 in APs?

2. How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?

3. How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-16?

4. How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?

In order to situate this study in a scholarly context, it is necessary to carry out a literature review

of relevant research. This will be done in the next chapter.

1.9 Outline of thesis

This thesis will be structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 began with a brief overview of this research and my personal and professional

interests in the topic. It then defined the term AP and situated the research within the current

context.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the relevant literature, situating this research in a

scholarly context. A systematic approach was taken to the review which involved two literature

21

searches which explored 'YP's experiences of AP' and 'Transitions'. Accordingly, the chapter is presented in two parts. The chapter concludes by providing a rationale for the current research and presents the research aims and questions informing this research.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 details the methodology of this study. It presents the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research, the methods and analysis used.

### Chapter 4: Findings and analyses

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the analyses in two parts. Part 1 presents the findings from the IPA of six pupil interviews. Part 2 presents the findings from the TA of three FGs with staff.

### Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and relevant literature. It then gives consideration to the strengths and limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with some final reflections.

# 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter positions the present research within a scholarly context by critically examining the relevant literature. The literature review seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1. What does research tell us about secondary aged YPs' experiences of AP in the UK?
- 2. What does research tell us about YPs' transitions from AP to post-16 in the UK?

I will firstly provide an overview of the structure of the literature review before directing the reader to Appendix 1 which provides a detailed account of the search strategy. I will then review the literature which will be organized in two parts: 'YPs' experience of AP' and 'Transitions'. At the end of this chapter, I will identify the salient issues from the literature and provide a rationale for the current research. This chapter will end with the research aim and objectives.

### 2.2 Literature review strategy

Two systematic literature searches were carried out based upon the research aims.

The first literature search identified literature which explored YPs' experiences of AP. In line with the phenomenological approach of the researcher, it was important for the review to reflect the lived experiences of YP in AP. As such, only literature which gathered the views of the pupils themselves was included.

The second search identified literature which explored YPs' transitions from AP. An initial scoping of the literature revealed few relevant empirical studies, which meant the search had to be widened. Literature relating to reintegration and the post-16 transitions of YP with SEMH needs were also included in the search as it was argued there could be parallels, given the makeup of AP (DfE, 2018b). SEMH is a term recently introduced in the revised SEND CoP (2015). MH replaced 'behaviour' used in earlier definitions. However, as Norwich and Eaton (2014) point out, this does not mean that behaviour will not be taken into account under the new terminology. Studies which used previous terms are included in this review.

Only research carried out in the UK was included in this literature search. The reasons for this are threefold. Firstly, the motivations for this research were specific to a UK context, arising from the Governments' drive for further research in the area and priorities within the LA. Secondly, the research seeks to inform practice within the AP context locally, and in the UK. Thirdly, international research reflects different education systems and adopts different terminology, which would complicate the search. Furthermore, international research in the field tended to adopt a quantitative approach which does not align with the epistemological position of this research.

Full details of search terms and strategy can be found in Appendix 1.

### 2.3 Structure of literature review

Literature reviews can be organised in many different ways, as the author sees fit (Oliver, 2004). This literature review is presented in two sections which enables this particular piece of research to be located within the most relevant scholarly context. Within each section, the articles found using the strategy described in Appendix 1 are grouped according to the themes and subthemes I identified.

The literature review is set out as follows:

### Section 1: YPs' experiences of AP

- Teaching and learning environment
- Relationships
- Challenges and barriers
- Gender differences
- Attributions and perceived futures

### Section 2: Transitions

- Transition
- Transition to post-16 for YP with SEMH needs
- Reintegration
- Transition to post-16 for pupils leaving AP

### 2.4 Critical appraisal

The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2019) qualitative checklist was used in critiquing the studies.

### 2.5 Section 1: YPs' experiences of AP

This section seeks to critically appraise the literature which was identified using Search Strategy 1 and is set out according to the themes stipulated in 2.3.

### 2.5.1 Teaching and learning environment

The teaching and learning environment in AP is frequently reported by YP in the literature as contributing to their positive experiences in AP. Five subthemes emerged from the literature in relation to this theme; class sizes, high levels of support, personalisation of learning, being listened to and being treated like an adult. Each will now be discussed in turn.

### Class sizes

Small class sizes are frequently reported in the literature as contributing towards pupils' positive experiences in AP. Michael and Frederickson (2013) carried out semi-structured interviews with 16 YP of secondary age in PRUs across two LAs. The YP in their study reported that small class sizes created a calm environment in the AP, which they contrasted with their experiences in mainstream. This was supported by pupils in Hart's (2013) study who felt that the smaller environment of the PRU encouraged a calm, nurturing atmosphere which contributed to them experiencing a sense of safety and security.

Nicholson and Putwain (2015) identified that the small class sizes contributed to improved concentration and better behavior management in the class, resulting in a more positive experience. Jalali and Morgan (2018) suggest that this may be related to YP experiencing an increased sense of control in the setting, something they perhaps did not experience in mainstream classrooms. The small classes in AP were considered to benefit from increased support within the classroom (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015), which will now be discussed further.

### High levels of support

High levels of support from staff is considered to be a 'protective factor' for YP in AP (Hart, 2013). It has also been identified as important to re-engaging pupils with learning (Hart, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Putwain et al. (2016) explored the support pupils received in AP in more detail; they researched the instructional practices of staff and pupils' engagement by carrying out fieldwork for one month in one AP. This included semi-structured classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with both pupils and staff, which enabled the triangulation of data. Analysis of the data was carried out using IPA; the authors argue this to be an appropriate choice as it seeks to explore individuals' experiences of a shared phenomenon. Critically, some pupil comments were removed at the request of staff as they were not deemed reflective of the pupil voice. This has ethical implications and arguably does not align with the epistemological positioning of an IPA researcher. The authors also reflected that the pupils' emotional and behavioural presentation fluctuated considerably during the interview period which may have implications for the reliability of the data gathered.

Putwain et al. (2016) observed the lesson to involve a high level of instructional interaction and pupil support. They suggest that the following instructional approaches enabled pupils to re-engage with their education and develop their skills in self-regulated learning: breaking down tasks into smaller chunks, encouraging self-belief, affirming the importance of learning and providing help to pupils quickly. However, despite the high level of support, pupils' attention remained limited. Putwain et al. (2016) suggest that this is related to pupils' lack of confidence, self-efficacy and fear of failure. Their study extends current research in the field by using IPA to develop an in-depth understanding of what 'high level of support' might look like in practice. However, critically, the study neglects the impact of pastoral support on students' re-engagement with learning, which is identified elsewhere (Hart, 2013).

### Personalisation of learning

In addition to high levels of support, personalisation of learning tasks was identified across the literature as important to the YPs' positive experiences of teaching and learning in AP. McCluskey et al. (2015) indicated that YP in AP value work which is tailored to their own individual needs (academic and emotional), interests and ambitions. This perhaps gives their learning a clear purpose - particularly in relation to their post-16 goals. They suggest that this

is in stark contrast to their learning in mainstream which they considered "a waste of time" (2015, p.600). Participants suggested that the work set is different, with some indicating that the work is easier (see also Hart, 2013). However, it is unclear whether the work referred to is individualised to the needs of the YP or whether it is perhaps not suitably challenging.

Similarly, Michael and Frederickson (2013) identified that personalisation of learning activities, extra-curricular activities and a relevant and engaging curriculum contributed to the CYP achieving positive academic and social-emotional outcomes. Some YP in KS4 felt that an 'engaging and relevant curriculum' was one which specifically taught them skills which are relevant to their career interests. Others perceived this to be a curriculum which was tailored to their emotional needs, something which is perhaps not readily on offer in a mainstream school.

### Being listened to

Hart (2013) suggested that YP experienced being listened to and involved in decision making in AP. This was also identified by McCluskey et al. (2015) who researched how CYPs' experiences in AP relate to the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). As part of a larger study examining AP, McCluskey et al. (2015) reported on 8 case studies which involved interviews with 48 children, as well as family members and professionals. Interviews with children were carried out informally to allow for flexibility and support the flow of the conversation, which may have reduced power imbalances.

In line with the findings discussed above, McCluskey et al. (2015) reported that CYP and their families recalled largely positive experiences of AP compared to their previous experiences of mainstream school. McCluskey et al. (2015) argued these positive experiences directly mapped onto articles within the UNCRC (1989). The CYP in the study strongly valued being listened to by staff within the AP and being given time to talk. McCluskey et al. (2015) argued that this reflects Article 12 of the UNCRC which states that children have the right to express themselves and have their views heard. The YP also reported feeling valued and not judged by the staff in AP, which closely relates to Article 28 and 29. By listening to and valuing the YPs' views, staff in AP were able to be flexible in their approach to teaching and learning by providing an education which reflected the wishes of the CYP and their families.

McCluskey et al. (2015) suggest that this approach shows that AP "can be compatible with a commitment to children's rights, ensuring the 'best interests of the child', that 'respects children's dignity', where 'their views are taken seriously' and which offers a place to develop the 'personality, talents, mental and physical abilities of the child' (United Nations, 1989)" (p.601). Their research offers a unique understanding of YPs' experience in AP by positioning their views and experiences within the context of the UNCRC. Critically, the case studies used in this research involved APs which were considered to be demonstrating good practice. As such, it could be anticipated that the YP attending would have more positive reflections than pupils attending APs not exhibiting best practice, which may not align so closely with the UNCRC.

### Being treated like an adult

Closely linked with the above theme, 'being treated like an adult' was reported by participants as a positive aspect of AP, particularly for YP aged between 13 and 16 (McCluskey et al., 2015). Nicholson and Putwain (2015) highlighted several factors which are reflective of being treated like an adult, including perceived 'freedom' within the AP, that contributed to YPs' reengagement with learning. Pupils also reported lessons to be relaxed and interactive, with pupils experiencing more autonomy in making choices, which is arguably reflective of a more adult learning environment. Similarly, Trotman et al. (2015) reported that pupils in Year 9 experienced "a very different approach to learning" (p.250), compared to mainstream. This was not because there were less demands but rather because the rules were more relaxed in the classrooms, which meant that they were able to listen to music whilst working. This was said to create conditions for a positive and personalised learning environment, which is in line with the findings above.

Being treated like an adult, with increased freedom and autonomy, is arguably antithetical to the high level of support also identified as being important to YP. However, these two approaches are perhaps not mutually exclusive and instead reflect the need for individualised and flexible support discussed above.

### 2.5.2 Relationships

Many of the teaching and learning practices in AP are synonymous with the relationships built between pupils and staff (Hart, 2013). Across the literature, relationships with staff are frequently identified as contributing towards YPs' positive experiences in APs, with a "high-priority given to developing and maintaining trusting and caring relationships with pupils" (Putwain et al., 2016, p.14). Jalali and Morgan (2018) suggest that relationships are particularly important for pupils in KS4; these pupils attributed staff support and relationships to their progress and positive experience in AP, compared to their primary counterparts who valued the physical aspects of the setting.

Nicholson and Putwain (2015) explored factors within AP which facilitated YP's reengagement with learning. A sample of 35 KS4 pupils in a secondary AP were interviewed and an IPA methodology was adopted. Critically, the sample is large for an IPA study and, although the sample is homogenic, this could risk losing the in-depth analysis central to IPA (Smith et al., 2009). They indicated that relationships were most valued when staff got to know pupils on a personal level, encouraged pupils' belief in their own ability and had mutual respect. Pupils also felt that staff understood their problems at home and the impact this had on their behaviour in school; they were also perceived as genuinely wanting to help.

Furthermore, Putwain et al. (2016) suggest that the relationships between staff and pupil extend beyond typical pupil-teacher relationships and also involve meeting pupils' basic needs which may not be met at home. This is also suggested by Mills and Thomson (2018) where participants report there to be a 'family' environment in these settings. Nicholson and Putwain (2015) suggest that the relationships pupils have with staff and the 'family' environment contributes to pupils' sense of belonging in the AP.

The importance of a sense of belonging is emerging in the literature. Jalali and Morgan (2018) explored pupils' perceptions of mainstream education and reintegration. They suggested that KS4 pupils reported a disconnect with mainstream and lacked a sense of belonging there. The YP expressed a feeling that they did not fit in with mainstream expectations or conventions; in contrast, they report pupils experienced connectedness with the PRU. Having a sense of belonging is suggested to contribute towards increased resilience in YP, which was explored by Hart (2013).

From a resilience perspective, Hart (2013) explored 'what helps' CYP in a PRU environment. The researcher acknowledged that she approached the research with preconceived ideas of themes from existing research into resilience, which may introduce bias. A sample of six children aged between 9 and 13 years were obtained from a single PRU setting which, of note, was rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The children in this study would be returning to mainstream school in less than four weeks from the interview, therefore their perceptions of the setting may be influenced by the short time they have left. Hart (2013) identified relationships with staff as a key protective factor which was most commonly reported by the CYP. CYP reported staff to be kind, fair and fun and the CYP felt trusted by them. Hart (2013) suggested that this contributed towards a 'secure base' for pupils and fostered an environment where basic needs were met and learning could occur.

Hart (2013) discussed how the environment in the PRU is protective, however acknowledged that there are limits to this and that it is not necessarily protective from the interacting systems outside. However, Hart questioned whether their resilience continues when they return to the mainstream systems which did not work for them previously, or if it is specific to the AP context. Critically, identifying 'what helps' children is not the same as establishing what provides resilience or resilience itself (Hart, 2013).

### 2.5.3 Challenges or barriers

As discussed above, many pupils' experiences in AP are positive. However, this is contrary to what would be expected given the current drive for reform of AP and the largely negative outcomes associated with the group. McCluskey et al. (2015) argues that although CYPs' comments are generally positive; this is likely to only be because of their extremely negative experiences previously. That said, within the literature there are some indications of challenges and barriers experienced by YP in AP.

The YP in Michael and Frederickson's (2013) study identified several barriers to achieving positive outcomes. Disruptive behaviour was the most commonly reported. This was in relation to pupils' own and peers' behaviour and ineffective behaviour management strategies in the setting. Unfair treatment was also identified as a barrier which was understood to cause negative emotions amongst pupils or negatively affect their relationships with staff. Some YP discussed negative labelling associated with being educated in a PRU and the impact this may

have upon the perceptions of future employers, something which will be discussed in Section 2. Contradicting the studies discussed in 2.5.1, failure to individualise learning was also identified as a barrier; some pupils felt the work was too challenging, whereas others felt it was not challenging enough.

Michael and Frederickson (2013) propose 'ideas for change' which were derived from the YPs' own suggestions and experiences. These largely reflected the positive experiences associated with AP discussed earlier, such as being listened to, accessing a flexible curriculum and supported emotional wellbeing. Of particular relevance to the present research, KS4 pupils identified the need for a wider range of GCSE subjects to be offered and for improved options when leaving the provision. This was supported by McCluskey et al. (2015) who report that some CYP and their families experienced a limited or inappropriate curriculum, limited pastoral support and few opportunities to progress (through reintegration to school or college). These issues will be explored in Section 2. Michael and Frederickson (2013) offer a valuable contribution to the literature in highlighting the challenges experienced by YP, thus painting a more balanced picture of AP. Importantly, they also offer insight into how YP would like things to improve. The research perhaps reflects the variation in AP practice and provision across the UK (DfE, 2018).

### 2.5.4 Gender differences

The majority of pupils in AP are males and so it can be anticipated that the experiences researched are largely from a male perspective. However, Russell and Thomson (2011) explored gender differences in AP, specifically girls' experiences of being a minority in AP. Through interviews with AP staff and pupils from six APs, they identified problems with what is on offer to girls in AP. They argued that the programmes on offer were designed around the boys and that girls tended to follow stereotypical vocational pathways. However, it is acknowledged that girls wanted to do these options. Interestingly, they also reported that girls tended to adopt certain social practices to 'survive' in male-dominated APs. These practices involved boyish behaviours, trouble-stirring or remaining quiet. Each of these positions revolved around the boys in some way, indicating the significance of boys' presence in AP.

Russel and Thomson's (2011) research delivers a distinctive contribution to the literature in terms of understanding girls' unique experiences in AP. It also highlights the need to ensure

girls are equally represented in the present study, particularly with regards to how girls perceive their future is influenced by AP.

### 2.5.5 Attributions and perceived futures

The attributions of pupils in AP emerged as a salient theme when reviewing the literature. Jalali and Morgan (2018) explored pupils' attributions of their difficulties, factors which supported them to make progress and their views around reintegration and mainstream schooling. They compared the experiences of 8 primary and 5 secondary aged pupils in PRUs to determine whether their views changed between these two stages of schooling. Jalali and Morgan used an adaptation of the 'life grid' to map the participants' educational journeys on a timeline, giving the participants ownership of their stories which was in line with their phenomenological approach. They member-checked the information to seek clarification from the participants and also kept a reflective journal which is said to contribute to the 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research (Yardley, 2000).

Jalali and Morgan (2018) reported that both primary and secondary pupils displayed external attribution styles; they attributed their behaviour to being wronged by others or unfairly blamed. The authors also suggested that the participants showed a lack of responsibility, external locus of control and "a learned helplessness in capacity to change" (2018, p.61). As such, despite reported improvements in behaviour, their thinking patterns remained unchanged. Jalali and Morgan argued that this suggested PRUs were ineffective in contributing to long term change. As such, the authors speculate a negative trajectory whereby pupils' thinking patterns have a negative affect not only upon their education, but upon their self-worth and MH. This may go some way to understanding the negative outcomes reported for this group (Gill et al., 2017).

Solomon and Rogers (2001) explored PRU pupils' perceptions and attitudes towards school, their current situation, their future and motivational patterns. They carried out interviews with a small sample of 6 pupils and 16 practitioners from both within and outside the PRU setting. They argued that PRU pupils demonstrated low self-efficacy and perceived themselves as being "less able to bring about the outcomes they desire" (2001, p.341), which the authors suggest is likely to negatively impact on the group re-engaging with education. As with the

sample in Jalali and Morgan's (2018) study, these YP were reported to have external attributions for negative events.

Furthermore, Solomon and Rogers (2001) argued that pupils had unrealistic and unworried view of their future and lacked a sense of direction; this supports Mainwaring and Hallam's (2010) findings. Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) explored Year 11 pupils' perceptions of their future selves using the construct of 'possible selves'. In-depth interviews were carried out with 16 YP in a PRU and 9 YP mainstream secondary school. 'Possible selves' can illuminate motivations, aspirations and fears (Markus and Nurius, 1987 in Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010). Participants were able to review the transcripts from the interview to check what was written, which contributes to the trustworthiness of the study. Taking a deductive approach to analysis, Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) identified that YP in the PRU were less able to identify positive 'possible selves' and had more negative and 'impossible selves' than those who attended mainstream. In addition, pupils from the PRU were less likely to be able to generate conceivable plans to achieve their positive future self, were less aware of possible obstacles in achieving this and did not have any alternative options should their ideal route fail. Mainwaring and Hallam suggest that this has notable implications for PRU staff with regards to supporting YP to ascertain their own positive and realistic goals. It perhaps also raises questions around how pupils' aspirations are supported in AP.

This was explored by Jalali and Morgan (2018) who suggested that the PRU had a positive role in changing and shaping pupils' aspirations. They reported that some pupils in KS4 realised what they want to do in the future and others recognised the need for qualifications to be able to go on to college and get a job. However, Jalali and Morgan argued that although this may indicate that the AP has been effective in supporting the YP to have realistic goals, participants' perceptions implied that their attributions remained external and thought patterns were unchanged. They inferred that these changes may be limited to the PRU context and could suggest why outcomes for YP leaving AP are poor, despite having such positive experiences.

### 2.6 Section 1 summary

Section 1 of the literature review explores YPs' experiences in AP and begins to consider the perceived impact of attending an AP in relation to their future. The importance of relationships

emerged as being significant to YPs' experiences in AP. AP appears to offer a unique and different environment to mainstream which the YP perceive they largely benefit from. Whilst the above research is useful in eliciting which aspects of AP contribute to the perceived reengagement and progress of YP, it raises questions as to why YPs' positive experiences of AP appear to be so vastly different to their outcomes. Researchers are beginning to suggest that the positive changes reported in AP are specific to that context and do not necessarily prevail upon leaving the AP. Furthermore, the challenges which emerged from the literature begin to illuminate some of the difficulties YP experience when leaving AP, including unchanged attributions, inappropriate qualifications and stigma in the community. This raises questions around what happens when YP transition from AP to post-16, which I will consider in Section 2.

#### 2.7 Section 2: Transitions

This section reviews the literature identified using Search Strategy 2. As discussed in 2.2, the search was broadened to include reintegration and transitions to post-16 for YP with SEMH needs. These are discussed in turn before introducing literature which addresses YP leaving AP specifically. Firstly however, it is necessary to define 'transition' as it is used in this thesis and consider the importance of transition for YP.

#### 2.7.1 Transition

Transition is a wide-ranging construct and it is not within the scope of this review to cover every definition or theory. Instead, consideration will be given to transition in education specifically. Fleischer (2010) defines transition in education as "the significant shifts that pupils encounter before, during and after their school experience" (p. 50). Edwards (2017) considers transitions as being either external, such as the move from one phase of education to another, or internal. An internal transition may be the 'developmental shift' from childhood to adulthood (Fleischer, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the term transition will be used in reference to both internal and external transitions.

Successful transitions are considered important in ensuring the participation of vulnerable CYP in education (Lawson and Parker, 2019). Where transition fails, CYP can be negatively affected. In an ethnographic study, Trotman et al. (2015) identified transition as a significant factor which contributed to YPs' exclusions from school. Interviews with 49 pupils' and 8 behaviour co-ordinators highlighted the transition to secondary school and the transition between KS3 and KS4 as being particularly difficult for YP. Pupils who had transitioned to secondary school were believed to experience a 'disconnect' in their relationships with staff, which were very different to those they experienced in primary school. They also reported feeling 'lost' both physically and emotionally. The behaviour co-ordinators perceived pupils to also struggle with the transition from KS3 to KS4 due to the academic, emotional and biological changes which occur. Interestingly, this was in contrast to pupils who perceived the transition to KS4 to be a positive move towards increased independence and opportunities.

Trotman et al.'s (2015) study highlights how educational transitions can result in disconnect, behavioural challenges and ultimately exclusion for some YP. This raises questions about how YP with needs similar to the pupils in Trotman et al.'s study experience the transition to post-16, which arguably has many parallels with the difficult transitions identified here.

# 2.7.2 Transition to post-16 for YP with SEMH needs

For many YP, the transition to post-16 can be significant, however research suggests this is particularly challenging for YP with SEMH needs. A longitudinal study led by the Institute for Employment Studies explored YPs' experiences of transition in Year 11 (Polat et al., 2001) and one-year post-transition (Dewson et al., 2004). Polat et al. (2001) reported that planning for transition is more problematic where pupils have SEND but do not have a Statement and is particularly challenging for YP with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). Of those without a Statement, YP with EBD had poorer transition planning than other groups of SEND. Parents of YP with EBD were the least satisfied with the preparation for transition to post-16 and were less likely to be involved in transition planning. Furthermore, YP with EBD and their parents were less likely to have positive thoughts about the future compared to other SENDs, which has parallels with Mainwaring and Hallam's (2010) findings. Critically, despite including case studies, the large-scale nature of the research reduces YPs' complex experiences of the transition to simplistic statements and so their lived experiences are somewhat lost. However, these findings have implications when considering the transition of YP from AP who also tend not to have an EHCP.

Tyson (2011) explored YP with SEND's experiences and perceptions of post-16 transition and the support provided to them. Four YP in Year 11, including one YP with Social EBD (SEBD), and three members of staff from one large urban secondary school took part. Tyson highlighted several barriers and facilitators to successful post-16 transition for the group. Facilitators included parental involvement in transition planning, the involvement of outside agencies and adhering to the guidance set out in SEND legislation. Conversely, limited pupil engagement in support, limited parental understanding of the SEND framework and limited parental involvement were identified as barriers.

Furthermore, Tyson (2011) argued that the holistic and individualised support given to YP with regards to their learning was not always evident in transition planning. Perhaps related to this,

Tyson indicated that the YP were not able to discuss their experiences of transition preparation or their own plans for transition, which suggested they were not actively engaged with it as a meaningful process. Furthermore, pupils showed limited understanding of their post-16 options. Interestingly, staffs' perceptions of transition support were more positive than the YPs' actual experiences of support. This difference perhaps requires further exploration. Tyson's small study contributes in-depth information about YPs' experiences of transition, however only one pupil with SEBD was included and therefore the extent to which these conclusions can be generalised to other YP with SEMH is limited.

O'Riordan (2011; 2015) specifically explored the factors influencing the successful transition of pupils with SEBD leaving special school and mainstream school. The study was longitudinal and involved up to three interviews with YP in their first post school year. Parents and key staff members were also interviewed which contributed to the case studies of each YP. O'Riordan used multiple data collection methods, including life grids, which enabled the YP to lead the discussion. This arguably supported the author to access their lived experiences and is in line with their collaborative approach.

O'Riordan (2015) identified the following factors which influenced the YPs' transition: personal qualities of the young person (including motivation and likeability); supportive families; post-school settings which support YPs' SEMH needs and positive relationships between staff and YP. The latter is described as one of the most dominant influences. Forming positive relationships was said to be underpinned by 'identity verification', "when environmental feedback tells us we are who we think we are" (p.418), which contributes to increased self-esteem. Associated with identity verification, supportive relationships and a sense of belonging were also said to contribute to YPs' resilience thus enabling them to overcome adversity during the transition to college. The importance of sense of belonging and resilience for YP in AP has been highlighted earlier with regards to YPs' positive experiences in AP (Hart, 2013) and also with regards to reintegration, which will be discussed later (2.7.3).

Extending O'Riordan's (2015) research, Edwards (2017) explored the process of transition for YP with SEBD from mainstream secondary school to FE. School staff, FE staff and EPs were interviewed. Critically, the voice of the YP was absent from the study and therefore their lived experiences of the process are missing. Like Polat et al. (2001), Edwards (2017) suggested that transition for YP with SEBD without an EHCP was more challenging. Staff reported challenges

with sharing information; the SEND CoP (2015) states that schools should share information with colleges in the spring term, however this rarely happened. It was argued that no-one was responsible for this and there was confusion around related legislation. Furthermore, some pupils wanted a fresh start and were reluctant to have information shared. Edwards (2017) also identified a lack of training in MH amongst FE staff which meant they felt incompetent in providing support to pupils with these needs. This was perceived to be compounded by the lack of support from external services due to austerity.

Polat and Farrell (2002; Farrell & Polat, 2003) explored the views of former pupils of a residential special school for YP with EBD. Farrell and Polat (2003) suggest that "the success of special schools in helping YP to become included into society is partly dependent on the quality of the transition planning arrangements, when these YP move from school to the adult world" (p.281). However, they argue that transition is unsatisfactory and leads to pupils experiencing problems adjusting to life after school. The authors suggest that the former pupils had mixed views about the support they needed up on leaving school. Some pupils appeared resistant to the idea of support due to having had negative experiences of support in the past. Other pupils wanted additional support but felt none was available.

Farrell and Polat (2003) argued that pupils' complex difficulties cannot be addressed in the short time spent in the school and so they need "support in preparing them to leave school and for some time thereafter" (Polat and Farrell, 2002, p.107). Like O'Riordan (2015), they suggest that schools should develop positive relationships with post-16 providers to reduce any stigmatisation and enable them to be fully included in society.

Polat and Farrell (2002) also considered how pupils perceived attending an EBD residential school had impacted their post-16 outcomes. Many of the pupils reported that attending the school had a positive impact on their confidence and self-esteem, managing their emotions and learning to respect others, which could be considered important skills to navigate the adult world. Some pupils mentioned getting GCSEs which they would not have otherwise achieved at mainstream school.

Polat and Farrell (2002) also reported that some former pupils perceived attending an EBD school had a negative impact on their lives because of the associated stigma and labelling, which was also reported in APs (Micheal & Frederickson, 2013). They felt it had affected their

relationships with their peers in the local community and was detrimental to their employment opportunities. However, other pupils felt that attending the school had helped them to continue in education or gain employment. Farrell and Polat (2003) note that the pupils appeared to generally lack ambition and had low expectations in relation to their future employment prospects, which has parallels with Solomon and Rogers' (2001) findings.

Having discussed post-16 transitions for YP with SEMH needs generally, I will now review the literature relating to transitions for YP leaving AP specifically, beginning with reintegration.

#### 2.7.3 Reintegration

Literature into reintegration is considered here because it is one of the most researched 'transitions' associated with YP in AP. It refers to YP leaving AP to return to a mainstream school and is identified as one of the main aims of AP (DfE, 2013). However, it is widely acknowledged that this rarely happens, and where it does, is not always successful (Daniels et al., 2003). As such, there is a substantial evidence base which explores the factors which contribute to a successful or unsuccessful reintegration from the perspectives of AP staff (Thomas, 2015; Levinson & Thompson, 2016), and CYP (Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016).

Pillay et al. (2013) explored YPs' lived experiences of the reintegration process. They asked 13 pupils, aged 11-14, who had reintegrated to mainstream school from PRU in the past 12 months to complete 'incomplete sentences' and write a life essay about their reintegration. Four participants were then chosen to be interviewed based on the 'richness' of their responses. Whilst this may seem an appropriate choice, critically it is worthwhile noting that it is not uncommon for children in AP to struggle with aspects of literacy. It is possible that YP who produced 'rich' data in the written task may be more academically able and may 'fit' better when reintegrated into the mainstream environment. As such, the sample potentially excludes the voices of those who struggle in school, thus introducing bias to the sample (Macro, 2019a).

Pillay et al. (2013) discussed the influence of relationships with family, peers and staff during reintegration. Pillay et al. indicate that cooperation between home and school was an important contributor to the effectiveness of reintegration. This supports findings by Thomas (2015) who

reported that having parental support can be integral to successful reintegration. Conversely, Pillay et al. (2013) argued that family could also be a risk factor, particularly where there were difficult relationships and attachments. Peer relationships were also highlighted as a promotive factor upon reintegration to mainstream school. They reportedly contributed to attachment to the school and provided a source of academic support. This supports Tootill and Spalding's (2000) findings who highlighted the importance of friendships, peer support and mentoring in successful reintegration. However, Pillay et al. (2013) suggest that if peer relationships are not forged, or are 'high risk', peers could have a negative effect.

Positive relationships with staff were perceived to contribute to learners' feelings of safety, attachment and emotional support (Pillay et al., 2013) which contributed to successful reintegration (Tootill & Spalding, 2000). Having 'free access' to a significant adult (Pillay et al., 2013) and staff having an inclusive ethos (Lawrence, 2011) were understood to support reintegration. Pillay et al.'s findings were supported by Atkinson and Rowley (2019) who adopted an ecosystemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). They contributed a 'holistic' understanding of reintegration by exploring the interacting systems around the child. However, their use of Q methodology meant that pupils were not able to add their own unique experiences.

Interestingly, Pillay et al. (2013) report that the reintegration itself can be a risk factor for YP, not only because of disrupted academic progress, but because the mainstream environment is very different to the small, nurturing and flexible environment of a PRU. This view is echoed by Levinson and Thompson (2016) who suggest that mainstream staffs' response to incidents in school is profoundly different to that of AP staff, who have adapted their practices to respond to the complex needs of the YP there. They raise the paradoxical issue that YP experience a culture which treats them differently in the AP and therefore when they return to mainstream, and are confronted with firm boundaries and rigid expectations, they are more likely to fail.

Broadly, research into reintegration tends to neglect the experiences of those in Years 10 and 11. This is perhaps because this group tend not to be reintegrated at all (HoC, 2018). For this group, particularly those in Year 11, the aim is perhaps no longer to reintegrate but instead to prepare them for post-16 provision (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). I will now discuss the literature which explores transition to post-16 for YP leaving AP.

### 2.7.4 Transition to post-16 for pupils leaving AP

As discussed in Chapter 1, YP in AP are more likely to be NEET when leaving school than their mainstream peers (DfE, 2016; 2018b) and are at increased risk of social marginalisation, exclusion and crime (Berridge et al., 2001). Despite this, research suggests that excluded YP are less likely to experience the support and preparation for transition to post-16 that their peers would receive in mainstream or special school (McCrystal et al., 2007). The literature reviewed in this section explores this further.

The literature is grouped into two subthemes: 'The perceived impact of attending AP' and 'How transitions to post-16 are supported'.

# The perceived impact of attending AP

Tellis-James and Fox (2016) carried out a Narrative Orientated Inquiry (NOI) into the stories told by excluded YP with SEBD about their future. The methodology was appropriate to the aims of the study as NOI seeks to preserve YPs' stories (Wells, 2011). The authors adopted a positive psychology approach which enabled them to identify pupils' strengths and resources within their stories. Relationships with staff and peers were identified as providing both emotional and academic support and contributed to a sense of belonging, supporting Hart's (2013) research. The AP was also considered to provide learning experiences which were relevant to pupils' futures and it was argued that this motivated them to achieve more qualifications and get a job in the future. Tellis-James and Fox (2016) suggested that AP was a "turning point" in the YPs' lives (p.337) which supports Malcolm's (2019) research.

Informed by positive psychology, Tellis-James and Fox (2016) also identified several qualities the YP had developed as a result of their previous negative experiences. These included an optimistic outlook on their future, self-determination and a resolve to have a better life in the future. This study provides a unique insight into the perceived impact AP has had on their future, utilising NOI and positive psychology. However, in only focusing on YP strengths, the authors arguably overlooked the less positive aspects of their narratives which were equally important.

Extending this conversation, Malcolm (2019) used life grids retrospectively to explore the impact AP had on the lives of former pupils. He suggested that many young adults (YA) experienced marginalisation and exclusion upon leaving AP. The YAs also contested the appropriateness of learning in AP and argued it was not comparable to the learning opportunities in mainstream. Whilst the teaching was considered better than mainstream, these YAs felt that the work itself was not what they needed, which perhaps reflects Michael and Frederickson's (2013) findings. Notably, Malcolm (2019) also identified transitions in AP (including transitions to post-16) as being 'negative experiences', although reasons for this were not expanded upon and requires further exploration.

Despite these negative perceptions, participants did report some positive effects from attending AP. One YA perceived the AP to have increased his motivation by giving him a sense of purpose and another felt that AP acted as a buffer against other adverse life experiences, which reflects research into resilience (Hart, 2013). The YAs also perceived that the AP had helped them to be calmer, happier and better able to communicate with others. Furthermore, the participants reportedly experienced increased confidence in relation to learning and their future. As a result, Malcolm argued that the AP contributed to "profound changes in many of the participants' perceptions of the opportunities available to them" (2019, p.96). Staff in the AP were considered influential in affecting these changes by challenging pupils to extend their aspirations, providing support and showing an interest in pupils' futures.

Malcolm (2019) concluded that AP offered a "qualitatively different kind of social space" (p.84) to mainstream school, which contributed to a change in the mind-set of the pupils there. The former point supports the argument made in Section 1. However, the latter point contradicts Jalali and Morgan (2018) who argued that pupils did not experience a change in mindset in AP. One reason for this contradiction may be the retrospective nature of Malcolm's (2019) study, which may not reflect the perceptions pupils held at the time. Furthermore, it is possible that that the YA who took part are those who have been successful following AP and are more likely to have positive reflections. Critically, almost three quarters of possible participants chose not to take part, therefore the study perhaps missed those who may have had a different story to tell.

How transitions to post-16 are supported

Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) carried out a research project commissioned by The Prince's Trust which examined AP for secondary aged pupils, including how pupils are supported to reengage with education, training or work. The research involved 17 case studies of 'Good' APs across the UK which were then cross analysed. However, the authors adopted a 'snapshot' case study model which arguably limits the depth of the analysis.

Pupils in KS4 only have a short amount of time in the AP before leaving school. As such, Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) suggested that the 'aim' for pupils was to prepare them for post-16, rather than attempting to reintegrate them. They suggest that, instead of focusing on academic progress, APs aim to develop YPs' personal qualities and knowledge to cope in post-school environments. This involves focusing efforts on developing skills which they considered important to succeed in post-16 environments, such as time keeping and working with others, as well as literacy and numeracy. Pupils were provided with new social and cultural experiences which were perceived to "stand them in better stead than time spent continuing to struggle with additional GCSEs and failing to tackle underlying difficulties" (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014, p.21). These findings support Gallagher (2011) who suggested the emotional, personal and social development of YP was important for post-16 success. Qualities such as good attendance, understanding rules and being respectful developed in the AP were also considered to be important life skills and enhance employability.

Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) suggested that preparing YP for post-16 was considered part of the curriculum for some of the APs. They reported that pupils were "supported with all aspects of this process; decision-making, planning, applying, interviews, acquiring the necessary accreditation" (p.29). Many of the APs also kept in touch with their pupils when they left school and even provided ongoing support throughout their first year in post-16 settings. Malcolm (2019) argued this is particularly important given the strong relationships formed with staff. This supports the findings of the Institute of Education (IoE) and NFER (2014) who argued that APs need to provide additional support for pupils in terms of interviews, transition and accompanying YP in the post-16 setting for the first few days. They also suggest that APs should forge links with counsellors for pupils in colleges, indicating that emotional support is something YP may continue to need in their post-16 setting.

Kilpatrick et al. (2007) explored YPs' experience of AP with regards to learning, reintegration and transition to the labour market. Questionnaires and destination data were gathered from

318 Year 11 pupils over 18-months. A sub-sample of 18 pupils were interviewed twice which contributed in-depth information about their experiences. Kilpatrick et al. recognise the hard to reach nature of the group and provided monetary incentives for participation in the study, which has ethical implications. However, attrition rates were low for the second interviews, with only 3 YP not wanting to complete their involvement. The research involved peer researchers which the authors argue helped build rapport with the interviewees. Kilpatrick et al. claim that the peer researchers themselves benefited by developing new skills, which was in line with the values of the research.

Like Malcolm (2019), Kilpatrick et al. (2007) argued that YP felt the qualifications on offer in AP were not valued by post-16 providers or employers and there was limited opportunity to study more GCSEs. Although Kilpatrick et al.'s (2007) study is 13 years old, their claims are supported by more recent research by Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) who also suggested that pupils in some APs did not value the qualifications on offer or felt that these were of lesser value than GCSEs when seeking opportunities post-16. Furthermore, YP in AP tended to do fewer subjects than they would in mainstream and their options were often gendered (see also Thomson & Russell, 2009). Extending this, Trotman et al. (2019) identified a 'polarised' academic/vocational route and suggested the latter is often reserved for AP pupils. They suggest that this route was, in part, a product of staffs' perceptions that the YP could not cope with academic demands. Trotman et al (2019) argue that such limited options "continue to affirm a long-standing and on-going poverty of ... career scope for many YP leaving AP" (p.231). However, the IoE and NFER (2014) suggest that the courses on offer at the AP help the YP to re-engage in education and thus leave school with some qualifications they may not otherwise have achieved.

Similarly, Kendall et al. (2007) suggest that providing vocational opportunities is important in making learning relevant and re-engaging YP. They suggested that learning should be personalised to the YP and there should be links with FE providers so that YP could experience what it is like. The latter is said to contribute to YPs' confidence and social skills in these environments and positively impacts upon their aspirations. Kendall et al. also highlight the importance of external services, such as Connexions, in supporting post-16 progression. However, critically, such services are no longer commissioned by many LAs in the current context.

Kilpatrick et al. (2007) emphasise the important issue that many YP in AP have experienced isolation throughout most of their adolescent life and therefore will need additional support in their reintegration to post-16 environments. They suggest that the YP will need support to develop their personal and social development and support around making decisions relating to post-16 pathways. Kilpatrick et al. suggest that YP who leave AP appear 'lost' without support systems in place and are "unaware of how to seek help and lacking any personal agency to pursue this" (2007, p.111); these findings are reflective of Trotman et al.'s (2015) study of transitions to secondary school, supporting the argument that the transition to post-16 is similarly challenging.

Kilpatrick et al. (2007) suggest that these YP have limited advice or support from family members, many of whom are also unemployed. As such, the authors emphasise the importance of APs ensuring there is effective careers advice on offer and provide work experience, reflective of the current statutory guidance (DfE, 2013). This is supported by Gallagher (2011) who argued that providing work experience was also important to develop pupils' skills and identify new areas of interests. Gallagher (2011) suggests this is particularly significant for these YP whose families often experience intergenerational unemployment and poverty. However, some APs in Kilpatrick et al.'s (2007) study report a difficulty in finding appropriate work experience opportunities for AP pupils due to stigmatisation in the community, an issue which has been reported by pupils themselves in more recent research (Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

Indicative of the Government's commitment to YP leaving AP (see 1.7), Tate and Greatbatch (2017) were commissioned by the DfE to identify strategies which are effective in supporting KS4 YP in AP and their transition to post-16 provision. They carried out a review of the literature which included 85 documents (26 peer-reviewed articles, 39 research reports and 20 Ofsted reports). Critically, they included international literature in the review therefore caution is needed when considering its transferability to the UK system.

Tate and Greatbatch (2017) stated that YPs' aspirations for their future should be identified when they join the AP and APs should ensure that their provision supports this. This should be reviewed regularly and the YP should be supported to make informed decisions around their choices. Tate and Greatbatch (2017) suggest that APs should provide bespoke transition support to pupils as they leave AP. Like Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) they suggest that this

will involve supporting YP with all aspects of their transition and may continue beyond the transition period "when their engagement can be fragile" (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017, p.58). This might include AP staff supporting them for the first few days of college or providing a support network throughout the year. However, the financial and practical ramifications of this are not considered.

As with many of the studies discussed above, Tate and Greatbatch (2017) argue that learning to develop respectful relationships with adults is important for success in post-16 environments. This was also emphasised by Daniels et al. (2003) who argued that YPs' success in achieving positive post-16 outcomes were related to support from staff, family and a sense of self-belief. They suggest that the skills and commitment of staff contributed to pupils developing positive views of themselves, self-esteem and willingness to engage with qualifications. Daniels et al. highlight the importance of relationships in encouraging the YP to try something new, endure challenge and develop a 'can do' attitude. In doing so, pupils' aspirations could be extended and expectations of failure reduced. This was highlighted as a particular challenge when some YP struggled to see a life beyond their current circumstances. However, where YP had belief in their own abilities, they were more likely to achieve positive post-16 outcomes.

Also commissioned by the DfE, Mills and Thomson (2018) carried out a large-scale study to develop the evidence-base around practice within AP, including post-16 transition practices. The study involved in-depth telephone interviews with 276 schools and 200 APs in England and 25 case studies involving staff, pupils and parents. As suggested above, careers advice was identified as one common way of preparing YP for post-16 and this was experienced positively by pupils. Positive working partnerships with local colleges were also identified in the majority of settings. This tended to include college staff coming in to build relationships with pupils or taster days. Mills and Thomson also reported that there was evidence of good information sharing between settings, which has parallels with the reintegration and SEMH literature discussed (2.7.2). Parents were sometimes involved in careers activities, although some APs reported that parents preferred the AP to take the lead, therefore staff had to make sure time was available for this role. As in Thomson and Pennacchia's study (2014), APs offered support with applications, CVs and interviews. This was intended to build pupils' confidence in relation to post-16 and was carried out in addition to the work around self-esteem and resilience which was already provided.

Mills and Thomson (2018) argued that the transition support provided was dependent on the individual, as pupils had different perceptions about transition. Pupils with SEMH needs were perceived by staff to need additional support as they were more likely to find transition daunting, which reflects Polat et al. (2001) findings. However, staff expressed that offering continued support to pupils after they left was not always possible due to funding and resources; this, coupled with the absence of external services (Edwards, 2017), would suggest there is a lack of support in this area, despite there being a need. Mills and Thomson's (2018) study contributes a contemporary understanding of transition practices in AP on a larger scale than previously reported and highlights some of the current issues faced in the present context. However, the study does not contribute an understanding of what leaving AP means to pupils themselves or how they experience the support with transition.

#### 2.8 Limitations

Relevant studies were identified systematically using search terms, however only studies where these terms were used in the title or abstract were found. Although every effort was made to supplement the search through snowballing and hand searching, some relevant studies may be missing from the review where these terms were not used.

Due to there being few empirical studies which explore this particular facet of the research topic, it was necessary to include literature carried out within the last 20 years to provide sufficient context for this study. Critically, this means that some of the research reflects an environment which is quite different from today. For example, some studies were carried out before the raising of the participation age to 18 which has particular implications for YP leaving AP, as suggested by the HoC (2018). Furthermore, some of the research was carried out prior to austerity, therefore was produced in a context where there was support from external agencies which is no longer widely available.

To broaden the second search, research which explored transition for YP with SEMH needs was included. Whilst this was deemed relevant to situate this study within a wider context, some of the studies report on a very different environment to AP. For example, Polat and Farrell's (2002) study looked at the experiences of former residential school for pupils with

EBD whose experience is probably quite different to attending a day AP, particularly with regards to feeling excluded from the community.

Finally, the majority of the research reviewed involves APs that are considered to be performing well or exhibiting best practice. Therefore, it could be argued that this may not be reflective of APs which are not performing well. However, at the time of writing this, 79% of APs in the UK were rated 'Outstanding' or 'Good' by Ofsted (DfE, 2018b), indicating that these studies are perhaps representative of the majority of AP in the UK.

# 2.9 Chapter summary

The reviewed research suggests that YPs' experiences of AP are largely positive; they experience a calm, nurturing environment with high levels of support and flexible provision. Relationships with staff are integral to their positive experiences in AP, with small class sizes enabling these to form. However, it appears that despite these positive experiences, pupils' post-16 outcomes are poor compared to their mainstream peers. Possible reasons for this are emerging from the literature (including external attributions, limited post-16 opportunities and poor transition), which raise questions around what YP think about post-16 and transition.

The second literature search sought to explore this issue. Wider research suggests that transition is likely to be challenging for this group and they are likely to need a high level of support (Malcolm, 2019). However, despite this, consideration has only recently been given to YP leaving AP and the support they might need during transition (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017). Whilst this has been explored recently in large studies (Mills & Thomson, 2018), there is limited in-depth empirical research which explores the YPs' perceptions of transitioning to post-16, their experiences of the support in place and what other support they might need. This seems to suggest a gap in the literature.

# 2.10 The current study

The current study seeks to respond to the local and national issues which have been highlighted in Chapter 1 and the gaps in the literature identified in Chapter 2.

To do so, this study aims to understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transitioning to post-16 and the perceived impact attending an AP has had on them.

Stemming from the research aims, this study seeks to address the following RQs:

- 1. How do YP experience KS4 in APs?
- 2. How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?
- 3. How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-16?
- 4. How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?

# 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology of this research. I begin by establishing the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research. I then discuss how the research fits within a qualitative framework and the rationale behind my chosen methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Following this, I give an overview of the research design, procedures and methods, along with the ethical issues considered in designing the research. Next, I discuss the sample and how the data was collected and analysed using IPA and TA. The reader is also directed to the appendices for evidence of transparency throughout. Finally, I comment upon the importance of reflexivity and how quality assurances were considered throughout the research process.

# 3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

The researcher's ontological and epistemological positioning informs the way in which the research is carried out (Bryman, 2012). My position in carrying out this research is discussed below.

# 3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to how reality is understood. Ontological positions are considered as being on a continuum which ranges from reality being independent of human understanding (realism) to reality being entirely dependent on human interpretation (relativism) (Braun and Clarke, 2013). 'Realism' would suggest that there is a singular, independent truth which can be accessed through research. This is often referred to as objectivism. Objectivism would suggest that this truth, or social phenomena, is 'independent of social actors' (Bryman, 2012, p.33) and therefore is separate from the influence of discourse and culture. However, the position of this research is constructionist and is derived from the researchers' belief that there are multiple truths which can change over time and context. In contrast to objectivism, constructionism assumes that social phenomena are produced, or 'constructed', by social actors and social interactions. As such, reality or truth is constantly revised (Bryman, 2012).

### 3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of the nature of knowledge; "how, and what, can we know?" (Willig, 2013, p.4). Epistemological positions can be broadly distinguished as either positivist or interpretivist. Positivism would assume that there is knowledge available in the world which can be obtained through empiricist measures. Positivist research proposes to produce knowledge which is "impartial and unbiased... without personal involvement or vested interests on the part of the researcher" (Willig, 2001, p.3). In contrast, interpretivism, or constructionism as it is often referred to, asserts that knowledge and meaning is co-constructed by humans in their social context. As such, the interpretivist researcher cannot be considered as separate from the research; instead, the researcher both influences and is influenced by the research. Constructionism argues that there is no singular truth to be obtained, rather there are

'knowledges' which are socially constructed and change over time and context (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For example, the same phenomena could be described by two people very differently, yet both be right; both individuals are generating knowledge, informed by their own human experiences. This human experience is influenced by history, culture and language (Willig, 2001).

My epistemological position in carrying out the present research is interpretivist. Taking this position as a researcher, I acknowledge that my interpretations are influenced by my own context and experiences, and thus knowledge is 'constructed rather than discovered' (Levers, 2013, p.4). As such, I am unable to obtain a singular 'truth'. Furthermore, I recognise throughout this thesis that as a researcher I am influencing the research by choosing the research area and questions, how I am going to do the research and how I will analyse it. My influence on the research is considered throughout this thesis.

Given the ontological and epistemological position of this research, qualitative research methodologies were deemed appropriate. Qualitative research methodologies align with my values and belief in talking to the people most concerned to establish their stories, experiences and the meanings they make from their situation. There are a number of qualitative methodologies, however through consideration of my own positioning and the RQs I wanted to explore, I chose IPA as my research methodology. My rationale for this choice will be explored further in section 3.4, but first I will discuss IPA.

# 3.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is a qualitative research approach which is primarily concerned with getting detailed accounts of participants' "lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience" (Smith, 2011, p.9). Despite being a relatively new methodology, it is now considered one of the most popular used in psychology (Smith, 2011). IPA draws upon three philosophical perspectives: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, which I will now discuss.

# 3.3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology refers to the study of lived experience and existence, with particular emphasis on what matters to the individual and how they understand their experiences. Smith et al. (2009) stated that IPA draws particularly upon the work of phenomenologist Husserl (1927) and his successors Heidegger (1996), Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Satre (1948). Smith et al. (2009) wrote that Husserl was primarily concerned with the process of reflection; being conscious of and attentive to experiences in life. Heidegger however, viewed the person within context and argued that people cannot be detached from the relationships, objects and activities they take part in. As such, Heidegger suggests that our experiences in the world are "always perspectival, always temporal and always 'in-relation-to' something" (Smith et al., 2009, p.19). This was also supportive of Satre, who emphasised 'others' in our experiences. Merleau-Ponty's idea that experiences are individual to the person and can never be fully shared by another is central to IPA. These key philosophers contribute to an understanding that experiences are dependent upon time, space and context and cannot be detached from our relationships with others. Experience is a lived process and is unique to the individual, therefore it cannot be fully shared or obtained by another, only interpreted (Smith et al., 2009). This links IPA to hermeneutics, discussed below.

# 3.3.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and is an important part of IPA. Heidegger (1996) suggests that our access to another's experience is through interpretation. However, Heidegger recognises that the reader brings their own preconceptions and experiences to the situation. Smith et al. (2009) refer to the hermeneutic circle whereby in order to understand any given 'part' you need to look at the 'whole', and vice versa. This is particularly relevant during the interpretation phase of IPA where it is necessary to move back and forth through the data. Smith et al. (2009) suggests that during IPA, the researcher engages in a double hermeneutic as the researcher themselves is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of an experience. As such, the researcher has a "dual role" (Smith et al., 2009, p.3) as they themselves engage in the same sense making as the participant, thus are an integral and integrated component of the research.

# 3.3.3 Idiography

Finally, IPA is underpinned by idiography; a concern with the particular (Smith et al., 2009). It focuses upon understanding the experience of a particular phenomenon for a particular sample by establishing detail through in-depth analysis. Unlike other approaches, IPA is less concerned with making wider generalisations. However, by establishing in-depth understanding of an individuals' experience, it makes connections with others' experiences of the same phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

# 3.4 Rationale for choosing IPA

My rationale for choosing IPA is as follows. Firstly, Smith et al. (2009) suggest that the prime reason for choosing IPA must be because it is consistent with the researcher's ontological and epistemological position. Smith et al. (2009) state that "IPA subscribes to social constructionism" (p.196) and is concerned with the individuals' perception of a phenomenon, not with creating a new objective truth (Smith et al., 1999). Coming from a constructionist position, the acknowledgement that the researcher can only interpret the participant's truth rather than reproduce it entirely was important. IPA also aligns with interpretivism through its hermeneutic underpinnings and explicit acknowledgement of the researcher's part in the research.

Secondly, IPA resonated with my own values as a TEP. Reid et al. (2005) aptly describe understanding experience as the 'bread and butter' of psychology and IPA allows psychologists to learn about experience from the experts themselves. IPA situates the participants as the experts and this aligns with my own approach and values in my practice.

IPA is concerned with "giving voice" to individuals (Noon, 2018, p.75). It was important for me to 'give voice' to the YP in AP as they are often regarded as a group who things are 'done to' rather than 'with', and who arguably have had little say in their education. The idiographic approach appealed to me as it enabled me to listen to each individuals' experience of this particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2017). However, unlike other qualitative approaches, IPA enables the researcher to "make interpretations about meaning, cognition, affect and action"

(Reid et al., 2005, p.20). The interpretive nature of IPA was important to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and to address my research aim.

Finally, IPA is considered useful for researching 'unexplored territories' (Reid et al., 2005). This was deemed relevant for the current topic which is only recently receiving research interest. Furthermore, due to there being few studies which explore this particular facet of the topic, I approached the present research with little expectations or theories; therefore, the inductive approach of IPA was deemed appropriate.

#### 3.5 Alternative considerations

Before deciding on IPA as a methodology, I reflected on using other approaches including Narrative Inquiry (NI) and Grounded Theory (GT).

NI was considered as a methodology for this study. NI has some things in common with IPA which made it a sensible consideration for this research. Notably, it seeks to hear individuals' stories and experiences. However, NI seeks to preserve the stories of the participants, rather than make interpretations about their experiences (Wells, 2011). For the present research, interpretation was important in addressing the RQs.

GT was also considered for this study. It has many parallels with IPA (Smith et al., 2009) and is useful for exploring under-researched areas (Moriarty, 2011). However, it was felt that the scope of the research study would not lend itself to a GT study; GT tends to require a larger sample which would be challenging given the hard to reach nature of the population (Pirrie & Macleod, 2009). Unlike GT, this study does not seek to generate theory, but rather seeks to understand individuals' experiences of the phenomenon through detailed and in-depth analysis.

# 3.6 Research design

This research set out to understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transitioning to post-16 and the perceived impact attending an AP has had on them. In designing this research, I was led by my own values and practice as a TEP. In my practice, I am led by the theory that CYP are influenced and impacted by the systems within which they exist, and these systems should be considered when attempting to understand CYPs' experiences. This is underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Model (1979). It is this thinking which informed the design of this research and my approach to addressing the research aim and the following RQs:

- 1. How do YP experience KS4 in APs?
- 2. How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?
- 3. How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-16?
- 4. How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?

Based upon the grounds of pragmatism, that is "the choice of approach should be based upon the goals of the research" (Johnson et al., 2004, p.364), this research is designed in two parts. A visual representation of the two-part design, influenced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), is shown in Figure 1 and expanded upon below.

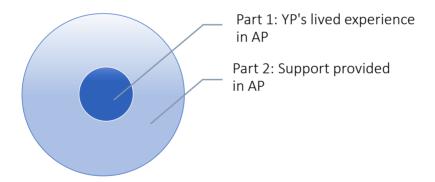


Figure 1 Graphic illustrating the two-part design of the research

Part 1 addresses RQ1 and RQ2 which concern the perceptions and lived experiences of the YP themselves. As such, the YP concerned took part in interviews which were analysed using IPA. Part 2 addresses RQ3 and RQ4 which seek to understand how staff support YP in AP and their transition to post-16. These questions concern the system around the child. As such, AP staff were involved in FGs which were analysed using TA.

In adopting this design, I intended to develop a fuller understanding of the phenomenon (Spiers & Riley, 2019) and address the research aim. My rationale behind the decisions made is elaborated upon throughout this chapter.

#### 3.6.1 Timescale

The timescale for the research is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Table showing timescale of research

Dates	Activity	
March 2019	Research proposal submitted for ethical consideration	
	by the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics	
	Committee	
August 2019	Ethical approval was granted in August 2019	
	(Appendix 2)	
September 2019	APs approached to take part in the research	
October 2019 – March 2020	Data collection and transcription	
March 2020 – April 2020	Data analysis	

# 3.6.2 Sampling

For the present research, it was necessary to recruit a purposive sample (Smith, 2017) as IPA requires participants who have first-hand experience of the phenomenon and thus have an experiential understanding of the topic (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

The purposive sample for Part 1 of the research was identified through applying the following inclusion criteria:

i) Pupils must be in Year 11. Although KS4 also applies to Year 10, it was felt that Year 11 would be better able to reflect on their experiences of KS4 and be readily thinking about post-16 transition.

- ii) Year 11 pupils must have been in the AP for at least a term, given the transient nature of the AP population.
- iii) Pupils who attend the AP for any reason. It was decided that all pupils are able to give valuable accounts of their experience in AP, regardless of their reasons for being there.

Smith et al. (2009) suggest that it is important to be able to get a "detailed account of individual experience" (p.51) and consider a sample of between three and six participants as appropriate. Based upon this, a sample of six pupils were sought.

Although males tend to dominate APs, understanding both males and females experiences weas deemed important because past research suggests that their experiences and opportunities available to them in AP may differ (Russell & Thomson, 2011). An even number of male and female participants were sought so that their experiences could be represented equally. It is not important for the purposes of this study to obtain a statistically representative sample as IPA is concerned with the individuals' experience.

A purposive sample of AP staff were sought for Part 2 of the research. Staff members who were considered to have a key role in supporting YP in KS4 or their transition, and could therefore provide information relevant to the RQs, were included in the sampling. Following Braun and Clarke's (2013) recommendation about the number of participants in a FG, between three and five participants were sought from each AP.

#### 3.6.3 Recruitment

Letters were sent to the Headteacher of each secondary aged AP in the LA inviting them to participate (Appendix 3), alongside an information sheet which explained the research (Appendix 4). The Headteachers of interested schools were asked to distribute information sheets (Appendix 5) and consent forms (Appendix 6) to the relevant staff.

Headteachers were asked to identify a staff member responsible for co-ordinating the recruitment and participation of pupils in the study. The named staff member was asked to distribute flyers (Appendix 7) to Year 11 pupils. Interested pupils were asked to approach this staff member to express their initial interest. It was considered that this named staff member

would typically be more approachable and accessible to pupils than the Headteacher. A date was then arranged for the researcher to go into each school to meet with the interested Year 11 pupils and provide further information on the study. The pupils who wanted to take part were provided with consent forms (Appendix 8) and information sheets (Appendix 9) to take away and consider before giving consent. Potential participants were provided with a stamped addressed envelope to return their consent forms in the post or return to the named staff member. They were also given parent/carer information sheets (Appendix 10) to share with their parent/carer.

#### 3.7 Methods of data collection

Multiple methods for collecting data were used in this study: semi-structured interviews, creative methods and FGs. My rationale for selecting each method is discussed below.

#### 3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are identified by Smith (2011) as the most common method of collecting data for IPA studies. They allow for collaborative meaning making and sense making between the researcher and participant (Smith, 2011). Reid et al. (2005) suggest that one-to-one semi-structured interviews aid rapport and allow for in-depth discussions where the participant can "think, speak and be heard" (p.22). Using interviews that were flexible enough to develop rapport was particularly important for this study as only one interview would be carried out with each participant. As I approached the data with no preconceived ideas, being able to explore different lines of enquiry as they arose made semi-structured interviews a sensible choice.

An interview schedule was created to provide an overall structure to the interview (Appendix 11). Interviews were audio recorded then transcribed verbatim. Smith et al. (2009) suggests IPA does not require the transcriber to include prosodic aspects of the recording as it is only concerned with the meaning of what is said.

Talking to the YP about their personal experience of the phenomenon is central to this study. However, as a TEP with knowledge of the population group, I felt that the traditional one-to-one interview context may be limiting for YP who find it difficult to verbally discuss their experiences due to social or language difficulties. Issues such as these can limit the value of interviews (Smith et al., 2017). However, the use of creative methodologies can reduce some of these issues and are increasingly used when carrying out research with CYP (Robinson & Gillies, 2012). Taking this into account, I used a creative method to support the semi-structured interviews, which I will now discuss.

#### 3.7.2 Creative method

Creative methods are widely used in qualitative research with CYP (Veale, 2005), prompted by changes in childhood discourse and children's rights. The UNCRC (1989) includes several articles that relate to involving children in research. Notably, Article 12 states that children have the right to express their views about matters which concern them and Article 13 states that children have the right to express themselves using whatever medium they wish, and that these ways may be different to adults. These articles are relevant when considering the importance of involving CYP in research and ensuring they can give their views in a way that suits them. As discussed in the literature review, there are several examples of creative methods that have been used successfully to support interviews with this population including life grids (Jalali & Morgan, 2018) and picture sheets (Hart, 2013).

Larkin and Thompson (2012) suggested that in IPA research, it can be helpful to use "additional tools to facilitate understanding between the researcher and participant" (p.104). Boden et al. (2019) explored the increasing use of visual methods within IPA studies. They suggested that using visual methods can be complementary when researching the lived experience using IPA. It can help researchers to get "experience-near" (Boden et al., 2019, p.219) by allowing participants to express and interpret their experiences using visual imagery and metaphor, reducing the initial need for verbal language. Boden et al. (2019) suggest that visual methods help to generate rich in-depth data and encourage "insightful metaphoric verbal accounts" (p.223); metaphors are considered significant in IPA (Smith, 2011). Furthermore, Klein et al. (2016) suggest that creative methods are helpful in joint knowledge production between researcher and participants, which is important in IPA. As such, I decided that it would be

beneficial to utilise a creative method when carrying out the interviews. I chose to adapt the Tree of Life (ToL) for use as a creative method; my rationale for this is discussed below.

# 3.7.2.1 Rationale for using the Tree of Life

I was introduced to the ToL on the DEdPsy course. The ToL is psychosocial support tool that is underpinned by Narrative Practices (REPSSI, 2007). Developed by Ncube and Denborough (2007), the ToL was initially used as a therapeutic tool to support vulnerable CYP affected by HIV/AIDs in Africa. However, Lock (2016) suggests that the ToL is a useful and versatile tool which can be utilised by EPs for intervention or assessment and to listen to YPs' views. In my practice as a TEP, I adapted the ToL to gather the views of YP in school about their strengths, aspirations and support network.

The ToL uses the widely recognised metaphor of a tree to explore people's stories of strength, hopes and values (Lock, 2016). The metaphoric basis of the tool lends itself well to IPA, which values metaphors in understanding experience (Smith, 2011). Different elements of the tree represent aspects of peoples' lives (REPSSI, 2007), as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Aspects of the ToL

ToL	Topic explored
Roots	Origins
Ground	Present situation
Compost	Things to leave behind
Trunk	Strengths and skills
Branches	Hopes and aspirations
Wind	Possible challenges
Leaves	People who are important
Fruits	'Gifts' received

During the process of creating the ToL, the facilitator has the opportunity to engage in rich conversations to explore children's stories (REPSSI, 2007). From my own experience of using this tool when talking to CYP, I felt that it could be adapted for use as a creative method in this research. Stark et al. (2019) adopted the ToL as a research method to explore the resilience of adolescent refugees. They used the ToL as a tool for participants to narrate their own

experiences and suggested it worked well as a facilitatory tool which focused on strengths and positives, rather than difficult pasts. This led me to consider its applicability and utility as a supportive method in this study.

I decided to adapt the ToL to focus specifically upon school-based experiences so that only information relevant to the RQs was discussed (as shown in Appendix 11).

#### 3.7.3 FGs

Larkin and Thompson (2012) suggested that expanding the design to include interviews with other respondents related to the participants can be helpful to add depth and range to an IPA study. FGs were chosen as an appropriate method of gathering information from staff in order to answer RQ3 and 4. Using an additional method of data collection also allowed me to triangulate the information which contributes to the 'trustworthiness' of the research, an indicator of a quality IPA study (Larkin and Thompson, 2012).

FGs were selected for the following reasons. Firstly, FGs align with the constructionist position of the researcher; they enable the researcher to observe the social construction of the topic and what the group think about it (Caillaud & Flick, 2017). FGs are said to enable a more 'naturalistic' conversation than a typical interview and allow for debate and elaboration which may not occur in a one to one interview (Braun & Clarke, 2013). FGs are also considered to facilitate collective sense making (Frith, 2000); this was important in answering RQ3 and RQ4 which looks at how practice could be developed. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that taking part in a FG can be empowering and can raise the group's consciousness of an issue which can lead to change; this was deemed appropriate in addressing RQ4.

A topic guide was used to guide the FGs (Appendix 12).

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

I will now discuss the ethical issues which were considered in designing this research.

### 3.8.1 Informed consent

The notion of 'informed consent' is a central component within the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2014). It requires the CYP to receive information in a way in which they understand so that they are fully informed and are competent to give voluntary consent (Kirk, 2007). Participants were given information verbally at the information session, and again at the start of the interview. Time was set aside for questions. They were also provided with information sheets which included simple language and visual aids to support reading and understanding. Participants were given time between receiving information and giving consent in order to allow participants to process the information, seek further information and to reduce any obligation to take part. Davids et al. (2001) state that traditionally, gaining informed consent from participants was a 'one off' event; however, informed consent is now considered an 'ongoing process'. As such, participant consent was sought repeatedly throughout the research process; in addition to the above, participants' consent was gained at the start of the interview, throughout the interview (by asking if they are happy to continue) and at the end.

Whilst every effort was made to obtain informed consent, the researcher acknowledges that 'informed consent' within qualitative research can be a difficult claim to make. Weatherall et al. (2002) suggest that, whilst it is possible to obtain informed consent from participants with regards to the broader intent of the research, it is not necessarily possible to obtain informed consent for the analysis of the data or findings of the research. However, by continually seeking consent throughout the interview process, this issue is somewhat reduced.

### 3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The information sheets explained the confidentiality and anonymity requirements of the study. Limits to confidentiality were also explained. A confidentiality protocol was developed should risks of harm be disclosed (Appendix 13). Participants names were removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms at the point of transcribing. The transcriptions were stored on the University's secure database and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). Access to the transcriptions remained open to enable other researchers to access the data for future research, which participants were informed of. This did not affect the confidentiality or anonymity of the data.

Confidentiality within FGs brings about its own challenges. Establishing confidentiality and anonymity is more difficult within FGs due to participants potentially breaking confidentiality of the group. To address this, confidentiality was discussed with the group before and after the interview, and a verbal contract of confidentiality agreed. Although, there is little way of knowing whether this confidentiality is ever broken (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, within the context of these particular FGs, concern around confidentiality was reduced as the topic discussed was not sensitive or personal to participants, and only concerned practice in the setting which they all worked.

Participants were made aware that the name of the school would not be included in the research and the location would be broadly identified as the North West of England.

# 3.8.3 Doing no harm

Protection of research participants is the responsibility of the researcher (BPS, 2014). The risks of doing harm to participants during this study were minimised in the following ways. The ToL utilises positive psychology and solution focused approaches and has previously been used to research highly sensitive events (Stark et al., 2019). I argue that this makes it an appropriate tool to facilitate the interviews which were intended to be a positive experience which focused on pupils' support network, strengths and aspirations. However, it is acknowledged that talking about participants' 'origins' and 'things they want to leave behind' may be more sensitive. This risk was reduced by focusing only on school experiences rather than personal experiences. Furthermore, the researcher was able to utilise her training in counselling skills and as a TEP to apply interpersonal skills and recognise if participants felt uncomfortable.

The practice of 'debriefing', as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013), was also adopted. This involved finishing data collection by asking participants if they have any questions and providing the AP with a summary of the research upon completion.

#### 3.8.4 Power imbalances

Power imbalances were considered throughout the research process. This study incorporated a creative method when collecting data, which has been suggested to reduce the power

imbalances sometimes seen in one-to-one interviews (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Led by IPA principles, the importance and value of the YP's unique voice and their position as the expert was reiterated throughout the recruitment and interview process. As a TEP, I address power imbalances when working with CYP on a daily basis by utilising interpersonal skills, being empathetic and adapting my communication style to build a rapport and develop trust. These skills were used in the interviews and some time was spent engaging in 'problem-free talk' to help the participants feel at ease.

In considering power imbalances in pupil interviews, it is important to recognise the issue of 'interviewing across difference' (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Despite being older than the participants and in some cases a different gender, arguably the most significant difference between the researcher and participants was social marginalisation. It is acknowledged that the participants are more socially marginalised than the researcher. This is particularly problematic when analysing data, especially when taking an interpretative approach such as IPA. However, efforts were made to reduce this by remaining close to the raw data, revisiting it regularly and including verbatim extracts from the participant in the write up (Smith et al., 2009).

#### 3.8.5 Dual role

As a TEP working in the LA which the research took place, there was a dual role present. Dual roles can impact upon the data in a variety of ways which affect both the relationships with participants, ethics and the data collected (Richards & Schwartz, 2002). The impact of this was reduced in the following ways. Firstly, the researcher did not have a relationship with the participants previously. The information sheets made clear that there was no obligation for the school, staff or pupils to take part. It was also made clear that the research was undertaken as a requirement for the DEdPsy course and was not associated with the LA. Furthermore, given my psychological background, it was acknowledged that my role in the AP could be misconstrued. As such, the extent of my involvement was made explicit and it was stipulated that no further work would be carried out with the school or pupils. Finally, the information sheets made clear that the ToL was an adapted version of a therapeutic tool and would only be used to help pupils tell their stories; it would not be 'therapy', which may be misinterpreted. To reinforce this, the term 'Therapy' was not used in the information given.

# 3.9 Data collection and sample

Three APs from one LA in the North West of England were involved in the study. Two of the APs were SSSs run by the LA and one AP was part of a Multi-Academy Trust. They were all rated 'Good' by Ofsted. All APs were located in areas of high socio-economic deprivation.

# 3.9.1 Interviews with pupils

Six YP in Year 11 from two APs were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to get an equal sample of pupils from each school. The limitations associated with this are considered in Chapter 5.

Interviews were carried out within participants' own school settings as it was felt participants would feel most comfortable there. The interview rooms were quiet and away from busy areas of the school to respect the YPs' privacy. However, to ensure the safety of all involved, key staff members knew where and when the interview would be held, and how long it would likely take. Both researcher and participant were seated in a way which allowed them to easily leave the room if required.

The interview was arranged at a time which was chosen by the YP so that any worries about missing an important lesson could be reduced. The interviews lasted around 1 hour. Pupils were given the option to engage in the ToL; two participants drew their own ToL, two asked the researcher to draw for them and two chose not to engage. One YP decided not to continue the interview after their break; the implications of this are considered in Chapter 5. Following the interview, participants were able to engage in a calming activity with a member of staff before returning to their normal school day.

# 3.9.2 FGs with staff

FGs of between three and four staff members were carried out at three participating APs, with the researcher acting as moderator. Staff members held the following roles: Careers Coordinator, SEND Coordinator, Pupil Pathway Manager, Behaviour Manager, Higher Level Teaching Assistant, Teacher and Deputy Headteacher.

The FGs took place in a quiet room in the APs and lasted around 45 minutes.

# 3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out in two parts, as per the research design (3.6). Part 1 involved the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with pupils using IPA. Part 2 involved the analysis of the FGs with staff using TA. Using multiple methods to analyse the data sets was deemed necessary to answer the RQs, in line with the pragmatic approach of the researcher. Braun et al. (2014) state that foremost, it is essential that there is a "good fit between your RQ, theoretical assumptions and approach" (p.97). Where RQs 1 and 2 were focused on the pupils' lived-experiences and their individual perceptions, thus lending itself to IPA, RQs 3 and 4 were concerned with understanding practice more broadly, thus making TA an appropriate choice. TA can be used flexibly with a range of data to answer a variety of RQs, including those which look for patterns across a data set (Braun et al., 2014) such as RQ3 and 4. TA also allows the researcher to explore both latent and semantic themes which was necessary in addressing these RQs (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

Spiers and Riley (2019) used both TA and IPA in their study. They argued that this resulted in findings which had both breadth (through TA) and depth (through IPA), and enabled them to gain a multi-dimensional understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, TA has associations with phenomenology (Guest et al., 2012 in Braun et al., 2014) and positions the researcher as part of the analysis, which aligns with the IPA methodology adopted in this study. Finally, as both methods were underpinned by the same epistemological stance, Clarke et al. (2015) argue that the findings from both analyses can be "meaningfully compared" (Spiers & Riley, 2019, p.279). As such, the two data sets were analysed in isolation and were later brought together in the discussion.

An inductive approach to both analyses was taken as I did not analyse the data with any preconceived ideas of themes, although my preconceptions were bracketed and noted in my reflexive journal.

The two methods of analysis will now be discussed.

### 3.10.1 Part 1: Analysis of pupil interviews using IPA

The interviews with the pupils were analysed using IPA. I followed Smith et al.'s (2009) process of analysis. Although Smith et al. (2009) suggest that their process is not prescriptive and can be deviated from, as a novice researcher new to IPA it felt appropriate to follow this guidance step-by-step. The six steps of analysis which were followed are depicted in Table 3. A detailed account of the process of analysis is provided in Appendix 14.

Table 3. Six steps of IPA (Smith et al., 2009)

# Steps of analysis in IPA

Step 1. Reading and re-reading

Step 2. Initial noting

Step 3. Developing emergent themes

Step 4. Searching for connections across emergent themes

Step 5. Moving on to the next case

Step 6. Looking for patters across cases

Table 4, taken from Smith (2019), was used to help me to recognise the different levels of analysis and which to focus my analysis on when carrying out IPA.

Table 4. Level of analysis in IPA (Smith, 2019)

Type of question	Level of Analysis	Density of IPA
		focus
1. What does that mean?	Literal	I
2. What does he mean?	Pragmatic/textual	III
	(puzzle)	

For transparency, examples of the analysis are included in the appendices (Appendices 15-17).

The drawings from the ToL were not analysed. Boden et al. (2019) suggest that drawings constitute as data in their own right, however state that they should only be "understood in relation to the participants' own meaning-making" (p.223). As such, it was decided that data from the verbal interview would be sufficient.

# 3.10.2 Part 2: Analysis of FGs using TA

The FGs were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA. Their six 'phases' of analysis were followed and are presented in Table 5. A detailed account of how I carried out each phase can be found in Appendix 18.

Table 5. Six phases of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

# Phases of TA

Phase 1. Familiarisation with the data

Phase 2. Initial coding

Phase 3. Searching for themes

Phase 4. Reviewing themes

Phase 5. Defining and naming themes

Phase 6. Producing the report

For transparency, examples of the following can be found in the appendices: initial coding of transcripts (Appendix 19), codes with extracts (Appendix 20), and codes with associated themes (Appendix 21).

# 3.11 Reflexivity

I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process. Reflexivity is considered by Braun and Clarke (2013) as "an essential requirement for good qualitative research" (p.37). Reflexivity involves the researcher reflecting upon how their thinking came to be and how their previous understandings and experiences impact upon their research (Haynes, 2012). Reflexivity is said to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the research (Berger, 2015) and increases the transparency of the research process (Coyle, 2015).

IPA acknowledges that the researchers are both a "part of and apart from the research" (Goldspink and Engward, 2019, p.291) thus, documenting this involvement is an important part of the research process. Goldspink and Engward (2019) reported that reflexive journals helped them to recognise, accept and hold their own positions when exploring the participants' world. The reflexive journal I engaged in during the research was guided by Hollenbeck (2015, p.163), as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Process of reflexivity, informed by Hollenbeck (2015)

1. Catch yourself in evaluation	Identify, question and reflect on initial thoughts
	and preconceptions

- 2. Create a passions, fears and beliefs list Consider what is meaningful and how I understand the construction of knowledge
- 3. Practice embodied awareness and Observe own emotional and physiological

# 3.12 Quality assurance

It is acknowledged that the quality of qualitative research should be judged differently to that of quantitative research. The criteria for evaluating quantitative research is often inappropriate if applied to qualitative research, given the different epistemological and ontological positions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For example, the notion of reliability is not applicable to qualitative research as it does not seek to achieve generalisability, nor does it acknowledge the researcher as part of the research itself. Instead 'trustworthiness' is a term often used to judge qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, there are different criteria for what constitutes good qualitative research. Smith (2011) identifies Yardley's criteria (2000) as useful in assessing the quality of an IPA study and so this will be used when considering the quality of this research. However, Smith (2011, p.24) also suggests further criteria specific to IPA, shown in Table 7, which were considered alongside Yardley's (2000) criteria.

Table 7. Quality criteria for IPA studies (Smith, 2011, p.24)

# Quality criteria for IPA studies

The paper should have a clear focus.

The paper will have strong data

72

The paper should be rigorous.

Sufficient space must be given to the elaboration of each theme

The following principles by Yardley (2000) were used to evaluate the quality of this research.

# 3.12.1 Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context can be demonstrated by establishing an awareness of the literature around the topic and linking this to the present study (Yardley, 2000). This will be demonstrated in Chapter 5. It can also be shown by having an understanding of the philosophy of the approach adopted and by acknowledging and reducing the ethical issues in the research (Yardley, 2000); these issues are acknowledged in this chapter. Furthermore, the choice of IPA itself arguably demonstrates sensitivity as it focuses upon the idiographic (Smith et al., 2009) and ensures that the participants' voices are heard. Smith et al. (2009) also suggest that data collection and analysis carried out in IPA requires sensitivity to context by understanding the interactional process of data collection, paying in-depth attention to participants' accounts and preserving verbatim extracts from participants. Furthermore, the use of the ToL approach demonstrated sensitivity by enabling participants to tell their own stories without imposing my own views.

# 3.12.2 Commitment and rigour

Rigour and commitment to the research was shown by reflecting upon my personal and professional connections with the topic in Chapter 1 and by demonstrating an understanding of the literature in Chapter 2. To establish rigour, a carefully selected homogenous sample was collected (Smith et al., 2009). The two-part approach to data collection and analysis also

demonstrated my commitment to the research by seeking to achieve a 'multi-layered understanding' (Yardley, 2000) of the phenomenon. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and FGs, with open-ended questions to allow for thorough data collection; this enabled me to hear participants' experiences and be an active participant in the research. The researcher was committed to ensuring participants felt confident in the environment through developing rapport, checking in and carrying it out at a time and place where the participant felt most comfortable. This was further supported through using the ToL as a facilitatory tool. Finally, by adopting a methodology which is considered suitable for a novice researcher (Smith, 2004), I was able to demonstrate methodological competence.

# 3.12.3 Transparency and coherence

Yardley (2000) highlights the importance of 'fit' between the RQs, theoretical framework and methods used to ensure transparency and coherence; this has been described and evidenced at length in this chapter. Disclosure of my own position, motivations and experiences were also made explicit in Chapter 1. Transparency is further demonstrated by discussing the analysis and data collection in detail in this chapter and by providing evidence through the use of quotes in Chapter 4. Extracts of analysis are also included in the appendices for the reader. In doing this, I have attempted to leave a 'decision trail' (Sandelowski, 1986) which can be followed and considered by the reader.

The coherency of the narrative and argument will be judged by the reader.

# 3.12.4 Independent audit

Independent audit refers to leaving a trail of evidence which enhances transparency. I have included interview schedules, annotated transcripts and tables of themes in the appendices. This is identified as "good discipline" by Smith et al. (2009, p.183) and offers a means of assessing the credibility of the research.

# 3.12.5 Impact and importance

As I am completing a professional doctorate, it is important that this research is applicable to the profession and the groups or individuals it seeks to support. The apparent dearth of research in this area and the recent Government attention highlights the importance of this study. The impact and importance of the study was considered in Chapter 1 and is argued further in Chapter 5.

# 3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive account of my research methodology and discussed my rationale behind the decisions made throughout the process. It also provided detail about the methods of data collection and the analyses carried out. It hopes to provide the reader with a 'decision trail', enabling them to make judgements about the quality of this research. My own reflections of the quality of this research were also made explicit. The next chapter will report on the findings of this research.

# 4 Findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

"A data set can tell us about a number of different things, depending on the questions we ask of it" (Willig, 2013, p.19).

In this Chapter, I present the findings from the analyses I carried out as described in Chapter 3. This chapter is divided into two parts reflecting the two parts of the research:

# Part 1: IPA of pupil interviews

The first part of the chapter will set out the themes identified from pupil interviews using IPA. Smith et al. (2009) suggest an IPA study can be written up in different ways. Due to the strengths of the themes which emerged across cases, the findings will be presented by themes rather than participant. However, I will firstly present a summary for each of the participants accounts in the form of 'Pen Portraits', thus maintaining the idiographic focus of IPA. Alongside the individual accounts, I will include an image of each participants' ToL which were co-constructed during the interviewing process (Figures 2-5). Then, I will present my analysis across cases, according to the most prominent themes. I have included tables for each theme which demonstrate the convergence and divergence within the group, an indication of quality in an IPA study (Smith, 2011).

This analysis was guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What are YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP?
- 2. How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?

# Part 2: TA of FGs

In the second part of this chapter I will report the themes identified through TA of staff FGs, as described in Chapter 3. First, staffs' pseudonyms will be provided and grouped by school. I will then provide a graphic representation of the three themes before going on to discuss the subthemes in detail, presenting quotes to support my analysis.

This analysis was guided by the following research questions:

- 3. How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-16?
- 4. How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?

Chapter 5 will draw together the two parts and offer further interpretation of the findings, discussed within the context of the background literature and professional practice.

# 4.2 Part 1: IPA of pupil interviews

# 4.2.1 Pen Portraits

# **Finlay**

Finlay joined the AP in Year 10 on a medical placement. He experienced bullying in his mainstream school and talked about his difficult upbringing. Finlay missed a significant amount of school and I interpreted that this contributed to him having low self-esteem and self-worth. However, I identified that he experiences a sense of belonging in the AP and has developed close attachments with the staff there. Finlay shares his problems with them and experiences unconditional positive regard, which he feels is developing his confidence. The staff in the AP have fostered Finlay's aspirations and belief in himself, leading him to want to pursue a career with animals — a passion of his. Finlay was unsure about his readiness for college and his worries mirrored the difficulties he experienced in mainstream school. However, he sees post-16 as an opportunity for personal development.

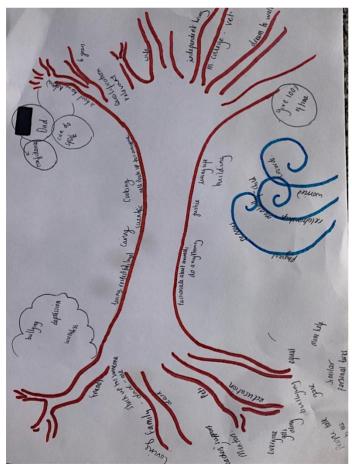


Figure 2. Finlay's ToL

# Lauren

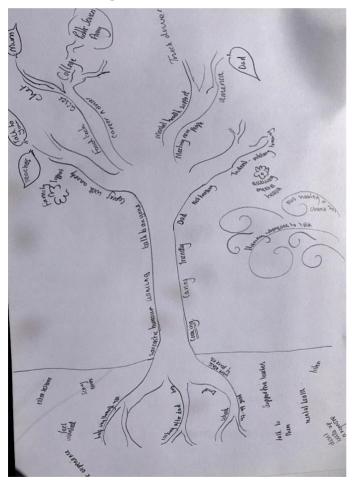
Lauren joined the AP at the start of Year 10 on a medical placement. Lauren experienced bullying in her mainstream school which I interpreted had had a profound impact upon her and her family. She was overwhelmed by the larger class sizes and frequently sought proximity to adults to help her to feel safe, although this was not always available. However, in AP, Lauren experienced feeling safe and contained by the staff there, a prominent theme throughout her account. It was interpreted that she experienced staff being attuned to her needs and they were able to give her their time through planned sessions and ad hoc support. Lauren experienced a calm and relaxed learning environment with smaller class sizes which enabled her to access learning in AP. Since being at the AP, Lauren has experienced feelings of happiness and increased confidence.



Figure 3. Lauren's ToL

# Freddie

Freddie joined the AP towards the end of Year 10. He was referred to the AP for his behaviour and also MH needs. Freddie's experiences in AP are largely positive. It was identified that he experiences positive regard from the staff there and feels valued as an individual. Freddie perceives that the AP has helped him to manage his emotions and he no longer needs to 'bottle everything up'. Freddie has had mixed relationships in the AP; he stated that he misses his old classmates and mainstream school which was in his local community. However, he considers them to be distracting from his learning. Freddie talked about the importance of gaining respect from others and this was something which is valued in his family. Freddie has experienced poverty in the past and it was interpreted that this is a driver for his success in the future. He sees his future as being positive after being at the AP. However, Freddie recognises that he will likely need someone to talk to help him navigate difficult relationships and support his motivation in post-16.



# Lily

Lily joined the AP on a medical placement in Year 11. Lily had a difficult time in mainstream because of relationships with her peers and her own anxiety. As a result, she missed a lot of school which she feels angry about and perceives as unjust. Lily felt that MH was not properly understood in her mainstream school and this defined her negative experience there. It was identified that Lily lost touch with education until she joined the AP. Lily experiences AP extremely positively; she values her relationships with the staff very highly. Feeling accepted and a sense of belonging were salient themes throughout her account; this was contrasted with her mainstream experience where she seemed to feel alienated and rejected. Lily perceives her own confidence to have increased since being at the AP and it was interpreted that she has experienced a change in her identity. Lily thinks that her future has changed for the better because of AP.



#### Kiara

Kiara joined the AP in Year 10 on a medical placement. It was interpreted that Kiara experiences a strong connection with the school and the staff in it. She has respect for the staff and feels respected by them. I interpreted that Kiara values being consulted about her views; this led her to feeling 'done with' rather than 'done to'. This seemed to indicate that she now feels a sense of control over her own future and wants to learn and better herself. She talked about regretting her behaviour previously and wishes she could share her hindsight with younger pupils. Family is important to Kiara and she perceives the AP to have supported her and her Mother through some difficult times, which she reported contributed to her improved relationship with her. Kiara looks forward to her transition to college and it was interpreted that she sees this as a new beginning and an opportunity to move away from negative experiences in her past. Kiara has a strong sense of what she wants to do in the future and perceives the AP to have contributed to her increased confidence in being able to achieve it.

# Connell

Connell joined the AP in Year 10 after being PEx from his mainstream school. Connell reported that his exclusion was unjust and undeserved, but he would like to return to mainstream if given the chance. Connell perceives that he does not fit in to the AP and it was interpreted that he experiences a lack of belonging there, which impacts upon his social identity and sense of self. He thinks that attending AP has limited his opportunities for the future and it was interpreted that this has affected his desire to engage with education.

# 4.3 Analysis across cases

Through engaging with the step-by-step analytic process set out by Smith et al. (2009), I identified three overarching themes which were prominent across all participants' accounts. Due to their salience, the analysis will be presented by themes: 'A fundamentally different experience to mainstream'; 'Perceived impact of attending AP' and 'Perceptions of transitioning to Post-16'. Smith et al. (2009) state that there is no prescriptive way of identifying which themes are salient, however suggests that themes which occur for one third of participants could be considered salient across cases. Convergence and divergence within each theme are discussed throughout this chapter and illustrated in the tables provided.

The themes identified across cases are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Themes across cases

Over-arching themes	Super-ordinate themes	Sub-ordinate themes		
A fundamentally different	Sense of belonging	Social belonging		
experience to mainstream		Experiencing acceptance and regard		
	Staff support	Supportive relationships		
		Understanding of MH		
	Learning environment	Physical environment		
		Different behavioural		
		norms		
Perceived impact of attending AP	Impact on self	Emotional competence		
		Attitudes towards		
		education		
		Sense of self		
	Impact on post-16 outcomes			
Perceptions of	Preparation and support	Implicit and explicit		
transitioning to Post-16	needs	preparation		
		Endings		
	Perceptions of post-16	Opportunity for change		
		Perceived challenges and		
		support needs		

# 4.3.1 Overarching Theme 1: Fundamentally different experience to mainstream

All participants experienced the AP as being fundamentally different to their mainstream school. Mainstream school was a significant and prominent part of their stories and was often held in stark contrast to their experience in AP in the following ways: 'Sense of belonging', 'Staff support' and 'Learning environment'. Divergence and convergence in this theme are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Divergence and convergence in Theme 1.

Fundamentally different experience		Lauren	Finlay	Connell	Freddie	Kiara	Lily
to mainstream							
Sense of	Social belonging		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
belonging	Experiencing	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х
	acceptance and						
	regard						
Staff	Supportive	Х	Х		Х	х	Х
support	relationships						
	Understanding of MH	Х	Х		Χ		Х
Learning	Different behavioural	Х		х		х	
environment	norms						
	Physical environment	Х		Х		Х	Х

# 4.3.1.1 Sense of belonging

A sense of belonging was one of the most prominent themes which emerged across the data sets. A sense of belonging was understood in relation to 'Experiencing acceptance and regard' and 'Social belonging'. This was experienced differently by participants, with divergence in the group.

# Social belonging

This theme was identified in most participants' accounts. Lily experienced a strong sense of social belonging in the AP, which was in stark contrast to her mainstream experiences where she felt she did not fit in. In the AP, she experiences a strong connection with her peers; this seemed to be experienced through sharing problems. Lily refers to a 'therapy' group with her

peers suggesting that she experiences validation from being part of the group and trusts her peers.

Lily: My classroom is very close knit. Very.

Finlay: Like mainstream you're divided [...], here we're all just one big group and no one cares.

Finlay also experienced a sense of connectedness with his peers and referred to being in 'one big group'. He compared this with his mainstream school where he experienced division amongst his peers. Finlay suggested that any differences within the group are disregarded and it is their similarities which bring them together. He talked about how the pupils in the AP have been through similar life experiences to him, something which he did not experience in mainstream and caused him to feel like an outsider.

Finlay: At mainstream no one went through the same stuff as me.

This was also reported by Freddie, who talked about having shared experiences with his peers in AP. Freddie had similar experiences in mainstream school to his AP peers which helped him to form connections with them. This was important for Freddie who previously had close relationships with his peers in mainstream school.

Freddie: It's like they know what you've been through with mainstream because they've been through the same thing.

Other participants experienced a lack of social belonging in the AP. Connell had a strong sense of belonging to his mainstream school and found the loss of the connection with his mainstream peers difficult. Connell struggled to make friends in the AP as he saw himself as different to them and felt that he did not belong. He appeared to make social comparisons between his AP peers and himself in an effort to distance himself from the group. Connell seemed to have developed a strong sense of in-group and out-group, maintaining his attachment to mainstream school as the in-group.

Connell: I shouldn't really be here. [...]. You have to watch out for them. Weird.

Like Connell, Kiara felt different to her peers in the AP. She did not want to connect with her peers and perceived some to have a potentially negative influence on her. She suggested that other pupils in the AP are 'not like' her, indicating she does not identify with the group. However, Kiara did experience a sense of belonging to the AP through regard and acceptance.

# Experiencing acceptance and regard

The subtheme 'Experiencing acceptance and regard' was identified in most participants' accounts and contributed to their sense of belonging within the AP.

Kiara experienced a sense of belonging in the AP by feeling valued and important. Kiara talked about being asked for her opinion on the support available to her in school and being consulted about wider organisational decisions. This contributed towards Kiara's commitment to and investment in the AP.

Kiara: They wanted our opinion of them before they even made a decision. They wanted what we thought of her.

Freddie also felt valued and important in the AP. He compared this to mainstream school where he perceived they valued exam results rather than the individual.

Freddie: It gives you that, like, sense of like you're wanted, [...] in mainstream and they're just shoving you to the side [...] but here, they'll pick you up.

Freddie experienced rejection from mainstream; he refers to being 'shoved' 'to the side' which is perhaps a metaphor for his exclusion. He also referred to being sent down a 'bumpy road' which is perhaps a metaphor for an undesirable future. However, Freddie feels like the AP has 'picked him up' which suggests that he feels held and accepted by the AP, despite his difficult past.

Lily too experienced feeling cast-aside in mainstream school and contrasted this with AP where she experienced belonging. Lily feels understood and accepted by the AP:

Lily: Like they don't leave you out of things. If you have an anxiety or panic attack, [...] my old school would just have said 'get over it'. Or they'd put you in the storage cupboard. [...] It was awful. It sounds really bad.

Lily referred to being 'put in the storage cupboard' in her mainstream school. The interview was paused whilst the researcher explored the 'storage cupboard' further with Lily. Through discussion with Lily it was established that the storage cupboard she was referring to had been repurposed as a small meeting room within the classroom and was used for intervention. The researcher was satisfied that this was not a safeguarding concern and proceeded with the interview. Although Lily was in fact speaking literally here, this also has obvious metaphorical connotations. Lily felt like she was being hidden away, forgotten about and not accepted in the class. Lily was acutely aware of the connotations associated with this and seemed to have internalised these feelings.

Finlay: At mainstream [...] they just kind of throw you in the deep end. But here they let you do it at your own pace.

Finlay used the metaphor of being 'thrown in at the deep end' when referring to mainstream school. Finlay's metaphor suggests that he previously felt rejected by mainstream school and experienced a lack of regard for his individual needs. He contrasted this with his experience in the AP where he feels valued as an individual and is able to progress at his own pace, without feeling excluded.

# 4.3.1.2 Staff Support

The super-ordinate theme of staff support was experienced by all participants, with the exception of Connell who struggled to trust the staff in AP. The importance of staff support was experienced positively by the other participants through 'Supportive relationships' and staffs' 'Understanding of MH'.

Supportive relationships

Supportive relationships with staff members were valued by five participants. For some participants, their relationships with staff were akin to friendships or even family. For others, relationships with staff were fostered through the 'time' they shared.

Lily talked about being able to develop positive relationships with the staff in AP. She referred to them as being 'amazing' which emphasises the positive regard she has towards them. Lily discussed how staff are referred to by their first names and the impact this had on her ability to talk to them openly:

Lily: It makes you feel a lot more comfortable. A LOT. It makes them seem more like a friend or carer than a teacher.

Kiara's account also highlights the close connection she experiences with the staff and refers to them as 'like friends' and also 'like family'. Kiara's relationship with staff is based on mutual respect and a sense of perceived equality. She feels comfortable in sharing personal information with them and trusts that they will not judge her for it.

Kiara: You don't feel like you're any less of a person than them.

Kiara's statement here further brings to light the importance of respect and equality in her account as it is contrasted with her negative experiences with staff in her mainstream school. Kiara felt that power and authority were exploited by some staff in mainstream, which caused her to feel belittled, embarrassed and dehumanised to an extent.

Freddie draws similar comparisons between his relationships with staff in the AP and in mainstream.

Freddie: Well, it's like they'll actually talk to you like a human being, not like you're a robot [...] They'll take time out of their own time...

Freddie's use of a 'robot' metaphor seems to indicate that he felt that staff did not think about his emotions in mainstream school and instead regarded him as a machine to produce results and behave in a prescribed way. Freddie experienced significant loss and grief during his time in mainstream school and having someone to talk to and listen to him was important. Freddie

placed emphasis on the 'time' given to him by staff in the AP as he used the word repeatedly, indicating this is highly valued. He also said that staff give 'their own time' to him which seemed to contribute to a perceived authentic relationship with staff.

'Time' was also salient in Lauren's account and contributed to her forming positive relationships with staff. Lauren struggled with social relationships in the AP and therefore considered teachers to be her friends in school. However, unlike Kiara, Lauren's friendships with the staff were a primary source of support for her. Lauren expressed a need for proximity to adults in her mainstream school, but this was not always met. However, in the AP staff are able to give Lauren the 'time' she feels she needs.

Lauren: Like at [mainstream] they're always rushing around [...], whereas here's more relaxed and calm. That's probably why I were how I were 'cos of all the teachers running round and being panicky so making me panic...

From Lauren's account, it seemed that staffs' availability provided the containment she needed and offered an outlet for her to talk through difficult emotions, something which Lauren thinks has contributed to her improved MH.

Finlay also valued the close relationships with staff and having someone to talk to about any problems.

Finlay: [The mentor] just lets you talk to her [...]. Like she calls me her school son. [...] 'Cos she's mostly done more of the things a mum should do than my actual mum...

Finlay seems to experience affection and satisfaction in being referred to as a 'school son' indicating there is an attachment there which resembles that of a mother and son relationship. The significance of this resonates because of Finlay's own difficult family circumstances.

# Understanding of MH

Pupils perceived staff to have a good understanding of MH and this was considered an important quality of the support they received.

Freddie talked about a key adult who supports him in school. He perceived her to have a good understanding of MH because of her own personal experiences, rather than any particular training. This understanding of MH, communicated through sharing personal experiences, seemed to contribute towards a sense of trust with the staff member. Her informal understanding of his MH needs was important for Freddie to feel comfortable and to accept the support.

Freddie: Well, there is a person in [AP] who I normally go to. She'll sit there. She'll make you a brew and she'll talk to you about problems, because she's been through mental health [...]

Both Lauren and Finlay perceive the staff in the AP to be competent and effective in supporting them with their problems. Finlay likened AP staff to psychiatrists which suggests he trusts and respects them and perceives them to be able to in help him with his problems.

Finlay: Well we have some teachers that are mentors and they will help you with your personal life, kinda like a psychiatrist...

For some pupils, the contrast between mainstream and AP staffs' understanding of how to respond to MH was at the forefront of their accounts. Lauren recalled her experiences at mainstream school where she struggled to go into classes and felt that the staff 'got fed up' with her. She believed that the mainstream staff did have her best interests at heart, however, were unsure how to support her and eventually resorted to punitive measures. Similar experiences in mainstream school were recalled by Lily:

Lily: They'd always leave us with the attendance award people if we had a problem in class. Even though their job was to look after us, they'd just leave us.

Lily perceived that her mainstream school did not understand MH. Lily recalled being sent to staff who dealt with attendance issues in mainstream, which implies that Lily's struggles with anxiety were perceived as an attendance concern. This has connotations that her anxiety is a behavioural problem which needs to be reprimanded. Lily also perceived there to be an

avoidance or a deferring of accountability by the mainstream staff who were responsible for pupils' wellbeing. She contrasted this with feeling understood in AP.

# 4.3.1.3 Learning environment

The overarching theme 'Learning environment' is considered in relation to the 'Physical environment' and 'Different behavioural norms'.

# Physical environment

The physical environment in the AP was discussed as being fundamentally different to that of mainstream. This included small class sizes, fewer pupils and quieter corridors. This seemed to have a pronounced impact on many pupils and was considered fundamental to their engagement in the AP. However, there is some divergence within this theme.

Lauren: [Small classes] made me stay in classes and get on with work. It's got me somewhere.

Lauren places substantial value on the small class sizes in the AP and the impact this has had on her emotional wellbeing and engagement in learning. Lauren also suggests that 'it's got [her] somewhere' which implies that it has and will impact upon wider aspects of her life and future.

Both Lily and Kiara also valued the small class sizes in the AP and reported experiencing reduced anxiety compared with mainstream school. Kiara drew comparisons with her experiences in mainstream school where she felt stressed and worried; she described mainstream corridors as being 'hunched together' which connotes feeling claustrophobic and trapped. Like Lauren, Kiara avoided education because of large classes and busy corridors. By attending a setting which had fewer pupils, both feel able to go to class.

Kiara: I couldn't cope with the corridors being full with pupils! I hated it. [...] But here [...] it's not all hunched together and crowded and you're not worried.

Conversely, Connell experiences the small environment very differently; he feels frustrated by

the small environment and perceives it as being restrictive. Connell finds the AP boring,

although acknowledges that the extra-curricular activities are good. He talked about getting

'stuff out of it', indicating that he perceives the activities as compensation for the boredom he

experiences day to day.

Connell: Dull innit. You're on one fucking corridor here aren't ya. One corridor

school. It's a bit boring but you get certain stuff out of it [...].

Different behavioural norms

Some pupils seemed to experience different behavioural norms in the AP compared to

mainstream. Connell experienced different or a lack of consequences for negative behaviour

in the AP which would have been disciplined in mainstream school. This seemed to lead him

to rationalise his own and others' challenging behaviour as being 'the norm' in AP:

Connell: Like you can be naughty and do what you want and not get kicked out or

excluded all the time.

Lauren talked about how her behaviour has changed since being in the AP. She seems to care

less about what others think about her and feels able to behave how she wants, perhaps without

inhibition.

Lauren: Like if I'm hyper I don't care whose around. Whereas if I was at mainstream

then there's more people, I would have been like in my shell a little bit more.

Kiara shared her experiences of challenging behaviour in AP; she suggested that pupils who

join the AP behave in a way which presents as being 'hard'. 'Hard' is associated with being

tough and perhaps cold or careless. Kiara attributed this to attending an AP and suggested that

their behaviour becomes challenging once they settle in. Kiara's account suggests that this is

an expectation or a norm in the AP. There appears to be some stigma within the community

around the behaviour of the children and reputation of the AP in Kiara's account.

*Kiara: They just think they're hard don't they.* 

92

Interviewer: [...] Where do you think that comes from?

Kiara: I don't know. Just because they're in a school like this, most likely.

Some of the participants seemed to experience a culture where 'being hard' and demanding respect through intimidation or aggression were valued. Whilst this tended to be in relation to the AP, as discussed above, it also seemed to arise from wider familial or community cultures.

Lauren talked about how she responds to problems or challenges with threats or aggression, stating that 'being hard' is a protective quality she has. Being 'hard' forms part of Lauren's identity; she is defensive of this quality and wants her peers to know about it, indicating it is a positive or preferred quality to have in her social group. Lauren also talked about her 'family name' and the associations and reputation this has in her local community:

Lauren: If they called Butler then that means you're strong and hard [...] like people can't mess with us or we'll get angry.

Freddie talked about demanding respect through intimidation or physical aggression. He understands such behaviour as being the best way to gain respect. Freddie reflected on stories his Dad had told him where he had 'squared up' with managers to resolve conflicts. Freddie talked about addressing challenges in a similar way in the future:

Freddie: If they say they're going to throw me out the door, I will tell them to do it, and if they try and do it, I will hit them.

He reflected that it might not be appropriate in the workplace but feels respect and 'standing up for yourself' is more important and is unlikely to change.

# 4.3.2 Overarching Theme 2: Perceived impact of attending AP

93

There was a sense of 'then and now' throughout the interviews as the pupils compared their current selves with their former selves in mainstream school, indicating that attending AP has had an impact on them. This was considered in terms of an 'Impact on self' and 'Impact on post-16 outcomes'. Divergence and convergence for this theme is illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10. Divergence and convergence in Theme 2

Perceived impact of		Lauren	Finlay	Connell	Freddie	Kiara	Lily
attending AP							
Impact on	Emotional	х			Х	Х	
self	competence						
	Attitudes	Х	Х	Х		Х	х
	towards						
	education						
	Sense of self	Х	Х	Х			
Impact on post-16		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
outcomes							

# 4.3.2.1 Impact on self

Pupils perceived the AP to have impacted upon aspects of their identity and self. Changes in pupils' 'emotional competence', 'attitudes towards education' and 'sense of self' were identified.

# **Emotional competence**

Freddie and Lauren discussed how they no longer 'bottle things up' which suggests that they have developed positive strategies to be able to cope with difficult feelings through talking with staff members. The metaphor 'bottling up' suggests that before joining the AP they would internalise their emotions and worries.

Freddie: It's like when I was in mainstream, I used to just bottle everything up [...], whereas here, I don't have to bottle anything up. I can tell the teachers, I can tell whoever and they'll sit down, listen and understand.

Kiara also talks about how she now responds to difficult situations differently and more positively.

Kiara: I know back then [...] I'd have been like 'you can fuck off'.

Attitudes towards education

Since being at the AP, Lauren is 'getting on with work' and experiencing increased commitment to learning. Lauren talked about having missed a substantial amount of learning and needing to keep up with her peers. Lauren seemed overwhelmed by the amount of work she had missed, however she also seemed to have a positive attitude towards 'catching up'.

Lauren: It were hard cos of all the things that I missed that I didn't know[...]. So, I'll probably learn that over the holidays.

Finlay talked about being 'denied' education previously, a child's right; he missed substantial amounts of learning as a result of bullying and MH difficulties which meant he could no longer attend school. Finlay suggests that these experiences have caused him to place increased value on education.

Finlay: Because I've been denied [education] in the past so... it's a bit important to me.

Lily also perceived that she has been denied education due to her MH needs not being met in mainstream school. Lily lost all hope in education when she 'dropped out' of her previous school and developed a negative attitude towards school generally. Now she 'looks forward to coming to school', indicating a significant change in her attitude towards it.

Lily: Oh, I think I'd still be at home to be honest. [...]. I wasn't happy, I was like I'm not really bothered Mum, I don't care. [...] So, I tried [AP] and I absolutely loved it!

Kiara talked about how her attitude towards education has changed and how she does not 'like messing around anymore'. She expressed frustration that other pupils do not want to learn,

95

which indicates how much she values her own learning. Since joining the AP, Kiara has taken ownership of her learning.

Kiara: I can't be arsed with you ruining my lesson because you can't be bothered.

Connell's attitude towards school has also changed since joining the AP. Connell experiences regret for his past behaviours in mainstream school and wants to return. However, he still has external attributions for his exclusion. Being in the AP has not changed these, nor has it changed his behaviour. Instead of changing his behaviour to be more positive, Connell talks about his behaviour being more challenging because he is in the AP. This has impacted upon his learning behaviours:

Connell: It's not too bad cos like you don't have to do your work all the time...

Connell also stated that he just 'puts up with it' indicating that he has resided to or accepted his current situation. In doing so, he seems to experience hopelessness and reduced motivation to try. He talked about his qualifications being restricted which has contributed to him developing a passive attitude towards his education.

Connell: [In mainstream] I'd be trying a lot harder, because I'd have something to work to if you know what I mean. I don't have nothing to work to in a school like this.

Sense of self

Lauren recognises a change in herself. She told stories which demonstrated her increased confidence and self-esteem. Lauren attributes her increased self-esteem to the mentoring sessions she has at the AP. Lauren frequently says 'I've come a long way' which seems to reinforce the notion of a change in self. It is also reflective of a journey which appears inextricably linked to her MH. Beyond feeling happier, Lauren talks about connecting with her friends more than she used to.

Lauren: Like I'm going out with my mates more now, like I used to.

[...] I'm actually doing something with my life instead of being stuck in...

This is significant for Lauren. She seems to have regained a positive sense of herself as an individual; she is reconnecting with a part of herself she perhaps lost during the negative experiences of bullying and trauma which occurred during her mainstream schooling. Lauren feels this has given her a renewed sense of purpose by 'actually doing something with [her] life'.

Finlay also talked about a time 'before' he came to AP. He suggests that since joining the AP, he has experienced increased confidence and self-esteem. Like Lauren, bullying had a significant impact on Finlay's sense of self. He struggled to see any positive qualities in himself and tended to see himself as not being likeable. This seems to have gradually improved over time at the AP through mentoring sessions and also through experiencing unconditional positive regard from key staff there:

Finlay: ... Like [mentor]'s helped me, she's given me confidence[...] Erm just, helped me. LIKED me.

Both Kiara and Lily have also experienced increased confidence since joining the AP; they seem to feel more comfortable in being themselves and expressing their views and opinions. Since joining the AP, both pupils seem to have developed a different response to challenges with their peers. Kiara seems to have gained a new respect for herself, particularly in relationships.

Kiara: Once I came here, I got my confidence and everything boosted. I didn't take shit anymore. I used to be a pushover...

Lily now sees herself as being dominant and no longer identifies with being 'shy'. It is unclear whether 'shy' was a label she gave herself or was given by others, but it appears to have negative associations for her and is an identity she no longer wants. It also seemed that Lily is trying to establish a higher position in the social ranks by physical assertion or intimidation. Regardless, Lily seems resolute in her change in self:

Lily: I'm completely different to how I was, so if I'm in the same room as them I'll probably start on them. That's how I am now.

Connell experiences conflicted identity since joining the AP. He considers himself wrongfully excluded and bullied out of mainstream school by staff who he perceives did not like him. He perceives himself as being 'not the worst' pupil in the mainstream school. However, this is conflicted with his current views of himself at the AP where he considers himself as 'one of the naughty ones'.

Connell: I come here and be naughty just cos I can. So, I'm being one of the naughty ones

It seems as if Connell is now adopting the identity of 'being naughty', a label which he was given by his teachers at mainstream school. As such, being at the AP seems to have distorted his sense of self resulting in him becoming confused about who he is or should be.

# 4.3.2.2 Impact on post-16 outcomes

All pupils talked about the impact they felt that attending AP would have on their future. There was significant divergence in the group's perceptions of this.

When considering the impact AP has had on her, Lauren frequently said 'I wouldn't be where I am now'. She suggested she would be in 'a horrible state' if she had not joined the AP indicating that she would not be in a positive place, perhaps emotionally or academically. Lauren feels that her grades have improved since being in the AP, which she thinks will have a positive impact on her future.

Lauren: Like I wouldn't be where I am now [...] I probably wouldn't have any grades at all if I were at [mainstream school].

Kiara suggested that there is some compromise on qualifications when attending the AP. She expressed that although there are fewer qualifications on offer, the AP enables pupils to access education and obtain some qualifications which they may not have been able to achieve in mainstream school. There appears to be a 'trade-off' whereby pupils in AP access fewer qualifications but are better supported to achieve these due to the support in place around their MH.

Kiara: I know you won't be able to get all the qualifications here you would in

mainstream but, like if you struggle, you have a better chance of getting your actual

GCSEs than you would at mainstream...

This was also interpreted in Freddie's account. Freddie talked about the difference in teaching

and resources at mainstream compared to the AP. He also discussed the impact of the transient

population in the AP and the impact this had on his learning. He perceived that he would have

achieved 'better results' in mainstream, but only if he MH needs were met:

Freddie: If they had the same teachers in mainstream that would sit down and

talk to you, I reckon I [...] would've got better results.

Finlay talked about how his aspirations have changed since being in in the AP. He had few

opportunities for success in his mainstream school and experienced failure frequently. Finlay

perceived his aspirations for the future to be limited in mainstream school because of this. In

the AP, Finlay has experienced more successes and has been encouraged by the staff in the AP

to strive for more.

Finlay: I had no goals when I was there because some of the people made it seem that

*I'd never achieve it, so I thought reyt what's the easiest job I know.* 

Interviewer: And here?

Finlay: They've just given me the confidence that I can.

Lily also perceived the AP to have changed her prospects for the future; she thought she would

not access any education or employment in the future and rely on her parents. However, since

joining the AP, Lily feels that she now has the confidence to be able to go to job interviews

thus expanding her opportunities in the future.

Lily: Well I thought I'd end up living off of my parents for the rest of my life really.

But now it's given me the confidence [...]. Which is very, very good because I'd just

stay at home if not.

Unlike the other pupils, Connell feels his opportunities have been limited by attending the AP.

This theme was prominent throughout Connell's account and was central to his sense making

99

of his experiences in AP. Connell perceived both his qualifications and career opportunities to be limited and is dissatisfied with the qualifications available to him.

Connell: [...] I can't be what I wanted to be without having all that behind me. [...]

Connell: Ah well it's like a downgrader isn't it. You won't get the job you would have had without [GCSEs].

Connell considers AP to be a 'downgrader' which suggests that he feels like he has been relegated or provided with a lower standard of education. Beyond this, Connell feels that he cannot be what or who he wanted to be; this suggests that Connell had a vision of his future self which he no longer feels is achievable.

# 4.3.3 Overarching Theme 3: Perceptions of transition

Pupils' perceptions of transition are considered in relation to two superordinate themes: 'Preparedness' and 'Perceptions of post-16'. Divergence and convergence in this theme are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Divergence and convergence in Theme 3

Perceptions of transitioning to		Lauren	Finlay	Connell	Freddie	Kiara	Lily
Post-16							
Preparedness	Implicit and	Х		Х		Х	Х
	explicit						
	preparation						
	Endings	Х				Х	
Perceptions of	Opportunity	Х	Х		Х	Х	
post-16	for change						
	Perceived	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х
	challenges and						
	support needs						

# 4.3.3.1 Preparedness

This superordinate theme refers to how pupils perceive they have been prepared for the transition. Two subordinate themes, 'Implicit and explicit preparation' and 'Endings', will be discussed.

# Implicit and explicit preparation

The preparation pupils received seemed to vary by school. Lily and Kiara placed value on both explicit and implicit ways of preparing them for leaving school. However, Lauren and Finlay seemed to be passive recipients of careers advice.

Lauren was initially unable to identify any experiences she has had in AP which have prepared her for transitioning to college. However, she acknowledged that the school are looking to provide work experience for her which will prepare her for work. It seemed that Lauren experienced this as being out of her hands and the responsibility of someone else rather than

her, which suggests she does not experience ownership of preparing for her post-16 setting.

Lauren: Like in mainstream I'd have had to find it myself, but here erm, the school

has provided the work placement for me [...] there's this one teacher which sorts

everything out for you...

Both Lily and Kiara talked about being explicitly taught particular skills which are relevant to

their post-16 transition including how to fill in forms and prepare for interviews. This seemed

to fill Lily with confidence that she will be able to do such tasks in the future. Kiara seemed to

value this as new information which she would not have acquired elsewhere.

Kiara: She explains how when you go into a meeting you have to be formal... You

can't like - you have to look the part; you can't come in tie half off.

Kiara also talked about more implicit ways she was prepared for post-16 by staff gradually

withdrawing the additional support in the classroom. Kiara felt this would prepare her for the

absence of additional support in college but also prepared her to cope with feeling stressed and

frustrated by her work.

Kiara: Because obviously college don't have that support in there [...]. So, if the

teacher is working with another pupil, then I have to sit there and wait. They're just

preparing us for that. Because sometimes we get stressed and I'll sit there and I'll

look at this question and it'll pee me off and I'll cry...

Connell also alluded to feeling implicitly prepared for 'the world' through the relationships

with staff in the setting. He talked about how he experiences some consequences for some of

his actions in the AP and has developed an understanding about the need to behave differently

in the outside world.

Connell: Well you can't be like that when you leave here can you. Cos you won't go

places. So, keep it in here and when you're out don't do it. Be normal, innit.

[...]

*Interviewer: So, what do you think about that?* 

102

Connell: It's good that you don't get away with everything. If you wanna be a bit nowty about it. It teaches you out in the world as well. So, you're not being a twat all the time.

# **Endings**

Whilst Kiara is excited about her future, she feels sad about leaving the school. She experiences an attachment with the school and staff which she wants to maintain after she leaves. Kiara talks passionately about her leavers' prom. This seems to help Kiara prepare for the emotion associated with leaving the school and forms an important 'ending' for her.

K: Sa-a-a-d, I love this school man! It'll be horrible, but I'll come back and visit definitely. [...] I can't wait for prom – they're doing prom. I've already got a dress and everything!

Similarly, Lily placed great importance on the prom. For her, prom is a defining event which marks the end of school. Lily seemed to fantasize about prom and have an emotional connection with the concept. Lily was worried she would miss out on prom by not attending a mainstream school and the AP has provided her with that defining ending.

# 4.3.3.2 Perceptions of transitioning to post-16

Participants shared their thoughts about transitioning to post-16 and there was considerable convergence in the group. The subordinate themes 'Opportunity for change' and 'Challenges and support needs' were identified.

# Opportunity for change

Kiara was very passionate about leaving school; she perceived it to be the beginning of a fresh start for her. Kiara aspires to leave the local area and 'go away'; she associates the area with negative relationships and trauma, experiences she wants to leave behind. Kiara also talked about her readiness to 'grow up' and college seems to be a defining experience of this internal transition. Kiara is quite clear in her aspirations for the future and going to college seems to be provide her with a sense of freedom to be able to make that change.

K: We just literally want to go. We just want to GO. Away. From this town[...] Can't

stand it.

Similarly, for Lauren, leaving school represents a significant internal transition from being a

child to being 'a big girl'. Lauren perceives transitioning to college will enable her to leave her

difficult past behind; this is poignant given the difficult journey she has been on through school

with regards to her MH and social relationships. In 'growing up', Lauren hopes to become

someone different to who she was in school.

Lauren: Like feels like I'm growing up.

*Interviewer: And what do you think about growing up?* 

Lauren: Good cos then I'm not always, I'm not always being like I were in the past...

Like Lauren, Finlay perceives college as an opportunity for change in terms of his own self-

development. He thinks college will be a new and challenging experience but hopes it will

encourage him to develop new skills and qualities.

Finlay: It matters 'cos I believe those 3 years will more form my character, [...]

college is about trying new things.

Freddie is looking forward to college and also perceives it as the start of a new beginning.

College is seen as a stepping-stone towards Freddie's preferred future. Freddie seeks financial

independence; he perceives himself as a burden on his Dad and carries a lot of responsibility

for this. Freddie's experience of poverty is motivating him to take ownership of his future and

ensure his financial security. He perceives the transition to college as a steppingstone towards

achieving this.

Freddie: I'm excited because it's different. [...] It'll get me to where I want to be.

Perceived challenges and support needs

104

The participants discussed the challenges they thought they might face in transitioning to college. All the pupils compared their prospective college to the AP when expressing their worries.

Lauren was largely positive about her transition to college; she had not considered any challenges she might face there. However, Lauren seemed to reflect on her negative mainstream experience when thinking about college. This suggests that she has made associations between the two mainstream environments and does not want her negative experience to be repeated. She compares this to the AP which she perceives to have been a positive experience.

Lauren: I don't like want anything bad to happen in college [...] I want college to go well. Like this school, like this school has gone well for me. I want it to be the same in college as well.

Having a support network in place is also important for Lauren; she wants the staff to be supportive and 'keep her happy' as they have done in the AP. It seems that Lauren hopes for the support in the AP to be 'the same' and replicated in college.

Similarly, both Lily and Freddie expressed that they will need the emotional support and understanding which they experience in the AP to continue into college.

Lily: Erm, to actually pay attention to me. [...] I think if they came up to you like what our art teacher does and all the rest of the staff here do, that would be very, very successful.

Freddie: Probably that figure to talk to. It's like because I can always talk to people here.

Freddie reflected on the behaviour policy in the AP which he perceived as being flexible and provides a second chance for any mistakes. He suggested that the post-16 environment is perhaps less forgiving. Freddie seems to think that he may need a 'second chance' if his current behaviour continues into post-16. Although Freddie has reflected on the positive changes in

his attitude and behaviour, it seems that these are not fully internalised and he may resort to a former self.

Freddie: It's like because if you mess up here, you've always got that second chance, but if you mess up in work, you'll get sacked.

Lily expressed that she is feeling nervous about going to mainstream college. Lily shared her worries about the class sizes which she thinks will be significantly different to those in the AP. Lily seemed to experience this as being quite overwhelming for her. Lily lacked certainty in her ability to cope with the larger class sizes, something which she struggled with in her mainstream school.

Lily: I'm nervous, quite nervous because I went to look around [College] and they said it would be like 20 per class... that's a lot to me, really a lot. But I will probably manage it.

Kiara did not perceive there to be any challenges in transitioning to college; she felt that her difficulties in the AP were subject specific and therefore would not continue. She did express some worries about relationships in college which reflected the challenges she experienced in mainstream school. However, Kiara felt any challenges with social relationships would be ameliorated by her having a friend who already attends the college. Kiara placed huge importance on one particular friend to help her with social relationships, managing any difficulties with college work and generally settling in. Kiara's friend is perceived as a protective factor during the transition:

Kiara: I know if my best mates there I'm not going to feel intimidated or anything, because she's got her own group and will let me slide in there and fit in. I think it'll be fine.

# 4.4 Part 2: TA of FGs with staff

Part 2 will set out the findings from the TA of the FGs. The FGs were carried out with staff from three APs whose role in school involved in supporting pupils in Year 11. Figure 6 below illustrates the makeup of the FGs using pseudonyms.



Figure 6. Staff members grouped by School FG

Figure 7 illustrates the three themes which were identified through the analysis. A Venn diagram has been chosen as, although each theme is distinctive, each one is interrelated with the other, reflective of the 'patchwork quilt' analogy used by Braun and Clarke (2013). The links between the themes will be explored further in Chapter 5. However, I will now present the findings for each theme in turn.

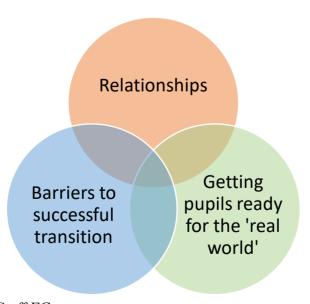


Figure 7. Themes for Staff FGs

## 4.4.1 Theme 1: Relationships

Relationships were identified as a prominent theme within staffs' accounts of the support provided in AP. The subordinate themes, illustrated in figure 8, indicate how relationships are important.

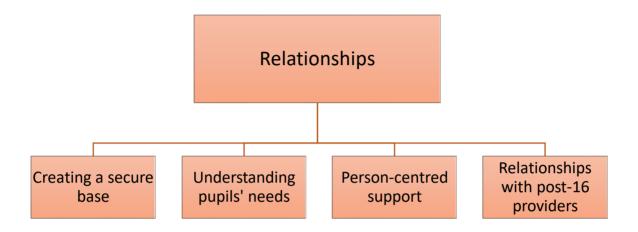


Figure 8. Subthemes for Theme 1: Relationships

#### 4.4.1.1 Creating a secure base

Staff spoke about developing trust with the pupils and creating a mutually respectful environment in the schools.

Nicola: [...] Nobody's more important than anybody else in this building. It's like a family.

This created a predictable environment which felt 'very safe' and 'very secure' (Sian). The environment and relationships seemed to create a 'secure base' for pupils, reflective of the attachment literature (Geddes, 2006), which enabled the pupils to try new things and be more accepting of challenges.

Beth: We just push them a little bit. We know who we can push I think, because of the relationships, so we will push them that little bit. Then once they've done that, they see success.

#### 4.4.1.2 Understanding pupils' needs

Relationships were nurtured by staffs' thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs. Staff talked at length about their understanding of pupils' behaviour as communication, which in turn influenced how they responded to any behaviours:

Gabe: they're trying to tell us something in their way and their way is to misbehave.

Understanding was developed through assessment and by working closely with the pupils in small classes.

Beth: Because of the small groups and because we can give them the attention and build up that rapport...

Working as a team was identified as important to all staff. They talked about how it was important that all staff had thorough knowledge of every pupil, not just those they were working with directly. They reported that this ensured a joined-up approach to supporting the pupils and helped to develop positive relationships across the AP.

Staff talked about using their past experiences, both professionally and personally, to inform their practice. It was identified that the staff team had a varied skillset which was often utilised through in-house training. They discussed sharing ideas and strategies amongst the team to develop their understanding on how best to support individual pupils. Sian indicated that working as a team is particularly important when supporting the complex and often challenging needs of pupils which can be emotionally demanding:

Sian: We're all quite supportive cos of the nature of the pupils and the hardship that they've been through, you couldn't deal with a pupil on your own...

Whilst the FGs largely reported having a comprehensive understanding of pupils' needs, staff in School 2 highlighted the challenge associated with working with pupils who arrive at the setting in KS4. They suggested that it can be difficult to understand pupils' needs and change engrained behaviours in the short space of time before pupils leave at the end of Year 11:

Diane: You might not get them till Year 10 and that's a short space of time to unpick those behaviours that are so well... so it's hard.

#### 4.4.1.3 Person-centred support

The practice discussed by staff in each school reflected a person-centred approach in supporting the pupils. They talked about how the unique environment and small class sizes in AP enabled support to be individualised to the learner's needs. This was considered particularly in relation to meeting the MH needs of pupils:

Diane: So, when a pupil is struggling, we can take them out and give them that one to one or give them the support they need to get them back into class.

Staff talked about being attuned to the emotional needs of individual pupils. They discussed how they are able to put support in place which is flexible and responsive to the pupils' individual needs at that time. Emotional support was considered to be readily available should the pupils need to access this at any time, with Ron stating that 'you can't always timetable a crisis!'. Staff offered emotional support for things which had happened both in school and at home.

Sian: Yeh Monday mornings are often 'we need to see such and such', cos [...] something might have happened and they need the support from somebody in school.

In delivering person-centred support, pupils voices were at the forefront of practice in the settings. Ray talked about 'finding about what works for them and what ticks for them'. Pupils' views were consulted both formally and informally and were always acted upon.

Gabe: And pupil voice. We listen. And try and act on whatever their concerns are.

Identifying and building upon pupils' strengths and interests was also highlighted by all of the schools as important, so that support and intervention could be tailored to their needs:

Beth: So if there was a pupil which was particularly struggling and that was something that they really loved then we would change the timetable and get them on it.

## 4.4.1.4 Relationships with post-16 providers

Staff talked about the importance of forging relationships with post-16 providers in supporting YP to transition successfully. This was discussed in relation to building both AP-college relationships and pupil-college relationships.

Two of the schools had developed positive relationships with the colleges. Staff considered sharing information about the pupil to be an important element of this relationship; namely what the pupil needs and the particularities of what works well for them, so that this could be put in place following their transition from school:

Nicola: We talk through exactly how each child will respond [...] And its them knowing that and that's great because when they get there that is in place for them.

Building a relationship between the pupil and college was also seen as important by all schools in ensuring a positive transition. For School 1, building relationships between the pupil and the college was embedded. For Schools 2 and 3, this was something that was developing but was perceived as important by the staff, nonetheless.

Identifying a key person prior to the transition was considered important in establishing a relationship between the pupil and college.

Leanne: I think also it'd be really good for them to have a keyworker maybe when they're there cos here they know who they can go to when they've got an issue [...]. I think they almost need that relationship straight away.

Developing relationships between the school and college were also discussed through making additional visits to the setting. Some staff reflected on taking on a role which may be typically done by a parent:

Ron: [We get a] member of staff to go with our more vulnerable pupils and maybe take them for their first couple of times and, you know, like you would do as a parent when your child starts at secondary school.

## 4.4.2 Theme 2: Getting pupils ready for the 'real world'

This theme refers to how YP are prepared for their transition to post-16 more generally. The phrase, used by both Ron and Sian (School 3), provides a succinct summary of the central organising concept for this theme. Staffs' repeated reference to a 'real world' suggests that AP is a part from this and implies that AP is a unique entity which has different environment, norms and culture to that of the 'outside world'. This is perceived to be something which YP need preparing for.

Sian: [...] So are we getting pupils ready for the real world? Are we getting them back into society, rather than them being sat at home? And I think us as an establishment are. We are.

Subthemes for Theme 2 are shown in Figure 9.

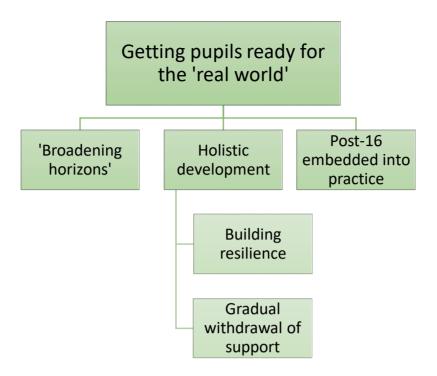


Figure 9. Subthemes for Theme 2: 'Getting pupils ready for the 'real world''

#### 4.4.2.1 'Broadening horizons'

The title of the subtheme 'Broadening horizons' was taken from a quote from Ron. Staff talked about how APs 'open [pupils'] eyes to what's available to them' (Nicola), referring to providing pupils with new opportunities and experiences they had not had before. Staff considered that this also exposes pupils to new possible futures. There was a sense that the AP provided pupils with opportunities for social mobility beyond school and college.

Sian: [...]So it's just giving them the opportunities of things that they might never have experienced before. [...] but once they see the life and see what it's all about and the sorts of things it can offer, it gives them a wider selection of things that they can choose. So, it does open their mind to different things.

4.4.2.2 Holistic development

The subtheme 'Holistic development' is taken from a quote from Sian but was present

throughout all of the FGs. This theme refers to viewing pupils' development as a whole, rather

than focusing primarily on academic progress or grades.

Sian talked about the importance of re-engaging YP with school being the initial focus when

supporting pupils who arrive in AP:

Sian: Some children they might have been out of education for 18 months so we made

progress just to get them over the threshold into the classroom, that's progress.

She reflects that the progress which can be expected is different for each child and for some, a

huge amount of work needs to be done before the pupil feels able to come into school at all.

Ron talks about providing a nurturing provision to develop pupils' readiness to learn before

moving on to access whole-class teaching. Part of this is about developing pupils' confidence

and self-esteem:

Marie: So, it's always about kind of bigging them up as well.

Beyond academic learning, the staff focus on developing pupils' socio-emotional skills. Each

school used a combination of direct intervention and key worker sessions. In addition, it was

perceived by staff that the 'whole school' was focused on developing these skills in the YP,

indicating that this is part of the school ethos and the responsibility of every adult in the school:

*Beth: The actual whole school is like one massive intervention* [...].

Gabe talks about both specific interventions and incidental learning opportunities to develop

the social skills of the YP in the setting. Part of this involved preparing the YP for coping with

challenges in mainstream society, indicating that behavior which is typical in the AP is not

always acceptable outside the AP:

114

Gabe: We very often use real life scenarios. [...] we will very often talk about you know when you got out into the big bad world, you're not gonna be able to walk down the street and say to you F off...

## Building resilience

It was identified that developing pupils holistically involved building their resilience. This subtheme, 'Building resilience' was referred to explicitly by staff in Schools 2 and 3. Pupils were considered to have low resilience in both schools.

For some staff, resilience was considered to be a within-child quality which could be enhanced through developing the socio-emotional skills of pupils to enable them to cope with, and move on from, adversities. Leanne talked about how School 2 build resilience by developing pupils' coping skills including their ability to manage their emotions and to ask for help.

Leanne: But we've built resilience in them there, so when they're not coping, they will seek the member of staff when they need it, so they will come out of class for that support. So, like managing their own emotions.

For other staff, resilience was considered part of the school ethos:

Ron: The overarching word that we're building into our ethos at school is resilience.

Sian goes on to talk about building 'resilience, whether it be from an academic point of view or work experience point of view or both points of view', indicating that resilience is an important quality for YP in educational environments and in the community.

#### Gradual withdrawal of support

Pupils were described by some staff as lacking independence. Gradual withdrawal of support was identified by some staff as a means of preparing the pupils for post-16 environments where they will have reduced support. It refers to school staff stepping back over time so that pupils are empowered to utilise their own coping strategies to manage any difficulties they face independently:

Diane: [...] So we tried to take back some of the year 11 support [...] to see if they

can deal with it.

4.4.2.3 Post-16 embedded into practice

Embedding post-16 into practice was considered important by all schools. There was some

divergence in this theme in that some schools had already achieved this, whereas School 3 were

working towards this:

Ron: At the moment now, we are trying to move careers from being a kind of 'bolt on'

at the side of things-

Sian: Shoe-horned into everything

A main consideration within this theme for all staff was that they were making links between

lessons and post-16 explicit for the pupils. This was considered important for in helping pupils

to understand why lessons were important and how the skills they learned would be useful

when they left school.

Beth: Well we've embedded that into the lesson plans haven't we now? So, the careers

have become a big element of well why are we learning this, where is it gonna take

you, how are we going to use it and apply it in life?

Staff also talked about the importance of making post-16 pathways explicit and supporting the

YP to identify a pathway they would like to take in the future. This was done through both

informal discussions and scheduled careers advice. However, Diane felt that this could be

overwhelming for pupils and is less important at this stage.

Staff in schools 2 and 3 spoke about how the curriculum offer had become more orientated

towards vocational subjects. Pupils were often referred to as 'hands on' and considered to

'struggle more academically'. Therefore, the vocational options were seen as beneficial for

these pupils who were 'expected' to go on to particular types of education, employment or

training:

116

Henry: Cos some of the options we provide are more practical cos we do have a lot more of the practical child. So [...] most of the options feed into what the children want to expect to do when they leave here.

#### 4.4.3 Theme 3: Barriers to successful transition

Barriers to successful transition were identified by all staff across the three APs. The barriers were considered in relation to three subthemes as shown in Figure 10.

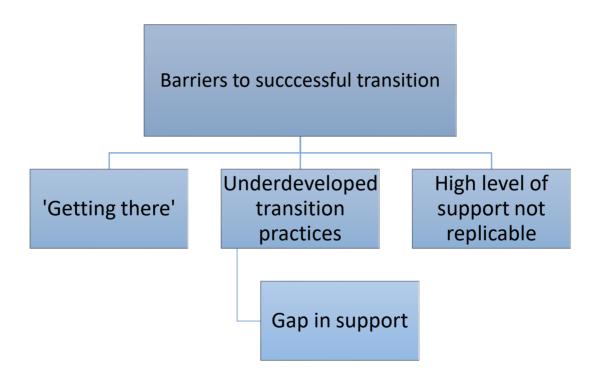


Figure 10. Subthemes for Theme 3: Barriers to successful transition

#### 4.4.3.1 'Getting there'

The subtheme 'Getting there' was derived from quotes from Sian, Marie and Gabe. It refers to staffs' perceptions of the difficulty pupils might face in transitioning to college. Staff perceived that pupils often find the transition emotionally demanding in terms of physically travelling to college and overcoming their anxiety of going to somewhere new.

Gabe: I think like mentally getting there. Physically getting there.

All staff talked about how pupils find travelling extremely difficult and how many lack life

skills and independence. Managing public transport, a common means of getting to college,

was given as a prime example of this. Ron talked about how pupils currently travel to school

by taxi and this reduces the opportunities for developing their skills around independent travel.

Staff considered how support could be put in place to help YP to develop these skills:

Diane: So, something that I said we need to work on is maybe taking them on the bus

so that we can build up the skills that way.

4.4.3.2 Underdeveloped transition practices

It was interpreted that schools 2 and 3 felt that more could be done to support YP with their

transition. Comparisons were drawn between other educational transitions including transitions

from primary to secondary:

Leanne: For kids that are really anxious – you know like you do from primary to

secondary – we don't have anything like that.

Beth: No, we don't have enough.

Leanne: And actually, I feel that that's missing.

Transition practices for pupils leaving the AP were also deemed inferior to practices in

mainstream school:

Beth: I think because they're not in mainstream – I don't know whether mainstreams

do it but I know in [School] they do it, but they have like taster days! They'll go over.

So, I don't know whether we have that yet so that might be something...

The transition from secondary school to college was perceived as more challenging than the

transition from primary to secondary. Diane perceives the transition as being 'very daunting'

for pupils and suggests that the pupils 'struggle more leaving us [...]-it's a HUGE shift',

highlighting the importance of supporting this transition.

118

#### Gap in support

Whilst School 1 did not identify any need to develop their own transition practices, they identified a 'Gap in support' as being a significant barrier for pupils during their transition. This theme refers to the absence of any involvement from school or college during the long summer break. Staff reflected that, even where transition is well planned and where support has been identified and put in place in college, there is a gap in support during the transition period. The absence of structure and support is perceived to generate anxiety in the pupils and makes the transition overwhelming.

Nicola: There is a very supportive learning environment waiting for them and they've left one, but there's six weeks with nothing. Apart from their own thoughts and fears and anxieties and maybe friends who do something a bit dodgy.

## 4.4.3.3 High level of support not replicable

All staff talked about how pupils are likely to find the transition to college difficult because the high level of support they have become accustomed to whilst being in the AP is not available at college. This was a prominent theme across each FG.

Marie: You know we get them in this place, which is really good, we do an awful lot with them here. It is like a very, very, very supportive environment and they just go to pieces...

There are significant differences between AP and the college environment which is 'bigger' and has 'considerably more pupils' (Nicola). However, perhaps more significant is the absence of close adult support. Beth refers to the support in place in the AP as a 'safety blanket'; an environment which is comforting and shields pupils from the challenges they are likely to experience upon leaving:

Beth: But also, they lose the structure and that safety blanket that we give them [...] for them it's a big bad world you know...

Nicola explained that 'although they have a pastoral system, some of [the colleges] do actually specify that the support we've given them here is not actually what they can give there'.

Staff also considered how YP experience the loss of attachments with key adults when leaving the AP:

Leanne: I think that maybe that because it's been so well supported, even though we start to remove ourselves slowly, it's kind of 'I have that attachment with you and now I haven't got you anymore'.

Where support is not available, or where the relationships have not been effectively forged, staff reported that pupils will often seek out contact with them after they have left. For schools 2 and 3 this seemed to be to maintain connections and relationships. However, Nicola in School 1 reported that she often has to help pupils manage their problems, for example by helping with applications or communicating with the college on behalf of the pupil. This suggests the pupils have not mastered these skills themselves.

Nicola: You know if pupils have something wrong, and they've left us, a lot of the time they will ring me and tell me what's wrong, and I will ring the college up...

## 4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter detailed the findings from the interviews with pupils and FGs with staff. Firstly, three overarching themes were identified from the interviews with pupils which were discussed in relation to super-ordinate themes and subthemes. Secondly, three themes were identified from the FGs which were discussed in relation to the subthemes. Quotes were used to illustrate the points made and to allow the reader to make their own judgements about the analysis and data. The next chapter will provide further interpretation, discuss the findings in relation to the RQs and situate the research in a scholarly context.

## 5 Discussion

#### 5.1 Introduction

Broadly, the research up to this point has been organised into two parts (pupil experiences and staff support). However, it is through this discussion that I will bring the two parts together to address the research aim. To do so, this section will address each RQ in turn by drawing upon the relevant findings and situating these within the relevant literature. Given the inductive approach taken in analysing the data, some of the themes identified in Chapter 4 were not highlighted in the literature discussed in Chapter 2. To respond to this, further literature will be introduced in this chapter (Smith et al., 2009). Although my literature review focused only on qualitative research in the UK, I will now include other literature so that the findings can be discussed in relation to wider theoretical concepts. I will then provide a summary of the research findings and evaluate whether the research aim and questions were addressed. Finally, I will discuss the implications for APs and EPs, provide a critique of the research and make suggestions for future research. I will conclude with some final personal reflections.

## 5.2 RQ1: How do YP experience KS4 in AP?

Through IPA, I was able to listen to pupils and understand their lived experiences of KS4 in AP. Two overarching themes identified through IPA, 'A fundamentally different experience to mainstream' and 'Impact of attending AP', were considered particularly pertinent to addressing this RQ. To provide depth to the discussion, I will explore the superordinate and subordinate themes in more detail, according to their relevance to the RQ. It is important to note that the themes do not exist in isolation and are interlinked in their contributions to YPs' experiences.

Figure 11 depicts the relevant themes and how these interlink in addressing RQ1. The overarching theme, 'A fundamentally different experience to mainstream', encompasses the YPs' experience as illustrated in the graphic. Each outside circle reflects salient aspects of the YPs' experiences which are derived from the relevant superordinate and subordinate themes. The inner circle, 'Impact on self', illustrates how the YPs perceive these experiences to have impacted upon them. Each item will be discussed in turn; however, links will be made for the reader throughout.

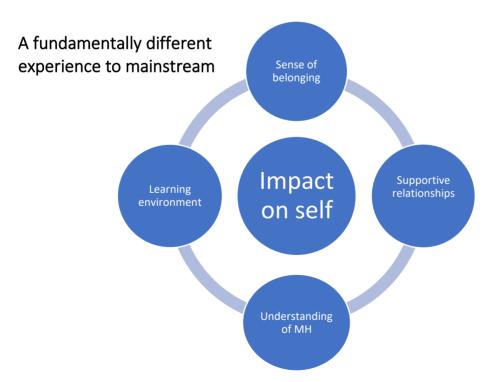


Figure 11. Overview of themes for RQ1

## 5.2.1 A fundamentally different experience to mainstream

As detailed in Chapter 4, pupils experiences in AP were considered 'fundamentally different' to their experiences in mainstream schools. All pupils drew stark comparisons between their experiences in the two environments. This was also reported in previous literature (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015), however the significance of this was perhaps not foregrounded to the extent it is here. This fundamental difference is considered in relation to four aspects of experience: 'Sense of belonging', 'Supportive relationships', 'Understanding of MH' and the 'Learning environment', which are elaborated upon below.

#### 5.2.1.1 Sense of belonging

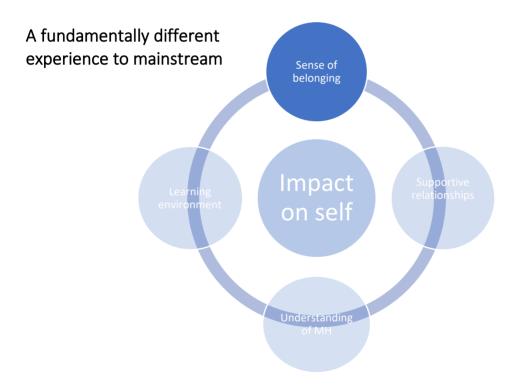


Figure 12. Aide memoire for theme Sense of belonging

'Sense of belonging' was identified as a superordinate theme in pupils' accounts, indicating that belonging was an important part of their experience. Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that belonging is the 'need' to experience acceptance, connectedness and significant interpersonal relationships. Belonging is widely understood as a fundamental need, featuring in seminal research in psychology (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) positioned belonging as

being secondary to having ones physiological and safety needs met within the 'Hierarchy of Needs' (see Appendix 22), indicating its importance in human motivation. The psychological benefits of belonging are widely reported (Slaten et al., 2016).

Belonging is understood to be significant to the educational experiences of CYP and 'school belonging' is considered a psychological construct in itself (Slaten et al., 2016). 'School belonging' is defined by Goodenow and Grady (1993) as "the extent to which pupils feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment" (p.80). In line with this definition, there were two salient subordinate themes in the pupils' accounts which were identified as contributing to pupils' experience of belonging in AP: 'Experiencing regard and acceptance' and 'Social belonging'. These will be discussed further below.

All of the pupils experienced a sense of belonging in the AP to varying degrees, apart from Connell who felt like he did not belong in the AP. Connell's experiences were markedly different to his peers and the possible reasons for this are tentatively suggested throughout this section. Those who had a sense of belonging seemed to recall their experiences in AP as being positive whereas Connell, who experienced a lack of belonging in the AP, had a negative experience. In line with other research (Slaten et al., 2016), this suggests that school belonging contributed to pupils' perceptions of school. Furthermore, through analysis it was identified that pupils' need for belonging was not met in their mainstream school and contributed somewhat to their negative experiences there. This supports the findings by Nicholson and Putwain (2015) and Jalali and Morgan (2018) who suggested that pupils reported a lack of belonging in their mainstream school compared to the AP.

#### Experiencing regard and acceptance

The subordinate theme 'Experiencing regard and acceptance' was salient in many pupils' accounts of belonging within the AP. Acceptance is widely recognised as contributing to school belonging (Osterman, 2000), along with feeling valued, included and listened to (Cameron and Maginn, 2009). These points were all evident in the YP's accounts and 'experiencing regard and acceptance' seemed to capture the essence of this.

For some pupils, such as Kiara, feeling involved in decision making was particularly powerful in contributing to her experiences of acceptance and belonging. Experiencing regard for her opinions about the support in place and wider organisational issues within the school environment were pertinent in her account. Pupils' involvement in decision making and being listened to has been highlighted in previous literature as contributing to their positive experiences in AP (McCluskey et al., 2015). For Kiara, there was also a sense that this contributed to her subscribing to the ethos and values of the school (Cline, 2015). Osterman (2000) suggests that when CYP experience acceptance they are more likely to experience positive psycho-social effects including conforming with social norms and accepting authority, which appeared in Kiara's narrative.

All of the pupils experienced rejection and exclusion whilst in their mainstream school. However, they contrasted this with feeling held and valued in the AP; this was evident in Freddie's metaphorical representation: 'they'll pick you up'. Finlay also talked about feeling included in the AP by being able to work 'at [his] own pace' and receiving individualised support. This suggests that inclusion and individualised learning, widely reported in the literature (Michael & Fredrickson, 2013), contributes to pupils' experience of belonging in AP.

## Social belonging

Most of the pupils in the study experienced difficulties with relationships with their peers in mainstream; for some this was characterised by bullying and for others, social exclusion. Such experiences are understood to be associated with negative psychosocial effects (Buhrmester, 1990). However, in AP, many of these pupils experienced connectedness and validation with their peers in some way. It was interpreted that the pupils did not consider their peers as 'friends', but rather experienced belonging to the group as a whole. It appeared that participants experienced social belonging with their peers through having shared experiences of exclusion, MH or family circumstances. Andersen et al. (2000) suggest that connecting with others enables shared meaning making and "may provide a sense of security while promoting exploration and autonomy" (p.272), which seemed apparent in the pupils' accounts.

These findings strongly support those of Lee (2017) who also suggested that secondary aged AP pupils' relationships with each other were not necessarily based upon 'being liked'. Instead, Lee (2017) argued that peer acceptance was established through shared experiences of

exclusion and MH. This contributed to feelings of normality and belonging in AP which they did not experience in mainstream. However, not all pupils experienced belonging with their peers. Kiara and Connell's accounts indicated that they wanted to distance themselves from some of their peers in the AP, seeing themselves as being 'different'. This has implications for pupils' transition to post-16, which will be considered later in 5.3.4.

## 5.2.1.2 Supportive relationships

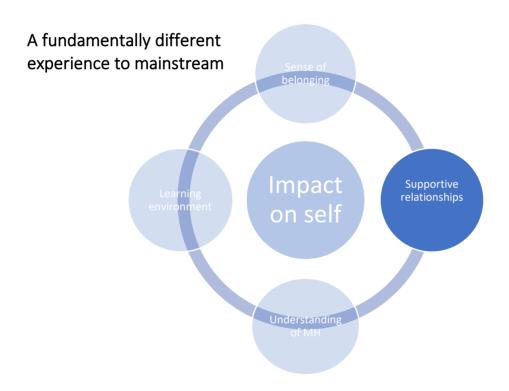


Figure 13. Aide memoire for theme Supportive relationships

It was interpreted that pupils experienced 'supportive relationships' in AP. Before discussing this experience, it is first important to acknowledge how it interlinks with the theme 'Sense of belonging'. Relationships can contribute to a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and teacher-pupil relationships are important in supporting pupils' connections to school (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). Likewise, school belonging also helps to facilitate positive pupil-teacher relationships (Cameron & Maginn, 2009). Therefore, although the themes are discussed independently, it is recognised that the 'Supportive relationships' identified in the YPs' accounts are inextricably linked with their experiences of belonging, as depicted in Figure 13.

The importance of relationships in AP is not new to the literature. They feature heavily in the accounts of YP in other studies, as discussed in Chapter 2, with Jalali and Morgan (2018) identifying relationships with staff as being particularly important for pupils in KS4. This research extends previous research by reporting divergence in how relationships with staff were experienced by the pupils. Some pupils experienced relationships with staff as friendships, others likened them to family and for others, the concept of 'time' featured heavily in their accounts. Each of these components will be discussed in turn.

Relationships with staff were characterised as being different to what may be expected from a pupil-teacher relationship. Some pupils considered their relationships with staff as being like 'friends'. 'Friendships' with staff were characterised by mutual respect and perceived equality, qualities which have been identified in previous literature (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). The function of social support was also evident in some pupils' relationships with staff. This was particularly important for Lauren who struggled to make friends with her peers and instead considered the staff to be her friends. As outlined in 5.2.1.1, the pupils seemed to make 'connections' with their peers but not necessarily friendships and it is interesting that staff fulfilled this role for some YP. The nature of the 'friendship' provided by staff is less apparent in the current literature. As such, this provides a nuanced understanding about how relationships with staff are important to YPs' experience in AP.

Other pupils likened their relationships with staff in the AP to 'family'. This supports existing research which suggests AP has a family environment (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). However, Finlay's account of his relationship with staff is suggestive of that of a 'key adult', a concept defined by Bomber (2007). In line with the role of a key adult proposed by Bomber, Finlay seemed to experience attunement and constant emotional availability. This is perhaps more significant given the context of Finlay's own difficult relationship with his mother. Consistent with Hart (2013), the findings highlight how attachment relationships are important in providing a nurturing and secure base for YP to meet their emotional needs and facilitate their engagement in learning. Finlay's account highlights the extent to which this attachment relationship is important, something which is perhaps underestimated in the existing literature.

'Time' was also a prominent feature in pupils' accounts of their relationships with staff. Pupils felt that staff giving their time to talk was important; this seemed to contribute to them feeling

valued, which was especially pertinent given pupils' previous experiences of exclusion and rejection. The importance of giving pupils' 'time' to talk was also reported by McCluskey et al. (2015) who suggested it enabled pupils to feel valued and listened to, which resonated with these findings. However, I interpreted that 'time' also involved staff providing containment to pupils by being emotionally and physically available; this is also suggestive of the 'key adult' role described above. By being given 'time', pupils experienced a safe space to talk about their emotions and felt safe and contained in doing so.

Most striking in the pupils' accounts was the extent to which these positive relationships were contrasted with pupils' experiences of relationships in mainstream. Through analysis, it appeared that pupils experienced dehumanisation in mainstream. They reported feeling like a lesser person or not even a person at all, perhaps as a result of the performative culture in mainstream school which was highlighted by Trotman et al. (2019). This had a negative effect on their relationships, belonging and inclusion in mainstream school. In contrast, the pupils talk about being valued as a 'human being' by staff in the AP, which interlinks with their experiences of acceptance and belonging, as outlined in the previous section. This also links closely with their experiences of understanding, which will now be discussed.

## 5.2.1.3 Understanding of MH

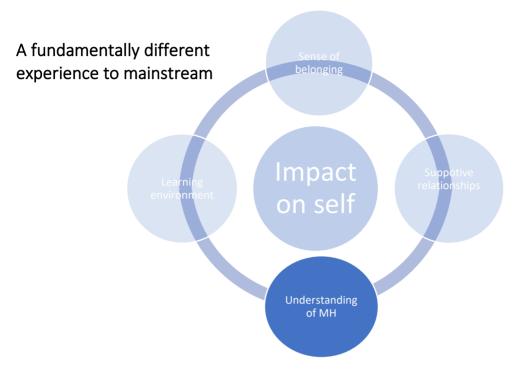


Figure 14. Aide memoire for theme Understanding of MH

The subordinate theme 'Understanding of MH' was considered an important part of the support pupils received from staff (see 4.3.1.2). As such, this subtheme inextricably links with 'Supportive relationships'. The term 'MH' was used by the YP themselves throughout their interviews. The language of MH is increasingly used by YP in the contemporary context which may have influenced their use of this term. It is also important to recognise that, as a construct, MH is likely to mean different things to each YP. However, it is argued that the essentiality of their experience was about feeling understood.

Pupils perceived the staff to have a good understanding of MH and how to support MH needs. This was discussed by pupils as being in stark contrast to their experiences in mainstream school where their MH needs were not well supported and pupils felt dehumanised, excluded and misunderstood. This supports findings by Trotman et al. (2019) who suggest that the performative cultures in mainstream school contribute to pupils' increasing MH needs, despite schools otherwise being in a good position to promote MH. Trotman et al. suggest that the effects of policy around performance have been detrimental to those pupils who are already 'at

risk' because of a myriad of complex socio-cultural factors. Pupils' perceptions and experiences also reflect a wider national issue of increasing MH needs in schools (DfE, 2018a).

Whilst the SEMH needs and complex backgrounds of YP who enter AP are well documented (Trotman et al., 2019), what is less evident in the literature is how YP feel they are supported with this in AP. Jalali and Morgan (2018) is one of the few studies which touch on this; they argue that the AP actually contributes to low self-worth and a depressive MH profile amongst its pupils. However, in the present study, pupils' perceptions of staff's understanding and competency in supporting MH seemed to lead to pupils feeling understood and well supported in the AP. This is likely to be interlinked with their experiences of acceptance and belonging which was discussed in 5.2.1.1. The data also indicated that, by talking with mentors about their MH, pupils experienced a sense of normalcy. This was particularly pertinent given the alienation and rejection experienced by the pupils in their mainstream settings.

It is not within the remit of this discussion to explore staffs' actual understanding and competency in supporting MH, nor to explore the concept of MH itself. However, that is not necessary given the aims of this research. What is important here is the pupils' *perception* of staffs' understanding and how this contributes to their experience in AP. Nevertheless, it is remarkable given the makeup of AP population that this theme has not been explicitly identified in the literature reviewed. Tentatively, one reason for this may be that most of the participants in this study identified as having had MH needs and were referred to the AP because of these, as opposed to PEx which is seen in other studies. As such, this theme may have arisen from this group because MH was central to their experiences of school and was part of their identity. It is possible that this theme was part of pupils' 'sense making' of their experiences.

#### 5.2.1.4 Learning environment

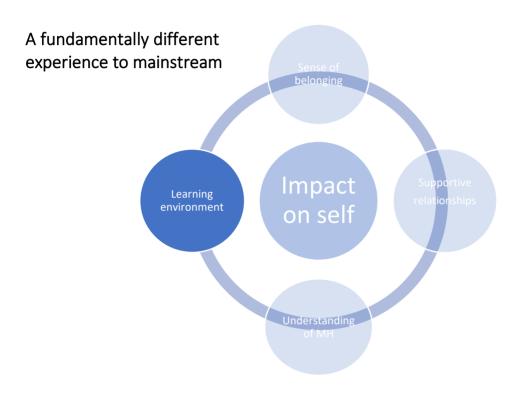


Figure 15. Aide memoire for theme Learning Environment

The 'Learning environment' in AP was also considered to be 'fundamentally different' to mainstream. These differences were experienced through two subthemes: 'Physical environment' and 'Different behavioural norms and values'.

#### Physical environment

It was interpreted that the physical environment in the AP contributed towards pupils' experiences of feeing safe and secure. This interlinks with 'Relationships' in that having a key adult can also contribute to feelings of emotional safety and security, as discussed in 5.2.1.2.

The physical characteristics of the AP were largely regarded as positive by the pupils, with the exception of Connell. Consistent with other research, the pupils valued smaller class sizes and quieter corridors (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). However, where previous research attributes small class sizes to creating a calmer *environment*, the findings from this study suggest that the

smaller environment creates a sense of calm within the pupils themselves. Pupils perceived this to have had a positive effect upon their engagement in school; largely, pupils perceived this to contribute towards improved emotional wellbeing and reduced levels of anxiety thus enabling them to feel ready to learn. It is argued that this resulted from experiencing a sense of safety and security within the school environment, such as that described by Hart (2013). Considered through the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), the AP environment appears to meet pupils' basic need to feel safe, thus enabling them to engage in higher order concepts described later in 5.2.2. This is in stark contrast to pupils' accounts of the mainstream environment which pupils experienced as being unsafe and contributed to their anxiety and flight responses.

It is notable for discussion that Connell's perceptions and experiences of the physical environment differ considerably from the other pupils. Where the other pupils perceived the environment to be supportive of their MH, Connell saw it as a quite the opposite, causing him to feel frustrated and confined. Interestingly, Connell did not describe any difficulties with MH and therefore perhaps did not reap the same benefits as his peers in this area. This suggests that the experiences of YP placed in AP because of their MH might differ from the experiences of YP who were PEx. This perhaps begins to address the gap in the literature around understanding the experience of pupils on medical placements in AP, identified by Tate and Greatbatch (2017).

#### Different behavioural norms and values

It was interpreted that some YP experienced different norms in the AP, particularly in relation to their behaviour. This was particularly prominent in Connell's account. Doing schoolwork and 'behaving' were perceived by Connell as optional or something he did not 'have' to do in AP. He also experiences things in AP which would be disciplined in mainstream school. This seemed to contribute to Connell's view of what is 'normal' in AP. This is perhaps suggestive of a difference in staffs' approach to behaviour management in the AP compared to mainstream, which will be considered later (5.4.1). However, it is interesting that Connell perceives this as a choice in AP.

Pupils also seemed to experience a culture which valued 'being hard' in the AP. This, in part, seemed to arise from the stigmatisation and negative preconception of AP in the local community. Pupils were perceived to internalise this perception upon joining the AP. Stigma

around AP is highlighted in previous literature (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), although the pupils in this study did not perceive their future to be impacted by this. It is interesting that the construct of 'being hard' also appeared present and valued within their families or communities; the construct of 'respect' seemed to be associated with this. Freddie and Lauren's account gave insight into how this valued construct could have negative implications for their post-school education or employment behaviours and attitudes, as it seemed to influence how they responded to challenges.

### 5.2.2 Impact on self

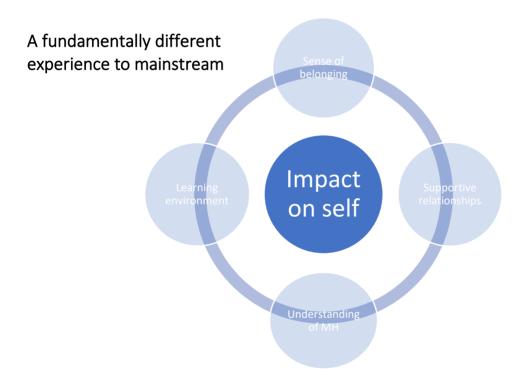


Figure 16. Aide memoire for theme Impact on self

Pupils perceived their experiences in AP to have had an impact upon their identity and self. However, it is not possible, nor the intention of this study, to imply cause and effect. It is acknowledged that there were other external interacting factors which coincided with the participants' education in AP and were also likely to contribute to the positive changes reported here, including therapy and improved familial relationships. However, the findings reflect the

perceptions of the pupils themselves and therefore contribute valuable information in understanding pupils' experiences in AP and the meaning they make from these.

The majority of pupils reported that their time in AP had a positive impact on them. Pupils talked about changes in their emotional competence, that is understanding their own and others' emotions and being able to respond to these appropriately. They also described feeling 'happier' and reported increased self-esteem and confidence. This supports Malcolm (2019) who suggested that in AP, pupils experienced increased confidence, were better able to respond to challenges and made positive changes in their lives. Akin to the 'fundamentally different experience' described in 5.2.1, Malcom (2019) suggested that the "qualitatively different social space" (p.96) offered in AP was responsible for these positive changes.

The majority of pupils also experienced a positive change in their attitude towards education whilst attending AP. Pupils discussed having a negative attitude to learning previously because of their adverse experiences in mainstream school. For example, Lily reported losing hope in her education before she joined the AP. Some pupils also shared their sadness and frustration at being 'denied education' in the past because they missed school or were unsupported during their time in mainstream. This seemed to contribute to them placing increased value on education in the AP. There was a sense that pupils had become open to learning and keen to make the best out of their situation in AP, with pupils like Kiara eager to affect change by taking control of her learning. This supports previous findings which suggests that YP in AP can develop positive qualities, such as a willingness to learn, from their negative experiences (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016). It also extends findings by Kendall et al. (2007) who suggested that the learning environment in AP contributed to a newly developed confidence and positive attitude towards learning.

In the YPs' accounts, there was a sense that the AP provided an enabling environment for the pupils, as reported by Malcolm (2019). Drawing again upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), it seemed the APs met the basic needs of pupils by providing safety, love and belonging (discussed in 5.2.1). This provided a foundation for pupils to develop the higher order skills and qualities described here, including readiness to learn, confidence and self-esteem. This is supported by other research which suggests that relationships and belonging have a positive impact upon pupils' MH and wellbeing (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010) and contribute towards re-engagement in learning (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Conversely, Baumeister and Leary

(1995) suggest that experiencing a lack of belonging can lead to negative feelings and behaviours. The latter may contribute towards understanding Connell's experience.

Unlike his peers, Connell reported negative effects on his sense of self and his attitude towards learning whilst in AP. He experienced dissonance through his conflicted perceptions of himself as being both 'one of the naughty ones' and not being 'the worst', whilst simultaneously wanting to distance himself from his peers. It appeared that he was unsure where he fit into the AP. This was perhaps exacerbated by his external attributions for the reasons he is in AP which remained unchanged. As a result, Connell appeared passive in his acceptance of his current situation and his future. Interestingly, these findings closely mirror those of Jalali and Morgan (2018) who argued that secondary aged PRU pupils had external attributions for their behaviours, perceiving themselves as being unfairly treated to protect their self-worth. As a result, the pupils had negative perceptions of themselves and appeared to passively accept their futures, which has many parallels with Connell's account. Like Connell, the pupils in their study were also PEx because of persistent disruptive behaviour. It is interesting that these findings have many similarities with Connell's experience yet are in stark contrast to the experiences of his peers who attend the AP for medical reasons.

## 5.3 RQ2: How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?

To address RQ2, the following subordinate themes identified in the pupils' accounts will be discussed: 'Impact on post-16 outcomes', 'Preparation' and 'Endings'. The superordinate theme of 'Perceptions of post-16' will also be discussed with regards to the subthemes 'Opportunity for change' and 'Challenges and support needs'.

## 5.3.1 Impact on post-16 outcomes

Pupils' perceptions of the impact attending an AP has had on their post-16 outcomes contributed towards understanding their perceptions of transition. Some pupils talked about AP having a positive impact on their grades and the likelihood of them achieving any qualifications, which supports other research in the field (IOE & NFER, 2014). They perceived that attending AP contributed towards raising their aspirations and increasing their confidence in succeeding in the future, as suggested by Malcolm (2019). Lily and Finlay also talked about the AP changing their futures by now feeling able to go to interviews and get a job. This change is perhaps reflective of the 'turning point' identified by Malcolm (2019) and illustrates the profoundly positive impact attending AP has had on their perceptions of the future. Finlay attributed this to the support and belief instilled in him by staff members; this was likely made possible through the aforementioned relationships. This supports findings by Daniels et al. (2003) who argued that relationships with staff in AP can encourage YP to develop a positive 'can-do' attitude to their future and raise pupils' aspirations.

However, others talked about mainstream offering a better teaching environment than AP, with better resources. This was perceived to result in better qualifications and supports other research in the field (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014). Interestingly, the pupils who largely perceived mainstream to offer better educational outcomes, also perceived that the likelihood of them achieving these would be very low because mainstream did not meet their MH needs. This led me to identify the notion of a 'trade off' (between qualifications and MH support) which appeared quite salient in these accounts. The concept of a 'trade off' extends the findings by IoE and NFER (2014) who suggest that AP re-engages pupils with learning thus providing them with some qualifications they may not have otherwise achieved.

Pupils' positive perceptions and acceptance of a 'trade-off' in their education is indicative of McCluskey et al.'s (2013) argument that YP in AP do not expect to receive appropriate education and therefore view AP as surprisingly positive. This has implications when considering YPs' rights to a good education. The notion of a 'trade off' indicates that, whilst AP appears to have a constructive place in the UK education system, this is still perceived by pupils to be somewhat at the expense of their post-16 outcomes.

Unlike his peers, Connell did not appear to benefit from this trade-off nor was he satisfied with what was on offer. Connell perceived there to be limited qualifications on offer which, coupled with different behavioural norms (5.2.1.4), negatively affected his attitude towards education. Furthermore, Connell's perceptions of his future were markedly despondent, resulting in a seemingly helpless and hopeless account. Connell perceived attending an AP to have a significantly negative impact on his future opportunities and aspirations. Connell seemed to have developed a passive acceptance of his future circumstances which was interpreted through his dialogue: 'can't do nowt can you'. This is perhaps reflective of his external attributions and learned helplessness, resulting in low self-efficacy and an unwillingness to change. These findings are reflective of Jalali and Morgan (2018) who suggested that pupils in their study passively accepted their future circumstances and lacked agency.

#### 5.3.2 Preparedness

Pupils differed in their accounts of being 'prepared' for transitioning to post-16. It was identified that pupils experienced both explicit preparatory activities and more tacit practices which prepared them for leaving school. Explicit practices mentioned by most pupils included accessing careers advice and work experience, which could be expected given the statutory guidance (DfE, 2013). Some pupils valued the explicit teaching of norms in interview and work settings which, for other YP, may have been learned incidentally at home or from peers. However, Lauren initially struggled to identify any such practices and appeared to lack ownership or active involvement in the process. This is perhaps reflective of Tyson's (2011) findings which indicated that pupils with SEND were not meaningfully involved in their preparation planning.

Equally salient in the YPs' accounts was the less directive, implicit preparation which they experienced. This appeared to be related to skill development in terms of managing emotions, behaviour and understanding norms. Kiara's account in particular revealed how staff were gradually removing support to challenge her to cope with her emotions in class. Connell suggested that the AP has prepared him to understand what behaviour is acceptable inside the AP compared to outside the AP. However, this in itself is perhaps contradictory; the findings indicated that YP experience different behavioural norms in the AP and it is questionable to what extent this would prepare a YP for 'the real world' outside AP. This extends the argument that YP may struggle adapting to mainstream settings (Mills and Thompson, 2018).

#### 5.3.2.1 *Endings*

It was interpreted that endings were important to YP in preparing to leave AP. Two female pupils from the same AP described the importance of 'prom' with passion and enthusiasm. Prom is arguably now considered a culturally significant event for pupils leaving secondary school in the UK. The implications of this are quite marked. Given the experiences of alienation and social exclusion of this group, engaging in such a culturally significant 'normal' end of school experience is likely to be quite powerful. The importance of this event for this group is potentially under-recognised in the literature and practice, and its role in providing both a sense of normalcy and an 'ending' is even less so.

More broadly, tentative links can be made between 'Endings' and the attachment literature. Endings are deemed a significant part of transition for any child moving to a new situation away from adults whom they are attached to (Bomber, 2010). It is perhaps suggestable that endings are particularly important for this group because of their close attachments and belonging to the AP, described above.

This subtheme appears specific to the two female pupils it concerns and does not appear in other YPs' accounts. However, given the relevance of attachment theory in supporting these pupils, it is important to draw attention to the concept of planned and supported endings for this group. This has not been highlighted in the literature reviewed concerning this group and perhaps warrants further investigation.

### 5.3.3 Opportunity for change

Most pupils considered transitioning to post-16 as an 'opportunity for change'. For many pupils, leaving school marked the end of a rather difficult and negative period in their lives and was therefore perceived optimistically as an opportunity for change or a new beginning. For these pupils, there was a sense of wanting to leave behind the personal, social and economic struggles they had endured during their difficult school lives. Some pupils appeared to want to physically or mentally escape the past and move on to a better future. For others, like Freddie, leaving school was perceived as the start of an independent future which was driven by gaining some control and ownership of his future by becoming financially independent, having experienced a history of poverty. This theme perhaps reinforces the significance of the theme 'Endings' discussed above.

This suggestion that transition to post-16 is an opportunity for change is already acknowledged in the transition to adulthood literature; Masten et al. (2004) suggest that "transition to adulthood is a window of opportunity for changing the life course" (p.1071). However, it is less acknowledged in the literature relating to this field. Tellis-James and Fox (2016) suggested how excluded pupils' with SEBD previous negative experiences appeared to contribute to an optimistic outlook on their future and resolve to having a better life. This study supports these findings and extends them further in suggesting that the pupils' previous negative experiences actually appear to be a driver for change in their future.

#### 5.3.4 Perceived challenges and support needs

There was some divergence in pupils' perceptions of the challenges they might face and support they may need during their transition to college. However, the desire for the support currently received in AP to continue into college was prominent in most of the accounts. Some of the pupils were concerned that the college environment may bring similar challenges to those in mainstream school. For example, some were worried about the larger class sizes and felt this may be difficult to manage. Others expressed concern about social challenges they might face, whether this be with peers or authority. This is illustrated in Freddie's account where he talked about the likelihood of needing 'a second chance' in post-16 and worried that this might not be possible. It appeared that 'second chances' were common in the AP, which

perhaps links to the different behavioural norms identified in the findings. This issue is alluded to in the literature relating to reintegration; Pillay et al. (2013) suggest that reintegration can be problematic as the pupils become accustomed to the small, nurturing environment of the AP and struggle returning to mainstream boundaries and expectations (Levinson & Thompson, 2016).

In terms of support needs, most of the pupils referred to the need for supportive relationships in transitioning to post-16, whether this be relationships with staff, peers or a wider support network. The need for staff support was highlighted by pupils in different ways. Lauren and Freddie wanted to have someone to talk to in college, like they have in AP. Having someone to talk to was deemed important in ensuring pupils remained 'on track' and felt happy and supported there. There was a sense that this would need to be readily available for pupils in order to provide the ad hoc emotional support the pupils were accustomed to. However, Lily wanted the staff in college to know how to help her by adopting similar strategies used by staff in the AP and, more generally, to be supportive and understanding around MH. Existing literature which explores transitions for this group also recognised the importance of relationships in supporting transition (Pillay et al., 2013) and maintaining post-16 placements (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017). However, this research illuminates why, and how, relationships are important from the perspective of the pupils' themselves.

Kiara was initially reluctant to identify any support she would need during transition. This may be because of her desire for a fresh start, as discussed in 5.3.3, which would support other literature (Edwards, 2017). However, Kiara did indicate that having a close friend at the college was very important in supporting her transition. This is reflective of the reintegration literature, whereby friendships are considered promotive factors which contribute to successful reintegration (Pillay et al., 2013). It is noteworthy that the close friend Kiara referred to did not attend the AP; an indication of the issue that many pupils do not necessarily have 'friends' in AP (Lee, 2017), as discussed in 5.2.1. This suggests that some pupils may lack the protective and supportive benefits of transitioning to college with a friend (Daniel & Wassell, 2002), something which their mainstream peers tend to experience. The nature of the AP, in that pupils attend from a wide geographical area, amplifies this as a potential problem as the pupils may go on to different post-16 provisions across the county and therefore may not benefit from transitioning with familiar peers.

# 5.4 RQ3: How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-16?

The two themes 'Relationships' and 'Getting pupils ready for the 'real world'' identified in the staff FGs are central to addressing RQ3. The latter theme is discussed in relation to its subthemes for depth. To develop a richer understanding of the phenomenon, I will also draw upon findings from the student interviews. The relevant themes and subthemes are illustrated in Figure 17.

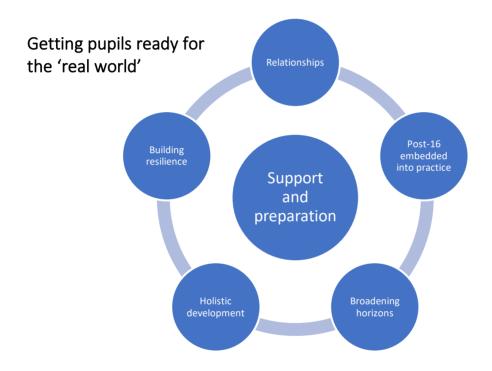


Figure 17. Themes and subthemes from FGs relevant to answering RQ3

## 5.4.1 Getting pupils ready for the 'real world'

It was interpreted that 'Getting pupils ready for the "real world" was the essence of how YP were supported and prepared in AP. 'The real world' is a construct which was interpreted as meaning 'mainstream' society. The perception that AP is separate from 'the real world' supports the notion of a 'fundamentally different' experience which was identified in the pupils' accounts. There was a sense that AP therefore seeks to prepare YP to return or 'reintegrate' into mainstream settings in several ways (see Figure 17), which I will now discuss.

#### 5.4.2 Relationships

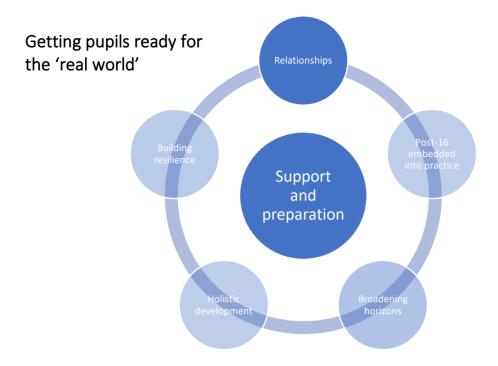


Figure 18. Aide memoire for theme Relationships

Relationships were identified as an important part of the support provided to YP in KS4 and in preparing them for transition to post-16.

Through analysis, I interpreted that staffs' relationships with pupils seemed to create a 'secure base'. The notion of 'secure base' arose from attachment literature; Bowlby (1988) used the term to explain the importance of attachment relationships in enabling children to feel safe enough to explore the world. Geddes (2006) suggested that relationships in school can provide an educational secure base through establishing "sensitive, reliable and trusting" (p.58) relationships, which were evident in this study. The staff implied that this allowed them to 'push' pupils by presenting them with challenges they are able to overcome by knowing the staff member will be available. Geddes (2006) suggests that this contributes to pupils' educational resilience and links with 'building resilience' which is expanded upon in 5.4.6. This also reflects findings by Daniels et al. (2003) who argued that relationships with staff in AP encourage YP to develop 'can-do' attitudes and endure challenges.

Staff also perceived themselves as having a good understanding of the pupils' needs, which seemed to facilitate these positive relationships and enabled them to effectively support

individual pupils. Understanding the YPs' needs was considered possible through small groups, sharing information and understanding pupils' behaviour as communication. Perhaps most significantly, staff appeared to have empathy for the pupils and the challenges they have faced, suggesting that their 'understanding' is both on a practical and emotional level. This level of understanding could be considered as staff being 'attuned' to pupil's needs. Again, 'attunement' originates from attachment literature and refers to adults being responsive to and understanding of children's needs (Bomber, 2010). This appears to be congruent with YPs accounts of their relationships with staff and their experiences of feeling understood (5.2.1). This may also be reflective of pupils' experience of different behavioural norms in AP (5.2.1.4); pupils experience different expectations of and responses to behaviour in AP which may be as a result of staffs' understanding approach and response to behaviour, as described here. Levinson and Thomson (2016) suggest that this is profoundly different to mainstream practices.

It was identified that staff took a 'person-centred' approach to their practice in AP and this facilitated their relationships with pupils. Consistent with other research (McCluskey et al., 2015), staff reported that they offer individualised and flexible provision. The flexible nature of their approach enabled staff to be responsive to pupils' needs, as indicated by Ron: 'you can't always timetable a crisis'. This approach was recognised by pupils who experienced staff being available and giving their 'time'. The staff also talked about the importance of listening to pupils and adapting the provision to meet their needs. This was reflected in the pupils' interviews through reports of being involved in decision making and feeling their opinions were valued. McCluskey et al. (2015) identified this in their study of AP which acknowledged the parallels with the UNCRC.

Given the importance placed on relationships by staff, it is not surprising that relationships also emerged as a central component in preparing pupils for transition. Through the analysis, the need for positive relationships with post-16 settings was identified; however, it was found that the APs' were at different stages in forging these relationships.

Establishing a relationship between the AP and post-16 provider was considered important in ensuring the YP were supported upon their transition. This involved sharing information with the setting about the YP, in terms of what sort of support they would likely need. This also

included more nuanced information about the YP which could only be known by the adults working closely with the YP - a product of their relationship. Facilitating relationships between the pupils and college staff was also deemed important in ensuring a successful transition. Although it had not happened at the time of interview, pupils did identify that having a key person or someone to talk to in college was something they would need during transition (5.3.4). This suggests that there is a consensus between both staff and pupils about the significance of this. This also supports and extends the literature (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017) by foregrounding the importance of relationships between the AP and colleges and also pupils and colleges. Furthermore, the findings also echo the reintegration literature which emphasises the importance of relationships (Pillay et al., 2013), indicating that there are parallels with reintegration practices when supporting this particular group.

## 5.4.3 Post-16 embedded into practice

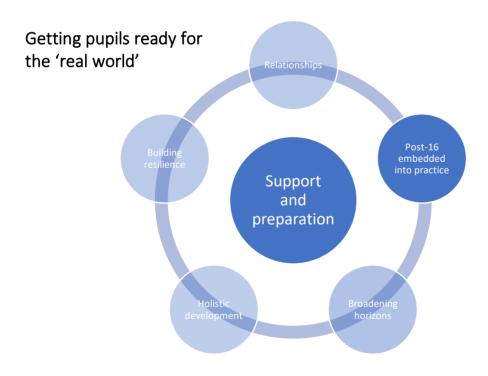


Figure 19. Aide memoire for theme Post-16 embedded into practice

Careers advice was mentioned by both pupils and staff, as would be expected given the statutory guidance around this (DfE, 2013). Careers fairs were also frequently reported by staff and pupils indicating they shared their perceptions of the support in place. However, there was a sense amongst staff that post-16 is, or should be, embedded within all aspects of the curriculum.

All staff identified the importance of making links between curriculum subjects and the 'real world' explicit so that pupils value the learning in school and understand its relevance. This extends previous findings by Michael and Frederickson (2013) and supports Kendall et al. (2007) who suggest that by making links explicit, pupils develop a more positive attitude to learning. Although pupils appeared to have developed a positive attitude to learning, this did not appear in pupils' accounts of the preparation they received. This may suggest that more could be done to make these links explicit for pupils, however, the YP were not explicitly asked about this and so may not have thought to contribute the information.

Some staff perceived many of the pupils to be 'practical learners' and therefore were considered more likely to pursue vocational courses. The APs all had provision which reflected this expectation. By providing vocational qualifications, staff felt they were able to make links between learning and post-16 clear. This supports Trotman et al. (2019) who highlighted a belief amongst staff that AP pupils were not cut out for an 'academic education' and suggested that pupils were orientated towards vocational pathways. Participants in Trotman et al's study also suggested that their pupils had limited aspirations for alternative post-16 pathways; staff in this study had similar perceptions which perhaps illuminates the importance of their role in 'broadening pupils' horizons', which will now be discussed.

### 5.4.4 Broadening horizons

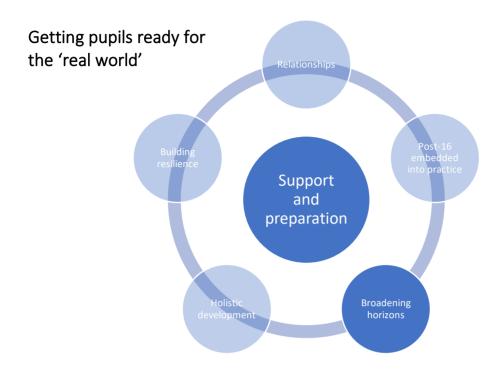


Figure 20. Aide memoire for theme Broadening Horizons

In preparing pupils for post-16, the staff talked about 'broadening pupils' horizons'. The staff reflected on the limited opportunities and experiences that the pupils are exposed to in their lives. Staff considered pupils to be likely to pursue similar lifestyles to their parents and siblings; statistics suggest that 'most pupils' attending AP are from economically poor backgrounds (DfE, 2018b) and are exposed to intergenerational unemployment (Gallagher, 2011). This supports Daniels et al.'s (2003) view that AP pupils struggle to see beyond their current circumstances and need staff to support them to believe in themselves.

Analysis highlighted the perceived importance of exposing pupils to possible alternative futures; this may be by providing new experiences or opportunities, such as visiting universities or supporting pupils to branch out beyond their immediate locality. This was mentioned in Thomson and Pennacchia's (2014) study but is extended here by drawing attention to the potential role of APs in promoting social mobility and breaking, rather than maintaining, the cycle of disadvantage which was suggested by Gill et al. (2017). Pupils' accounts reflected this through their changed attitudes towards education and ambitions for a better and different future. However, it is important to highlight that staffs' perceptions were not congruent with

Connell's perception that AP has had a detrimental effect on his aspirations for the future. This suggests that perhaps more could be done to connect with pupils who are disengaged from AP, like Connell.

#### 5.4.5 Holistic development

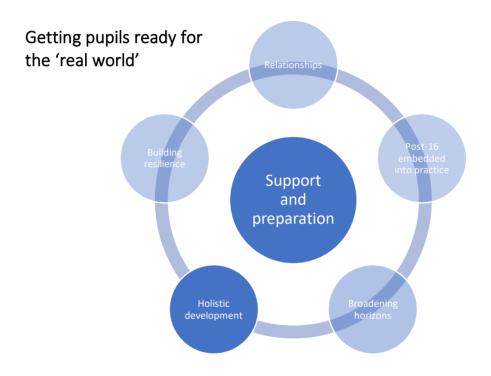


Figure 21. Aide memoire for theme Holistic development

Perhaps not unique to KS4, all staff talked about developing pupils 'holistically' to prepare them for the 'real world'. This involved re-engaging the pupils with learning and developing their confidence, social knowledge and coping skills. Closely aligned with the person-centred approaches discussed in 5.4.1, the notion of holistic development is derived from humanistic psychology (DeRobertis, 2008). However, in this context, it is understood by staff as focusing on developing the 'whole' child, rather than concentrating primarily on academic progress. The notion of a 'holistic approach' has emerged from AP staff in previous research; Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) characterised it as "filling voids in YP's lives and knowledge" (p.28) through developing social and life skills which prepare YP for life after AP. Supporting these

findings, Thomson and Pennacchia suggests that this type of social learning is crucial for reducing further social marginalisation and exclusion. The benefits of developing YPs' social and emotional skills to prepare YP for life after school were also argued by Fleischer (2010).

In this study, the 'holistic' approach seemed to be delivered through direct work with the YP and almost vicariously through a whole school approach and ethos; staff described the whole school as an intervention which provided 'all round support'. This suggests that their holistic approach to pupil development is applied across systems, rather than an intervention added to the curriculum. There was a sense that this whole-school approach is unique to the AP. It perhaps reflects an important difference between mainstream and AP practices which is echoed in the overarching theme from pupils' interviews, 'A fundamentally different experience to mainstream', discussed in 5.1.

The focus on the holistic development of pupils who have been socially excluded and marginalised is arguably important in facilitating their inclusion in mainstream society upon leaving AP. However, at the same time, this perhaps reflects a shift in focus away from academic qualifications, which arguably negates the possibility for social mobility discussed in 5.4.4. This issue was also highlighted by Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) who observed the reduction of academic subjects to allow for activities and excursions which were valued by staff in order to 'broaden pupils horizons'. This issue is perhaps reflected in the pupils' accounts of a 'trade off' which is regarded as positive by some students but limiting by others.

## 5.4.6 Building resilience

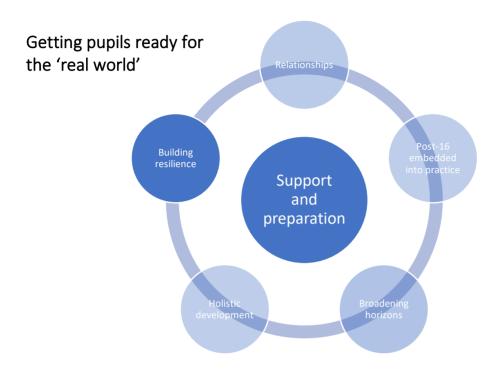


Figure 22. Aide memoire for theme Building resilience

A salient aspect of the theme 'holistic development' was the focus on building YPs' resilience; this was deemed an important quality for these YP to possess as they progressed into post-16. Building resilience was common language used across the APs and was explicitly identified as a desired outcome for the YP. There appeared to be a nuanced understanding of the term shared by staff which referred to a 'specific quality' of the young person which enabled them to cope with and overcome adversity. Staff perceived this could be developed through support and intervention. However, it is of note that the construct of resilience is widely no longer considered a within-child trait, but rather a process or product of the systems around the child (Masten, 2014). As such resilience is considered dynamic and changeable, according to time and context (Rutter, 1987).

Resilience can be influenced by 'risk' or 'protective' factors, with the latter acting as a buffer against adversity (Gilligan, 2000). Gilligan (2000) states that belonging, having a secure base and positive relationships are key 'protective' factors and support resilience. Similar factors have been identified by the pupils (5.2) and staff (5.4.1) in this study, which suggests that AP

does appear to provide a system which fosters resilience in its pupils. This supports findings by Hart (2013). However, it is of note that Hart (2013) also speculated that pupils' resilience may be limited to the AP context. She suggested that pupils are vulnerable to risk factors when they lose the supportive and protective factors within AP and return to the mainstream system which did not work for them previously. This raises questions around how this group will fair upon their transition to post-16 when the protective factors in the AP are removed. This is considered further in the next section.

# 5.5 RQ4: How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?

To address RQ4, the following section discusses the theme 'Barriers to successful transition' identified in the staff FGs and will also draw upon pupils' perceptions as discussed in 5.3. The following subthemes from the FGs will be discussed in more detail: 'High level of support not replicable', 'Getting there' and 'Underdeveloped transition practices'. Figure 23 illustrates how these factors interlink, which is discussed throughout this section.

It is argued that through consideration of these barriers, areas for development can be identified. In response to the findings, this section will conclude by offering a model for professionals to consider.

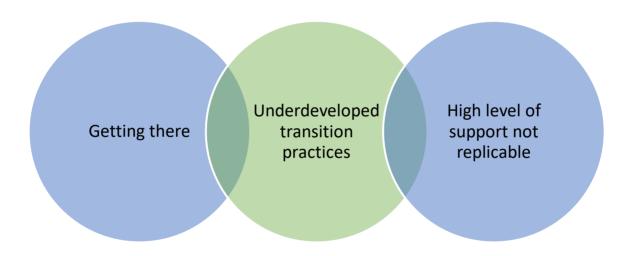


Figure 23. Interlinking subthemes which address RQ4

### 5.5.1 Getting there

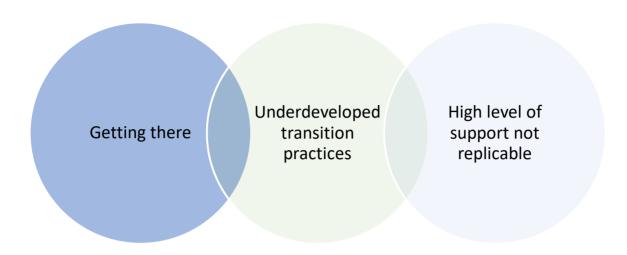


Figure 24. Aide memoire for theme Getting there

The theme 'Getting there' was salient throughout the accounts of staff from all three schools. The theme refers to the emotional challenges which pupils experience in transitioning to college including anxiety and difficulty with independent travel. Staff reported that pupils currently travel to school by taxi and this ensures they attend. However, some staff reflected that this reduces opportunities for the pupils to practice life skills such as travelling independently. Whilst pupils' taxis to school facilitate their attendance, this is unlikely to continue into post-16 which creates a substantial barrier for some pupils.

Getting to college is not highlighted explicitly as a barrier elsewhere in the literature. However, it is perceived by staff to be linked to pupils' difficulty with independence and life skills more generally, which is observed in the literature (Farouk, 2015). Farouk (2015) suggests that because of the high level of support provided in the AP, pupils have limited opportunities to develop the independence skills, including self-organisation and self-motivation, that are required to successfully transition to post-16 provision. However, this study aligns more closely with the view that staff in AP are well positioned to further develop these skills in YP who may struggle, as suggested by Thomson and Pennacchia (2014).

It is important to note that none of the pupils raised getting to college as a concern. However, many of the pupils did express anxiety about the transition generally, which is indicative of the emotional challenge of going to college identified by staff. The YP perceived this to be short-lived providing the right support is on offer, which perhaps highlights the importance of ensuring YP feel fully supported during their transition and are equipped with the skills to manage this.

## 5.5.2 High level of support not replicable

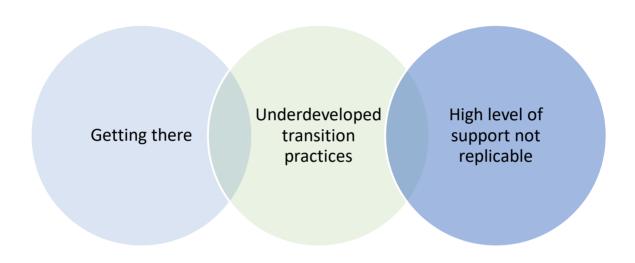


Figure 25. Aide memoire for theme High level of support not replicable

The findings suggest that pupils experience a fundamentally different environment to mainstream in the AP, as discussed in 5.2 and 5.4. However, it is this difference which provides the context for this barrier to transition. Staff in this study suggest that one of the fundamental challenges for pupils leaving the AP and moving on to post-16 is that the high level of support provided in AP is not replicated.

Staff highlighted the physical college environment and the loss of attachments with key adults as being central to this issue. Beth lists a number of challenges pupils have to cope with when starting college, which suggests the experience may be overwhelming for pupils. There is concern that the sense of belonging and supportive relationships, which contributed to the

positive impact on pupils as seen in the APs, may be lost upon transition. Referring back to the resilience literature and discussion in 5.4.6, it appears that during transition the YP lose the supportive system of the AP which provided multiple protective factors and contributed to their resilience. Without this, as suggested by Hart (2013), the YP can struggle. This suggests why pupils who make considerable progress in the highly supportive AP environment 'go to pieces' when they have left (Marie).

This issue is emerging in the literature reviewed. Malcolm (2019) suggested that transitions to post-16 were difficult because of the "challenge of moving on from a situation where extensive support had been in place" (p.93). Similarly, other studies indicate that changes which occur in the AP may well be context specific and pupils may struggle when retuning to mainstream (Mills and Thompson, 2018). Extending previous arguments, this study foregrounds this issue as a complex barrier to successful transition.

### 5.5.3 Underdeveloped transition practices

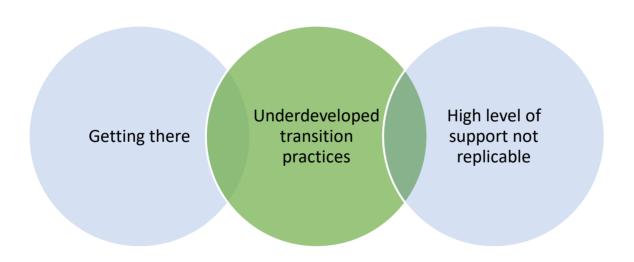


Figure 26. Aide memoire for theme Underdeveloped transition practices

Analysis highlighted the perception amongst some staff that transition practices were 'underdeveloped'. This is placed at the centre of Figure 26 as it interlinks with the issues discussed above. Implications of this are considered below.

Staff described transition as 'missing' or 'we don't have enough' (School 2) and there was a perception that more could be done. This reflects wider literature (HoC, 2018). Staff compared the transition support in AP to pupils leaving mainstream school, suggesting there is more which could be done to mirror the practices in mainstream schools. Their perceptions suggest a lack of confidence in their current provision in supporting pupils moving on to post-16, however there seemed to be a willingness and efficacy in being able to improve this. This suggests that staff perceive themselves to have some control and influence over pupils' transition. As illustrated in Figure 27, it was identified that staff have influence over 'Gaps in support' and 'Relationships' which can, to some extent, begin to address the barriers discussed above. These are expanded upon below.

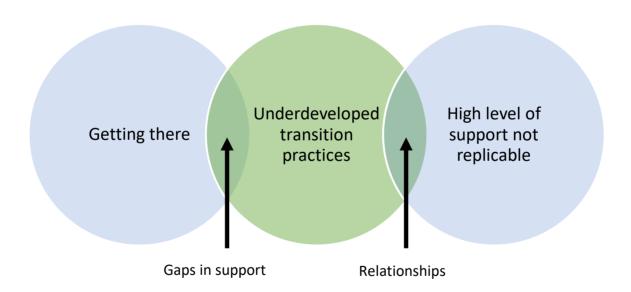


Figure 27. Diagram illustrating how transition practices can reduce barriers

### 5.5.4 Gap in support

Staff in School 1 perceived the gap in support over the summer as a significant barrier to YPs' transitions to college. This refers to an extended period of time over summer where pupils do not have support from AP or college. Staff discussed the support which was previously

provided by external services but is no longer available due to funding, arguably a product of the current economic climate reported by Edwards (2017). Without support or 'protective factors' during this lengthy period of unstructured uncertainty, staff report pupils become increasingly anxious about the move to college, meaning that 'getting there' can be too much. Some staff suggest that this is worsened by exposure to 'risk factors' such as negative peer relationships. Critically, it is worthwhile noting that this 'gap' was not evident in the accounts of staff from Schools 2 and 3; this could suggest that they did not have support previously or may still have access to other services.

This issue was also highlighted by Mills and Thomson (2018) who, in response, identified the need for 'bridging programmes' over the summer. The present research supports this idea, although it is unclear whose role it is to provide this. Echoing Mills and Thomson, it is suggested that APs work together with colleges and the LA to identify how this could be facilitated. In addition, it is proposed that staff seek to identify other 'protective factors' with pupils to buffer the loss of protective factors from the AP, particularly where external support cannot be sought.

#### 5.5.5 Relationships

Relationships are discussed extensively throughout this chapter, indicating their importance to both pupils and staff. Relationships were also perceived as being important in facilitating successful post-16 transition for pupils. However, this research indicated that some APs' were still establishing relationships with post-16 settings, despite there being a consensus that this was important.

Although the high level of support is not replicable in college, it is suggested that this barrier can be ameliorated by developing relationships with colleges. It is argued that APs should continue to extend their links with college settings and seek to further develop the relationships between college staff and pupils by identifying a 'key adult' and supporting them with additional visits, as suggested by Kendall et al. (2007). Whilst it is acknowledged that college are unlikely to be able to offer the same 'time' identified as important in this study, it is suggested that AP staff equip pupils with the skills to know who to go to for help. Links should be made between pupils and appropriate professionals who have a pastoral or wellbeing role, as suggested by IoE and NFER (2014). Furthermore, information should be shared with college

staff so that key adults in college can develop their 'understanding' of pupils' needs. This should be done in a person-centred way which amplifies pupil voice and ensures they are actively involved in the process, thus reducing the issues with consent raised by Edwards (2017).

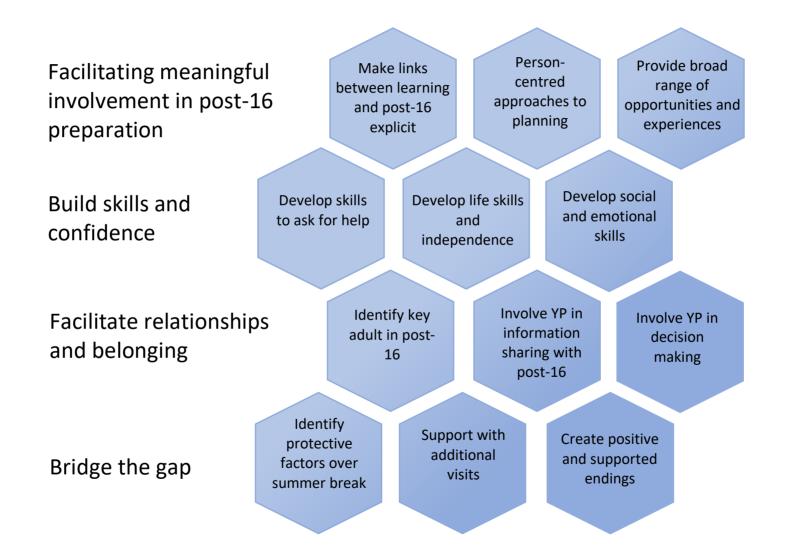
# 5.6 A model for structuring post-16 transition preparation

Staff's aspirations to develop their practice in supporting transitions for this group is suggestive of the potential utility of a model for practice. Drawing on the findings from the RQs and the relevant literature, the following model highlights important factors to consider in preparing YP for their transition to post-16. These factors are organised under four broad areas: facilitating meaningful involvement in post-16 preparation, building skills and confidence, facilitating relationships and belonging and bridging the gap.

The model emphasises the importance of YP being meaningfully involved in preparing for post-16, so that they feel listened to and included in decision making. This includes making links between learning and post-16 explicit and providing opportunities which expose YP to futures they may not have otherwise considered. Softer skill development is considered important so that pupils are confidently able to respond to the challenges associated with transitioning to a mainstream post-16 environment. Based on what is important to YP, the model foregrounds relationships and belonging as a central component in supporting YPs' transition, extending current literature. Finally, the model responds to the problematic 'gap' in support (between leaving AP and starting college) by highlighting the need for positive endings and identifying protective factors over the break.

The honeycomb graphic was adopted because of its connotations of being a strong structure consisting of interlinking factors which are pieced together, thus creating a metaphorical bridge between the AP and post-16 setting. The model moves from the general (left) to the specific (right).

# A model for structuring post-16 transition preparation



## 5.7 Summary of research findings

The aim of this study was to understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transitioning to post-16 provision and the perceived impact attending an AP has had on them. In meeting the aims of the study, the research addressed the following RQs:

- 1. How do YP experience KS4 in APs?
- 2. How do YP perceive their transition from AP to post-16 provision?
- 3. How do staff currently support YP in KS4 and their transition to post-16?
- 4. How might transition practices be developed for YP leaving AP?

This study was underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology, and also assumed a degree of pragmatism in that the research was intended to be useful and applicable to practice. A two-part approach was taken to address the RQs: Part 1 involved an IPA of semi-structured interviews with pupils and Part 2 involved a TA of three FGs with AP staff.

The findings highlighted that pupils' experiences in AP are fundamentally different to their experiences in mainstream school. Largely, pupils had positive experiences in AP where they experienced belonging, supportive relationships and understanding. This seemed to have a positive impact upon their confidence, attitudes towards education and emotional competence. Staffs' accounts of the support provided in AP suggested that relationships, person-centred practice and developing YP 'holistically' contributed to pupils' positive experiences. However, it is important to highlight that Connell, who was PEx, had different perceptions to his peers who were attending the AP for MH reasons.

Largely, pupils had positive perceptions of their transition to post-16. They perceived AP to have a positive effect upon their post-16 futures, although the notion of a 'trade-off' was identified. They perceived transitioning to post-16 as an opportunity for change. This was significant for the YP who all had challenging experiences during their school lives which they wanted to leave behind. Staff felt that pupils had had limited experiences previously and saw their role as 'broadening horizons' through exposing YP to alternative futures and building their confidence to achieve.

It was felt by staff that softer skills and resilience fostered in pupils helped to prepare them for post-16. In addition, staff perceived that post-16 should be embedded into the curriculum so that links between lessons and real life can be made explicit for pupils. Despite this input, there was a consensus amongst staff and pupils that pupils may find transition to a mainstream post-16 environment difficult because the unique AP environment cannot be replicated. Some staff deemed that this was exacerbated by the absence of support during the summer break. Staff identified that more could be done to support YP during their transition to college, including fostering relationships with post-16 providers. To respond to this, a model for practice was offered to prepare pupils for their transition to post-16 which could be adopted by APs, EPs and other related professionals.

## 5.8 Emergent thesis

The emergent thesis presented here is that YPs' experience in AP is fundamentally different to that of mainstream. Central to this are relationships with staff, experiencing a sense of belonging and feeling understood. Whilst this is argued to have a largely positive impact on the YP who attend, it is this very difference which is considered the biggest challenge in pupils' transition to mainstream post-16 environments. It is postulated that, to respond to this, APs need a model which builds upon current practices to structure transition in a way which prepares YP to successfully move on to mainstream post-16 environments.

#### 5.9 Implications for practice

This research was driven by the researchers' values and motivations, as an applied practitioner, to produce a unique contribution to knowledge which has both applicability and utility for APs and EPs. As such, the implications for practice are in part considered as one indicator of the impact of this research.

#### 5.9.1 Implications for APs

The implications for APs are considered with regards to supporting pupils in KS4 and preparing them for the transition to post-16.

#### Supporting pupils in KS4 in AP

This research uncovers the most salient aspects of pupils lived experiences in AP. It foregrounds relationships as being fundamental to pupils' experiences and illuminates the needs which these fulfil. The research provides further understanding of how belonging is experienced by the YP in the setting and what contributes to this, including feeling listened to and understood. In highlighting what is working for pupils who experience AP positively, the findings indicate how APs could apply these principles to engaging YP who are disaffected with the AP.

Importantly, this research also highlights how some pupils perceive that attending an AP can negatively affect their future prospects and cause them to feel hopeless. In highlighting this issue, more can be done to challenge this perception by providing opportunities relevant to their career interests and developing their understanding of post-16 pathways through personcentred planning.

## Preparing for transition to post-16

This study draws alternative providers' attention to their current post-16 transition practices. Notably, it highlights where practices might be underdeveloped and require further consideration. The study offers a model which responds to these issues and is intended to have direct utility within AP settings. The strength of the model is that it makes explicit the key factors to consider in preparing YP for their transition to post-16. These are broadly as follows:

#### i) Facilitating meaningful involvement in post-16 preparation

Facilitating YPs' meaningful involvement in preparing for post-16 is important to actively engage YP in taking ownership of their futures. This may be done through adopting personcentred approaches to planning and making links between learning and post-16 explicit. Also, APs should provide a broad range of opportunities and experiences which develop YPs'

knowledge about what options are available to them. This was identified as important in extending YPs' ambitions and their confidence to achieve, particularly where YP are passive or uncertain.

#### ii) Building skills and confidence

The model highlights the important role APs have in building YPs' skills and confidence. Developing the socio-emotional skills of pupils is recognised as important in preparing YP for challenges they may face when outside of the supportive AP environment. Supporting YP to develop life skills, such as navigating public transport and asking for help, may be a role which AP need to fulfil in developing YPs' confidence to be more independent when leaving school.

#### iii) Facilitating relationships and belonging

Relationships and belonging are well established within the AP, making it a safe and secure environment. However, it was identified that there is a lack of consistency in forming relationships with post-16 providers. The model makes explicit the need for APs to facilitate relationships between pupils and staff in colleges through establishing a key adult. Likewise, establishing relationships between the AP and colleges are equally important so that information can be shared on how best to support the YP. The YP should be actively involved in this process so they can experience being involved in decisions and take ownership of their futures.

## iv) Bridging the gap

The model highlights the importance of supporting positive endings for YP leaving AP. The YP have close attachments to staff and consideration needs to be given to this by senior leaders. Staff are also encouraged to identify promotive factors with the YP to buffer the negative effects of the absence of support and any other risk factors over the extended summer break. However, it is acknowledged that there are limitations to this and therefore it is suggested that APs work with Colleges and the LA (including EP Services) to consider how YP can be supported over this unstructured period.

#### 5.9.2 Implications for EPs

As the research was carried out as partial fulfilment of a professional DEdPsy, particular consideration was given to the implication of this research for EPs.

The model offered is intended to provide a framework for APs in preparing and planning for YPs' transition to post-16. However, I propose that it has direct utility in informing and, importantly, extending EPs' involvement with APs.

Firstly, this research brings the issue to the attention of the profession. This group of YP tend not to have EHCPs and therefore EPs are unlikely to have any statutory involvement (Edwards, 2017). However, this study highlights this group as being as needing as their primary-aged and reintegrating peers, of a carefully planned transition to the next phase of their education. Given the many parallels with reintegration literature, I argue that EPs should consider this transition as being comparable to reintegration and requiring similar input. As such, this study seeks to extend the scope of EP involvement to include supporting Year 11s leaving AP; an area which appears overlooked. This research suggests several ways in which EPs can support APs in four key areas, as stipulated in the model:

#### i) Facilitating meaningful involvement in post-16 preparation

EPs' practice is underpinned by the SEND CoP (2015) and so they tend to be well versed in understanding and applying person-centred approaches, as well as listening to and empowering YPs' voices. This research emphasises the importance of person-centred approaches in AP and, importantly, what this means to the YP who attend. This research highlights how such approaches contribute to not only a sense of belonging, but feelings of acceptance, understanding and value which are extremely powerful in light of their past experiences. As such, EPs are integral to informing the development of person-centred practice in APs and considering ways in which YP can have their voices heard in AP, particularly with regards to post-16 pathways.

#### ii) Building skills and confidence

EPs are knowledgeable about child development and how CYP acquire skills, including social skills, emotional competence and independence. As such EPs are well placed to provide information (through training or consultation) about the relevant theories of development and skill acquisition, such as social learning theory and attachment. Furthermore, EPs are able to extend staffs' knowledge and understanding of theories which are relevant to their broader

practice and approach in AP, including perspectives on resilience and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943).

## iii) Facilitating relationships and belonging

This research foregrounds the importance of relationships between pupils and staff in AP. It extends previous research by considering the different needs these relationships fulfil; whether this be an attachment relationship, a friendship or emotional containment. As such, theories into attachment and belonging are particularly relevant. EPs are knowledgeable about such theories and are able to share this understanding with AP staff at a systemic level, through training and consultation.

This research also highlights how YP perceive staff to have a good understanding of their MH needs. EPs are able to contribute to furthering staffs' knowledge of MH and understanding of how to support YP with MH in school through adopting whole-school approaches, which may be initiated through systemic or organisational work.

This research illuminates not only what preparation is needed from the AP, but also highlights the sorts of things which may need to be put in place in college. As EPs have recently become more involved in post-16 work, they are increasingly present in colleges and are suitably positioned to share 'what works' in supporting vulnerable YP who arrive from AP, thus contributing to inclusion at a post-16 level.

#### iv) Bridging the gap

This research highlights a potential gap in support for YP between leaving school and arriving at their post-16 destination. As EPs can have influence at a wider level (locally and nationally), they may be able to raise this issue with those who are involved in decision making. For example, the DfE (2020) has issued funding to support those who have left AP during the Covid-19 pandemic. EPs may be well placed to advise where and how this is spent. Furthermore EPs, with their knowledge of transition and attachment, are well placed to consider how staff can support YP with endings.

As these YP often do not have EHCPs, EPs must be aware of how this transition should be supported to ensure that YP do not 'slip through the net'. As EPs are experienced in personcentred approaches, it is suggested that they could be involved in facilitating transition

meetings between school, college and the YP, for those must vulnerable. This could take the form of person-centred approaches such as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope, which have been used with this group (Bristow, 2014).

Finally, this research argues that AP is a 'fundamentally different' environment to mainstream. This raises the question as to whether such practices can be replicated in mainstream at all and perhaps positions AP as a unique and valuable part of the education system for some CYP. This said, throughout Connell's interview it appeared that he did not benefit from being in the AP; rather, the AP was having a negative impact on his sense of self and perceived future which contributed towards his disaffection. This highlights the importance of ensuring that placements in AP are appropriate for YP and, where these are not appropriate, pupils are supported to return to mainstream school - even in KS4. EPs are well placed to work systemically with the LA, secondary schools and APs to share the impact this can have on YP and promote their reintegration where possible.

#### 5.9.3 Implications for other stakeholders

Although this study did not seek to understand practices in mainstream, the findings do illuminate the experiential aspects of mainstream school which the pupils struggled with including relationships, sense of belonging and understanding of MH. By highlighting what works well in AP, these findings could inform Senior Leaders, teaching staff and support staff in mainstream schools about how to support pupils with MH needs in their mainstream school, with the aim of preventing their experiences of exclusion and alienation reported here and enabling them to continue in mainstream education. It perhaps also suggests that there may be training needs within some mainstream schools in relation to supporting and understanding MH. As such, this research also contributed towards understanding, and responding to, the wider national issue of increasing MH needs in mainstream schools (DfE, 2018a).

The research also has implications for post-16 settings, in particular mainstream colleges. In highlighting aspects of mainstream school which pupils found difficult, the research provides some indication as to the difficulties YP may experience upon their transition to mainstream post-16 settings. In making post-16 settings aware of these challenges, it is hoped that they can be addressed and appropriate support put in place when the YP arrive. Furthermore, the model also has clear implications for post-16 settings in that it highlights the importance of their active

involvement in transition preparation. Firstly, it illustrates the importance of post-16 settings developing relationships with AP staff and students. It also highlights the importance of sharing and therefore receiving information about the students and being involved in person-centred approaches to planning. The model also highlights that post-16 settings should facilitate additional visits for YP in AP and be involved in 'bridging the gap' during the transition; as such there are implications for how post-16 settings should work with APs and the LA in organising this.

Although parents were not explicitly involved in this research, previous research suggests that parents of YP with SEMH needs can feel uncertain and unsupported during their child's transition to post-16 (Polat et al., 2001). It is hoped that, by providing a model which is easily accessible, parents will have a tangible tool which can inform their conversations with AP staff and empower them to be involved in their child's transition.

Finally, as YP are at the centre of this research, it is important that the research is useful for them. It is hoped that the findings position the YP at the centre of all transition preparation and planning so that they experience being fully involved in making decisions relating to their transition and their future. As the model is easily accessible it could be used with the YP themselves to identify and plan their transition and be personalised to their individual needs. It is hoped that actively engaging YP in this process may empower them to develop the skills and confidence to achieve their goals.

## 5.10 Critique of the present research

### 5.10.1 Strengths and contributions

The two-part approach to this research allowed for the triangulation of data from both staff and pupil perspectives. Whilst this could be criticised given the social constructionist position of the research (in that there is no single truth to obtain), it is argued that this actually enabled me to obtain multiple truths and present a richer picture of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, it is argued that my commitment to the idiographic is maintained throughout the research and that pupils' individual voices permeate all aspects of the thesis. As such, this study benefits from both the depth established through IPA and breadth established through TA, enabling me to develop a fuller understanding of YPs' experience of the phenomenon.

The research design includes the use of one creative method to support data collection: the ToL. The ToL has been used previously by Stark et al. (2019) as a means of collecting data with refugee children. This study illustrates how the ToL can also be adapted to research with YP exploring school-specific issues and transition.

The sample included five pupils who attended AP on medical placements. This group of pupils are largely absent from current research and therefore little is known about their experiences. This study contributes towards developing an understanding of their experiences in AP and also, unexpectedly, highlights how these may differ from their PEx peers. As such, this study contributes knowledge about the lived experiences of these YP and responds to the call for further research with this group (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017).

This study looks specifically at AP pupils' experiences in KS4 and their perceptions of transitioning to post-16, which extends the limited literature on this particular topic. The study contributes information about pupils' current experiences in AP and how they perceive their transition, which provides insight into how best to support this group. It is hoped that the findings and the model offered can be considered by similar APs in the UK to inform their post-16 transition practices. Although the generalisability of this study is limited (discussed further in 5.10.2), it is argued that the findings may be transferrable to other similar settings, however the extent of this should be determined by the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Whilst the importance of belonging is well established in the context of school literature, the concept is just emerging in the AP literature in the UK (Hart, 2013). Through IPA, belonging

has been foregrounded as a meaningful part of YPs' experiences in AP, thus extending the current research in the field.

A further unique contribution of this research is the model which is offered to practitioners. Based upon the findings of this study and relevant literature, the model explicitly stipulates several important factors which could be considered in preparing YP for transition to post-16. It is intended that the model can be easily disseminated and understood by staff and senior leaders in AP, EPs, LA officers and other related professions. As such, the model adds not only new information to the literature, but also contributes towards developing practices which have been identified by staff in this study and in the wider literature, as requiring improvement. Furthermore, it responds to the priorities of the LA in which the research is situated and so has direct real-world contributions which was important to the researcher.

#### 5.10.2 Limitations

Three different APs were included in the study. However, due to time constraints, pupil participants were only obtained from two of the schools and their experiences were not grouped accordingly. As such, staff perceptions and pupil perceptions were not directly compared. However, the intention of this study was not to compare school practices nor to establish causation, but rather to understand YPs' individual experiences and the support they receive in AP.

The sample of pupils obtained for this study is not representative of the national demographic of AP. The sample is also small and limited to one LA, therefore it is not possible to generalise the findings to pupils' experiences in all APs. However, this was not the aim. Instead this study intended to focus on experiences of individuals, before moving to the more general by looking across cases (Smith et al., 2009). Although there are limits to its generalisability, it is suggested that the strength of the themes, their prominence within the literature and links with seminal psychological theories, indicate its usefulness in understanding other YPs' experiences of this phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

The analysis was not member checked or peer checked; this could be seen as an issue relating to the reliability and credibility of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Although this was not possible due to the time constraints of the study, it is argued that if reality is understood to be

socially constructed, then it is not possible to 'check' the analysis (Sandelowski, 1993). It is unlikely the peer would have the same interpretation as the researcher, given their own experiences will be different. Furthermore, the data collection process was understood as being 'collaborative', something which I am a part of, therefore it is not possible for participants to 'prove' or 'disprove' the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, I suggest that by using a reflexive journal to track my thoughts during the analysis, I was able to be transparent about my impact a researcher whilst being sensitive to the research (Macro, 2019b).

The issues of power were acknowledged in Chapter 3 when discussing the ethical issues associated with this research. It is important to acknowledge them again here. Although efforts were made to minimise the power imbalance, it is not possible to conclude the interviews were wholly unaffected by this. As such, it is acknowledged that the interviews may have been influenced by demand characteristics. Similar issues may have arisen during the FGs; staff may have portrayed an idealised picture of their practice so as not to be judged by the researcher or other group members.

Information about the SEND needs of the YP, including whether they had an EHCP, was not gathered for this study. This may have been useful for the reader because the literature indicates that YP who have an EHCP may have a different experience of transition compared with those who do not have an EHCP. However, it is argued that the nature of IPA is to understand what is important to participants and what this means to them; as such, it is suggested that if the participant had an EHCP and this was important to them in supporting their transition, then the participants may have shared this with the researcher. Despite this, not gathering this information could be considered a limitation of this study as this information may have been relevant and useful to the reader.

Further information about staff and their roles in the setting were not included as this could compromise their anonymity. Furthermore, as the research was about how staff support the YP more broadly, rather than exploring their individual roles, it was decided that this information was not required to answer the RQs. However, it is acknowledged that further information about the staff and their roles may have been useful to the reader.

Finally, one YP decided not to conclude their interview. As such, there was information missing from their perspective which potentially biases some of the findings. However, it was

important to include the data I had, given the value and significance of their contributions. The power of this is reflected throughout the discussion and conclusions of this thesis. The participant cannot be identified as this would affect their anonymity.

## **5.11 Suggestions for future research**

This particular topic is under-researched. Whilst interest in the subject area is emerging, more research is required to understand what being in AP means to pupils and their post-16 transition.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study emerged in part from a conversation with a parent about her child's experience in AP. Although it was not possible within the scope of this research to also include parents' voice, it would be interesting for future research to explore the views of parents with regards to the impact attending an AP has had on their child and their future.

This study occurred at a single point in time and therefore is only a snapshot of YPs' perceptions of the phenomenon. As such, claims cannot be made about how the pupils' actually experienced the transition or what helped them. Equally, it is not possible to discern whether the impact AP had on the YP was reflective of long-term or short-term change. As such, a longitudinal study which explores pupils' perceptions before, during and after transition would be beneficial in understanding the longer-term impact of attending an AP and what works in supporting YPs' transition.

One thread which runs through the findings of this study is the stark difference between Connell's experience and that of his peers. The study tentatively suggests there might be differences in the experiences of pupils who have been PEx and pupils attending AP due to MH. Further exploration of this difference may be worthwhile.

Finally, further research may wish to further explore the views of pupils who attended AP for MH reasons and those who were PEX once they have transitioned to post-16. In addition, it would be interesting to also explore the views of those who are unsuccessful in their transition to post-16.

## 5.12 Concluding reflections

Carrying out this research has been both rewarding and thought provoking. I was privileged to have been given such insight into the lived experiences of pupils and the unique practices within AP. Carrying out the interviews and later reflecting upon these was a powerful experience; I was honoured that the YP felt able to disclose so much information about their lives, but with this I felt a great sense of responsibility. This meant that interpretation sometimes felt uneasy, however I felt secure having explicitly acknowledged my interpretivist position as a researcher. If I was to conduct the research again, I would like to do a second interview with pupils to ensure I was understanding their story. I would also consider asking staff about salient aspects of the YPs' accounts, or vice versa, to develop a fuller understanding of the phenomenon.

Whilst semi-structured interviews and FGs are common methods of collecting data, my use of the ToL was somewhat unique and so warrants further reflection. I found the tool worked well in structuring the conversations and reducing some of the barriers associated with one-to-one interviews, including power imbalances. I felt that using the ToL created a more relaxed environment and supported the co-construction of the YPs' story, in line with IPA. However, some YP chose not to draw their ToL. Although I had not anticipated this, it was more important that the YP did what felt comfortable for them during the interview.

The research has given me insight into the complexity of the lives of many YP who attend AP. I have developed a stronger understanding of how, and why, relationships are a fundamental aspect of practice in AP and how a sense of belonging is foregrounded in YPs' experience. I think this research will also inform how I approach casework within AP settings in the future and understand the support needs of YP with MH or who are at risk of disengaging from education.

Finally, given the current Covid-19 pandemic, it is regrettable that these pupils will not have the 'ending' which they were so looking forward to. The transition practices which were discussed at the time of interview will not reach fruition and the pupils will lack the supportive hand needed, more than ever, to make the transition. However, at the time of writing, the DfE

(2020) announced an encouraging £7 million 'Year 11 transition fund' to specifically support YP who left AP during Covid-19. Such action from the Government is indicative of the importance of this issue at this particularly challenging time. However, it is also hoped that this research, together with the existing literature, substantiates the need for this kind of support and action to continue long beyond the pandemic.

# 6 References

- Andersen, S.M., Chen, S., & Carter, C.J. (2000). Commentaries on the 'What' and 'Why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behaviour. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 269-318.
- Association of Educational Psychologists. (2017). Written evidence submitted by the Association of Educational Psychologists. ALT0068.

  http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Education/Alternative%20provision/written/72438.html
- Atkinson, G. & Rowley, J. (2019). Pupils' views on mainstream reintegration from alternative provision: A Q methodological study. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 24(4), 339.
- Bandura, A. 1997. Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control. New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Baum. S., & Shaw, H. (2015). The Tree of Life Methodology Used as a Group Intervention for People with Learning Disabilities. *The Bulletin*, 13(1), 14-19.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*(3), 497–529.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219-234.
- Berridge, D., Brodie, I., Pitts, J., Porteous, D. & Tarling, R. (2001). The independent effects of permanent exclusion from school on the offending careers of young people. Research Development and Statistics Occasional Paper No 7. Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office.

- Boden, Z., Larkin, M. & Iyer, M. (2019). Picturing ourselves in the world: Drawings, interpretative phenomenological analysis and the relational mapping interview. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(2), 218-236,
- Bomber, L.M. (2007). Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools. Worth Publishing.
- Bomber, L.M. (2010). What about me strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day. Worth Publishing.
- Boyle, C. & Lauchlan, F. (2009). Applied psychology and the case for individual casework: Some reflections on the role of the educational psychologist. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25(1),71-84.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). A Secure Base: Clinical applications of attachment theory. Routledge
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners.

  Sage.
- Braun, V. &Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V. & Terry, G. (2014). Thematic analysis. In P. Rohleder & A. Lyons (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Clinical and Health Psychology* (pp. 95-113). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Bristow, M. (2013). An exploration of the use of PATH (a person-centred planning tool) by

  Educational Psychologists with vulnerable and challenging pupils. [Unpublished Doctoral thesis]. Institute of Education, University of London.
- British Psychology Society (2014). Code of Human Research Ethics. The British Psychology Society
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press.

- Bryman, A., (2012). Social Research Methods (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Buhrmester, D. (1990). Intimacy of friendship, interpersonal competence, and adjustment during preadolescence and adolescence. *Child Development*, 61(4), 1101–1111.
- Caillaud, S. & Flick, U. (2017). FGs in triangulation contexts. In R. Barbour & D. Morgan (Eds)

  Advances in FGs Research (pp. 155-177). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cameron, S. & Maginn. C. (2009). Achieving Positive Outcomes for Children in Care. London: Sage.
- Clarke, N. J., Willis, M. E., Barnes, J. S., Caddick, N., Cromby, J., McDermott, H. and Wiltshire, G. (2015). Analytical pluralism in qualitative research: A meta-study. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), 182-201.
- Cline, T. (2015). School ethos and student identity. In Cline, T., Gulliford, A. & Birch, S. (Eds.) *Educational Psychology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 306-320). Routledge.
- Cowen, G. and Burges, M. (2009). *Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme Evaluation*. London: DCSF.
- Coyle, A. (2015). In Lyons, E. & Coyle, A. (Eds.). *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sage.
- Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2019). CASP Qualitative Checklist. https://casp-uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CASP-Qualitative-Checklist-2018.pdf
- Daniel, B. & Wassell, S. (2002). *The School Years: Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children 2*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Daniels, H., Cole, T., Sellman, E, Sutton, J., Visser, J & Bedward, J. (2003). *Study of young people permanently excluded from school*. DfE Research report number 405.
- Data Protection Act (2018). Chapter 12. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/enacted
- David, M., Edwards, R. & Alldred, P. (2001). Children and school-based research: 'informed consent' or 'educated consent'? *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 347-365.

- Denborogh, D. (2018). *Do you want to hear a story? Adventures in collective narrative practice*.

  Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Department for Education (2013). Alternative Provision: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.

  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data

  /file/268940/alternative provision statutory guidance pdf version.pdf
- Department for Education (2016). Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper.

  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data
  /file/508447/Educational Excellence Everywhere.pdf
- Department for Education (2018a). *Mental health and behaviour in schools*.

  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/755135/Mental health and behaviour in schools .pdf
- Department for Education (2018b). Creating opportunity for all: Our vision for alternative provision.
  - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/713665/Creating opportunity for all AP roadmap.pdf
- Department for Education (2018c). Permanent and fixed term exclusions in England 2016-2017.

  National Statistics.
  - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/726741/text\_exc1617.pdf
- Department for Education (2018d). Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils, England 2016/2017.
  - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/748199/Destinations Main Text 2017.pdf
- Department for Education (2018e). Government response to the Education Select Committee's fifth report of Session 2017-19 on alternative provision.

- https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Education/Correspondence/Government-response-to-fifth-report-alternative-provision-17-19-Cm-9709.pdf
- Department for Education (2020). Alternative provision: Year 11 transition funding. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/alternative-provision-year-11-transition-funding.
- Department for Education and Department of Health (2015) *Special educational needs and disability* code of practice: 0 to 25 years. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25.
- DeRobertis, E.M. (2008). *Humanising Child Developmental Theory: A Holistic Approach*. iUniverse.
- Dewson, S., Aston, J., Bates, P. & Ritchie, H. (2004). Post-16 Transitions: A Longitudinal Study of Young People with Special Educational Needs: Wave Two. Department for Education and Skills.
- Edwards, A.L. (2017). An activity theory analysis of the transition process into further education for young people with social emotional and mental health needs. [Unpublished doctoral thesis]

  University of Birmingham.
- Farouk, S. (2015). The life stories of students excluded from school and their engagement in education. Report and Recommendations for Education Professionals working in School and Pupil Referral Unit/Alternative Provision. Nuffield Foundation.
- Farrell, P. & Polat, F. (2003). The long-term impact of residential provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 18(3), 277-292.
- Fleischer, L. (2010). Developing emotional literacy: Transition planning for youth at risk. *Journal of emotional and behavioural disorders*, 19, 1, 50-53.

- Gallagher (2011). The second chance school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(4), 445-459.
- Geddes, H. (2006). Attachment in the Classroom: A Practical Guide for Schools. Worth Publishing.
- Gill, K., Quilter-Pinner, H. & Swift, D. (2017) Making the difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion. Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Gilligan, R. (2000). Adversity, resilience and young people: the protective value of positive school and spare time experiences. *Children and Society*, 14(1), 37-47.
- Goldspink, S. & Engward, H. (2019). Booming clangs and whispering ghosts: Attending to the reflexive echoes in IPA research. *Qualitative research in Psychology*, 16(2), 291-304.
- Goodenow, C., & Grady, K. E. (1993). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 62(1), 60–71.
- Hart, N. (2013). What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)? An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(2), 196-212.
- Haynes, K. (2012). In Symon, G. & Cassell, C. (2012). *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. Sage.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). Being and Time. Blackwell.
- Hollenbeck, A. F. (2015). The familiar observer: seeing beyond the expected in educational research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(2), 149-165.
- House of Commons Education Committee (2018). Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever-increasing exclusions. Fifth Report of Session 2017–19. HC 342, 2017-2019.
- Husserl, E. (1927). Phenomenology. Encyclopaedia Britannica: Revised translation by Palmer, R.E.
- Institute of Education and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), (2014).

  School exclusion trial evaluation. Department for Education.

- Jalali, R. & Morgan, G. (2018). 'They won't let me back.' Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 23(1), 55-68.
- Johnson, S., Burrows, A. and Williamson, I. (2004). "Does my bump look big in this?" The meaning of bodily changes for first time mothers-to-be. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 9, 361 374.
- Jonathan A. Smith (2017). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Getting at lived experience.

  The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12(3), 303-304.
- Kendall, S., Wilkin, A., Kinder, K., Gulliver, C., Harland, J., Martin, K. and White, R. (2007). *Effective alternative provision*. National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Kilpatrick, R., McCartan, C.& McKeown, P. (2007). *Out of the Box: Alternative Education Provision (AEP) in Northern Ireland*. Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency.
- Kirk, S. (2007). Methodological and ethical issues in conducting qualitative research with children and young people: A literature review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 44, 1250–1260.
- Kleine, D., Pearson, G., and Poveda, S. (2016). *Participatory methods: Engaging children's voices and experiences in research*. www.globalkidsonline.net/participatory- research
- Larkin, M. & Thompson, A. (2012). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In Thompson, A. & Harper, D. (Eds.), *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: a guide for students and practitioners* (pp.99-116). John Wiley & Sons.
- Larkin, M., Watts, S. & Clifton, E. (2006) Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 102-120.
- Lawrence, N. (2011). What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 27(3), 213-226.

- Lawson, K. & Parker, R. (2019). How do young people with special educational needs experience the transition from school to further education? A review of literature. *Pastoral Care in Education*, *37*(2), 143-161.
- Lee, J.F.J.K. (2017). Peer relationships and friendships: Perspectives from Pupils and Staff at a Secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). [Unpublished Doctoral thesis]. Institute of Education, University College of London.
- Levers, M.D. (2013). Philosophical Paradigms, Grounded Theory, and Perspectives on Emergence. SAGE Open October-December 2013, 1–6.
- Levinson, M. & Thompson, M. (2016). "I don't need pink hair here": Should we be seeking to 'reintegrate' youngsters without challenging mainstream school cultures? *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 12(1), 23-43.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Sage Publications.
- Locke, S. (2016). The Tree of Life: A review of the collective narrative approach. *Educational Psychology Research and Practice*, 2(1), 2-20.
- Macro, E.J. (2019a). A comparison and critical review of two qualitative studies which explore the reintegration of children from PRU to mainstream education. [Unpublished assignment]. University of Bristol.
- Macro, E.J. (2019b). *Reflexivity and the researcher's position in qualitative research*. [Unpublished assignment]. University of Bristol.
- Mainwaring, D. & Hallam, S. (2010). 'Possible selves' of young people in a mainstream secondary school and a pupil referral unit: a comparison. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 15*(2), 153-169.
- Malcolm, A. (2019). Turning Points in a Qualitatively Different Social Space: Young Adults'
  Reflections of Alternative Provision. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 24(1) 84-99
  2019.

- Maslow, A., (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pp.370-396.
- Masten, A. (2014). 'Global perspectives on resilience in children and youth.' *Child Development*, 85(1), 6-20.
- Masten, A.S, Burt, K.B., Roisman, G.I., Obradovic, J., Long, J.D., Tellgan, A. (2004). Resources and resilience in the transition to adulthood: Continuity and change. *Development and Psychopathology*, 16, 1071–1094.
- McCluskey, G., Riddell, S. & Weedon, E. (2015). Children's Rights, School Exclusion and Alternative Educational Provision. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(6), 595-607.
- McCrystal, P., Percy, A., & Higgins, K. (2007). The cost of drug use in adolescence: Young people, money and substance abuse. *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy, 14*(1), 19–28.
- McLaughlin, C. & Clarke, B. (2010). Relational matters: A review of the impact of school experience on mental health in early adolescence. *Educational and Child Psychology* 27(1), 91-103.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). Phenomenology of Perception. Routledge.
- Michael, S. & Frederickson, N. (2013). Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: pupil perspectives. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(4), 407-422.
- Mills, M. & Thomson, P. (2018). *Investigative research into alternative provision*. Department for Education.
- Moriarty, J. (2011). *Qualitative Methods Overview: Methods Review 1*. NIHR School for Social Care Research.
- Morris, R. & Atkinson, C. (2018). The role of educational psychologists in supporting post-16 transition: findings from the literature. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *34*(2), 131-149.
- Morrow, V., & Richards, M. (1996). The ethics of social research with children: An overview. *Children and Society, 10*(2), 28–40.

- Ncube Milo, N. & Denborough D. (2007). Tree of Life. The Mainstreaming Psychosocial care and Support: A manual for facilitators. Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative REPSSI.
- Nicholson, L. J. & Putwain, D.W. (2015). Facilitating Re-Engagement in Learning: A Disengaged Student Perspective. *Psychology of Education Review*, 39(2), 37–41.
- Noon, E. (2018). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: An Appropriate Methodology for Educational Research? *Journal Of Perspectives In Applied Academic Practice*, 6(1), 75-83.
- Norwich, B & Eaton, A. (2015). The new Special Educational Needs (SEN) legislation in England and implications for services for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 20(2), 117-132.
- O'Riordan, Z. (2011). Living in the 'real world': the experiences and support of school-leavers with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 16(3), 303-316.
- O'Riordan, Z. (2015). Building productive relationships with young people with SEBD in transition: the role of identity. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 20(4), 415-431.
- Oliver, P. (2004). Writing your thesis. Sage.
- Osterman, K.F. (2000). Students' Need for Belonging in the School Community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323-367.
- Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H. & Mostert, J. (2013). Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(3), 310-326.
- Pirrie, A., & Macleod, G. (2009). Locked out: Researching destinations and outcomes for pupils excluded from special school and PRUs. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 14(3), 185–194.
- Polat, F. & Farrell, P. (2002). What was it like for you? *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 7(2), 97–108.

- Polat, F. Kalambouka, A., Boyle, W.F. & Nelson, N. (2001). *Post-16 Transitions of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. Department for Education and Skills.
- PRISMA. (2009). Transparent reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/FlowDiagram
- Putwain, D.W., Nicholson, L.J. & Edwards, J.L. (2016). Hard to reach and hard to teach: supporting the self-regulation of learning in an alternative provision secondary school. *Educational Studies*, 42(1), 1-18.
- Reid, K., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience: An introduction to interpretative phenomenological analysis. *The Psychologist*, 18, 20-23.
- REPSSI (2007). Tree of Life. Psychosocial Wellbeing Series. Creative Commons.
- Richards, H. M., & Schwartz, L. J. (2002). Ethics of qualitative research: are there special issues for health services research? *Family Practice*, 19(2), 135-139.
- Robinson, Y. & Gillies, V. (2012). Introduction: developing creative methods with children and young people. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15(2),87-89,
- Russell, L & Thomson, P. (2011). Girls and gender in alternative education provision. *Ethnography* and Education, 6(3), 293-308.
- Rutter, M. (1987). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(3), 316-31.
- Sandelowski, M. (1986). The problem of rigor in qualitative research. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 8(3), 27–37.
- Sandelowski, M. (1993). Rigor or rigor mortis: The problem of rigor in qualitative research revisited.

  \*Advances in Nursing Science, 16, 1-8.
- Satre, J.P. (1948). Existentialism and Humanism. Methuen.

- Slaten, C., Ferguson, J., Allen, K., Vella-Brodrick, D. & Waters, L. (2016). School Belonging: A Review of the History, Current Trends, and Future Directions. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 1-15.
- Smith, J.A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *1*(1), 39-54.
- Smith, J.A. (2011). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology Review*, *5*(1), 9-27.
- Smith, J.A. (2019). Participants and researchers searching for meaning: Conceptual developments for interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(2), 166-181.
- Smith, J.A., Jarman, M. and Osbourne, M (1999). doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In Murray, M. & Chamberlain, K. (Eds.), *Qualitative Health Psychology; theories and methods* (pp. 218-238). Sage.
- Smith, J.A., Mccullough, R., Critchlow, C. & Luke, M.M. (2017). Proposing an Initiative Research Methodology for LGBTQ+ Youth: Photo-Elicitation and Thematic Analysis. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counselling*, 11(4), 271-284.
- Solomon, Y. & Rogers, C. (2001). Motivational patterns in disaffected school students: insights from pupil referral unit clients. *British Educational Research Journal*, *27*(3), 331-345.
- Spiers, J. & Riley, R. (2019). Analysing one dataset with two qualitative methods: The distress of general practitioners, a thematic and interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(2), 276-290.
- Stark, M.D., Quinn, B.P., Hennessey, K.A., Rutledge, A.A., Hunter, A.K. & Gordillo, P.K. (2019). Examining Resiliency in Adolescent Refugees Through the Tree of Life Activity. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(2), 130-152.

- Tate, S. and Greatbatch, D. (2017). *Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition*.

  Department for Education. https://assets.publishing.service.

  gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/585550/Alternative\_provision effective practice and post-16 transition.pdf
- Tellis-James, C. & Fox, M. (2016). Positive narratives: the stories young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) tell about their futures. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 32(4), 327-342.
- Thomas, D.V. (2015). Factors affecting successful reintegration. *Educational Studies*, 41(1-2),188-208.
- Thomson, P. & Pennacchia, J. (2015). What's the alternative? Effective support for young people disengaging from mainstream education. The Prince's Trust.
- Thomson, P. & Pennacchia, J. (2016). Hugs and behaviour points: Alternative education and the regulation of "excluded" youth. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(6), 622–640.
- Thomson, P. & Russell, L. (2009). Data, Data Everywhere--But Not All the Numbers that Count?

  Mapping Alternative Provisions for Students Excluded from School. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(4), 423-437.
- Timpson, E. (2019). *Timpson review of school exclusion*.

  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data
  /file/807862/Timpson review.pdf
- Tootill, R. & Spalding, B. (2000). How effective can reintegration be for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties? *Support for Learning*, 15(3), 111-117.
- Trotman, D., Enow, L., Tucker, S. (2019). Young people and alternative provision: Perspectives from participatory–collaborative evaluations in three UK local authorities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(2), 219-237.

- Trotman, D., Tucker, S. & Martyn, M. (2015). Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city. *Educational Research*, 57(3), 237-252.
- Tyson, H.C. (2011). An Exploration of the Transition Planning Experiences of Young People with Additional Educational Needs in a Mainstream Context, as They Consider Their Post-16 Plans. [Unpublished Doctoral thesis]. The University of Birmingham.
- United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/
- Veale, A (2005). Creative methodologies in participatory research with children. In Hogan, D. & Greene, S. (Eds.), *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*. Sage.
- Weatherall, A., Gavey, N., & Potts, A. (2002). So Whose Words are they Anyway? *Feminism & Psychology*, 12(4), 531–539.
- Wells, K. (2011). Narrative Inquiry. Oxford University Press.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method.*Open University Press.
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill Education, Open University Press.
- Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, 15(2), 215-228.

# 7 Appendices

#### Appendix 1. Search strategy

A systematic approach was taken in carrying out two searches of the literature, based upon the research aims. The first search sought to understand the research relating to YP's experiences in secondary aged APs. The second search sought to understand the literature around transition for this group.

The following databases were searched: British Education Index, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Child Development and Adolescent Studies, PsycINFO and Web of Science. In addition to the systematic search, a supplementary search of the reference list of key articles was carried out to identify any further relevant articles (known as 'snowballing' or citation search). Google Scholar and Government Archives were also searched by hand to identify other grey literature.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to each literature search to ensure only the most relevant literature was reviewed (shown in Table 1 and Table 4).

#### Search strategy for Section 1

The first literature search identified literature which explored YPs' experiences of AP. In line with the phenomenological approach of the researcher, it was important for the literature review to reflect the lived experiences of those who have been educated in AP: the YP. As such, only literature which gathered the views of pupils who attended AP directly was included.

<u>Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Section 1</u>

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	
Published in the English language	Not published in the English language	
Studies carried out in the UK	Studies not carried out in the UK (unless seminal)	
Post 2000	Pre- 2000	
YPs' experiences/views of AP	Non-YP views	
	Experiences of exclusion in mainstream	
	Experiences of reintegration	
Participants were YP who were	Participants were YP who had not attended an AP	
attending or had attended an	Participants with SEMH or challenging behaviour in	
'Alternative Provision'	mainstream schools	

Alternative provision including	Special schools or SEBD/SEMH schools
PRUs, Short Stay Schools, AP	Resource bases, units on mainstream sites or similar
academies.	
Qualitative or mixed-methods studies	Quantitative studies
Secondary aged YP in AP	Primary aged YP in AP

Table 2. Search terms for Section 1

Concept	Search terms
School type	'pupil referral unit', 'PRU', 'short stay school', 'alternative provi*'
	or 'alternative education*
Experiences	'experiences', 'perceptions', 'views' or 'attitudes'
Sample group	'school', 'adolescent', 'child*', 'young person', 'young people',
	'youth', 'pupil*' or 'student*'

The search returned the results shown in the flow diagram below, based on PRISMA (2009).

### Search strategy for Section 2

The second search identified literature which explored transition for YP leaving AP. An initial scoping of the literature revealed few relevant studies which meant the search had to be widened to include literature relating to reintegration and post-16 transitions of YP with SEMH needs.

Table 4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Section 2

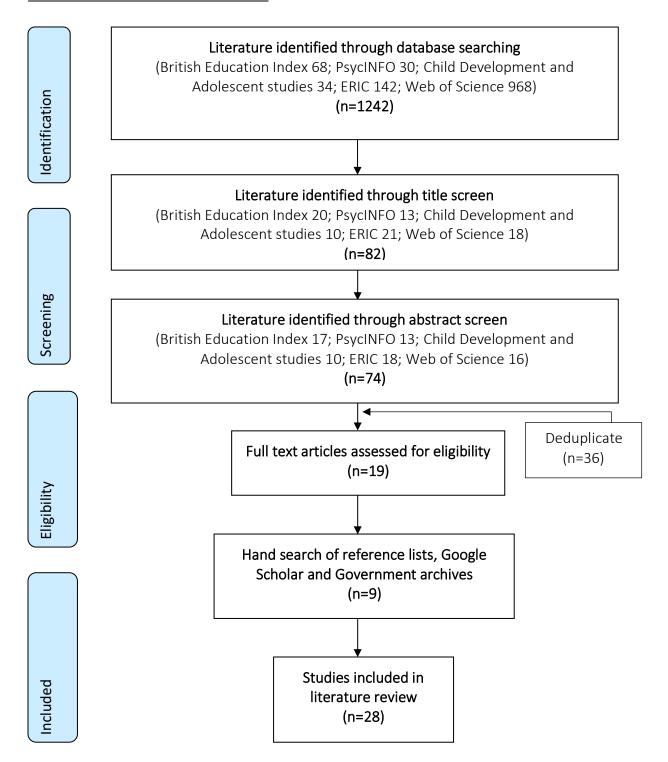
Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Published in the English language	Not published in the English language
Studies carried out in the UK	Studies not carried out in the UK
Post 2000	Pre- 2000
Transitions experiences of secondary	Transition experiences of primary aged children in
aged children and staff in AP (including	AP
reintegration)	
Post-16 transition experiences of YP	Transition experiences of children in mainstream
with SEMH needs	or special school without SEMH needs.
	Transition experiences of YP in pre-16 FE
	provision.
Qualitative or mixed-methods studies	Quantitative studies

Table 5. Search terms for Section 2

Concept	Search terms
Sample group	'pupil referral unit', 'PRU', 'short stay school', 'alternative provision',
	'alternative education provi*', 'sebd', 'social emotional behavioural
	difficulties', 'SEMH' or 'social emotional and mental health', 'EBD'
	or 'social emotional difficulties'
Transition	'transition', 'post-16', 'adulthood', 'further education', 'college',
	'school leav*', 'key stage 4', 'KS4', 'GCSE', 'NEET', 'progress*',
	'employment', 'outcomes', 'training', 'leaving school',
	'reintegration', 'prepar*', 'young adulthood' or 'destinations'

The search returned the results shown in the flow diagram below, based on PRISMA (2009).

#### Literature search results for Section 2





#### **School for Policy Studies**

School for Policy Studies University of Bristol 8 Priory Road Bristol BS8 1TZ Tel: +44 (0)117 954 6755 Fax: +44 (0)117 954 6756 **bristol.ac.uk/sps** 

Dear Elle

Project Title: Exploring Young People's experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their perceptions of transition to post-16 provision.

Reference number: SPSREC/18-19/033

The School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application regarding this project, and we have received your responses to our requests for clarification. As such I am happy to provide Research Ethics Committee approval for this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any gueries.

Yours sincerely

(on behalf of)

#### **Beth Tarleton**

Chair of the Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee





#### Dear [NAME OF HEADTEACHER],

My name is Elle Macro. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Bristol, currently on placement with Lancashire County Council. As part of my training, I am required to complete a research project as partial fulfilment of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

I am approaching Alternative Provisions in the Local Authority to seek participants for my research. My research hopes to look at pupils' experiences of Key Stage 4 in Alternative Provision and their prospective transition to Post-16 education, employment or training.

I have attached an information sheet for schools which goes into further detail about the research, what to expect and how to get involved if you are interested.

If you would like to express your initial interest, please email me and I will answer any questions you may have. If following this you would like to go ahead, I will send you consent forms and information sheets and ask that you distribute these to potential participants.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Elle Macro

Trainee Educational Psychologist University of Bristol

#### Appendix 4. Information sheet for school





'Exploring Young People's experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their perceptions of transition to post-16 provision'

#### Information sheet

Your school is invited to take part in a piece of research exploring Young People's experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their perceptions of transition to post-16 provision.

#### What is this research about?

Research suggests that Young People (YP) who previously attended Alternative Provision (AP) are considerably more likely to become NEET (not in education, employment, or training), with only 56% of pupils in AP going on to education, employment or training compared with 94% from mainstream schools (¹DfE, 2018).

There is much research exploring transition from AP to mainstream school for YP in Key Stage 3, however there is little research which considers YP's experiences of Key Stage 4 (KS4) in an AP and how this prepares them for transition to Post-16 mainstream provision, whether this be employment, education or training.

#### This research aims to:

Understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transition to post-16
provision and the meaning they make from this in relation to their identity and
perceived future.

#### What are the benefits for our school and our pupils?

- It is hoped that by talking about their **strengths and goals** your pupils may feel **empowered to achieve** them in the future.

- It is hoped that your pupils will leave the interview feeling **respected**, **valued and listened to** which is intended to have a positive effect on their **self-esteem**.
- Your pupils will be able to talk about their aspirations for the future and the support they need to achieve them.
- It is hoped the findings from this research in your school will help **shape policy and practice** for other young people leaving Alternative Provisions.

#### Who is carrying out the research?

This research is being undertaken by Elle Macro, a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Bristol. Elle is carrying out this research as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology professional training programme. Elle is currently on placement with Lancashire County Council. Elle has a current Enhanced CRB for working with Children and Young People.

This research has been approved by the University of Bristol School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

#### Who is needed for the research?

Elle is approaching Alternative Provisions in Lancashire who offer placements to Young People in KS4. Alternative Provision is used as an umbrella term which includes Pupil Referral Units or Short Stay Schools.

Elle is looking for the following participants in her research:

- Between 4 and 6 Young People in Key Stage 4 who attend Alternative Provision and will be in Year 11 in September 2019. The Young People should also have attended your setting for at least one term in Year 10. Elle is hoping to get an equal number of boys and girls.
- A focus group of between 3 and 5 members of staff who work in Alternative Provision and have a role in supporting pupils in KS4. This could include but not be limited to a teacher, learning mentor, pastoral lead or SENCo.

If there are a larger number of pupils or staff members available to participate in the research, Elle will select participants at random. Participants will be informed at the earliest convenience whether they are, or are not, selected to participate.

Please note not all participants will be from your school.

#### What will happen in the research?

The project will run from September 2019 to July 2020. It will involve the following stages:

#### 1. October-November 2019

A 30-minute information-give session with students who may be interested in taking part. This will be an opportunity for them to ask questions about the research and decide whether they would like to take part.

#### 2. October to December 2019

Interviews with staff members. Each staff member will take part in one interview which will last approximately 60 minutes.

The questions asked will seek to explore:

- 1. How KS4 is organised in your school setting
- 2. How young people in KS4 are supported in your setting
- 3. How staff support young people in KS4 to transition to post-16 provision
- 4. How staff think post-16 providers could support young people who have left Alternative Provision

#### 3. October to December 2019

Interviews with YP. Each YP will take part in one interview which will last approximately 1 hour. In addition to the interview, the YP will be given the option to create an adapted version of the 'Tree of Life' using paint and collage materials with Elle. The 'Tree of Life' will be a visual tool to explore the following with the YP:

Tree	Questions relate to:
Ground	Current situation.
Compost heap	Things the pupil may want to leave behind.
Roots	Pupil's origins and influences.
Trunk	Skills, qualities and abilities.
Branches	Aspirations and dreams.
Leaves	Significant people.
Winds	Difficulties the pupil may face in reaching your aspiration/dream.
Fruits or flowers	Things that will help the pupil to overcome challenges/barriers.

How will we use, store and protect the information we collect?

The information you provide during interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and the data anonymised. The findings will be used as part of Elle's Doctoral thesis. This may be

subsequently written into a journal article format and published in the future. The school will be provided access to the finished thesis and will receive a research brief detailing the findings. Student participants will receive a reader friendly version. Findings may also be distributed to other APs in the Local Authority to inform best practice.

Any information you provide as part of the research will be in complete confidence.

- It will be stored on the secure University of Bristol research data storage facility then deleted as soon as possible. Any paper copies will be disposed of as soon as possible in the confidential waste.
- The data collected from interviews and analysis will be anonymised. This means any personal identifiers will not be attached to the data when it is stored at the University of Bristol. All the names mentioned during the interviews will be changed to pseudonyms.
- Pseudonyms will be used in any publications of the research. Your school will not be recognisable. The location of the research will be described broadly as an 'Alternative Provision in the North West of England'. No identifiable information will be collected from participants.
- The anonymised transcripts from the interviews will be saved on a secure Bristol archive that will be made accessible to other researchers for future research.
- You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and have the right to request that all information held about you is deleted. Please be aware that it may be impossible to delete information once the data has been anonymised.

#### Limits to confidentiality

Whilst interviews will be confidential, there are limits to this. Should the researcher hear any information which may cause concern and be suggestive of harm to participants or others, this will be reported to the designated safeguarding officer in the school. This will also be reported to the research supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_, at the University of Bristol.

#### What would happen next?

Taking part in the research is voluntary. If you would like your school to take part in the research, then the school would be required to do the following:

- 1. Email Elle at \_\_\_\_\_ to confirm your interest.
- 2. Identify a named member of staff to co-ordinate the research.

- 3. Display flyers around school and give information sheets to pupils in Year 11 who are interested in taking part.
- 4. Give out information sheets and consent forms to members of staff team who work with KS4 pupils.
- 5. Arrange for 30-minute information-give session with the researcher and potential student participants in school.
- 6. Host the interviews and focus group at your school in a quiet room.

Participants will be able to send their signed consent forms to me in a sealed addressed envelope or give to named member of staff.

Once participants have been identified, Elle will liaise with the named member of staff to identify an appropriate time for interviews to take place in the Autumn term.

#### **Further information**

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Elle via email
If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher, or other details you do not wish to discuss with the researcher directly, please contact

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> DfE (2018) *Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 students, England 2016/2017.* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_dat a/file/748199/Destinations\_Main\_Text\_2017.pdf.

#### Appendix 5. Information sheet for staff

'Exploring Young People's experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their perceptions of transition to post-16 provision'





#### Information sheet for staff

#### What is this research about?

Research suggests that Young People (YP) who previously attended Alternative Provision (AP) are considerably more likely to become NEET (not in education, employment, or training), with only 56% of pupils in AP going on to education, employment or training compared with 94% from mainstream schools (¹DfE, 2018).

There is much research exploring transition from AP to mainstream school for YP in Key Stage 3, however there is little research which considers YP's experiences of Key Stage 4 (KS4) in an AP and how they are prepared for transition to Post-16 mainstream provision, whether this be employment, education or training.

#### This research aims to:

Understand YPs' experiences of KS4 in AP, their perceptions of transition to post-16
provision and the meaning they make from this in relation to their identity and perceived
future.

#### What could I contribute?

Staff in AP have a unique insight into the processes and reality of life in an AP for Young People in KS4.

As such, your views are really important in helping us to understand what could be improved in order to increase positive outcomes for Young People in AP who are leaving KS4 and transitioning to post-16 provision.

In a small focus group, with other staff from your setting, you would have the opportunity to express your opinions and enter into a discussion relating to the following:

- 1. How KS4 is organised in your school setting
- 2. How young people in KS4 are supported in your setting
- 3. How you support young people in KS4 to transition to post-16 provision
- 4. How you think post-16 providers could support young people who have left Alternative Provision

#### Who is carrying out the research?

This research is being undertaken by Elle Macro, a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Bristol. Elle is carrying out this research as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology professional training programme. Elle is currently on placement with Lancashire County Council who

have approved this research. Elle has a current Enhanced CRB for working with Children and Young People.

This research has been approved by the University of Bristol School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

#### Who is needed for the research?

Elle is approaching Alternative Provisions in Lancashire who offer placements to Young People in KS4. Alternative Provision is used as an umbrella term which also includes Pupil Referral Units or Short Stay Schools.

Elle is looking for the following participants in her research:

- 6 to 8 Young People in Key Stage 4 who attend Alternative Provision and are in Year
   11.
- Between 3 and 5 members of staff who work in Alternative Provision and have a role in working with YP in KS4. This could include but not be limited to a teacher, learning mentor, pastoral lead or SENCo.

#### What will happen in the research?

The project will run from September 2019 to July 2020. It will involve the following stages:

#### January 2020

A 30-minute information-give session with students who may be interested in taking part. This will be an opportunity for them to ask questions about the research and decide whether they would like to take part. Staff are welcome to attend and to ask any questions.

#### January to March 2020

Focus group with 3 to 5 staff members who work with KS4 pupils. The focus group will last approximately 60 minutes.

#### January to March 2020

Interviews with YP. Each YP will take part in one interview which will last approximately 1 hour. During the interview, the YP will also be given the option to work with Elle to create an adapted version of the 'Tree of Life' using paint and collage materials.

#### How will we use, store and protect the information we collect?

The information you provide during interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and the data anonymised. The findings will be used as part of Elle's Doctoral thesis. This may be subsequently written into a journal article format and published in the future. The school will be provided access to the finished thesis and will receive a research brief detailing the findings. Student participants will receive a reader friendly version. Findings may also be distributed to other APs in the Local Authority to inform best practice.

Any information you provide as part of the research will be in complete confidence.

- It will be stored on the secure University of Bristol research data storage facility and paper copies will be disposed of as soon as possible in the confidential waste.
- The data collected from interviews and analysis will be anonymised. This means any personal identifiers will not be attached to the data when it is stored at the University of Bristol. All the names mentioned during the interviews will be changed to pseudonyms.
- Pseudonyms will be used in any publications of the research. Your school will not be recognisable. The location of the research will be described broadly as an 'Alternative Provision in the North West of England'. No identifiable information will be collected from participants.
- Please note that an external transcriber may be used to transcribe interview data.
   They will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- The anonymised transcripts from the interviews will be saved on a secure Bristol archive that will be made accessible to other researchers for future research.
- You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and have the right to request that all information held about you is deleted. Please be aware that it may be impossible to delete information once the data has been anonymised.

#### Limits to confidentiality

Whilst interviews will be confidential, there are limits to this. Should the researcher hear any information which may cause concern and be suggestive of harm to participants or others, this will be reported to the designated safeguarding officer in the school. This will also be reported to the research supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_, at the University of Bristol.

#### What would happen next?

Taking part in the research is voluntary. If you would like to take part in the research then these are your next steps:

- 1. Fill out the staff consent form attached.
- 2. Elle will be in touch with the Head teacher or SENCo to liaise around an appropriate time and date to carry out the interview with you during the autumn term.

I only need between 3 and 5 participants to take part in the focus group and it is possible that more this will be interested in taking part. If this happens, participants will be chosen at random. I will let you know as soon as possible if you are selected to take part or not.

## **Further information**

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Elle via email at
If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher, or other details you do not wish to discuss with the researcher directly, please contact

# Appendix 6. Consent form for staff

# Staff consent form





School name: BRISTC  Your name: Your role:	лL	
Please tick the appropriate boxes		
1. Taking part in the study I have read and understood the study information, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	Yes	No
I consent voluntarily to participating in this study and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. I understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can request to withdraw my information from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. This may not be possible if the data has already been anonymised.	Yes	No
I understand that taking part in the study involves taking part in an interview. I understand that the interview will be recorded and transcribed ensuring anonymity by using pseudonyms. I understand that a professional transcriber may be used and that they would keep the information confidential.	Yes	No 🗖
2. Use of the information in the study I understand that information I provide will be used for data as part of the researcher's Doctorate thesis. I understand that this may be re-written for publication as part of a journal article in the future.	Yes	No □
I understand that a summary of anonymised research findings will be made accessible to the local authority and may be shared by the local authority with other APs in the area.	Yes	No

I understand that information collected pupils, will be replaced with a pseudo	•	• •	Yes	No
I agree that the information I provide	can be anonymously o	quoted in research outputs.	Yes	No
3. Future use and reuse of the in	formation by others			
I give permission for the anonymised to University of Bristol so it can be access research and learning.	•		Yes	No
4. Signatures				
Your name:	Your role:			
Your signature:	Date:	<del></del>		
Name of researcher [IN CAPITALS]	Signature	 Date		
5. Study contact details for furth	er information			
Researcher				

**Research supervisor** 

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Elle Macro

# **Year 11!**

Do you want to **feel listened to**?

Do you want to **have your views heard**?

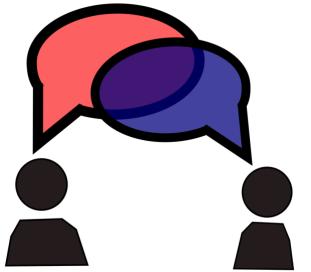
Do you enjoy being **creative**?

You are invited to take part in a **research project** by Elle, a University of Bristol student.

Your views about **your school and your future** are so important and I want to hear them!

I would like to **meet with you** to hear what you think **whilst doing a creative project**.

This will last about 1 hour and will take place in school at a time that <u>you</u> choose.



To find out more:

Please text or ring me on \_\_\_\_

or

Ask Mr \_\_\_\_ for more info.





'Exploring Young People's experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their perceptions of transition to post-16 provision'

# What is the research about?

I would like to find out about your time at your school and your experiences whilst you've been in your school. I want to find out about what you would like to do when you leave this school and what and who is going to help you achieve this.

I will also speak to some staff in your school to find out about what they do.

This conversation will **not** be about you and they won't know you are taking part.

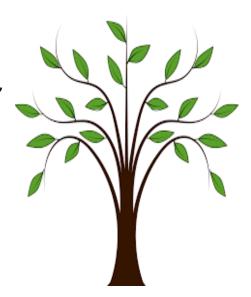
This research has been approved by the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.



# What do I need to do if I take part?

- First, I will come into school to meet with all of you who are interested in taking part. This will give you a chance to meet me and ask any questions about my research.
- If you would like to be involved you will be invited to sign a consent form. You will be given an information sheet to give to your parents to let them know.

- If you would still like to be involved, I will come into school to chat with you. We will arrange a date that suits you best.
- I will chat with you about your strengths and who is important to you, your hopes and goals for the future. There's no wrong answer, this is a chance for you to have your say about school.
- During our time together, you will be given the option to create a 'Tree of Life' on a big piece of paper using paints and collage materials whilst talking about your experiences and your future when you leave school. You won't have to do any writing and you don't have to do this part.

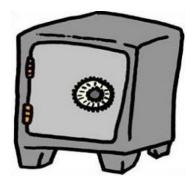


- It should take about an hour to finish your 'Tree'.
- You can keep your 'Tree' and take it home with you when we finish. I will ask you if I can take a picture of it before you leave to use in my research but you don't have to.
- I will record our discussions so that I can remember what we talked about. I
  will then write down what we said and use this in my research. Your name
  won't be included.
- You can stop the conversation at any time.



# Will people know it is me who is talking?

- I will not use your real name, so no one will know who you are.
- If you let me take a photo of your 'Tree', I will blank out any names you have used so that no one will recognise it's yours.
- I won't use your school's name in my research.
- What we talk about will be confidential. But, if you tell me something that makes me think you or someone else is at risk of harm, then I will have to tell a staff member in school. I will let you know if this happens and what I will need to share.



- The recording will be stored safely in a secure file on the University's server and then deleted from the device. The transcripts may be used by other researchers in the future.
- When my research is finished, I will share the findings of the research with you, your school and other schools that are similar to yours.
- I will not ever use your real name or anything that identifies you.

# What would happen next?

- You do not have to take part in the research and no one will mind if you say no.
- If you would like to take part, please take a **consent form** and read it through. Ask an adult to help you if you are unsure.
- Talk to your parent or carer about taking part and give them the information sheet provided to you.

- Text or ring me on [NUMBER] if you have any questions or want to know more.
- Put your consent form in **the envelope** and give it to me, a staff member in school or post it.
- I will then speak with your teacher to arrange a time that is best to come into your school and meet with you to create your 'Tree'.
- If you change your mind about taking part, that's okay! You can change your mind at any time. If you change your mind after our meeting, let me know and I will remove your information from the study. Please be aware that this may not be possible if your name has already been removed from your information.

I only need between 6 and 8 participants and it is possible that more people will be interested in taking part. If this happens, participants will be chosen at random. I will let you know as soon as possible if you are selected to take part or not.

If you want to ask me any other questions you can email me on: _	
If you have any complaints please contact .	
if you have any complaints please contact	

Thank you, Elle 😊



# Appendix 9. Consent forms for student





## **Student consent form**

Your name: Your school:	
Please read the points below and tick the box if you are happy with it.	
I have read the information sheet and understand what it says.	
I want to take part in the study.	
I know that I don't have to take part and can change my mind at any time.	
I know that I can ask for my information to be removed from the study.	
I know that I will be anonymous in the research and my name or school name won't be used.	
I know that any names I use will be swapped with fake names, so no one will know it is me.	
I know that our conversation will be recorded and stored safely in a secure file. It will be transcribed by myself or an external agency who will keep it confidential.	
I know that what I say is confidential unless I say something that makes Elle think I, or someone else, is at risk of harm. I know that Elle will have to tell someone.	
Your signature: Date:	Ц



# 'Tree of Life' consent form



Your name:	
To be completed upon completion of the 'Tree of Life'.	
Please read the points below and tick the box if you are happy with	ı it.
I am happy for Elle to take a picture of my 'Tree of Life' which she can then put in her research.	
I understand that any names I used on my 'Tree of Life' will be replaced with fake names so that they are not recognisable.	
I understand that this means that other people may see my 'Tree', but they will not know that it is mine.	
Your signature:	
Date:	

#### Appendix 10. Information sheet for parents

'Exploring Young People's experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision and their perceptions of transition to post-16 provision'



#### What is this research about?

This research wants to:

- Explore pupils' experiences of KS4 in Alternative Provision
- Explore what they think about transition to post-16 provision
- Explore the meaning they make from this in relation to their identity and perceived future.
- Explore pupils' and staff in APs' thoughts on how to improve KS4 and transition practices in Alternative Provision.

#### Who is carrying out the research?

This research is being undertaken by Elle Macro, a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Bristol. Elle is carrying out this research as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology professional training programme. Elle is currently on placement with Lancashire County Council. Elle has a current Enhanced CRB for working with Children and Young People.

This research has been approved by the University of Bristol School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

#### Who is needed for the research?

Elle is approaching Alternative Provisions in Lancashire who offer placements to Young People in KS4. Alternative Provision is used as an umbrella term which includes Pupil Referral Units or Short Stay Schools.

Your child's school has volunteered to take part.

Elle is looking for the following participants in her research:

- Between 6 and 8 Young People in Key Stage 4 who attend Alternative Provision and are in Year 11. Elle would like an equal number of boys and girls.
- Between 3 and 5 staff members for a focus group. This is an interview about what staff do in school; they will NOT be asked about your child or know your child is taking part.

If there are a larger number of pupils available to participate in the research, Elle will select participants at random. Participants will be informed at the earliest convenience whether they are, or are not, selected to participate.

#### What are the benefits of my child taking part?

- Your child will be given the choice to create a 'Tree of Life' using paints and collage. This is an adapted version of a therapeutic tool used to help people to tell their stories. They will be able to take this home to share with you if they wish and is intended to be an enjoyable experience.
- Your child will have the opportunity to talk about their hopes and aspirations and their strengths. This could help them feel able to achieve their dreams in the future.
- Your child will be able to have their voice heard and feel valued.
- Information gathered from your child could help shape policy and practice to help young people to move on to succeed in post 16 settings in the future.

## What will happen in the research?

The project will start in October 2019.

# 1. January 2020

Elle will meet with the group of students who may be interested in taking part. This will involve a 30-minute information-give session which will give the young people a chance to meet with Elle, ask questions about the research and decide whether they would like to take part. They will be given a consent form to sign.

#### 2. January to March 2020

Your child will take part in one interview which will last approximately 1 hour.

During the interview your child will be given the choice to create an adapted version of the 'Tree of Life' using paint and collage materials. The 'Tree of Life' will be a visual tool to explore the following with your child:

	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Tree	Questions relate to your child's:
Roots	Origins and influences.
Ground	Current school situation.
Compost heap	Things about school they may want to leave behind.
Trunk	Skills, qualities and abilities.
Branches	Aspirations and dreams.
Leaves	Significant people.
Winds	Difficulties they may face in reaching your aspiration/dream.
Fruits or flowers	Things that will help them to overcome challenges/barriers.

## How will we use, store and protect the information we collect?

The information your child provides during interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and the data anonymised. The findings will be used as part of Elle's Doctoral thesis. This may be subsequently written into a journal article format and published in the future. The school will be provided access to the finished thesis and will receive a research brief detailing the findings. Student participants will receive a reader friendly version of the research. Findings may also be shared with other APs in the Local Authority to inform best practice in supporting pupils in KS4 and their transition to post-16 provision.

Any information your child provides as part of the research will be in complete confidence (limits to confidentiality are highlighted below\*).

## What happens to the information my child gives?

 Information will be stored on the secure University of Bristol research data storage facility and deleted from the recording device as soon as possible.
 Any paper copies will be disposed of as soon as possible in the confidential waste.

- The data collected from interviews and the analysis will be anonymised.
   This means any personal identifiers will not be attached to the data when it is stored at the University of Bristol. All the names mentioned during the interviews will be changed to pseudonyms (made-up names).
- Pseudonyms will be used in any publications of the research. Your child's school will not be recognisable. The location of the research will be described broadly as an 'Alternative Provision in the North West of England'. No identifiable information will be collected from participants.
- The anonymised transcripts from the interviews will be saved on a secure Bristol archive that will be made accessible to other researchers should they wish to use it for future research.
- Your child is free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and has
  the right to request that all information held about them is deleted. Please
  be aware that it may be impossible to delete information once the data has
  been anonymised.

# \*Limits to confidentiality

Whilst interviews will be confidential, there are limits to this. Should the researcher hear any information which may cause concern or be suggestive of harm to participants or others, this will be reported to the designated safeguarding officer in the school. This will also be reported to the research supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_, at the University of Bristol.

# What would happen next?

- Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary.
- I will arrange to meet with your child in school for the interview.

### **Further information**

If you have any questions or require fu	rther information, please do not hesitate to
get in touch with Elle via email	Or, ask the school to contact Elle on your
behalf.	
If you have any concerns about the cor	nduct of the researcher, or other details
you do not wish to discuss with the res	earcher directly, please contact

### Appendix 11. Interview schedule

The semi-structured interview will cover the following whilst creating the 'Tree of Life':

Tree	Questions relate to the young person's:	
Roots	Origins and influences.	
	- What is important to you?	
	- What is important to your family?	
	- What happened in your previous school?	
	- When did you move to this school?	
	- What did you think about that? How did that make you feel?	
Ground	Current school situation.	
	- What's happening now at school?	
	- What's that like?	
	- What does it make you think?	
Compost heap	Things they may want to leave behind	
	- Are there any things you want to leave behind?	
	- Is there anything that's changed for you whilst you have been in the AP?	
Trunk	Skills, qualities and abilities.	
	- What are you learning at the moment?	
	- What skills/qualities have you developed?	
Dunanahaa	- Where and when did you develop these?	
Branches	Aspirations, goals and dreams.	
	- What do you want to do when you leave school?	
	<ul><li>What makes you think that?</li><li>What does [family member/friend/teacher] think about that?</li></ul>	
	- Has anyone spoken to you about that?	
	- What is happening at the moment to help you get there?	
	- What do you want to see in your future?	
	- How, if at all, has the AP helped you to work towards your goals?	
Leaves	Significant people.	
200100	- Who is important to you? (past and present)	
	- Who is supporting you? What are they doing?	
	- What would you like them to do more of or differently?	
Winds	Difficulties they may face in reaching your aspiration/dream.	
	- What challenges might you face in post-16?	
	- Have you experienced challenges before?	
	- Tell me about a time when you have? What happened?	
Fruits or flowers	Things that will help them to overcome challenges/barriers.	
	- How will you overcome these?	
	- How have you overcome challenges in the past?	
	- What will you need to help you? Who will you need to support you?	

### Appendix 12. Focus group topic guide

### 1. Tell me about the KS4 group in your setting...

- How do they come into to the school?
- What happens when they join?
- Do they return to mainstream? What is your opinion of this? What is your view of the implications of this?
- Is there any intention for them to return to mainstream school or another school? Why? What is your opinion of this?

#### 2. What current support is in place for KS4?

- How are young people supported now? What is your opinion of this?
- How is this arranged?
- What skills do these courses seek to develop?
- What courses do the YP access?
- How is this decided upon?
- How are they supported to fulfil their goals and ambitions?
- What are the challenges you face in delivering support? What is your opinion of this?
- What could be different?

### 3. Tell me about the transition process for KS4 pupils to post-16 provision?

- What is the pathway for KS4 pupils? What is your opinion on this?
- Are YP's ambitions consulted in selecting a post-16 provision?
- Are YP involved in selecting their preferred post-16 provider?
- How are post-16 providers selected?
- How is transition managed? What is your opinion on this?
- Who is involved in transition planning and preparation?
- Are parents involved? Does this have an impact and, if so, what?
- What could be different?
- Do you think their transition will be successful? What is your opinion of this?
- Can you tell me about a transition that was successful previously? What did this look like?

### 4. Let's think about your pupils when they are in post-16 provision...

- Do you foresee YP facing any challenges when they leave school/enter post-16 environment? in college, in the community?
- What do you think post-16 providers need to do to support YP and overcome these barriers? What is your opinion on this?
- What has worked well in the past? Do you know of any stories of success?
- What could be different?





### **Confidentiality Protocol**

The following actions will be taken should a participant make a disclosure:

- Limits to confidentiality are set out in the participant information sheet and consent form.
  - Participants will be reminded of this again verbally before the interview.
- A disclosure which requires me to break confidentiality will include any information which makes me think that that the participant, or another person, may be at risk of harm.
- If something is disclosed, I will first discuss the need to break confidentiality with the participant and explain what I will need to share and with whom.
- I will inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and follow their safeguarding procedure.
- I will then inform my thesis supervisor.
- I will follow this up with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure the appropriate action has been taken.

### Appendix 14. Detailed account of the process of IPA

#### Step 1: Reading and re-reading

The first step of reading and re-reading the transcript allowed the researcher to become immersed in the data. This also involved listening to audio recording and imagining the participant's voice. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that this step enables the researcher to 'slow down' and actively engage with the data.

As suggested by Smith et al. (2009), part of this process included 'bracketing' some of my initial thoughts as I read the transcripts. Bracketing is considered an important characteristic of IPA as it allows the analyst to acknowledge and record their own ideas whilst being able to "remain with the data" (2009, p.82), instead of being influenced by their early conceptions.

### **Step 2: Initial noting**

Initial noting was then carried out to analyse the text at three levels; descriptive, linguistic and conceptual which are discussed further below. I found that this step almost became synonymous with step 1 as I moved back and forth through the text multiple times re-reading and annotating the transcript at the three levels. Doing so enabled me to remain with the data. To assist with this step, I found it useful to underline any text which seemed important and make a note of why in the margin (Smith et al., 2009). I felt that this allowed me to challenge my thinking by ensuring any interpretations had come from the text.

Examples of my initial noting of transcripts are included in the appendices (Appendix //).

#### Descriptive comments:

This level of analysis was largely descriptive and involved noting things which were of significance to the participant.

#### Linguistic comments:

Making linguistic comments enabled me to explore how the participant has used language to convey the meaning they make from an experience. Of particular note were participants" use of metaphors and adjectives.

#### Conceptual comments:

Smith et al. (2009) states that this stage is crucial in moving away from the descriptive towards the interpretative. Analysing the data at this level enabled me to begin interpreting the participants' experience. One aspect of this involved questioning the data. Some questions were answered by the participant as I moved through the text but others were left open or tentatively answered through interpretation.

### **Step 3: Developing emergent themes**

Smith et al. (2009) describes the process of developing emergent themes as an "attempt to produce a concise and pithy statement of what was important" (p.92) in the initial comments, whilst paying attention to the whole text. This step involved moving away from the transcript and reducing the data to work with the only initial comments made during the previous step. Doing so required the researcher to move further towards interpretation and understanding the participants experience, whilst drawing upon psychology. This step was perhaps the largest for me, having been so close to the transcripts up until this point. Smith et al. (2009) anticipates the researcher may experience such feelings and provides reassurances that the initial noting remains close to the original text and invites the researcher to "take a central role" (p.91) in the next step; that is not forgetting that IPA is a collaboration between the participant and the researcher as they engage in the hermeneutic circle.

#### **Step 4: Searching for connections across emerging themes**

This step involved organising the emerging themes so that connections could be identified. I used abstraction (putting similar themes together) and polarisation (identifying opposites in emergent

themes), strategies suggested by Smith et al. (2009), to group the themes whilst keeping my RQs in mind.

### **Step 5: Moving to the next case**

This involved carrying out the whole process again with subsequent transcripts. Smith et al. (2009) state that the analyst must maintain the idiographic focus by considering each transcript in its own right and therefore I bracketed off any ideas which arose from the previous analysis.

### **Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases**

This step involved physically laying the tables of themes for each participant on the floor and looking for connections or patterns across them. This required me to reconsider some themes in the light of others and illuminated higher order qualities. Smith et al. (2009) also offer additional guidance for 'larger samples' of more than six which involves looking for 'recurring themes' across the participants accounts. Given that my sample was on the cusp of this classification, I decided to follow this guidance.

Appendix 15. Initial noting and emergent themes for Kiara

Emerging themes	Transcript	Exploratory Comments
		Descriptive, linguistic, conceptual
	I: What's it like now being here?	
	K: I dunno, like when I first came on	Initially did not like being in the
Contrasting response to	behaviour, then they moved me to	provision but once settled in enjoyed it. Seemed to want to
behaviour	medical – I was like no I don't like it,	rebel/escape?
		Notion of 'settling in' – needs time to calm? Does this suggest it
Calm response to	and kicked off, but <u>once you settle in</u>	requires adapting to?
behavior management	medical group they're really good.	
in AP	Usually in mainstream you get	Compares mainstream to AP.
	shouted at and the teachers shout at	'Usually' – suggests Kiara thinks shouting is typical practice in AP.
Calm environment in AP	you. Teachers <u>here, they don't</u> shout	Contrast between AP and mainstream staff responses
Experience different	at you, they speak calmly. <u>And if</u>	behaviour. Shout and calm are opposites.
behaviour management	you're being out of order they're just	'Out of order' – implies
	like right wait there, we will get	unacceptable – recognition of behaviour as unacceptable. Also
	another teacher and they'll take you	says 'you're' - is this a reflection
Person-centred practice	to inclusion or just leave you to calm	on own behaviour?
in AP	down or get their favourite teacher to	Get another teacher as a response to behavior – taking into
	come talk to them. I don't know I just	account individuals' preferences?

Ad hoc support	think you've always got anyone to talk	Having someone to talk to.
, ta nee sappere	, <u> </u>	'anyone' suggests that Kiara feels
	to. If you see a teacher on the corridor	comfortable talking to any staff.
Always someone	and you're upset they'll take you into	Ad hoc support on corridor –
		don't have to wait for support.
available to talk	<u>a room</u> and talk to <u>you straight away</u> . I	Will take you aside into a room
Dorson controd	had my timetable abanged and	suggests teachers make time for
Person centred	had <u>my timetable changed and</u>	Kiara.
Individualized support	everything to make me feel better	'Straight away' – immediacy, on
		demand? Responsive to needs of
Feel listened to and	about it. I've had my different lessons	students? Feels valued.
		Timetable changed - 'and
valued	put in, <u>extra</u> lessons put in. <u>They</u>	everything' suggests that this was
		a significant thing for Kiara or that
	would do anything for you.	it was one of many things that
		were changed. 'Different' and
		'extra' lessons suggests timetable
		is individualized and personalized.
		Kiara feels better/happier.
		Changes made for Kiara's feelings
		This makes Kiara feel listened to.
		Changes done <u>for</u> Kiara – valued
		as an individual?.
		'They would do anything for you'
		indicates the emphasis she places
		on this. Is this also a perception of
		being protected, a safety net?
	I: Yes. How does that make you feel	
	having that kind of	

Preconceptions and	K: I don't know. It made me realise	AP has a reputation in the
		community for being a bad
stigma of AP challenged	before I came here, I was told it was a	school. However, feels this is no
		longer the case but does this
	really bad school and ages ago it were	perception still exist in the
		community?
Influence of senior	<u>a really bad sc</u> hool, it had its	Senior leadership has influence on
leadership on practice	reputation. But then [NAME] became	ethos of the school and this is
readership on practice	reputation. But then [IWIVI2] became	seen even by the students.
in AP	the headteacher and really brought it	Emphasis on change within the
		AP.
Influence of senior	up. It just makes me happy that I got a	How did she bring it up? What's
		changed?
leaders on students in	chance to come here cos not a lot of	'Happy' – positive emotion
		towards AP.
AP	kids do, there isn't a lot of places now	'I got a chance' – feels lucky?
	here. I feel bad for the kids that can't	Perception of being fortunate? A
	Tiere. Treel bad for the kids that can't	chance at what?
Happy about attending	come here and have to go to like	Feels bad others cannot come
		here – what does she think this
AP	[School name].	means for them? How has it
		affected her life? What would
		have happened if she did not
		come here?
		Happy she goes to the school over
		other mental health specialist
		provisions. Does she perceive the
		AP to better cater for her MH
		needs?

	I: What makes it a good school?	
	What's changed and made it better?	
Valuable rewards	K: She's just like got good ways of	'Good discipline' in school is
systems	approaching things. She's got good	valued. Rewards systems in place that are valuable to the students.
Behaviour management	discipline but then you get rewarded	Makes you want to do good – implies Kiara feels motivated by
Personalised rewards	for things and it makes you want to do	the rewards. Whilst extrinsic motivators, they have impacted
	good. Like last week I got a gift	upon Kiara's engagement and willingness to partake as well as
Motivation to do well	voucher for shopping cos I got	having a positive effect on wellbeing.
	headteachers award and because I	
Sense of belonging	helped a new teacher look round the	Involved in organizational aspects
	school and that's why I got it. They just	of school – showing new teachers
Involvement in decision	reward you for things and <u>it makes</u>	around – feel worthy or valued?  Does this contribute to a sense of
making	you feel good, so you want to do it	belonging?
	more.	
	I: Has that impacted how you view	
	school?	
Change in attributions	K: a lot. <u>Because now it makes me</u>	'now' suggests change, time,
		then/now. Reflecting upon own
(internal)	want to tell younger kids honestly I	experiences and wanting to
		impart this knowledge on others

	wish I'd just got on straight away, cos	perhaps indicates a change in
		Kiara's attributions.
Personalised timetable	now I'm sitting in maths and I was sat	Use of 'I' – I could - Is
		experiencing a sense of control in
Involvement in decision	there doing this test paper and I was	her ability to affect her own life.
making	like wow I could have learned this ages	
THURING	The wow result have learned this ages	
Sense of control/agency	ago and I didn't but I can easily get	Personalised timetable – Kiara
		feels like this is 'easily' tailored to
	maths put into place so I can do more	
		her needs – again feels in control.
	of it. It's just good here.	
		Repeats 'it's just good'.
	I: So you said I wish I'd done it earlier	
	1. 30 you said I wish I d done it carlier	
	Do you mean when you were in	
	Joyeu mean unen yeu were m	
	mainstream?	
Anxiety	K: Yeah like I wish I'd done it in	Contradicts –feels that the
		mainstream environment was not
Attributions (external)	mainstream, but even then I don't	conducive to her making progress.
Mainstream response	think I could because they weren't as	Anxiety and depression – mental
		health issues in mainstream
to mental health as	understanding and my anxiety was	school had impact on academic
		·
barrier to success and	bad then back then I had depression	progress and school engagement.
		Staff in mainstream were not
engagement.	and things like that but now I don't	understanding – how did this
		make her feel?
Ad hoc support from	even have depression I don't think, I	Sense of then and now. Change in
		self.
staff.	don't take meds anymore. It's just my	

Staff are accessible and	anxiety a bit. But I don't know <u>its just</u>	Helped her. Helped her to
		succeed in school? Helped her
approachable.	proper helped me. [NAME], the	with work?
	safeguarding teacher, he is the best,	Able to talk to staff 'any time of
	like the best. He will speak to you any	the day'. Staff are accessible and
	like the best. He will speak to you any	approachable.
	time of the day, he's just really good.	Staff are there for the students.

Appendix 16. Initial noting and emergent themes for Lily

Emerging themes	Transcript	Exploratory Comments  Descriptive, linguistic, conceptual
Discarded/cast aside in	L: It really wasn't good. We had	'leave us' - She felt left out?
mainstream.		Experienced being
Treated as someone else's	our head of year in every year,	discarded/cast aside? Did she feel unimportant or
problem.	they'd always leave us with the	undervalued as she was left
Mainstream outsourcing pastoral support.	attendance award people if we	with attendance people. Was it about attendance for the school rather than mental
Mental health perceived	had a problem in class. Even	health - how did this impact Lily? What impact did that
as behavioural problem in mainstream.	though their job was to look	have upon her?  Person with the role of
1.46	after us, they'd just leave us. Not	supporting mental health of students devolved their
Left out.	very nice people.	responsibility to another. Lily attributes this to being not very nice people. Was it an
		issue with skillset/training?
	I: Who did they leave you with?	
Escape mainstream	L: The attendance manager who	Walking out of school. Escape? Avoid? Given up?
Flight response to being in mainstream	marked everyone in – but she	Escape: Avoid: Given up:
Personal qualities of	was nice so	
teaching staff are valued	Sometimes I just walked out of	
	school.	

	I: Was she a help or not?	
Personal qualities of teaching staff are valued	L: She was a big help but [name]	Personal qualities of the attendance officer helped
teaching stail are valued	didn't have that support, she just	Lily? Relationship built.  Nobody was helping.
Lack of relationship with	left <u>because nobody was – I</u>	'horrible' teachers – again this seems to be relating to
staff in mainstream	don't know. Teachers are just	the personal qualities or how they made Lily feel. Did she
	<u>horrible</u> there.	feel targeted or victimized by them? Perhaps related to a lack of relationship.
	I: In what way?	
Exploitation of power imbalances in mainstream.	L: <u>Very strict.</u> I remember I told	Personal qualities of teaching staff – strict, overpowering,
Large classes in	one, I was going in like one	power imbalances, forced to do things?
mainstream	lesson a day, because we had	Large classes in mainstream. Increased anxiety about being
Forced into anxiety	five lessons and I'd go into	in large classes. Teacher did not respond to
provoking situations	English and Maths, I completely	her asking for help. Lack of understanding around
Lack of inclusive practice	dropped science. And I <u>went in</u>	anxiety.  'Made me read out'. Made –
Flexibility in AP	and my class was 40 students – it	forced, no choice, compelled to do something. Lily felt forced to do things she was
	was really big – and I told her I	not comfortable with and which caused her anxiety.
Understanding in AP	didn't want to read out –	Missed school due to anxiety
Feels listened to in AP	obviously I'd missed a lot of	– seems to be intrinsically linked to the above.

Person centred practice in AP.	school because of anxiety and	In AP there is flexibility.
Likes school.	things like that. And she made	Student's views are listened to. They are not made to do
	me read out. It was awful. Which	anything they don't want to do. Lily likes this school
	is why I like this school, because	because of this. Seems to experience understanding
	you don't have to read anything	from staff there? Adapted to her individual needs.
	out if you don't want to.	
	I: Yeh. So what support do you	
	think would have been helpful in	
	your mainstream then?	
Smaller class sizes	L: <u>Definitely a smaller class.</u> Cos	Definitely – without a doubt,
Not involved in decision making in mainstream.	like, they put me in top set <u>for</u>	definitive. Values smaller class sizes. This would have helped her to cope. This is
Lack of appropriate	some reason, I'd missed loads of	important to Lily.
reintegration.	lessons and they put me in top	Does not understand the decisions made for her.
Not person-centred.	set? And they expected me to do	Questions their decision making. Did she feel
Personal qualities of teaching staff in	French as well, even though I	misunderstood? Did she feel like no one asked her for her opinion?
mainstream.	hadn't been there for about a	,
Lack of relationship with mainstream staff.	year. Cos I just dropped it I	Personal qualities of teaching staff, not compatible?

	guess. I didn't get along with	
	French teachers either.	
	I: Ok, so in terms of what they	
	could have done more of Is	
	there anything else?	
	L: Given me a bit more slack, or a	More slack – a more relaxed
Passed from pillar to post  No safe base	smaller classroom, <u>or a place I</u>	attitude? A better understanding of her anxiety? Not resorting to punitive
	could go but they moved me	measures in response to behaviour.
	from classroom to classroom it	Smaller class sizes. A place I could go –
Lack of belonging	was awful. Then they sometimes	somewhere to escape to? A safe base to retreat to? Sense
	put me in the drama teachers'	of security.  'moved me classroom to classroom' – done to rather
	class and he was quite a big man	than with.  Feels like an object to be
	and he would just shout at you	moved away/moved around?  No sense of security or
Deferral of responsibility elsewhere.	all the time. I don't know if he's	belonging? This was 'awful'.
Power imbalances	still there, but I do not like him.	Mainstream school unsure how to respond to needs so
	That's why I dropped it, I	devolve and defer responsibility to someone
	dropped quite a lot of lessons	else. Power imbalances exploited by staff?

	there, to the point I nearly	
	dropped all of them.	
	I: You talked about having	
	missed quite a bit of school. Was	
	that whilst you were at your	
	mainstream?	
Experienced bullying	L: I had a best friend and she	Experienced bullying. Challenging relationships in
Challenges in social relationships in	used to hit me. I struggled going	mainstream school.  Best friend who hits –
mainstream.	to lessons with her and she	juxtaposition of this – she is still attached to the notion of
Change in identity since being at AP	would like, cos I was quite a shy	best friend for this person. Power differentials.
Does not identify with being shy anymore	person- I'm not at all anymore-	Shy – is this her perception or a label she has been given by
being sity arrymore	but <u>because</u> I was quite shy back	others? Adds 'I'm not at all anymore'. Wants to make
	at my old school, she <u>thought</u>	this clear. Was she embarrassed about how she
Ranking system in	that I could do that. It's honestly	used to be shy? She does not seem to want to identify with
mainstream school was difficult to cope with.	like Mean Girls. They have a	this quality anymore. Blaming self for being hit because she
	ranking system for the whole	was shy? Shy is associated with a negative quality
	group of friends. <u>It's so bad</u> .	because of this. Cultural reference of Mean
		Girls. She describes this as being 'so bad' which suggests

	They're like 'we're the least	she does not like that social
		comparison.
	It was literally mean girls.	Use of 'they' instead of 'we'
		suggests she no longer
		identifies with the girls or was
		outside of the group.
		'Popularity' is important to
		teenagers in school.

# Appendix 17. Example of thematic maps with emergent themes for Kiara and Lily

### Thematic map with emergent themes for Kiara

Superordinate	Sub-ordinate	Emergent themes
themes	themes	
Sense of belonging	Done with rather	- Opinions valued
	than to	- Involved in decision making
	Individualized	- Individualised support
	approach	- Individualised timetable/curriculum
		- Individualised, meaningful rewards
	Social network	- Limited social network
		- Different to others in AP
		- Social environment easier to navigate
		- Close friend
Fundamentally	Relationships with	- Mutual respect and valued.
different space/ethos	staff	- First name basis.
		- Friendships with staff.
		- 'Like family'
		- Take time out to provide support
		- No hierarchy
		- Feel like a person
		- Non-judgmental
		- Always someone to talk to
	Learning	- Subject classrooms reflect mainstream school
	environment	- Boredom not moving classrooms
		- Calm and relaxed.
		- High level of support in class.
		- Class sizes in mainstream challenging.
		- Mainstream crowded.
		- Not worried in AP.
	Response to	- Fairness
	behaviour	- Punitive responses to mental health needs in
		mainstream
		- Calm response to behavior management in AP
		- Behaviour management perceived as effective [in
		AP].
	Parental	- Parents not involved in planning for post-16
	involvement and	- Positive home/school relationship
	support	- Weekly contact about progress
		- Positive communication with parents from AP.
		- Support with change in family systems
Wider systemic factors	Familial	- Family history of difficulties in school
	circumstances	- Family history of trauma and abuse
		- Loss of control over situations at home
		- Family support impact on systemic change
	AP culture	- 'Hard' culture within the setting previously
		- Negative stigma in the community
		- 'Hard' persona of peers
		- New students preconceptions of how to behave in
		AP
		- Parental preconceptions of AP
		- Influence of senior leadership on AP culture

Perceived change in	Emotional	- Manage feelings and behavior better
self	competence	- Difficulty managing emotions relating to drug use
	'	- Positive change in managing own behavior
		- Change in behaviour
	Attitudes and	- Positive change in attitude towards learning
	values	- Values qualifications
		- Change in own 'hard persona'
		- Preservation of self
	Self-esteem and	- Increased self-esteem
	confidence	- Staff recognise change in students
		- Increased confidence
		- Struggle to identify and acknowledge own strengths
	Internal	- Experiences remorse for own behavior previously
	attributions	- Acknowledges poor choices made in mainstream
Leaving AP	Support needs	- Similar worries to those in mainstream – social
		groups
		<ul> <li>Interest in course supersedes challenge</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Unable to see possible challenges</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Attributes difficulties to specific subjects</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Does not feel there are support needs in college</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Need for group belonging</li> </ul>
		- Reliance on friend for transition and support in
		college
	The beginning of a	<ul> <li>Significant ending defined by Prom event.</li> </ul>
	better future	<ul> <li>Excited about going to college.</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Wants to escape current social relationships</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Aspires for better future</li> </ul>
		- Wants to escape past
		<ul> <li>Wants to go and start a new future</li> </ul>
		- History of trauma in the local area as a driver for
		better future
	Preparation for	<ul> <li>Limited awareness of transition planning</li> </ul>
	post-16	<ul> <li>Pre-teaching of college course content</li> </ul>
		- Gradual removal of support
		<ul> <li>Explicit teaching of skills for adulthood</li> </ul>
		- Self-determination skills
		- Input around careers
		<ul> <li>Anxiety around asking for help</li> </ul>
	A constructive	<ul> <li>AP as a second chance at education</li> </ul>
	'trade off'	- Able to achieve fewer qualifications but more likely
		to succeed
		- Given opportunity to achieve GCSEs in AP
		- Feels future is achievable
		- Happy to remain in AP
		- Different aspirations and expectations of self in AP
		(positive)
		<ul> <li>Would not succeed if in mainstream</li> </ul>

### Thematic map with emergent themes for Lily

Superordinate	Sub-ordinate	Emergent themes
themes	themes	
Feeling accepted	Person-centred	- Not involved in decision making in mainstream
r cemig decepted	approach	- Person centred practice in AP
		- Done to, not with in mainstream
		- Person-centred approaches in AP can be detrimental
		to other students
		- Flexibility in AP
		- Person-centred support
		- Included in the lesson
		- They don't leave you out of things
	Understanding	- Lack of understanding of mental health in mainstream
	of emotional	- Limited mental health support in mainstream
	needs	- Mental health perceived as behavioural problem in
		mainstream
		- Punitive response to anxiety in mainstream
		- Lack of inclusive practice for students with mental
		health in mainstream
		- 'Inclusion' as a punitive measure in mainstream
		- Understanding in AP
Staff support	Relationships	- Staff as friends
11	with staff	- First name basis with staff
		- Highly regards AP staff
		- Trusting relationships with staff
		- Staff are attuned to students needs
		- Staff as family
		- Listened to and valued
		- Pastoral relationship
		- Genuine positive regard for students
		- Did not feel people cared in mainstream
	Responsibility of	- Individual attention from staff
	staff	- Staff and parents share responsibility
		- Good communication between home and school
		- Pastoral care
		- Mainstream outsourcing pastoral support
		- Treated as someone else's problem in mainstream
		- Staff go above and beyond
		- Staff take time to support all students
		- Deferral of responsibility elsewhere [in mainstream]
	Qualities of staff	- Respect and value students
		- Comfortable in being able to ask for help
		- Staff are understanding of students' needs
		- Staff are responsive to students' needs
		- Open communication with staff
		- Personal qualities of staff are valued
		- Exploitation of power imbalances in mainstream
Sense of belonging	Social belonging	- Lack of social belonging in mainstream
		- Connections with AP peers
		- Experiences social belonging in AP
		- Close connection with AP peers
		- Social challenges in mainstream
		- Bound together by experiences and difficulties

		- Importance of friendships
	Belonging	- Feels like home
		- Feels comfortable
		- Stand out from group in mainstream
		<ul> <li>Alienated by mental health needs in mainstream</li> <li>Discarded and case aside in mainstream</li> </ul>
		- Outcast in mainstream
		- Does not want to feel different
		- Difficulty fitting in in mainstream
		- Passed from pillar to post in mainstream
		- Not able to be self at mainstream
		- Felt forgotten by mainstream
		- Mental health hidden away by mainstream
		- Feels able to express herself.
Impact of attending AP	On future	- Feeling angry missed schooling will affect
		qualifications worked towards in mainstream
		- Increased opportunities for different qualifications.
		<ul> <li>Increased opportunities as a result of AP.</li> </ul>
		- AP has increased opportunities available to her.
		- Has a chance to succeed which she would not have
		had in mainstream.
		- Attributes GCSEs to increased opportunities for her
		future.
		1
		<ul> <li>Able to achieve qualifications she would not have got at mainstream</li> </ul>
		- No aspirations before o opportunities before AP
		- Able to access education
		- Increased opportunities as a result of AP
		- Thought she would be NEET before AP
		- Re-taking control and ownership of future in AP
		- Choosing options based on strengths and interests
	Changed	- New identity
	identity	- Responds to social challenge with aggression
	,	- Care-less but not carefree attitude
		- Had careless attitude to school previously
		- Looks forward to coming to school
		- Attitude towards learning and future has changed
	Increased	- Increased confidence
	confidence	- Increased confidence and self-worth Pride in progress
		at AP
		- Happier
		- Does not identify with being shy anymore
		- Change in behavioural and emotional response since
		being at AP
	Impact of	- Missed schooling
	leaving	- Parental fight
	mainstream	- Left behind peers
		- Perceived injustice in mainstream
		Feeling angry about being denied education     No expectations of what school should be
Feeling safe and secure	Physical	No expectations of what school should be     Smaller class sizes
i ceimig sale and secule	environment	- Large classes in mainstream
	CHANOLINELL	- Relaxed environment
		- Basic needs met in AP
	1	basic needs met in Ai

	1	
		- Impact of financial difficulties in mainstream
		- Feeling comfortable
		- Feels able to branch out and learn
		- They provide everything you need
	Practice in the	<ul> <li>Feels able to get out/escape</li> </ul>
	AP	<ul> <li>Flight response to being in mainstream</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Forced into anxiety provoking situations in</li> </ul>
		mainstream
		- Mainstream response to non-attendance was to
		invade safe space
		- Able to escape
		- Coping strategies understood by staff
		- No safe base in mainstream
		- Safe base available
Perceptions of Post-16	Support needs	- Travelling to college independently a challenge
'		- Reliance on adult with transport
		- Needs college to support mental health needs
		- Wants college provision to mirror aspects of AP
		- Ongoing emotional support after students leave
		- Anxiety around public transport
		Needs college staff to understand needs and
		strategies which are successful
		- Needs person centred approach
		- Worries about relationships in college
		- Nervous about class sizes
		- Risk of isolation in college
		- Wants to feel listened to and valued
		- Importance of ending
		- Prom as happy ending
		- Struggle with initial transition
	D	- Worried about isolating self
	Preparation for	- Work experience
	post-16	Employers not prepared by AP to support students
		- Humiliating work experience
		- Negative work experience contributed to change in
		career aspiration
		- Lack of understanding of work experience provider
		- Relaxed relationship with staff perceived as preparing
		for college
		- Careers day
		- Taught skills for adulthood
		- Building skills for independence
		- Cannot remember being spoken to about future
		opportunities
		<ul> <li>Parent involved in decisions informally</li> </ul>

### Appendix 18. Detailed account of the process of TA

#### Phase 1. Familiarisation with the data

I transcribed the audio data verbatim, read and re-read the transcripts and made notes of my initial thoughts about the data.

#### **Phase 2: Initial coding**

I coded the data manually by making notes beside the text. Whilst the position of this research is constructionist, perhaps lending itself to coding for latent themes, both latent and semantic themes were identified to answer the RQ which seeks to 'understand' practice in its broadest sense. Braun and Clarke (2019) argue that one does not have to code only for one or the other. I then grouped all extracts together which had the same code.

### **Phase 3: Searching for themes**

Phase 3 involved looking at all of the codes to identify themes. To do this, I wrote the name of each code on slips of paper and arranged them manually into possible themes. The kinaesthetic nature of this process helped me to be led by the data, rather than by my own conceptions.

### **Phase 4: Reviewing themes**

This phase was a recursive process. First, I reviewed the extracts for each theme to check whether they fit into the theme. In some cases, this involved changing themes or moving extracts into other themes. As recommended by Braun, Clarke and Terry (2014), my RQ remained central to my thinking during this process. Next, I returned to the data set to re-code the data for any missed or new themes. I also checked my themes against the entire dataset to ensure they were an accurate reflection.

### Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

This phase involved refining the themes, ensuring a coherent and consistent story was being reflected. Naming the themes required consideration of the 'essence' of the theme so that the reader quickly knows what the theme is about.

### **Phase 6: Producing the report**

Finally, producing the report required careful consideration and refinement of the analysis which was then presented in a coherent and logical manner, telling the story of the data to the reader.

### Appendix 19. Example of coding transcript

Extracts of coded transcript from FG 1, demonstrating Phase 2 and Phase 4.

Transcript	Coding (Phase 2)	Re-coding (Phase 4)
Nicola: Colleges also come in So, every college comes in and sees the children. So, they'll see them at the careers fair and they'll see them again before Christmas and then will see them again in the new year. And we try and see them just before erm they leave for their exams.	Developing relationships with colleges	Need to build relationships between college staff and young people
Marie & Gabe: You do mock interviews as well don't ya?  Nicola: Yeah, we are doing mock interviews, so we do that this year. We go visit the colleges. So, they have a lot of involvement. Some especially our more medical ones who are going to struggle, they are given over summer- a lot of colleges are open, so they get used to the environment with limited numbers of students in it.	Developing relationships with college Additional visits to college	Need to build relationships between college staff and young people
Interviewer: Right.  Marie: So, maybe they'll go once a week into the college and spend an hour or so. The ones that are vulnerable we make sure they are allocated a key worker before they start the college.	Developing relationships with college Pupils will find transition difficult	Need to build relationships between college staff and young people
Interviewer: So, they've got someone in college to go to?  Gabe: Yeah, so they have departments that deal with children who are more vulnerable, but yes some go in over the holidays or some will go in on an enrolment - but they will already have a keyworker that's waiting for them. They have different enrolment days so the ones who are more vulnerable will have a quieter enrolment day.	Additional visits to college Support over the holidays Developing relationships with college	Need to build relationships between college staff and young people
Interviewer: Is there anything else that you do as a part of that transition that we've not covered yet?  All: [unlegible]. That's quite a lot that we do.  Marie: Well the key workers do a lot of work with them, they have that recognition that they're going to be doing their exams. So, like we had [MH services] in once, where they've done dealing with exam stress and the keyworkers do that as well. So, as you're coming up to,	Emotional support Stress and anxiety in Summer term	Lack of support over summer period

you know April and May, we always see them wobbling.	Involve outside	
You know you can see that, you can feel it as well.	agencies	Staff attuned to students needs
Gabe: But we have an awareness of that don't we.		Staff attuned to student anxieties
Marie: Yeh I was gonna say that. Usually the keyworker time is to work with the children on the Boxall strands. But some of the key workers who particularly support Year 11s have said that some of the Boxall activities are not appropriate for their age.  Nicola: Age appropriate. Interviewer: Oh okay, as in they're too young?	Key workers tailor support to need Resources not age appropriate for Year 11	Key workers tailor support to need
Gabe: Too young yeh, yeh. Erm so they've asked if they can do work towards maybe helping them through exam stress and that sort of stuff. More productive stuff.	Key workers tailor support to need Developing coping strategies	Key workers tailor support to need
Marie: We've just gone through coaching appraisal, and some of them have recognised that year 11s will struggle and want to actually – one of them is designing a key worker session around you know their emotional health and eating appropriately.	Key workers tailor support to need	Key workers tailor support to need
Gabe: Yeh, one of mine has said she doesn't want to step on Nicola's toes, cos you know Nicola works a lot with them regarding their education, further education side of it. But, she wants to take them out individually to help them prepare for interview techniques and be prepared really for leaving -erm-oh- CVs that's what sort of thing. That's only with her key [children] though. But it can be rolled out, to her capacity.	One staff member responsible for post-16 Key workers sessions around preparation for leaving school	Specific person involved in careers  Key workers sessions around preparation for leaving school
Nicola: They do do CVs in class as well, they do CVs how to do interviews, so they do preparation for working life.  Gabe: They do a lesson a week, I think. Is it yeh?	In class support around post-16 In class support	
Interviewer: Ok. Erm Is there anything that you think could be better, could be different? [Long pause]	around post-16	

If you could have anything?		
Nicola: If I could have anything, I would definitely have services between, in the summer, because like I say we've got [company name], but their contracts are finishing now, and they can only take about 20 children; well I could have given them 20 children.	Involvement of outside agencies	Lack of support over summer
Interviewer: Yeh.		
Nicola: But they've got the whole of this area. So, it'd be really good to have people who are working between when they're leaving us and they're [unlegible]. That 6 weeks is a long 6 weeks when you're scared.	Anxiety over summer period	Lack of support over summer
Marie: When they're waiting for their results as well	Anxiety over summer	
Gabe: And you don't know what to do	Anxiety over summer	
Interviewer: Is that where you think there's a barrier?		
Nicola: I think that's where things fall down massively. Because we get them up, we big them up all ready to go to college and put all these things in place but then there's no one there to hold their hand To take them there or to and we had a young lad who, it was so good for him, he struggled to read or write and came to us very late – in year 11 I think – and he'd managed all through mainstream school without being able to read or write essentially, at one point he struggled to even write his own name Erm So [company name] worked with him, and he'd go every week, and they'd go to a coffee shop, she helped him go through, she got him a little job over the summer which gave him a boost of confidence and then supported him to start college. That is what they need.	Anxiety over summer period  Pupils will find transition difficult	Lack of support over summer  Not having relationships with college staff  Build students confidence
there's no big break in-between?		
Nicola: Yeah		
Marie: See there did used to be these services which supported them, with not just KS4, but all the way through. They was doing something in the summer holidays which, like Nicola said. You know we get them in this place which is really good, we do an awful lot with them here, it is like a very, very, very supportive environment and they just go to pieces don't they.	Gap in services Pupils will find transition difficult High level of support and intervention in PRU not replicated in post-16	Supportive environment

Nicola: But there's a supportive environment waiting for them, but equally they can't go out and find them and equally we can't – they've left us – I mean no that we don't, I still, I had a child who left us in 2016 the other day rock up for me to help him apply for college. So, we still, they still come! Just because they've left us doesn't mean they've left us. And I always say, as long as the kids have left you know, I'm more than happy for children from years and years ago to come back and I'll help them apply for college. And I have multiple times. But you know, there is no, there is a very supportive learning environment waiting for them and they've left one, but there's six weeks with nothing. Apart from their own thoughts and fears and anxieties and maybe friends who do something a bit dodgy.	Students form attachments with AP  High level of support and intervention in PRU not replicated in post-16 Continued support after leaving college	Ongoing support after leaving AP
Gabe: Leaving year 11 the last Friday of June so it's actually more like 12 weeks.		Gap in services
Interviewer: It's a long time isn't it		
Nicola: It Is a long time.  Interviewer: I'd never really thought about the middle bit before.		Gap in services
Nicola: We're really good at making sure - I speak to the colleges and our local ones especially — and it tends to be our local ones that our students gravitate to. I do have some at [college name] and they're a bit more out there, but they tend to be a bit more confident and know what they want and what they're getting. But our local ones that's where our children go that tend to be a bit more anxious, more nervous or, and a lot of the ones who have behavior issues — that's purely because they're frightened a lot of the time as well, you know it'll come out because they're unsure of the new environment new people you know	Information sharing with college  YP experience uncertainty and unpredictability upon transitioning to college  Understanding of behaviour as communication	Pupils will find transition difficult  Loss of structure and safe space
Gabe: they're trying to tell us something in their way and their way is to misbehave	Understanding of behaviour as communication	

### Appendix 20. Example of Extracts and Codes

Example of grouping extracts by codes (Phase 2).

<u>Key</u>

Black - School 1 (FG 1)

Blue - School 2 (FG 2)

Red – School 3 (FG 3)

Code	Coded extract from transcript
Jump from secondary expectations to college expectations	D: They're the youngest in the bunch and their resilience is not there like it used to be in year 7, so I do think they struggle more leaving us-or even mainstream students struggle going to college-it's a HUGE shift.  S: You do! Because you're going into the adult world aren't you! When it's primary into secondary you're still a child. But year 11 into 12 you are progressing into the adult world and it can be very daunting.
Large class sizes/environment in college	L: The big classes for some of them.  R: Definitely and they do! Yep. I mean the colleges do work hard and they have similar types of people but they have vaster numbers. The ratio of staff to pupils here is very high but at colleges they've got thousands of kids.  N: []However obviously, in college, they're in a much bigger building and considerably more students so they don't have as much one to one time for them as we do.
Loss of structure and safe space	B: But also they lose the structure and that safety blanket that we give them they're gonna go out. For them it's a big bad world you know and they've got to meet new people, new friends, new adults, you know get themselves from A to B  L: and we do prepare them! But I think that maybe that because it's been so well supported, even though we start to remove ourselves slowly, its kind of 'I have that attachment with you and now I haven't got you anymore'.  N: that's purely because they're frightened a lot of the time as well, you know it'll come out because they're unsure of the new environment new people you know

# College staff lack experience with this group

G: I think some of the college staff have worked with students who have been in this situation where they're in a PRU, however some have just come from teaching maybe school, so they've not had that experience. I think they would struggle dealing with our students

### High level of support and intervention in AP not replicated in post-16

M: [..] you know we get them in this place which is really good, we do an awful lot with them here, it is like a very, very, very supportive environment and they just go to pieces don't they.

N [..]although they have a pastoral system some of them do actually specify that the support we've given them here is not actually what they can give there.

N: But you know, there is no, there is a very supportive learning environment waiting for them and they've left one, but there's six weeks with nothing. Apart from their own thoughts and fears and anxieties and maybe friends who do something a bit dodgy.

N: I can imagine if they just came from a school like ours and they were just, and they went to a college which didn't have or maybe we didn't have a strong relationship with them for instance, then yes, they would get lost within the system and would probably attendance would dip down and then they'd just never go in. That is what would happen. Erm.

N: I don't think they can. I honestly if truth be told I don't think they can.

N: 'Cos equally if the child doesn't attend for 4-5 weeks and you've rang them up and rang them up and you've rang the parents, what else can they do? They don't have the staff to go out and check.

N: and also, we would—there'd be help wouldn't there. If a child hasn't washed their clothes in three weeks or haven't been able to because you know there's no washing powder, these things would be picked up and dealt with. There's no body to pick that up.

N: Plus, they're not legally obliged to be there. It's their choice. If they choose, they don't wanna be there they don't have to be there. Marie: they don't have an attendance officer chasing them up like what we do.

B: But also, they lose the structure and that safety blanket that we give them... they're gonna go out. For them it's a big bad world you know and they've got to meet new people, new friends, new adults, you know get themselves from A to B.

Not having relationships with college staff	L: we've got a really good relationship with them and they've got really good support and that's gonna be their issue is that it's not going to be there straight away and it will be a slightly different environment for them and they will have to adjust to that again.  B: Erm, some girls that I work quite close with are quite nervous about leaving cos the know that they've got it really good here and they've got good relationships with everybody and they're worried that they won't have that again.
	R: [name] has got the good relationships with the colleges and doing that. If you've got the right person at the college you've got that link with then they're happy to do that. But like you said, a lot of them go for an evening, open evening, and have an interview with someone who will probably never teach them. So it's sort of like that's extra reassurance.
	N: I think because we/I speak to them first they do know what they're getting, I do go quite in depth about each student. However obviously, in college, they're in a much bigger building and considerably more students so they don't have as much one to one time for them as we do.
	N: I think that's where things fall down massively, because we get them up, we big them up all ready to go to college and put all these things in place but then there's no one there to hold their hand To take them there or to
Social challenges	B: But also, they lose the structure and that safety blanket that we give them they're gonna go out. For them it's a big bad world you know and they've got to meet new people, new friends, new adults, you know get themselves from A to B.
Pupils will find transition difficult	S: Massive! R: Definitely and they do! Yep. I mean the colleges do work hard and they have similar types of people but they have vaster numbers. The ratio of staff to pupils here is very high but at colleges they've got thousands of kids.
	D: They're kind of nurtured at primary school and given all these ways of dealing with things and although they're youngest they do seem to have more tools available to cope at high school. It's when they go through high school, they seem to pick up mental health issues or different anxieties.
	S: []so I do think they struggle more leaving us - or even mainstream students struggle going to college - it's a HUGE shift.

M: [...] you know we get them in this place, which is really good. We do an awful lot with them here, it is like a very, very, very supportive environment and they just go to pieces don't they.

N: I think that's where things fall down massively, because we get them up, we big them up all ready to go to college and put all these things in place but then there's no one there to hold their hand.... To take them there or to

N: [..]But you know, there is no, there is a very supportive learning environment waiting for them and they've left one, but there's six weeks with nothing.

N: So, like I say you'll find that some of them become so anxious that they won't go, because the step's too far and there's nobody there to help them.

N: I can imagine if they just came from a school like ours and they were just, and they went to a college which didn't have or maybe we didn't have a strong relationship with them for instance, then yes, they would get lost within the system and would probably attendance would dip down and then they'd just never go in. That is what would happen.

N: Children go that tend to be a bit more anxious, more nervous or, and a lot of the ones who have behavior issues – that's purely because they're frightened a lot of the time as well,

M: The ones that are vulnerable we make sure they are allocated a key worker before they start the college.

# Appendix 21. Example of Themes and Codes

Examples of grouping codes into themes (Phase 3)

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Relationships	Creating a	Building relationships with YP
	secure base	Building trust with YP
	Secure base	Positive home school relationships
		Close communication between home and school
		Communication with parents is positively
		focused
		Developed relaxed relationship with parents.
		Empathetic about difficulties in school
		Respectful relationships
		High levels of praise and recognition
		Invested and attuned to students needs
		Students feel safe in the AP
		Students form attachments to AP staff
		Relationships as protective factor
		YP have Adverse Childhood Experiences
		Small environment contributes to feelings of
		safety for YP
		Calmer environment than mainstream
	Understanding	All staff have knowledge of all children in the
	pupils' needs	setting
	pupiis riccus	Managing behaviour in AP environment
		Recognise underlying needs
		Shared responsibility for students
		Staff are skilled in understanding need
		Understanding of behaviour as communication
		Seeking support and advice within the team
		Varied skillset in the team
		Staff learning from past experiences
		Personal qualities of staff members
		Involvement from outside agencies .
		Perception of proactive support, rather than
		reactive
		Value being part of a team
	Relationships	Developing relationships with colleges
	with post-16	Ongoing support upon leaving AP
		Need to build relationships between college staff
		and young people
		Importance of information sharing with college

A lack of parental involvement in transition
support
Ongoing support after leaving AP
YP experience uncertainty and unpredictability
upon transitioning to college
A lack of parental involvement in transition
support
Additional visits to college
AP staff join students on initial few days at
college.

Getting	Broadening	AP exposes YP to new opportunities and
pupils ready	pupils' horizons	experiences
		AP exposes YP to new possibilities and futures
for the 'real		Careers as essential for integration into society
world'		Support to perceive themselves as successful
		Societal implications of disengagement from
		education
		YP have limited experiences outside local area
		YP lack awareness of alternative futures
		Follow in family footsteps
	Holistic	Build students confidence
	development	Support YP to develop coping strategies
	development	AP focus on preparing YP for reintegrating into
		society
		AP seek to develop YP holistically
		Develop skills to ask for help
		Whole-school focus on socio-emotional
		development
		Challenges in fulfilling the aim of AP in Ks4
		Developing readiness to learn
		Difficult to affect change in KS4 in short period
		Time spent re-engaging YP with education
		Support socio-emotional development
		Focus on developing motivation
		YP lack life skills
		Unable to cope with mainstream society
		Mainstream are results driven
	Post-16	In class support around post-16
	embedded	Keyworker sessions on preparation for leaving
	embedded	school
		Careers is a developing area
		Careers as an afterthought
		Seeking to involve parents more in careers
		Focus on developing skills for work

Harness interests to access post-16
Informally gather info on aspirations
Make links between lessons and post-16 explicit
Need to change curriculum to focus on skills for
work
Option for more practical, vocational subjects
seen as a positive.
Post-16 embedded into lessons
Specific person involved in careers
Need for careers to be central
Make post-16 transition pathways explcict
Planning for future
Help with applications
Specific activities in place
Involve local businesses in careers
Identify those with additional support needs for
post-16
Transition as school responsibility

Barriers to	High level of	Large numbers of students in college will be a challenge
transition	support not replicable	Jump from secondary expectations to college expectations
		Large class sizes/environment in college
		Loss of structure and safe space
		College staff lack experience with this group
		High level of support and intervention in PRU
		not replicated in post-16
		Not having relationships with college staff
		Social challenges
		YP will find transition difficult
	Gap in support	Gap in services
		Lack of support over summer
		Pupils will find transition difficult
		Additional support over the holidays
	Underdeveloped	Transition from primary to secondary
	transition	perceived as protective
		Transition from secondary school as more
		challenging for students
		Transition to college as a gateway to adulthood
		Limited resources to support post-16
		transitions
		Post-16 Transition as underdeveloped
		Post-16 transition support not comparable to
		mainstream

### Appendix 22. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

An overview of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs.

Self actualisation

Self esteem

Love and belonging

Safety and security

Physiological needs