Using a Realistic Evaluation framework to explore what goes on in Peer Group Supervision within an Educational Psychology Service. Useful not useful?

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVATIONS

BPS	British Psychological Society
C(s)	Context(s)
CMOCs	Context, Mechanism, Outcomes Configurations
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCSF	Department of Children, Schools and Families
DECP	Division of Educational and Child Psychology
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DH	Department of Health
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
HCPC	Health Care Professions Council
IPS	Initial Programme Specification
LA	Local Authority
M(s)	Mechanism(s)
O(s)	Outcome(s)
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
PT	Programme Theory
PGS	Peer Group Supervision
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologists
YPS	Young Peoples Services.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Peer Group Supervision (PGS) is based on the belief that there are no intended power relationships as the members of PGS are generally of equal status and they rotate roles and decide how PGS will be structured (Inskipp, 1996). The planned PGS meetings are leaderless, egalitarian in principle and comprise of practitioners who work in similar fields (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). PGS members can draw upon each other's experiences, gain advice on difficult cases and issues (Askhurst & Kelly, 2006; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Kaiser & Barrettta-Herman, 1999) and develop a wide range of skill-based knowledge (Proctor, 2010). PGS has been found to be an effective form of peer support to a wide range of professionals. Limited research exists regarding PGS within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) context. The aim of this research study is to employ a Realistic Evaluation (RE) framework to evaluate PGS within an EPS.

Participants: An EPS provided the context of the research study. The sample of participants reflected the composition of the EPS: four full-time equivalent main grade Educational Psychologists (EPs), one main grade EP 0.4, one Senior EP and the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP). All participants were actively sought and recruited through purposive sampling (Thomas, 2009).

Methods: I adopted a RE framework (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) as the methodological approach. RE is a theory-driven approach to evaluate social programmes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). RE aims to identify causal mechanisms and the conditions under which they are activated to produce specific outcomes. The realist formula is symbolised as Context (C) + Mechanism (M) = Outcome (O), (CMO). Semi-structured interviews and a focus group were the main means of collecting the qualitative data. Thematic analysis coding described by Braun & Clarke, (2006) was used to analyse the data.

Analysis/Findings: Semi-structured interviews and a focus group were thematically analysed following full transcription (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Global themes were organised and structured under a realist CMO formula. Based on the methodology employed, the findings reveal contextual and mechanism themes to support the use of PGS within an EPS. The key mechanisms within PGS were: team dynamics, commitment and protected time. The key contexts were: social conditions, the PGS model and structure. The key outcomes were coded into educative, supportive and managerial (self-monitoring) functions (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). EPs reported that PGS was valued, it had a sense of purpose and overall it provided a forum to foster positive engagement and

affinity with peers (Marks & Hixon, 1986; Christensen & Kline, 2001). PGS was highlighted as organic because other EPS interest/research groups developed plus there was a growing interest from schools and other settings in PGS led by EPs.

One disenabling mechanism noted to be hampering the implementation of PGS included EPs contending with competing priorities such as, extra workload and time pressures. This resulted in EPs missing PGS sessions.

Conclusion/Implications: This thesis contributes to the limited amount of literature on the study of PGS within the field of educational psychology. This study gives a greater insight into the use of PGS within an EPS context. PGS has become embedded into policy and practice within the EPS.

Additionally, as other teams and school practitioners have become aware of PGS, the demand for PGS training has increased and has become part of the traded elements of the psychological service delivery.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1:1 Researcher background statement and involvement in the research area

This research study was conducted to fulfil the requirements of the University of Manchester, Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy). When deciding on a topic to research for this requirement, I reflected on my own interests and working practice as a primary teacher in an inner-city school, a Local Authority Early Years Advisory Teacher, a person-centred and psychodynamic counsellor. I have also provided clinical 1:1 supervision to Educational Psychologists (EPs) as a Senior Educational Psychologist (EP). In my current role as a Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) I provide supervision to EPs, Learning Support Teachers and Early Years practitioners.

During my counselling days, my supervisors organised 1:1 clinical supervision but they also promoted and encouraged us to use different models of supervision within a group context. They said, "If you learn to use the group well and gain experience in a creative and challenging environment it will help to access and use 1:1 clinical supervision more effectively". I have attended numerous peer led supervision groups and worked within a variety of therapeutic communities, some groups have been rich and rewarding, whilst others not so rewarding. I have also delivered training and facilitated supervision within a group context; to School Nurses, practitioners who work at Behavioural, Emotional, Social Difficulties (SEBD) Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

I am passionate about lifelong learning and truly believe that peer support groups have all contributed to my skill set, learning and most importantly my Continued Professional Development (CPD). This has led to my interest in researching Peer Group Supervision (PGS) within the workplace.

PGS features

PGS maintains its special character through several features; practitioners from the same field of work come together to form a group; they focus on work related topics and engage in a complex process of exploration and reflection; there is the distribution of active participation as all practitioners have a role. Members of PGS reflect on their working practice and experiences and help each other by supporting each other whilst relating their internal and external world (Kobolt, 1994). Other benefits for seeking peer support within a group context include quality assurance, job enrichment, peer affiliation and self-actualisation (Shields et al., 1985). Nonetheless, I was aware that PGS is not for everyone as some individuals may have had a 'bad' experience of working in a group situation.

However, through various conversations related to 1:1 supervision and PGS with colleagues and other practitioners in Young Peoples Services (YPS), it became apparent that regular supervision was not a priority for some managers and certain services considered developing their own peer support systems. During an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) meeting, I discussed the possibility of implementing PGS within the EPS. I briefly explained the PGS process and model. I referred to the PGS structure, drawing on Solution Focused Brief Therapy principles (de Shazer, 1985). I explained that my aim was to first conduct a PGS pilot study with a group of Early Intervention Workers (EIWs) and their manager.

The PEP at that time and the main grade Educational Psychologists (EPs) expressed an interest in accessing PGS, reporting that the new open plan office environment was not conducive to the access of 'ad hoc' peer group support. 'Ad hoc' peer support is defined as unplanned and spontaneous moments of engagement and support within a dyad or group context (Golia & McGovern, 2013). The PEP agreed to trial PGS within the EPS. However, as a reaction to uncertainty regarding the future of the EPS (due to changes in legislation, high workload and a move towards traded services) the focus was on the possible benefit-to-costs ratio. Is it useful? Is it worth doing? Is it of benefit to the EPs? EPSs need to run as efficiently as possible, to improve service user satisfaction, evaluate impact and keep pace in this increasingly competitive world. Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) stressed that supervision and support was central to the delivery of a high quality psychological service.

1.2 Introduction to the study

This thesis reports a qualitative evaluation of PGS that was conducted within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in the North of England during 2014 to 2015. Seven EPs volunteered to participate in the PGS research study. The PGS sessions were conducted every four weeks for eight months. It was agreed that I would provide PGS training, organise and facilitate the first PGS session.

I outlined how I proposed to evaluate PGS within the EPS and made clear my role as an insider researcher. I stressed the importance for PGS to be continually evaluated from time to time; focusing on the possible facilitators and barriers of employing PGS. Zorga, Dekleva & Kobolt (2001) stated that peer supervision/support groups should continue to be evaluated and members should invite an experienced supervisor to evaluate the process and outcomes.

One of the reasons why I undertook this research was because I believed it would help me gain a deeper understanding of peer support within a group context. My approach to research could therefore be described as 'real world research' (Robson, 2002) and pragmatic as I wanted to examine if, and how, PGS is a useful and supportive tool for EPs.

My aim was to adopt a Realistic Evaluation (RE) framework (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) as my methodological approach. The RE approach attempts to present explanations about how a 'programme' (PGS) works. I was interested to identify the causal mechanisms and the conditions under which they are activated to produce specific outcomes. RE is influenced by the writings of Roy Bhaskar (1978) and underpinned by a critical realist view of epistemology and ontology. A critical realist viewpoint implies that there are multiple and changing perspectives of reality, that explanations of the social world are 'theories,' rather than incontrovertible 'truths'. This study does not claim to report 'facts', but instead aims to provide perspectives of PGS.

1.3 Aims

The aim of the research is to evaluate the PGS within an EPS. The research study is divided into three phases, as outlined in Chapter 4, Table 4.3.

Additional aims are also:
- To examine the usefulness of PGS as a method of staff support.
- To offer EPs a multi contextual forum for exploring, time for reflection and learning from colleagues.
- To explore the perceived initial expectations of EPs regarding PGS, and to explore whether initial expectations had been met.
- To gather information around common themes that arose in discussions in relation to causal mechanisms and the conditions under which they are activated to produce specific outcomes.
- To gain insight to inform future practice.

This study may provide information that might be useful to those who are considering setting up or researching a similar model of PGS within their own EPS.

1.4 Research questions

To focus the following literature review to areas that are pertinent to this evaluation study, the following four questions were formulated as a guide to the research.

1. How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?

2. How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?

3. In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?

4. How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS, at a professional or personal level?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Relevant subsections will be provided in each of the chapters, details of which are provided in the table of contents. The thesis is organised into the following chapters:

1.5.1 CHAPTER 2: AN INTRODUCTION TO REALISTIC EVALUTION AND REALIST SYNTHESIS

This chapter provides an overview of Realistic Evaluation (RE). The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with the assumptions that underpin RE and Realist Synthesis, by outlining how RE can be employed as a methodical framework for evaluative research.

1.5.2 CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of supervision, how it evolved and how it paved the way for the development of PGS (Mills & Swift, 2015).

1.5.3 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS, METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The chapter describes the rationale for choosing RE, sampling strategies, data analysis techniques, ethical issues and the considered threats to reliability and validity.

1.5.6 CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

A summary of the findings is highlighted and discussed in relation to the research questions.

1.5.7 CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The key findings are considered and discussed in relation to the literature presented in Chapter 3. Possible rival explanations for the findings will be presented, particularly where unanticipated findings have been ascertained.

1.5.8 CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a concluding summary of the research study, outlining its limitations and implications for future practice.

CHAPTER 2: AN INTRODUCTION TO REALISTIC EVALUATION AND REALIST SYNTHESIS

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will cover the principles of realistic research, as described by Pawson & Tilley (1997). The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the Realistic Evaluation (RE) approach. I will also discuss the importance of conducting a systematic review before evaluations of the study are undertaken, as this approach can provide evidence-based research to assist interventions or programmes and support the process of policy development. A framework for conducting systematic reviews is referred to as, 'Realist Synthesis,' (Pawson, 2006) which is congruent with RE philosophies (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Largely, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of RE (the rationale for selecting RE as a methodological approach will be discussed in Chapter 4).

2.2 What is evaluation?

Every single day evaluations are conducted informally such as, we decide what clothes to wear, what we should eat or what mug we like to drink from, what TV programmes we watch, how to travel, etc.

There appear to be numerous definitions of evaluations; evaluators often differ in what they believe to be the fundamental or ultimate purpose of an evaluation. Robson (2002) defines evaluation as:

> '…an attempt to assess the worth or value of some innovation or intervention, service or approach.' (p.202)

Scriven's (1991, p.139) definition of evaluation appears to be popular as it is closely linked to the word evaluation in a regular dictionary:

> 'Evaluation is a systematic process to determine merit, worth, value or significance.'

The origins of evidence-based evaluations can be tracked as far back to the 1880s when external government inspectors evaluated programmes in prisons, schools, hospitals and orphanages (Stufflebeam, Madaus & Kellaghan, 2000). It appears that evaluation programmes came to the forefront in the 1960s when mandated evaluations were part of the Head Start programmes. Evaluation is different from other research methods in terms of including ethical and practical issues during the planning stage and management of evaluations, the design stage, data collection and methods for the data analysis (Brinkerhoff, Brethower, Hluchyj & Nowakowski, 1983; Mertens, 2005; Robson, 2002).

Wandsworth (1997) offers a practical overview of the different models and evaluative approaches.

Depending on the focus and the purpose of the evaluative research, it generally falls under two broad headings, e.g. formative (process evaluations or improvements) and summative (outcome or impact evaluation; make decisions or improve) evaluation (Scriven, 1991).

In the context of this research, the goal of evaluation is to systematically investigate the usefulness of a social intervention program (PGS).

2.3 The purpose of evaluation

Within the field of educational psychology there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of evidence-based research (Fox, 2003; Miller & Todd, 2002, Farrell et al., 2006). There has also been a '…growing emphasis on accountability and evidence-based practice; evaluation has become increasingly important in the contexts in which educational psychologists (EPs) practice' (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen 2009, p.53). In 2004, Frederickson stressed that evaluation is 'a key requirement of accountable and ethical professional practice' (p.106). Educational psychologists are committed to researching individual practice (Fox, 2003, p.101), through "practice-based evidence" (Fox, 2011, p.328). Educational and clinical psychologists are encouraged to adopt a scientific role to empirically evaluate psychological interventions to inform future practice (Shapiro, 2002). Consequently, Lowther (2013) states:

> *'EPs as scientist-practitioners are in a good position to choose measures appropriate to each case and context in order to collect information for evaluation.'* (p.254)

Baxter & Fredrickson (2005) stressed the importance of evaluations as they inform the efficacy of new practices. Evaluation research can also support the development of psychological theory and professional practice (Timmins & Miller, 2007) and inform practice and future decisions (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004) as to what may work for specific populations under what conditions (Frederickson, 2002). However, some argue that research in the field plays a relatively limited role in informing future practice (Hammersley, 1997). Reeves & Hedberg, (2003) stated that evaluations have evolved into a contentious debate as there are many challenging models and opposing paradigms, such as:

- Analytic-Empirical-Positivist-Quantitative paradigm.
- Constructivist-Hermeneutic-Interactive-Qualitative paradigm.
- Critical Theory-Neomarxist-Postmodern-Praxis paradigm.

- Eclectic-Mixed Methods-Pragmatic paradigm.

The debate over the quality of research continues (Frederickson & Cline, 2009). For this study, it is considered important to discuss evaluative research; as it is considered an extension of general research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and is it is used to measure the effectiveness of an intervention, policy or service which generally leads to change (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). An evaluation is often guided by key stakeholders (Cohen et al., 2011) and is of value to individuals who may be potentially affected by the findings (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Evaluations should be purposeful; they are strategies for improving practice besides constantly rethinking and deconstructing beliefs (Hlynka & Yeaman, 1992). There are multiple reasons for evaluations, such as:

- They can be used to monitor, track, manage or evaluate the implementation of a programme.
- Researchers can obtain feedback from participants to access the expected process or outcomes.
- The findings may contribute to the formulation or design of the programme and inform future decisions about whether to continue, expand, or end the programme.

Hansen (2005) describes competing models of evaluation as outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Types of evaluation models (Hansen, 2005, p449)

Evaluation model	Explanation
Results Process model	This model seeks to identify the outcomes of a certain intervention or programme.
Explanatory Process model	This model explains a certain intervention or programme right from the initial idea through to end.
Systems model	This model evaluates the effectiveness of a system. The evaluative focus in on the input, process and structure.
Economic model	This model focuses on the analysis of the cost-efficiency of the system.
Actor model	This model focuses on collating the perceptions and perspectives of the participants or stakeholders.
Theory-based model	This model focuses on the identification of the theory underpinning the intervention or programme.

Hansen's (2005) theory-based model can be linked to Pawson & Tilley's (1997) RE framework as they both seek to develop programme theory by identifying the fundamental components that are required for the programme to work. Robson (2002, p.22) states 'the purpose of evaluation is not to prove but improve.'

In the 1960s, the United States of America (USA) government proposed that public services should set aside a certain amount of their budgets for the evaluation of social programmes to improve the effectiveness of future programmes. The 'Theories of Change' framework was developed at the Aspen Institute (USA) by Connell & Kubisch, (1998); and Fulbright-Anderson, Kubisch & Connell, (1998). The main aim of the 'Theories of Change' approach was to bring together practitioners and recipients or service users to map out and generate explicit theoretical knowledge on programme effectiveness whilst focusing on the most effective strategies and methods; to make explicit the underlying assumption to understand how an intervention is supposed to work (programme theory) and to use this to guide the evaluation. Since the 1960s and the help of the evaluation process in the USA, theory-driven methodologies have developed in the UK, such as, 'Realistic Evaluation' by Pawson & Tilley (1997).

2.4 Realistic Evaluation (RE)

RE is a theory-driven approach to evaluate social programmes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The social programmes that Pawson & Tilley (1997) refer to are in relation to existing policies or interventions that propose new ideas or resources to produce or make a change. PGS is the 'social programme' or 'intervention' evaluated within this research.

RE was first developed to understand how interventions or social programmes worked rather than pointing out whether they worked or not (Pawson, 2006). Pawson & Tilley (1997) criticised the experimental design of evaluation by explaining that it 'prevails in orthodox evaluation circles' (Tilley, 2000a, p.2). Pawson & Tilley (1997) pointed out that the experimentation approach failed to recognise and understand the complexity of social programmes. RE was developed as an alternative approach to traditional outcome-oriented evaluation which describes only the outcomes, rather than questioning what 'mechanisms' are acting to produce which 'outcomes' and within what 'context' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

RE is underpinned by a realist philosophy in that interventions are often implemented within a social setting and therefore the findings are open to contextual variance (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) or are context-related (Timmins & Miller, 2007). As EPs, we focus on contextual features when accessing children and young people. We are also aware that some recommendations or interventions may bring about positive outcomes in one context, but not in another. Pawson & Tilley (1997) stressed programme evaluations need to take account of the complex social settings within which they are implemented as they

may well be under constant transformation. The main aim of RE is to understand the evaluation in the social world and the impact of context on the effectiveness of interventions, as well as to seek to improve knowledge and to uncover which aspects worked for whom and in which situation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Using examples from their own studies (crime prevention) Pawson & Tilley (1997) demonstrated how RE looks inside the 'black box' to generate useful information instead of reporting on the process, output, success or failure of a programme/intervention.

Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey & Walshe (2004) convey seven fundamental realist claims about interventions (or programmes); outlined overleaf in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1: Realist claims about programmes (Pawson et al., 2004, p.4-8).

1. "Interventions are theories". A hypothesis underlies each intervention that postulates, "*if we deliver a programme in this way or we manage services like so, then this will bring about some improved outcome.*" In this study, programme theories describe the way in which PGS is implemented to achieve the outcomes.

2. "Interventions are active". So, with most programme incentives they generally lead to impact via the active input of participants. This means that active interventions only work through the participants reasoning, knowledge and understanding of the outcomes. In this study, the intervention is active because it depends upon the perceptions or reasoning of EPs and the effective implementation of PGS, and the EPs' response to PGS.

3. "Intervention chains are long and thickly populated". The key argument is that the different theories are fundamental as the chains of events are all fallible. In this study, all the EPs are taking an active role during the implementation stage, process, PGS model and evaluation.

4. "Intervention chains are non-linear and sometimes go into reverse". Some interventions operate in a bottom-up as well as a top-down manner. In this study, the EPs will discuss their initial perceptions of PGS which may, or may not, impact or influence upon the context, mechanisms or the implementation of PGS.

5. "Interventions are embedded in multiple systems." Behaviours and social conditions are affected through the working of macro system of social relationships. A realist evaluation considers the layers of social reality and surrounding interventions. The success of a programme depends upon the context and setting. Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe, (2004) propose that the following four contextual factors should be considered:
   - Individual capacities of the key actors and stakeholders (beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the EPs);
   - Interpersonal relationships needed to support the intervention (good communication, team dynamics, management support, dedication, loyalty, etc.);
   - Institutional setting (Educational Psychology Service location, culture, environment, ethos, supportive leadership, etc.);
   - wider infra-structural and welfare system (time, support, funding, resources, commitment, etc.).

6. "Interventions are leaky and prone to be borrowed". The intervention itself tends to change during the implantation of the programme (PGS). The processes are affected by adaptation to local circumstances, reinvention and refinement.

7. "Interventions are open systems that feedback on themselves". As the intervention (PGS) takes place, learning occurs over time which may modify and adjust the context in which the intervention is taking place.

Pawson et al., (2004) stressed that generating transferable experiences about the implementation of an intervention will always be problematic because they are never embedded in the same social infrastructures.

Pawson & Tilley (1997) proposed RE as a 'new evaluation paradigm' to deal with real problems not just social constructions. The basic principle of realistic evaluation, therefore, is to understand what makes a programme work, for whom, how and under what circumstances. RE is a theory-based framework, in which causal relationships are recognised by identifying outcome patterns, instead of outcome uniformities. Pawson (2006) suggested that this concept can be further understood by exploring a generative view of causation within the contextual layers of the wider infrastructure.

2.5 The difference between 'generative' and 'secessionist' view of causation

Generative and the secessionist both provide a causal explanation of the relationships that exist between interventions and outcomes. Harre (1972) explained that the secessionists deal with outcome patterns and continue to provide the raw data to infer and identify a consistent relationship between 'X' and 'Y' within a controlled sequence of observations. However, a generative design utilises mechanisms and contexts to explain the association or patterns between 'X' and 'Y'. A secessionist and generative view of causation is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Models of Causation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p68)
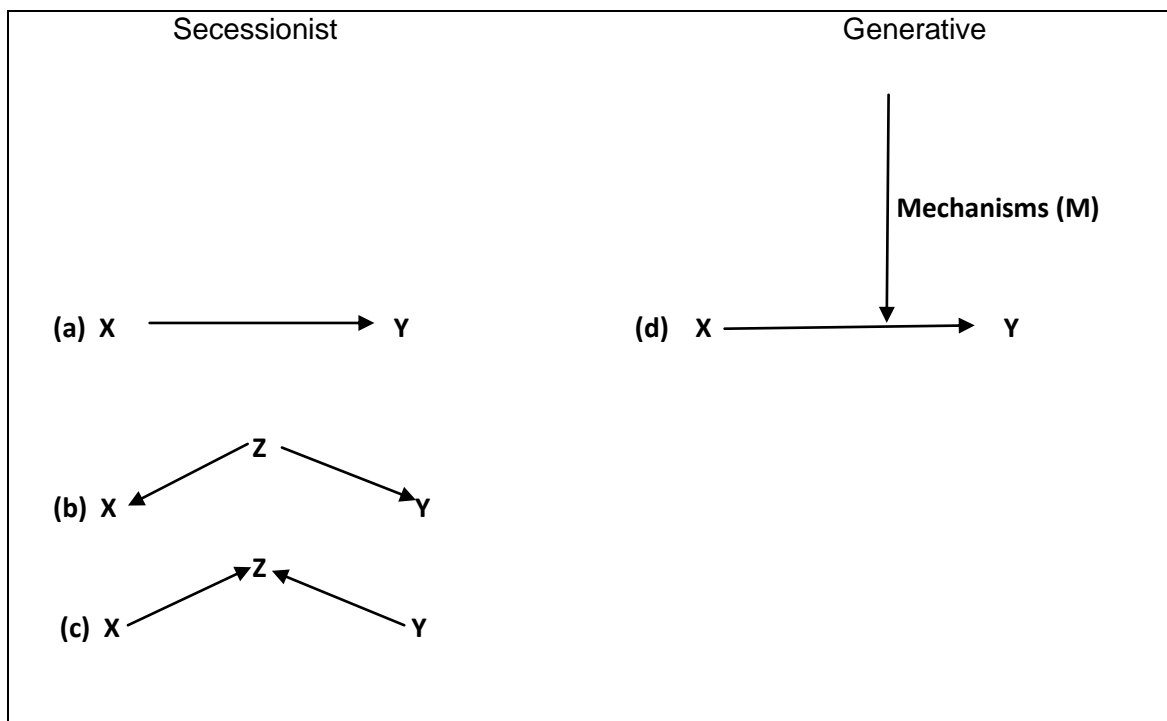
The generative causation explanation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) questions the secessionist view of an intervention independently producing the outcomes. They do not suggest the

possibility of any unexpected variables (model (b)) nor do they suggest the relationship between the intervention and outcome is operating by interfering variable (model (c)). Pawson & Tilley (1997) suggest that generative causation provides a theory and an explanation by highlighting the underlying mechanisms and context which cause the relationship to occur (model (d)). Underlying mechanisms inherent in any social system could possibly (or may not) affect outcomes because of individual choice, social constraints and capability (Matthews, 2003). Mechanisms do not operate in isolation, but are influenced by the context in which they function (Sheppard, 2009). All programmes are exposed to some degree of variance and therefore have the potential to trigger different mechanisms which may produce multiple outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). With experimentation procedures (model (a)), the causal agents that contribute to programme effectiveness are missed (Timmins & Miller, 2007). If researchers are to understand 'how' and 'why' a programme or intervention is effective for individuals across contexts they are required to undertake an outcome-orientated approach (Maynard, 2000; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). RE approach advocates the clarification of the contexts and mechanisms that lead to programme regularities or outcomes, by identifying and assessing the theoretical underpinnings on which a programme builds (Hansen, 2005).

The challenge, when evaluating social programmes, is to identify the optimal context needed for appropriate mechanisms to be triggered, and to promote the intended outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

2.6 Gunpowder analogy

Pawson & Tilley (1997) use a gunpowder analogy to build on their model of generative causation. They rationalise that a realist explanation considers both the mechanism (the chemical composition of the gunpowder which enables the reaction to take place) and the context (the physical conditions, circumstances or situations) that act together to produce or promote the outcome. The causal connection requires the conditions to be right for an explosion, for example there should be a sufficient amount of dry, compressed gunpowder. The gunpowder analogy is outlined overleaf in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Generative Causation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.58)

Chemicals in the gunpowder (M)
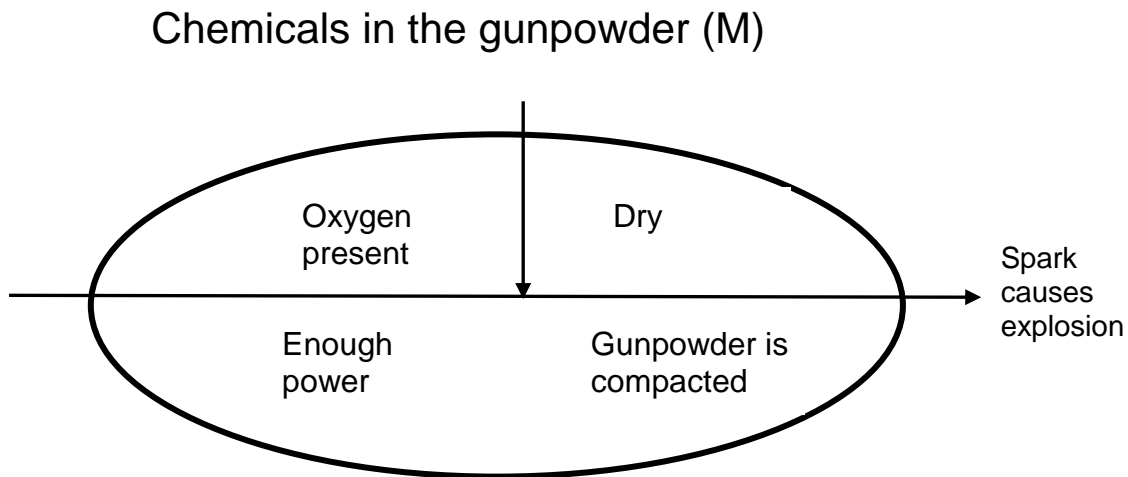
Pawson & Tilley (2004) report that, "it is not programmes that work, but rather the resources they offer, to enable their subjects to make them work" (p.5). It is also important to note that 'multiple mechanisms' may "have different effects on different subjects in different situations, and so produce multiple outcomes" (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.217). The causation in the social world is represented as: Context +Mechanism = Outcome. A diagrammatic representation of Pawson & Tilley's (1997) formula is outlined in Figure 2.3. Box 2.2 provides a brief description of context, mechanisms and outcomes.

Figure 2.3: Diagram of Context + Mechanism = Outcome
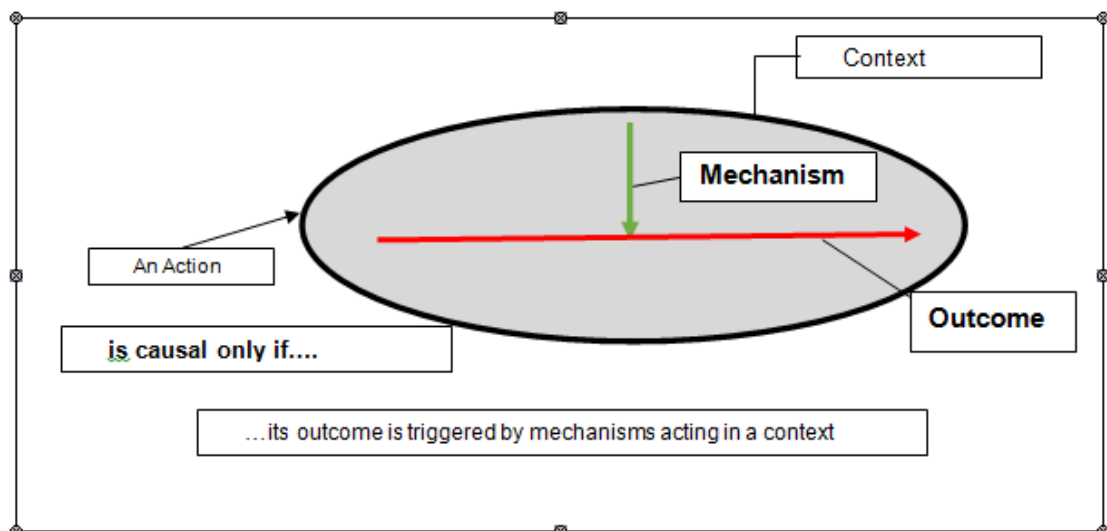
Box 2.2: Context, Mechanism and Outcomes

Context
Pawson & Tilley (1997) state that all social programmes wrestle with pre–existing social contextual conditions and that prevailing social conditions are important when trying to explain the success or failure of any social programme. Pawson & Tilley (1997) add that all social contexts go beyond the spatial location, and include the conditions that allow the mechanisms to move the operation. The social contexts include social norms, rules, beliefs, values and interpersonal and social relationships. It does not just imply locality as they are pre-existing conditions within which a programme is implemented. Whether an intervention works or not is largely dependent on the contextual factors as they facilitate or inhibit the mechanisms. Pawson (2006) identified four contextual factors which may influence the implementation of an intervention: the capabilities of participants); the interpersonal relationships; the institutional settings (culture, ethos, leadership and management, etc.); and wider contexts (policies).   Pawson et al., (2004) make explicit the contextual layers of influence, adding that they, "represent the single greatest challenge to evidence-based policy" because the three 'Is' (Infrastructure, Institutions and Interpersonal relationships) will always be difficult to generalise due to the different set of structures. This would suggest that the current research study cannot be replicated, therefore posing threats to overall external validity of the evaluation study. Threats to validity and steps taken to control them are further explained in Chapter 4, section 4.8.1.3.

Mechanisms
Causal mechanisms are the drivers and main part of the CMO framework (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). Mechanism activities include patterns of thinking, perceptions or actions undertaken as part of PGS. Pawson & Tilley (1997) identify certain features of programme mechanisms such as, they should reflect the programme concept along with the embedded layers of social reality and they should also take account of the complex social structure and system. The mechanisms are expected to take account of both macro and micro processes within the programme.

Outcomes
Outcome configurations are described as the intended or unintended consequences of a programme emerging from the interaction between context and mechanism. Outcome patterns can be varied; therefore, it is necessary that programmes should be tested against a range of output and outcome variations (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

2.7 Realistic evaluation and evidence-based practice

It appears that RE and an interest in realist ontologies and methodologies is currently gaining credence and having a recurrence. RE paradigm for evidence-based practice and its effectiveness has transpired across many disciplines (Byng, Norman & Redfern, 2005;

Greenhalgh et al., 2009; Kazi, 2003; Tolson, McIntosh, Loftus & Cormie, 2005; Wilson & McCormack, 2006).

Within the field of educational psychology there has been a growing body of UK EPs advocating the value of RE as a methodology and its efficacy in evaluating social programmes, e.g. (Bozic & Crossland, 2012; Chadwick, 2014; Crowley, 2013; Simm & Ingram, 2008; Soni, 2010; Timmins & Miller, 2007). This suggests that RE affords EPs to expand their role beyond curricular theory development to evaluate interventions which are designed to improve social programmes and conditions (D'Agostino, 2010).

2.8 Evidence-based policy

Pawson (2006) points out that the search for evidence-based policy is a challenge due to the nature of its complexity. He proposed a more accurate description, suggesting that it might be evidence-informed policy or evidence-enlightened policy rather than evidence-based policy. Evaluating social programmes and discovering the evidence of 'what works and for whom' has become integral to government agendas and policy making (Boaz, Ashby & Young, 2002), as outlined in the White Paper (Cabinet Office, 1999, Section 2.6):

> *'Government should regard policy as a continuous learning process, not as a series of one-off initiatives. We will improve our use of evidence and research so that we understand better the problems we are trying to address. We will make more use of pilot schemes to encourage innovations and test whether they work.'*

2.9 Realist Synthesis (RS)

RS acknowledges different methodologies and data from different research fields to aid the understanding of the conditions affecting the success of an intervention. Pawson (2006) explains the first stage in the RE process involving Realist Synthesis (RS); current research is examined and synthesised to provide explanatory data which may contribute to theory development which is central to RE. Researchers interpret and challenge the impact of the outcomes to develop programme theories, whilst trying to identify the contexts that impact on the actions of mechanisms to produce the outcomes. Realist research synthesis attends to contextual data and "cuts through complexity by focusing on the 'theories' that underlie social interventions" (Pawson et al., 2004, p.3). Timmins & Miller (2007, p.15) raised concerns about building a programme theory from a review of the literature relating to the programme concerned. They acknowledge it being a daunting task for researchers and suggested programme theories could also be collated from talking to practitioners about how they thought a programme could or should function.

2.10 Summary of Realistic Evaluation

RE aims to identify causal mechanisms and the conditions under which they are activated to produce specific outcomes. RE also searches to develop programme theories to understand social programmes, and how and why they work. Programme theories explain how context and mechanisms work together to produce outcomes.

Theory-based evaluation approaches, such as, Connell & Kubisch (1998) 'Theories of Change' model and Pawson & Tilley's (1997) Realistic Evaluation framework emphasised the importance of the programme context when trying to understand how complex programmes lead to changes in outcomes. However, they are not synonymous, as 'Theories of Change' evaluates a sequence of systems at a macro programme level, whereas RE focuses more on the micro level aspects of the programme (Blamey & Mackenzie, 2007). Nevertheless, both Theories of Change and RE approaches have highlighted how change processes can facilitate the impact of an intervention (Boaz et al., 2002). Traditional evaluation models highlight the process or outcomes, unlike RE which, "opens up the underlying 'black box' of the programme theory, uncovers mechanisms and raises the focus to a cluster of interventions" (Hansen, 2005, p.450).

In conclusion, this study adopted a RE approach to evaluate PGS within an EPS. Mechanisms and contextual factors are considered.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Systematic Review

Before conducting a piece of research, investigators and policy makers immerse themselves with accumulating research findings "into a robust body of knowledge" (Davies, Nutley & Smith, 2000, p.7). Researchers can examine the available evidence-based research literature, "before the leap into policy and practice" (Pawson, 2006, p.8). Conducting a systematic review involves finding all research studies pertinent to the aims and research questions (Davies et al., 2000). Systematic reviews criticise traditional literature reviews for the narrow examination of taking existing evidence-based research at face value (EPPI-Centre, 2011). Boaz et al., (2002) point out that, even though systematic reviews adopt a transparent, tough and logical procedure, they are not trouble free, due to the discrepancy and diversity of different research methods, approaches, and the policy area under consideration.

The main objective of the systematic literature review is to critically evaluate PGS within an educational psychology context.

3.1.1 Search methods and criteria for selecting studies

Literature relating to PGS was first conducted using search engines such as Google Scholar and WebCrawler. Key texts and publications in the field of supervision were identified and full articles, chapters and books were obtained and reviewed for inclusion. Studies that pre-dated 1980 were excluded.

With little success, I expanded the search with a focus to review the literature pertaining to peer support groups within the helping professions, such as, social workers, clinical psychologists and counsellors. Whilst reviewing the papers, I used the 'snowballing' technique (also known as reference harvesting) to locate and track down references from the existing bibliographies in a continuous process of evaluation, inclusion, exclusion and synthesis. The key words included the following and included truncated versions and combinations of key words:

- supervision
- clinical supervision
- case conference
- peer group supervision

- peer support

- peer supervision

- consultation

- support group

- group supervision

- group context

- Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

- Benefits and limitations

- Advantages and disadvantages

The key words were applied to explore the following electronic databases: International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, PsychINFO, Medline, CERUK, ERIC (1980 to date), ASSIA, Zetoc, CINAHL, APA and PsycNET. The overall aim of exploring the on-line databases was to establish as much knowledge of PGS from a range of sources. There was an awareness throughout the literature review that key words or terms could be added, or modified as more was researched around the topic, e.g. supervis$ and group consult$. Also, reference lists of relevant articles were scrutinised for potentially unlisted sources. A hand search of some relevant journals around group work was also carried out to enhance coverage of the literature. Abstracts were checked for relevance, based on peer supervision, peer consultation, support groups, collaborative problem-solving groups, peer collaboration groups, staff support groups, learning/consultation with colleagues, peer helping groups, inter-professional groups, collegial consultation groups and leaderless groups. Overall, a general overview was conducted of the relevant work pertaining to facilitated, planned or 'ad hoc' peer support supervision within a group context. The searches revealed some literature on peer supervision as well as anecdotal accounts of dyadic and group models of PGS. Subsequently, the screening process involved reviewing abstracts and using the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to select and evaluate the papers in relation to 'methodological appropriateness' and 'relevance of focus' for the research questions in this study.

The inclusion criteria for this area of the literature review included:
- papers that discussed peer support/supervision within an EPS context.
- papers that included educational psychologists participating in peer support/supervision groups.
- papers that had a descriptive focus and papers that involved research.

The exclusion criteria involved:

- papers that described peer support/supervision in a general sense with little emphasis on educational psychology.

This yielded a total of three studies which met the inclusion criteria and will be discussed in greater detail (Chapter 3, section 3.17). Each study was evaluated against Gough's (2007), 'Weight of Evidence' criteria, 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. Methodological appropriateness evaluations took account of trustworthiness, appropriateness of design, defined participant sample, measures of outcomes and relevance of evidence.

3.1.2 Limitations

I was aware that I might miss key or new relevant articles. I set an alert on Google Scholar to signal new articles relating to PGS. Reference software Endnote kept track of references and a short paragraph to describe the paper and key findings was added using the notes field.

3.2 Introduction

To provide a theoretical context of PGS it is necessary to primarily explore the role of supervision, its roots and the various influences that have affected its evolution. It is important to explore supervision within the broader literature as it paved the way for the development of PGS (Mills & Swift, 2105). In outlining the history of supervision across the many professions and cultures, it will hopefully not only demonstrate its progression, but expound how it has influenced today's current beliefs and values (Carroll, 1996; Cutcliffe, 2005; Davy, 2002; Scaife, 2009). Following this, I will attempt to define supervision whilst considering the implications and issues in doing so. I also refer to supervision functions, approaches and research in order to demonstrate how it can be equally applicable to PGS. I then focus on supervision within the field of educational psychology, again outlining its previous historical complexities, e.g., although supervision was inclined to be during the initial training stage or for the newly qualified EP (Nolan, 1999). Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) emphasised the necessity of professional supervision for all practicing EPs, considering it to be essential for service delivery. Unfortunately, little research has been published exploring the types, processes, roles, goals, mechanisms or outcomes of supervision within an EPS.

Next, I progress to explore the literature relating to peer support within a group context. I first clarify the different types of peer support groups before moving on to define PGS. I then discuss the development, function, theoretical frameworks and models, advantages and disadvantages relevant to PGS.

The overall purpose of drawing on the literature pertinent to supervision and peer support within a group context has been to ground the thesis within the existing understanding of PGS within an EPS context. Research studies by Jones (2004), Squires & Williams (2003) and Rawlings & Cowell (2015) are discussed, outlining how they form the basis of the rationale for the methodology chosen in the current study. Finally, I outline the research questions, aims and implications for current research, the expected contribution to practice and the impact on knowledge and contribution.

3.3 The development of supervision

The history and development of supervision is not easy to track or simply define, as it has appeared to become a large and expanding field. Bernard (2005) retrospectively reviewed one of her earlier works with George Leddick and noted that it was much easier to review the literature of professional supervision back then, compared to the sheer volume of the literature on supervision which currently exists (Leddick & Bernard, 1980). To increase the understanding of the historical context of supervision, various authors have attempted to identify its early foundations within professions and cultures whilst also focusing on the different beliefs, values and norms that have underpinned it (Carroll, 1996; Cutcliffe, 2005; Davy, 2002; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Fleming & Steen, 2004; Scaife, 2009).

The first models of supervision evolved when small groups of workers gathered around knowledgeable leaders and, through a process which has been akin to an apprenticeship, they learned through observation and instruction (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). It is thought that supervision originated as part of Freud's, (1914/1950) psychoanalytic training process (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). During this period, supervision became central to reviewing practice with a view to improving future work with clients. It was reported that Freud himself supervised groups of supervisees and that his supervisor role had three components; taught, supervised and analysed (Binder & Strupp, 1997; Fleming & Benedek, 1996, 1983). This problem-solving approach could be akin to the familiar 'tripartite' model of training involving the hierarchal, expert supervisor. In 2001, Frawley-O'Dea & Sarnat modified the traditional psycho-dynamic approach and replaced the expert supervisor with openness and the highly reflective supervisor. According to Carroll (2007, p.34) it was

during this time when the focus and emphasis within counselling psychology moved towards the "reflective-practitioner" model, which gave supervision its prominence and credibility to practice. It was at the latter end of the 19th Century that social workers in the United States of America (USA) espoused supervision in their practice. It is questionable whether psychoanalytic influences launched supervision to other professions, or vice versa (Carroll, 2007).

In the 1970s, supervision began to drift away from counselling and undertook a more educational, training and developmental orientation. The function of supervision 'flipped upside down' as it moved towards a strengths-based approach, focusing on what might be more effective rather than the traditional problem-focused model of what the clinician did wrong (Miller, Hubble & Duncan, 2008). The shift in theoretical orientations and practice resulted in USA practitioners embracing the social role/developmental model. During this phase, the development of more supervision approaches was reported, influenced by adult learning theories and accountability, (Carroll, 2007; Loganbil, Hardly & Delworth, 1982). It appears that practitioners working within other helping professions such as, nurses, probation officers, welfare officers and teaching staff implemented the practice of supervision (Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Within the United Kingdom (UK), authors have duly acknowledged and recognised the importance of supervision whilst focusing on the functional aspect of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Kadushin, 1976; Proctor, 1986). The widespread recognition of supervision has been driven by counselling, education and the identification of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) (Cutcliffe & Lowe, 2005; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Page & Wosket 2001; Scaife, 2009).

Historically, qualified practitioners such as, social care and other clinical professionals stated that they perceived supervision as a valuable tool (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Fish & Twinn (1997, p.23) also reported that qualified mental health nurses and midwives have always been able to access supervision. Additionally, it is a professional requirement by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2010) as all members have to build into their practice a standard number of supervision sessions.

Carroll (2007) highlighted that, initially, counselling and counselling psychology held the monopoly on supervision within the helping professions. However, it appears that the external supervision landscape has essentially changed as it is now being employed by several practitioners within other professions. Supervision has developed in education,

clinical, health and forensic psychology, family support workers within social care, mental health settings and psychiatry, nursing, speech and language and occupational therapy, probation service, prison service, police service, coaching, homoeopathy and GPs, to mention but a few.

Davys & Beddoe (2010) highlighted that in some contexts supervision has exclusively been the domain of the novice or student apprentice whilst in other contexts it has been a lifelong process. Traditionally, qualified practitioners have not utilised or valued supervision but made use of it as a method of training and overseeing student practitioners (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Is this since most professions are characterised by lengthy periods of training? Supervision has been employed and perceived for the development of specific skills and professional competencies (Hoyle, 1980). The word or term 'supervision' and/or it being originally linked to the province of the new and uninitiated practitioners, appears to have followed supervision on its journey resulting in experienced practitioners resisting the idea of supervision, considering it an insult and a suggestion of incompetence (Kane, 2001); or the desire to remain autonomous and avoid the inherently collaborative nature of supervision (McIntosh & Phelps, 2000) or maybe to avoid the discomfort of having one's work scrutinised (Herlihy, Gray & McCollum, 2002).

Regardless of years of experience, practitioners require supervision whenever they enter situations in which they have no previous experience (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Hawkins & Shohet (2006, p.3) stressed the importance of supervision becoming a part of an individual's working practice. Davys & Beddoe (2010) stated there has been a shift in practitioners thinking by commenting:

> '*Supervision is currently in a new phase of change. Interest in career-long supervision has been shown by professions which traditionally only involved themselves in pre-service education.'* (p.13)

Supervision has been around for over a century and, in that time, supervision models and methods have become a large, expanding field and continues to develop substantially in different professions (Carroll, 2007). Authors of key texts on supervision have outlined important chapters dedicated to organisation, culture and context, different processes and generic models, training and the consideration of, ethical and legal challenges for supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife, 2009). However, supervision is a complex process. It varies according to the work context and focus for different professional groups (Hill et al., 2015). As Carroll (2007. p.35) stated:

> '*it is not easy to freeze supervision and capture it in words that would last forever.'*

3.4 General definitions of supervision

There are numerous definitions of supervision (examples are outlined in Appendix 1). Scaife (2001) noted that no single term can fully explain or capture the true meaning of supervision as it is not only used differently within contexts but also dissimilar in different countries and within cultures and traditions. Scaife (2001) reported that her definition of supervision may also overlap with the definition of consultation:

> *'used to describe what happens when people who work in the helping professions make a formal arrangement to think with another or others about their work with a view to providing the best possible service to clients and enhancing their own personal and professional development.'* (p.4)

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1990), to supervise is to, '*oversee the actions or work of [a person]*'. Within the literature, there appears to be an increasing number of definitions of supervision available; the following examples are by no means exhaustive of those currently in use. Problems defining supervision have occurred with the growth and refinements of supervision within the different professional groups; there is no universally accepted definition (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). There appear to be several definitions of supervision; this may be due to it being positioned differently, not only across the different professions, but also across the international borders. Supervision can be both context-dependent and context-specific, with no universally accepted definition (Davys & Beddoe, 2010); it can also be multi-functional, depending on the setting (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p.57). At present there appears to be no current consensus reached on the definition of supervision as each definition of supervision has its own nuances, emphasis and applicability to a range of contexts.

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) pointed out that confusion may have arisen due to the many different functions and types of supervision, which appear to have differed between cultures and professions. There is counselling supervision, clinical supervision, professional supervision, training supervision, consultancy supervision, peer group supervision, group supervision, academic supervision and individual supervision, and so forth. There is a myriad of terms applied to supervision (Creaner, 2014), resulting in supervision, 'not being a uniformed corpus but a conflicted site' (Davy, 2002, p.228). The practice of professional supervision is often contested and very differently understood and interpreted, (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Mills & Swift (2015) stated that EPs refer to the terms 'clinical supervision' and 'professional supervision' interchangeably. To add further confusion, Howard (2008) and Orchowski, Evangelista & Probst (2010) proposed that

there are also several different models within clinical supervision, which are regarded as empirically, tested theories (Townend, 2005).

Nevertheless, clinical supervision is a term commonly encompassed by health practitioners, social workers and psychologists (Care Quality Commission, 2013). Within the field of educational psychology, Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) refer to the umbrella term 'professional supervision' in their guidance.

It is difficult to capture the true meaning of supervision, as it is not connected to any single definition or theory (Rich, 1993, p.137). However, I have noted that definitions of supervision can be aligned to the functional elements of supervision (educative, supportive and managerial) outlined by Hawkins & Shohet (2006), Kadushin (1976) and Proctor (2008).

3.5 Functions of supervision

The functions of supervision relate to the role or purpose of developing the skills to meet the needs of service users. Hawkins & Shohet (2006) emphasised three different functions of supervision which relate to their model, namely; development, resourcing and qualitative. They stress the importance of a clear contract to determine which of the main categories is being requested. The categories are as follows:

1. Tutorial Supervision - in this the supervisor may focus on the development function and take more of a tutor role in aiding the supervisee to reflect and explore their practice.
2. Training Supervision - again the emphasis is on the developmental function with the supervisee being more in a training role on a work placement. The supervisor will be accountable and have the responsibility to oversee the work being completed.
3. Management Supervision - the supervisee will often discuss cases and work load with their line manager.
4. Consultancy Supervision - this type of supervision is for the experienced and qualified practitioner. The supervisee is responsible for their work but seeks consultation with their supervisor.

Davys & Beddoe (2010, p.25) also noted that, traditionally, models of supervision have identified several essential functions or tasks of supervision. Pettes (1967) identified the terms 'administration', 'teaching' and 'helping'. Falender & Shafranske (2012) refer to the

three pillars of supervision: relationship, inquiry and educational praxis. Whilst, Hawkins & Shohet (2006), Kadushin (1976) and Proctor (2008) described the functions of supervision as threefold; outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Three Functions of Supervision outlined by Hawkins & Shohet (2006), Kadushin (1976) and Proctor (2008)

Functions	Descriptions
Educative/formative	Referring to the supervisee's learning and the personal development of their professional skills, knowledge and understanding their competencies and abilities. This can be carried out through the reflection process and exploration of the supervisee's work.
Supportive/restorative	Whereby the supervisor attends to the supervisee's well-being and emotional responses regarding their personal work. The supportive function usually attends to the 'unpacking' of personal, emotional impact when engaging in highly complex and distressing situations.
Managerial/normative	Relating to the ethical and professional considerations around aspects such as quality control, monitoring and upholding standards during the supervision process. This is to ensure that work is conducted to high ethical standards and within guidelines.

Although different theorists describe and label the functions of supervision in slightly different terms, the above functions appear to have stayed consistent. They are generally described as; 'normative', 'formative' and 'restorative', (Milne, 2007).

Table 3.2: The main functions of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p.58)

Hawkins	Proctor	Kadushin
Development	Formative	Educational
Resourcing	Restorative	Supportive
Qualitative	Normative	Managerial

Educative function

Supervision is known as a tool to foster professional growth (Wiley & Ray, 1986) to prevent performance deterioration through carelessness or inaccurate practice without correction (Franklin, Stillman, Burpeau & Sabers, 1982) and to foster reflective practice (Carrington, 2004; Scaife, 2009). A hallmark of 'good' supervision is reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife, 2009; Schon, 1991). Supervision with corrective and reflective feedback may prevent skill deterioration (Kavanagh, Spence, Strong, Wilson, Sturk &

Crowl, 2003). Falender & Shafranske (2008) identified competency and a skill-based approach to supervision; this draws on individual needs, prior knowledge and skills. Falender & Shafranske (2008) acknowledge Kolb's (1984), 'Experiential Learning Cycle' as it links and complements their competency-based approach. The acquisition of competency occurs throughout the lifetime of practising professionals (Talbot, 2004). Practitioners within the helping professions should never stop evaluating and reflecting on their skills and practice (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Supportive function

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) use the analogy and suggest that the function of supervision is parallel with the British Miners in the 1920s. The miners fought for 'pit-head time' to wash their 'grime of work' rather than taking it home. Hawkins & Shohet (2006) suggest that it is essential for professionals to have the time to become aware and understand how they react to issues, and importantly, how transference if not dealt with, can emotionally affect them. It is during the supervision process that issues linked to transference and counter transference can be identified and explored. The supportive function of supervision provides emotional containment for anxiety related issues (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 1993; Steel, 2001) and acts as a therapeutic support for workers (Miller, 1971; Munson, 1993; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) stressed that the supportive function is key to lessen stress, burn-out and reduce isolation. Davys & Beddoe (2010) stressed that support is not a function but rather a core condition of effective supervision as it is thought to not only promote job satisfaction but enhance emotional well-being (Hyrkas, 2005).

The supportive function of supervision is considered essential for practitioners who work in the helping professions, especially if they are exposed to demanding and stressful work (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun & Xie, 2009; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Managerial function (Administrative)

The managerial function is the promotion and maintenance of good standards of work, co-ordination of practice with policies to quality assure an efficient and smooth-running service (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). It affords individuals an opportunity to participate in a choice of aims and procedures that leads to greater probabilities of achievement, motivation and self-regulated learning (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008). It is thought the managerial function of supervision is a crucial tool used for knowing and overseeing how practitioners conduct

and manage their work (Peterson, Peterson, Abrams & Stricker, 1997; Hawkins & Shohet,
2006). It is also important for supervisors (managers) to understand the related processes
and concepts that promote the development of skills that contribute to professional and
personal growth.

Within the field of educational psychology, the Division of Educational and Child
Psychology (DECP, 1993) and the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2012,) may
consider the managerial function of supervision as significant, as practising psychologists
are held accountable for their professional work and should practice within their level of
competence.

It noted that the three functions of supervision are often related to each apex of an
equilateral triangle, each function having equal weight and importance as they link to the
overall outcomes of supervision (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). It is also suggested that the
three functions of supervision are not separate as they unite and partly overlap (Hawkins &
Shohet, 2006; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Proctor, 1986). This suggests that during the
supervision process the three functions should not be viewed in isolation with distinct
purposes. Figure 3.1 illustrates the model by Kadushin & Harkness (2002).

**Figure 3.1: An adapted version of Kadushin & Harkness (2002) model of
supervision**
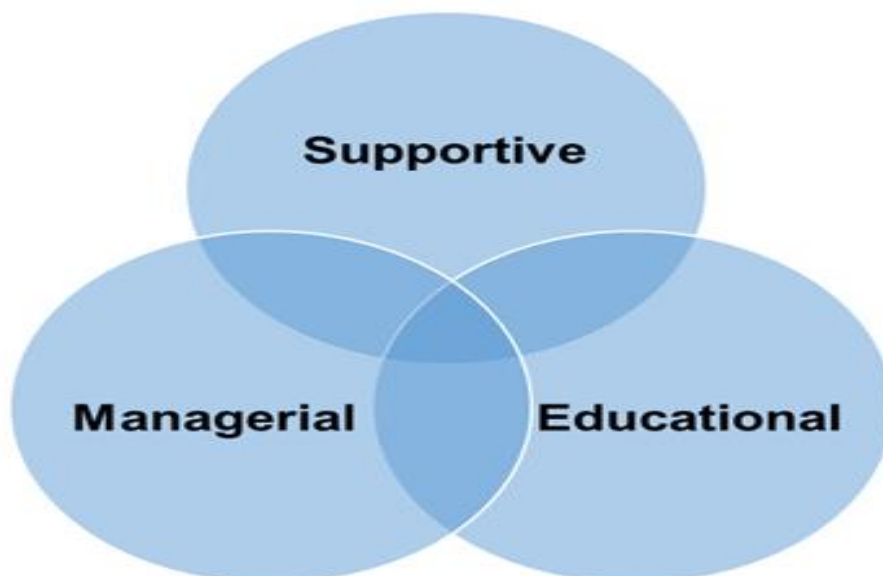
It appears that the three functions of supervision can be useful as an overview of
expectations of supervision policy and practice. However, it does have its limitations as it

provides an unclear, uncritical and static perspective of supervision. Also, the functions do not consider the role of manifestations of multifaceted power dynamics, group relationships, practitioner's fears or the complexity of organisations. These issues are ever present, socially constructed and therefore must feature in any kind of evaluation.

Also, during the supervision process there may be tensions between management duties and supportive responsibilities (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). The additional pressures may relate to all the different hats a supervisor (manager) must wear (Mills & Swift, 2015) as one supervision style does not fit all. The intimate goal is to maintain a wide-ranging hat stand as individuals and situations can change over time. An incorrect reaction during supervision and the supervision process would be to wear one hat without seeing out from under the brim.

There appear to be additional functions of supervision such as, communication and co-ordination as they both appear to have a key role. Additionally, the supervisor (manager) may have to advocate or be the facilitator of individual differences between colleagues, senior management or other outside agencies. Morrison (2005) proposed the inclusion of a fourth function of supervision, i.e., 'mediation'.

3.6 Features that characterise supervision

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) describe different types of supervision and do not put forward that it is a shared responsibility between the supervisor and supervisee. They propose a hierarchal model as they differentiate between vertical and horizontal axes of supervision in suggesting that vertical supervision (perpendicular level) occurs when the more experienced supervisor is working with the less experienced supervisee. This implies a one-way learning process with the supervisor providing and the supervisee receiving. This type of authoritative supervision may well be an excellent master class but it could also potentially result in a power imbalance.

Scaife (2001, p.5) concluded that it is difficult to define and understand the complexity of supervision. She outlined the features that characterised supervision, such as:
- Supervision can serve formative, restorative and normative functions.
- The aim of supervision should not be for the developmental needs of the supervisor.
- Supervision should be appropriately addressed to the personal and professional development of the supervisee.

- Supervisory relationships should either preclude the simultaneous existence of other-role relationships between participants (friendships, managerial relationships) or, where dual relationships pertain, this should be acknowledged and the implications addressed.

- The purpose of supervision is to secure the welfare of the clients, and to enhance the services offered to clients. In doing so, the supervision focus may be almost exclusively on the needs and experiences of the supervisee.

- Supervision is characterised by an agreement or contract (with varying degrees of formality) which specifies the purposes, aims, methods, terms, frequency, and location of the supervision.

There is a belief that supervision is a profession with a unique set of skills or competencies that cut across a range of professional disciplines. Scaife (2009) and Hawkins & Shohet (2006) have written supervision texts for a wide range of professionals to access supervision. They have outlined supervision as eclectic in terms of theoretical orientation and given prominence to supervision skills across the disciplines that professionally help others.

Scaife (2001) stressed that it is difficult to define and understand the complexity of supervision because of its synergy and purposes that appear to keep it flowing.

3.7 Theoretical approaches of supervision

To further add to the confusion, there is an array of specific models and approaches of supervision that are underpinned by theoretical orientations; a few examples are listed below:

- Psycho-dynamic model (Binder & Strupp, 1997; Frawley-O'Dea & Sarnat, 2001).
- Client-centred and existential-humanistic (Mahrer & Boulet, 1997).
- Cognitive behavioural (Friedberg & Taylor, 1994).
- Systemic and family systems (Liddle, Becker & Diamond, 1997; Storm, Todd, Sprenkle & Morgan, 2001).
- Cyclical Model of Supervision (CMS) (Page & Wosket, 2001).
- Brief Therapy (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993, 1995).
- Integrative process model (Hawkins, 1985). The 'Seven Eyed model of Supervision' was further developed by Hawkins & Shohet (2006).
- The Group Supervision Alliance Model (GSAM) (Proctor, 2004).
- Consultancy Supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Davys & Beddoe (2010) stated there are also different models and approaches that focus on the process and outcomes of supervision. Examples are discussed in the next two next sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2.

3.7.1 Theoretical approaches to the process of supervision

The process-based approaches or social role supervision models (Bernard, 1979; Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Holloway, 1995) provide descriptions of the component roles, tasks and processes during the supervision process. The process-based approach is aimed to provide more reliable and valid procedures for studying and accessing the supervision process and outcomes dimensions (Bergin & Garfield, 1994).

Holloway (1995) developed a systems approach to illustrate the learning alliance between the supervisor and supervisee and the interpersonal and contextual influences based on multiple interlinking factors, such as power, interpersonal structure, contract, expectations and functions within the supervision relationship. The process-based models highlight theoretical tools for identifying and understanding intermeshing influences that contribute towards the interpersonal interaction (Hess, 1986) and the client focus (Dewald, 1987). They highlighted a greater importance to the psychological need rather than focusing on the developmental needs of the novice learner.

3.7.2 Theoretical approaches to the outcomes of supervision

3.7.2.1 Developmental approaches to supervision

The developmental approach to supervision appears to assume that supervisees progress through the stages of internal cognitive processes in acquiring and assimilating skills. Supervisees move from the concrete operations stage to the formal operational stage of thinking (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). The developmental approach has also been called the 'zeitgeist of supervision thinking and research' (Holloway, 1987, p.209).

Most development approaches share the central assumption that supervisees develop through a series of skill-based progression (Grater, 1985) on their journey of competence. Researchers emphasise the development of practical skills (Longanbill, Hardy & Delworth, 1982) and attempt to explain the transition from inexperienced supervisee to the master clinician (Whiting, Bradley & Planny, 2001). Brenner (1984) proposed that practitioners pass through a few stages; from novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and finally to expert level.

Worthington (1987) highlighted that development models can be divided into two parts that address the developing supervisee (Longanbil et al., 1982) or the developing supervisor (Hess, 1986). The Integrated Development Model (IDM) of supervision was originally developed by Stoltenberg (1981) and refined by Stoltenberg & Delworth (1987), who proposed a stage-based model which considered the trainee's cognitive and affective awareness of their client's motivation, investment, effort, enthusiasm, autonomy and independence across time. This appears to underpin the competency-based approach to supervision as outlined in section 3.7.2.2.

Although the developmental models and theories outlined offer some helpful insights and how they are applicable to the UK, they do not allude to the integration or accommodation of systemic factors, which are important for educational psychology practice (Hill et al., 2015). There is little evidence to support them as most studies have methodological problems about development over time (Fleming & Steen, 2004), or limited research in the UK (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Research in this area is yet to be explored within the field of educational psychology (Hill et al., 2015).

3.7.2.2 Competency-based approaches to supervision

Competency-based approaches (Falender & Shafranske, 2008) were first developed in the United States of America (USA) and they have now become more pertinent to the working practices of professional psychology; they are akin to the educative function of supervision. Effective professional competencies are considered necessary to ensure practitioners are fit to practice (Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016). Professional standards are set out to ensure that practising psychologists, 'work within the boundaries of their competence' as outlined in guidelines by the HCPC (2012) and the British Psychology Society (BPS) (2006).

Supervision for EPs in the UK has become an important requirement and in 2010, Dunsmuir & Leadbetter proposed the competency framework for skills in supervision for EPs in the UK. The competency framework was underpinned from models and the perspectives by Falender et al., (2004) and Scaiffe (2001).

Certain authors have criticised the competency-based approach to supervision by proclaiming that they narrow the focus of training by reducing professionalism to a collection of specific skills (Fish & De Cossart, 2006) and limit the reflective process (Cutcliff & Lowe, 2005; Page & Wosket, 2001).

3.7.2.3 Development/Ecological/Problem-Solving (DEP) approaches to supervision

Simon, Cruise, Huber, Swerdlik & Newman (2014) added the systemic aspect to supervision by proposing the DEP approach. This model was created by combining both the IDM (Stoltenberg, 1981) and the Systems Approach to Supervision (SAS) by Holloway (1995). It is proposed that the DEP supervisory approach is relevant to school-based practitioners as it addresses three inter-related domains (supervisory tasks, functions, and decisions). This framework is utilised by US school psychologists and it could be equally applicable to practising psychologists in the UK.

There is no doubt that whichever theoretical framework is adopted it will inevitably shape the supervision framework and process. There are generic frameworks of supervision that can be used across professions and theoretical orientations (Carroll, 1996; Cutliff & Lowe, 2005; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Page & Wosket, 2001; Scaife, 2009). The supervision process may be limited if only one approach is solely applied; whichever approach is utilised it should be specifically tailored to address the multiple responsibilities within the various professions (Falender & Shafranske, 2008).

3.8 The complexities of supervision

There appears to be a bygone assumption that supervision is effective across professions. McIntosh & Phelps (2000) noted that the complexities of supervision become apparent when attempting to identify the different types and levels of supervision within the various professions and ethical frameworks.

Beddoe, Davys & Adamson (2014), explored the possible explanations as to how some social workers survive, thrive and demonstrate resilience whilst others are lost and experience burn out. In their study, they outlined positive engagement in supervision and the availability of collegial support as vital key elements to promote social workers' resilience. Even though this was a small-scale study of twenty-seven participants, it was highlighted by Beddoe et al., (2014) that the participants were not specifically asked about supervision; nevertheless, the consensus amongst participants highlighted that, 'good' supervision was crucial to resilient practice.

Supervision research has mainly focused on the process (Roth & Pilling, 2007); there remains little agreement as to what constitutes an effective outcome (Wampold & Holloway, 1997). Ellis, Krengel, Ladany & Schult (1996) conducted a systematic review

and analysed 144 clinical supervision studies. During the reviews, they employed a positivist epistemological stance focusing on the factors that could possibly be generalised and applied to other populations. Their findings suggested that much of the empirical research was not methodically rigorous. They highlighted the use of non-random samples, weak statistical findings, threats to the validity of the findings and unreliable measures. However, if Ellis et al., (1996) review employed a different focus, such as, an interpretivist epistemological stance, would their findings be different? If contextual and relationship factors were included it may have highlighted more clarification and a deeper meaning.

Research studies have bravely attempted to evaluate the outcomes of supervision only to have floundered on methodological difficulties of accounting or controlling the range of interpersonal relationships between the supervisor, supervisee and client (Fleming & Steen, 2004). The importance of a good supervisory relationship cannot be underestimated and, so, unlike any other relationship, it needs consideration and attention. Relationships have been recognised as a key mechanism in supporting positive supervision (Beinart, 2012) and professional development (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). However, it is noted that the supervisor's own development can either limit or facilitate the supervisee's professional progress (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Supervision provides the space for a comprehensive practical understanding of any personal transference and counter transference responses. Additionally, person-centred core condition, (Rogers, 1977) fosters the facilitation of self-awareness, professional growth and development of a 'good' supervisory relationship to develop (Sampson, 2006). Supervisees need to feel received and understood (Proctor, 2004) and safe (Scaife, 2009). The building of relationships, the development of emotional bonds and feelings of trust take time to develop; they are all facilitated by authenticity and openness (Scaife, 2009). Barnett, Wise, Johnson-Greene & Bucky, (2007, p.269) stated that, good supervision involves,

> *'…a safe holding environment where practitioners feel safe enough to openly discuss their work, address weaknesses, flaws, insecurities, difficulties and have the freedom to experiment or try new strategies and techniques.'*

It is not surprising that individuals respond to trusting relationships and acceptance, especially when putting themselves on the line and open for scrutiny (Fleeming & Steen, 2004). However, power imbalances within the supervisory relationship can occur (Holloway 1995; Kaberry, 2000; Knoff, 1986; Lawton, 2000; Murphy, 1981; Robiner, 1982; Strein, 1996). Power imbalances may include cultural differences, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socio-economic status. Conflict or tension

during the supervision process may influence the outcomes (Fleming & Steen, 2004). Dunsmuir & Leadbetter's (2010) '*Professional Supervision*: *Guidelines for Practice for Educational Psychologists,* the competence framework', refers to roles and responsibilities through the, "*monitoring the supervisory relationship*" (p.22). Palomo, Beinart & Cooper (2010) developed the '*Supervisory Relationship Questionnaire,*' as a measure of greater clarity with respect to supervisory rapport; this has been consistently considered as an important factor, but it appears to be poorly understood as a concept (Orlans & Edwards, 2001).

Supervision is a complex process with an array of multi-faceted networks of social relationships within different professional contexts (Milne & James, 2000). This poses a challenge for researchers when trying to identify and isolate the influencing variables on the outcomes or attempting to generalise the findings, especially when positivist epistemologies are espoused. Supervision studies have been largely explanatory and descriptive with a focus on supervisees and their reactions to supervision with little attention to outcomes (Fleming & Steen, 2004).

Carroll (1996) also outlined demographic problems with supervision research as much of the research was conducted with USA trainee, psychology cohorts. This suggests a limited application to different demographic populations of qualified psychologists. Research on supervision has not kept pace with the theoretical or conceptual material published on the topic (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p.76). Davys & Beddoe (2010, p.11) emphasised the following difficulties when researchers try to evaluate the value and effectiveness of supervision:

- complexity of the activity which is compounded by the variety of definitions;
- multiple relationships and the variability of context;
- Multi-faceted variables can be overwhelming for both the researcher and participant.

Fleming & Steen (2004) hypothesised that previous supervision researchers may have been asking the wrong questions. Or they may have found it too difficult to distance or separate their position of supervision-facilitator to supervision-researcher to spot the failings or flaws (Davy, 2002). In response, Hawkins & Shohet (2006) proposed that supervisors should take on an applied-researchers role to flexibly respond to the context whilst reviewing the process to make the changes along the way. Davy (2002) and Hawkins & Shohet (2006) stressed that both the political and social drive for supervision has not been underpinned or supported by an evidence-based research. The purpose of

supervision is only the participant's 'emotional speech making' that supports its value (Feltham, 2000).

Within the field of educational psychology, lifelong supervision for EPs has not received a high profile in the theoretical and research literature; supervision for EPs has previously been inclined to be during the early stages as a trainee or newly qualified EP (Nolan,1999).

3.9 Professional supervision for EPs

It appears that the term supervision has often been used generically within educational psychology literature, referring to settings that have been either university or field-based supervision. Compared to other professions there has been little supervision research within the field of educational psychology. In 1991-92, the Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP) conducted a survey on the role of supervision in educational psychology. This study was a follow up to an earlier study carried out in 1984-85. The 1991-92 survey focused on the different types and amounts of support available to practising EPs. A national questionnaire entitled, 'Activities and Support is to Promote Learning for Educational Psychologists at Work,' focused on seven different types of professional support such as: informal peer discussion, training, appraisal, supervision, formal consultation, team meetings and managerial oversight. The results were written up in eleven papers by nine authors and published in one journal, entitled 'Supervision and Psychologists' Professional Work,' (Lunt. & Pomerantz, 1993). In their 1991-92 study two hundred questionnaires were posted to educational psychologists; 117 were returned and used in the analysis. The results from the questionnaire indicated that 44% of the EP sample did receive supervision; 17% of the 44% received supervision regularly for at least one hour per month; 92% of supervisors were in a 'promoted' position and 33% thought that their supervisors should not be their line manager. Results also indicated that 56% of the sample did not receive supervision (Lunt & Pomerantz, 1993). The response rate in the above study was 62%, which appeared to be quite low; no follow up reminders were sent out to try and increase the response rate. A summary of the demographic data was highlighted but little was reported about the population parameters.

Lunt & Sayeed (1995) noted that 91% of EPs and 71% of Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) had stated that EPSs had designated members to provide support for newly qualified EPs but supervision practice was not even across the EPSs. It was observed that several of the papers received related to the supervision of trainee EPs (Ferguson, 1990; Hamilton-Farrell, 1993; Pomerantz, Leyden, Osborne, Powell &

Ronaldson, 1987). Additionally, Leyden (1997) and Nash (1999) conducted similar research with trainee EPs. Both studies reflected constructively on the development and learning of the supervisee and supervisors.

In 1999, Nolan employed a qualitative approach and focused on the review and development of a supervision system in one EPS (n=14). A questionnaire was distributed to PEPs in other UK services (n=58). It was reported that the questions related to, 'the way supervision was valued and organised,' (p.102). Little information was reported on the process, models, outcomes or effectiveness of supervision; also, the views of the trainee educational psychologists were not included. The results indicated that 49% of the EPs reported that supervision was a requirement and that in 20% of the EPS there had been an increase of supervision practice. During this time, Nolan (op.cit.) concluded that, whilst the amount of supervision for main grade EPs appeared to be improving, it decreased as EP practical experience increased. This research appeared to reflect cultural attitudes within EPSs that supervision was previously perceived more as a requirement for the newly qualified EP. It is important to note that the above research by Nolan (op.cit.) was important, as it highlighted the need for all EPs to receive regular and high-quality supervision and it helped to establish the development of a supervision policy and practice. Next steps alluded to the need for all EPSs to explore and review their culture of supervision.

Leadbetter (2002) researched models of service delivery in EPSs and a section of the data related to supervision systems in terms of staff support. Questionnaires were returned from 92 services in England and Wales. The results indicated that 73 services had a supervision system in place. The overall figures alluded to an increase in supervision undertaken within EPSs since the surveys conducted by Pomerantz (1993) and Nolan (1999). However, is the greater increase in the provision of supervision (Pomerantz, 1993; Nolan, 1999) linked or related to the different way the data was collected and reported? Closer examination of the types of supervision outlined in the Leadbetter (2002) survey indicated that 26 out of the 73 services providing supervision described management appraisals, team meetings or practice development as supervision. In five of the services practitioners reported that supervision was available on request. Jennings (1996) proposed that practitioners need support and reassurance during supervision and that supervision and appraisal are different and very separate procedures.

At a conference in 2002, Julia Hardy provided an important focus and emphasis to supervision. The outline of the conference was published as an issue of 'Debate' in June

2003. Supervision was reported to be essential and workshops gave examples of helpful induction and supervision practices. Rowland (2002) outlined the 'group supervision' model used at his EPS. The model seemed to highlight a senior EP supervisor supervising main grade colleagues within a group context. Findings highlighted that the structure of the group was important, together with the logistics, prioritising time for supervision and regularly evaluating the supervision process.

In 2009, the HCPC became the regulatory body for all practitioner psychologists, along with other health and care professionals practising in the United Kingdom (UK). The HCPC (2012) highlights the requirement of supervision and included an inclusive breakdown of the standards of proficiency standards. The aim is to reflect and review working practice and competencies required for supervision. Within the document, section 2c relates to the critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions and section 2.2, relates to registrants being able to audit, reflect and review their contribution to practice and understand models of supervision. Additionally, the British Psychology Society (BPS) and the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) convened a supervision working group. This was in response to a range of stakeholders regarding professional practice, guidance and clarification of the skills and competencies required for successful supervision. The working group reviewed a range of supervisory structures and provisions that the educational psychologists may be involved in, which included the supervision of:

- Trainee educational psychologists.
- Qualified educational psychologists.
- Supervision by educational psychologists of other professional groups.

Dedicated to supervision, the DECP created a professional guidance document for EPs engaged in supervision (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). The 'generic professional practice guidelines' produced, stated that supervision should be an entitlement for all educational psychologists working with service users. Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) stated that:

> '*Good supervision has an important role in assuring quality of service delivery and supporting service development. It should address both the well-being and professional development of the supervisee, but also attend to outcomes for children, young people and their families.*' (p.3)

Influenced by the work of Falender et al., (2004) who stressed that quality supervision develops competency and assures standards of practice, Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) comprised a competency framework for skills in supervision, outlined in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: List of supervisor competencies and qualities (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010, p. 14-19)

Competency category	Example competency from the supervision competencies
Training	Seeking supervision of own supervision practice.
Values	Creating a safe and trusting forum for discussion and recognising potential power imbalances.
Context	Clarifying lines of accountability and relationship between line management and supervision.
Knowledge	Knowing and using appropriate models of supervision.
Skills	Developing and maintaining critical mind sets in order to assist the supervisee to work in a reflective way.
Evaluation	Using evaluative feedback from the supervisee to develop supervisory practice.

EPSs have applied Dunsmuir & Leadbetter's (2010) structured frameworks to support supervisory practice, and practitioners have been developing their expertise in this area (Dunsmuir, Lang & Leadbetter, 2015). Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) helpfully illustrated distinctive and partly interlinked professional competency skills (EP specific skills), core competence (skills essential for supervision) and specialist/therapeutic competence (skills and professional knowledge in specific areas, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)); outlined in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Competency Skills (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010, p. 8)
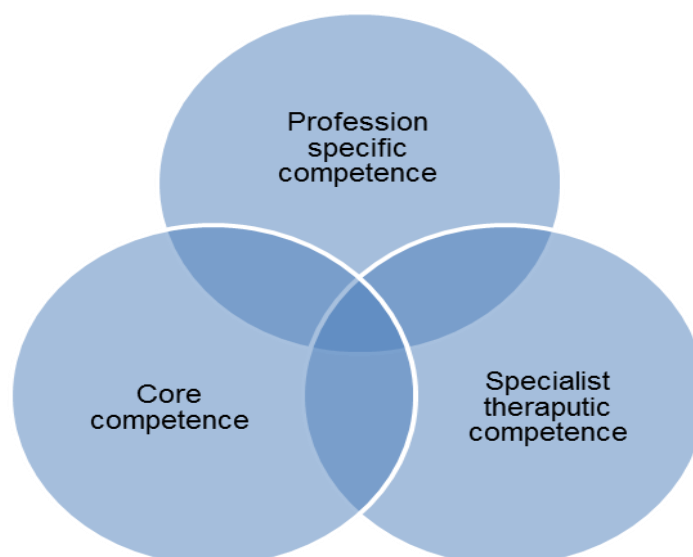
Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010, p.7) suggested that supervisees should have a clear influence on the supervision process and outlined the following educational and supportive functions of supervision:

> *'...personal and professional development that offers a confidential and reflective space for the educational psychologist to consider their work and the response to it.'*

As stated above, the DECP viewed supervision not only as an entitlement for all EPs, but as an essential part of CPD. In contrast to this view, Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) stressed that, whilst supervision was central to the delivery of high quality EPSs, and the experience of 'good' supervision being invaluable, not all EPs experienced this.

Bayley (2010) conducted a small-scale research into EPs receiving supervision within EPSs. Findings indicated that all EPs received and appreciated individual supervision. Squires (2010) stated that many EPSs might have effective supervision in place that serves not only a managerial function but that can also be used to develop competence and skill, and to help EPs deal with the affective elements of their work (p.288).

Dunsmuir, Lang & Leadbetter (2015) conducted a large-scale study focusing on current practices concerning the number of EPs receiving and providing supervision within the changing context of service delivery. Findings were discussed alongside the UK guidelines (Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2010) on professional supervision, e.g. access to high quality supervision to maintain professional development and well-being. It highlighted that a high proportion of EPs working in the UK are both accessing and providing supervision.

Previous educational psychology research had focused on the personal experiences of supervisors (Bartle, 2015; Carrington, 2004; Nash, 1999) or views of the qualified educational psychologist (Atkinson & Woods, 2007; Nolan, 1999).

Carrington (2004) focused on reciprocal learning between the supervisor and supervisee. She employed a case study design to consider the learning gains for supervisors' whilst supervising trainee educational psychologists. She concluded that supervision should be viewed as a reciprocal learning process, pointing out the need for EPs to have an opportunity to train in supervision, develop their supervisory practice in many contexts and to receive supervision at whatever level they are in the profession. Carrington (2004) offered a personal perspective of supervision and highlighted the positive aspects of her role as supervisor, stating that:

'*For too long supervision has been regarded as a low-status task, something to be done out of duty to foster the professional development of others. Establishing a view of supervision as a reciprocal learning would not only raise the status of the activity but could also, ultimately, lead to more reflective EPs, more creative Educational Psychology Services and a more forward-looking profession.*' (p.40)

Mills & Swift (2015, p.107) also stated that:

'*…. reciprocity may be important in supervision, where the responsibility for getting the optimum professional supervision is placed on both parties.*'

In 2015, the journal Education and Child Psychology 32(3) published ten supervision research studies relating to psychological practice. Research papers within this field have been long overdue (Leadbetter, Dunsmuir & Gibbs, 2015). The ten papers outline localised initiatives across the country demonstrating the changing role of the EP. One study by Bartle (2015) explored the relational aspect of supervision from a psycho-dynamic perspective and the experience of an EP supervising a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP).

Ayres, Clarke & Large (2015) researched approaches to supervision within an EPS. Findings identified the following facilitators for effective supervision: a high profile for supervision, protected time, service policy, and ongoing supervision training for all EPs, supervision for supervisors, an EPS supervision strategy group and ongoing evaluations of supervision practice. It was recommended that supervision should be high on the EPS agenda for service delivery.

There appears to be a consensus on the importance of supervision, as I have yet to come across a research paper or a presentation devaluing supervision. Given the importance of supervision, and the esteem in which supervision is now held, one would think that the area of supervision and PGS would occupy a place of extensive attention and productivity within the educational psychology profession. After all, EPSs not only provide regular supervision to EPs and TEPs during their fieldwork placements but they also deliver inter-professional supervision (Ayres, Clarke & Large, 2015).

Within the field of educational psychology, the following two areas have received little research attention:

- The supervision of supervisors: it is acknowledged that these sessions are deemed valuable to reflect upon relationship aspects of supervisory practices (Bartle, 2015). Over twenty-five years ago, Bernard & Goodyear (1992) stressed that supervision of supervision is, "an area of research that begs attention" (p.67). Also, Dunsmuir &

Leadbetter (2010) refer to the importance of supervision for supervisors, '*Seeking supervision of own supervision practice*' (p.14).

- Likewise, little attention has been assigned to the mechanisms of change: how supervision facilitates the learning process, the impact on competence and systematic approaches or the direct associations between supervision and improved outcomes for children (Dunsmuir, Lang & Leadbetter, 2015).

3.10 Professional supervision for Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs)

The lack of research aimed at exploring fieldwork supervision has been further acknowledged by Atkinson & Woods (2007). Thus, they conducted research focusing on the effectiveness of supervision of trainee or newly qualified educational psychologists.

Atkinson & Woods (2007) used a mixed methods approach comprising focus groups (n=8) within one EPS, and questionnaires (n=93) distributed to educational psychologists from the North of England and Wales. Respondents were required to rank positive statements in order of perceived importance and, where relevant, provide additional comments. The highest ranked barrier was the, 'Lack of communication/clarity of communication between the supervisor and trainee'. Atkinson & Woods (2007) stated, 'Supervision offers guidance, problem solving and support appropriate to the needs of the trainee'. They offered a, 'Model for Effective Supervision', which was specifically related to TEPs, as outlined in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Model for Effective Supervision (Atkinson & Woods, 2007, p.307)
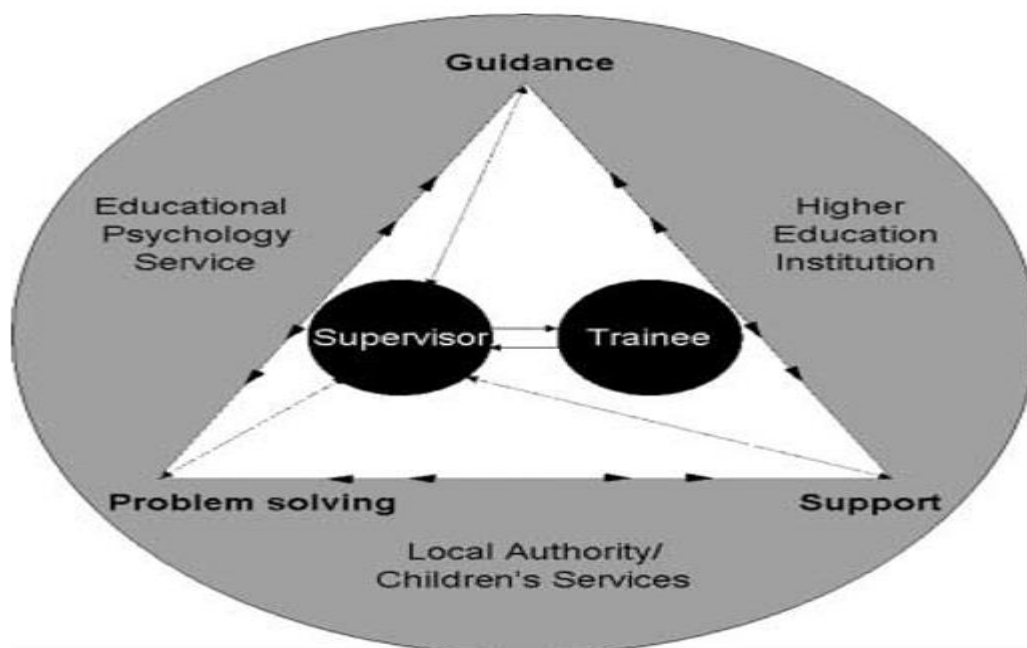
Atkinson & Woods (2007) highlights the importance of contextual factors, such as distinct cultural factors, affecting supervision. Their model refers to trainee educational psychologists being recipients during the supervision process. However, it neglects the views of the trainee educational psychologists. By portraying a passive role of the supervisee, it contradicts the plethora of literature on reciprocity within the supervisory relationship (Nolan, 1999; Page and Wosket, 2001; Scaife, 2009) and reciprocal learning (Carrington, 2004; Mills & Swift, 2015); both parties accessing personal knowledge (Freshwater, 2007); mutual learning alliance (Sampson, 2006). Also, Atkinson & Woods' (2007) research was undertaken when EP training was a one-year Master's degree, rather than the current three-year doctoral training.

Revisiting Atkinson & Woods (2007) research, Hill et al., (2015) conducted a research study focusing on how supervision supported the learning and development of TEPs during their three-year doctoral training. Four focus groups (106 trainees) were undertaken with each year group at four initial educational psychology training sites. The key findings related to the development of practitioner skills, professional learning and professional role, responsiveness to development learning needs and meta-analysis of professional activity and professional role. Hill et al., (2015) refer to Stoltenberg & McNeill's (2010) IDM model and Simon et al's., (2014) DEP framework for their relevant use in the supervision of TEPs, i.e. by capturing additional dimensions of their EP role. The function of supervision for TEPs tends to focus more on the educational aspect; over time it becomes more reflective and analytical (Ayres et al., 2015).

Webster, Hingley & Franey (2000) included supervision as a main factor during the transition from TEPs completing their training course, to becoming a qualified EP. For some newly qualified EPs, there were huge variations in both the amount and type of supervision being offered within certain EPSs. Also highlighted was the non-existent, infrequent and fragmented supervision within some EPSs. The changes in the context of EP work, the EPS culture or the different functions of supervision can all potentially reduce the time available for supervision or the extent to which it is prioritised within EPS placement (Woods, 2014).

The quality of supervision that TEPs receive during their professional placements is an important factor, as it is not only associated with their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the EPS but it may also affect future recruitment of TEPs to that particular EPS. Mills & Swift (2015) suggested the topic of discussion between TEPs is mainly professional supervision. An EPS that promotes supportive relationships and the well-being of its work force has a

better advantage in the recruitment of new employees than an EPS which focuses solely on case work management and productivity.

Through discussions with EP colleagues who supervise TEPs, their experience and formal training in supervision appears to differ considerably, e.g. a recognised supervision training course, a one-day supervision training event or attending a supervision tutorial for a couple of hours at the local university. However, on the other side, it appears that many EPs are well equipped to take up a supervisory role as they learn alongside the supervisee (Carrington, 2004). However, it would be difficult to identify a scientific study that could demonstrate that the supervisors who attended a single class, seminar or a two-year supervision course led to significantly better outcomes for the supervisee, than those who did not. Most practitioners would agree a safe, trusted relationship is central in facilitating effective, satisfying supervision (Proctor, 2008; Scaife, 2009).

Hawkins & Shohet (2012) highlighted the importance of supervision training as supervisory work requires a, "more complex ethical sensitivity" than therapeutic work (p.58).

3.11 Training in supervision skills

Falender et al., (2004) reported that supervision is a domain of professional practice conducted by many psychologists, but for which formal training and standards have been largely neglected. They proposed supervision as a core competency area in psychology. Hawkins & Shohet (2006) have advocated for supervisor training since 1989; they stressed that, quite often, skilled practitioners moved straight into a management and supervisory position, with no training in supervision skills. This issue is also supported by McHolland (1991) who stated:

> '*Because many graduates of professional psychology programs are employed in positions requiring management and supervisory skills, these competencies should occupy a more developed status in the core curriculum.*' (p.166)

Within the Educational Psychology domain (Lunt & Sayeed, 1995, p.26) implied that qualified EPs are no longer in need of supervision as it is the unskilled, dependent practitioner who require supervision. Has the value of supervision, plus the previous lack of demand in supervision training and the shortage of supervision research, been linked to previous cultural attitudes, beliefs and values?

Today, universities who provide Doctoral Educational Psychology training programmes are required to include education in supervision as part of their core curriculum. The basic

assumption is that trainees will develop basic knowledge and skill competencies in the supervision process. However, in contrast, Hulusi & Maggs (2015) stated that, "…*it is our experience that training in supervisory skills are not commonly addressed during initial psychological training"* (p.37). In support, Scott, Ingram, Vitanza & Smith (2000) stated that EP training programmes have been the problem, as most psychologist have not received formal supervision training.

It is perceived that EPs are, "well placed to become supervisors due to skills in consultation and counselling" (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013, p.396). Some EPs may well have a distinctive skill set required for effective supervision; however, their training and experience does not necessarily mean that they possess all the skills necessary for supervision (Rawlings & Cowell, 2015).

It is questionable how much experience and supervision training practitioners need before taking on the responsibility of supervising others. It appears that responses are varied. Fleming & Steen (2004) for example, suggest psychologists, counsellors and social workers should have a minimum of three years practical working experience (full-time), before taking on the responsibility of supervising others. However, teaching new supervisors how to supervise has been mixed; within the field of clinical psychology new supervisors are often assigned a supervisee with no prior training on how to supervise (Schindler & Talen, 1996). Bent, Schindler & Dobbins (1991) stated,

> '…. *the most neglected area of a psychologist's education and training is learning how to be supervised and how to supervise others.'* (p.124)

Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) and Dunsmuir, Lang & Leadbetter (2015) acknowledged the importance of training in supervision for practicing EPs as their casework can be generic, profession specific or specialist/therapeutic. Also, DECP, Professional Supervision Guidelines (2010) state that supervision is a growing area with many opportunities for EPs to develop and acquire competence in supervision (p.13).

Overall, supervision is considered an essential part of professional practice by a breadth of different professional bodies. It can contribute to meeting CPD requirements set by a professional body or a regulator and can, therefore, help to ensure that all staff remain registered within their profession and practice within the boundaries of competence (BPS, 2009). Supervision has been linked to 'good' clinical governance, by helping to support quality assurance, managing risks, and by increasing accountability. Supervision has been associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, increased retention and staff

effectiveness. McHolland (1991) proposed that doctoral students who are trained in supervision probably enhance their marketability as psychologists.

Formal supervision provides an essential link between manager and staff, which is essential in all organisations; however, properly organised PGS can provide an experience of learning that differs from traditional one-to-one supervision (Winstead, Bonovitz, Gale & Evans, 1974). PGS can make an important contribution and be part of the supervision process (Alfonso, 1977).

3.12 Introduction to peer group support/peer group supervision

PGS differs from traditional 1:1 supervision in that it does not require the presence of a more qualified supervisor. PGS refers to a reciprocal process in which a peer group works together for mutual benefit, provides feedback and self-directed learning, and evaluation is encouraged (Benshoff, 1992).

Within this section, I will discuss how PGS evolved, along with the definitions and functions of PGS. I aim to provide an example of the different types of peer support groups and theoretical frameworks that underpin peer support within a group context. Next, I will discuss the possible advantages and limitations of participating in a peer support group. I will then proceed to discuss peer support within an EPS and demonstrate how EPs can extend their role by facilitating peer support systems within different contexts. Finally, I aim to outline the three studies that met the inclusion criteria, before summarising the overall aims of the current study, the expected contribution to practice and knowledge.

3.12.1 Brief history of peer group supervision

It is reported that, in the early days of psycho-analysis, peer support groups were utilised. However, there are few references to PGS prior to the 1980's (Billow & Mendelsohn, 1987). Most of the early articles cite support groups being related to the helping professions and the teaching professions (Alfonso, 1977). They first appeared in medical and nursing journals around the late 1970's and early 1980's (Kanas, 1986). Yet with a forty-year history, there has been very little detailed attention given to peer support groups (Hartley & Kennard, 2009).

It is assumed that many clinical settings have employed PGS, as a secondary or an additional addendum to clinical supervision. PGS is often used for the purposes of training

and effective delivery of service to consumers (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005). PGS is widely recognised within health professional training; it is viewed as a rich source of reflection and learning for trainees (Cross, 2011).

Within the field of social work, PGS has provided alternate frameworks to promote greater "worker responsibility, authority and accountability", and to counter potential dependency issues which dyadic supervision might promote (Hardcastle, 1991, p.65). The various terms and systems are underpinned and built upon a range of concepts, including problem-solving, solution-focused, psycho-dynamic, counselling, therapeutic orientation, consultation and coaching. Different models have been utilised and valued across different professions.

3.13 The different types of peer support groups

As stated, support groups have been utilised and valued across different professions. To avoid confusion, it is important to distinguish the differences between the different types of peer support groups, i.e. group supervision and peer group supervision. Group supervision includes a supervisor (line manager) who may be at a more advanced level of expertise and who may have some form of hierarchical authority. Group supervision, peer case conference and facilitated peer supervision is often led by a supervisor; they may be inter-disciplinary and often encourage the input of trainees or newly qualified practitioners (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005). The supervisor is responsible for the supervisory functions of education, support and management (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

In contrast, PGS involves the establishment of regular PGS meetings with the explicit purpose of discussing case issues (Counselman & Weber, 2004; Hare & Frankena, 1972; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Schreiber & Frank, 1983). The planned PGS meetings are leaderless, egalitarian-in-principle and comprise of practitioners with similar experience (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). There are no intended power relationships, as group members of PGS are generally of equal status, the group members rotate roles and decide how their PGS will be structured (Inskipp, 1996). In PGS the experienced supervisor is replaced with equal contributors who share the responsibility (Mills & Swift, 2015). PGS generally meet on a regular basis and offer collegial support and encouragement, thus, increasing morale (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992). PGS is not used for individual appraisals, performance management or case management (Counselman & Weber, 2004).

3.13.1 The ambiguity of the terminology

Within the literature, there are many different terms and names used for non-hierarchical PGS. The ambiguity of the terminology can be subsumed within umbrella terms such as, peer consultation groups, planned peer supervision groups, peer collaboration groups, peer support groups, staff support groups, learning/consultation with colleagues, peer helping groups, inter-professional groups, collegial consultation groups, etc. All the terms can be used to describe similar non-hierarchical relationships in which practitioners have neither the power nor purpose to evaluate one another's performance (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992, p.103). Counselman & Weber (2004) state that they accept the name PGS as a non-hierarchical form of peer group support. However, the term 'supervision' may imply many different connotations. Why does supervision within a group context come under many different headings? Is it because some practitioners view the term 'supervision' with negative connotations because of their previous experiences? Supervision for most people often implies a power differential, as a supervisor often has some responsibility for the practitioners.

Counselman & Weber (2004) proposed that, technically, PGS is not a supervision group but a consultation group, according to the definition they use. Bogo & McKnight, (2006) pointed out that PGS would be more accurately termed 'peer consultation'. It appears that PGS and peer consultation are often used interchangeably (Borders, 2012) as consultation is generally viewed as a problem-solving process used to generate alternative ideas and plans (Keys, Bemak, Carpenter & King-Sears, 1998). However, no single definition exists that successfully delineates peer supervision from consultation. After consulting with the EPs who participated in this study there was a consensus that the term PGS would be utilised.

3.13.2 Definitions/Descriptions and functions of PGS

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) explain that:

> *'Peer supervision happens within a group between peers who supervise each other in a reciprocal way'* (p.225).

Hawken and Worral (2004) define PGS as:

> *'Reciprocal mentoring supervision is a structured, reciprocal learning relationship between peers … who wish to work together, where trust, support, and challenge encourage honesty, in-depth reflection and constructive analysis on practice and related issues and contextual issues, enhancing self-confidence, personal and professional learning, and promoting best practice' (*p.48).

The following three working descriptions are offered in this research study:

1. Benshoff (1992, p.2) describes PGS as a, reciprocal arrangement in which peers work together for mutual benefit, where developmental feedback is emphasised and self-directed learning and evaluation is encouraged.

2. Kassan (2010, p.1) describes PGS as, a group of professionals, clinicians and practitioners, who meet regularly within a group context to give feedback and supervision to each other.

3. Additionally, planned PGS is sometimes referred to as, a group that meets regularly to discuss cases and other professional matters (Counselman & Weber, 2004).

There have been more definitions relating to individual supervision than PGS (outlined in Appendix 1). However, PGS is equally applicable to supervision as it also draws upon the educative, supportive and normative (self-management) functions of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Proctor (2008) advocates the educative function of working within a group context and proposed the following advantages:

- Shared and a variety of learning.
- Skills and awareness in groups and systems.
- Resources within groups or the work of supervision.
- Embracing and harnessing differences in the group dynamics.
- Economics around time and expertise.
- Tackling 'hot issues' which may arise during group supervision.
- An opportunity for practitioners to discuss and scrutinise their practice.
- Making clear agreements and alliances.
- Group support.

3.13.3 Theoretical frameworks and types of supervision within a group context

Outlined below are the theoretical frameworks for group supervision. I propose these could also be linked to the non-hierarchal PGS approach. Proctor (2008) and Proctor & Inskipp, (2001) used the analogy of hierarchal nesting Russian Dolls to explain the levels of contracts or agreements, boundaries, arrangements and structures of supervision within a group context:

- The largest doll possesses the professional contract (non-negotiable parameters such as codes of ethics, confidentiality, record keeping and lines of accountability).
- The second doll maintains the group working agreement (type of group, ground rules for interacting with each other, time allocation for presenting and roles).

- The third doll sets the agenda for a group session.

- The forth doll draws up the tasks that need to be supervised, to balance the needs of the group (the commissioned space, choices, decisions, etc.). How to practice and how to use the group resources (this has been depicted as a shadow doll).

- The fifth doll provides an outline of the organisational boundaries or the mini-contract for a piece of supervision (casework) that is brought to the group. This provides a safe environment and a reflective space for each member. The smallest doll has been described as, "*the heart of the matter*" (Proctor, 2008, p.66).

Additionally, Hawkins & Shohet (2010, p.155) put forward the analogy of concentric rings to explain supervision within a group context:

- Within the outer circle, this will manage the group contract and organisational boundaries.

- The next circle inwards will attend to group dynamics and development.

- The next circle inwards will facilitate group responses.

- Finally, the inner circle will provide an opening and space for reflective supervision.

When comparing the two frameworks, both models view the importance of the professional contract and organisational boundaries. Farouk (2004) stressed that an essential requirement for efficient group work is for group commitment through drawing up of a working contract and supporting the process through contract management. This could be linked to the second Russian Doll in the framework by Proctor & Inskipp (2001) and, similarly, to the second and third concentric rings by Hawkins & Shohet (2006) as both attend to group dynamics and group responses.

Inskipp (1996, p.278) suggested the following continuum of types of group supervision:

1. Individual Supervision within a group;
2. Participative Group Supervision; and,
3. Co-operative Group Supervision and Peer Group Supervision.

Proctor (2008) described a typology of supervision groups underpinned by the supervisor's preference, experience or leaderships skills, outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Typology for Supervision Groups (Proctor, 2008, p.32)

Type 1: Authoritative Group Supervision The supervisor supervises each supervisee in turn and manages the group.	Supervision in a Group. Supervisees mainly observe and learn.
Type 2: Participative Group Supervision The supervisor is responsible for supervising and managing the group and supports supervisees as co-supervisors.	Supervision with the Group. Supervisees provide some co-supervision
Type 3: Co-operative Group Supervision The supervisor is group facilitator and monitors supervision.	Supervision by the Group. Supervisees contract to co-supervise and develop a supporting system.
Type 4: Peer Group Supervision	All participants take a shared role and responsibility for supervising and being supervised.

In contrast, Hawkins & Shohet's (2010, p.154) model of supervision within a group context proposed the following four quadrants, outlined in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Model of Four Quadrants (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p.154)
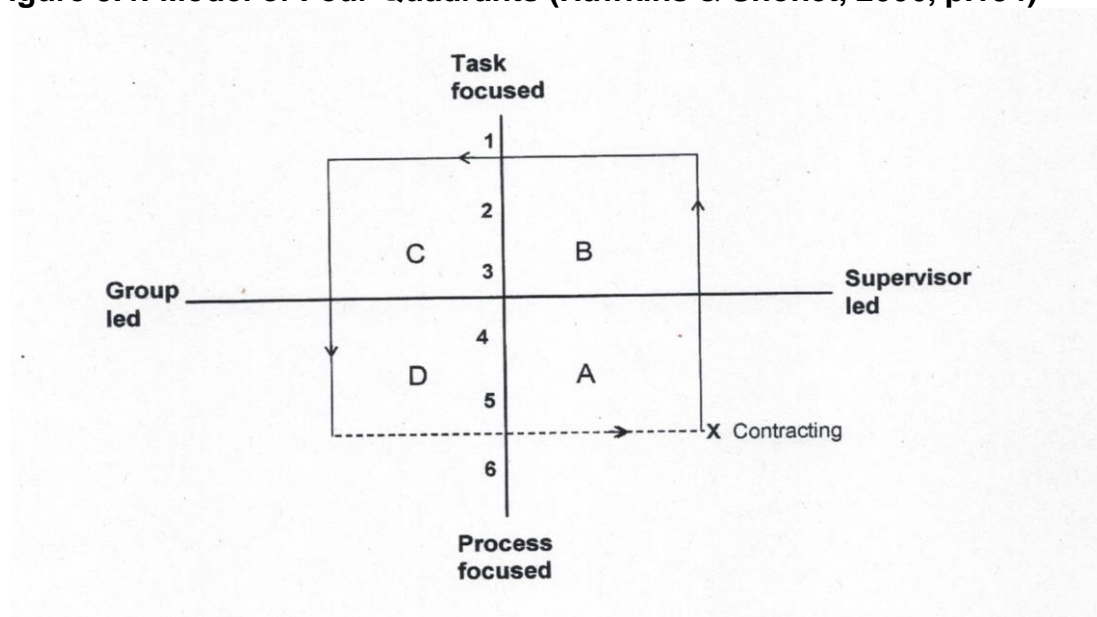
- In quadrant A, the supervision is directed and led by the group supervisor and has a focus on group process.
- In quadrant B, the supervisor takes the central lead and the focus is case-based.
- In quadrant C, the group takes the central lead and responsibility and the focus is case-based.
- In quadrant D, the group take responsibility and focuses on the process. This quadrant appears akin to PGS.

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) emphasised the flexibly of the model and stressed that groups may move across all four quadrants as they develop and become more established. Proctor (2008) stressed that the typology of groups is non-hierarchical as one type is not better than another one. Hawkins & Shohet (2006) proposed, 'Practicum groups' where supervisees adopt various roles. Is this not the same as PGS? Proctor's (2008) and Hawkins & Shohet's (2006) supervisory group 'D' types appear to link to PGS, as they can be accommodating and flexible as the group develops.

3.13.4 Peer support with a group context

Holloway & Johnston (1985) conducted a literature review of supervision within a group context dating from 1967 to 1983. They concluded that peer review, peer feedback, and personal insight are all possible to achieve while undertaking supervision in groups.

PGS is widely used in several professions but is rarely researched or evaluated (Prieto, 1996). The need for empirical research relating to PGS was recognised over two decades ago (Holloway & Johnson, 1985). Fleming, Glass, Fujisaki & Toner (2010) noted that there has been a small but growing body of literature resulting in limited qualitative studies of supervision within a group context. The little research available on PGS has been criticised as methodically flawed (Prieto, 1996). However, despite this, PGS continues to be used (Fleming et al., 2010) and its unique value includes peer feedback and support, exposure to many cases, and observational learning (Linton & Hedstrom, 2006; Riva & Cornish, 2008). Participants also learn group dynamics (Tebb, Manning & Klaumann 1996) and how to deal with counter transference (Markus, Cross, Halewski, Quallo, Smith & Sullivan, 2003). Starling (1996) stated that, once the environment and ground rules are well established it decreased the practitioner's anxiety and thus, it increased the practitioners' self-efficacy, self-assurance, confidence, trust and learning opportunities. In support, Bogo & Dill (2004) reported that more learning took place on a range of topics when participants felt psychologically safe within the group context. Seligman (1978) researched the relationship aspect of PGS and reported that it helped to increase practitioners' levels of empathy, respect, genuineness and concreteness. Does this suggest that peer supervision can draw out Rogerian qualities, (Rogers, 2004) most associated with humanistic philosophical principles?

Rutter's (2007) research of supervision within a group context highlighted that counsellors valued the three main factors:

- trust and safety within the group;

- self-awareness and the supportive relationships amongst peer group members; and

- the opportunity to learn from one another to increase skills and knowledge.

Olofsson's (2005, p.264-5) study of psychiatric nurses identified several factors which may have an influence on peer supervision:

- The importance of voluntary participation; when one is pressured or forced to reflect and participate in peer supervision or self-reflection, it may not necessarily or always be a fruitful experience.

- The relationship between the members can determine whether the process has a restorative effect. If not, it could, in turn, create an additional stress for the participants.

- Being aware and conscious that their need for supervision and support could be interpreted by colleagues as indicating that they could not manage their job.

- Staff being put in a room and expected to get on with it. Peer support group work is not for everyone, hence the recommendation that attendance and membership should be voluntary.

3.13.5 Peer support within an EPS context

Corlett (2015) conducted 'Collaborative Peer Support (CPS)' research with TEPs at a Scottish educational training site. Findings highlighted critical reflection on core skills including communication, shared understanding and attuned interactions, with an intention to create a supportive relationship. Corlett (2015) described how these skills could be generalised to fieldwork placement and practice, whilst emphasising how CPS could potentially co-exist alongside formal supervision within EPSs. Recently qualified EPs deemed it useful to participate in peer supervision as it provided opportunities for reflection (Fox, 2011; Evans, Grahamslaw, Henson & Prince, 2012).

However, through discussion with colleagues from other services, it is acknowledged that not all EPs seek professional support from their colleagues or in groups. Most would agree that peer support happens organically, as some EPSs employ certain type of informal, unstructured peer support either on an 'ad hoc' basis or as and when groups of EPs can meet up. This type of 'ad hoc' peer supervision is defined as unplanned and spontaneous moments of engagement and support within a group context (Golia & McGovern, 2013). These encounters have also been informally referred to as 'bull sessions' (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, p.456). Hare & Frankena (1972) stressed that the development of

planned PGS arose from the amount of 'ad hoc' PGS within their setting. In support, Mills & Swift (2015) stressed there continues to be a need for informal 'ad hoc' support, especially in moments of crisis. However, as colleagues are not always around the office, this became the main motivator for EPs requesting regular PGS. 'Ad hoc' peer support was also highlighted in the 1991-92 survey, Pomerantz & Powell (1993) suggested that informal peer discussion was rated most highly for reducing stress.

There is very little research in relation to 'ad hoc' peer supervision within the literature relating to health, social work, psychology and other related fields (Golia & McGovern, 2013). Still, from my own experience and anecdotal evidence from peers, colleagues and authors (Hare & Frankena, 1972; Schreiber & Frank, 1983) I noted that these kinds of encounters continue to offer tremendous benefits to practitioners. Golia & McGovern (2013) offer case examples to emphasise the power of 'ad hoc' supervision within the context of clinical social work and psychology settings. This type of 'ad hoc' peer support may have specific advantages but, of course, many disadvantages such as private conversations being overheard.

EPs may often like to turn to colleagues for peer support to 'share their burden'. They have the value of proximity, immediacy and first-hand understanding of the other's work place. However, 'ad hoc' peer supervision is quite difficult in the current climate as most EPs are not office based; they work in open plan offices and hot desks; and some EPSs have been disbanded and enmeshed into multi-agency area teams. Because of these factors, it appears that PGS is being employed in more EPSs; however, it has received very little research attention in the UK. Lewis, Greenburg & Hatch (1988) conducted a survey of 480 psychologists in the USA and found that 23% were currently involved in PGS and 24% reported involvement in the past. This may be only a small percentage but it was highlighted that a substantive number of respondents expressed the desire to participate in PGS.

3.13.6 EPs facilitating peer support within an educational context

Within an educational context, Hanko (1999) put forward a collaborative problem-solving approach for teachers. The two main aims were to not only enhance the teacher's ability to support pupils with challenging behaviour but, also, for them to learn how to be consultants to other staff members. Drawing on the approaches by Hanko (1987), schools have run staff support groups. For example, Norwich & Daniels (1997) developed two problem-solving models to assist school practitioners who work with children with Special

Educational Needs (SEN). They were referred to (1) Teacher Support Teams (TSTs) and (2) Teacher Assistance Teams (TATs). Findings highlighted an increased awareness of strategies and approaches to support pupils. Additionally, school practitioners reported an increase in confidence. Newton (1995) initially developed a solution-focused framework to support school practitioners in further developing their policies to support emotionally literate work practices. Findings suggested that the peer group support process supported the development of genuine empathy and reduced the levels of stress amongst individual team members. Guidhard (2000) proposed that peer group support promoted inclusion in Further Education Colleges.

Farouk (2004) provided a detailed description of the consultation process and its application within groups of school practitioners working with pupils displaying emotional and behavioural difficulties. The research study was based upon the work of Hanko (1999) and Schein (1999). Findings of the study were reported anecdotally by the author, resulting in no evaluative methods being reported to allow participants an opportunity to reflect upon the effectiveness of the approach.

Again, based on the work by Hanko (1999), the 'Circle of Adults' model by Wilson & Newton (2006) and 'Solution Circles' by Pearpoint & Forrest (2002), both promote the importance of co-facilitation, and adopt a problem-solving approach whilst applying a psychodynamic perspective to work with groups of school practitioners.

Bennett & Monsen (2011) critically evaluated the literature of four problem-solving approaches and noted that both the 'Circle of Adults' and 'Solution Circles' recognised that our behaviours and responses are influenced by our conscious and unconscious thoughts. Additionally, Hawkins & Shohet (2006) also recognised the importance of the psychodynamic approach; they stated that the PGS process allowed an opportunity for reflection and feedback whilst also recognising the influences of group dynamics on a situation.

In response to the recommendations highlighted in the Elton Report (DES, 1989), Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell & Louw (1992) evaluated consultation delivered in a group capacity. They proposed a 'consultative' method and reported that EPs in Newcastle acted in the role as facilitators within the school consultation sessions. School practitioners identified the effects of occupational stress when they did not have support to share issues or problems. Evans (2005) examined EPs being involved in a consultation process with a group of teachers. She highlighted the evolving role of the EP and how it made a

significant impact on EPS delivery. Steel (2001) advocates the value of supervision for teachers who work with young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to lessen or alleviate stress. She explains:

> '*Supervision is a concept that is widely accepted and valued in the social service and nursing sectors, and evidence suggests that the education field could benefit from adopting it.*' (p.96)

Squires (2007) conducted two studies using a modified form of PGS (Solution Focused approach) for staff support groups. One study focused on teaching practitioners whilst the other study focused on a group of Head Teachers from different schools. Both participants were experiencing job-related stress. In both studies, PGS had been shown to be effective in helping individuals cope with the demands placed upon them. This is consistent with studies involving educators (Hanko, 1987; Stringer et al., 1992; Norwich & Daniels, 1997; Wilson & Newton, 2006). Squires (2007) research study also provided clear evidence to support the three functions (educative, supportive and managerial) of supervision. Additionally, positive contextual factors were discussed, such as clear and agreed structure, ground rules, confidentiality, non-judgemental and non-blame approaches, regular attendance, flat management structure and individuals volunteering to discuss cases. Limitations and barriers were highlighted relating to time, not feeling comfortable with the script or taking on the role of the facilitator. It was deemed necessary by both groups for someone to take on the task of organising PGS and managing the group process (akin to group supervision). This study highlights the developing role for educational psychologists in working with groups of adults using PGS or group supervision.

Hulusi & Maggs (2015) based their research on Bion's (1961) theory of 'Containment' and group dynamics. They conducted Work Discussion Group supervision (WDGs) with a group of teachers. Hulusi & Maggs (2015) suggested that WDGs provided a useful psycho-dynamic framework for supporting teachers, as it provided an emotionally contained space to reflect on the emotional aspects of their teaching. However, considering the ethical implications of this study, the application of the psycho-dynamic approach requires sound knowledge (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2002). Also, there was no mention of, if or how, the debriefing sessions took place. As in a psycho-dynamic counselling session, the ending is just as important as the beginning; the therapist must support the client to, "put the cork back on the bell jar of emotions" before they leave the session. In any helping profession, the overall aim is to do more 'good' than harm.

Although the structure of peer support groups may vary considerably, the underlying function is that groups provide support for school practitioners to discuss the difficulties they face (Boyle, Topping, Jindal-Snape & Norwich, 2011; Creese, Norwich & Daniels, 1998; Norwich & Daniels, 1997; Nugent, Jones, McElroy, Peelo, Thornton & Tierney, 2014). Bennett & Monsen (2011) critically reviewed four approaches of problem solving within school settings and noted two areas which had not been addressed, but which should have been considered when researching staff support approaches. The first was linked to supervision for facilitators and the next one linked to the understanding of peer support group processes. This study also highlighted a gap in supervision training, which educational psychologists could provide, as research clearly suggests:

- That even the most proficient school practitioners may feel vulnerable and isolated if support is not available (Steel, 2001).

- The teachers had very few opportunities to discuss any problems (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989).

- School practitioners reported peer supervision as an antidote for burnout and stress (Munson, 1993; Kadushin, 1976).

- Many practitioners working in schools might be exposed and vulnerable, with little opportunity to engage in the reflection process (Newton, 1995).

- Group work and staff support group approaches in schools influenced the school as teachers became increasingly aware of supporting each other (Farouk, 2004).

Additionally, EPs have been at the forefront leading and supporting multi-agency teams in the three-year, Targeted Mental Health in Schools Grant Project (TaMHS), 2008). Furthermore, Davis et al., (2008) reported on the contribution of EPs in Sure Start local projects by highlighting how supervision within a group context provided support to other professionals. This research was conducted by Soni (2010) as part fulfilment of her doctorate research, 'Group supervision: supporting practitioners in their work with children and families in Children's Centres'. Soni (2013) pointed out that EPs could miss a valuable opportunity to be involved in supporting teams who deliver therapeutic interventions, especially in the current climate. Maxwell (2013) reflected on his work as an EP in providing group supervision for a team of community based family support workers; he highlighted positive outcomes for service users. However, this type of research has been curtailed, resulting in an opportunity for EPs to be involved in supporting practitioners within the helping professions. EPs can play an important role in facilitating the peer support systems within schools to support school practitioners in becoming more

autonomous (Jones, Monsen, & Franey, 2013) and reflective in their practice (Creese et al., 1998).

Schools see a role for educational psychologists in providing training on a wide range of issues (Farrell et al., 2006). PGS for school practitioners could be built around school systems. This may not only help to reduce levels of occupational stress and absenteeism but, also, increase the practitioner's confidence to request specific support instead of viewing it as a sense of failure or with other negative connotations. Literature relating to PGS outlined above suggested that PGS provided a forum for learning, accountability, reflection, openness and trust but ultimately, it creates self-awareness (Luft & Ingham, 1982). PGS can also be useful as a 'critical friend' within an educational context. In an article, White (2007) referred to the 'Johari' window as a means of highlighting the idea of unconscious and conscious competency during group participation and learning. In 1955, psychologists Luft & Ingham created the 'Johari' window test. This was a technique primarily used as an exploratory exercise to help people better understand themselves, which ultimately creates another level of self-awareness. In terms of supervision, Mills & Swift (2015) reported that the 'Johari' window' resonated with them in terms of identifying unknown areas of self, whilst seeking to understand their relationship with others. The 'Johari' window is outlined in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: 'Johari' window, an adapted version by Luft & Ingham (1982)

The vertical axis represents those characteristics which are known or unknown to others about ourselves. The horizontal axis also represents the characteristics that are known or unknown to ourselves (Luft & Ingham, 1982). It is important to note that the rooms in the 'Johari' window usually do not remain the same size, as there are things known to others

that are not known to self, or things known to self that others do not know, or simply are not known to any. It is important to note that the overall size of the window can change and affect the other windows, i.e., a small window or room may reflect an area for development.

I propose that EPs are in a prime position to support practitioners in the helping professions who work 'at the coal face'. Leadbetter, Dunsmuir & Gibbs (2015) propose that EPs providing multi-disciplinary supervision to other practitioners, is clearly an expanding area of service delivery. Rait, Monsen & Squires (2010) pointed out,

> '*Educational psychologists do have a unique working knowledge of school systems, priorities and constraints and how this impacts on the way in which children learn and behave; which places them in an ideal position to support school staff who may be more directly involved in the delivery of therapeutic interventions.*' (p.113)

3.14 The expanding role of EPs

MacKay (2002) pointed out that EPs need to be clearer about their role, especially as stakeholders are now commissioning EPSs. Dunsmuir & Hardy (2016) have recently outlined the practicalities of delivering psychological therapies in schools and communities. They stressed the importance of the decision-making process, conditions of acceptance and consent. Where individual or a group therapeutic intervention is considered appropriate a provision map stating the criteria and threshold levels should be agreed between agencies and accompanied by detailed supervision or peer supervision.

EPs are in a unique position to support school practitioners who are directly involved in supporting young people and vulnerable families in crisis. They may not only be directly involved in one-to-one therapeutic interventions but they can support school-based projects, pastoral systemic work, training and supervision. Rait et al., (2010) stated that:

> '*A distinct supervision role for educational psychologists could be evolved here.*' (p.117)

Davis et al., (2008) proposed that supervision was an area where EPs should feel confident and knowledgeable and suggested this is an area for development. Annan, Bowler, Mentis & Phillipson, (2008) stated that:

> '......*educational psychologists who have developed sound team facilitation skills in their work and who can identify the fluid positions of team members are well placed to work authentically, respectfully and consequently effectively with school practitioners…*' (p.397).

Consequently, offering supervision is one way in which EPs can work creatively towards enabling better outcomes for children and service users (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013).

However, Ayres, Clarke & Large (2015) point out that, although there are requests from other service users for EPs to provide supervision and therapeutic work, it has so far not always been possible due to the amount of statutory work that EPs are involved in.

3.15 The advantages of participating in peer support groups

Proctor & Inskipp (2001, p.99) stressed that their purpose of supporting the value of peer supervision originally stems from seeing it as an aid:

> *'…to seeing practice in a diversity of ways; offering a tower with many windows.'*

Gersch & Rawkins (1987) detailed the use of teacher support groups in a school for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD). During their study, teachers had reported on the emotional and stressful demands of the job. This resonates with this study, as the changing role of the EP profession places high emotional demands on EPs, thus indicating the need to talk and share their experiences during supervision or through a supportive, peer network group. de Haan (2005) reported that, in a safe and open learning environment, professionals could devote time for each other and share each other's frustrations. Similarly, Schreiber & Frank (1983) pointed out that a conversation with peers often provides a safer and less intimidating environment in which to explore and process any difficult issues that might emerge.

Crutchfield & Boarders (1997) pointed out some of the benefits of belonging to a PSG, in that the process may be less threatening than a more traditional model; once the process has been taught the roles can be reversible, promoting a non-hierarchical practice. With this format, there is less dependency on the supervisor, plus it is economical of time, cost-effective and, overall, practitioners have access to 'expertise' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2010).

A growing body of evidence exists to support the potential contributions and benefits of support groups, which could be linked to PGS. Many justifications have developed from a theoretical perspective, while others are based on research. I have outlined a few of the extensive list of reported benefits or reasons for participating in peer support groups. I have attempted to link the positive benefits to functional themes (as outlined in Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Potential Benefits of Peer Support Groups

Related Functions	Citations	Extracts
Educational	Askhurst & Kelly (2006); Beddoe & Davys (2010); Kaiser & Barretta-Herman (1999).	When engaging in PGS, participants can draw upon others' experiences, gain advice on difficult cases and issues, and develop more and better resources.
Educational	Hawkins & Shohet (2006).	The group can provide a wide range of experience; sharing reflections, feedback and inputs from other colleagues.
Educational	Benshoff (2001).	Involvement in PGS appears to equip practitioners with self-supervisory skills, which further promotes the development of professional identify and competence.
Educational	Hawkins & Shohet (2006).	Economies of time, learning and shared expertise.
Educational	Proctor (2008).	PGS members can access a wide range of skill-based knowledge.
Educational	Goldberg (1981).	PGS gives practitioners a forum to exchange with trusted colleagues and provide a safe place to discuss work related issues; to offer support and encouragement to further develop their professional competence.
Educational	Hawkins & Shohet (2006).	Groups provide more opportunities to use action techniques as part of the supervision.
Educational	Proctor (2008).	Groups offer a wide variety of learning opportunities and members are encouraged to learn to trust their own perceptions while being open and receptive to different views.
Educational	Benshoff (1992).	Reciprocal learning, sharing of experiences, increased skills.
Supportive	Counselman & Weber (2004).	Specified several purposes of PGS, such as ongoing support and consultation for different cases and other professional matters; combating the isolation and potential burnout and offering important networking, marketing, and other professional development opportunities.

Supportive	Proctor & Inskipp (2001).	Group members can draw upon the wider experience of the group and feel supported in a safe, trusting environment.
Supportive	Borders (1991).	The creation of an environment which offers mutual aid and support, particularly for burnout prevention.
Supportive	de Haan (2005).	In a safe and open learning environment, professionals could devote time for each other and share each other's frustrations.
Supportive	Schreiber & Frank (1983).	Pointed out that conversations with peers often provide a safer and less intimidating environment in which to explore and process any difficult issues that might emerge.
Supportive	Hawkins & Shohet, (2006); Hanko, (1987).	Supportive atmosphere; practitioners can share concerns and realise they are facing similar issues. Provides reassurance.
Supportive	Tempest, Huxtable, & Knapman, (1987).	Provides emotional support and reduces isolation.
Supportive	Benshoff (1992).	Increased support including increased access/frequency of supervision.
Supportive	Billow & Mendelsohn (1987); Yeh et al., (2008); Stringer et al., (1992).	Provides emotional support. PGS has been invaluable during moments of stress, exhaustion and exasperation.
Supportive	Agnew et al., (2000); Crutchfield & Borders (1997); Yeh et al., (2008).	PGS has helped to normalise and alleviate anxiety and feelings of inadequacy, whilst allowing the development of confidence in judgement and skills.
Supportive	Hawkins & Shohet (2006).	Sharing reflections, feedback and inputs from other colleagues as well as accessing group supervision.
Supportive	Borders (1991).	PGS creates environments of mutual aid and support, particularly for burnout prevention.
Supportive	Hawkins & Shohet (2006).	Group can test out their emotional or intuitive response by checking it with other group members.
Salient benefits	Crutchfield & Boarders (1997).	It may be less threatening than more traditional models.

Salient benefits	Borders (2012).	It is a supplementary practice to traditional clinical supervision, PGS can also address many salient issues faced by professionals.
Salient benefits	Marks & Hixon, (1986); Christensen & Kline, (2001).	The establishment of affinity and responsibility sharing among peers.
Personal benefits	Benshoff (2001); Benshoff & Paisley (1996); Christensen & Kline (2001).	Practitioners attending PGS have also reported an increase in self-awareness, self-confidence and independence.
Personal benefits	Benshoff (1992).	Responsibility for self-assessment and decreased dependency on expert supervisors.
Personal benefits	Mills & Swift (2015).	Self-awareness and competency.
Personal benefits	Counselman & Weber (2004).	Advantageous in helping participants engage in self-appraisal and in developing self-esteem and professional identity.
Personal benefits	Hawkins & Shohet (2006).	Group can also provide a wide range of life experience.
Personal benefits	Wagner & Smith (1979).	Highlighted that members who participated in PGS found greater confidence, developed their mutual co-operation, increased self-direction and improved goal setting.
Humour and relationships	Borders (1991).	Humour and professional camaraderie developed through PGS is a powerful force for overcoming barriers and obstacles faced by beginning practitioners.

There are many advantages to delivering supervision in a group capacity including time and cost effectiveness (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). However, it should be acknowledged that sharing problems and participation in a PGS is not for everyone. Experienced practitioners may not want to engage in PGS as they may perceive it as an insult (Kane, 2001). Shohet (2008) put forward the idea that, in this 'risk society', practitioners who work in the helping professions may often feel fearful of criticism. He added, practitioners who are worried of being judged or deficient in some way will often block them from fully utilising the supervision process or peer support.

3.16 The limitations of peer support groups

Although delivering supervision within a group capacity may have some benefits as demonstrated in Table 3.4. It is acknowledged that, without training of due attention to process, it could also have some potential pitfalls, such as:

- In the absence of a group leader there is a greater need for a firm and clear structure and, overall, a greater commitment from all the PGS members. Early reports on leadership groups tend to be negative and point out the negative problems without suggesting strategies for improvement. They can often be tempted to become off-task or engage in free association that moves away from the problem being discussed (Markus et al., 2003). More successful reports of leaderless groups confirm the importance of protecting the group contract, sharing the leadership (Counselman, 1991) and ensuring a scripted structure (Squires & Williams, 2003).

- Individual members may feel threatened and intimidated (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006) or demoralised (Rae, 2015).

- Practitioners may be uncommitted and passive, finding it difficult to maintain focus (task drift), resulting in lack of group participation (Counselman & Weber, 2004; Hyrkas, Koivula, Lehti, & Paunonen-Iimonen, 2003).

Counselman & Weber (2004) outlined certain dangers that may undermine the functioning of PSG; they stressed that the success of PSG is one that stays with its original purpose and does not become a therapy group or a social event, although pulls in both directions can be quite strong. Potential PGS limitations are outlined in Appendix 2.

3.17 Peer support studies within an EPS that met the inclusion criteria for this study

Three studies met the inclusion criteria; they were critically appraised using Gough's (2007) 'Weight of Evidence' model. A more detailed description of this criterion is provided in Appendix 3.

Squires & Williams (2003) conducted a pilot study focusing on the systems of organising peer supervision for EPs for quality service delivery. Squires & Williams (2003) outlined the wide range of work EPs conducted and how the emotional content can have a high demand on a psychologist's personal resources, e.g., emotional responses, mental health and stress. To address these difficulties a small group of EPs in Staffordshire set up and piloted different ways of organising supervision, such as:

- Group supervision- the group act as supervisors.

- Paired supervision-each EP takes a turn at being the supervisor and the supervisee.

- Triads-three EPs rotate their role of supervising, one supervisor and two supervisees.

It was highlighted that the twenty-six EPs who took part in the pilot study all took part in one form of supervision group (it was not mandatory to do so). The EPs were also asked to rate (scale zero=not at all and ten=very well) their experience of supervision the following four specific aims:

1. Enhanced knowledge and skill = average rating 8.1.
2. Ethical practice = average rating 8.1.
3. Service delivery average rating 8.1.
4. Emotional health average rating 8.4.

It was reported that the overall aims were reasonably met. Some EPs had reported feeling emotionally healthier. It was proposed that peer supervision provided a useful way to enable psychologists to continue to provide a high-quality service to a diverse set of clients. However, the pilot study paper was very brief; it did not provide details of participants, method or models; and the aims were pre-set, not allowing themes to emerge from the data. EPs were not asked how peer supervision had helped to improve their practice. Most importantly there appears to be no follow up to this pilot study. Did the peer supervision groups continue after the pilot study ceased? Is it still sustained today? As with any group, they require someone, not only to organise them, but to assess and reassess given the on-going developmental nature of peer support groups.

Jones (2004) investigated the usefulness of PGS within South Lanarkshire Educational Psychology Service. She proposed that the role of formal professional supervision and/or peer support was not central to many psychology services. She argued that EPs are no different from Clinical Psychologists, Social Workers, and Counselling Psychologists as they also provided a therapeutic or case management service. Jones (2004) stressed that all practitioners within the helping professions require support and time for reflection to remain effective. She evaluated the model of support and the preliminary findings revealed that the opt-in peer support groups were effective for providing EPs with emotional support, bringing about changes to practice, team building, reduced stress and feelings of professional isolation. The following positive themes emerged from the questionnaires:

1. Practice enquiry (case discussions).
2. Practice shared (discussions).

3. Information requests (certain criteria).

4. Resource sharing (checklists, etc.).

5. Procedural enquiry (how to make referrals).

6. Group related issues (actions, updates, etc.).

7. Service issues (admin support).

8. Ethics (protocols).

9. Feelings/personal (re: casework).

10. Policy enquiry (discussions).

11. Training needs (target setting).

Jones (2004) highlighted the limitations in her study, such as the field notes were handwritten, not tape-recorded and transcribed, no cross checking of data analysis took place, and findings were based on selectively recorded data. I also noted that the initial questionnaire only had three questions; also, there was no mention of how the questionnaire was created, developed and piloted. Likewise, if the EPs interviews were transcribed it would have allowed for a more unbiased consideration of the context and overall findings. Furthermore, and most interesting, in Jones (2004) findings was the fact that one EP reported that they would like more frequent 1:1 supervision with a senior member of staff in relation to more practical issues. Another EP stressed that they did not feel the need for 'advice' from peers and that they may not be of use to others if they attended, and it would have to be within the contracted hours of working. It appears that this person felt apprehensive even before the evaluation study began. It makes me question if the rationale and aims of the peer support group were explained in detail? Was a contract developed and agreed with the EPs? Peer support groups are supposed to be used for reflection and not solely for giving advice. Not only do practical and procedural issues need to be considered but, also, ethical issues in relation to trust, safety and positive regard.

Rawling & Cowell (2015) explored the experiences of EPs undertaking group supervision within an EPS. A qualitative research design was idiographic in nature, adopting Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a research method. Findings highlighted three main themes: the *purpose* and the *process* of group supervision plus the *personal needs* met by group supervision. Rawlings & Cowell (2015) anticipated group supervision across the children's workforce would become an area of rapid growth. However, group supervision differs from PGS as it requires a supervisor to facilitate the process. The supervisor (line manager) may be at a more advanced level of expertise which may result in a type of authoritative group supervision (Inskipp & Proctor, 2008). For some individuals, this may be a

difficult experience, especially if they have had 'bad' experience of power relationships in a group setting. If not highlighted, they could transfer these experiences to the new setting. Rawlings & Cowell (2015) report on issues regarding group resistance, transference, countertransference and confidentiality, but they do not discuss the possible power imbalances that may occur within group supervision.

Overall, the three studies provided a picture of EPs experience of PGS and group supervision by highlighting the positive process and outcomes. However, they are limited by the small scale of the studies. In the current study, I aim to build on the above research studies and explore, 'what works and for whom, and why?' and speculate tentative theories, explanations about the Context (C) and Mechanisms (M) that might support or inhibit the Outcomes (O) of PGS within an EPS.

3.18 Summary of the literature review

Supervision is recognised as a profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998) and the supervisory role is likened to the therapeutic alliance in counselling (Bordin, 1983) along with the importance of supervision training (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Holloway & Carroll, 1996). Supervision has been described as a psychological process which allows reflection and professional development in a supportive capacity (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013).

Both Hawkins & Shohet (2006) and Scaife (2001) have developed comprehensive models of supervision that can be applied in different professional contexts. It appears that the reported functions of supervision vary, as many depend upon which model is adopted. Hawkins & Shohet (2006) emphasise the ways in which supervision and peer group support can support the development of knowledge and skills as well as promoting emotional well-being.

The importance of professional supervision has been increasingly emphasised within the field of educational psychology by Dunsmuir & Leadbetter (2010) and Ayres, Clark & Large (2015). Regulatory bodies, such as the BPS (2006) and the HCPC (2012) have shaped the development and entitlement of supervision for EPs. Practicing psychologists are accountable and legal responsibilities have received more attention due to the greater litigious environment they work in (Orlans & Edwards, 2001). Research studies within the field of educational psychology have focused on the efficacy of supervision (Atkinson & Woods, 2007), the value and professional requirement for supervision for EPs (Dunsmuir &

Leadbetter, 2010) and the improvement of individual practice (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Roy, Genest-Default & Châteauvert, 2014).

Examining the effectiveness of PGS within an educational psychology context has been difficult, due to the lack of research. However, following a systematic search using specified search criteria, the studies by Jones (2004), Squires & Williams (2003) and Rawlings & Cowell (2015) were found to meet the inclusion criteria. To consider the collective findings of the studies the data must now be synthesised (Robson, 2002). The primary outcomes of the three studies were to evaluate PGS within an EPS. As highlighted in section 3.17, there appeared to be methodological limitations in all three studies. Despite this, there is some consensus between the three studies promoting that PGS can lead to a range of positive outcomes and might, therefore, be an effective way of supporting EPs within an EPS. There are many reported benefits of PGS including a shared expertise, (Frederickson, Osborne & Reed, 2004) and feeling supported by colleagues (Boyle et al., 2011) being open and receptive to different viewpoints (Proctor, 2008).

Despite this, the lack of representation of PGS evaluation studies and case studies highlights the need for more rigorous longitudinal designs to be used to determine the effectiveness of PGS.

3.19 Aims of research

This study has the dual purposes, (i) to explore the EPs' views of PGS within an EPS and the unique contribution is, (ii) to add to PGS literature, through exploring inhibiting and enabling contexts and mechanism and how these may have an impact on the outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

The current study aims to further explore the findings of Jones (2004), Squires & Williams (2003) and Rawlings & Cowell (2015) studies, by recognising and seeking to explore the EPs' views and perceptions of PGS. To fill the gaps and add to existing PGS literature, the following Research Questions (RQs) will be answered:

1. How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?
2. How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?
3. In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?

4. How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional or personal level?

In the next chapter, I will progress to discuss how this evaluation addresses the research questions, underlying methodological assumptions and methods. Both the aims and research questions determined the choice of methodology.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS, METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Chapter overview

The chapter begins by outlining the research, aims, and questions. An overview of the underlying philosophical perspective and a critical realist view of social science is delineated. In the first part of this section I will discuss the methodological orientation and provide a rationale for choosing RE as the methodological approach (RE is also discussed in Chapter 2). In the latter part of this chapter, I will discuss the research tools used, procedure, data collection and analysis. I will then progress to explain how the RE research design was conducted across three phases, the RE cycle procedure and the different stages I utilised the data collection methods (semi-structured interviews and Focus Group (FG) and data analysis (Thematic Analysis, Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, an in-depth discussion regarding the reliability and validity of the research is presented.

4.1.1 Purpose

The overall purpose of this research study is practical as I aim to explore, 'what works and for whom, and under what circumstances? (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). I aim to speculate tentative theories, explain the context and mechanisms that might support or inhibit PGS within an EPS. However, I view theories as contributory, as they may offer workable explanations of PGS within an EPS.

4.1.1.2 Aim and research questions

The main aim of the current study is to evaluate the input of PGS within an EPS. This research study seeks to inform practice by answering the four key research questions outlined below:

1. How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?
2. How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?
3. In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?
4. How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional or personal level?

How data was gathered to answer each research question is outlined in Table 4.1; a visual representation of data sources is provided Figure 4.1.

Table 4.1: Overview of data gathered to answer each research question

Research Questions	What data was gathered?	How was the data gathered?
RQ1(Phase 1) How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?	Information from the EPs in relation to their initial views and perceptions of PGS. Information from the EPs initial views and perceptions regarding the Contexts and Mechanisms that may promote/inhibit PGS within an EPS. Information from the EPs initial views and perceptions regarding their personal/professional outcomes that they hoped to achieve.	Initial semi-structured interviews with EPs (see Appendix 4); developed by the researcher. Focus group (see Appendix 4.
RQ2(Phase 3) How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?	Information about the PGS model, structure and overall process of PGS. Information from the EPs as to why they thought this.	Final semi-structured interviews with EPs (see Appendix 4); developed by the researcher.
RQ3(Phase 3) In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?	Information of the context, mechanisms that promoted/inhibited the use of PGS within an EPS. Information from the EPs regarding their explanations of why the systems acted the way that they did.	Final semi-structured interviews with EPs (see Appendix 4); developed by the researcher.
RQ4(Phase 3) How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional or personal level?	Information of the professional outcomes that EPs experienced. Information of the personal outcomes that EPs experienced. Information about how the EPs viewed and experienced PGS? Cross referencing information from the EPs initial perceived thoughts and outcomes of PGS. Information from EPs about what they did/did not value about PGS.	Final semi-structured interviews with EPs (see Appendix 4); developed by the researcher. Conversations, reports and emails initiated by EPs in relation to PGS (see Appendix 5).

Figure 4.1: Visual representation of data sources used to answer the research questions
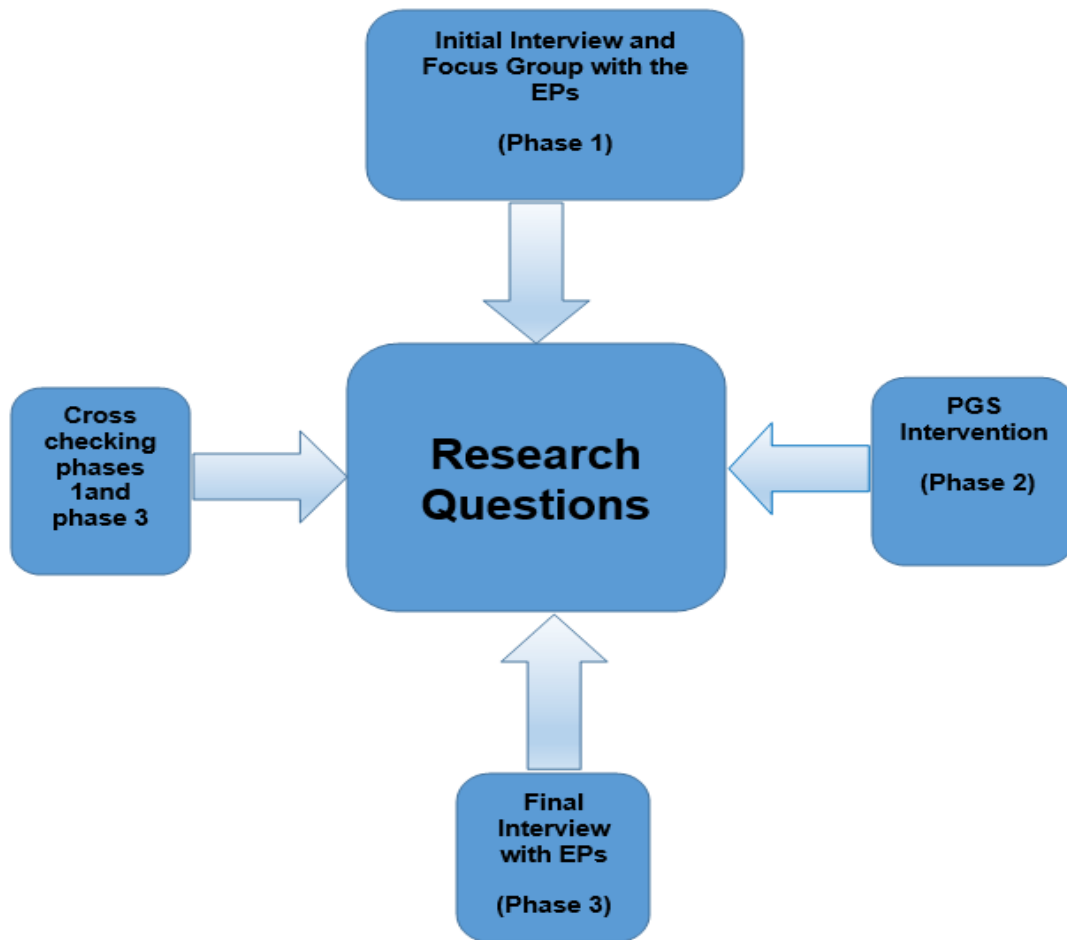
4.1.1.3 Time line and organisation of study

The organisation of the research study is outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Time line and organisation of the research activity

Date	Research Activity
November 2012 to April 2013.	Preparation I had previously conducted a pilot study evaluating PGS with Early Intervention Workers (EIWs) and their manager. The purpose and rationale of the pilot study was to trial the measures and to identify potential difficulties in administration and/or analysis of the data. I also practiced coding Context, Mechanism, Outcome Configurations (CMOCs) from the findings (see Appendix 6).

August 2013 to July 2014.	Background reading. Thesis proposal, ethics approval. Presentation of thesis proposal to panel. Literature review.
January 2014 to March 2014.	<u>Participant recruitment</u> I outlined the proposal of the PGS study with colleagues from the EPS. I conducted INSET training on PGS and created training materials. Information sheets and consent forms were handed out and emailed to prospective participants (EPs). Consent was gained and I provided EPs with information regarding their right to withdraw from the study. Information and consent was gained regarding the audio recording and how the data will be transcribed, used, stored, etc.
March 2014 to August 2014	<u>Preparation</u> I created questions for semi-structured interviews and focus group. I piloted the semi-structured questions and focus group questions with two counsellors who had attended a peer support group. I conducted background reading, i.e., how to organise a focus group, reading research books, Thematic Analysis, Realistic Evaluation studies and up-dated the literature review. I organised meetings with the research assistant.
July 2014	Ethical approval.
August 2014	<u>Data Gathering</u> Participants selected (EPs). Dates, times, structure and roles organised with the research assistant.
September 2014	RE overview/training.
September 2014	Initial semi-structured interviews were conducted with the EPs.
September 2014	Initial semi-structured interviews were analysed.
September 2014	A focus group was conducted with the EPs. The purpose of the focus group was to seek a consensus of the data gathered in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2009).
September 2014 to April 2015	PGS intervention.

April 2015	Final semi-structured interviews conducted with the EPs. Researcher and research assistant practiced coding Contexts (C), Mechanisms (M) and Outcomes (O). A coding manual was developed (see Appendix 6).
September 2014 to July 2015	<u>Data analysis</u> Transcription of the initial semi-structured interviews and a thematic analysis of the data collected. Transcription of the focus group and thematic analysis of the data collected. Triangulation of data occurred. Transcription of the final semi-structured interviews and a thematic analysis of the data collected. The data analysis demonstrated a consensus therefore a second focus group was not deemed to be necessary. *To promote inter-rater reliability the researcher and research assistant cross-checked transcriptions, coding and themes.*
July -September 2015	<u>Research Findings</u> Context (C) Mechanisms (M), Outcomes (O) Configurations (CMOCs) and themes and programme specifications presented to EPs.
October 2015 to April 2016	Delay due to work commitment.
August 2014 to November 2016	Write up
December 2016	Submission of final thesis

4.2 Methodology and Methods

I will first begin by defining the term 'methodology' as it can often be confused with the term 'methods'. Appleton (2009) proposed that:

> *'Methodology is the rationale and philosophy underpinning the study design and its execution, including the researcher's ontological or epistemological perspective and method, is a specific data collection and analysis technique, such as systematic reviews, surveys or focus group.' (p. 20)*

4.2.1 Methodological Orientation

In the drive to promote evidence-based practice, researchers are not only required to reflect and discuss the quality of the chosen research method but also consider the

influence of their epistemological perspective (Fox, 2003). Research carried out in social settings can be strongly influenced by the paradigm, belief system adopted by the researcher (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

When considering different methodological approaches and, when designing a piece of research, it is important to consider the underlying epistemological and ontological positions that underpin the study. This helps to explain the rationale and focus of the study, as well as the preferred means of data collection, design sample, and methods for data gathering and analysis. Green & Thorogood (2009) indicate that, employing theoretical perspective in research informs the research questions, how the researcher intends to address them plus the transparency and reliability of research findings.

However, in contrast, Patton (2002) argued that theoretical positions should not be the key motivators for research. However, it is necessary to consider which theoretical approach and methods are most appropriate in terms of 'fitness for purpose' for the research design and methodology. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) proposed that:

> *'The purpose of the research determines the methodology and design of the research.'* (p.73)

4.2.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Lincoln & Guba (1985) acknowledged the human desire to make sense of the world as a historical endeavour. Individuals adopt a set of systematic belief systems (theory) and methods to make sense of the world; this is termed a *'paradigm'* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This guides our belief systems, our thought patterns (thinking), the way we do things (actions), and more formally establishes a set of practices.

There are basically two ways of conceiving social reality, subjectivism or objectivism, both underpinned by explicit and implicit assumptions (Cohen et al., 2011). There are different ways of viewing the world and researchers have, "commitments to particular versions of the world (ontology) and ways of knowing that world (epistemology)" (Usher, 1996, p.13).

Ontology is the philosophical study of existence and focuses on the nature of reality and how reality is defined (Cohen et al., 2011; Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska & Creswell, 2005). A critical realist perspective would claim that there are different types of 'things' in the world that exist: the real, the actual and the empirical. In research, the question that drives ontology is 'what is there to know?' and ontological stances can be explained as realist or relativist (Willig, 2008). Realists believe that there is only one true

reality whist relativists believe that multiple constructed realities exist (Ponterotto, 2005). It appears that the fundamental belief within realist ontology is the existence of a 'real world', which exists interdependent of our interpretations of it. However, the way we interpret things daily will influence our actions, which in turn can influence reality. Personal experience, culture and history are not static (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Epistemology is described as what we, '…regard as appropriate knowledge about the social world' (Bryman, 2008, p.4). A researcher's epistemology viewpoint and position has implications for the design of their study as it often determines the type of information sought and the methods of acquiring it. Epistemology attempts to consider how we come to know realities (Cohen et al., 2011) whilst also considering the validity and reliability of claims of knowledge (Willig, 2008). Burrell & Morgan (1979), in Cohen et al., (2011) suggest that depending on the epistemological assumptions held, researchers subscribe to a positivist and interpretivist (anti-positivist) paradigm.

Positivists assume that there is one true reality that is measurable (Ponterotto, 2005) and maintain that the world is made up of structures and objects that have cause–effect relationships with one another (Willig, 2008). Cohen et al., (2011) explain that a positivist approach is based on empiricism and the testing of hypotheses based on the manipulation of isolated variables or outcomes. Cohen et al., (2011) further report the following criticisms of the positivist approach such as, it does not account for how participants experience and represent the world, it overly emphasises the quantification and computation of data leading to misleading representations of human life. The positivist approach is appropriate to experimental design as it regards human behaviour as passive; it overlooks the individual's beliefs and subjective views.

However, the interpretivist view of the world would reject the methods of natural sciences, as it posits that reality is represented according to an individual's interpretation as they look through a more subjective lens (they often utilise, but not solely qualitative methodology). The paradigm discards the positivist approach that there are general universal laws that govern human behaviour. Criticisms of an interpretive methodology would argue that it does not offer sufficient rigour to the research, and suggest it is likely to be descriptive rather than explanatory. Cohen et al., (2000) stated:

> *'Just as positivist theories can be criticised for their macro-sociological persuasion, so interpretive and qualitative can be criticised for their narrowly micro-sociological persuasion' (p.27).*

4.2.1.2 Critical Realism

When considering my current epistemological position and general philosophical view of social research it was decided that a critical realism perspective would be taken. Layder's (1993) declaration of the focus on identifying causal mechanisms, makes evident an associative link between RE and critical realism epistemology.

Byng et al., (2005) stated that critical realism is often attributed to the works of Bhaskar (1975). Bhaskar (1978) claims that the social world is comprised of open systems which is predisposed to human influence. Human actions are constrained by social structures and behaviour (conscious or unconscious) depending on the structures (Cruikshank, 2003).

Critical realism paradigm accepts that a true reality exists (rather than multiple realities) and individuals seek some form of understanding in the world they live in (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, our human presence as researchers will always influence (directly or indirectly) what we seek to measure (Runes, 1942).

It is acknowledged that structures are also problematic as they are continually changing over time, consequently the social world in which we live in can only ever be viewed as transient in nature (Sayer, 2000).

I am aware that my approach to knowledge is one of many. I am also mindful that my own presence, interpretation, biases and interactions may influence (positively or negatively) my actions, which in turn can influence the reality of what I am trying to measure.

4.2.1.3 Axiology

Unlike positivists who maintain that there is no place for personal values in research (Ponterotto, 2005), critical realists acknowledge that they exist and propose that all research is imperfect. Axiology refers to the values, ideologies, principles and ethics of conducting research (Cohen et al., 2011).

Axiology also acknowledges that the researcher's personal/professional viewpoints, values and theories may influence every stage of the research e.g. planning stage, design, data analysis, interpretation and conclusion. Therefore, it is considered important to adopt a transparent approach and make explicit potential biases plus my role as an insider researcher.

4.2.1.4 My role as an insider researcher

I was aware that my position was different to the more traditional researcher role, were the researcher would possibly take an 'objective outsider' stance in studying subjects external to themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Robson (2002) used the term 'insider researcher' to describe projects where the researcher has a direct involvement or a connection with the research setting. I was aware of the risks of partisanship as I had a direct link to the EPS in which the study was conducted and the recruited participants are EP colleagues. Pawson (2006, p.6) stated that:

> '*to be both partisan and researcher is a bit like having one's cake and eating it.*'

Mercer (2007) outlines the pros and cons of 'insiderness' and concludes it is a 'double edged sword' as insiders enjoy free access and deeper rapport with the participants but they must also deal with their own pre-conceptions due to their shared history.

Some researchers acknowledge that insider/outsider researchers both have merits and shortcomings (Mercer, 2007). I am mindful of the many 'hats' that I may wear such as, my role as an EP and my position as a researcher and PGS facilitator. However, I am also mindful that being an 'insider researcher' within my workplace may offer some advantages. I will be able to overtly observe the application, process, development and evaluation of PGS. Robson (2002, p.382) states that,

> '...*it is increasingly common for researchers to carry out a study directly concerned with the setting in which they work.*'

I am conscious about the long-standing debates around the advantages and disadvantages of insider/outsider researcher. However, one of the main disadvantages of 'insider researcher' is the concept of validity due to the threat of objectivity and the lack of a true representation of the world (Kvale, 1996). Nevertheless, can there ever be complete objectivity in any research study? Anti-positivists suggest that complete objectivity is impossible and that researchers' biases threaten validity.

4.2.1.5 Objectivity/reflexivity

Robson (1993) suggests that there can be an aim to strive to approach objectivity through:

> '*…a commitment to look at contrary evidence (and) a determination to aim at maximum replicability of any study*' (p.65).

The threats to objectivity and the steps taken to control these threats are outlined overleaf:

- A commitment to look at conflicting evidence based on PGS research.

- I am fully aware that the consideration of the many variables that could affect the outcomes of PGS, including, for example, the skills of the group facilitator, the skills, knowledge and expertise of the group members, the size of the group, the dynamics of the group, the venue, the timing, the cases or issues brought for discussion, and so on. However, due to the number of variables related to each PGS session it is impossible to propose that PGS would necessarily be successfully replicated elsewhere. Throughout this study, I aim to provide a clear, transparent documentation of each step taken from the design stage, instruments used, and the collection of the raw data, coding, analysis of data, findings and conclusions.

I acknowledge that both a critical stance and reflexivity are of great importance and a fundamental aspect in the entire process of this study. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall (1994) suggest that reflexivity at the personal and professional level is the most appropriate way of gaining objectivity and external validity in qualitative research. This means the researcher should reflect upon his/her own bias and create conditions whereby the research can be replicated. Similarly, Pawson & Tilley (1997) encourage researchers to describe social programmes within an organising framework for similar social programmes to replicate.

Throughout the research process study, I kept a reflective diary as a form of social interaction (Hatton & Smith, 1995). I aimed to use the reflective diary as a tool to support a reflexive analysis of how I may influence the research process. Jasper (2005) suggests that reflective writing can be seen in a positive light and that it is central to the belief of learning from experience. By keeping a reflective diary, it can make visible the researcher's viewpoint which might otherwise be hidden. I am mindful that being involved in the design and implementation of PGS, my background interest in supervision as well as my values, preconceptions, and social identity (Willig, 2008) may shape the research approach. I am also conscious that I need to be constantly aware of my position as an insider researcher. Mauther & Doucet (1998) define researcher reflexivity as a situation where researchers are constantly:

> *'reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are in relation to our research respondents, reflexivity also means acknowledging the critical role we play creating, interpreting and theorising research data'* (p.121).

I acknowledge that reflexivity and ethical considerations should be well thought out and considered before any research study begins and throughout the study. Conducting

evaluation research without any intention to utilise the results or promote reflexivity would be pointless and a waste of time (Weiss, 1990). Researchers should always outline the practical significance of their research (BERA, 2004)

In the next section, I will discuss the research design, procedure, data collection and analysis.

4.3 Research design

This piece of research could be described as 'real world' research (Robson, 2002) as I aim to evaluate PGS within an EPS. To address the four research questions outlined in section 4.1.1.2. The research design was conducted across the three phases (outlined in Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: The overall structure of the design

Phases	Sources of data collection
Phase 1:	Data collection and analysis from the initial semi-structured interviews and Focus Group. Interpretation of the findings from phase 1.
Phase 2:	PGS Intervention
Phase 3:	Data collection and analysis from the final semi-structured interviews (after the eighth PGS session). Interpretation of the findings from phase 3. Qualitative- comparison of data collected in phase 1 and phase 3. Proposed PGS programme specifications.

4.3.1 RE as the selected methodological framework

A range of potential methodologies was considered for the current study such as, 'Action Research' (Stenhouse, 1975; Zambo, 2007), 'Case Study' (Yin 2009) and 'Grounded Theory' (Strauss & Corbin, 2008), RE was selected as I did not just want to find out about the process or outcomes of PGS, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of PGS in relation to what works for whom and under what circumstances (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The RE framework was also selected as it can improve stakeholders (EPs) knowledge and practice (Timmins & Miller, 2007). The tenet of RE is to understand what makes an intervention work, for whom, how and under what circumstances? RE aims to highlight the mechanisms (ideas and opportunities) that cause outcome patterns (whether a programme

works or not) and within which context (social and cultural conditions). This is represented as context (C) and mechanism (M) and Outcome (O) or CMO configuration (outlined in Chapter 2). RE was therefore considered to be useful as it involved the development of programme specifications and sought to uncover the optimal context needed to fire mechanisms and produce intended outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

I am not expecting the RE design to be an easy process. I am aware, amidst a dynamic complex system of the, *'tortuous pathways which a successful programme has to travel'* (Pawson et al., 2004, p.31).

A RE design can either employ a quantitative or qualitative research method. Maluka, Kamuzora, SanSebastian, Byskov, Ndawi, Olsen & Hurtig (2011) stated that RE has a predisposition towards utilising qualitative methods.

To answer the research questions outlined in section 4.2., it was considered important to fully explore the EPs' perceptions, views and reflections of PGS. As a result, I did not perceive quantitative methods to be appropriate as it would assume that perceptions, ideas, concepts and attitudes for enquiring about the social world are static rather than a process. Also, quantitative methods focus on predetermined operational variables, which would narrow the parameters of the subject and destroy valuable data linked to the social world (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Pawson & Tilley (1997) state that whatever the method or choice it should be, "carefully tailored" to match the research purposes and process.

### 4.3.1.1 The Realistic Evaluation Cycle

RE offers a methodological process and is described as a 'realist evaluation cycle' resulting in evaluations being part of an on-going procedure of programme design and improvement (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey & Walshe. (2004), this is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Matthews (2003), Timmins & Miller (2007) state that realistic evaluations provide a very useful framework for the development of evidence base for EPs. Timmins & Miller (2007) offered an additional synopsis of the activities that occur during each stage of a cycle of RE:

   ➢ The programme theory is based on a review of the relevant literature research and expert/practitioner knowledge. Initial programme specification is derived from

programme theory, which then maps onto the programme in terms of perceived or presumed Cs, Ms and Os;

➢ Hypotheses are then derived from the initial programme specification;

➢ The evaluation design and the related data collection methods, evoked by the hypotheses, are implemented and researchers aim to check whether the programme is working as predicted or anticipated;

➢ How the findings highlight how the programme or intervention might be modified or inform replications.

Figure 4.2: The realistic evaluation cycle (adapted from Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p85)
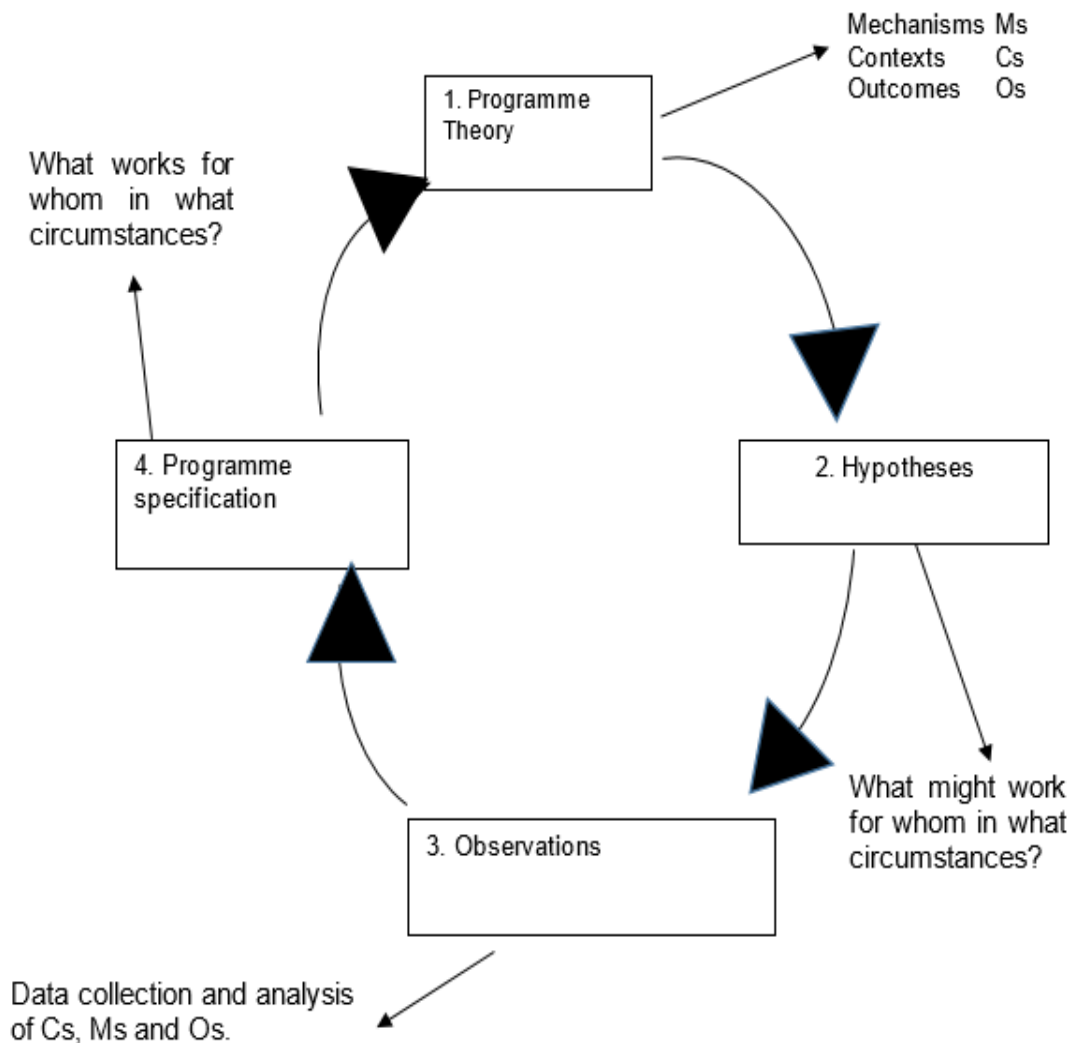
The cycle begins with the development of propositions of Programme Theories (stage 1) from the participants involved in the programme, about what will work for whom, in what circumstances, and what outcomes would they expect or perceive? This also includes

generating ideas about which contextual factors are likely to be important, considering potential mechanisms and deciding on which outcomes should be the focus of inquiry. The programme theories may be shaped by academic literature, policy document reviews, stakeholders/practitioners previous experience, existing ideas about similar programmes, psychological theories or 'folk wisdom' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 104). Through dialogue with the EPs I aimed to gain the EPs' initial understanding and perceptions of PGS, the kinds of contexts PGS would operate in; and their final thoughts and perceptions of PGS. I hoped to explore the contextual issues to understand how they relate to the mechanisms to produce outcomes. The data findings may lead to the acceptance or rejection of some theories (shaped as 'generative causal propositions' or CMO configurations) resulting in particular hypotheses (stage 2) involving the identification of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes that promote or inhibit the programme theory (EPs knowledge and their existing evidence base of PGS might suggest potential mini programme theories that relate the various contexts or the multiple mechanisms which operate to produce the different outcomes). Observations (stage 3) might include a range of data collection methods, to interrogate the hypotheses. The next stage focuses on the programme specification (stage 4). This involves the assessment and interpretation of the analysis regarding the intervention working or not working in specific contexts. The findings from the research then feeds back into further theoretical development, which includes revising accounts of the interactions between mechanisms, contexts and outcomes. Through the exploration of how CMO configurations play out within PGS, tentative programme theories are then proposed in relation to what works for whom under what circumstances? In contrast, which is just as important, it may explain to some extent the many situations in which an intervention (PGS) fails to achieve the anticipated outcomes or benefits (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Finally, the findings (stage 4) are then used to revise the programme theories or initial CMO configurations and to build an explanation of the intervention (programme specifications).

Pawson and Tilley (1997) further explain that the difference between an RE cycle and other forms of research is, "a matter of content rather than form" (p.84). During the different phases in this study I aim to complete circuits of the realistic evaluation cycle; outlined in section 4.7.1. I acknowledge that I do not know everything or have not 'learnt' all there is to know about RE or PGS. I hoped to uncover and gain insight of the EPs' initial perceptions and insights (to consider plausible CMO configurations) towards the implementation of PGS with an EPS. I also hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the implications of PGS within an EPS, uncovering which parts worked or did not work, for whom and why?

'Only where we know what precisely it is that we are studying can we reach into the toolkit for the appropriate instrument' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.159).

4.3.1.2 Participants and the context of the study

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) provides the context of the study. At the time of this study, the sample of participants reflected the composition of the EPS: four full time equivalent main grade EPs, one main grade EP 0.4, one Senior EP and the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP). All EPs agreed to take part in the study; they were actively sought and recruited through purposive sampling (Thomas, 2009). The selection of participants was also based on the EPs volunteering and their overall commitment at the time. I knew the participants recruited, as they were colleagues with whom I worked. It is acknowledged that this could be a weakness of the research design as participants may say or give answers that they thought I wanted to hear (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). To increase the validity and reliability of responses given, I emphasised to all the EPs that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in hearing their views and experiences of PGS. No incentives were offered for participation.

I realise that the decision to include the senior EP and the PEP may indicate an uneven power differential, which is not the position recommended by the authors of key supervision texts such as, Scaife (2009) and Hawkins & Shohet (2006). It was a consensus decision made by the main grade EPs that the Senior EP and PEP should be given an equal opportunity to participate in PGS. An initial meeting took place before the implementation of PGS to discuss the form PGS would take, e.g. how it would be employed, PGS ground rules and contract (outlined in Appendix 7). Also, to reinforce the non-hierarchal status and equality within the group, it was agreed and deemed important that I would now refer to all the PGS members as EPs.

Stakeholder engagement is recognised for ensuring the effectiveness and practicability of research (Cohen et al., 2011). I was mindful that it was essential for initial discussions to take place regarding the purpose and structure of the research. It was identified that whilst EPs had some prior knowledge of PGS they also had their own unique perceptions about the approach.

4.4 Data collection: research instruments

4.4.1 Pilot Study

I had previously conducted a pilot study evaluating PGS with Early Intervention Workers (EIWs) and their manager. The purpose of the pilot study was to trial the measures and to identify potential difficulties in administration and/or analysis of the data. I also practiced coding CMOCs from the findings (Appendix 8). Implications from the pilot study were used to inform the current study and the following adaptations are outlined in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Implications from the pilot study

Pilot study (implications)	Adaptations made for the study
It was highlighted by the EIWs that PGS should be underpinned by a clear and structured model. EIWs also highlighted the usefulness of not only recording case discussions in a structured format but to also note the questions being asked by the group members. The questions were considered useful during the reflection and case formulation process.	In the current study, I decided to employ an adaptive version of the Interactive Framework of Problem Solving (Monsen, Graham, Frederickson & Cameron, 1998) as a recording tool, during the case presentation, discussions and formulation. The EPs questions were also recorded during the PGS process.
I was aware of the potential for distortion in which an insider researcher may alter the research process and findings. I found that the reflective log was central to my role as an insider researcher as it heightened my awareness of potential influences on information.	It was decided at the beginning of the study to keep a reflective diary. I jotted down what I considered to be interesting observations during each stage to support transparency and reflectivity.
I noted that some of the sub themes could not be classified or grouped neatly together into meta-theme categories. During the data mapping exercise, some of the themes overlapped according to the context. Themes sometimes appeared to fit into more than one meta-theme category.	I decided in the present study that it would be invaluable to have a second researcher, especially to support the reliability of data coding and data analysing stage.
I noted that the Focus Group (FG) questions and probes could have been worded more explicitly to answer the key aims and the research questions.	In the present study, I decided to ensure that all the interview and FG questions reflected the four research questions and underpinned the general aims of the study.

The pilot study research design and the data collection methods were similar to this present study. In the pilot study, I did not employ a RE framework, nor did I generate CMO configurations. After hearing about RE from my EP colleagues and reading the book 'Realistic Evaluation' by Pawson & Tilley (1997) it enthused me to adopt a RE framework for this present study.

4.4.1.1 Main research study

As this study is working on different levels, e.g. it involves both summative (the effects of PGS, both enabling and inhibiting) and formative ('what' is going on?) (Robson, 2002). I required data gathering tools that would address and capture both types of data.

For this research study, the form of two (initial and final) semi-structured interviews and a Focus Group (FG) were employed as a means for collecting data. I acknowledge that research carried out in social settings can be informed by different methodological approaches and that other data collection methods could have been utilised in this study, such as Likert scaling questions, telephone interviews or questionnaires. I ruled out following a highly-structured questionnaire, as any exploration of questions would have been problematic. In gathering the data, every effort was made to obtain sufficient information to respond to the research questions.

The initial semi-structured interviews were conducted four weeks prior to PGS commencing and the FG was conducted two weeks after the initial semi-structured interviews. The final semi-structured interviews were arranged with each EP and they were conducted one week preceding the eighth PGS session. All the semi-structured interviews were conducted over a one-week period.

4.4.1.2 Preparation and development of the semi-structured interviews and focus group questions

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured questions were carefully and thoughtfully prepared to translate the research questions into the semi-structured interview questions (outlined in Appendix 4). I devised the questions myself and then liaised with the research assistant. A 'commonly used question sequence' was followed, to provide the initial framework (Robson, 2002). Open, non-directive questions were used at the beginning of the interview to help build rapport, encourage reflection and to respond freely and provide detailed information (Kumar, 1999). Questions were chosen which were easy to talk about, and elicited

spontaneous thoughts among participants (Finch & Lewis, 2003). The questions were designed to elicit the features of PGS (context, mechanisms and outcomes).

Qualitative measures, such as semi-structured interviews were considered well suited to this study as PGS phenomena operates in a continual process of change as is conducted within an 'open system'. I thought by adopting quantitative measures I would lose the detail, intensity, subtlety, ethical judgement and relevance related to qualitative research (Shaw, 1999).

The overall emphasis was placed on interrogating and seeking to understand the EPs perceptions and theories of PGS whilst remaining open to the possibilities of finding additional CMOCs. The semi-structured interview design allowed:

- greater flexibility to explore in depth the meaning conveyed by the EPs in relation to the research questions;
- interview schedule questions to be pre-determined in the order in which they would be asked, (but they could be varied and involve further explanations, probing and clarity sought as appropriate from the interviewer (Robson, 2002));
- the wording of the questions to be carefully chosen to avoid leading questions that may have influenced the EP responses. Denscombe (1998, p.136) stated that an advantage of interviews is that they may help to control the threats to the validity; direct contact at the point of the interview means that any data can be cross checked with the EP for accuracy and relevance.

However, I was also aware of the possibility of a power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee. Mishler (1986) stressed that the interviewer should go beyond empowering the interviewee but they should also be aware of the interviewee's active role in the interview.

Focus Group

The rationale for using FG was to allow EPs time to discuss, clarify or revise the potential themes generated from their initial semi-structured interviews. A similar format to the semi-structured interview was followed for the FG discussions (Robson, 2002). I adhered to a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions which I had devised and liaised with the research assistant. Based on the EPs dialogue and responses to the questions, they were probed further allowing for clarification. A free conversation method was considered unsuitable for this study as it would have lacked structure and focus.

In recent years FGs have become increasingly popular as a qualitative research method of gaining perspectives on a variety of topics (Krueger & Casey, 2009) including education (Frederickson et al., 2004). FGs rely heavily upon group participation and interaction for a purpose (Morgan, 1997). Through careful planning, the group is led through a series of open-ended questions aimed to explore the personal views and opinions of the individuals (Krueger & Casey, 2009) without the fear of feeling judged (Hennink et al., 2011). The moderator is responsible for creating a conductive environment to guide the process without expressing opinion thus influencing individual or group views. Depending on the focus of the research, the process or structure may vary (Morgan, 1997). FGs have become an established tool in psychology research (Lunt, 1998; Akhurst & Kelly, 2006). Powell & Single, (1996, p.499) define a FG as:

> *'A group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research.'*

I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages of using a FG (outlined in Appendix 2). However, the main reason for choosing the FG design includes:

- FGs use group dynamics to facilitate discussions (Bowling, 2009).
- Participants who feel reluctant to express their views on an individual basis can discuss their opinions in a safe environment (Krueger & Casey, 2009).
- The usefulness in eliciting opinions and provoking participants to consider different opinions considering disclosures from others (Frey & Fontana 1991).
- The allowance for gathering individual and group views but it also allows the exploration as the reasons why such views or beliefs are held (Hammersley, 2002).
- Focus groups typically emphasise a theme or topic that is widely explored in depth and the participants respond to each other's views allowing more authentic responses (Bryman, 2008).

Overall, the FG was selected as it allows for interactive development and collaboration of ideas and themes to develop (Barbour, 2007). My aim was to explore and clarify themes arising during the semi-structured interviews. However, I also acknowledge and recognise the disadvantages of focus group methodology such as, FGs can create 'group think' (MacDougall & Baum, 1997), difficulties with a pre-existing group (Krueger & Casey, 2009) and the influence of social, conformity bias (Sherif, 1936; Kelman, 1958).

4.6 Procedure

4.6.1 PGS training event

To ensure the EPs knew their involvement in the research study I arranged a 'PGS' training event (outlined in Appendix 10) at a local Children's Centre. I also introduced the research study emphasising what the study would entail, how the interviews and FGs would be recorded, and expectations surrounding anonymity and confidentiality. Before this research study I considered it important to conduct a brief RE training session. Towards the end of the training session, I distributed consent forms along with an Information letter outlining the aims of the research study (outlined in Appendix 11). I also explained that I would give the EPs time to think about their participation and stressed that it was fine to say no. One week after the training event, all the EPs had verbally agreed to participate in the study and had signed the consent forms. I individually thanked the EPs and informed them that I would discuss the logistics and next steps at the 'Team Day' (one week later).

On the 'Team Day', I asked the EPs to reflect on the PGS training session. EPs were also asked to discuss the logistics of PGS and the ethical considerations in relation to PGS contracts and ground rules. I also encouraged the EPs to negotiate logistics; namely time, venue and frequency of PGS. I also stressed to all the EPs that any safeguarding concerns should be taken to 1:1 supervision and not brought to PGS. I also reiterated the importance of safeguarding concerns, ground rules and boundaries at the beginning of each PGS session.

At a team meeting, I presented the PGS draft contract and, as a collective group, the EPs jointly redrafted this, e.g. rewording phrases, moving sections, etc. The final PGS contract was distributed amongst the EPs (outlined in Appendix 7). The distinctive ethos of PGS was to provide a safe, supportive space for EPs to share their experiences, support colleagues and learn from one another, whilst still maintaining autonomy.

4.6.1.1 Semi-structured interview procedure

The semi-structured interview schedules were first trialled with two counsellors who had previously attended a peer support group (no significant changes were suggested or made to the original interview schedules following this pilot).

Before the initial and final semi-structured interview with each EP, I discussed pre-requisites such as, appropriate date, time, venues and methods of recording. Also, at the beginning of each interview an explanatory passage was read out referring to confidentiality, anonymity and the EPs' rights to stop the interview at any time if they no longer wished to participate.

The wording of the semi-structured interview questions was also carefully chosen to avoid leading questions. The semi-structured interview related to the four research questions. EPs were asked again at the end of the semi-structured interviews and FG to give consent for their summary data and quotes to be used in the write up stage of the research.

All seven EPs participated in the semi-structured interviews. They took place in a quiet room away from the office and lasted approximately 25 to 35 minutes. The first semi-structured interview was conducted before the PGS sessions and the final semi-structured interview was conducted after the eighth PGS session (they were undertaken between September 2014 and April 2015). Throughout all the interviews I adopted a conversational tone to obtain important insights (Yin, 2009) and for rival explanations to be obtained.

4.6.1.2 Focus group procedure

EPs were first informed of how long the FG process would last. To involve everyone straight in the discussion I initially started off by asking the EPs to comment on the EPS 'Team Day', "Can you first tell me what you thought of the training event?" Krueger & Casey (2009) noted:

> *'the longer it is before somebody says something in a group, the less likely he or she is to say something.'* (p.39)

During the FG process, I followed procedures that were in line with the guidance summarised by Reeves & Hedberg (2003) for example, logistical requirements, group size, silences, body language, interview guide, collection of data and analysis of repeated themes. I also noted that it would be beneficial to observe the EPs seating arrangements to assist with identification of coding the EPs responses. I also kept monitoring the discussions were relevant to the aims (Krueger, 1994).

4.5.1.3 Data recording procedure

All the semi-structured interviews and FG were recorded onto a Dictaphone and contemporaneous notes were also made during the process. Audio recording of interviews

and FGs is considered necessary because it reduces the risk of loss of valuable data (Coombes, Allen, Humphrey & Neale, 2009). Additionally, digital recordings capture the data to ensure accurate transcriptions.

As a step to control for internal validity I allowed EPs time to reflect on what they had said along with my interpretations of what they had said. At the end of the semi-structured interviews and FG the EPs were asked again to give consent for their summary data and quotes to be communicated in the research study. EPs were informed that the data would be stored under password protection in a secure sector and accessible only to the researcher. EPs were thanked for their time and interest. Additionally, they were informed that they would be offered access to their transcripts and the final thesis.

4.6 Data analysis

4.6.1 Research assistant

To help with the validity and reliability of the coding process and data analysis. I made use of a second researcher. I outlined the process of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I stressed the importance of cross checking the recordings, transcripts and coding procedures during the data analysis stage. Harrop, Foulkes, & Daniels (1989) highlighted that, no one can know how accurate recordings are, but with two researchers, it is possible to detect inaccuracy in recordings and coding.

I was aware of the advantages and potential implications of a research assistant, such as a cross-disciplinary research assistant could have produced a range of disciplinary discourses, making the researcher and research assistant's role more complex and more fraught. However, the research assistant's background was in psychology, therefore she had knowledge of psychological theories and evidence based research procedures.

To ensure the division of labour was equitable and a non-hierarchal perspective between myself and the research assistant was impartial, we ensured pre-planned roles, responsibilities and agreed meeting times for critical discussions.

4.6.1.1 Thematic Analysis

I was aware of the different approaches for analysing qualitative data such as, Narrative Analysis or Discourse Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was noted that qualitative methods of data analysis rarely state how to analyse textual material, and as such, I found

there was no specific structure outlining the analysis of RE data (Tolson, McIntosh, Loftus & Cormie, 2005).

I decided to employ, 'Thematic Analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and I also undertook guidance and steps systematically outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001). The reason I chose to employ 'Thematic Analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in this study was down to the fact that it had more theoretical freedom and flexibility; it can also be employed in a critical realism perspective (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000). Furthermore, Thematic Analysis enables researchers to identify themes and patterns across the whole data set and it can also be used to interpret features and topics under investigation (Boyatzis, 1998). I am aware that thematic analysis does not subscribe to a theoretical framework, and that it can be used differently depending on the epistemological position of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According, to Miles & Huberman (1994; p.56), when the researcher is analysing data, s/he must remain, "mindful of the purposes of the study" and look at the data through a, "conceptual lens". In this study, my 'conceptual lens' was underpinned by critical realism and the RE methodological framework.

During the progression of thematic analysis, the process must be made transparent to the reader, so that a theoretical position can be deduced (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Ryan & Bernard (2000) and Miles & Huberman (1994) pointed out an underlying concern in using thematic analysis in that researchers may look for patterns or themes in the data. In contrast, Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis will provide a more detailed analysis of certain features of the data even if it does not provide a full description of the data. In their approach, Braun & Clarke (2006) also describe the active role of the researcher as it is the researcher's judgement to capture themes/patterns and something important about the data in relation to the RQs.

Qualitative researchers can adopt an inductive ('bottom up' way) or deductive approach ('top down' way) to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study made use of a mixture of inductive and deductive coding and theme development (Fereday & Muir-Cockrane, 2006). The rationale for employing this data-driven approach was that it allowed themes to emerge from data through the inductive coding approach whilst allowing CMO configurations to be central to the deductive analytical process. However, deductive approaches are often criticised due to potential biases (Robson, 2002). To reduce such biases and enhance reliability, inter-rater checks were conducted throughout the thematic analysis process.

4.6.1.2 Process of Thematic Analysis

Direction and guidance was taken from Braun & Clarke (2006), who supported the formation of the thematic networks. Attride-Stirling (2001) also presented similar phases as Braun & Clarke (2006). I discovered that it was much easier to amalgamate both their thematic analysis processes into basic themes, organising themes and global themes. Therefore, I used a combination of both approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006 and Attride-Stirling, 2001) to employ a robust methodological approach.

The research assistant and I transcribed verbatim all data generated from the semi-structured interviews and FG using a Microsoft Word processor. The transcribing of the data took a lot longer to compose as we had to repeatedly listen to all the recordings allowing familiarisation of raw data and time to immerse ourselves in the data. Transcripts were checked twice to ensure reliability. After this procedure, the research assistant and I followed the process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and basic themes started to evolve, they were grouped into organising themes and finally the organising themes were then grouped into a global theme that expressed the main message and metaphor conveyed by all themes. The global themes from the initial semi-structured interviews along with global themes from the FG were amalgamated and treated as one data source. Using the CMO coding manual (outlined in Appendix 6) the assistant researcher and I transferred the coded data into meaningful data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) by selecting the most commonly occurring mechanisms, context and outcomes onto a CMO template (outlined in Appendix 12). However, in order not to be too restrictive and to lose the richness of the data by using the exact CMO elements as codes, their descriptive features were used. For example, when considering codes for contextual issues, representations of context such as, PGS model and social conditions were used. Finally, CMO global themes and Initial Program Specifications (IPSs) were then developed to address RQ1 (outlined in Table 6.1).

Also, to ensure that the validity and the manageability of the data during the latter stages of analysis the CMO coding manual was continually referred to and revised throughout the coding process. Examples of qualitative Tables of Cs, Ms and Os can be seen in Appendix 12. The overall purpose of mapping out the CMOCs was to elicit and formalise the IPSs (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). It is important to highlight that each individual C, M, or O was not described by every EP as basic themes originated from text extracts from two or more EP interviews. Also, to ensure anonymity, data collected by EPs that could lead to their identification was taken out and replaced by a code. It was also agreed that once the

recordings were transcribed and examined for themes the data would be erased. The same procedure was followed for the data analysis of final semi-structured interviews. The phases of thematic analysis and how they applied to this research study is outlined in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Phases of Thematic Analysis adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006)

Steps	Process Undertaken
Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data:	Transcriptions: Data from the initial semi-structured interviews with the EPs were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Baxter & Jack (2008) suggested that the dependability of the data can be promoted through inter-rater reliability checks and this occurred in this study. The transcribed data was read twice by myself and the research assistant to gain an overview of the information, to begin to develop an idea of key messages conveyed and to allow familiarity of the data to be established. Relevant contexts, mechanisms and outcomes that appeared in each transcript were highlighted (see Appendix 12). Generating initial codes: The highlighted contexts, mechanisms and outcomes were given a code and then the codes were placed into a table under the respective column headings: context, mechanism, and outcome. A separate table was compiled for each individual EP interview.
Phase 2: Generating initial codes after applying a coding framework:	Transcripts from the EPs and FG were collated and emerging global themes were highlighted according to which RQ they could answer. Data codes were further organised and grouped according to the organisational process to which they referred, such as PGS model, time, commitment, etc. They were then organised under three rows Context (C), Mechanism (M) and Outcome (O). The CMO data was then amalgamated to form a single table of themes. (see Appendix 12). I presented the initial codes to the EPs, to check that the codes accurately represented their views.
Phase 3: Searching for and identifying themes:	CMOCs were checked against the original data (transcribed interviews). A sample of EPs were asked to check the generated CMOCs and a consensus was achieved. I reviewed the CMOCs in relation to EP perspectives and the research questions under consideration. Throughout the study, CMOCs were revised/redefined to accurately reflect meanings or themes evident within the whole data set. The CMOCs were then organised and developed into programme theories. Searching for and identifying themes: Salient, common or significant themes in the coded text segments were extracted and these similar themes were then recorded onto post-it notes (See Appendix 6 for photographic examples).

Phase 4: Constructing the thematic networks:	Theme development: Basic themes that conveyed a shared message were first grouped together then each cluster was considered resulting in the development of an organising theme. Organising themes were then grouped and then a global theme that portrayed the underlying message and metaphor conveyed by all themes was produced. Thematic network diagrams of clusters of themes were then produced. Attride-Stirling (2001) offer the following descriptions of each of these levels of themes: _Basic themes_: Lower order and the most basic themes derived directly from the text. When grouped together with other similar basic themes they produce organising themes. _Organising Themes_: These are described as middle order themes that summarise the principle message of basic themes and, together with other organising themes, produce a global theme. _Global themes_: These are the super-ordinate themes that encompass the main metaphor of the data and are described as "a concluding or final tenet'" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389).
Phase 5: Reviewing themes:	The general aim of grouping basic themes into organising themes and then global themes was that they all conveyed a similar message to produce a thematic network. Initial themes were cross checked to ensure all the themes genuinely did convey similar messages and encapsulate the overall message conveyed in the data set coherently.
Phase 6: Describe and explore the thematic network:	Initial codes (with quotes) were grouped under each basic theme and each basic theme was grouped under each organising theme. This allowed quotes to be collated that conveyed a similar message resulting in a summary of the analysis and findings to be made. The transcript of their individual interviews along with the coded summary of the context of mechanisms, context features and outcomes were shared with each EP.
Phase 7: Producing a report:	All the data was presented diagrammatically and an overview of programme theories generated and programme specification (outlined in Chapter 6, Table 6.4). Extract examples were then selected and findings were summarised (as presented in the Chapter 4). Findings were then linked to the RQs, propositions and relevant literature (as presented in the Chapter 6).

During the data analysis stage the research assistant and I became more familiar with the data and a shift from just describing the data using codes into identifying patterns and organising these patterns into themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) explain that:

'A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some kind of patterned response or meaning within the data set.' (p.88)

I will now explain the RE research design and how it was conducted across three phases. I will also explain the RE cycle framework procedure and the different stages I utilised the data collection methods (semi-structured interviews and FG) and data analysis (Thematic Analysis, Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.7 RE cycle procedure

4.7.1 Phase 1: Initial semi-structured interviews

Phase 1, concerns the underlying assumptions or perceptions about the intervention (PGS) and how it is presumably going to work (these are known as programme theories (Pawson & Tilley, 1997)). The programme theories are constructed using the most likely context, mechanism and outcome (CMO) configurations. The data gathered for this phase was first obtained from the perceptions of the EPs who had volunteered to take part in PGS.

During phase 1 of the study my starting point on the RE cycle (Figure 4.2) was at stage 4, 'Programme Specification'. After conducting the literature review I reflected upon the evidence and constructed possible 'CMOCs' for stage 1 (outlined in Appendix 9). This supports the construction of a 'Hypotheses' (stage 2) presumably how PGS is expected to work for whom and in what circumstances?). I progressed to stage 3, 'Observations', and conducted initial semi-structured interviews with the EPs. The data collected from the initial interviews with the EPs was then utilised by adopting a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) approach to identify the CMOCs. I then returned to stage 4, 'Programme Specification'. The process it outlined in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: First circuit on the realistic evaluation cycle
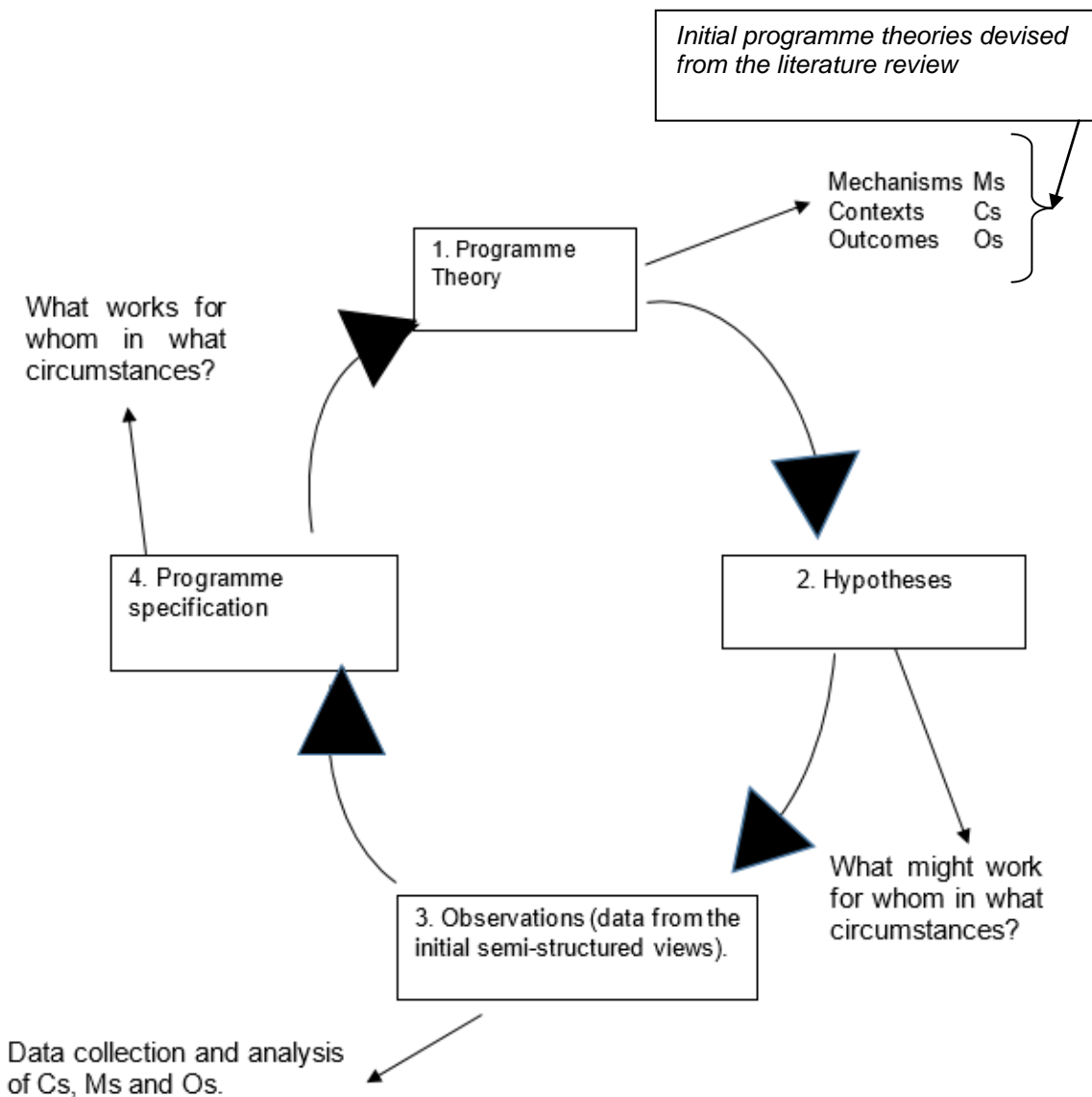
4.7.1.1 Phase 1: Focus Group

I then conducted a second circuit of the RE cycle (Figure 4.4) starting at stage 1, 'Programme Theory', then moving to stage 2, 'Hypotheses'. At stage 3, 'Observations' I used the data collected from the Focus Group to identify and revise the CMOCs before moving to stage 4, 'Programme Specification'.

Figure 4.4: Second circuit of the realistic evaluation cycle
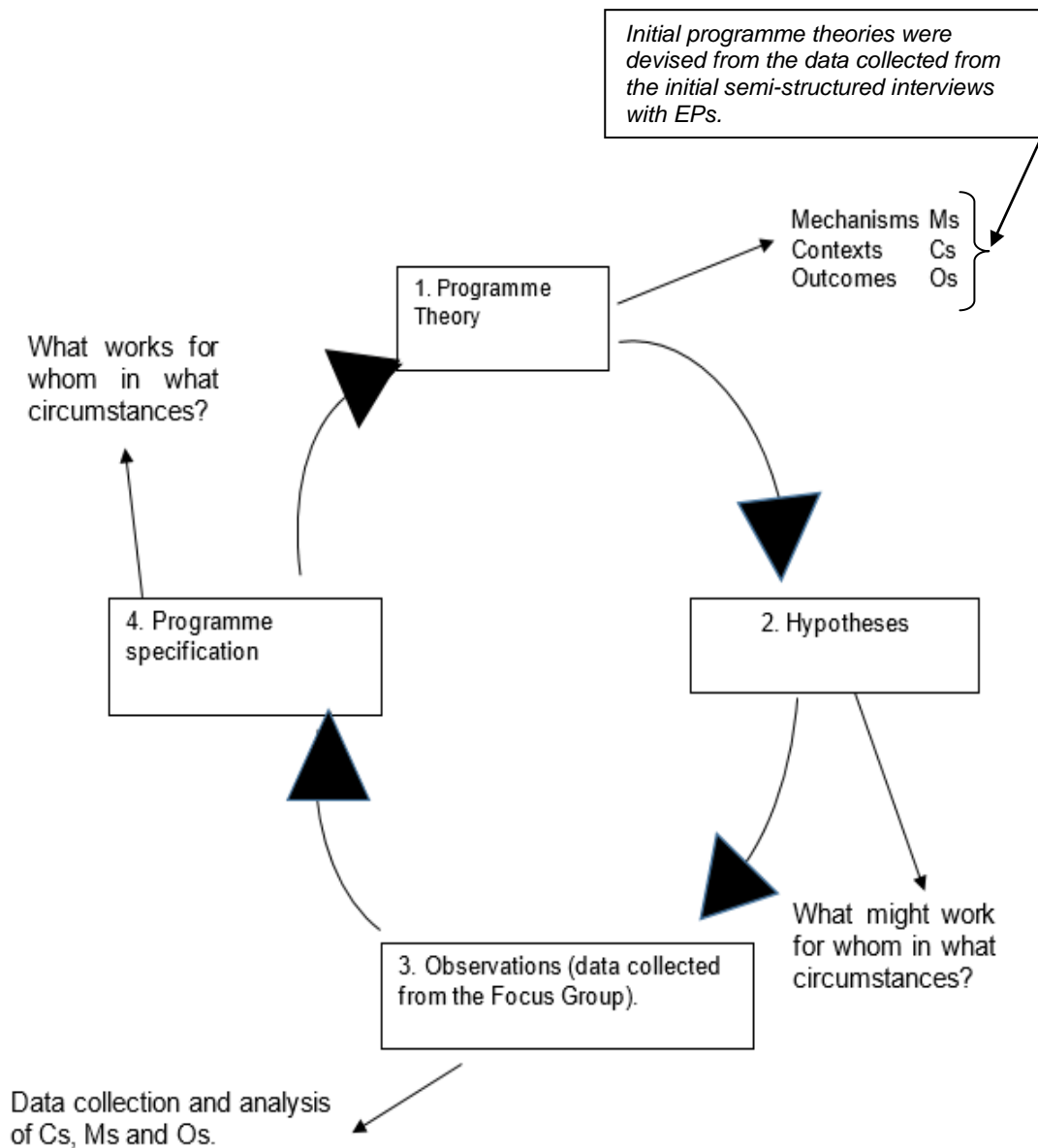
4.7.1.2 Phase 2: PGS Intervention

PGS was held once a month and the research study occurred from September 2014 to April 2015. After the eighth PGS session I conducted the final interviews with the EPs.

Phase 3: Final semi-structured interviews

I conducted a third circuit of the RE cycle (Figure 4.5) starting at stage 1, 'Programme Theory', moving to stage 2, 'Hypotheses'. At stage 3, 'Observations', I used the data collected from the final interviews with the EPs (again utilising thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006)) to refine and explain the CMO configurations and to check whether the implementation of PGS within an EPS supported or refuted the initial EPs predictions and

perceptions of PGS. I concluded by explaining the 'Programme Specification' of PGS within an EPS (What works for whom in what circumstances?).

Figure 4.5: Third circuit of the realistic evaluation cycle
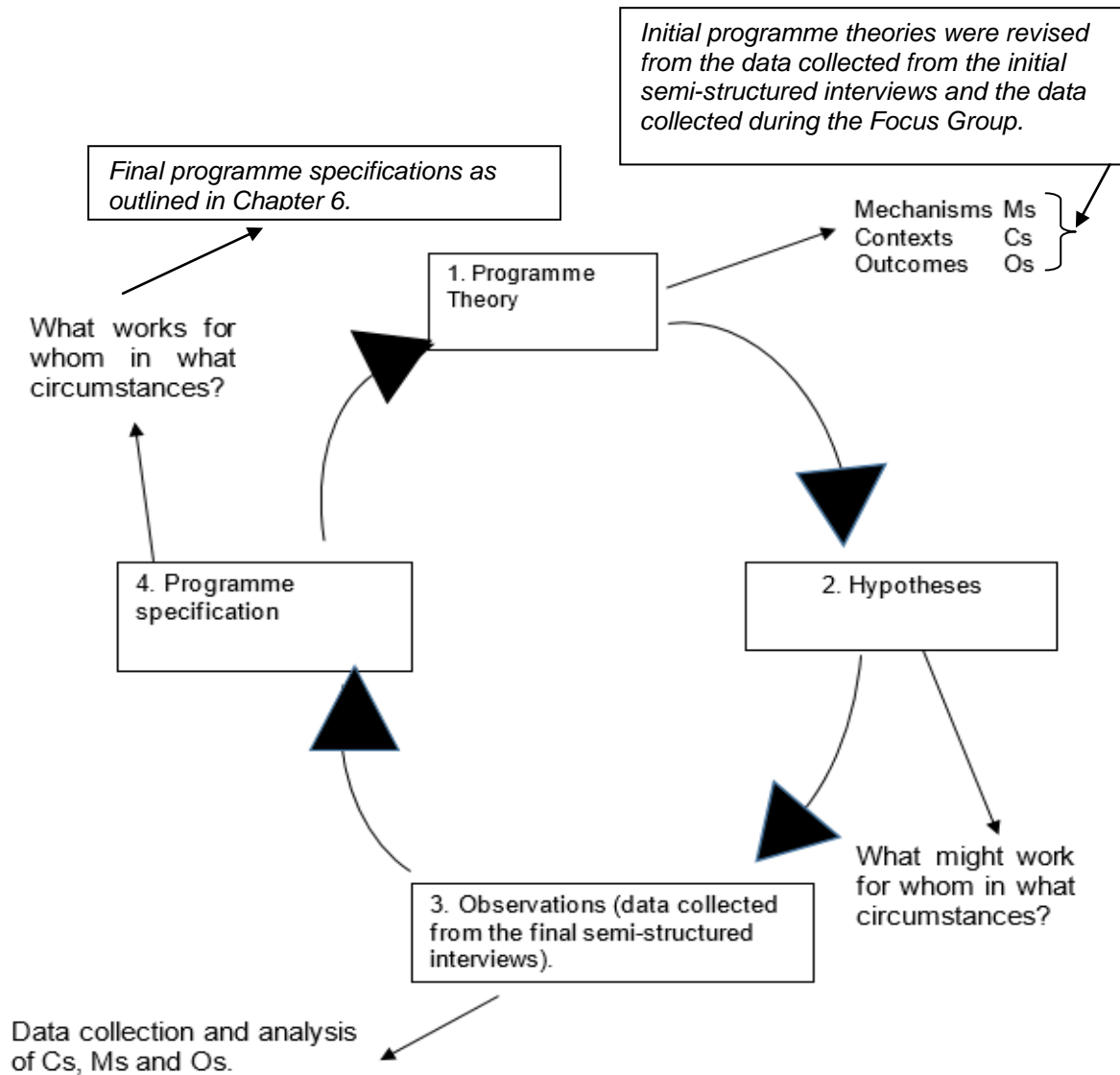
4.7.1.3 Summary

The iterative cyclic process advocated by RE enabled me to work with EPs to refine and analyse the process and proposed theories to underpin implementation of the programme PGS). This iterative cyclic process was also considered particularly useful, as PGS was a new resource for EPs to engage in.

4.8 Ethical considerations

I was aware throughout this research study of the ethical challenges and risks inherent when conducting research, including recruitment of participants, informed consent, the right to withdraw, reliability, validity, data collection and storage, monitoring standards and achieving confidentiality, etc. Opie (2004) stated:

> *'A useful acid test when considering methodologies and procedures is to ask yourself how you would personally feel if you or your children or your friends where 'researched' by such means. If you have any qualms whatsoever then you need to think very carefully about the morality of subjecting anyone else to them'* (p.25).

Professional standards and guidelines were maintained in this study to ensure participant's rights were protected as exemplified in the British Psychological Society (BSP) Code of Ethics and Conduct, (BPS, 2006) and the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC, 2012).

Ethical approval was applied to the School of Environment, Education and Development Quality Assurance team by completing the research, risk and ethics assessment (RREA) form and The School of Education (SoE) Ethical Approval Form. The study was considered as low risk and was approved by the ethics committee at the University of Manchester on 30.07.2014. Official channels to conduct this study at the EPS were obtained through the PEP and Assistant Director for Children's and Young People's Services (CYPS). The following ethical considerations were made.

4.8.1 Free and informed consent

The following issues of informed consent and confidentiality were considered in line with the guidance from the BPS (2006) 'Code of Ethics and Conduct'; BPS (1992) and 'Ethical Principles for Conducting research with Human Participants'.

EPs received the research information that outlined the purpose of the study in accordance with ethical principles, to ensure that individual EPs were given free and informed consent, participant information sheets and consent forms were distributed. EPs were also informed that if they did not wish to consent to the involvement this would in no way affect their relationship with the researcher, team members or senior management. Consent gained from the EPs to be interviewed was obtained by initial contact and via e-mail. The EPs chose to be interviewed individually and selected a convenient date, time and venue. The times were collated onto a timetable of dates, times and preferred venues. All the EPs

gave written consent for use of their transcript and interpretation of their transcript. This included the right to quote from transcripts. I also clearly reminded the EPs of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. All the interviews and the FG sessions were conducted in a non-threatening manner and all information was treated in the strictest confidence.

Jones (1996) puts forward a list of rights for research participants, such as the right to privacy, not to be harmed by research, the right to refuse to participate and withdraw.

4.8.1.1 Protection from harm

EPs were treated as co-researchers and care was taken to minimise the risk of any psychological harm. To ensure that each EP felt safe, respected and able to contribute to PGS, a contract was established highlighting a set of ground rules and boundaries. The ground rules were revisited at the beginning and end of each PGS session (outlined in Appendix 7). EPs were also debriefed at the end of each session, and if necessary, signposted to the appropriate supportive structures within the LA. After the FG, I informed EPs that they could also contact me should any concerns arise. Stress and harm seemed very unlikely for the reasons outlined above. Also, as requested by the EPs, the PGS sessions took place in a familiar setting away from the office.

The use of procedures that avoid harm were also utilised both for the researcher, research assistant and the EPs, e.g. to provide minimal disruption as possible the dates and times of the PGS sessions had been negotiated with the EPs. It was also agreed that should the researcher, research assistant or EPs face any distress or danger at any point the research will be stopped. Fortunately, this did not occur and the research commenced as planned.

4.8.1.2 Quality of research

The quality of any type of research has traditionally been judged by concepts and standards of validity, objectively and reliability. Historically, these standards have been underpinned by a positivist philosophy and quantitative experimental research. Therefore, this can pose a challenge for a critical realist researcher.

If measures claim to have good reliability then this would lead to the same results if repeated (Cohen et al., 2011). However, taking a critical realist stance it is acknowledged

that this could be problematic as structures are continually changing over time. Also, is it at all possible to obtain the same results due to individual differences?

In the current study, several strategies were implemented which attempted to control for threats to reliability such as, the consideration of participant error and participant bias (Robson, 2002). Participation error is associated with tiredness, certain steps were taken to control for this, e.g. EPs were given time during the data collection process without any pressures. As EPs, had volunteered to be involved in the study participant bias was an area that required careful consideration.

In addition to control for threats to reliability the data was checked and coded by two researchers. Steps were also taken to control for this threat to reliability through an individual verbal summary for each EP at end of the interview and FG. Yin (2009) defines reliability as:

> *'…demonstrating that the operations of a study, such as data collection procedures, can be repeated with the same results'* (p.34).

Banister et al., (1994) suggest that reliability is similar in a way to objectivity as it aims to reduce errors and biases. Therefore, he suggests that reliability is enhanced by good documentation of the processes followed so that the study could be replicated or repeated by another researcher. The following steps taken to control threats to reliability during the semi-structured interviews and FGs are outlined:

- At the beginning of each semi-structured interview and FG I clearly outlined the function of the interview structure and process to ensure all the EPs were clear of the reason for the semi-structured interviews and FG. The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually, and the FG was organised in their preferred context to help the EPs feel comfortable with the process.

- Questions were piloted with two counsellors who accessed a peer support group. The semi-structured interview schedule was devised to help maintain order and consistency of the interview. The questions were carefully phrased with prompts to ensure aspects were covered rather than to direct the EPs responses. Prompts for the interview schedule were written in and were used in a standard way to check understanding.

- Interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone and transcribed in full to avoid selective recording of data. The recordings were transcribed at the earliest opportunity. Two researchers checked the transcriptions and followed a structured approach whilst coding the data. The transcripts of interviews were shared with a sample of EPs to

comment on and check for accurate interpretation of context, mechanisms and outcomes.

- A database was made, holding all the raw data collected. Yin (2009) suggests that this is a way of increasing reliability and will allow for independent inspection should it be required. Using a database also allows the researcher to track and organise data (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

To ensure reliability of methods and practice I aim to be thorough, careful, transparent by providing a step-by-step 'audit trail' as proposed by Robson (2002, p.174).

4.8.1.3 Validity

Robson (1993) defines validity as being:

> *'...concerned with whether the findings are 'really' about what they appear to be about'* (p.66).

Yin (2009) outlines several tactics that can be applied to establish the quality of designs and suggests the consideration of three types of validity:

- Construct validity: referring to whether the correct operational measures have been selected for the concepts being studied. Yin (2009) notes that construct validity is particularly challenging as subjective judgements from individuals are used to collect the data.
- Internal validity: referring to whether the intervention has caused the outcome. Yin (2009) suggests that internal validity has more relevance to experimental design than exploratory studies. Questions relating to internal validity are worth noting, otherwise, research can produce little more than descriptive accounts (Silverman, 1993).
- External validity: referring to whether the findings can be generalised beyond the research. This can be particularly challenging as explained by Yin (2009) who gives emphasis on analytical generalisation where the researcher is: "…striving to generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory" (p.36). Generalisation was not the underlying principle in this study. As outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.5, reflexivity of the personal and professional level is another way of gaining external validity in qualitative research. The reflexivity of personal bias can help to create conditions whereby research could possibly be replicated. Pawson & Tilley (1997) encourage researchers to move away from trying to create universal programme theories but move towards the description of a social programme that can be used as a foundation when organising frameworks for future similar social

programmes. I am aware that the process of abstraction and defining, which are mechanisms, contexts and outcomes, is inherently subjective, since it involves the researcher identifying potential factors and then interpreting to which category it applies. It can be difficult to distinguish contexts and mechanisms (Timmins & Miller, 2007). I aimed to achieve reliability and validity by regularly checking the 'Themes' were appropriately coded and categorised and relevant to the research questions. The research assistant helped to promote inter-rater reliability during the coding and data reduction stages. It is deemed important that a high level of detail of the context, mechanisms and context are identifiable for discussion.

Table 4.6: Threats to validity and steps taken to control

Types of validity	Steps taken to control
Threats to construct validity	*Descriptive particulars that exist in practice?* Employing two individual interviews with seven EPs and not relying on one single view as in a case study design. Collecting data evidence to demonstrate where the descriptive particulars have been derived from. Research assistant and EPs reviewing the draft research report.
Threats to internal validity	*Knowledge of the culture?* The researcher attended all the PGS sessions to be familiar with the PGS model and the process. The researcher understands EP role and the structures and culture of the EPS. *Why engage in PGS? The changing population within PGS?* It was outlined during the PGS training session the reasons why some team members may choose not to participate in PGS. This option was also included on the information and consent form, interview schedule and FG. All the EPs who participated in PGS were interviewed and attended the focus group. The same measures were administered in the same way for all participants, e.g. semi-structured interviews and FG. EPs allowed multiple perspectives to be gained on the impact of the PGS approach. *How to keep the realistic interview schedule consistent?* All the interviews with the EPs were held over a short period (one week), to promote internal validity. *Framework analysis of the interview and FG transcripts?* A research assistant supported the examination of the coding process and thematic analysis.

| | To support reliability, the interviews and FG data were transcribed within a week so that the interviews and FG were still fresh in my mind. Once checked for accuracy, transcriptions were subjected to analysis and interpretation. I was aware of being as objective as possible during the thematic analysis process as both Lee (1993) and Kvale (1996) highlighted 'transcriber selectivity', where the data can become de-contextualised if it is selected specially from the interview data.

How to ensure the findings reflected the EPs views?
Making available and ensuring EPs had access to transcripts of their interviews and checking they were happy with the interpretation and agreed with the coding of their interviews.
During the selection process, it was not possible to randomly allocate EPs. |
|---|---|
| Threats to external validity | *Researcher biases?*
Constantly adopting a reflexive approach. Reflecting and examining any personal bias or assumptions during the interviews and FG process. Cross checking analysis and interpretation of transcripts with the research assistant with a sample of EPs for biases within the process. Also, through discussions with my supervisor.

Replication of research?
The research cannot be replicated for the reasons given in section 4.8.1.3. However, by keeping a detailed account of the sample, data analysis, procedures, CMO configurations and outcomes it may enhance the possibility for researchers deciding to conduct similar research.

The theoretical foundations of RE explicitly draws upon previous research in related fields. This allows further research to understand the methodological framework of the present study and build upon it.
The small-scale nature of this study meant that external validity is arguably difficult to establish although efforts were made to control threats. |

4.8.1. 4 Social validity

Finney (1991) suggested part of social validity is asking participants what they thought of the programme. This was accomplished in the current study as all the EPs were asked their views at the beginning and end of the study. In the next chapter, the EPs views will be demonstrated through their quotes; data analysis and findings are also discussed.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined and explained how I collected the data which sought to address the four research questions outlined below. The realist evaluation framework was used to systematically track the context and the enabling and disabling mechanisms affecting the outcomes. The overall aim of the research study was to identify the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of PGS within an EPS by answering the following research questions:

1. How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?
2. How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?
3. In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?
4. How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional or personal level?

5.2 Data collection and analysis

The study utilised RE (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) as the methodological framework as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. RE is concerned with understanding causal mechanisms and the context which they are activated to produce the specific outcomes. Pawson & Tilley (1997) stressed that, 'social programmes cannot to explored in isolation', as the role of the people, the outcomes attributed to the programme and the context in which the programme occurs must all be included and explored.

Within this chapter qualitative analysis of the data will be presented, the data has been gathered from the following sources:

- initial semi-structured interviews with the EPs;
- focus group;
- final semi-structured interviews with the EPs.

The data gathered to answer each research question will be presented separately. The data will be presented across the three phases, as outlined in Chapter 4, Table 4.3.

5.3 Possible Initial Programme Specifications (IPSs) generated from the literature review and findings from the pilot study

Possible IPSs were generated from the literature review and pilot study (outlined in Appendix 8). However, they were not shared with the EPs as I thought this may influence their initial perception of PGS.

5.4. Phase 1: Interviews with the EPs (before the PGS Intervention)

Phase 1 of the study involved interviewing the EPs to enquire how they initially perceived PGS being introduced into the EPS (RQ1). My overall aim was for EPs to speculate about contextual factors and enabling or disabling mechanisms that could influence the outcomes of PGS. This section describes the findings that emerged from the data, which sought to address the following research question:

RQ1: How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?

5.4.1. Outcomes: findings to RQ1

In relation to RQ1, the following global themes emerged from the data analysis. EPs reported on their initial perceptions of PGS; they speculated potential contributing factors to support the implementation of PGS and possible inhibiting factors were also considered. Eight global themes emerged from the data which provided a pathway through phase 1 of the data set, as outlined in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: CMO Global themes
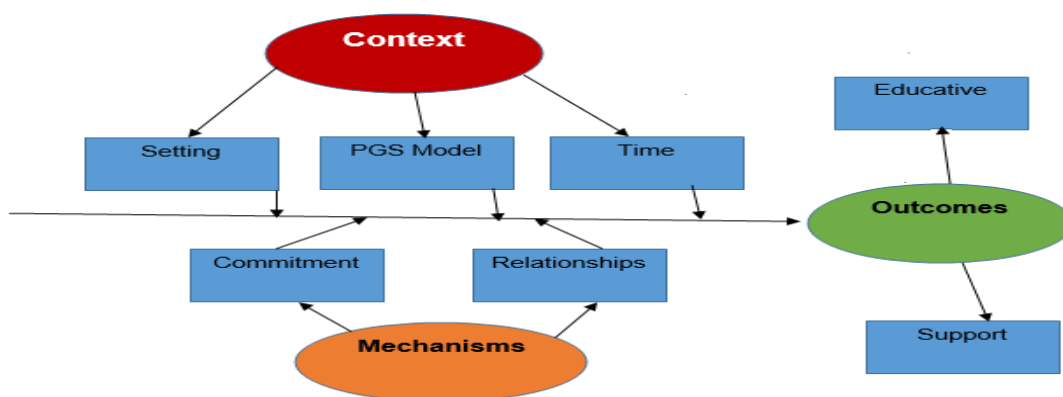
In the following sections I will illustrate RQ1 findings by outlining the thematic networks describing the global themes along with examples of the EPs comments.

5.4.1.1 Thematic Network: Context: 'Social Conditions'

The global theme, 'Social Conditions' was related to the context; it was produced from three organising themes and fourteen basic themes. EPs also highlighted three possible inhibiting factors.

Figure 5.2: Thematic network: Context 'Social Conditions'
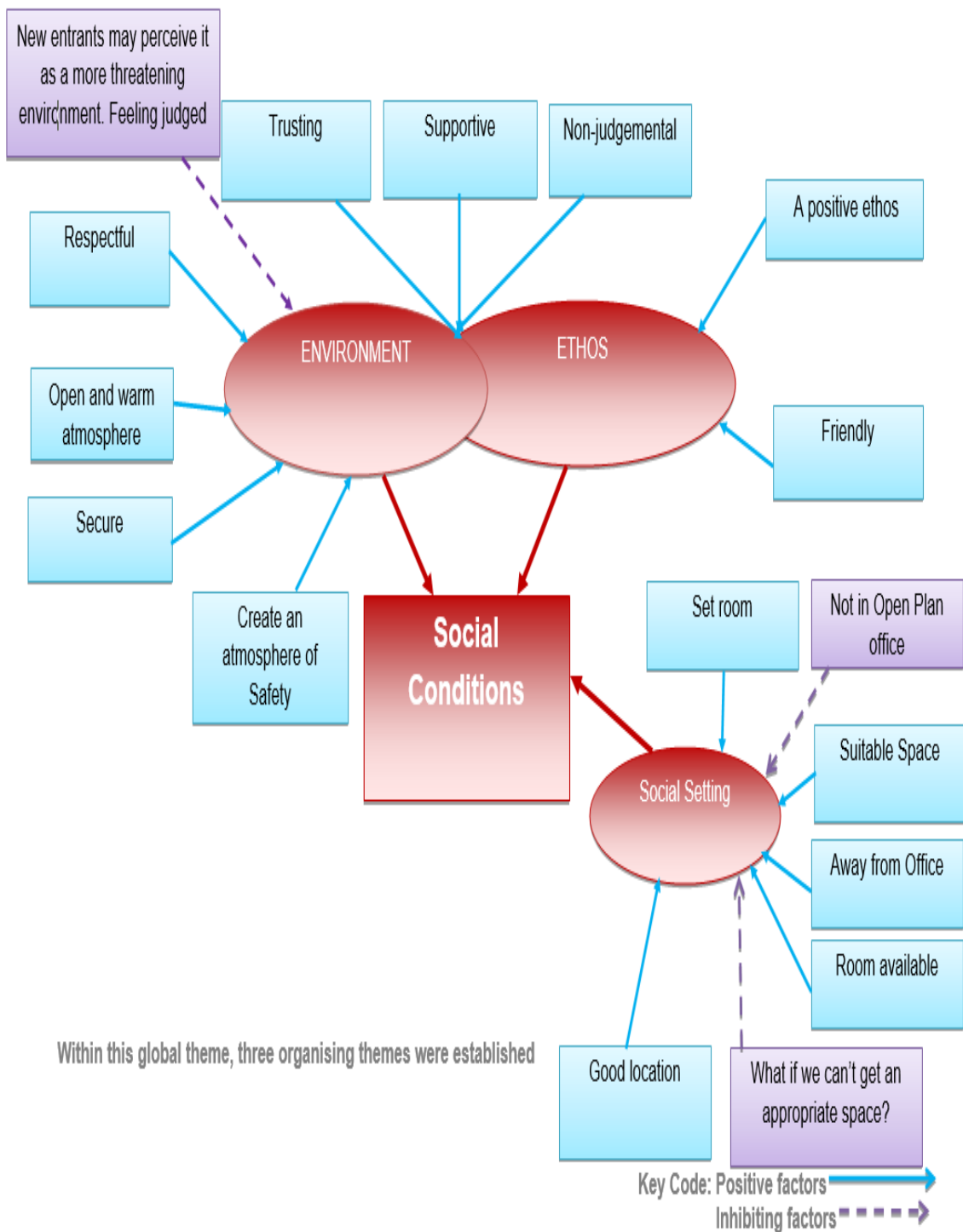
5.4.1.2 Venn diagram, 'Ethos/Environment'

Organising themes such as, 'Trusting, Realness and Non-judgemental' emerged in both the Ethos and Environment global theme. This is visually demonstrated as an overlap on the Venn diagram.

5.4.1.3 Organising theme: 'Ethos'

Ethos is the distinctive character, spirit and attitudes of a people's culture. The organising theme termed, 'Ethos' was generated from five basic themes such as, having a positive, friendly, supportive and trusting ethos.

> *…something like a positive ethos would allow PGS to occur …it needs to be something that's important to others in the group.*

> *...having a supportive and trusting ethos and working environment.*

> *…. friendly and supportive ethos is important.*

5.4.1.4 Organising theme: 'Environment'

Environment is the external conditions or surroundings. The organising theme termed, 'Environment' was generated from seven basic themes, one basic theme of possible inhibiting factors emerged such as, new entrants may perceive it as a threatening environment, feeling judged.

> *… new entrants, those less experienced, perhaps perceiving it as a more threatening environment, perhaps perceiving they are being judged on their practice, … there may be a discrepancy in their knowledge base in relation to other.*

> *… chat with colleagues, in a setting that is conducive to having a quiet discussion with colleagues in a safe and empathic environment.*

> *... safe space and environment is favourable to what we need.*

> *I think it would be nice to get together with people in a safe environment...*

5.4.1.5 Organising theme: 'Social Setting'

The theme, 'Social Setting' was generated from five basic themes that the EPs perceived may promote and support the implementation of PGS plus two basic themes of possible inhibiting factors. Themes were discussed regarding the location of the PGS such as, PGS being conducted in a good location, having a suitable space and a room available and for it

to occur away from the office. The two basic themes of possible inhibiting factors related to organising an appropriate space and the pressures of trying to book a room.

> *...in a room like we have here (a room at the Children Centre), the side offices in the open plan office environment are not ideal for PGS. People can see you through the large windows and think nothing of disturbing you. I think a room in one of the children's centres would be a good place.*

> *...what if we can't get an appropriate space ... perhaps group numbers would diminish.*

> *…ideally agree upon where, when and whenever PGS was going to be organised.*

> *for PGS to work we first need a good location away from the office environment, the same room at a Children's Centre would be good.*

5.4.1.6 Summary of Context: 'Social Conditions'

EP's highlighted that they did not want PGS to take place within their work place; all the EPs stressed that they would prefer an off-site location. Social conditions were considered an important factor for the successful implementation of PGS. The above themes appeared to draw on humanistic philosophies and principles (Rogers 2004) such as, trusting, non-judgemental and empathic qualities. All the EPs had expressed the importance of the enabling social conditions to promote the implementation of PGS within an EPS. Perhaps the EPs had a good sense of the context matter as their service training days were often held off-site at a Children's Centre.

5.4.2 Thematic Network: Context: 'Time'

The global theme, 'Time' was related to the context, it was generated from five organising themes and fourteen basic themes; six possible inhibiting factors were also reported.

Figure 5.3: Thematic network: Context: 'Time'
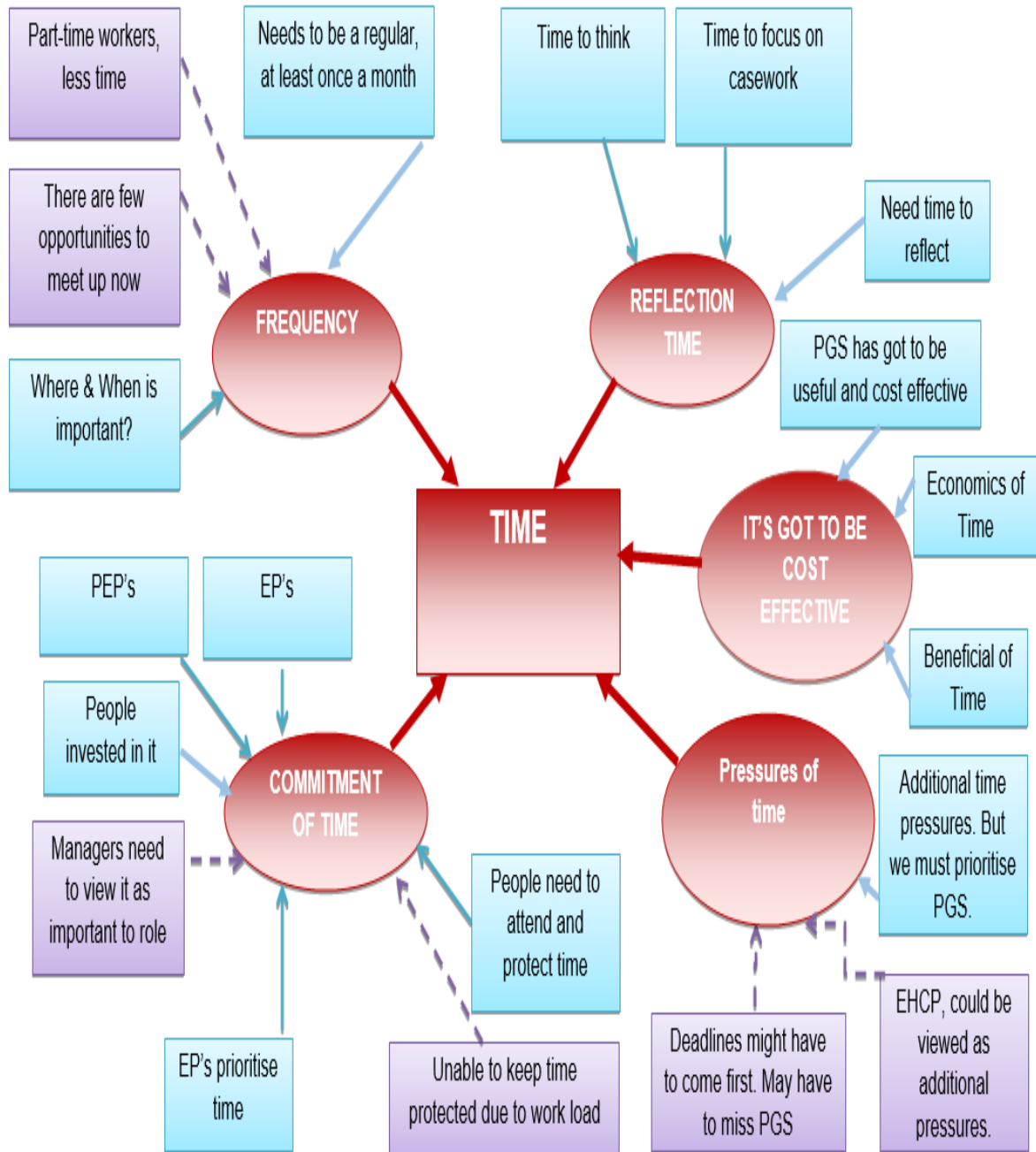
5.4.2.1 Organising theme: 'Frequency' of time

The organising theme, 'Frequency' was generated from two basic themes such as, PGS needs to be regular at least monthly. Logistics such as, where and what time were also considered important. Two inhibiting factors related to lack of opportunity to meet up and part-time workers expressed their concerns of not being able to attend all the PGS sessions due to time restraints.

> *I would want to do it infrequently, not necessarily on a highly-scheduled basis, primarily because the way my work is now, working part-time is difficult, finding the time. Yes, concerns about the frequency, as I have less time… full-time workers can build and plan PGS more easily.*

> *Once a month is good because it's not a big commitment but on the other hand if PGS is really useful you might want it once a fortnight.*

> *There are few opportunities to meet up nowadays…. it needs to have a regular slot.*

5.4.2.2 Organising theme: 'Commitment' of time

The theme, 'Commitment' of time was generated from six enabling basic themes and four basic themes of possible inhibiting factors. The enabling themes were discussed regarding the EPs being invested and time commitment from the EPs. The two possible inhibiting themes emerged in relation to meeting deadlines, commitment of time due to extra case work and EHC plans and transfers taking priority.

> *I guess obviously, the commitment of time would be a difficulty, especially with the pressures of Statutory work such as, the Education, Health and Care assessments and transfers and pre-statutory work…this has implications on people's time, so that might stop PGS from happening.*

> *Most recently there has been a massive increase in EP workload, along with quite tight deadlines. Many EPs may feel unable to protect the time as much as they might want to do. Statutory deadlines have to come first.*

> *I think people have got to see it as part of their role and therefore they are going to attend PGS.*

> *… need to protect time to do PGS otherwise it ... just does not happen.*

5.4.2.3 Organising theme: 'Reflection' of time

The theme, 'Reflection' of time was generated from three basic themes such as, time to focus, think and time to reflect.

> *.. time to think about casework and other issues that impact on our work …providing the protected time to talk…this may give us time to reflect on our practice.*

…time given to focus on case work ……time to reflect on practice.

...having time to reflect on our practice.

5.4.2.4 Organising theme: 'Time Cost-Effective'

The organising theme termed, 'Time Cost-Effective', was generated three basic themes such as, it being both beneficial and cost-effective of EP time.

PGS has got to be time-cost effective, hasn't it? We are all so busy.

It may have implications on people's time; therefore, it has got to be cost-effective.

Hopefully, it will be beneficial, cost-efficient and have an impact on our practice.

Pressure of time.

5.4.2.5 Summary of Context: 'Time'

EPs highlighted the importance of time for the smooth implementation of PGS. They also indicated that PGS should be time cost-effective as time is precious due to casework and the increased statutory duties.

5.4.3 Thematic Network: Context: 'PGS Model'

To successfully implement PGS within an EPS, all the EPs reported the PGS model should be structured, promote supportive and inclusive structures and facilitate communication and learning. The global theme 'PGS Model' was related to the context; it was generated from four organising themes and twenty-six basic themes. EPs also highlighted four possible inhibiting factors.

Figure 5.4: Thematic network: Context: 'Model'
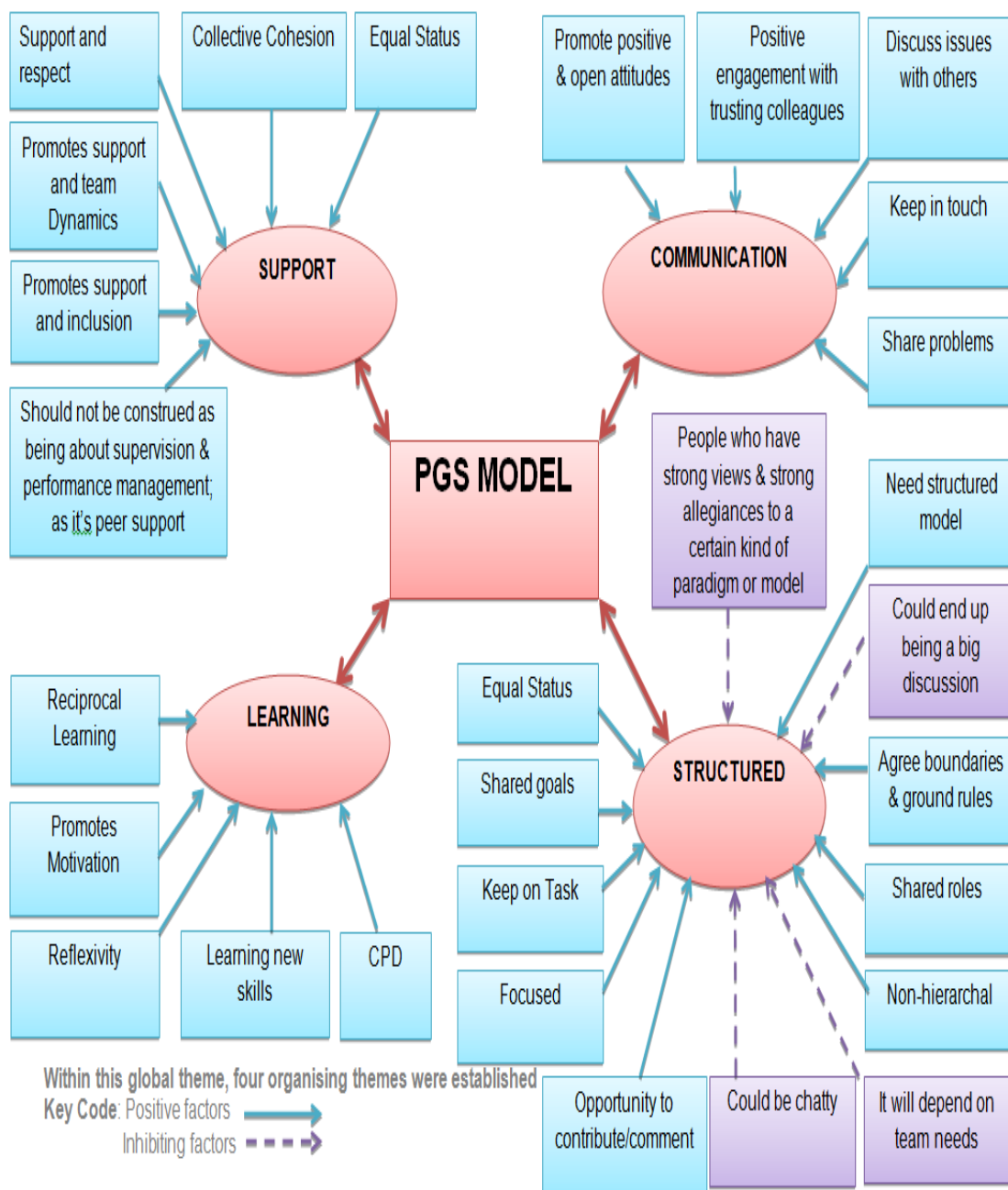
5.4.3.1 Organising theme: 'Structured'

The theme, 'Structured' was generated from nine basic themes and four basic themes of possible inhibiting factors. The nine supporting themes were discussed regarding the importance of the PGS model being structured, non-hierarchal, opportunities to contribute/comment, the need to keep on-task and focused, boundaries and ground rules and the importance of shared roles and goals. The four-possible inhibiting basic themes related to, the structured PGS model as EPs did not want it to be a chatty social gathering or a big discussion without a purpose, meaning or ending. EPs also highlighted that people may have strong allegiances to certain paradigms creating biases.

PGS will be effective if everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities… during the session, structure is important to ensure that everyone can contribute… if the model does not have meaning or structure to it…it could turn into a chatty social gathering without a purpose.

… a comfortable environment where everyone feels at ease about opening up and sharing. PGS also need structure as it allows others to lead the facilitation plus develop their skills.

I think the PGS model and structure is important to keep us on track and focused.

5.4.3.2 Organising theme: 'Learning'

The organising theme, 'Learning' was generated from five basic themes such as, learning new skills in relation to the PGS model and structure.

Yes, I am keen to learn and know more about PGS models … I think it should promote reflectivity and other important outcomes like reciprocal learning.

...hopefully it won't feel pressured and the PGS model and structure will give everybody in the circle a role... I think it may promote CPD and learning within the team.

...the model and structure should provide motivation... so that people follow things up and develop new skills.

...a PGS context would give us the time and opportunity to kind of … take a step back from the busy day to day of casework and reporting back…where you are kind of… trying to follow a process of a reflective, open, enquiry, where you are forming hypotheses and trying to test those hypotheses out, whilst remaining critically inquisitive It might offer a learning process of about the cases that you are being presented with.

5.4.3.3 Organising theme: 'Communication'

The theme, 'Communication' was generated from five basic themes. EPs hoped that PGS would hopefully promote positive engagement with colleagues, to meet with each other and to keep in touch with their colleagues.

> *The PGS model will hopefully give people the chance to sort of keep in touch with other people within the team …. because I think, through PGS ...it might be a good chance to check in with everyone.*

> *Hopefully, it will promote positive engagement with trusting colleagues.*

> *…a negative experience or if others feel that people aren't contributing in a positive and useful way then that might put them off going again to PGS.*

> *.. hopefully, it will send out a positive message to the team …and promote positive attitudes within the team.*

5.4.3.4 Organising theme: 'Support'

The organising theme, 'Support', was generated from six basic themes. EPs perceived the model and structure would help to support the inclusion and collective cohesion and promote a learning culture.

> *I quite like Solution Circles. I think PGS may offer support and it may feel less pressured. Hopefully, it will give everybody in the circle a focus and role.*

> *The PGS model should not be construed as being about supervision and performance management…as it should promote inclusion, team dynamics and be about peer support and respecting each other.*

> *The PGS model may help to get feedback and to receive support as well as challenge ...or you know, or provide guidance to feel emotionally secure.*

5.4.3.5 Summary of Context: 'PGS Model'

EPs highlighted the importance of the PGS model and structure to support the implementation of PGS within an EPS. They also reported the model should be structured, supportive and facilitate communication and learning.

5.4.4 Mechanism: Thematic Network: 'PGS Relationships'

The global theme, 'PGS Relationships' was generated from three organising themes and fifteen basic themes. No inhibiting themes were reported.

Figure 5.5: Thematic network: Mechanisms 'PGS Relationships'
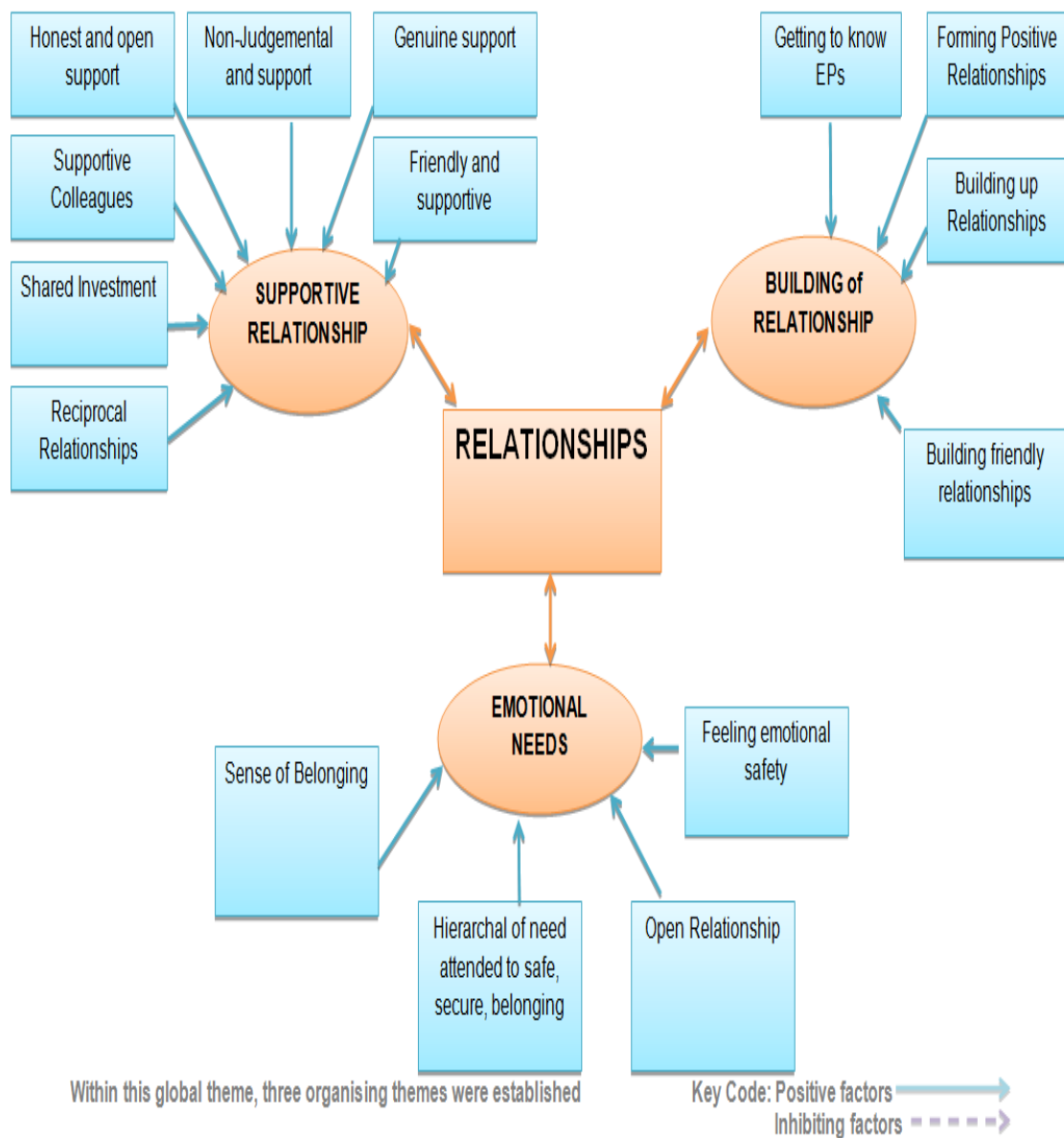
5.4.4.1 Organising theme: 'Building of Relationships'

The theme, 'Building of Relationships' was generated from four basic themes. EPs anticipated that PGS would facilitate the building of existing relationships, forming new positive relationships especially for the two new entrants.

The PGS sessions may also help to promote and keep relationships with colleagues because obviously having those relationships is really important …so hopefully it will allow those relationships to stay intact ... we need to build in time for each other.

…but I think relationships are central to PGS group supervision either way to support the process and outcomes.

PGS will be especially useful for the new entrants, to form new relationships.

...it is a good time to promote PGS as the new entrants will get to know the other EPs in the team.

5.4.4.2 Organising theme: 'Supportive relationships'

The organising theme, 'Supportive Relationships' was generated from seven basic themes. EPs reported that for PGS to be successful it requires, honest, friendly, genuine and non-judgemental relationships.

…. relationships are central to PGS.

I think just bearing your soul almost…., it can be a bit of a risk sometimes depending on who is there you need supportive relationships with colleagues.

Inter-colleague support and respect ... hopefully a shared investment.

Supportive relationships are vital for the successful implementation of PGS.

5.4.4.3 Organising theme: 'Emotional Needs'

The organising theme, 'Emotional Needs' was generated from four basic themes. EPs perceived the importance of feeling of safe, a sense of belonging within the team and being open.

...there is a need to create honest open and safe relationships.

New entrants should feel safe, feel that they are accepted, feeling that they are part of the team… almost a sense of belonging ... hopefully PGS will support the new entrants... it is difficult now to have the time in our busy schedules to support other people within the team.

…if there is tension, bad relationships maybe if people are feeling emotionally vulnerable and haven't maybe addressed that before coming into the group ...good interpersonal relationships are essential... especially at this busy period.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is important, that keeps popping into my head actually about this, promoting safety, secure relationships and sense of belonging.

5.4.4.4 Summary of Mechanisms: 'PGS Relationships'

EPs highlighted the importance and the quality of relationships within PGS to support the implementation of PGS within an EPS.

5.4.5 Thematic Network: Mechanisms: 'Commitment'

All the EPs perceived commitment as a positive factor to promote and support the implementation of PGS within an EPS. The global theme, 'Commitment' was related to the mechanisms; it was generated from two organising themes and twelve basic themes.

Figure 5.6: Thematic network: Mechanisms: 'Commitment'
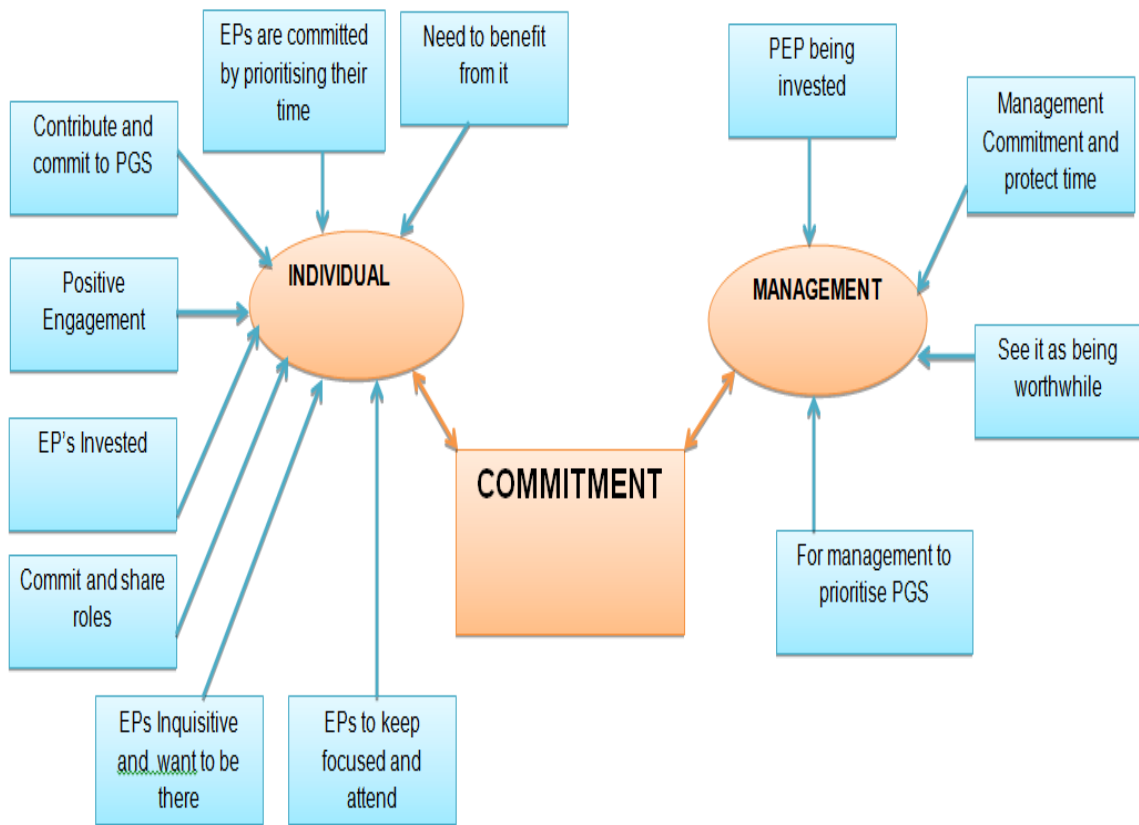
5.4.5.1 Organising theme: 'Management'

The organising theme, 'Management' commitment was generated from four basic themes such as, the managers being invested, committed and for management to prioritise time and view PGS as being worthwhile.

> *Obviously support from senior management is important…. especially other people who aren't necessarily part of the EPS... you know if they're not in that line of work and don't access supervision they may not value it or see the value of it.*

> *Of course, we also need to protected time and the management need to be committed.*

> *The PEP needs to be invested in it and support PGS at the higher-level of the management structure.*

5.4.5.2 Organising theme: 'Individual'

The theme, 'Individual' commitment from EPs was generated from eight basic themes such as, EPs need to attend, contribute and demonstrate commitment to PGS.

> *I think for people to be on board with PGS there needs to be individual commitment.*

> *I think if people are committed and interested… they may see how it can be of benefit to them. Commitment is what will definitely promote it …. people who attend should be committed and want to be there.*

> *I guess for people to have experienced it and see it as something that is beneficial, which links to the first point about people being on board with it... but if people haven't been involved with it they wouldn't see it as useful… then they're not going to engage and commit to it.*

> *I think the only barrier for me... I suppose would be if as time goes on ...if I feel I am not getting any benefit from PGS, then I would be less committed and less inclined to want to attend the sessions.*

5.4.5.3 Summary of Mechanisms: 'Commitment'

EPs highlighted the importance of EPs and the management showing commitment to PGS. EP2 commented, "Volunteers and the management team need to create a productive PGS climate to warrant individual obligation and commitment".

5.4.6 Thematic Network: Outcomes: 'Educative'

The global theme, 'Educative' was related to the outcomes; it was generated from four organising themes and eighteen basic themes.

Figure 5.7: Thematic network: Outcomes: 'Educative'
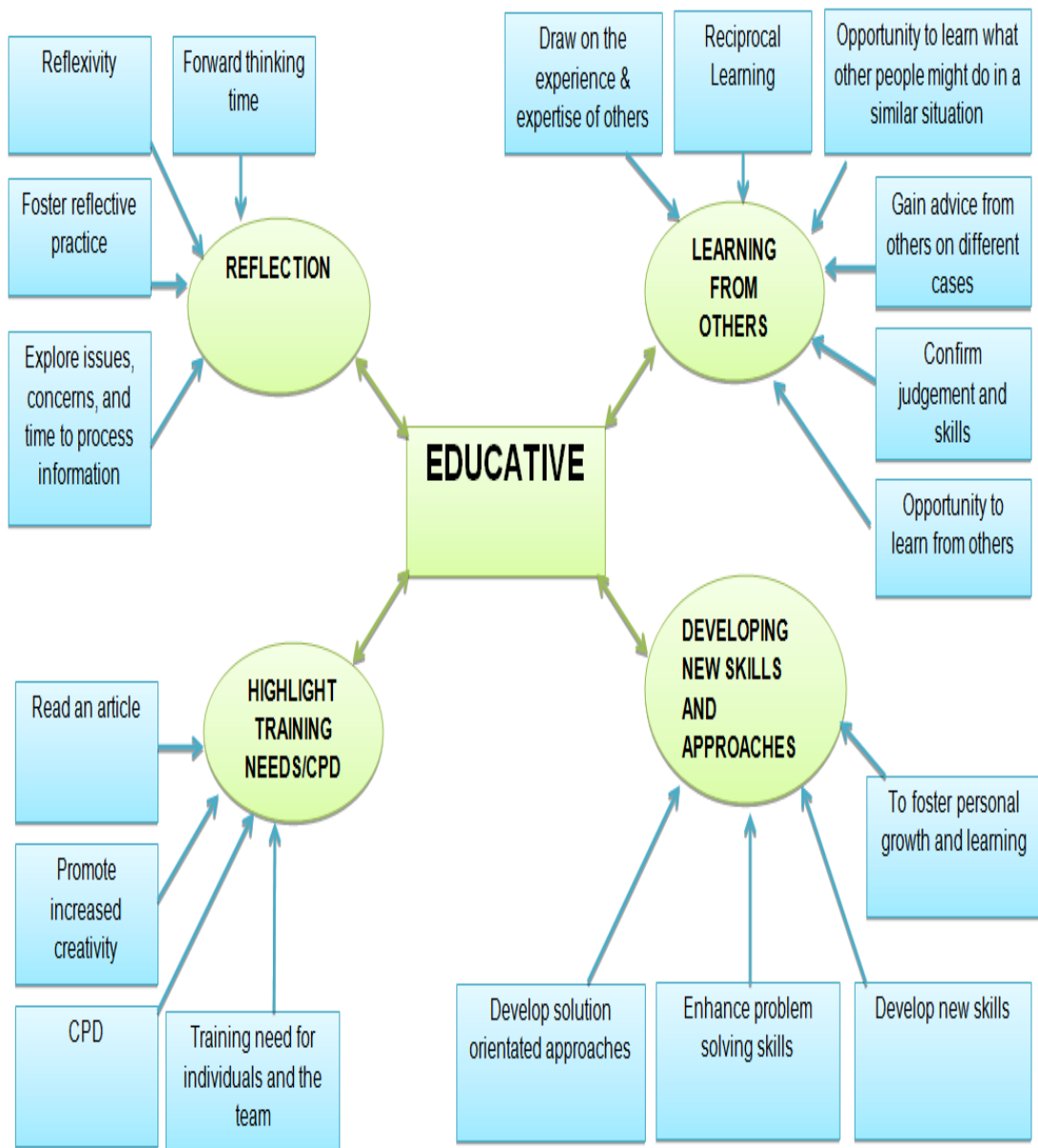
5.4.6.1 Organising theme: 'Learning from others'

The theme, 'Learning from others' was generated from six basic themes such as, promoting the opportunity to learn from others, reciprocal learning, to gain advice from others, to confirm judgements and to learn what other people might do in a similar situation.

> .. getting advice from people who have been doing the job for a lot longer than me.

> Opportunities for learning, sharing and development.

> ...hopefully it will spark ideas… promote shared learning.

> …. having PGS with different people will help me in my role… I could learn more about other assessments, other interventions, other ways of thinking. I am very much interested in how people learn through challenge and dissonance and so on. I don't always think you always get that when you just have supervision from one person... so for me I think it will be the opportunity to hear lots of different experiences from different people who work in completely different ways, who think and formulate things differently.

5.4.6.2 Organising theme: 'Reflection'

The organising theme, 'Reflection' was generated from four basic themes such as, PGS fostering reflective practice, forward thinking time and time to process information and reflexivity.

> …questioning what can my experience bring? … I think in terms of overcoming that, it's just about trying to be reflective about knowing everyone has a different experience, no matter how many years you have been qualified, you have something to add. Plus, we all have something to learn.

> Time to think and reflect…

> ...its legitimate to have your own perspective, your own allegiances, your own strong views about different models but it's equally important to value that other people might have a different one and that they have come to that position through a process of thought, reflection and engagement in you know kind of day to day practice of being an Educational Psychologist and that's legitimate too. Yes, having time to reflect and process information will be important.

5.4.6.3 Organising theme: 'Highlight training needs and CPD'

The theme, 'Highlight training needs and CPD' was generated from four basic themes such as, to promote increased creativity, CPD, to research and read psychological articles following the discussions and to identify individual training needs.

I was also thinking about PGS, how it might useful ...we could reflect and think what training we need in different areas …so that we could buy somebody in …PGS would be useful for CPD.

.. hopefully PGS would highlight any future training needs for the team.

...I guess I'd hope for it to allow me to keep broadening my role and feel confident in those different areas as well. Highlight any training needs and CPD.

5.4.6.4 Organising theme: 'Developing new skills and approaches'

The theme, 'Developing new skills and approaches' was generated from four basic themes such as, PGS providing an environment for EPs to develop new skills, enhance problem solving skills, to develop solution orientated approaches and to foster personal growth and learning.

I guess to broaden my way of working because you know even sort of... from doing it for a few years you probably do fall into habits of doing assessments and doing certain assessments and doing things in a certain way…, so I guess maybe the chance to think about what other assessment methods you can use or other ways of working ...systemic working, consultation approaches, things like that.

I will be taking and using PGS as a learning opportunity to develop skills.

...picking peoples brains... I guess sharing any new knowledge that we have learnt on the training course as well… any new interventions that we might know about or ... research or anything like that.

5.4.6.5 Summary of Outcomes: 'Educative'

EPs highlighted that they hoped PGS would produce educative outcomes such as, learning from others, developing new skills, highlighting training needs whilst fostering reflective practice.

5.4.7 Outcomes: Thematic Network: Outcomes: 'Support'

The global theme, 'Support' was connected to outcomes; it was generated from three organising themes and sixteen basic themes.

Figure 5.8: Thematic network: Outcomes: 'Support'
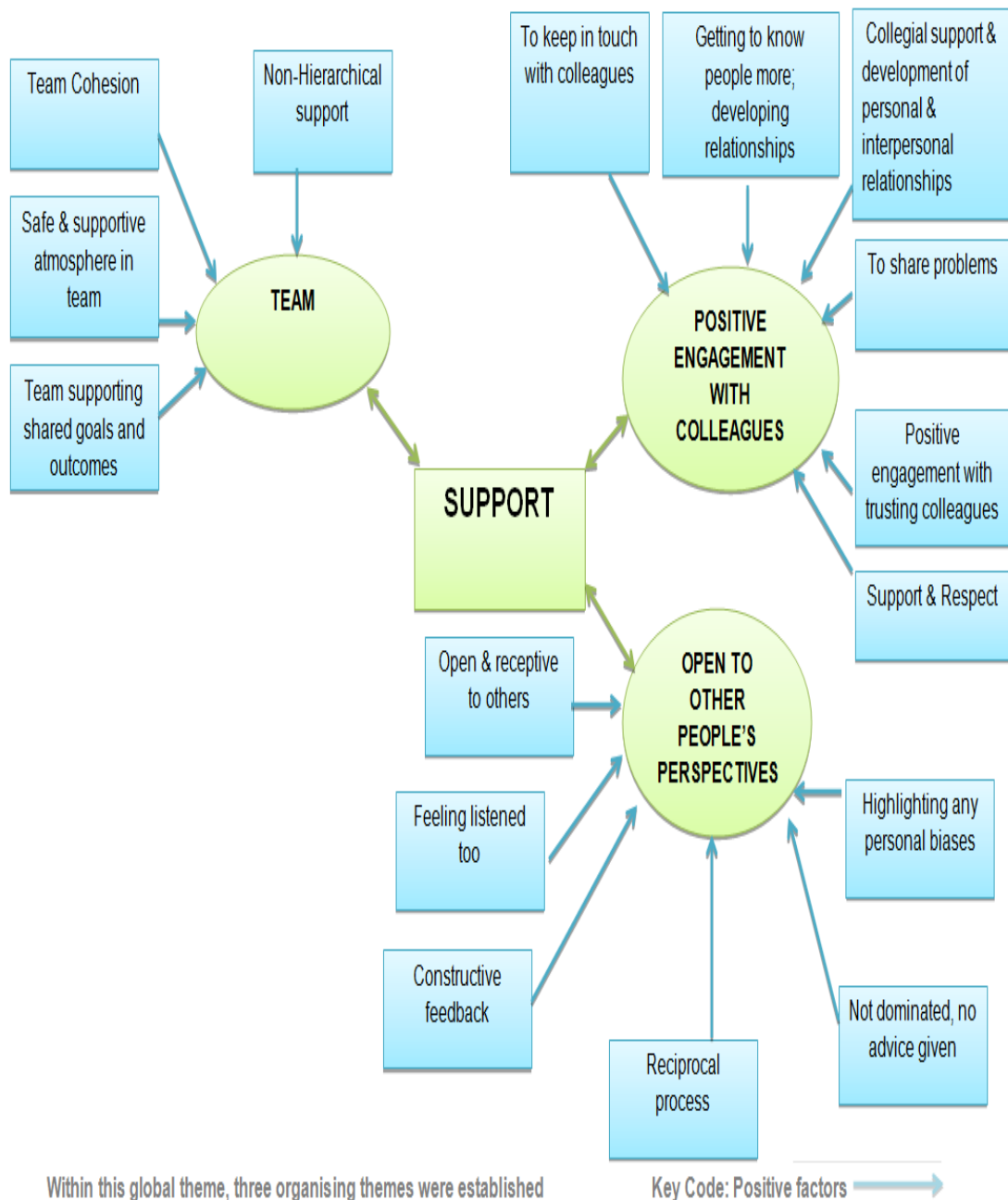
5.4.7.1 Organising theme: 'Open to other people's perspective'

The organising theme, 'Open to other people's perspective' was generated from six basic themes such as, being able to be open and receptive to others, reciprocal process, constructive feedback, listening and feeling listened to, whilst highlighting any personal biases.

> *But inevitably we all have our personal biases and the potential for those to creep in is always there so this is a way of you know…, hopefully it's a way of counteracting that, it's a way of helping you to remain open to other perspectives basically...., so that you don't end up becoming too sort of channelled into your own ways of working … I suppose preferences or however you choose to term that.*

> *If you can see things from other peoples' perspectives I think that is a good quality to have, PGS may provide a place for us to practice these skills, to be open and receptive. If we want to understand a situation we need to understand why people act the way they do.*

5.4.7.2 Organising theme: 'Positive engagement with colleagues'

The theme, 'Positive engagement with colleagues' was generated from six basic themes such as, keeping in touch with colleagues, new entrants having the opportunity to get to know other people better, developing relationships and supporting relationships.

> *.. a desire to work together to make things better, hopefully promote positive attitudes within the team.*

> *.. to get to know people a bit more, to keep in touch with them, both personally and professionally.*

> *…or to help someone out, to help resolve a situation and support each other. Support colleagues and get support from colleagues, sharing problems and positive engagement with colleagues, yes that is what I would like to get out PGS.*

> *…coming together with your peers.*

5.4.7.3 Organising theme: 'Team'

The theme, 'Team' was generated from four basic themes such as, PGS promoting team cohesion, support, a safe, supportive atmosphere and the team supporting shared goals and outcomes.

> *I am hoping that the whole team will feel mutually supported really and I'm hoping it's going to have an impact on team cohesion.*

> *Hopefully it will give us the space to just come together as a team.*

> *No matter how well team cohesion is established, it must be constantly supported by management, if the management appears disconnected then team cohesion and solidity suffers.*

5.4.7.4 Summary of Outcomes: 'Support'

EPs highlighted that they hoped PGS would provide a supportive environment such as, it promotes positive engagement with colleagues, team cohesion and for EPs to be supportive and open to other people's perspectives.

5.4.8 Thematic Network: Outcomes: 'Emotional Support'

The global theme, 'Emotional Support' was connected to outcomes; it was generated from three organising themes and seventeen basic themes.

Figure 5.9: Thematic network: Outcomes: 'Emotional Containment'
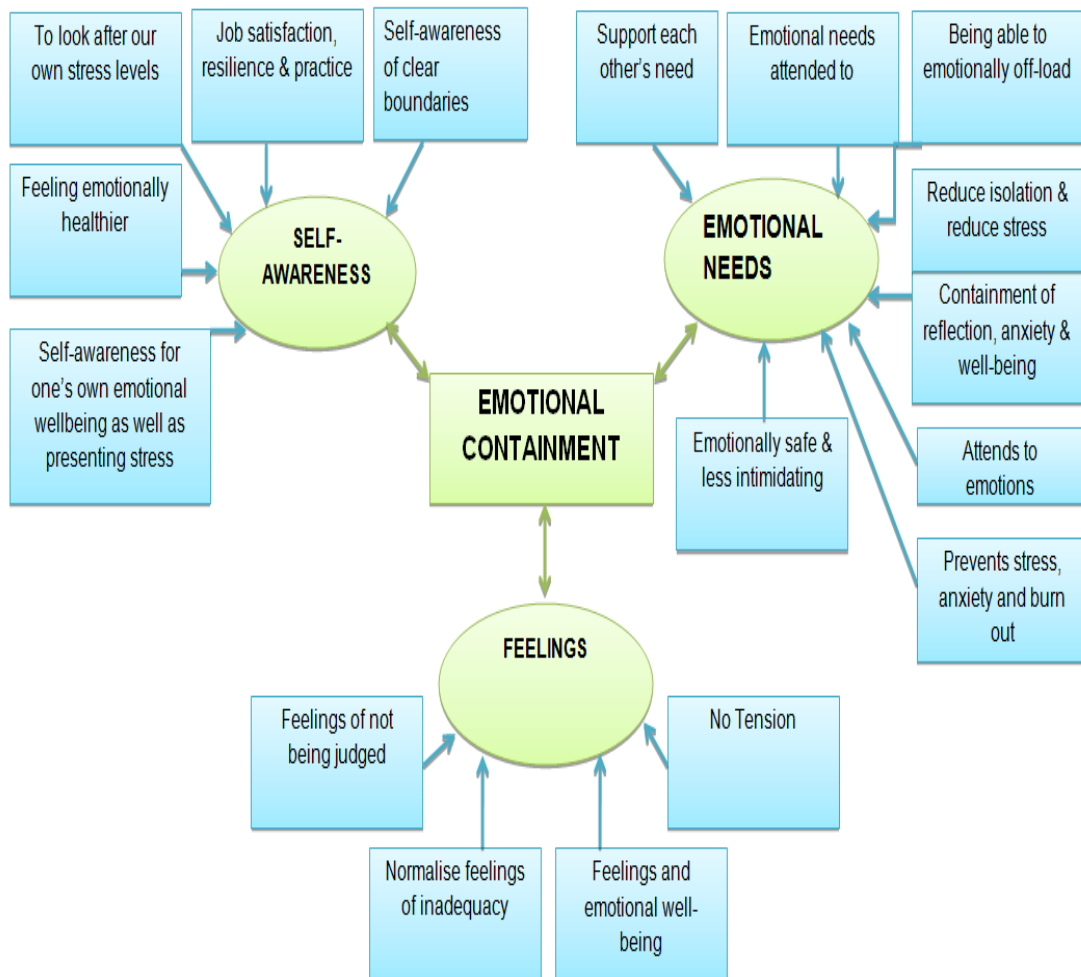
Within this global theme, three organising themes were established   Key Code: Positive factors ⟶

5.4.8.1 Organising theme: 'Feelings'

The organising theme, 'Feelings' was generated from four basic themes such as, not feeling judged and to promote feelings of competence and emotional well-being.

> *...personal and professionally, I would want an environment where I had an opportunity to share any concerns with colleagues, ...stressful situations or anything I was anxious or concerned about …, an environment to feel emotionally secure.*

> *On a personal level, I am really hoping it will make me feel that my burdens are not just my own burdens and that they are shared…, and that it will relieve stress levels... because I think when you work at it on your own... things nag at you and you wonder whether you've made the right decision… but when it's shared it does reduce the anxiety. Like it normalises things, I am hoping that myself and others will find the whole process emotionally supportive.*

> *An outcome of PGS should be on personal growth ... it's important that people don't feel judged or misunderstood…hopefully it should promote competency and develop skills.*

5.4.8.2 Organising theme: 'Emotional Needs'

The theme, 'Emotional Needs' was generated from eight basic themes such as, supporting each other's emotional needs and promote well-being, being able to off-load, reduce isolation and burnout. PGS needs to provide emotional containment.

> *I am hoping PGS is going to provide positive energy... a stress relief in a way and good for team cohesion….as some work in isolation…., to prevent burnout and to maintain a positive outlook.*

> *Yeah, I think definitely it would sort of give us a chance to keep in touch with others... to look after your own sort of stress levels and things like that..., and again that reassurance that you are kind of doing things the way other people would do them…being able to offload and ask questions and get information from others…yes, hopefully support emotional needs.*

> *...emotional health affects your mood, relationships, and productivity. PGS will hopefully provide us with emotional containment … the support and tools for when we have to cope with difficult situations.*

5.4.8.3 Organising theme: 'Self-Awareness'

The organising theme, 'Self-Awareness' was generated from five basic themes such as, promoting self-awareness regarding feeling emotionally healthier and being more aware of one's own limitations and boundaries.

> *I am hoping PGS will provide self-awareness… for one's own emotional wellbeing as well as reducing stress. Self-awareness can however be both a good and bad thing as people may stick to their personal values and beliefs and not be open and honest. They may avoid a situation in which they might be constructively challenged. As a*

psychologist, I think it is a good to be developing a higher level of self-awareness. You know like developing self-awareness … through the 'Johari' window process.

To develop self-awareness would be a good thing, acknowledging and admitting that we don't have all the answers all the time.

Developing self-awareness will be good for job satisfaction, competency, resilience and practice.

…. being knowledgeable and recognising one's own limitations and boundaries amplify self-awareness.

5.4.8.4 Summary of Outcomes: 'Emotional Support'

EPs hoped PGS would provide a safe environment to support their emotional needs. It was also highlighted that PGS would hopefully promote self-awareness and a forum to support emotional containment.

5.4.8.5 Findings (Phase 1)

Data from phase 1 highlighted two (educative and supportive) of the three functions of supervision as proposed by (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Proctor & Inskipp, 2001; Kadushin, 1976). The third function (managerial) did not feature in any of the EP transcripts. Was this due the fact that EPs viewed 1:1 supervision as managerial? Or was it because they viewed PGS as non-hierarchal in nature? One reported, *"We need a safe environment to off-load our feelings and emotions about casework ….and other people's views of where to go next… I don't think 1:1 supervision is of any value. There is no structure to it and it does not seem to be a high priority... It often gets cancelled… is has got no focus and often it is just a short discussion about time and managing workload."*

During the interviews, the EPs provided a novel account as they described their initial perceptions of PGS. They offered their honest opinions and perceptions of PGS by outlining the possible enabling and inhibiting factors. It was noted that during phase 1 EPs reported less inhibiting factors.

To answer RQ1, Initial Programme Specifications (IPSs) were generated from the perspectives of the EPs. The aim of the IPSs was to capture the EPs initial theories on how they initially perceived the implementation of PGS within an EPS. Analysis of phase 1 is further discussed in in Chapter 6.

The implementation stage of PGS was classed as phase 2 of the study.

5.5 Phase 3: Following PGS Intervention

5.5.1 Introduction

The realist evaluation framework was used to systematically track the context and the enabling and disabling mechanisms affecting the outcomes of PGS. This section describes the findings that emerged from the data, which sought to 'interrogate' the IPSs whilst also addressing the following research questions:

- RQ2: How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?
- RQ3: In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?
- RQ4: How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional or personal level?

5.5.1.1 Phase 3: Overview

Phase 3, included the interpretation and clarification of the findings from phase 1. Did the key contexts, mechanisms elicit the desirable outcomes as the EPs had hypothesised? I utilised thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse the data from the final interview with the EPs. Following these processes basic themes evolved, they were then grouped into organising themes and finally the organising themes were then grouped into a global theme. The global themes expressed the main message and the metaphor conveyed by all themes. Some examples of the quotes to support the themes are presented below, whilst further examples can be found in Appendix 13.

Finally, global themes were organised and structured under each heading, Context + Mechanisms = Outcome as outlined in Figure 5.10. Examples of the CMOs tables are in Appendix 12.

Figure 5.10: Phase 3: Global themes organised and structured under the Realistic Evaluation Framework
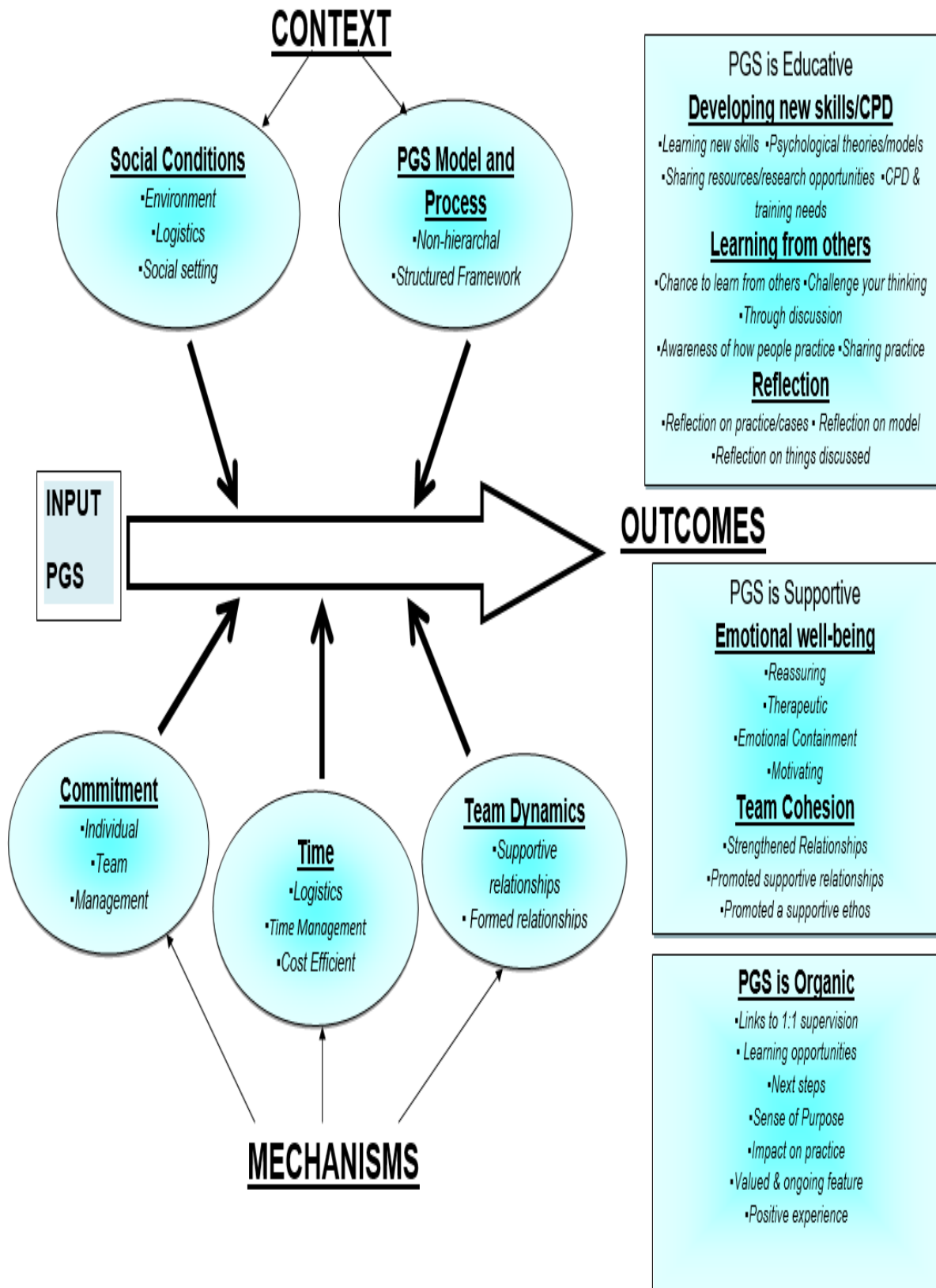
5.5.1.2 Context and Mechanisms: for RQ2 and RQ3

RQ2 aimed to encompass information about how the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS. Research question 2 therefore focused on two units of analysis: the structure of PGS and the process of PGS.

RQ3 aimed to bring together the EPs views of both the context and the mechanisms that enabled or inhibited the use of PGS within an EPS. Whilst also focusing on any connections between the contexts and mechanisms in order and look for possible explanations or reasons they acted the way that they did.

To answer RQ2 and RQ3, data was drawn from the final interview with the EPs. Both positive and inhibiting factors were explored. EPs highlighted the following contexts and mechanisms:

- Context (social conditions, PGS model and process);
- Mechanisms (commitment, time and team dynamics).

5.5.1.3 Context: Thematic Network: 'PGS model and processes'

The global theme 'PGS model and processes were produced from three organising themes (facilitating, non-hierarchal and a structured framework) and 33 basic themes. EPs did not discuss any inhibiting outcomes. The PGS model and structure is discussed in Appendix 14.

Figure number 5.11: Context: Thematic Network: PGS Model and process

Process facilitated learning

PGS model facilitated more tangible outcomes

The process emphasised a non-hierarchal element everyone was equal

No Hierarchy PGS model was good

Sharing of labour having different roles

PGS allows access to other people thought process

Facilitates Empowerment

All EPs were able to express themselves

NON-HIERCHARCHAL

FACILITATING

Model and process facilitated listening

Good to have a peer agreement & policy, non-hierarchal

Feeling additional Support

Process facilitated a chance to stop, think and reflect

Non-judgemental process

Non-threatened/judged

PGS MODEL and PROCESS

Facilitating a relaxing process

Opportunity to share and compare views without feeling judged

No power differential

STRUCTURED FRAMEWORK

Kept to structure and rules

Structure was an essential part of making PGS work

Structure helpful

Visual framework

Important roles but non-threatening

Liked framework of sitting in a circle gave unity

Supportive structure

Supportive structures and process

Clear structure & clear roles

Not restrictive-flexible & adaptable

Opportunity for different roles

Enabling and empowering process

Natural start middle & end to PGS

PGS kept people on task

Systematic roles were useful

Structured framework: used the model effectively

Within this global theme 3 organising themes were established

Key code: promoting factors →

5.5.1.4 Organising theme: 'PGS Model and processes was 'Non-Hierarchal'

The model having a non-hierarchal structure was regarded as an essential feature for PGS. Some EPs highlighted the importance of the PGS model promoting a democratic structure.

> ...as an EPS, we have a flat management approach..., in terms of PGS there was also no hierarchy, I think there being no sense of hierarchy has been a really important factor.

> ...and the PGS model helps everybody…you know it gives people an opportunity to act take on different roles… so it does kind of emphasise that non-hierarchal element as roles are equal within the process.

> I really liked the model as it was non-threatening and everyone could express themselves.

5.5.1.5 Organising theme: 'PGS Model and processes was 'Facilitating'

EPs discussed how the PGS model and structure facilitated direction, identified clear roles whilst producing tangible outcomes.

> PGS was time well spent and the model facilitated a sense of purpose and direction the whole time … the model provided a very ... clear structure and outlined clear roles …. the process facilitated the structured conversations and outcomes. The PGS model was really helpful and assisted the supportive process.

> I think PGS was really useful for me to formulate my ideas and also for when I feedback to schools… I used the interactive frameworks as a visual aid, ….to express to the dimensions and possible hypotheses and theories that could be happening in a particular complex case.

> Yeah, so the PGS model enabled us to stop, think and reflect... the PGS model helped to facilitate the implementation of PGS.

5.5.1.6 Organising theme: 'PGS Model and processes followed a 'Structured Framework'

The model and process having a structured approach was regarded as an essential feature to support the implementation of PGS. EPs highlighted the structured PGS model was an important contextual factor for the successful implementation of PGS.

> I think having a structured approach is an important feature; the structured context helped the process and facilitated the structured conversations and outcomes. The model and process was really helpful ...

> …even though the process and the model was structured…it also seemed quite flexible and adaptable at times …everyone participated and seemed to gather a great deal from it. Also, I think the model prompted and facilitated people to feel more relaxed …. and perhaps more able also to express themselves both professionally and personally...

I think the structure and the circle gave us unity....

I think that within our team, imposing the structure like that was a very essential part of making it work… you know we all like to talk and everybody has got an opinion and we've seen this in team meetings… in the past if they're not chaired you know how quickly things can digress …EPs go off on tangents …so keeping to PGS structure was really useful ….it kept people on track.

…but as demonstrated in previous unstructured casework discussion …it's like herding cats… so you need to have something which is quite external and structured and giving people the opportunity to present.

5.5.1.7 Summary Context: 'PGS model and processes'

EPs reported that the model, structure and non-hierarchal process facilitated the PGS process and outcomes. EPs also highlighted that they liked the different models and theoretical frameworks employed during the process. The PGS model and structure should be specifically tailored to address the multiple responsibilities involved in supervision; it may be limited if only one approach is solely applied (Falender & Shafranske, 2008).

5.5.2 Context: Thematic Network: 'Social Conditions'

The global theme, 'Social conditions' was produced from three organising themes and 24 basic themes. EPs also highlighted 1 possible inhibiting factor such as, PGS or private discussions should not be conducted in an open plan office.

Figure 5.12: Context: Thematic network: 'Social Conditions'
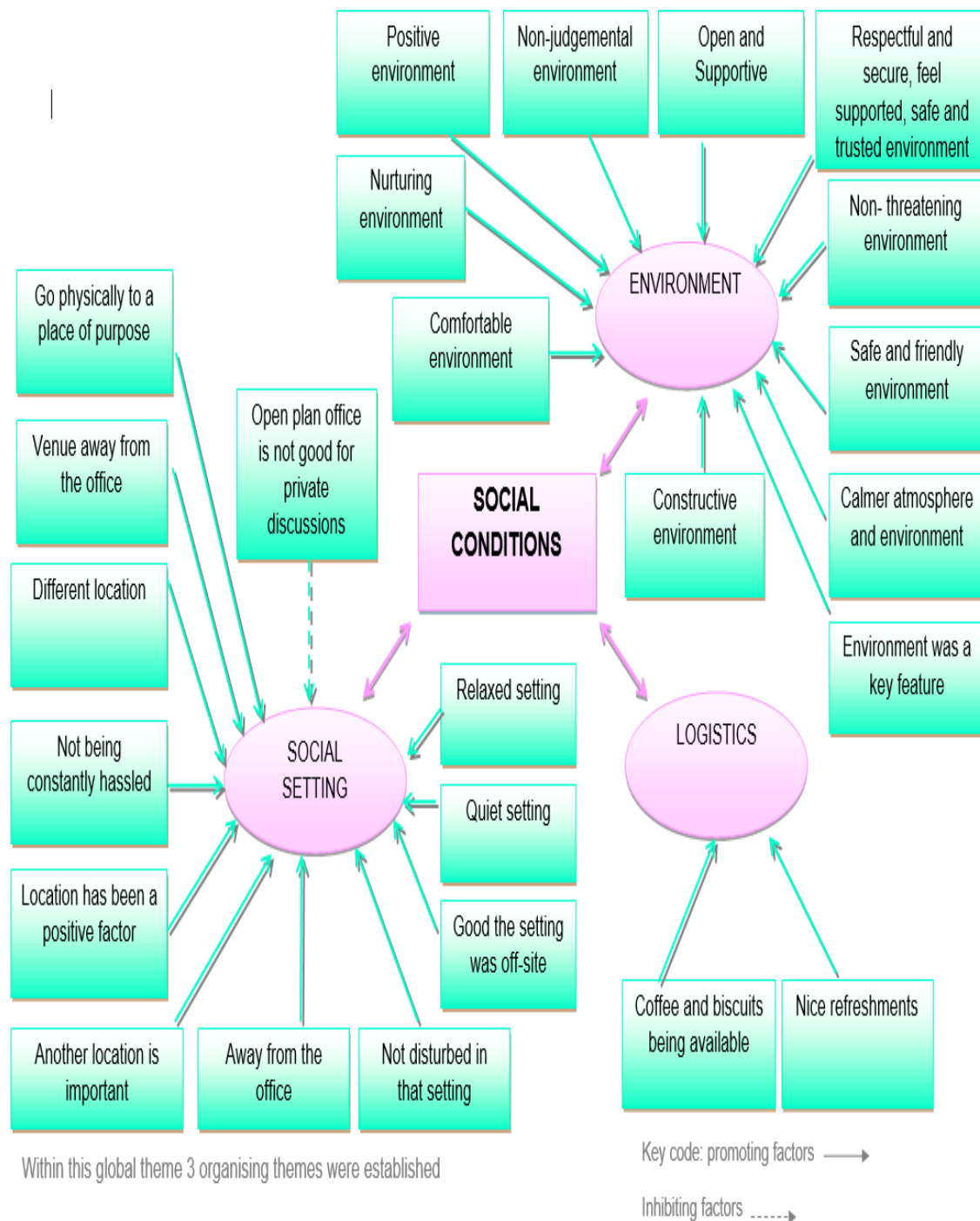
5.5.2.1 Organising theme: Social conditions promoted a 'Supportive Environment'

A range of basic themes conveyed the message that a supportive environment was a key context for supporting the outcomes of PGS. EPs discussed the importance of PGS promoting a safe, respectful, non-judgemental and open environment.

I think the environment was really important, it felt good to have a non-judgemental, respectful and secure environment … it ensured and promoted … a safe and trusted and nurturing environment …this was a very important contextual factor.

I think the calm atmosphere supported the PGS process. The environment was an important factor … as I felt supported. I also felt valued when I gave my opinion about a particular case.

PGS not only promoted a very comfortable working environment but a safe working environment.

5.5.2.2 Organising theme: Social conditions promoted a positive 'Social Setting'

PGS being held at an off-site venue was regarded as an essential contextual feature. All the EPs stressed the importance of accessing PGS away from the open-plan office environment.

Definitely, I think a number of factors have been helpful in facilitating PGS, getting out of this building has been a big factor because this is quite an oppressive working environment and I think its associated with quite a few negative factors, …. being away from here and somewhere else is good. Having PGS away from the office was a very important feature …when you're away you are not being hassled constantly by people nipping in and out with queries or phone calls.

I think the social setting and venue promoted the use of PGS, I think it was important to have it at a venue away from office…somewhere you can feel relaxed.

I think PGS has been good and that it has been off site... so... yes, the environment is an important context …. It has been good to be away from the office, it's nice and quiet, you feel like you're not going to be disturbed.

5.5.2.3 Organising theme: 'Logistics' supported the social conditions

A range of basic themes conveyed the message that EPs valued the organisation of PGS such as, the room and refreshments (location, tea, coffee, biscuits, etc.).

I think the contextual factors such as, the logistics were important…the location was quiet, the chairs were arranged in a way that was favourable to everyone, creating a circle, all the non-verbal body language such as, being able to have good eye contact and feeling listened to…. also feeling relaxed ..having a cup of coffee and a biscuit, all those sort of things, were valued and really important features.

…the organisation of PGS the room also made it work, having our basic needs met. We've always had a cup of tea or you know biscuits and things like that, they do make a difference, don't they? Yes, you organise it and providing the tea, coffee and biscuits has been important too. It needs someone to organise it.

You always bring nice refreshments, which is nice, because everybody feels kind of looked after right at the onset.

...you provide us with nice refreshments coffee and biscuits… the location felt good... I always felt more relaxed on my journey home.

…. having nice refreshments, tea, coffee, biscuits, cakes was especially nice and very thoughtful.

5.5.2.4 Summary of the Context: 'Social Conditions'

The contexts in relation to the social conditions were considered enabling features affecting the outcome of PGS. Findings revealed the importance of the social conditions (environment, social setting and logistics). PGS being conducted in a side room off the open plan office was deemed an inhibiting factor. Fleming et al., (2010) suggested that the setting is important as it could influence the content, process, purpose, value and outcomes of peer group supervision. Supportive working environments and positive working conditions are where people want to stay (Farouk, 2004).

5.5.3 Mechanisms: Thematic Network: 'Commitment'

This global theme, 'Commitment' was produced from three organising themes and fifteen basic themes, one inhibiting theme was highlighted. EPs reported that commitment was an important mechanism to support the outcomes and the use of PGS within an EPS.

Figure 5:13: Mechanisms: Thematic Network: 'Commitment'
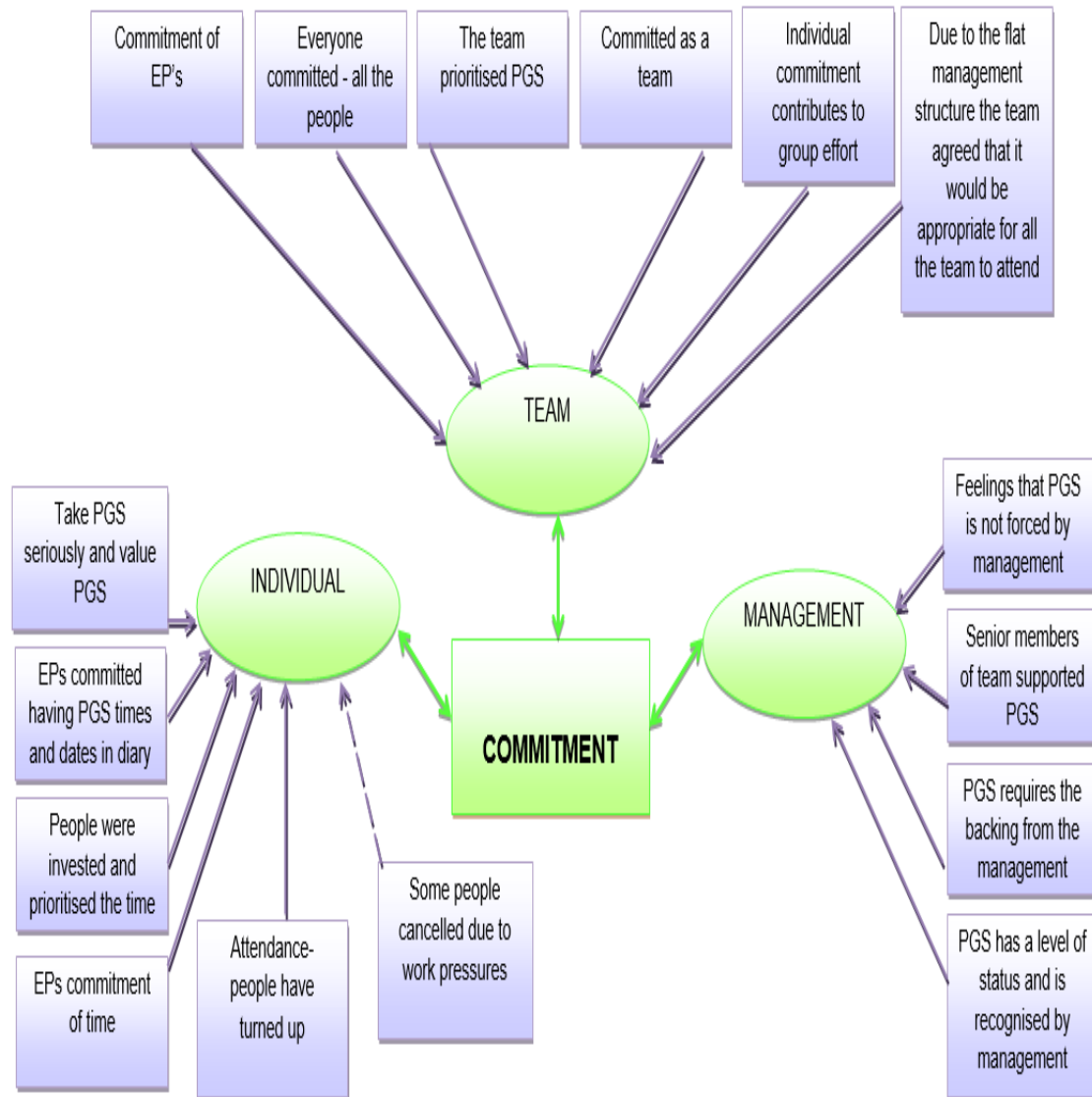
5.5.3.1 Organising theme: 'Team'

All the EPs perceived, team commitment as an enabling mechanism to support the outcomes of PGS.

I think the team being committed to PGS …they demonstrated this by prioritising it…we all valued it … roughly in an equal way.

I was thinking just in terms … of relationships within the team… because we're all probably very supportive of each other and demonstrate committed as a team.

...key features such as the relationships and the commitment of EPs... … being committed and showing that PGS was valued by the team …yes, the commitment from people.

...it's the commitment of all people that makes it work … all EPs should prioritise PGS.

5.5.3.2 Organising theme: 'Individual'

It was found that individual commitment by the EPs was an important mechanism that supported the outcomes of PGS. One EP commented on an inhibiting factor regarding the difficulty of individuals committing to PGS due to additional work pressures.

...people were committed to PGS ...they had all the times and dates and put them in their diary… people have been good I think at sticking to the times and seeing the benefits of PGS…. EPs must continue to prioritise PGS.

...attendance at PGS highlighted that people were invested and people made the space and prioritised the time…. individual committed contributes to group effort.

... individual commitment helped a great deal in making a success of PGS.

I think lack of attendance could have inhibited PGS. However, overall, attendance was good as most people turned up, this demonstrated commitment to PGS.

Work pressures take priority over PGS ...but this should not be the case. PGS is very important for the team especially now…. I think PGS was very beneficial and we should continue to make it a future priority.

5.5.3.3 Organising theme: 'Management'

This theme described how the commitment from management was an important mechanism in contributing towards the outcomes of PGS.

…feeling that PGS is not being forced on us by the management was good… it being supported by management was good… it should be the EP's desire and commitment to be there.

There was perhaps a discussion amongst some of the team members about it being open just to main grade EP's as opposed to those higher up... but the majority of the

team felt that it was appropriate to extend it to everybody which I was really grateful for…as a senior I wanted the opportunity to attend the PGS sessions. It is something definitely that I relish ... I know others have enjoyed the PGS sessions as well.

...obviously senior members of the team have allowed us time to attend and have valued PGS.

I think it's… like I said before it about giving PGS an appropriate level of status and for it to be recognised, really more broadly by management. This has been our time as practicing psychologists.

As a manager, I can see that it has been good for the team and that people have been committed and valued it. They have said how beneficial they have found it to be. I am very supportive of PGS.

5.5.3.4 Summary of Mechanisms: 'Commitment'

EPs reported certain mechanisms they believed contributed to and inhibited the outcomes of PGS. Findings revealed the importance of commitment to PGS. Cancellations and PGS non-attendance was due to workload and time pressures; this was highlighted as an inhibiting factor.

Did the organisation, preparation and the joint contribution of the PGS contract help to support the commitment to PGS? Farouk (2004) outlined the importance of drawing up of a supervision contract as it is an essential requirement for efficient group work and for individual commitment.

5.5.4 Mechanisms: Thematic Network: 'Time'

The global theme, 'Time' was produced from three organising themes and fourteen basic themes; one inhibiting theme emerged such as, time pressures.

Figure 5.14: Mechanisms: Thematic Network: 'Time'
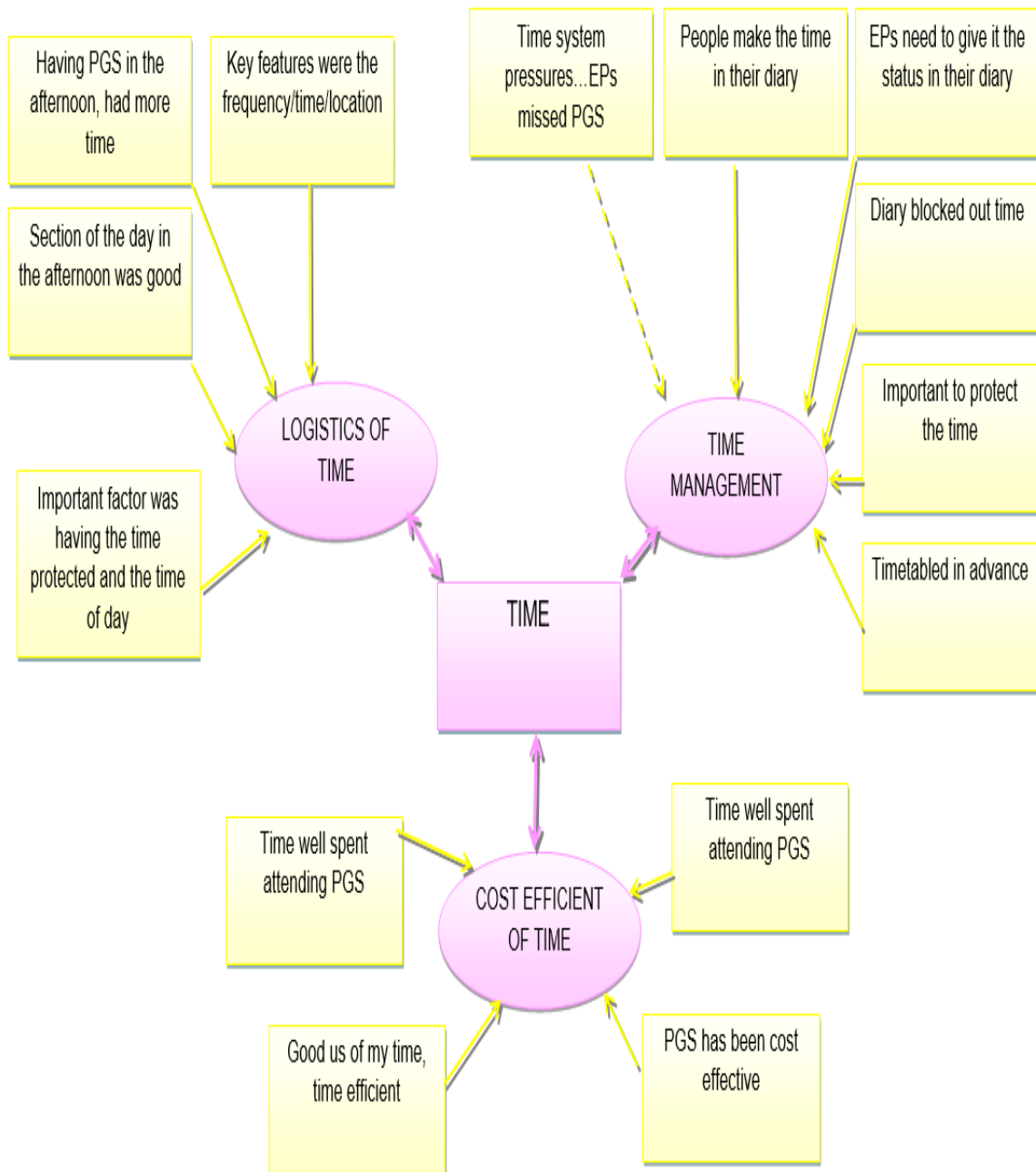
5.5.4.1 Organising theme: 'Logistics'

This theme conveyed frequency, time and the logistics as an important mechanism to support the outcomes of PGS. Again, EPs highlighted that the PGS sessions being conducted away from the office had a positive impact on the outcomes.

I don't think we would have got the same positive outcomes if PGS had been at (named work setting). The time, frequency and location were also very important …moreover as I mentioned and stressed... being away from (named work setting) ... we have got a small physical space and sometimes I can't think …you can't help hearing and listening to other people's phone calls and conversations.

...having time to organise PGS.

…but because PGS is like a section of the day, ... it is well timed in the afternoon …good location... its having the protected time ... you have got more of an opportunity haven't you …to sort of get the additional support from colleagues.

I think having the time and of course the location and logistics have been a big positive factor.

5.5.4.2 Organising theme: 'Time management'

This theme discussed the importance of giving status to PGS by not only scheduling the time but protecting the time for PGS. Time pressures regarding unexpected deadlines were highlighted as a constraining mechanism.

It's about time management, having it timetabled into your diary, those things are really important for making PGS work which impact on the outcomes …. because you know it is valuable … you know… you're actually having to go physically to a place for a purpose …so it gives PGS some status within your busy time schedule.

...the time was protected and people need to try and keep the time.

...PGS highlighted that people were invested and people can make the space and able to prioritise the time...I think it helps if you try to keep it as protect time in your diary.

Yeah, I think for PGS to continue it's clearly important that we have the time …and that's it's kind of timetabled in… advance, you know all the things that facilitate and support the process.

5.5.4.3 Organising theme: 'Cost Efficient'

The organising theme, of PGS being 'Cost Efficient' was made up from four basic themes. The key messages conveyed the importance of PGS being beneficial, a good us of time and cost-efficient.

I think… it gave us nurturing time away from the 'hustle and bustle' it was beneficial time well spent and time efficient.

I really valued PGS, for me it helped me with my casework and I thought it was time well spent… PGS was more structured and focused, very effective I felt PGs was very useful, I had personally got a lot out of it... more than 1:1 supervision.

...the timing of PGS… that it was organised towards the end of the day... so that you know you can relax and reflect... you have the time and space… you have that sense of feeling, Oh, well I can relax now, with my colleagues. I found it a good use of my time.

...the time was very well spent. Very useful and beneficial to everyone *who attended. People often talked about PGS sessions being very useful and resourceful.*

…it was time well spent and PGS always had a sense of purpose and direction….it has also been time cost-effective as I learnt a lot by listening to how others formulated their ideas.

5.5.4.4 Summary of Mechanisms: 'Time'

EPs reported certain mechanisms they believed enabled and inhibited the outcomes of PGS. Findings revealed that time (logistics, cost-effective and time management) were all essential features that supported the outcomes of PGS.

5.5.5 Mechanisms: Thematic Network: 'Team Dynamics'

The global theme, 'Team Dynamics' was produced from two organising themes and 13 basic themes. EPs reported that team dynamics and relationships were a significant mechanism to support the outcomes and use of PGS within an EPS.

Figure 5:15: Mechanisms: Thematic Network: 'Team Dynamics'
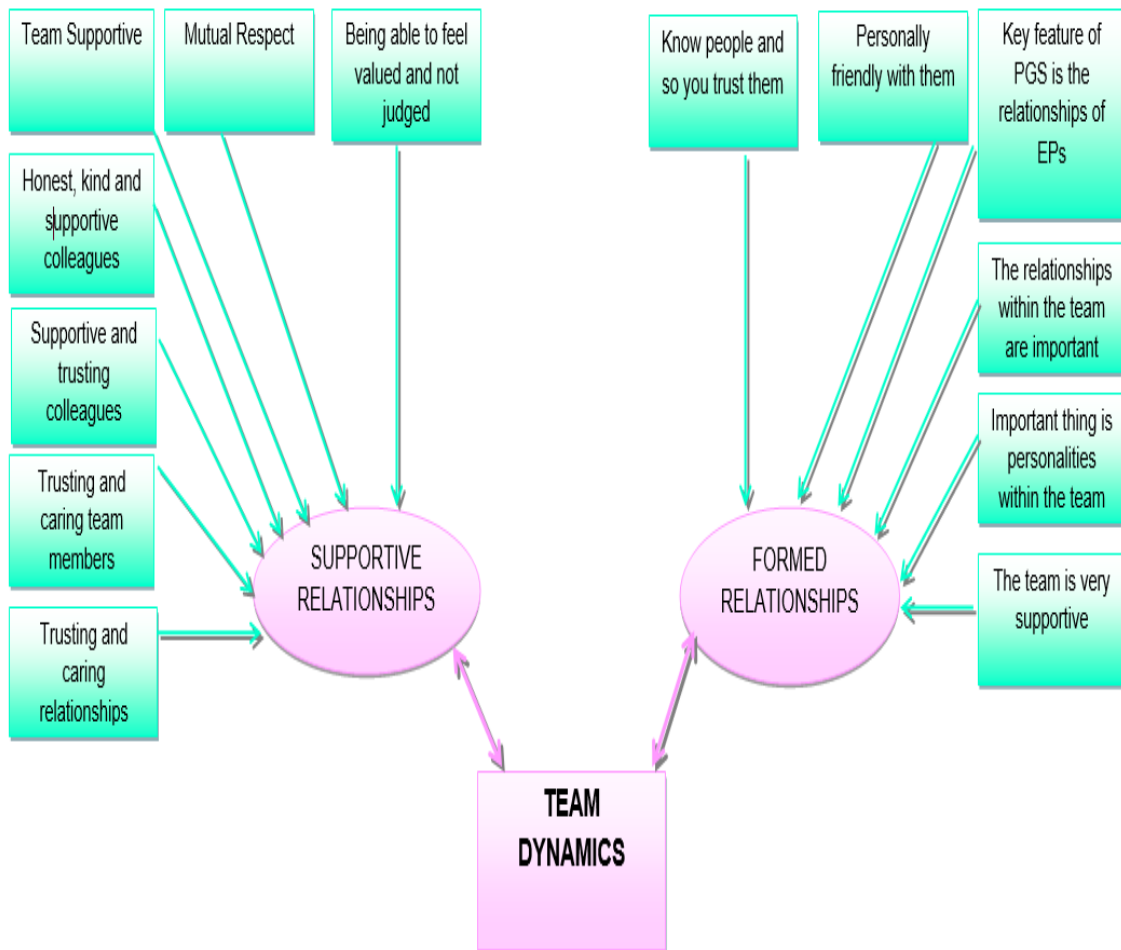
Within this global theme, 2 organising themes were established   Key code: promoting factors ⟶

5.5.5.1 Organising theme: Team Dynamics 'Supportive Relationships'

This theme conveyed group dynamics and supportive relationships as an important mechanism to support the outcomes of PGS in an EPS. Feelings of safety, being honest and having trusting colleagues were also highlighted.

I think for me an important thing is the personalities of the people involved because if we did not have… supportive, trusting colleagues I would have decided to opt out the process.

I think it does help that you know the people... you engage with them in that process, you trust them and have a trusting relationship with them… it is people who you are friendly with … and you have a lot of respect for them ... the whole process has got to be about everyone trusting each other.

.. ...it's the commitment of all people...group dynamics that makes it work and trusting relationships that also makes it work…....relationships... trusting your peers are all-important mechanism of PGS.

In terms of like …the relationships within the team I think PGS went well … because we are all probably very supportive of each other and committed as a team.

5.5.5.2 Organising theme: Team Dynamics 'Formed Relationships'

This theme highlighted important mechanisms such as, established relationships, mutual respect, and group cohesion to support the outcomes of PGS.

I think PGS gave us the opportunity to come together as cohesive team. I feel this is an important factor … it gives you a better appreciation of development and the importance of team work. … everyone should feel part of the team.

I think trusting relationships within the group are a very important mechanism …trust is what people take away with them… another key feature is group cohesion.

It was successful because of the team that we have here…it is naturally quite a supportive team ... you know, there's a lot of mutual respect and support within the team.

I think people felt well supported and not judged because we have a strong team, other teams comment on the positive dynamics of our team.

I feel quite strongly really, it depends on the personalities of people, the attitude of people …but also their personalities as well as other people's agendas …., so you know I think PGS went well because as a team we have developed secure, trusting relationships.

Team dynamics and the importance of everyone's role is an important feature to support PGS.

5.5.5.3 Summary of Mechanisms: 'Team Dynamics'

EPs reported how team dynamics such as, supportive and formed relationships were an important mechanism to support the process and the outcomes of PGS. This would support Rutter's (2007) view, as he highlighted supportive relationships between peer group members as an important factor to support the activity and process.

5.5.5.4 Findings relating to RQ2 and RQ3

The findings appeared to suggest that the contextual features and enabling mechanisms not only supported the overall structure and process of PGS, but they also had an impact on the outcomes. EPs highlighted the following five global themes such as,

1. the social conditions (environment, social setting and logistics) were described as particularly accommodating;
2. the non-hierarchal PGS model was described as a positive framework;
3. the commitment of individuals, the team and management were all described as an enabling mechanism;
4. time, such as PGS being cost-efficient, people allocated time and demonstrated commitment to PGS;
5. team dynamics, such as supportive relationships were highlighted as key mechanisms to support the outcomes of PGS.

5.5.6 Data for RQ4

RQ4 aimed to take account of the EPs views in relation to their perceived benefits and outcomes of PGS. A range of both professional and personal outcomes were discussed, however, it proved difficult to single out and clarify the differences between a professional and personal outcome. All the EPs fused both the professional and personal outcomes together; therefore, I had no choice but to combine the outcomes. I will now outline the following enabling outcomes that emerged from the data.

5.5.6.1 Personal and professional Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Supportive'

PGS supported the EPs emotional well-being; this global theme was produced from four organising themes (therapeutic, motivating, reassuring and emotional containment) and twenty-five basic themes.

As highlighted in Figure 5.10, EPs reported several enabling outcomes; they did not highlight any inhibiting outcomes. A summary of the supportive outcomes is discussed in section 5.5.6.6.

Figure 5:16: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Supportive'
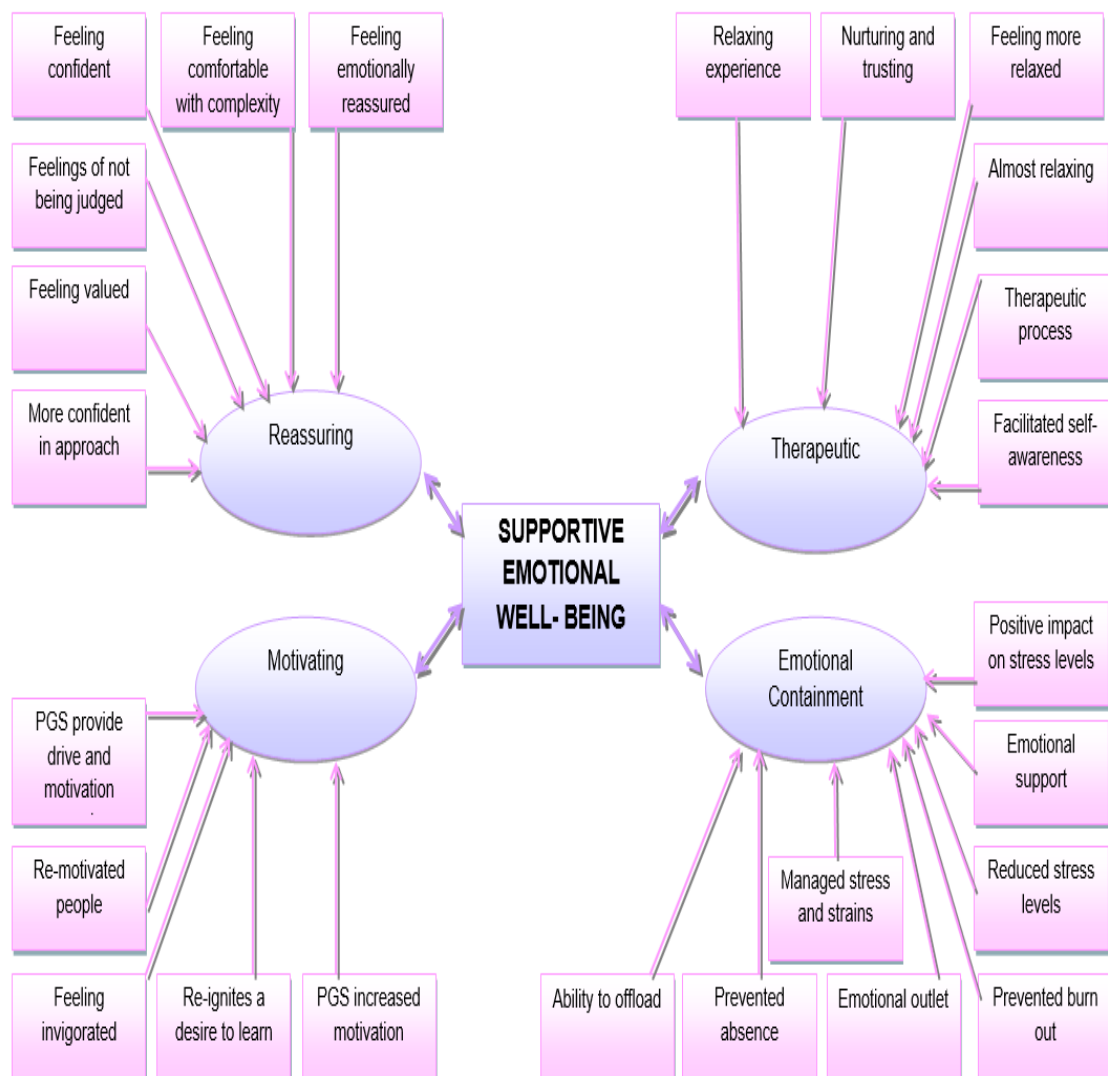
5.5.6.2 Organising theme: Supportive 'Reassuring'

A range of basic themes conveyed the message of PGS supporting EPs emotional well-being. EPs reported feeling more confident and emotionally reassured. They all stressed that they felt a valued member of PGS.

> *…it was reassuring to know and not that I want other people to feel anxious, …but it's reassuring to know that other people worry about similar sorts of things and that everyone struggles, no matter what stage in their career, that no matter how many times you have been presented with a referral such as, (name) you can still feel perplexed by it in some way …. It is nice to feel comfortable with complexity rather than be worried over it.*

> *...reassuring, yes, emotionally reassuring, I think that other people who are competent and very experienced struggle at times…, they seem to struggle with the same things so that gives you confidence. I think that I'm not alone really… I think PGS was very supportive and reassuring when listening to others formulate their ideas ... I also felt people appreciated my ideas and that I was a valued member of the group.*

> *...talking through something together, it makes you feel more comfortable and confident about your practice so a bit reassured I suppose…., but I felt confident and reassured that we were all kind of on the same page.*

> *I gained just a bit more confidence maybe…., and the fact that it's fine to struggle over cases because everyone is going to struggle … it was good... I felt I was able to contribute to the process … I felt appreciated.*

5.5.6.3 Organising theme: 'Therapeutic'

EPs reported that PGS was relaxing and therapeutic; they also alluded to PGS providing emotional support.

> *I think the opportunity to have some time to relax …. because you as you know, it's important, …PGS was almost like a therapeutic process that you go through as well as a professional staged process…. at a professional and personal level, I found PGS quite refreshing…. almost relaxing…. I think it provided emotional support for the team.*

> *I think in a way, your ...stress level reduce when you are able to talk about different things … you're not necessarily going to take them home with you … go over something in your mind because you haven't had the opportunity to discuss it with other people… you know to clarify what your role is, what you need to do, so you can leave it when you go home and not think about it...so you know, PGS has got a positive impact I think on colleagues' stress levels.. yes, a therapeutic outcome.*

> *...another key feature and again has been the openness and emotional support of the team, you know that someone will feel comfortable to bring a case and say I'm struggling with this because in another situations you might not get it …if people aren't bringing things or being open or sort of admitting that there struggling with something or wanting some support then it would be pointless…it's just about having that time out of the week isn't it, where you look forward to and feel a bit calm and more relaxed.*

5.5.6.4 Organising theme: 'Motivating'

EPs reported that they felt motivated both during and after the PGS sessions. This theme was considered an important outcome of PGS as EPs reported it gave them the drive to want to train others on PGS and deliver it to other settings.

> *I would like to learn more about PGS, yes it has given me the incentive to deliver it to other services, such as, (name) team.*

> *...good to celebrate something that has had a good outcome because sometimes only in the process of speaking about something do you actually realise what you've thought and what you've actually achieved… so it can be motivating sort of…what's the word… affirming for people.*

> *…this has been, for us as practising psychologists a very useful tool…PGS has a really critical function because it has a purpose; it's very inspiring and motivating.*

> *...for me it kind of renewed I suppose a sense and excitement about the job, plus promoting job satisfaction, I feel that I am applying my psychology again and not just kind of carrying on in the same old way, doing the same thing … I am now exploring new opportunities and feeling supported in doing so ….it has definitely been something that I've benefited from both personally and professionally ... it difficult to separate the two concepts.*

5.5.6.5 Organising theme: 'Emotional Containment'

A range of basic themes conveyed the message that PGS promoted self-awareness and it also provided emotional containment.

> *It was about self-awareness …managing my own emotional well-being. I honestly do think that managing the stresses and strains and being able to share those and genuinely being supported by the team …. I do think at a practical level PGS could lessen absences from the team. My perceptions of PGS has changed I think to begin with I thought it was going to be supportive on a practical level such as, sharing ideas and resources…I wasn't really expecting any emotional support to come from it, … and feeling less stressed after PGS after discussing things. So yes, when I think of PGS, I think about the emotional containment side of it.*

> *I think it has given people permission to have an emotional outlet when things are difficult but also when things are perceived as not so as complex and difficult …it felt good to discuss strategies and think about cases that went well ... you forget these cases.*

> *…it's just about having that time out of the week isn't it where you look forward to and feel a bit more relaxed and chance to sort of stop and think and reflect, ...I think otherwise emotionally you just feel burnt out don't you especially if you're just running around schools.*

> *Another function of PGS was that it provided and was good for containing people's emotions. People need that space and feel safe in their space to discuss their thinking.*

...for me I think it helped to reduce my stress levels. Not that I am stressed all the time, but sometimes just a little niggle that you take home or think about it at the weekend; that can be stressful. For me it was about off-loading and feeling emotionally contained. If I get stressed or for some reason I am having a difficult time or if I think such and such a thing, I would get stressed over things that get to me. If it this isn't managed I know that it would have an impact on sickness absence ... for me… yes, PGS has been a good thing... it was introduced just at a critical time ... you know …team morale was low due to the many changes.

5.5.6.6 Summary of personal and professional Outcomes: 'Supportive'

EPs reported that PGS promoted self-awareness; this would support the view of Benshoff (2001); Benshoff & Paisley (1996); Christensen and Kline (2001). It was also reported that PGS provided emotional containment and promoted emotional well-being. EPs also reported that they felt reassured during the PGS process as it helped them to normalise any feelings of inadequacy (Agnew, Vaught, Getzz & Fortune, 2000; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997; Yeh, Chang, Chiang, Drost, Spelliscy, Carter, and Chang, 2008); it helped to reduce stress levels and feelings of isolation (Counselman & Weber, 2004; Soni, 2013; Stringer et al., 1992; Tempest et al., 1987) and EPs reported that PGS had been invaluable during moments of high anxiety (Billow & Mendelsohn, 1987; Yeh et al., 2008).

5.5.7 Personal and professional Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Team Cohesion'

The theme, 'Team cohesion' was highlighted as an enabling outcome of PGS. The global theme was produced from three organising themes (it promoted supportive relationships, promoted a supportive ethos and strengthened relationships) and twenty-one basic themes. As highlighted in Figure 5.15. EPs reported several enabling outcomes; no inhibiting outcomes were reported. A summary of the theme team cohesion is discussed in section 5.5.7.4.

Figure 5:17: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Team Cohesion'
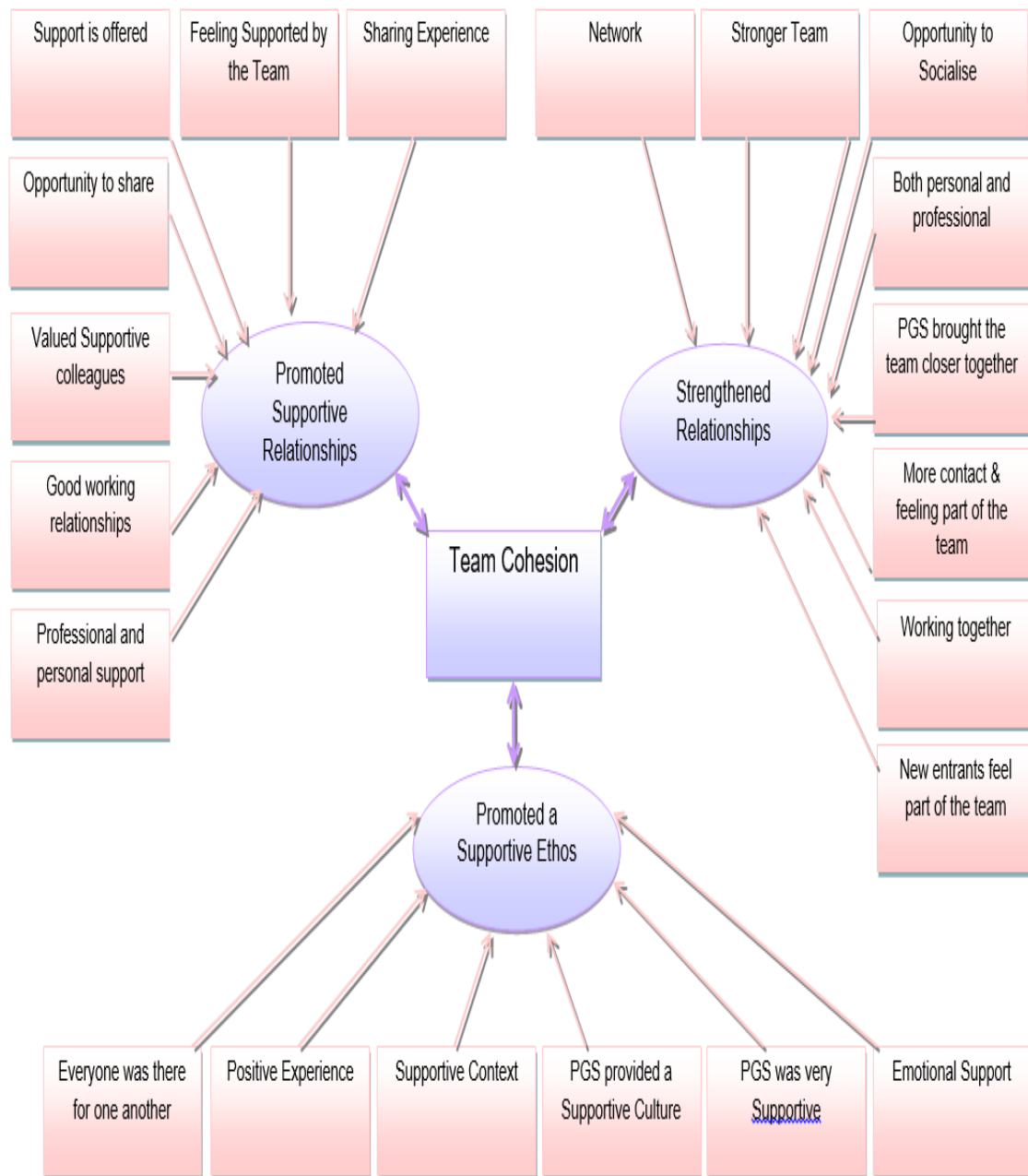
Within this global theme, 3 organising themes were established   Key code: promoting factors ⟶

5.5.7.1 Organising theme: 'Promoted Supportive Relationships'

A range of basic themes conveyed the message that PGS promoted supportive
relationships with colleagues. This was highlighted as an enabling outcome.

> *The relationships within the team were an important factor for PGS to work. both
> professionally and personally. PGS is a really useful framework to help build and
> form relationships …so it has definitely helped me to feel supported and to get to
> know colleagues both on a personal level as well as at a professional level.*

…. the lines were supportive ones…., saying, I've tried this sort of thing, have you thought about doing it this way? So, it's about recognising that there are alternative ways to work ….and supporting others… I did find PGS very supportive and glad that I was part of the process.

…a supportive context ……you're always coming away with something because there's a discussion that's been of value ...yes, from supportive colleagues…. in a supportive context.

5.5.7.2 Organising theme: 'Strengthened Relationships'

This theme highlighted relationships within the team and how PGS helped to facilitate the strengthening of these relationships. This was considered an important outcome as most of the EPs reported that they had felt the PGS forum helped to unite the team.

..., yeah, it's about trust and attunement, I think, because it's all about bringing the team together. Yeah, groups are very powerful …, they work in a cohesive kind of way and equally groups can exclude individuals and be quite destructive. But I think our team had a natural spontaneous humorous element to it and …, I think that worked very well and indeed it brought us closer.

…professionally and personally it was a good opportunity for me to meet my colleagues, hear about what their interests are…opportunity to not only hear about their professional practice but to get to know people personally, it united us as team.

I suppose something like PGS just allows us to sort of stay a bit of a tighter unit in the sort of an ever-changing system around us… you know if were kind of stable and tight as a team then hopefully you can overcome whatever might come our way in the future …so I think PGS just allowed us the space to strengthen relationships and sort of be an even stronger team and probably a closer team than what we were before. .

5.5.7.3 Organising theme: 'Promoted a Supportive Ethos'

EPs discussed how team cohesion enhanced a supportive ethos.

PGS had a positive impact on the team. I think colleagues' stress levels were well supported during the PGS sessions…I felt that PGS provided emotional support and a supportive culture.

PGS helped to promote a supportive culture and ethos. I really valued it…. through PGS a creative and supportive culture emerged …we were able to ask each other things such as, asking sharing resources... everyone benefits…

…in a kind of informal way, it's definitely enhanced the teams' ethos …especially for our new entrants … feels more a cohesive the team now…during the PGS sessions everyone was there for one another...it promoted a very supportive environment.

5.5.7.4 Summary of personal and professional Outcomes: 'Team Cohesion'

EPs reported that PGS promoted team cohesion, strengthened relationships and promoted a supportive ethos. This relates well to Proctor (2000), who noted that group supervision/support can often help to build up relationships plus enhance friendships and companionship. Seligman (1978) considered the functions of relationship within peer groups and reported that the process helped to increase practitioners' levels of empathy, respect, genuineness and concreteness. These outcomes appear to be connected to humanistic philosophical principles and akin to Rogerian qualities (Rogers 2004).

As with any group process it is imperative to have an awareness of group processes, procedures and the potential threat and impact on group dynamics (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Tuckman, 1965). An outline of Tuckman's (1965) linear model of group development is briefly discussed in Appendix 16.

5.5.8 Personal and professional Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Educative, Developing New Skills/Approaches and CPD'

To address RQ4, EPs reported the following educative, enabling outcomes (no inhibiting outcomes were discussed):

- *Educative*: (developing new skills/approaches whilst also highlighting CPD needs). This global theme was generated from four organising themes (learning new skills, psychological models and theories, sharing resources and research opportunities, CPD and highlighting training needs) and twenty-eight basic themes.

- *Educative: (*Learning from others) this global theme was produced from five organising themes (opportunities to learn from others, to challenge EP's thinking, learning through discussion, sharing practice, knowledge and skills and developing an awareness of other people's practice) and twenty-five basic themes.

- *Educative: (reflection) this global theme emerged from three organising themes (reflection on items discussed, reflection on practice and case work, reflection on PGS Model, time, space and opportunity).*

When I asked EPs the question, "You thought PGS would allow you to develop new perspectives and acquire new knowledge, what do you think about that?" Many EPs replied "yes" and proceeded to describe how they felt PGS had supported this. EPs could give an account of how and why they thought this. They reported that PGS had enabled

them to develop a new skill set whilst providing CPD opportunities. A summary of the *educative* outcomes is discussed in section 5.5.8.5; 5.5.9.6 and 5.5.10.4.

Figure 5:18: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Educative, Developing New Skills/Approaches and CPD'
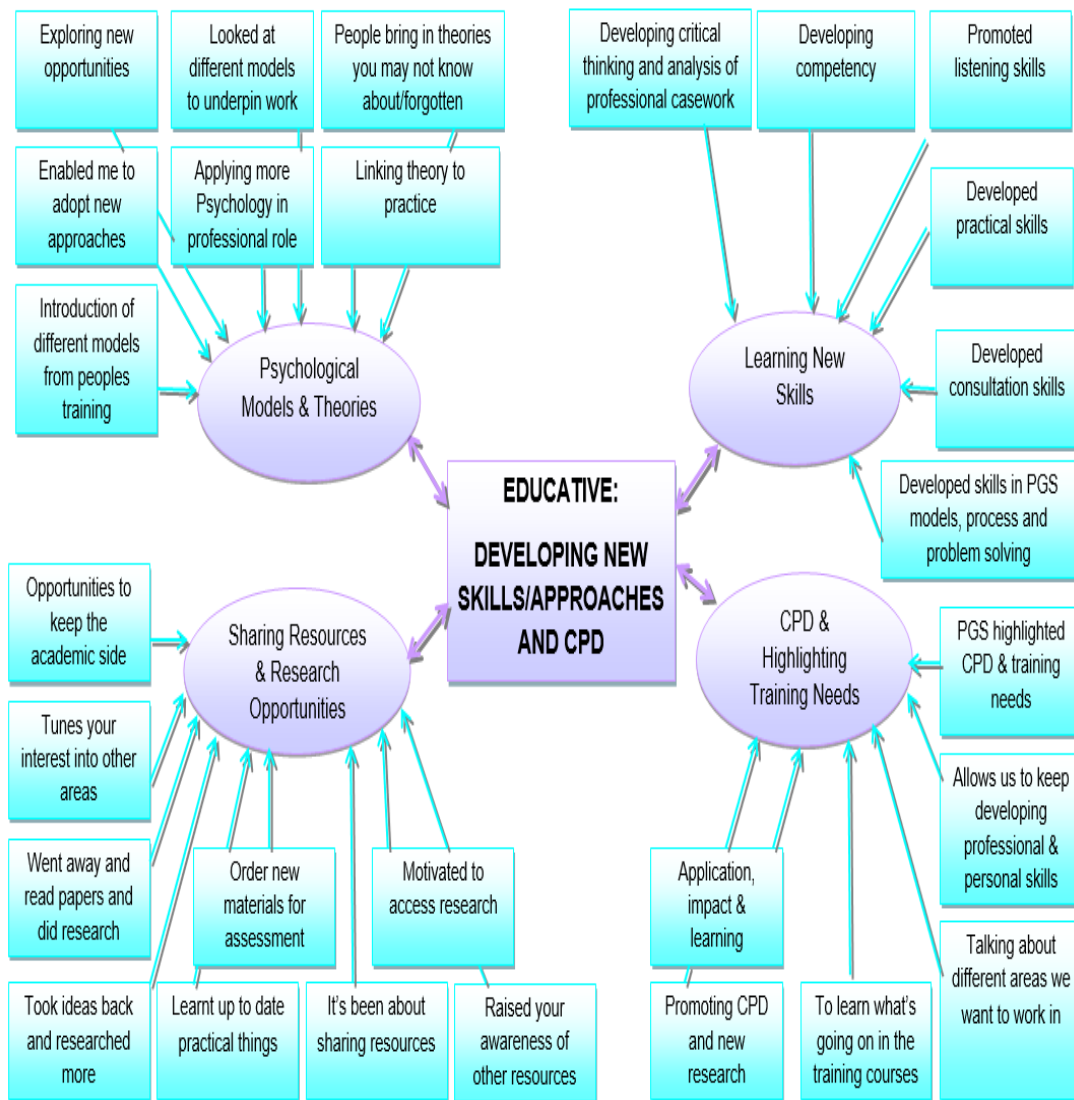
5.5.8.1 Organising theme: 'Psychological Models and Theories'

This theme related to PGS outcomes as it highlighted how EPs had expanded their knowledge of psychological models and frameworks.

> *…during PGS we had the opportunity for you and others to explain types of frameworks and theoretical models such as, Monson, Activity Theory, trans*

theoretical model of behaviour change, Comoria …and most importantly the formulation stages, presenting a problem, the contributing predisposing factors, the onset precipitating factors, protective factors… this helped me to organise and structure my thinking especially when trying to unpick complex case. I think gosh you know that model would be useful to apply in this situation.

Yeah, there has been learning in terms of… and we have been kind of looked at different of models of thinking … we've looked at the problem solving interactive factors framework and the realistic evaluation model …. sharing different frameworks, models of formulation and next steps ...in relation to casework…linking theory to practice …. people bring a different aspect of a theory that you may be aware of or you may not... or you may have some knowledge but forgotten it.

...you know just seeing other sorts of theoretical frameworks or other ways to formulate… you know other forms of problem solving, that other people use.

I know it has been helpful for me …. looking at all the different models that we've talked about, what's it called? … Solution focused model, the solution circles and the outcomes and the context and looking at things in that way… Realistic evaluation model …. yes, the realistic evaluation model, that has been really helpful and I've taken that away and thought I could use that in different pieces of work so yes, it's been really good.

5.5.8.2 Organising theme: 'Learning New Skills'

This theme highlighted the outcome in relation to EPs learning new skill set.

PGS has motivated me…like it has reignited my desire to learn.

So, for me PGS has had some really big outcomes …PGS has been useful and again you know just those opportunities for learning, I felt PGS promoted my listening skills and other skill sets …. I think PGS allowed us to keep developing our professional and personal skills…it's about developing our competency isn't it as well… PGS developed our consultation skills. I am going to try to use 'Circle of adults' in my practice.

PGS was a learning opportunity for developing new skills …. during PGS I've learnt quite a few practical things.

I found I have developed skills in relation to PGS models, the process and problem-solving frameworks. It has developed people's drive to learn and to read more around certain areas of interest.

5.5.8.3 Organising theme: 'CPD and Highlighting Training Needs'

This theme highlighted CPD and training needs as an outcome.

PGS was especially beneficial for CPD and highlighting further training. It's not always about reading research or reading papers, it's about application, impact and learning isn't it and continuous professional development.

…you know in terms of continuing your professional development I mean...it definitely has a role.

I think in the office there has been numerous conversations… people will say ..., "oh do you remember in PGS when we were talking about that …. what was that paper or what was that framework or approach we used. PGS has helped to create a learning culture …. we're all in the habit of asking each other for things and talking about different areas we want to work in…. people are now sharing training and promoting in-house CPD.

…to learn from the new people is really useful… knowing about what is new and what training is on offer at the university training courses.

…even the need to order new assessment materials, books and all those things have come from PGS. Training needs also …. I suppose in a way obviously, there's so many things that you just take for granted but when you think back it does all link to the PGS I think the learning culture has changed … it's hard to capture all the benefits of PGS … I think it has been great for the team.

5.5.8.4 Organising theme: 'Sharing Resources and Research Opportunities'

This theme related to EPs sharing resources and research opportunities.

...your awareness is being kind of raised in terms of like, other resources …, you know, I suppose resources in a general sense, in terms of like different tools you might use, a different kind of literature that you might look at or different resources, different training needs that might benefit other services within the local authority.

…you know if there's anything that's mentioned in PGS that one of us hasn't heard of then just sort of tunes your interest in to other areas that you might not have known about or even thought about. It is just about sharing knowledge and resources. The PGS forum has been useful as it has helped me to remember all the different resources and you know something that someone says might prompt you to think, 'Oh this reminds me of a session at Uni, or when we did this….

...there is something about self-evaluating through that process so I'm not surprised that people are now motivated to access research. It is about sharing resources and not being precious...

I think, oh I need to go out and research that or I need to go and look at that resource. I went away and read a couple of papers on the back of one of the cases presented by (name).

5.5.8.5 Summary of personal and professional Outcomes: 'Educative, Developing New Skills/Approaches and CPD'

EPs reported educative outcomes such as, developing new skills/approaches and in-house training and CPD. The educative outcome in this study supports the educative function of supervision outlined by Hawkins and Shohet, 2006; Kadushin, 1976; Proctor, 1988; Hanko, 1999 and Scaife & Scaife, 2001. Wiley & Ray (1986) stated that PGS is a tool used to foster professional and personal growth.

5.5.9 Thematic Network: 'Educative, Learning from Others'

The global theme, 'Educative, learning from Others' was produced from five organising
themes and twenty-five basic themes.

Figure 5:19: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Educative, Learning from Others'
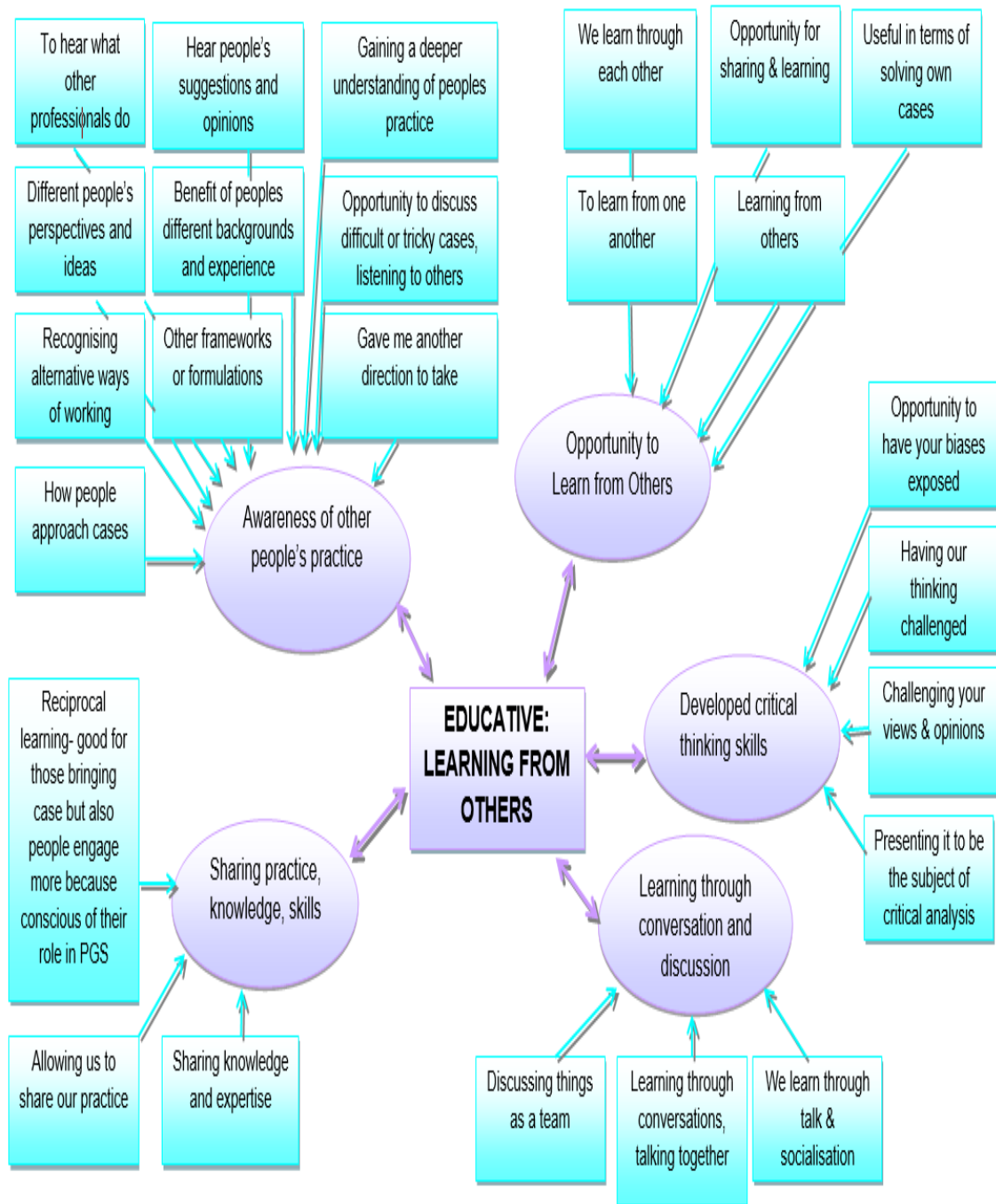
5.5.9.1 Organising theme: 'Awareness of Other People's Practice'

This theme highlighted a set of outcomes that related to EPs having the time and opportunity to listen to other peoples' practice plus their thinking and formulation of casework.

> *...at a professional and personal level, I think I have gained a lot in terms of opportunities to reflect …., opportunities to gain from peers' experience and practice … you get several different perspectives which is good. PGS has been useful for me as I have had some very difficult and complex cases of late… wondering what to do next or if I've missed anything.*

> *I did gain a deeper understanding of peoples' practice but not as a manager more so as a fellow professional … I also think that PGS sessions enabled me to understand my own practice in relation to others …. that was a good insight and outcome for me.*

> *…helpful to hear, at this stage in my career, how other psychologists practice and especially hear their thought processes in decision making ....to hear the diversity of what other people do within the team was a privilege… I have actually feel honoured and got a lot from hearing about another person's practice.*

5.5.9.2 Organising theme: 'Opportunity to Learn from Others'

This theme related to EPs having the opportunity to learn from each other.

> *The thing with PGS is we've got a range of different people with a range of different experience, background, training experience so when we have those discussions you're getting the benefit of that kind of, range of different kind of experience, different sorts of training. People are being introduced to different theoretical models through their training, EPs have had different opportunities and it's that …it's having that opportunity to kind of draw on that breadth of experience and knowledge. That has been really valuable because by having some experience and understanding of how the context and mechanisms may support the outcomes… this has been a new learning opportunity for me and something I will definitely use during LAC casework.*

> *I suppose it's just about accessing other people ideas and learning from them.*

> *...well I think for me, PGS obviously has not only been useful but valuable... because you're in that group situation you get the chance to hear about other people's views or other people's ideas or how they might do things in a different situation. You get the chance to learn from each other… I suppose obviously, you get to see different ways of working.*

> *I found it particularly useful in terms of formulating my own cases and the next steps. PGS had many positive outcomes; I just don't want it to finish... I am going to champion it to ensure we carry on with it. PGS continues to develop, the steps and the formulation process has been essential to its success.*

5.5.9.3 Organising theme: 'Sharing Practice, Knowledge and Skills'

This theme related to EPs having the time to share knowledge and skills.

. …to have the time and space to learn from the new people …really it is about keeping up to date and knowing what's going is going on in the training courses.

PGS has been really good for those individuals who took the time to bring the cases for discussion. …they were able to get what they wanted out of it. PGS has also been useful... I think because it has allowed people to engage in the process... because they're conscious of their role …PGS is reciprocal learning at its best.

….and it's about sharing knowledge, isn't it?

I have also enjoyed sharing my knowledge and past experiences…it's all about contribution I suppose.

5.5.9.4 Organising theme: 'Develop critical thinking skills'

This theme related to the EPs having the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills.

PGS gives you the opportunity to have those biases exposed if you like… because I think it's quite easy to sort of just go along with a very kind of like fixed idea about (name) … and I think … for me, what it does it re-affirms and re-asserts on a regular basis. I think I need to keep doing this or that; I need to keep questioning and to be critical about my own thinking, my own practice. I think with PGS you're getting a regular opportunity to engage in that kind of thinking and process.

…you're not just externalising your thinking you are presenting it to the group… the subject of a more critical analysis, so it wasn't just sort of putting it out there while somebody said, "Ah yeah, that sounds really complicated". People offered next steps and said, "Yes, but have you thought about?" … so yes, it was a challenge, yes, it made me consider other directions, it widened my hypothesis lens.

I think people do value PGS immensely, feeling supported, feeling as though opinions are reinforced and also challenged in some respects which has been a good thing for me.

...so, by having our thinking challenged in a safe way and having our actions and beliefs affirmed by colleagues… this is all part of the learning process, isn't it? It has helped me to be more analytical in my thinking.

5.5.9.5 Organising theme: 'Learning through discussion'

This theme related to EPs having the opportunity to learn through structured conversations and discussions.

…the conversations were structured but not rigid…we were able to develop questions and probe … there was a lot of exploring to do through discussion.

PGS has been a very useful process…. we had the opportunity to discuss cases.

I'm a big believer, and you know… this is one of my main research interests that we learn through each other. ...I think PGS gave us the opportunity to learn from each

other, that we learn through talk and we learn through socialisation and if we work in isolation from each other we're not getting those opportunities.

...talking and discussing things …. discussing something together has been really useful... yes PGS has had many good outcomes.

5.5.9.6 Summary of 'Educative, Learning from Others'

EPs reported educative outcomes such as, learning from others, sharing practice, knowledge and skills and developing critical thinking skills. This would support the views of Proctor (2008) who explained that group supervision offers a wide variety of learning opportunities and that others are receptive to different views as they want to know more about 'how others do it'.

5.5.10 Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Educative, Reflection'

The global theme, 'Educative, Reflection' was produced from three organising themes and sixteen basic themes.

Figure 5:20: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Educative, Reflection'
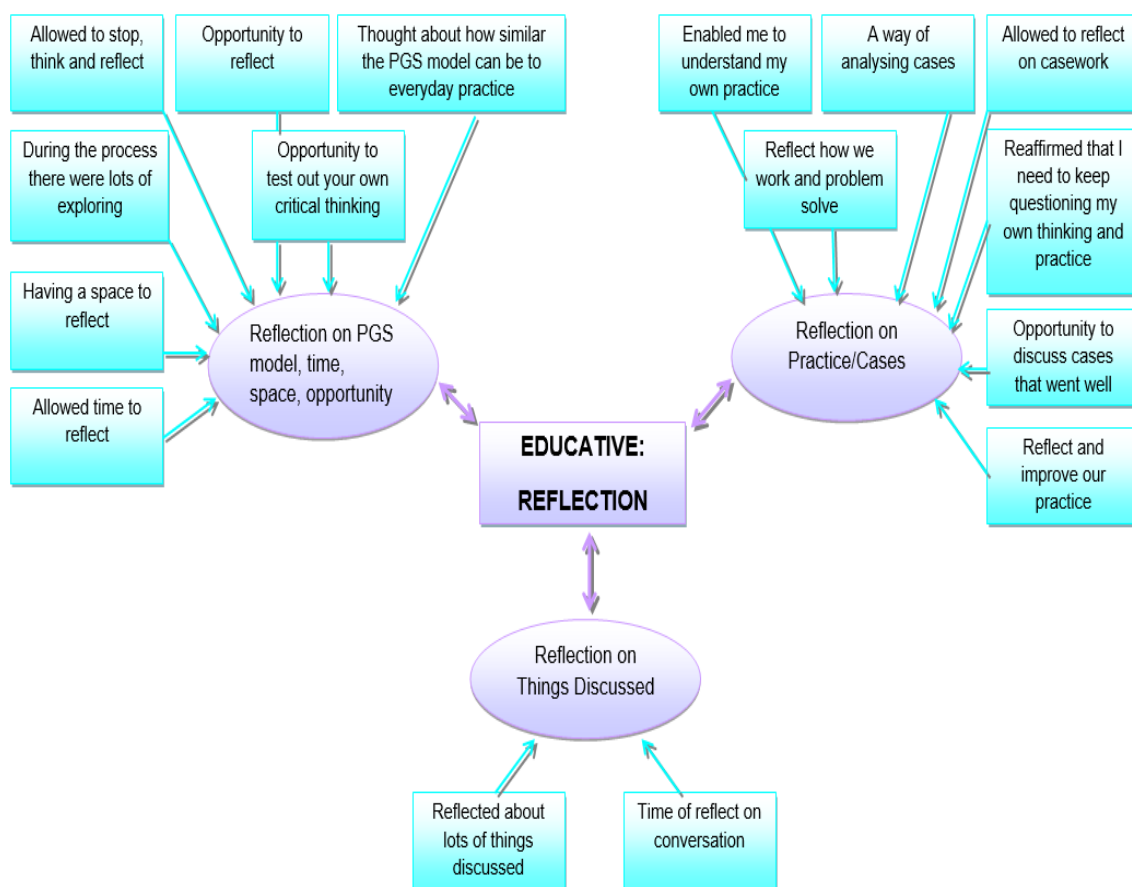
Within this global theme, 3 organising themes were established

Key code: promoting factors →

5.5.10.1 Organising theme: 'Reflection on PGS Model, time, space, opportunity'

This theme related to the PGS model and process. EPs reported that during PGS they were afforded the time and had the space and opportunity to think and reflect.

> *...to sort of stop, think and reflect and even afterwards you do reflect and you think about other cases, …similar cases … it's about making time isn't it… during the PGS process we had the opportunity to just stop and think.*

> *The PGS model provided time for reflection. I think I need to keep questioning and to be more critical about my own thinking, my own practice… it is about reflecting on practice…. having the opportunity to stop and time to relax with my colleagues.*

> *…we had time to reflect on our practice during the PGS process.*

> *...I suppose PGS gave me the time to think and reflect about how similar the PGS forum can be to our everyday EP practice. The PGS model does get you to think, reflect and formulate your ideas during the process.*

> *The PGS model provided an opportunity for us to reflect on our practice.*

5.5.10.2 Organising theme: 'Reflection on Practice/Cases'

This theme related to the EPs having the time to discuss and reflect on their casework and practice. To follow the suggested next steps and bringing the case back to the group.

> *...we're looking at a cohesive group of people analysing and reflecting how we work, how we problem solve …I think one of the things that we do anyway a lot in our profession is to ponder and reflect upon our casework and practice. It was good to hear how the new steps went and how the cases went.*

> *...having the opportunity to go away and reflect cases that went well and report on them.*

> *PGS not only allowed us time to reflect on casework, but also allowed me to provide an update during the next session. I liked to hear how cases developed.*

> *I also think the PGS sessions enabled reflection … to go away and leave a case and come back to it.*

> *...you know even sort of reflecting afterwards about different cases that you have heard…, it makes you feel more comfortable and confident about your own practice.*

5.5.10.3 Organising theme: 'Reflection on Things Discussed'

This theme highlighted the outcomes relating to EPs having the time to reflect on their discussions during PGS.

> *I had the time to just sort of reflect on conversations and discussions. Yes, cases we have discussed… that has just dawned on me really.*

…listening to everybody's views, listening is not the same as hearing …yes giving our attention to others. It has been good to listen to the discussions and reflect on discussions.

…also, having the time to reflect on what was discussed to consider other people's opinions.

It was important to have the time at the end of PGS to reflect on the discussions and the different questions people asked.

5.5.10.4 Summary of 'Educative, Reflection'

EPs explained that PGS model and process afforded them time to reflect on their discussions and practice in schools. EP5 described how PGS had helped her reflect on her own practice even though she had yet to bring a case a PGS session. This would support the views that PGS fosters reflective practice (Carrington, 2004) and the importance of sharing reflections and feedback from other colleagues (Hawkins & Shohet, 2010). A hallmark of good supervision is reflection (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010). Scaife (2009) stressed that space for reflection is more important than the choice of model.

5.5.11 Personal and professional outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Organic'

RQ4 aimed to encompass information about personal and professional outcomes, EPs reported the following positive outcomes:

This theme highlighted the outcomes relating to the organic, natural growth and offshoot of PGS.

Organic 1: this global theme emerged from four organising themes (PGS links to 1:1 supervision, it had a sense of purpose, promoted learning opportunities and provided next steps) and seventeen basic themes.

Organic 2: this global theme was produced from three organising themes (PGS is valued and is an ongoing feature of service delivery, it impacted on practice and EPs perceived it as a positive experience) and 24 basic themes.

As highlighted in Figure 5.21, EPs reported several positive outcomes. EPs did not discuss any inhibiting outcomes. A summary of the organic outcomes is discussed in section 5.5.11.8.

Figure 5:21: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Organic 1'
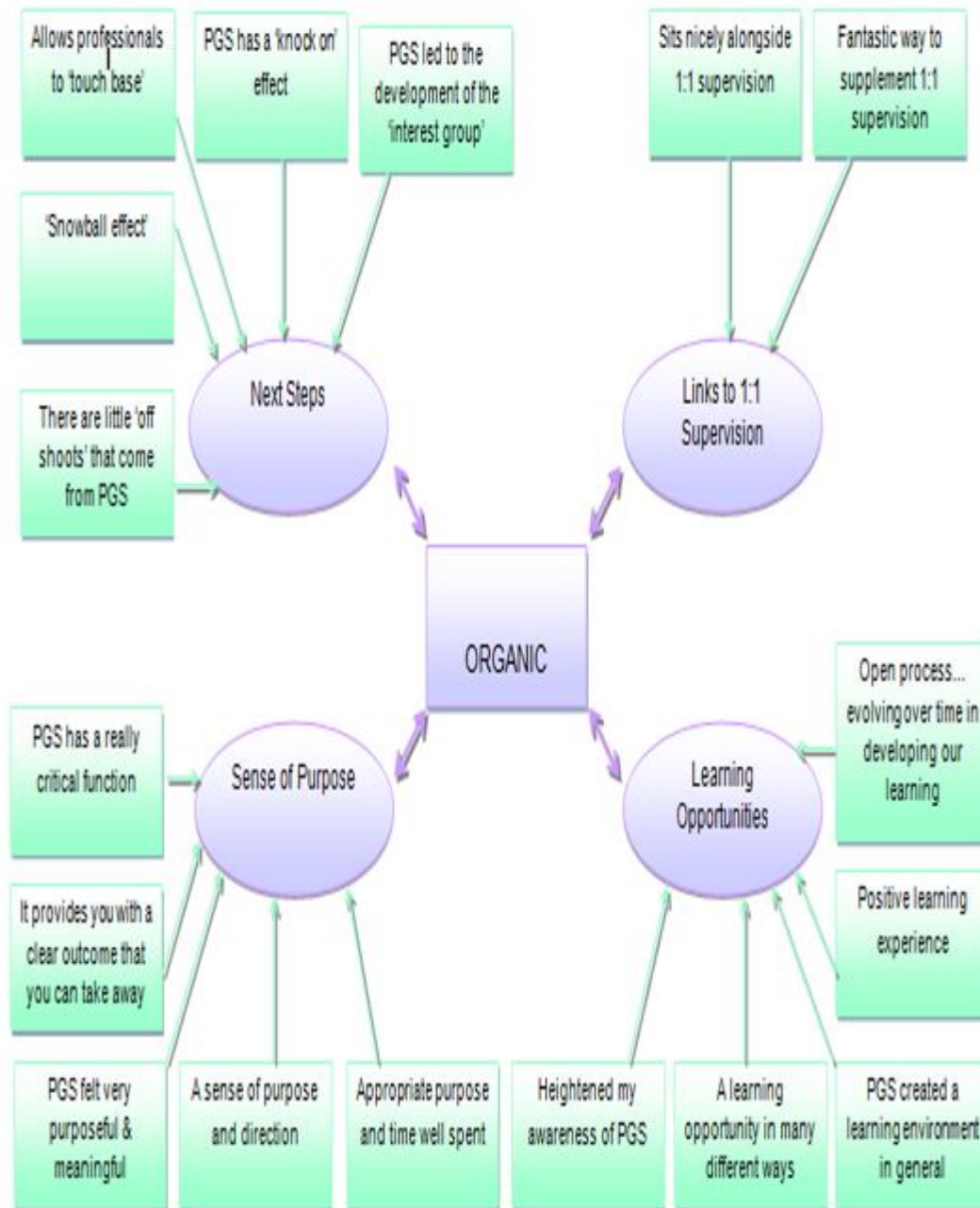
Within this global theme, 4 organising themes were established

Key code: promoting factors →

5.5.11.1 Organising theme: 'Next Steps'

This theme highlighted opportunities relating to next steps.

> *I think for me it was seeing PGS as something bigger than just attending PGS session…you know because like we said it's the knock-on effect isn't it and the outcomes of that and how it relates to other things.*

I think that PGS was organic as it grew … this resulted in off shoot groups being set up. There is something about the PGS process which does allow professionals who are really busy and tight pressured to touch base really with their own professional expertise and …, there's something about self-valuing through that process.

...the snowball effect of PGS really, I suppose in the development of other interests, training and everything like that.

… the suggested ideas from PGS were really helpful and I took that back and we've worked around that. I've also learnt more about PGS and that has filtered through into setting up the interest group which was set up alongside PGS.

Yeah, there's the little offshoots that come off PGS. I feel branches take on a life of their own, ...such as the interest group.

5.5.11.2 Organising theme: 'Links to management 1:1 Supervision'

This theme highlighted how PGS linked to management 1:1 supervision.

It has and continues to be really useful and sits nicely alongside 1:1 supervision ... we should continue to access PGS.

PGS is essential in terms of quality assuring processes and professional contribution and I don't think that can be safeguarded in management supervision.

I think PGS was useful as it highlights competency issues around our role, when to get involved and when not to. Yes, I think it helped us not only to think about our role but to question our role.

I think it's definitely a fantastic way to supplement individual supervision ...in fact I have valued PGS more than 1:1 supervision.

5.5.11.3 Organising theme: 'Sense of Purpose'

This theme highlighted how the PGS model and processes had a sense of purpose.

PGS processes and model felt very purposeful …also it had a very kind of professional purpose and it felt as I say, … it wasn't just about kind of like chewing the fat over cases it was talking about cases in a very structured, purposeful, meaningful way that had clear outcomes.

The PGS process had an appropriate purpose and it was time well-spent. We need to protect the time for PGS.

The PGS model had a really critical function in that it had a sense of purpose to it and most people I think got a lot out of it.

5.5.11.4 Organising theme: 'Learning Opportunities'

This theme highlighted opportunities relating to EPs learning about PGS models and processes.

…it has also been a positive learning experience … I think it's been really, really important that we continue to have access to PGS to keep the academic side of things going... I would like to have the opportunity learn more about the different models, actually for me I felt it was a very positive learning experience ... I liked the process as it grew and developed overtime. I would like to know more about peer support systems.

Yeah, it has heightened my awareness of PGS, you know the models and processes… so... yeah, I think PGS created a learning environment …. I think for me it has changed from being quite a structured set period of time to being a more open process. It's like organic isn't it, evolving over time …different models to develop our learning.

PGS process can be and was very supportive. I think it's a learning opportunity in lots of different ways, for me we learnt more about processes and other things as well.

Figure 5.22: Outcomes: Thematic Network: 'Organic 2'
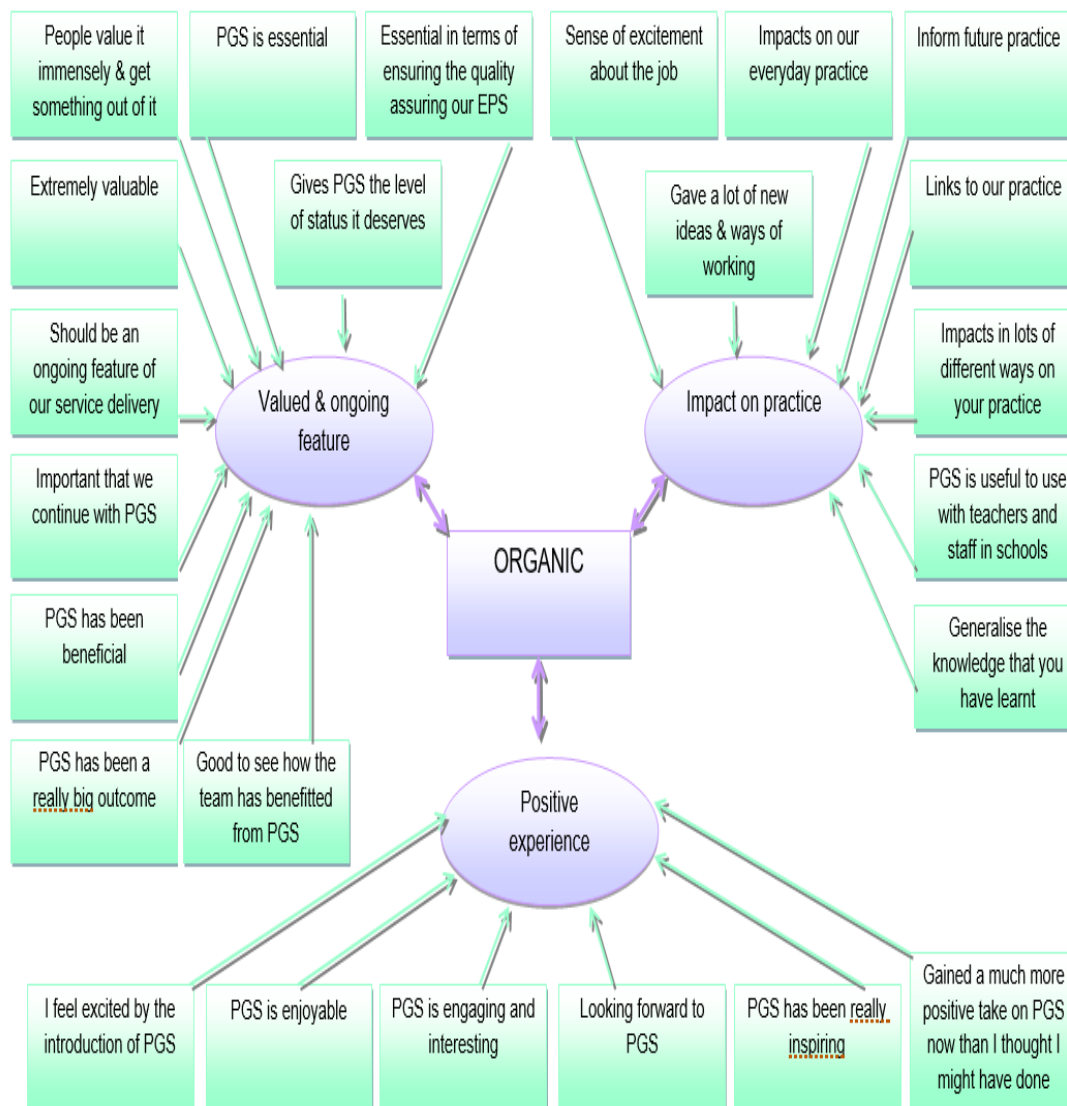
5.5.11.5 Organising theme: 'Valued and ongoing feature'

This theme highlighted how EPs valued PGS as they all expressed that they wanted it to be embedded within the EPS support systems.

> *...if anything, now my views of PGS are probably more positive ...now I see PGS as something that is potentially essential really, ...PGS is essential in terms of quality assuring processes and professional contribution and I don't think that can be safeguarded in management supervision. I think it should be ongoing, it's, a very efficient way to safeguard quality assurance of our service delivery.*

> *…hopefully it should be an ongoing feature of our service delivery really.*

> *I think PGS should continue, all the EPs reported how much they enjoyed the sessions.*

5.5.11.6 Organising theme: 'Positive Experience'

This theme highlighted how the EPs viewed PGS as a positive experience.

> *I think all the team viewed PGS overall as a very positive experience.*

> *For me I viewed PGS as a very positive experience, I think the processes felt very natural. PGS sort of grew and developed, I think we made it our own.*

> *I think PGS developed as it went one… organic really…yes, a very positive experience… I got a lot from it.*

5.5.11.7 Organising theme: 'Impact on practice'

This theme highlighted how participating in the PGS process had impacted on the EPs working practice.

> *Yeah, ... I think PGS impacted on my thinking and practice, I was able to draw on other people's thought processes and formulations, which was really useful... yes, it made me reflect on my practice and think, yes... I need to go back and do this or that. Thinking about the next steps.*

> *I suppose what has developed from PGS... was the influence of listening to casework formulations and the overall impact on my knowledge base .... yes so, like the interest group developed from it... We looked at different training packages that we could develop.*

> *...on the back of PGS the interest group developed. It made me think about different areas ...yes it was good to use and apply my research skills again.*

> *I used the interactive framework you know the one we use in the PGS sessions. I used it in school with a SENCo and parent; they both thought it was useful. I think because it was visual and they could see my thinking and formulations around what was going on… yes, I really liked the framework and I am now using it with complex cases.*

5.5.11.8 Summary of 'Organic 1 and Organic 2'

The findings are helpful in the development of future theories regarding how EPs described PGS as useful. It was highlighted that PGS had a sense of purpose, it promoted learning opportunities and other interest groups emerged because of it. EPs reported that PGS helped them to apply their knowledge into practice; as they could, "*take away strategies, resources, ideas and frameworks for problem-solving".* EPs explained how they valued PGS as it linked to 1:1 supervision. "*I was able to feedback our discussion about a particular case during supervision with (name)".* Overall, EPs viewed PGS as a positive experience and that it should be an ongoing feature in the EPS.

5.5.12 Findings to RQ4

EPs reported that they not only thought PGS was useful, but they perceived the following benefits and outcomes:

It supported emotional well-being

- Feeling reassured about their working practice.
- Facilitated a relaxed therapeutic environment.
- Provided emotional containment.
- Provoked emotional arousal, drive and motivation.

It promoted team cohesion

- Strengthened relationships and promoted a social function.
- Promoted a supportive ethos within the team.

It was educative

- Supported the development of new skills.
- Provided the exploration of new psychological frameworks.
- Provided opportunities to share resources and ideas.
- Promoted CPD.
- Enhanced listening and consultation skills.
- EPs developed skills in PGS, e.g. PGS models, process, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The PGS model provided an opportunity for EPs to reflect and explore points discussed.
- Provided time and space for reflection, e.g. EPs had more time to reflected on their practice and casework formulation.

<u>It was organic as it led to further opportunities</u>

- Interest groups developed.
- It was purposeful as future learning opportunities developed outside PGS.
- PGS was valued and it complemented 1:1 supervision.
- It had an impact on practice.

5.5.13 Summary

In phase 1 the EPs discussed their perceptions of the contexts and mechanisms that might enable or inhibit the implementation of the PGS. Potential pitfalls (preparation time to present cases) were identified during the initial stage and addressed through careful planning.

Concerns were raised regarding the forming of the group, the contract, attendance and negotiating logistics such as, the venue and frequency of PGS. These perceived concerns can be linked to literature by Hawkins & Shohet (2006). They stressed the importance of negotiating and agreeing initial working contracts. Concerns were also raised regarding the PGS model, structure and process, "*If PGS does not follow a structured format it could result in it becoming a 'chatty' environment and would be a waste of people's time*". However, in contrast one EP said, "*The PGS process should depend on the needs of the team or a particular case. It should not be too restrictive as sometimes we need more time to expand on issues. Yes, longer time for discussions*".

This chapter has provided a summary of the findings from phase 1 and phase 3. During phase 1, EPs provided a narrative illustrating their perceptions of the implementation of PGS. A prior discussion in relation to the PGS was considered important as EPs had the opportunity to highlight their perceived enabling and inhibiting factors.

Phase 3 provided a useful description of the enabling and inhibiting context, mechanisms affecting the outcomes of PGS within an EPS.

The overall findings will be discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Overview

This chapter considers the overall findings of the current study in relation to the literature presented in Chapter 3, with a specific emphasis upon the following RQs addressed:

1. How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?
2. How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?
3. In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way that they did?
4. How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional and personal level?

A summary of the findings for each RQ will be discussed. Possible rival explanations for the findings will be presented, particularly where unanticipated findings have been ascertained.

6.2 Justification and aims of the study

The justification of this current study first arose from EPs becoming interested in accessing peer support within a group context. The open plan office environment was considered not conducive to access 'ad hoc' peer support; as discussed in section 3.13.5. Also, limited research has been conducted on peer support groups within the field of educational psychology.

The study has sought to evaluate PGS within the EPS context by examining the question "What works for whom in what circumstances?" (Tilley, 2000, p.4). The study may also offer knowledge and the possible implications of setting up peer support systems within an EPS. The overall aims of the study were to:

• use a realistic evaluation framework to explore PGS within an EPS and to consider if it was useful or not useful;

• explore the potential enabling and inhibiting factors of PGS;

• add to Squires & Williams (2003), Jones (2004) and Rawlings & Cowell (2015) research by attempting to identify both the contexts and mechanisms that enable or inhibit PGS within an EPS;

- contribute to knowledge; and, add to the evidence-based practice within the field of educational psychology.

6.2.1 Key Findings of the research

6.2.2 Research Questions 1

How did the EPs initially perceive the proposal of PGS within an EPS?

6.2.3 Phase 1: Semi-structured interviews

In relation to RQ1, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the EPs. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data in phase 1, revealed the EPs initial perceptions of PGS, considering the possible enabling and inhibiting factors. Nine global themes emerged (inclusive of both enabling and inhibiting factors). A visual representation of the data sources used to answer RQ1 is outlined in Figures 6.1., 6.2., 6.3.

Figure 6.1 Phase 1: Initial themes (the possible facilitating factors)
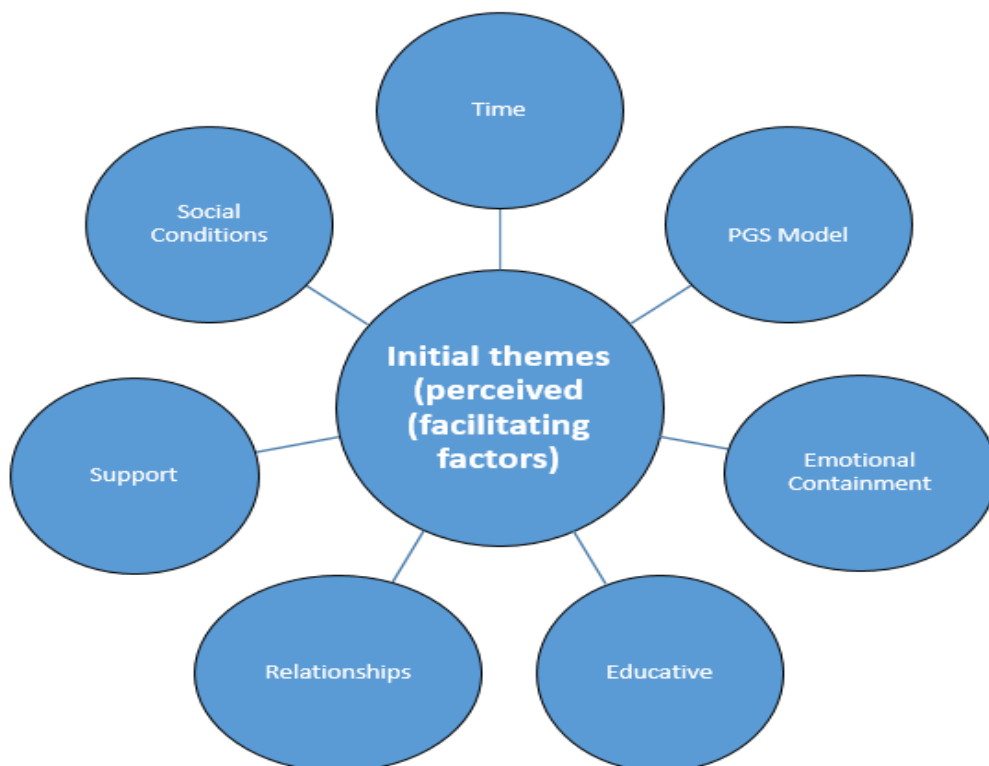
Figure 6.2 Phase 1: Initial themes (the possible inhibiting factors)
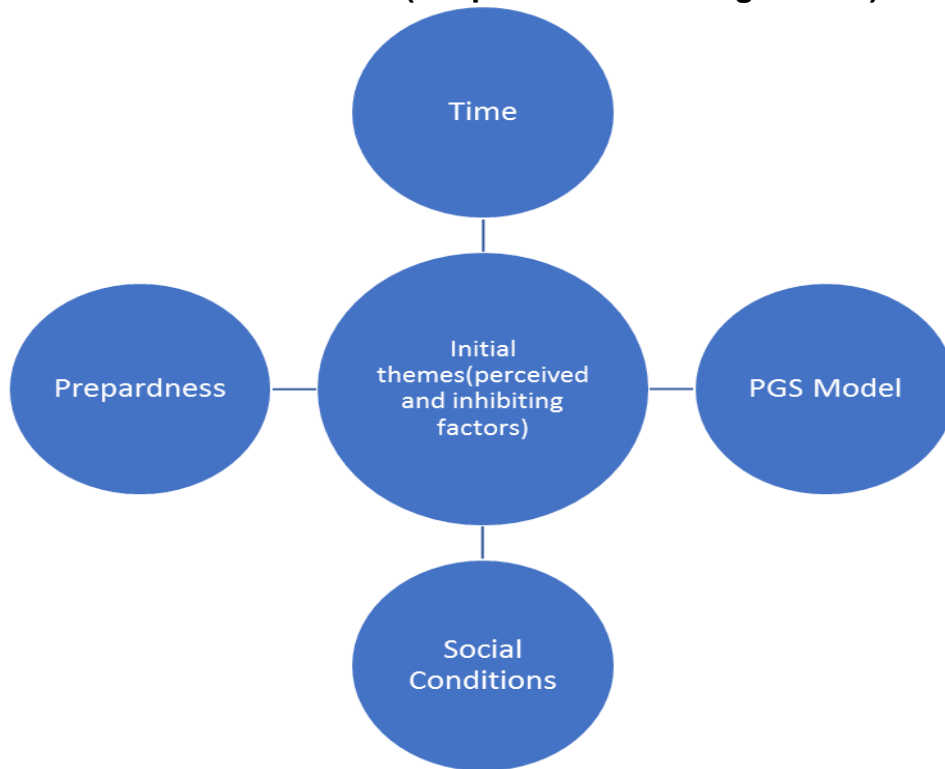
Figure 6.3: Phase 1: Global themes organised and structured under the Realistic Evaluation Framework
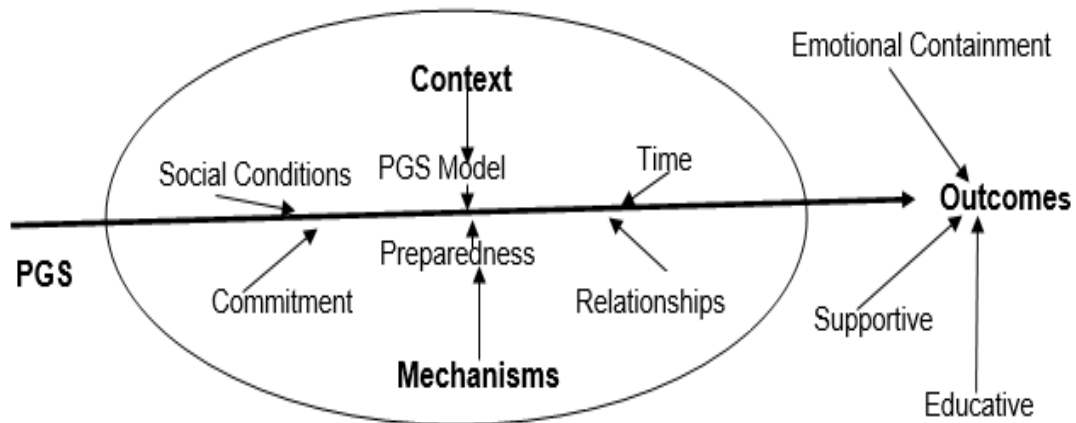
The nine global themes were organised and structured under the RE framework, outlined above in Figure 6.3. Initial programme specifications were generated from the EPs' perceptions, as outlined overleaf in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Initial programme specifications (perceived enabling and inhibiting factors) were generated from global themes (phase 1)

Initial Global Themes	Initial PSs (perceived enabling factors)	Initial PSs (perceived inhibiting factors)
Social Conditions (Context)	EPs highlighted the supportive aspects (M) of the social conditions including the ethos, social environment and setting (C) to support the implementation of PGS within an EPS (O). PGS should promote a supportive, trusting, safe, positive, friendly and non-judgemental social environment (C) in a suitable space away from the office (M). PGS should promote a warm, friendly and open atmosphere (O).	New entrants may feel judged (M) and perceive the PGS process as threatening (O). PGS sessions should not take place in an open plan office (C).
Time (Context)	EPs highlighted the need for time to be protected and it should be prioritised for PGS (C), for EPs to invest in PGS and commit time (M). PGS should be useful and cost-effective (O).	EPs may be unable to commit to PGS (O) or protect the time (M) as additional workloads may take priority (C). Managers need to view PGS as important to the EP role (M). Part-time workers may have less time to contribute to PGS (O).
PGS Model (Context)	EPs highlighted the PGS model (C) should have a clear structure and follow a non-hierarchal agenda (M). It should provide support, enhance team dynamics and promote positive communication, engagement, motivation, reflexivity and learning (O).	PGS could possibly end up as a big discussion and quite chatty (O). It depends on the team's needs (C). People may have strong views and strong allegiances to certain paradigms or models (M).
Relationships (Mechanism)	Within the PGS sessions EPs should be committed to supporting and building up new positive relationships (C). Colleagues should be open, honest and have a shared investment (M). PGS will hopefully provide Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of need such as, a sense of belonging and feelings of being safe and secure (O).	None reported.

Commitment (Mechanism)	EPs highlighted individual and management commitment (C) to support the implementation of PGS. For PGS to be successful individual EPs and management should view it as being worthwhile (O). EPs should be invested, contribute and commit to PGS (M). EPs need to contribute and engage in the process (O).	None reported.
Educative (Outcome)	PGS should promote an educative environment (C). EPs should create learning opportunities (M). It should promote and foster reflective practice (O). EPs should be able to develop new skills (O). Hopefully it will highlight training needs (O).	None reported.
Supportive (Outcome)	PGS should promote a supportive PGS environment (C). EPs should promote positive engagement with colleagues and develop team cohesion (M). This should lead to a supportive ethos with shared goals and outcomes (O).	None reported.
Emotional Containment (Outcome)	PGS should provide a forum to share anxieties (C). EPs should be more aware of their own emotional needs and use PGS as emotional containment (M) to prevent stress and burn out (O).	None reported.

6.2.4 Global theme: Social conditions

EPs deemed a supportive environment, ethos and social setting as a particularly important context for the success of PGS. This would support Rogers (1977) person centred core conditions; practitioners who work in a safe environment can openly discuss work related issues (Barnett et al., 2007). Similarly, Schreiber & Frank (1983) and de Haan (2005) reported that in safe and open learning environments professionals can devote time for each other and share each other's frustrations in a supportive capacity (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013).

6.2.5 Global theme: Time

EPs conveyed the message that time was an important mechanism for the success of PGS. Their initial perceptions related to the advantages of PGS, e.g. devoting time, it being cost effective (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006), providing opportunities for reflection whilst

remaining effective (Jones, 2004; Bennett & Monsen, 2011). Inhibiting factors related to pressures of time and EP commitment due to heavy workloads.

6.2.6 Global theme: PGS Model

EPs highlighted that they thought the PGS model should have a clear structure along with a non-hierarchal process. PGS sessions should be leaderless, egalitarian in principle and comprise of practitioners with similar experience (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). There should be no intended power relationships (Inskipp, 1996) as equal contributors share the responsibility (Mills & Swift, 2015) to guide the processes during problem solving and case formulations (Squires, 2010).

6.2.7 Global theme: Relationships

EPs proposed that the PGS process should help to establish new relationships. Individuals respond to trusting relationships and acceptance, especially when putting themselves on the line (Fleming & Steen, 2004). Building relationships and feelings of trust take time to develop; they are all facilitated by authenticity and openness (Scaife, 2009).

6.2.8 Global theme: Commitment

EPs highlighted the importance of individual and management commitment to support the implementation of PGS. This would support Markus et al., (2003) view that PGS requires a greater commitment from all its members.

6.2.9 Global theme: Educative and Supportive

EPs anticipated that PGS should promote an educative and supportive environment. This would support the educative and supportive functions of supervision by Hawkins & Shohet (1989) and Proctor (2008).

6.2.10 Global theme: Emotional Containment

EPs proposed that PGS should provide a forum to share anxieties, enhance self-awareness and promote emotional containment. This would support Bion's (1961) theory of 'Containment'. In a study by Hulusi & Maggs (2015) they suggested that work discussion groups provided an emotionally contained space for teachers to reflect on the emotional aspects of their practice.

In addition, the supportive function of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989) is also thought to promote emotional containment for anxiety and reflection, (Hughes & Pengelly 1997; Morrison, 1993; Steel, 2001). PGS can provide emotional support, reduce stress and feelings of isolation (Jones, 2004), EPs felt emotionally healthier (Squires & Williams, 2003).

6.3 Focus Group

EPs briefly discussed the IPSs that were generated from the initial interviews and literature review (outlined in Appendix 9). All the EPs agreed with the possible enabling and inhibiting factors associated with PGS. They strongly supported the view that PGS should be purposeful, cost effective and not perceived as a social event. The overall findings from the FG indicated that all the EPs agreed with the initial eight positive global themes, three inhibiting factors and the initial IPSs outlined in Table 6.1. An additional global theme emerged from the combined analysis of the FG consensus, i.e. preparedness, "*I think it is going to be important to prepare for PGS and to feel prepared, especially when presenting a case ...I will have less time in the office to prepare for PGS ...as I work part-time*". Another EP explained, *"We will need time for reflection and time to summarise the main points before presenting a case. Also, time to process to think about the key questions we want answering".* A third EP added, "*I think sometimes it requires a great deal of time to read the case notes and prepare before presenting the case, yeah, we will probably need time for preparation as well".* Preparedness was anticipated as an important mechanism especially for the case presenters; the additional theme and the following IPS was generated from the FG data, outlined in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Additional IPS generated from the FG

Initial global Themes	IPSs (perceived positive factors)	IPSs (perceived inhibiting factors)
Preparedness (Mechanism)	Pre-planning and readiness for PGS (C), along with time to prepare the case (M) will support the PGS processes and outcomes (O).	Part-time workers struggled to prepare for PGS (C), they had less time to outline their case (M), resulting in longer casework presentations (O).

6.3.1 Limitations

RE proposes that identification of programme theories should come first before testing and refining the theories to develop programme specifications. In this study, attempts were

made in phase 1 to extensively outline initial programme specifications by using data from the initial semi-structured interviews and the focus group. As an additional mechanism, 'preparedness' was identified which necessitated the need to revisit the initial analysis in phase 1. Preparedness was added to the initial programme specifications. This highlighted that the process of identifying, testing and refining programme specifications was not straightforward nor a linear process.

I was aware of my personal bias and my own theories about PGS. I had read literature and had previously conducted several PGS sessions. I was aware that I may have influenced the IPSs as I noted some of the EPs used certain phrases such as, reflective space and emotional containment. These were phrases that I had read and espoused from the literature. I think I may have used these phrases during conversations or discussions with the EPs. I was conscious throughout the research study not to impose my own theories and biases.

During the data analysis stage the research assistant and I found it difficult to correlate linear data from all three CMO elements, as outlined in Table 6.3. These findings would support Gill & Turbin (1999) view that it is difficult to obtain all the pertinent CMO configurations as more than one mechanism can operate concurrently (Rycroft-Malone, Fontenla, Bick & Seers, 2010).

Table 6.3 Themes generated from phase 1

Contexts	+ Mechanisms	= Outcomes
Social Conditions	*Relationships*	*Supportive*
PGS Model	*Commitment*	*Emotional Containment Educative*
Time	*Preparedness*	
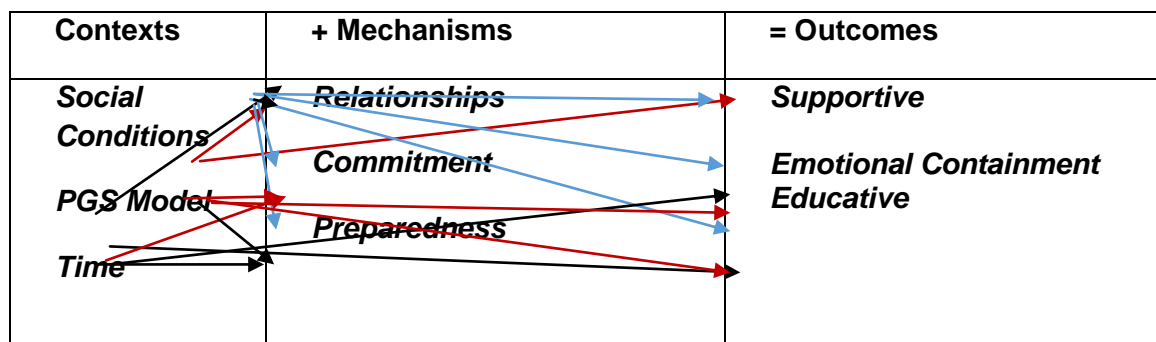
I was aware that I could have provided a hypothesis grid and come up with a whole list of plausible context and mechanism associations. However, I was mindful that I could not demonstrate reliability or produce a coherent explanation of how these features acted the way that they did (Pawson & Manzano-Santaella, 2012). It was decided that the term CMO propositions would now be used instead of CMO configurations.

6.3.2 Conclusion to RQ1

RQ1 aimed to consider the EPs initial perceptions of PGS before focusing on their involvement in the PGS process and their final response after participating in PGS.

6.4 Phase 3: Final semi-structured interviews

Final semi-structured interviews were conducted with the EPs. The data collected from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final global themes related to the EPs perceptions of the overall structure and process of PGS, the context and mechanisms that enabled or inhibited the use of PGS and the perceived outcomes (What works for whom in what circumstances?).

The nine global themes were organised and structured under the RE framework, outlined in Chapter 5, Figure 5.10. Programme specifications (PSs) were generated from the EPs perceptions in relation to enabling and inhibiting global themes; outlined in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Refined Themes and proposed PGS programme specifications

Themes	PSs (enabling factors)	PSs (inhibiting factors)
1 Social Conditions (Context)	The social conditions including the social setting (it being at a different location in a quiet and relaxed setting and overall not being disturbed), the environment (it being supportive, positive, trusting, nurturing, open and honest, friendly, respectful and non-judgmental) and logistics (such as, refreshments, tea, coffee, biscuits, etc.) were all highlighted as key features (M) to support the PGS process and outcomes (educative, supportive, self-monitoring and organic) (O).	None reported.
2 PGS Model and process (Context)	The PGS model and process (C) followed a structured, non-hierarchal framework (M); it facilitated direction, clear roles and tangible outcomes (O).	None reported
3 Time (Mechanism)	Time for PGS is protected and prioritised (C), frequency, time and location are key features for EPs to invest in PGS and commit the time (M). PGS was time well spent; it was cost effective and it facilitated the process and outcomes (educative, supportive, self-monitoring and organic) (O).	Additional time pressures (C) due to workload (M) resulted in EPs missing PGS (O).

4 Team Dynamics (Mechanism)	Supportive and formed relationships (C), mutual respect, group solidity, open and honest relationships and trusting colleagues (M) facilitated and supported the process and outcomes (educative, supportive, self-monitoring and organic) (O).	None reported.
5 Commitment (Mechanism)	Individual, team and management commitment (C) support the implementation and outcomes of PGS (O). The EPS team, individuals and the management team were invested, committed and positively engaged in the PGS process (M). EPs valued PGS and prioritised it (M). PGS was worthwhile, beneficial, and cost-effective (O). EPs commitment supported the PGS process and outcomes (educative, supportive, self-monitoring and organic) (O).	None reported.
6 Educative (Outcome)	Educative environments (C), opportunities for learning and sharing resources (M), foster reflective practice, critical thinking and problem-solving skills (O). It helped to highlighted CPD and training needs (O) within the EPS.	None reported.
7 Supportive (Outcome)	A PGS supportive environment (C), promotes emotional reassurance, drive and motivation, (M). Situations that were considered stressful were managed within a safe place (O). PGS facilitated a therapeutic environment (C) by promoting a relaxed and trusting atmosphere (O). Awareness of other people's emotional needs (M) promoted emotional regulation and containment (preventing stress, burn-out and absenteeism (O).	None reported.
8 Team Cohesion (Outcome)	Positive team cohesion (C), provided opportunities for the team to come together and spend time with each other (M), it strengthens relationships (O). The team grew in confidence whilst developing skills in PGS (O). Team cohesion supported collective efficiently which resulted in EPs reporting PGS was a positive experience (O).	None reported.
9 Organic (Outcome)	Learning environments (C), sense of purpose, direction and clear outcomes (M), facilitated future task related processors to occur such as, the development of an interest/research group and PGS being linked closely to 1:1 supervision (O). EPs developed skills in PGS which has now become part of the traded service offer (O).	None reported.

The proposed PGS programme specifications may have been viewed through a subjective and context specific lens. However, the set of possible hypotheses or CMO propositions could also be viewed as plausible due to the fact they have been carefully constructed from the methodology employed in this study along with the overall findings.

RQs 2 will now be considered in relation to the findings along with the literature evidence described in Chapter 3.

6.4.1 Research Question 2

How did the EPs perceive the overall structure and process of PGS; why did they think this?

6.4.1. 1 Contextual features

EPs reported certain aspects of the context features that enabled the PGS structure and process. Findings highlighted in Chapter 5, sections 5.5.2.1, 5.5.2.2 and 5.5.2.3 emphasised the importance of the social environment, social conditions, practicalities and logistics. EPs conveyed the message that the positive environment was an enabling context for supporting the process of PGS such as, promoting a safe, respectful and a non-judgemental environment. All seven EPs stressed that the open-plan working environment was not conducive for 'ad hoc' peer support or private discussions. *"Conversations on stairwells are not private, we are all probably wise enough to know that and yet we can find ourselves doing it more often than we'd like. Whilst we acknowledge that a quick discussion may resolve a problem quite quickly, it can be quite tricky as often these conversations can go unaccounted for; corridor conversations are neither safe nor 'good enough' practice. Therefore, I have welcomed the implementation of PGS being organised in a quiet room away from the office. The environment has been vital not only to support the process but the successful outcomes of PGS".*

Outlined in Chapter 5, section 5.5.1.3 the model and process was highlighted as an enabling context for PGS. All the EPs favoured the structured and the non-hierarchal framework. EPs did not discuss any inhibiting factors in relation to the PGS model or process. However, did the EPs perceive the non-hierarchal structure positively as it appeared to mirror the EPS flat management structure?

Nevertheless, one EP did comment, "*I would like PGS to have more of a flexible structure in terms of maybe running it as drop in session or a workshop".* This is an important issue to consider as structured models can also act as a straightjacket when used ineffectively, evoking frustration and limit creativity (Wosket & Page, 2001). Additionally, Rae (2015) stated that some participants may find the PGS structure too restrictive or challenging. In Newman, Nebbergall & Salmon (2013) study they focused on the procedures, pitfalls and potential structures of PGS for novice consultants; findings revealed the structured procedures and processes proved to be beneficial to the participants. However, in contrast Counselman & Weber (2004) proposed that there can be certain dangers of PGS being too accommodating; the success of PGS is when it stays with its original purpose and not become a social event or therapy group. Would PGS drop-in sessions or workshops offer consistency or sufficient peer support? This is questionable; vital contributions could be missed through sporadic attendance and support.

6.4.1.2 Mechanisms

In Chapter 5, section 5.5.3.1, 5.5.3.2 and 5.5.3.3, individual, team and management commitment was highlighted as an enabling mechanism to support the process and outcomes of PGS. Constraining factors such as, heavy workloads and meeting unexpected deadlines were related to non-attendance of PGS.

Findings also highlighted that time factors such as, logistics and practicalities, time management and it being cost-effective were all enabling mechanisms (outlined in Chapter 5, section 5.5.4 and 5.5.4.1). Also, many EPs stressed that the PGS sessions being conducted away from the office. As highlighted in Chapter 5, section 5.5.5, 5.5.5.1 and 5.5.5.2, team dynamics, including supportive relationships were also highlighted as enabling mechanisms that contributed towards the process and outcomes of PGS.

6.4.1.3 Conclusion to RQ2

The finding from this study supported the findings from previous studies which also highlighted PGS context factors. Squires (2003) suggested that clear and agreed structures, ground rules, confidentiality, a non-judgemental approach, regular attendance, a flat management structure and individuals volunteering to discuss cases all contributed towards positive contextual factors.

6.5 Research Question 3

In which context and what mechanisms promote/inhibit the use of PGS within an EPS; why did these features act the way they did?

EPs reported on the context and mechanisms that enabled or inhibited the use of PGS within the EPS. Analysis of the data highlighted the following enabling contextual factors:

- The social conditions.
- The PGS model and structure.

Exploration of the data highlighted the following enabling mechanisms:

- EPS team dynamics.
- EPS commitment.
- EPS protected the time.

One inhibiting mechanism was highlighted such as, heavy workloads and unexpected deadlines resulted in EPs missing PGS sessions. Two EPs reported they could not attend one of the PGS sessions due to additional work pressures and deadlines, "*I felt that I had missed out by not attending PGS, back at the office all the EPs were saying how good the PGS session was and how much they got from it*". However, for most EPs the attendance of PGS continued to occur implying that positive effects and overall commitment outweighed time pressures.

6.5.1 Conclusion to research RQ3

It proved difficult to explain why the contexts and mechanisms acted the way that they did. During the process of developing the CMO configuration, it was clear that alternate CMO configurations could have been generated. This challenge was not unique to this study as other researchers who have employed a realistic evaluation methodology have also faced these difficulties (Byng et al., 2005; Tolson et al., 2005). RE limitations will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

6.6 Research Question 4

How did the EPs view the outcomes of PGS; both at a professional or personal level?

The evidence available from the qualitative measures in this present study clearly outlines the professional and personal outcomes related to the three functions of supervision (Educative, Supportive and Managerial (self-monitoring) (Hawkins & Shohet, 2010).

6.6.1 Educative

The educative outcomes are akin to those described in Chapter 3, section 3.5 in terms of sharing experiences and problems, learning new skills, ideas and strategies, gaining other people's perspectives and views, learning from colleagues and CPD (Akhurst & Kelly, 2006; Beddoe & Davys, 2010; Kaiser & Barrettta-Herman, 1999). EPs reported that PGS played a pivotal role in fostering professional, personal growth and feelings of improved practice (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Roy, Genest-Default & Châteauvert, 2014).

PGS provided time for reflective, professional practice and professional competence (Goldberg, 1981; Mills & Swift, 2015). Analysis of the data revealed that EPs reported PGS as educative; as it facilitated the development of new skills and highlighted future CPD and training needs. All the EPs discussed the benefits pertaining to educative functions. Some valued the mutual support they had received during PGS. EPs also reported feelings of affirmation that they felt secure in knowing that their colleagues were following a similar thought process and procedure.

> "*At this early stage in my career it felt reassuring that other EPs followed the same train of thought. They too had several hypothesises about certain cases*".

> "*It gave me reassurance, different ideas and regenerated my practice*".

> "*The time for us to gather and meet as a group has been most beneficial; it has given us thinking time and time to reflect on our practice*".

> "*The group made me aware of alternative approaches to my practice. I took on board suggestions what others had proposed. PGS also had an impact on my practice as it broadened my knowledge of resources*".

6.6.2 Support

EPs reported on PGS providing emotional support (Billow & Mendelsohn, 1987; Tempest et al., 1987; Yeh et al., 2008; Squires, 2010; Stringer et al., 1992) and raised confidence (Agnew et al., 2000; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). EPs also highlighted how PGS helped to reduce isolation (Tempest et al., 1987); it provided emotional regulation and containment (Bion, 1961; Hulusi & Maggs, 2015) and reassurance (Hanko, 1987). "*PGS provided the team with valuable emotional support especially during times of stress due to*

the increased workload. I often found myself feeling on high alert". All the EPs reported feeling supported by colleagues (Boyle et al., 2011) and being open and receptive to other people's views (Proctor, 2008). Some EPs discussed how PGS provided support to help them rationalise their thinking,

> "*I have learnt a lot, took on board some of the ideas and plan to use them. There has been lots of change and there may be more changes to our role, who knows, maybe we can discuss these changes within PGS".*

6.6.3 Managerial function (self-monitoring)

The managerial function was highlighted in relation to quality control; this is outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.5. EPs reported that PGS provided a context for them to self-monitor the quality of their practice such as; it provided an awareness of other peoples' practice and developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills. EPs also reported enabling outcomes in relation to feeling reassured and raised competence levels (Benshoff, 2001; Goldberg, 1981), confidence and pro-active thinking and self-direction (Wagner & Smith, 1979). Managers also valued PGS and reported, "*It has been supportive for EPs, especially for them to observe how others manage their cases*".   Furthermore, EPs reported,

> "*It felt good to know that we think in a similar way and follow the same thought processes, most specifically through case formulations …maybe this is due to our EP training?"*

> "*I felt reassurance from the other EPs and confident to try new ideas".*

> *"It felt good to know that I did what others would have done in a similar situation".*

6.6.4 Social function

PGS provided a forum to foster a positive engagement and affinity with peers (Marks & Hixon, 1986; Christensen & Kline, 2001). EPs formed positive relationships and team cohesion developed. It provided a shared experience (Frederickson et al., 2004) and the PGS process helped new entrants to build relationships with EPs,

> "*We had the opportunity to get to know EPs a lot more"*

> "*I was able to meet up with different EPs".*

Some EPs spoke of isolation within their role and their appreciation of the support they have received from their colleagues.

"*I look forward to meeting as a team; we feel a much closer team".*

"PGS has brought us closer together as a team".

"*PGS provided a social, supportive network, a safe space to express our vulnerabilities and off-load*".

6.6.5 Organic function

It was also highlighted that PGS was organic as 'off shoot' groups developed because of it such as, the interest/research groups. All the EPs stressed that PGS was valued as it had a sense of purpose and it was perceived as an enjoyable experience. Overall, the study supported the usefulness of PGS within the EPS. PGS is now an intervention that is successfully embedded into supervision policy and practice within the EPS. "*I think PGS has been very good for team morale and the next step is to ensure that we carry on with it*".

6.6.6 Conclusion to RQ4

EPs reported that they not only thought PGS was useful, but perceived the following benefits:

- ❖ It was cost-effective.
- ❖ EPs shared resources and ideas which promoted CPD and a collaboration of teamwork.
- ❖ Stronger relationships were formed which enhance team cohesion.
- ❖ PGS was a valuable form of CPD.
- ❖ It enhanced supervision and consultation skills.
- ❖ EPs valued the protected time to attend the PGS sessions plus the support they received from their colleagues. All the EPs wanted PGS to continue.

6.7 Phase 4: Comparison of the findings from phase 1 and phase 3

The data collected during phase 3 was analysed against the themes formulated in phase 1. This led to the following supplementary question being posed:

Question: Did PGS produce the EPs' anticipated CMOs?

The findings indicated that the EPs perceived favoured outcomes (outlined in Table 6.1) had been met. However, the favoured outcome 'preparedness' highlighted in Table 6.2 was not cited by the EPs during phase 3. Maybe, this was due to it being identified and addressed through careful planning, i.e. verbal alerts and emails? Please see Appendix 15 for 'Phase 1 and Phase 3 Comparison Table'.

6.8 Key research findings

Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in drawing firm conclusions based on the methodology employed, the main findings indicated that the study aims (outlined in section 6.2) had been met. Analysis of the data highlighted that EPs reported the following enabling mechanisms and contexts (under what circumstances):

- Social conditions (C)
- PGS model and structure (C)
- Team dynamics (M)
- Commitment (M)
- Protected time (M)

Heavy workloads and unexpected deadlines were highlighted as an inhibiting mechanism; resulting in non-attendance of PGS sessions.

EPs also reported that they found PGS useful as it promoted the following outcomes (what worked):

- An educative, supportive and self-monitoring environment.
- Promoted team cohesion and team morale.
- Promoted organic outcomes such as interest/research groups developed.

Throughout the study, EPs exhibited a clear commitment to PGS, additional findings highlighted that:

- EPs developed an understanding of PGS models and developed methods of problem solving, critical analysis and critical thinking.
- PGS allowed EPs time for reflection and to apply psychology through employing Problem-Solving Frameworks (Monsen et al., 1998).
- They valued the opportunity to gain different perspectives and felt supported by their colleagues. EPs highlighted feeling reassured that other colleagues may be experiencing a similar dilemma; whilst this is recognised such assertions can only be made tentatively.
- EPs reported PGS having an impact on their practice. However, due to time restrains this area was not explored or scrutinised.
- PGS provided an opportunity for EPs to practice the different roles within a group context.

- The PEP reported that PGS would continue to run alongside individual casework supervision.

- PGS provided a professional frame of reference in which EPs could learn from each other's experience, exchange ideas and receive emotional support.

- It highlighted training and CPD needs.

- PGS provided time for reflection; this has been recognised as a key factor in successful supervision (Fox, 2011; Evans et al., 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Nash, 1999; Scaife, 2009).

- PGS allowed EPs to be exposed to the internal cognitive process of other EPs. EPs reported that PGS provided self-regulation and emotional containment.

- There was a higher proportion of positive comments to negative comments in relation to the process and outcomes of PGS. One inhibiting factor was highlighted in relation to PGS non-attendance due to heavy workloads and unexpected deadlines.

- All the EPs actively engaged in the PGS process, they reported that they valued PGS as it enriched their practice and they gained a new flexibility to cope with the stressful demands placed upon them, "*PGS enriched my working practice as I gained a flexible approach to my casework and formulation processes.*"

- Newly qualified EPs viewed PGS as a supportive tool to access additional support (Gersch & Cowell, 2014). *"As a relatively new EP I found the whole process very supportive, I got a lot out of it."*

This study is consistent with other research studies who evaluated professional groups (Counselman & Weber, 2004; Jones, 2004; Norwich & Daniels, 1997; Rau, 2002; Rawlings & Cowell, 2015: Squires & Williams, 2003; Wilkerson, 2006).

Throughout the planning and completion of the research, a reflective diary was kept. The following limitations will now be discussed, and should be considered in relation to the key research findings and conclusions.

6.8.1 Reflections of the limitations to this study

Several limitations are inherent in the methodological approaches employed in this study. A critique of each data gathering method is outlined below.

Data collection methods
When I was formulating the methodologies of this current research, I first considered whether it would be more appropriate to use questionnaires. I noted that some evaluation

studies had employed questionnaires, Likert-type scales or a set of preconceived outcomes. In this study, I wanted the EPs to express and explain their views openly, how they initially perceived PGS, how useful or not they found it and the overall benefits. Throughout the data collection stages I encouraged the EPs to be honest and critical in their reflections. The undertaking of observations during the PGS sessions was initially considered as they may have added another dimension. I am aware that the use of observations is thought to be a useful form of data collection, as it allows the researcher to have direct contact with the setting (Mertens, 2005). Yin (2009) describes observations as invaluable aids. However, because of the Hawthorne effect and most importantly for ethical reasons, I decided not to observe the EPs during PGS.

Semi-structured interviews

One possible limitation of semi-structured interviews may be the degree to which the EPs felt that they could be honest and open due to them wanting to please me. In this study, I fully briefed and reassured the EPs that their authentic and honest answers were essential. I was also aware of the possibility of a power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee. Mishler (1986) stressed that the interviewer should be aware of the interviewee's invested and active role during the interview process.

Yin (2009) highlighted the importance of language and phrasing used during interview questions, to ensure the interviewer appears naïve about the area of interest thus allowing the interviewee to provide a fresh view. However, this would appear to contradict the RE framework, as this approach is designed to elicit features of context, mechanisms and outcomes.

It may have also been useful to ask more questions through the semi-structured interviews about perceived negative effects of PGS. Although some points were discussed in the interviews these points came through quite naturally through the open communication that had clearly been developed. However, rival explanations could have been developed regarding this point and data gathering methods could have been linked to these rival explanations accordingly.

Focus Group

A pre-existing group was used as a focus group. I was aware that pre-existing groups can present as a disadvantage as participants (EPs) interact daily therefore they may influence each other (Krueger & Casey, 2009) or they may have their own established power

relations (Krueger, 1994). However, in this study pre-existing familiarity possibly served to facilitate discussion and diffuse tension between group members.

I was also aware that FGs can create 'group think' (MacDougall & Baum, 1997), which is linked to social psychological viewpoints of 'behavioural adjustments of group members' in conformity experiments such as the study completed by Asch (1956). Group dynamics within a FG could also possibly raise threats as assertive members with strong viewpoints may prohibit the voices of quieter members or alternatively they could dominate the whole session (Krueger & Casey, 2009; MacDougall & Baum, 1997) resulting in 'conformity effects' (Sherif, 1936; Kelman, 1958). Krueger & Casey (2009) state that these risks can be minimised by a 'skilled' moderator or facilitator who ensures that all group members are given the opportunity to express their views. Precautions were taken to prevent this from happening, e.g. at the start of the FG each EP was given the chance to talk. This 'small talk' was deemed unthreatening and the questions were straightforward to answer. Also, to promote a relaxed atmosphere the EPs chose the location where they felt most comfortable. Taking account of the group dynamics and formed relationships I tried to ensure all the EPs (especially the newly qualified EPs) felt as comfortable as possible. Active listening techniques such as, reframing and paraphrasing were also adopted throughout the FG procedure. This ensured that all EPs not only spontaneously interacted but, also, they felt their voices had been valued, heard and fully understood.

Data recordings

Hycner (1985) and Siverman (2003) raised criticisms of the application of the use of audio tape recordings such as, the loss of paralinguistic and non-verbal communication. Silverman (2003, p.163) stated that:

> *'...transcribers may 'tidy up' the 'messy' features* of natural conversations, such as the length of pauses or overlapping or aborted utterances.'

It is accepted that the recordings taken in this study may have resulted in the opinions and interpretations of some aspects of the communication, however this did not hinder themes being identified.

Data analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed to encapsulate the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA should consist of an analytic narrative that interprets and translates the data content to extract its meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, this process poses limitations as it can be inherently subjective, as the researcher's experience, values, beliefs and

methodological orientation will unquestionably affect the way in which the data is inferred and deduced. Whilst I used reflexivity to consider the influence upon the data, the potentially subjective nature of TA was recognised. During the process of interpreting the data I was aware that my values and experiences may affect the way in which the data is construed. To add rigour to the data analysis I followed the six-phased model criteria (Braun & Clarke, 2006); outlined in Table 4.2. In the study, the reliability of coding was greatly enhanced by having two analysts independently code the qualitative transcripts rather than relying on the judgement of a single researcher (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). The themes were also cross-referenced allowing for inter-rater reliability to be established. Generally, inter-coder agreements were high and the minor disagreements about any differences were resolved through discussions; resulting in 100% agreement. Nevertheless, this chosen method was time consuming and at times there were several, different themes emerging from the data which required a more widely accepted 'lens' to analyse the data. It is acknowledged that there are strengths and limitations of all forms of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, I selected TA because of its flexibility and compatibility with a critical realist epistemology; it was also considered to be the 'best fit' in relation to the broad research aims and questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, by involving the EPs in the data analysis it enabled me to obtain consensus on the global themes relating to PGS. Holstein & Gubrium (2004, p156) stated,

> *'when writing up complex findings from interview data, the data should speak for itself.'*

Realistic Evaluation

Several limitations of the RE methodology have been highlighted in research practice. These limitations will now be discussed, and the following should be considered in relation to the research findings and conclusions:

- Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, even though Pawson & Tilley (1997) proposed a RE approach, they do not set out steps for the would-be novice realist evaluator to follow. The RE principles appear clear in the text but the lack of adequate procedures regarding how its methodological enquiry should progress in practice presents as an operational challenge (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2010). There is a need for standards and training materials in RE, because even if you follow a protocol in a technically correct manner; becoming competent at RE involves the ability to think, reflect and interpret data underpinned with realist philosophy and principles (Greenhalgh et al., 2015).

However, Pawson & Tilley (1997) suggest that it is relatively straightforward to offer plausible context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOCs). Propositions that bring together mechanism and relevant context-variation to predict and to explain the complex, outcome pattern variations is the sign of a good evaluation (Mark, Henry & Julnes, 2002). Pawson & Manzano-Santaella (2012) highlighted three common errors in RE studies, (1) the failure to explore and explain why the CMO associations or correlations occur (2) there should be a mix of data types to provide explanations and support for the relationships within and between CMO configurations (3) CMO configurations should not just be a list of CMOs but rather a coherent explanation of how they relate (or not) to each other. However, the CMO propositions in this study were presented because the data strongly supported them. As discussed in section 6.3.1, it proved difficult to correlate CMO configurations and to obtain pertinent data for all the three elements (Gill & Turbin, 1999) that clearly distinguishes and defines 'context' and 'mechanism' (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2010). Also, the context, mechanism and outcomes can be interchangeable (Timmins & Miller, 2007). A mechanism can change to context or outcome or vice versa. In this study, the global theme 'Time' was highlighted as a contextual feature in phase 1 and as a mechanism in phase 3. I pondered if the lack of CMO pseudo equations to link specific contexts to mechanisms was a main weakness in this study or an actual strength? Nevertheless, I found this to be very time consuming as it created many debates in relation to a context changing to a mechanism and vice versa. It appears that other researchers who employed a RE methodical framework have also encountered such difficulties (Byng et al., 2005; Tolson et al., 2005).

Insider researchers

As an 'insider researcher' in this study I was mindful of the potential dilemmas and questions that could arise, e.g. could my 'inside' knowledge of the organisation hinder my enquiry stance or enhance it as I understood the role of the EP? I was also aware of the added pressure of maintaining objectivity and the effects of my working relationships with colleagues. Robson (2002) proposed practical advantages of 'insider researchers' such as, knowing how to approach people, and your 'street credibility' as someone who has prior knowledge and information of the EPS working environment and support systems. Borbasi, Jackson & Wilkes (2005) conducted fieldwork research within their local authority. They stressed that researchers need to negotiate a 'thorny path' between methodological clarity and practical application whilst taking account of both philosophical and realistic concerns.

Miller & Frederickson, (2006) described educational psychologists who translate the principles of University led research into their day-to-day work as taking on the role of 'Scientist-practitioner'. Kennedy & Monsen (2016) also embraces the applied psychologist practitioner-research role. EPs not only apply research finding to practice but make a distinctive contribution to psychology knowledge base (Birch, Frederickson & Miller, 2015).

<u>Validity</u>

Although steps were taken to control threats to external and internal validity (as outlined Chapter 4, section 4.8.1.3) the following threats were encountered in the current study:

- The research was conducted in one EPS and represented the views of a relatively small number of EPs. The findings of the study therefore cannot be generalised to other professional groups thus affecting the external validity of the study (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). However, generalisation was not the rationale for the study.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The main aim of the study was to investigate the usefulness of PGS within an EPS. Seven EPs participated in the PGS study. The findings demonstrated that, based on the methodology employed and measures taken, EPs valued the use of PGS and this was demonstrated by their testimonies. I noted in my reflective diary that, "*The EPs freely reported their experience in a positive manner; they appeared eager and sincere when expressing their views*".

Rather than simply evaluating the process or outcomes of PGS, this study took a realist perspective which sought to clarify CMO configurations to highlight, "What makes PGS work for whom in what circumstances"? (Tilley, 2000, p.4). The present study sought to elucidate the underlying contexts and mechanisms that enable or inhibit the outcomes of PGS. This led to the proposed programme specifications, which included nine programme theories. It is questionable if the nine programme theories are the prerequisite of successful PGS as they are context specific.

In the study one inhibiting programme theory emerged, this was related to heavy workloads and time pressures.

In the final section I will consider how the RE framework contributed to EP practice, the implications for EP practice and future research will be considered. Finally, I will offer a reflection of my personal benefits of conducting this study.

7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

7.2.1 Realistic Evaluation Framework

The theoretical RE framework had some limitation as outlined in section 6.8.1. However, the methodological approach that delineated context, mechanism and outcome of PGS was deemed to be appropriately suited for this research. My aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the enabling and inhibiting contexts and mechanisms of PGS, the usefulness of PGS within an EPS. It proved difficult to fully explain why the contexts and mechanisms acted the way that they did and provide a justification of what works for whom and under what circumstances (Pawson &Tilley, 1997). Nevertheless, I feel that I have gained a greater insight of employing the RE framework as a research tool. RE has now

been adapted and I continue to use it as a framework to outline the contexts and mechanisms required to achieve the desired outcomes.

EPs have also gained an understanding of the philosophy underpinning RE, one EP reported, "*I have used RE in my working practice and have gained a deeper understanding of how to promote the preferred outcomes. I now ask school staff to think about the context and mechanism needed to achieve their favoured outcome. I think RE has helped me to promote a working partnership and a shared responsibility*". A group of school practitioners reported how they valued the RE framework, *"This framework has been useful and hopefully it will help to strengthen the support systems within this department".*

However, the RE approach is one of many and unlikely to be sufficient, other contextual methods explicitly aimed at identifying the mechanisms that trigger the desired outcomes not only provide useful information but they make the findings 'come alive.'

7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

7.3.1 Evidence-Based Practice

EPs play an important role in the drive for evidence-based practice (Farrell et al., 2006). Although, PGS may have limited evidence-based research within the field of educational psychology, it appears to have a strong psychological underpinning. As described by Hanko (1999), peer group support is based heavily upon a collaborative group problem-solving procedure and reasoning process.

7.3.2 The EP role

EPs are in a prime position to offer PGS to multi-agency teams and practitioners who work day-to-day in challenging environments. The delivery of a distinctive supervision role for educational psychologists could be evolving (Rait, Monsen & Squires, 2010; Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016; Soni, 2013). I propose that EPs have a unique set of skills to facilitate multi-disciplinary PGS. More so than ever EPs are in a prime position to further develop their skills in therapeutic practice. To support the engagement of EPs actively working in therapeutic practice Dunsmuir & Hardy (2016) have proposed a framework for the development of therapeutic competencies.

EPs not only need to develop their role but broaden their skills set due to local authority budget cuts and the current financial climate. The goal posts are narrowing and gone are the times were schools viewed EPs as gatekeepers to local authority services (Maddern, 2010). EPs need to set their stall out in this competitive market and demonstrate their unique contribution to schools and settings. I believe there is a distinctive role for EPs to work with policy developers to promote the use of therapeutic practice such as, PGS or generic 1:1 supervision for practitioners who work at the 'coal face' within the helping professions.

7.3.3 PGS

The EPS management team maintain support of the PGS process and have decided to make PGS part of a regularly timetabled development opportunity. This demonstrates a commitment to support EPSs especially during unsettled periods of managing budgets and cost-cutting exercises within the YPSs.

Additionally, as other teams and school practitioners have become aware of PGS, the demand for PGS training has increased. The delivery of PGS training has become an element of the part-traded service delivery.

This study has also emphasised the need for EPSs to continue to adapt to meet the needs of both the EPs working within the traded service context and service users.

7.4 Recommendations for future research

This research has provided support for the growing popularity of PGS; future research might consider the following:
- The impact of PGS on other service users.
- Considering the current emphasis and importance of involving children and young people in decision making around their SEN (DfE, 2014) and hearing their voice. It may be interesting to observe how PGS could be extend to the wider community to include and work with children and young people, parents/carers, school practitioners and community partners.
- Measuring individual's performance and impact: measures such as, Target Monitoring Evaluation (TME), (Dunsmuir et al., 2009) could be employed as pre-and-post measures.
- Critical refection on the development of skills acquired.

- Researching Kolb's learning theory (1984) alongside PGS.
- It would be beneficial to complete a PGS follow-up study or a longitudinal study that compares the original CMOs.

7.5 SUMMARY

It should be noted that initial programme theories and programme specifications should be regarded as a compilation of things that were reported. They are theories which may be used to provide an explanation; it does not claim to report specifics, facts or truths about PGS. It is also acknowledged that EPs may apply their own meaning to events and that these meanings may be influenced by the wider social context, and the mechanisms that operate within it.

It could also be suggested that some aspects of this research were 'impressionistic' (Sanders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007) as the research focused on the interpretation and perceptions of others. However, the EPs perceptions and their experiences were considered important as it would have proved difficult to explore CMOs configurations in any other way.

However, based on the methodology employed, the findings highlighted the following contextual and mechanism themes to support the use of PGS within an EPS:
- Optimal social setting and conditions.
- Time for PGS is protected and prioritised.
- PGS model and process follows a structured, non-hierarchal framework.
- Positive, supportive relationships as they set the criteria for future success, forming positive relationships and achieving rapport was considered an important element in EP work (Beaver, 2003).
- Individual, team and management commitment.

Again, based on the methodology employed, the findings highlighted the outcomes. The three themes (educative, supportive and managerial (self-monitoring)) could be related to the functional elements of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Kadushin, 1976; Proctor, 1986):
- Educative environment.
- Supportive environment.
- Managerial (self-monitoring).
- Team cohesion.

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- Organic outcomes.

It is noted that there can be other long chains of causality (Gulliford, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that future research continues to search beyond the outcomes and explore the mechanisms within PGS, plus the context that promote or inhibit the use of PGS. This study identified the possible mechanisms and contexts that are likely to enable or hinder the outcomes of PGS. This is not to imply that these factors can be transferred directly to all settings and groups, but that it would be of value to consider these factors when setting up PGS in another context.

7.6 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

7.6.1 Epistemological standpoint and Reflexivity

In previous research studies, I had taken a social constructionist stance; following the premise that language, knowledge and action are inextricably linked together through interpretations. Proposing that outcomes of social engagement and interactions are embedded by historical, contextual, social, economic and political experiences. Individuals seek some form of understanding in the world they live in through their experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, as I began reading about the RE approach I felt it was an opportunity to broaden my scope to learn, and employ other research methods. My epistemological standpoint is that the findings are one representation of 'reality'. I have presented a version of the world based within my personal experiences and views. I acknowledge that the findings are open to different interpretations. I have therefore endeavoured to be reflexive and provide an accurate account of the research process and the way in which I produced the findings. In my reflective diary, I wrote, "scepticism and questionings are the basic tenets of this paradigm".

I acknowledge that the data collection and research process could inevitably be influenced by my values and beliefs. I therefore recognise and acknowledge that my findings may not provide a complete or transparent representation of reality. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.5 I was aware of being as objective as possible throughout the research process. Conducting a study in the organisation where I work, my role as an EP and being an insider researcher, I was acutely aware of the potential for distortion and biases in which an insider researcher may alter the research process and findings. Mercer (2007) suggested that insider researchers might be more likely to suppose things and assumptions might not be contested. I found that the greater familiarity not only allowed an understanding of the subtleties of the context, but it also heightened my awareness of potential influences of informant bias. The following steps were made to demonstrate transparency:

- Personal reflexivity (Banister et al., 1994): I kept a reflective diary throughout the research process to reflect upon my own thoughts and feelings about PGS. I noted my understandings and decision making during the process. I attempted to identify how I may have imposed my own meanings or any bias when reporting the findings.

- Functional reflexivity (Banister et al., 1994): I held regular meetings with the research assistant and supervisor to discuss the research process whist attempting to uncover values, biases or assumptions that may have influenced the research process.

7.6.3 My personal perspective

In this study, I found that my reflective diary was central to my role as an inside researcher and my research journey. It helped to make visible my feelings, attitudes, point of view, strengths/weaknesses of the study and my learning experiences throughout the process. Also, at the beginning it offered me a reflective lens in relation to personal dilemmas or tensions and to neutralise any potential power inequalities.

With the co-operation of my colleagues, extensive reading and adopting a reflective stance I feel I have developed my understanding of supervision, peer support systems and the techniques and strategies to support the process. I have also gained a greater understanding about the relevance of using theoretical approaches not only as a researcher but applying them to everyday practice. Most importantly, I have also realised that research does not always go according to plan; external factors such as, work related issues have also influenced the direction and timescale of the research. Nevertheless, personally I feel this study has been beneficial as it has substantially increased my research knowledge and the importance of continuing to evaluate practice. Wandsworth (1997) emphasised the need for evaluation research systems to be robust as possible. He proposed building a culture of evaluation within the workplace. Evaluation studies should not solely focus on the final game score but rather a review of the process of how the game was played (Kadushin, 1976). Researchers should want to be able to act and act 'better' than before by utilising findings to inform future practice (Langeveld, 1965).

7.6.4 Final reflection

This research study can be viewed as a mechanism by which management recognise the need to change the context leading to an outcome. Furthermore, this study remains on-going as the EPS continues to think more creatively in accessing and developing interactive problem-solving frameworks, integrative models for case formulation and RE frameworks (Appendix 14). Most recently, I have employed a model of peer-group consultation along with a formulation framework as a vehicle to aid the understanding and contributing factors for children and young people who are at risk of exclusion. Working as a practicing psychologist, my main aim during the peer-group consultation meetings has

been to promote an empathic and supportive ethos whilst also reinforcing genuineness, warmth and unconditional, positive regard.

It is hoped that this study will offer additional evidence based practice research in PGS, and will provide EPs with information pertaining to the implementation of PGS within an EPS. However, whilst the anecdotal evidence for PGS is promising, the current study sought to objectively explore the underlying processes, through focusing on the context, mechanism and outcomes, it is important to note that the CMOs only related to the context in which this study was located.

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APPENDIX 1

This Appendix outlines examples of general definitions of supervision.

General Definitions of Supervision

The Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) (2002) state in their definition of supervision the importance of it being an essential component of continued professional development (CPD):

> *'….the opportunity to explore and learn from the practical, experiential and theoretical elements of professional practice and is an essential component of the psychologist's continuing development.'* (p.19)

In contrast, Butterworth & Faugier (1992) stressed the element around accountability and discussed the need to offer supervision separately from management supervision to protect the practitioner's professional independence and accountability. Hawkins & Shohet (2006, p.3) highlight the value of professional supervision but do not comment on the need or value of it. They stress the importance of it becoming regular and part of working practice. Nevertheless, even though supervision has become mandatory practice in many human services, the practice of professional supervision is often contested and very differently understood and interpreted, (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Fagan and Wise (2000) reported that, *"………definitions are difficult to write and achieve consensus on."* (p.2)

Inevitably, some definitions explain the hierarchical nature or the power dynamics of the supervision process. They describe it as an interpersonal relationship or activity between the supervisor and supervisee (Knoff, 1986; Murphy, 1981; Strein, 1996). Bromme & Tillema (1995) described supervision as a key step in "fusing theory and experience". Scaife (2001, p.5) suggested that since it is difficult to define and understand supervision, it should prove useful to identify the common features and descriptions which characterise supervision as follows:

1. The purpose of supervision is to secure the welfare of the clients.
2. To enhance the services offered to clients by their therapists. In doing so, the supervision focus may be almost exclusively on the needs and experiences of the supervisee.
3. Supervisory relationships should preclude the simultaneous existence of any other relationships (friendships, managerial relationships), or, where dual relationships pertain, this should be acknowledged and the implications addressed.

4. Supervision is characterised by an agreement or contract (with varying degrees of formality) which specifies the purposes, aims, methods, frequency and location of the supervision.

5. It should not be an aim of supervision for the personal development needs of the supervisor to be met by the supervisee, but supervision is appropriately addressed to the personal and professional development of the supervisee.

6. Supervision can serve formative, restorative and normative functions.

Hawkins & Shohet (2006, p.57) stressed that the task of supervision may be multi-functional as it depends on the setting. It seems to be that supervision is both context-dependent and context-specific, with no universally accepted definition. Many professions use the term supervision similarly with activities ranging from management tools and training requirements. Davys & Beddoe, (2010). McIntosh & Phelps (2000) developed the following definition within school psychology:

> '*Supervision is an interpersonal interaction between two or more individuals for the purpose of sharing knowledge, assessing professional competencies, and providing objective feedback with terminal goals of developing new competencies, facilitating effective delivery of psychological services, and maintaining professional competences.*' (p.34)

Rich (1993) proposed that supervision has not been connected to any single definition or theory and thus this may have hindered the development of supervision, (p.137). There seems to be no current consensus reached on the definition of supervision. On reflection, there is no major debate around the definition of supervision. Most of the definitions demonstrate that they are quite similar in that they refer to supervision as a developmental function, promoting accountability, a tool for learning, developing skills and to support practitioners who work within the helping professions. In support of this view it was noted that in previous books and articles regarding supervision within the field of educational psychology, researchers have taken the perspective of it being part of the supervisee's professional development, (Atkinson & Woods, 2007; Gardiner, 1989; Hamilton-Farrell 1993; Pomerantz 1993; Nash 1999; Lunt & Sayeed 1992).

Appendix 2

This Appendix includes an example of potential limitations of PGS and potential advantages of Focus Groups (FGs).

Potential limitations of PGS

- Certain dangers that may undermine the functioning of the group as practitioners might be fearful of being criticised, which may lead to the group becoming, 'too nice' (Counselman & Weber, 2004).

- Kadushin (1976) cited competition and the fear of being critical as two important limitations.

- Group dynamics may be an issue as some members may undermine the process resulting in tensions between personal and professional boundaries (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

- Groups may establish strong norms that are hard to challenge (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

- Members not staying on-task and the tendency of being overly supportive and/or advice giving (Boarders, 1991).

- Group may be too large resulting in less time for each person; some members may be either too dominant or not participating (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

- Poor organisation of peer supervision can create anxiety (Proctor, 2010) and boredom. (Proctor, 2000).

- Ideas may be forced upon the group (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

- Some members may be dominant or some quiet (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

- The group may need to manage a few simultaneous processes. (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Potential advantages Focus Groups (FGs)

- The interactive nature of FGs make them distinct from other interviewing techniques (Litosseliti, 2003)

- An efficient method of gathering views and opinions on a range of topics (Morgan, 1997).

- The research, is not just listening to people's responses, but, observing how they say it (May, 1997).

- It is an alternative to traditional interviewing (Krueger, 1994).

- Participants can listen to other people's views before moving into an in-depth discussion (Finch & Lewis, 2003).

- The use of focus group discussions has been particularly successful in eliciting the views of professional peer groups by encouraging debate on sensitive issues within a supportive setting (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

- Involving a homogeneous group (EPs) in a FG will hopefully help to generate rich data. Participants who are comfortable with each other will engage fully in discussions (Krueger, 1994).

- Focus groups are a time effective way of collecting several views at the same time and discussion amongst members of the focus group may provoke exchanges in views, providing more information and insights which may not be discussed on a one-to-one basis (Coolican, 1999) which is one of the benefits (Mertens, 2005).

- Focus groups enable perspectives, original ideas and insights to be gathered, which can often be missed in more traditional forms of research (Kennedy, Kools & Krueger, 2001).

Appendix 3

This Appendix includes an outline of the 'Weight of Evidence' model (Gough, 2007).

'Weight of Evidence' model (Gough, 2007)

When defining the criteria for the inclusion of research studies I systematically appraised the studies. I examined how the findings would collectively provide evidence for the research question posed in this study. I followed the stages of the systematic review (Gough 2007, p.5), as outlined in Table A.

Table A: Stages of a review

(i)   Systematic map of research activity

- Formulate review question and develop protocol

- Define studies to be considered (*inclusion criteria*)

- Search for studies (*search strategy*)

- Screen studies (*check to see if they met the inclusion criteria*)

- Describe studies (*systematic map of research*)
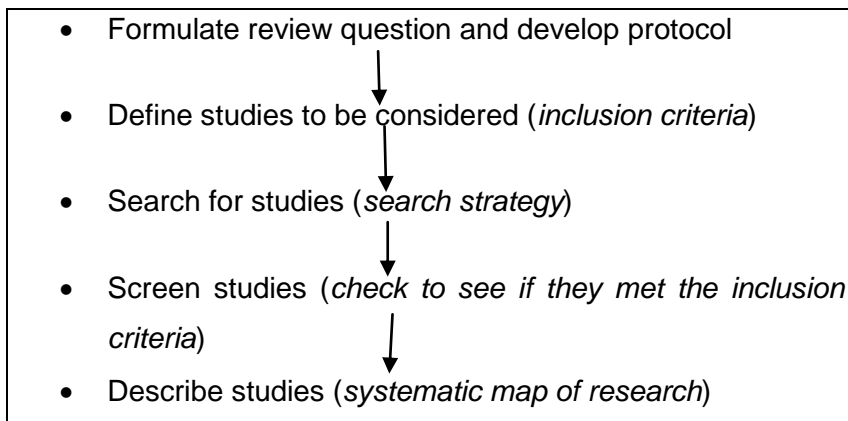
Following the above criterion, the following three studies were selected, outlined in Table B.

Table B: Three selected studies

Study	Weight of Evidence A: *trustworthiness*	Weight of Evidence B: *appropriateness of design*	Weight of Evidence C: *relevance of evidence*	Weight of Evidence D: *overall judgement*
Squires and Williams (2003)	*Low/Medium* Twenty-six EPs took part in the pilot study. They all participated even though it was not mandatory to do so.	*Low* Study did not provide details of participants or methodology. Aims were pre-set not allowing themes to emerge from the data.	Low/Medium Findings suggest that PGS may be effective. Some EPs had reported feeling emotionally healthier.	Low/Medium

Jones (2004)	*Low* Limited replicability and unclear as to whether other factors may have influenced.	*Low* Methodology flawed, e.g. field notes were handwritten, not tape-recorded and transcribed, no cross checking of data analysis, findings were based on selectively recorded data.	*Low/Medium* Preliminary findings revealed that the opt-in PGS was effective both on a personal and professional level.	Low/Medium
Rawling and Cowell (2015)	Medium/High Limited replicability but thorough details were given on the process and methods.	*Low/Medium* Method fit for purpose of evaluation but could have benefitted from pre-measures.	*Medium/High* Suggested some possible (multi-layered) outcomes of group supervision.	Medium/High

The rating for high/medium/low was determined by the reviewer making an overall judgement.

This was conducted by reading the full text of each study and assigning a score against the following criteria:

- Weight of Evidence A (*trustworthiness):* Broad judgement about the coherence and integrity of the evidence provided in the research study.

- Weight of Evidence B *(appropriateness of design)*: Review and judgement about the appropriateness of the design and analysis. With a focus on the rigor and the appropriateness to address the research questions plus a sufficient description of the context in which the research was carried out.

- Weight of Evidence C (*relevance of evidence)*: Review and judgement about the relevance of the evidence in relation to the current research questions in terms of, for example, the population sample, data collection and analysis, findings, evidence and relevance (determining if any changes in the participants' knowledge and skills following the use of PGS, concluding the usefulness of PGS).

- Weight of Evidence D (*overall judgement)*: An overall assessment which combines the judgements made from A, B and C. The rating for high/medium/low was determined by the reviewer making an overall judgement.

Appendix 4

This Appendix includes data gathering methods, initial semi-structured interview, final semi-structured interview and prompts used during focus group.

Initial semi-structured interview schedule for Educational Psychologists

Introductory script

Thank you for taking part in this interview.

As part fulfilment for my doctoral thesis at the University of Manchester I am completing a research project that aims to explore what goes on in Peer Group Supervision (PGS) within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS), to consider how it's useful or not useful. I am using a Realistic Evaluation framework to explore PGS. In doing so, I aim to seek Educational Psychologists perspectives about PGS within an EPS.

Can I assure you that this interview will be kept strictly confidential and what you say will remain anonymous. As I have already explained the semi-structured interview will be recorded and transcribed and I may use direct quotations from what you say within my research report. I must stress that I will be very careful to do my best to make sure you cannot be identified from what you have said. If you tell me anything that you do not want me to write down or use in my research, please tell me. It that still okay with you? I will ask you this again at the end of the interview.

I would like to stress that I won't keep any records of the interview that have your name on and your identity or name will not be used within the research report. Therefore, during the research process all personal information will be removed and data sources will not be identifiable. The data will only be available to myself and my supervisor (Garry Squires, at the University of Manchester).

During the interview, I aim to make notes of what you say as we go along, this is so, if I'm not certain of what I have written or if I can't write quickly enough, I will be able to check back on the tape of what you have said. I will only keep the tape for a few days to give me chance to do this and to transcribe the recording. I will keep my written notes until the research is completed and people have had a chance to read it. In accordance with University guidelines, the data gathered during the research process will need to be securely stored for two years. This is so that if someone else wants to do some research like this, or wants to know more about how I have done this research then I can show them. After two years, I will destroy the written notes.

I am aware that you have already read the information sheet, signed the consent form and agreed to participate in the study. Before we start the interview, I would like to remind you that:
• your participation in the study is entirely voluntary.
• you are free to refuse to answer any question.
• you can withdraw from the study at any point of time.

<u>Brief overview of RE</u>
Give a brief overview of RE such as, it differs from traditional outcome-based evaluation. RE seeks to identify the contexts and mechanisms that enable outcomes. Show EPs the illustrated formula context +mechanism = outcomes. For gunpowder to cause an explosion, certain factors need to be in place. Oxygen is present (C), Dry enough powder, gun powder is compacted; chemicals in the gunpowder (M). What might work for whom in what

circumstances? RE is an iterative process, which supports theories to be generated and refined.

Semi-structured Interview questions
Please feel free to interrupt me at any point if you want to ask any questions.

Do you have any questions before we begin?
Are you happy to carry on?
You may not have answers or views on some of the questions, and that's fine. It depends on what your experience of supervision or PGS has been?

Background Information

Rapport Building Questions
Can I first ask you?
1. How long have you worked as an EP?
2. What is your background and what drew you to this line of work?
3. Have you had supervision in your previous jobs/roles? What type?
4. Can you tell me your experiences of your previous supervision? (Probe: Was it managerial, casework, etc.).
5. How was the supervision organised? (Probe: Can you expand? communication, mechanisms, frameworks for delivery, collaboration, timetabling, etc.).
6. Have you had any previous experience of PGS? (Probe: previous experience (if any) of PGS, support groups, peer support, group cohesion, leadership, practicalities, attraction and commitment, the format of group sessions, etc.).
7. What is your motivation to participate in PGS? What are you hoping to gain? (Probe: Outcomes, expectations, perceptions…?). (RQ1)

Perceived contexts questions (explain-background, framework, environment, etc)

- Could the organisation do anything else to support PGS?

- What factors within the organisation do you perceive that will help to enable or hinder PGS? (Probe: practical issues).

- Overall, which perceived contexts, might promote or inhibit PGS?

Perceived mechanisms questions (give some examples of possible mechanisms)
Which mechanisms do you perceive that might promote or inhibit PGS?

Perceived outcomes questions (give some examples of possible outcomes, both enabling and inhibiting).

What do you perceive or consider being the desired outcomes of PGS?
Overall, what do you consider are the attributes that characterise effective PGS?
What kind of factors do you perceive hinder or promote effective PGS?
 (Discuss, C + M = O)

Conclusion
Finish the interview by summarising the information gathered.
Is there anything else you would like to add or comment on?
Thank participant for their time!
If you have any further questions you can contact me via email: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

or by …………../gov.uk or by telephone: XXXXXXXXX.

Final Semi-structured interview schedule

Introductory script

First, I would like to thank you for participating in PGS. I would also I like to thank you for taking part in the one-to-one interviews and focus group.

As you are aware, as part fulfilment for my doctorate thesis at the University of Manchester, I have been evaluating Peer Group Supervision (PGS) within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to consider if it useful or not.

Before we start the interview, I would like to remind you that your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to refuse to answer any questions.

Again, I would like to remind you that the semi-structured interview will be recorded and transcribed. During the interview, I also aim to make notes of what you say as we go along, this is so, if I'm not certain of what I have written or if I can't write quickly enough, I will be able to check back on the tape of what you have said. I will only keep the tape for a couple of days to give me chance to transcribe the recording. I will keep my written notes until the research is completed and people have had a chance to read it.

I may use direct quotations from what you say within my research report. I must stress to you again, that I will be very careful and do my best to ensure that you cannot be identified from what you have said. If you tell me anything that you do not want me to write down or use in my research, please tell me. Are you still okay with this? I will ask you this again at the end of the interview to check that is still okay with you.

In accordance with University guidelines, the data and information gathered during the research process will be securely stored and treated in confidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003). I would like to stress that I won't keep any records of the interview that have your name on and your identity on. Your name will not be used within the research report and data sources will not be identifiable. The data gathered during the research process will need to be securely stored for 2 years. During this process, all personal information will be removed and data sources will not be identifiable. I will then destroy the written notes.

This interview will be kept strictly confidential and will only be available to me and my supervisor, Dr. Garry Squires, at the University of Manchester.

The findings of the research will be written up as my doctorate thesis and I would like to stress again that your identity will not be included
Before we start the interview, I would like to remind you that:
• your participation in the study is entirely voluntary;
• you are free to refuse to answer any question; also,
• you can withdraw from the study at any point of time.

Semi-structured Interview questions

Please feel free to interrupt me at any point if you want to ask any questions.
Do you have any questions before we begin?
Are you happy for me to start the interview?

The interview should take between 15 and 20 minutes.

Semi-structured Interview questions (Start the tape)

1. On reflection, how did you experience PGS, first at a professional level? (RQ4)
2. On reflection, how did you experience PGS, at a personal level? (RQ4)
3. How did you experience the structure and process of PGS? (RQ2)
4. Did any key features promote PGS? (RQ3)
5. Did any key features inhibit PGS? (RQ3)
6. Did you achieve your perceived outcomes? Why do you think this? (RQ4)
7. Has your understanding or view of PGS changed since participating in PGS process? (RQ4)
8. What did you personally find useful or not useful about PGS? (RQ4)

Thank you!

<u>Conclusion</u>
Finish the interview by summarising the information gathered.

Is there anything else you would like to add or comment on?

Is there anything that we have discussed that you don't want me to use in my research?

Inform participants that if they wish they can read their transcripts.

If you have any further questions you can contact me via email: XXXXXX or by telephone: XXXXX

Thank participant for their time!

Focus Group Prompts

Introduction and aims: The structure will be as follows: *Researcher to conduct FG *Research assistant to scribe EP responses on a flip chart. *Produce additional themes in pictorial form.	Explain the purpose of the session; it is to get EPs current views of PGS. The focus group will involve some discussion and some activities. • Explain that the session is being recorded so that I don't forget any of their important ideas and suggestions. • To share the themes generated from the initial interviews conducted with EPs. • To check that there is consensus between the researcher's interpretation of interview data and EPs views.
Establish ground rules for the focus group session, such as:	• Ensuring anonymity (unless child protection or safeguarding concerns arise); • Keeping private information about who said what during the session. • The right to withdraw: EPs have the right to leave the session at any point and without giving a reason. • Taking turns to speak. • Listening to others when they are talking. • Respecting the views of others.
Introduction	• Explain that this is a follow up to the initial interviews conducted in September 2014, and it will enable to the researcher to check that the information generated is accurate and reflects the EPs views.
First Activity Share perceived themes:	• Explain to the EPs that the above themes were generated from the initial interviews with EPs. • Speculative and perceived themes were abstracted from each interview and then collated to make global themes. • Themes will be presented visually as mind-map. • Allow EPs to comment and discuss the ideas generated. Invite EPs to ask questions during this process. • Researchers to make notes during the activity.
Second Activity Discussion session:	• Share the data from the pilot study. • What do the EPs think? Do they agree with the themes and IPSs?
Plenary Closing Questions	Researcher to review the main discussion points from the focus group to check there is a consensus about the themes generated and the refinements needed. Have we missed anything? Is there anything we should have talked about? **Thank you!**

Appendix 5

This Appendix includes examples of EPs and Trainee Educational Psychologists e-mails and discussions after the PGS study.

From:
To: Patricia Lunt/CYPS,
Date: 06/03/2015 16:21
Subject: Info for PGS

Just some of the additional thoughts - if I can remember any others, I will email them as well!

I think that the PGS should be seen as a safeguard for the local authority as, when we discuss cases (which are usually difficult or contentious), there is input from the whole team. This enables different perspectives, implications, etc., to be considered and, I think, ensures a more robust piece of work. There is also some security - from the local authority point of view - in having the whole of the EP team contributing to a case and confirming agreement, etc.

I also think that, due to the support that PGS gives to EPs, particularly those that bring a case to be discussed, this has a big impact on stress levels and feelings of anxiety, e.g., via sharing the responsibility/sharing opinions/having your own opinion validated. I think this avoids going home and continuing to go "over and over" a problem - which can impact on stress levels and, then, result in sickness absence from work.

> "*I hope that PGS continues as it has brought the team together, especially, during a very difficult period of change, heavy workload and added pressures. I think PGS has been very supportive and it has boosted team morale*".

> "*I have found PGS very valuable it has helped me to expand my knowledge in case formulations*".

> "*Proposing possible hypothesis, linking theory to practice and a team discussion around the possible theories and next steps have been a really useful*".

> "*I have got so much use from PGS*".

> "*I am going to promote the use of PGS in my schools; I think the SEN teams would find it a good tool*".

> "*PGS and the integrative models of formulation have taught me a lot, as a newly qualified EP I feel I have developed and continue to improve my practice. Formulation is a key element to our work*".

> "*I feel that PGS has helped us as a team to develop a shared understanding of a particular piece of casework*". *Formulation has become central to my practice as I draw upon psychological theory to create a working hypothesis*".

Appendix 6

This Appendix includes an example of CMO Coding manual and photographic evidence of themes.

Realistic Evaluation Codding manual

• Mechanism: what is it about a measure which may lead it to have a particular outcome pattern in a given context?

• Context: what conditions are needed for a measure to trigger mechanisms to produce particular outcome patterns?

• Outcome pattern: what are the practical effects produced by causal mechanisms being triggered in each context?

• CMOCs: how are changes in regularity (outcomes) produced by measures introduced to modify the context and balance of mechanisms triggered.

Contexts
Conditions
Circumstances
Situations
Environmental
Surroundings

Mechanisms
Gears
Factors
Parts
Cogs
Components.

Photographic evidence of themes

Photographic evidence of themes
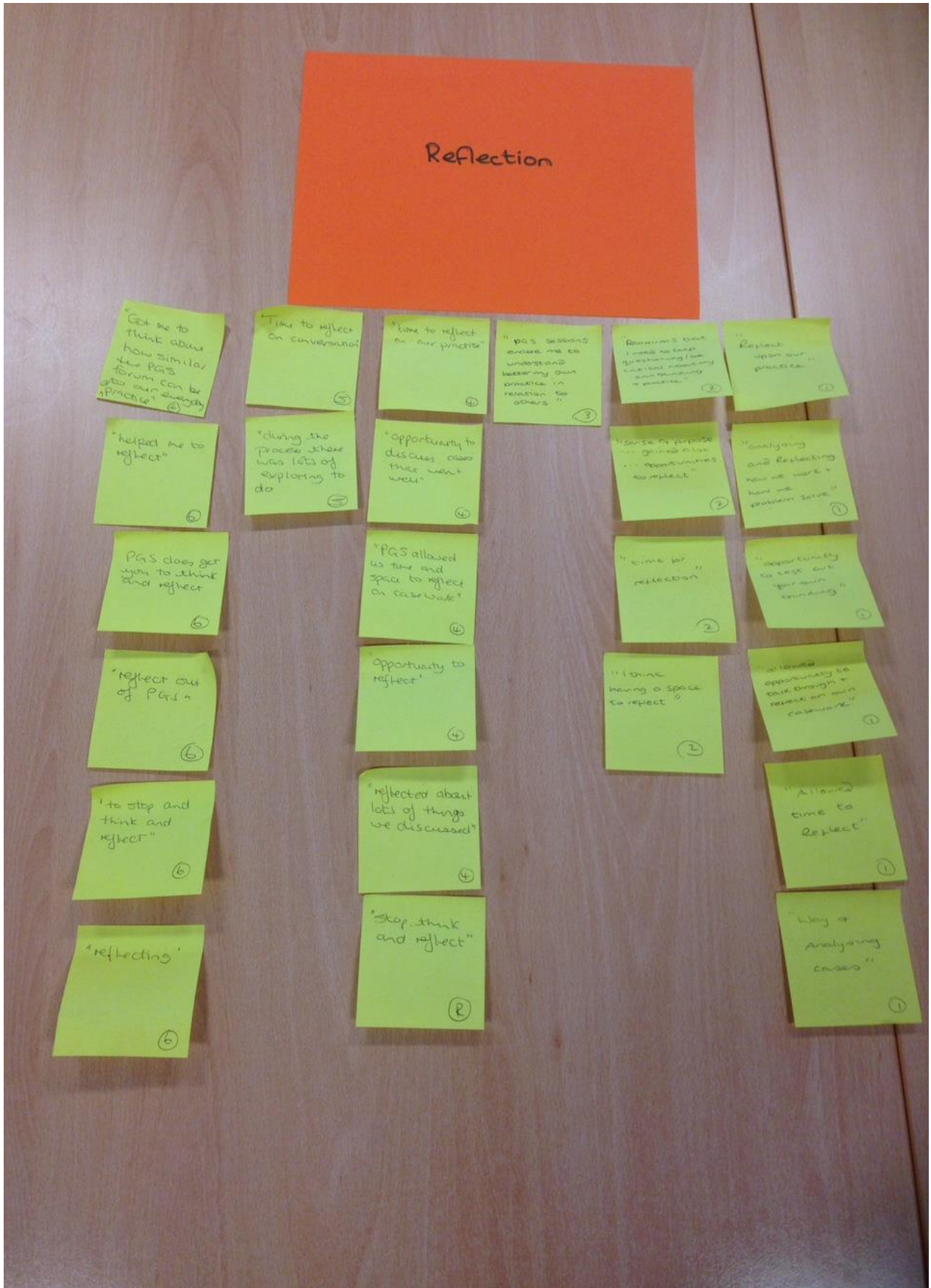
Appendix 7

This Appendix includes information regarding to (i) PGS Policy and (ii) PGS Contract.

xxxxxx Educational Psychology Service
Peer Group Supervision (PGS) Policy (Ethical Considerations)

Purpose of Policy/Requirements

Introduction

The members of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) aim to work to enhance the well-being and development of the children and young people in xxxx through consultation; assessment; intervention; training and development; research and contribution to authority-wide initiatives. This is done through the application of psychological theory, whilst adhering to standards of proficiency, competency and conduct required by the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC, 2012) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2006). To provide appropriate and responsive services EPS must:

- understand what is expected of them;
- have the skills, knowledge, behaviours, values and attitudes necessary to carry out their role;
- are fully supported to work and are managed effectively.

Whilst this is achieved through team meetings, appraisals and one-to-one management discussions, effective supervision and peer group supervision can also play a key role.

Supervision

This document should be read in conjunction with, and is in addition to, the wider Educational Psychology Service (EPS), Supervision Framework and Policy.

Supervision is central to the delivery of high quality psychological services. Good supervision supports professionally competent practice and ensures that legal and ethical responsibilities to service users are met. Supervision has an important role in assuring quality standards of service delivery and supporting service development. It should address both the well-being and professional development of the supervisee but also attend to outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Peer group support/supervision

Peer group supervision has the potential to play an important role in the continuing professional development of practising psychologists, by providing a forum where practitioners can learn from each other in a supportive environment, while still maintaining autonomy.

Guidelines

When considering the conduct of peer group support/supervision networks, the following aspects should be considered:

- The organisation of the group;
- The group process;
- The conduct of peer support; and
- Review of the group's functioning.

Informal peer supervision such as, case discussions will inevitably continue be sought as and when required (daily 'ad-hoc'). It is important to note that these guidelines are recommendations and not directions.

Frequency and duration of peer group supervision

It is recommended that:
- PGS members meet at least every four weeks; and
- a minimum of two hours is required per group meeting.

Arrangements for peer group supervision

All peer group supervision should be:

- Based on a written agreement or contract;
- planned well in advance and only changed in exceptional circumstances;
- a structured process; allowing all practitioners to contribute to the agenda and the group process;
- in an appropriate setting that is free from interruptions;
- recorded, with notes copied to the practitioner who presents the case.

Ethics

Peer group supervision groups require the same professional attention to the ethical code of conduct of practising psychologists.

It is important that this document is read with due regard to other relevant documents such as:

Dunsmuir, S. & Leadbetter, J. V. (2010). *Professional Supervision: Guidelines for Practice for Educational Psychologist.* The British Psychological Society.

Health Professionals Council (2012) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. London: HPC.

British Psychological Society (2006). *Code of Ethics and Conduct.* Leicester: BPS

Moreover, The BPS *Child Protection Portfolio* and the DECP *Professional Practice Guidelines* are accessible via the BPS website.

Xxxxxx Educational Psychology Service
Contract for Peer Group Supervision (PGS)

Peer Group Supervision (PGS) provides valuable skills building for individuals in reflective practice and promotes a learning culture in teams and organisations. It is a valuable adjunct to professional 1:1 supervision.

Ground rules:
As a member of peer group supervision, I agree the following:

- To display a considerable commitment to the group and try to make PGS a priority.
- To protect time and space for PGS, by keeping to agreed sessions and time boundaries.
- To take responsibility for making effective use of the time.
- To meet once per calendar month for two hours.
- To promote a non-judgemental, trusting and respectful environment with a positive ethos.
- To agree on the PGS model and structure; agree and share roles and respect each other's role during PGS. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses; they can be as disrespectful as words.
- To be open to giving and receiving support from colleagues.
- To ensure that at the end of the PGS session that there is no further discussion in relation to a members practice, feedback or comments.
- To have an awareness of emotional well-being to ensure emotional containment.
- To keep all information, you hear in PGS confidential, except for, if you should describe any unsafe, unethical or illegal practice.
- To ensure that you discuss any child protection or cases that you deem confidential with your line manager during professional 1:1 supervision.
- To maintain professional autonomy and accountability; to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of the HCPC (2012).

PGS is underpinned by a person-centred approach to ensure a positive, safe and secure environment is created; with, respect, empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard to others.

The Peer Group Supervision: Interactive Factors Framework for casework formulation will be completed by the recorder. In accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003), the data and information gathered during the PGS process will not be identifiable. The case presenter will add the Interactive Factors Framework for casework formulation to the secure file in the locked filling cabinet at the Educational Psychology Service.

Name:

Signed

Appendix 8

This Appendix includes examples of the possible Initial Programme Specifications from the Pilot Study.

Pilot study outcomes and IPSs

Outcomes	IPSs
1: Positive-supportive outcomes	PGS offers a personal supportive aspect of team building and the forming of supporting relationships (O), listening and hearing that others feel the same way (M), gives reassurance and reduces isolation. PGS offers practitioners a forum to exchange work related issues with trusted colleagues (C). PGS is a forum that is vital to attend to emotional needs (C), it could lead to less-effective workers or stress and burn-out (O), EIW's discussed their stress levels tensions whilst supporting vulnerable families (M). PGS provided emotional support in relation to empathy, sensitivity, compassion and tolerance issues (O). PGS offered supportive environment (C). It provided valuable support for EIWs who work in stressful situations (O). Supporting colleagues shared information and resources (M).
2: Positive-educative outcomes	PGS provided a learning context (C). EIWs could share their experiences and problems (M), learning new skills, ideas and strategies, gaining other people's perspectives and views, learning from colleagues and CPD (O).
3: Positive-managerial outcomes	PGS offered a quality control supportive environment (C). EIWs could self-monitor the quality of their own practice (M). EIWs reported raised competence, personal insights, personal growth and development, confidence building and pro-active thinking and planning (O).
4: Positive-social outcomes	PGS is an essential tool for service delivery (C), it provides opportunities to meet with colleagues in a safe and supportive climate and everyone has got different experiences that they bring to the group (M). PGS also allowed people to meet up socially with others (O).
5: Inhibiting outcomes **(Restrictive model)**	Concerns were raised in the forming of the group, attendance, group size, contract and negotiating logistics such as, time, venue and frequency (M). The PGS model maybe too restrictive (C), some issues may need to be discussed in more depth before moving on (M). Space for reflection is more

	important than the choice of model (O). PGS model needs to be more flexible in different contexts to expand on issues (C). PGS was refined to suit the working team culture (M). PGS should be purposeful and not just a social event (O).

Proposed Initial Programme Specifications (enabling and inhibiting) for PGS (develop from the Literature Review and the Pilot study) were not presented to the EPs in the main study. I had decided not to share the findings of the EIWs perceptions of PGS as I considered the information may have influenced the EPs initial perception of PGS.

Appendix 9

This Appendix includes examples of the possible Initial Programme Specifications for PGS.

Proposed Initial Programme Specifications for PGS (develop from the Literature Review):

"Accommodating and non-judgemental social conditions and employing a non-hierarchal PGS framework (C) supported the building of relationship and commitment of group members (M). To promote the three functions of supervision such as, educative, supportive and managerial (quality assurance) (O)."

Appendix 10

This Appendix includes an example of the PGS Power Point presentation and training.

The UK HCPC

The UK HCPC is the regulating body for sixteen professions including practicing psychologists. The UK HCPC fitness for practice encompasses not only issues of conduct, but also continued competence to practise. New regulation requirements for practicing psychologists in the UK and the maintenance of professional registration are linked to evidence of standards of competence through some form of evidence of CPD. The UK HCPC standards for CPD state that registrants must:

Peer Group Supervision

- PGS maintains its special character through several features; practitioners from the same field of work come together to form a group; they focus on work related topics and engage in a complex process of exploration and reflection; there is the distribution of active participation as all practitioners have a role. Members of the peer group supervision look at their own working practice and experiences and help each other by supporting each other (Kobolt, 1994).
- PGS should not have a hierarchal leader who differs in status to the other group members (Gomersall, 1997; Billow & Mendelsohn, 1987; Hare & Frankena, 1972).

Models of Peer Group Supervision

- Promotes shared responsibility.
- Everyone participates.
- Culture of contribution.
- Peer group supervision sessions discuss issues arising in a structured and methodical and manner.

Peer Group Supervision (Solution Circles)

- **Casting** (moderator, case presenter, secretary, time keeper, consultations).
- **Case Presentation** (outlines 5-10 uninterrupted minutes to outline the issues or problem).
- **Moderator** (listens and guides the session).
- **Key Question** (moderator asks for one specific question from the case presenter. Consultants support the process).
- **Consultants** (ask questions and clarifying the current situation, Who? What? Where? When? How often?
- **Brainstorm,** (ideas and creative solutions are offered).
- **Secretary** (takes notes).
- **Conclusion** (case presenter selects, feeds back).

Roles

- **Moderator** (guides session, ensuring the focus is kept, promotes autonomy and respect, confidentially, sets boundaries, safety, fosters an atmosphere of support, safety, etc).
- **Case presenter** (important pieces of information, thinks of the one key question).
- **Secretary** (takes notes, clarifies key question, checks understanding, focuses on groups constructive suggestions).
- **Time keeper.** (keeps track, moves things on, etc).
- **Consultants** (creative brain storm team they listen, comprehensive questions, offer ideas and perspectives).
- **Silent observer(s)** (observes the process and notices key parts in the discussion).

Conclusion

- Case presenter selects feedback.
- Thanks the group for their support.
- Moderator asks for feedback. How did it go? Did you get what you wanted out of the sessions? Did the session flow? Was it well organised?
- Moderator will thank all practitioners and end the session. Reminding practitioners of boundaries such as confidentiality.

Boundaries around Peer Group Supervision

- Contract for Peer Group Supervision
- Confidentiality.
- Commitment.
- Recognition of personal feelings and issues are important.
- Respect for each other and the professional nature of peer group supervision .
  (Osborne, 1993).

Attitudes towards Supervision

- Feel inhibited or uncomfortable in 1:1.
- Worried about generating the impression of needing help.
- Peer group supervision has helped to ameliorate anxiety and normalise feelings of inadequacy, while allowing practitioners to learn and develop skills (Agnew, Vaught, Getzz, &Fortune, 2000; Crutchfield &Borders, 1997; Yeh, Chang, Chiang, Selliscy, Carter, & Chang, 2008).

Reflection and Questions

Thank you!

Appendix 11

This Appendix provides an outline of information sheet read to participants during the recruitment phase, i.e., participant information sheets and consent forms.

Participant Information Sheet–Purpose and Aims of the Research

Title of the Research

Using a realistic evaluation framework to explore what goes on in Peer Group Supervision within an Educational Psychology Service. Useful not useful?

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a research thesis project conducted by Tricia Lunt, via the University of Manchester.

Who will conduct the research?

This study is being undertaken by Tricia Lunt, Chartered Educational Psychologist, Children and Young People Service (CYSP), XXXXXXX, as part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy).

I am contacting you to invite you to take part in a research study to explore what goes on in Peer Group Supervision (PGS) within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Useful or not useful? As you consider whether you would like to be involved it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Also, please take the time to decide whether you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of this study is to explore PGS; is useful or not useful within an EPS? The current study aims to allow a contribution to knowledge in PGS within an EPS context.

Why have I been chosen?

The aim is to obtain the views of several EPs who work in CYPS.

Invitation to attend the awareness training in relation to peer group supervision

I am hoping that you will join me on the <date, time> at <venue>. The session is timed to run from <time> to <time>. During this session, you will be able to find out more about Peer Group Supervision.

Volunteers

If you are willing to take part in this research study, there will be forms of consent for you to sign. It must be stressed that involvement in this study is by way of completely voluntary, and participants' identities will be protected. Results of the research will be disseminated to yourselves.

Professional standards and guidelines will be maintained in this study to ensure participant's rights are protected as exemplified in the British Psychological Society (BSP) Code of Ethics and Conduct, (BPS, 2006) and the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC, 2012). In line with Manchester Institute of Education Ethical Protocol I have completed the Research, Risk and Ethics Assessment (RREA) form and the Manchester Institute of Education Ethical Approval form. I will also take guidance from the University Ethics Committee and my supervisors.

Jones (1996) puts forward a list of rights for research participants such as, the right to privacy, not to be harmed by research and the right to refuse to participate and withdraw. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

First there will an in-service training session for EPs in relation to Peer Group Supervision. The training session will be held at <venue> on <date>.

EPs will first be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview and Focus Group to explore their perceived expectations of PGS within an EPS. At the end of the study, EPs will be asked again to take part in a semi-structured interview to explore their views and perceived outcomes of PGS, both at a personal and professional level. The rationale for selecting the semi-structured interview was because it is a flexible technique, well-suited for conducting research with a small sample and it allows participants a greater freedom to describe experiences and express their views (Drever, 1995).

The PGS will at first run for a period of eight sessions. I will facilitate the first session and demonstrate the structure of the PGS.

After PGS session two a Focus Group (FG) will be developed. During the FG, volunteers, will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon PGS. It is proposed that the FG discussions will be constructed to underpin the research questions. The rationale for specifically conducting a FG is to explore any issues arising, whilst conducting analysis of the first phase of data generation, namely after the face to face interviews. I do acknowledge and recognise the disadvantages of FG methodology such as, the influence of social conformity bias and group think. The FG will last for approximately twenty minutes and participant's responses will be taped for ease of recording. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be used to analysis the data collected.

At the end of the research study the researcher will meet with the participants and the data and overall findings so to feedback the findings.

*(Minor alteration to the questions may be made as part of the discussion).

The first PGS session will be held at <venue> on <date>. This session will be timed to run from <time> to <time>. After that the PGS session will be held every <weeks> and will be held at <venue> and will be timed to run from <time> to <time>.

What happens to the data collected?

The data collected will be analysed by myself and (name) research assistant according to the principles of thematic analysis. The findings will then be feedback to all participants interested before it is written up.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Participant confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Storage/ destruction of data

Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and all electronic material will be protected by password. Once the research study is completed all materials will be stored for two years and then destroyed.

One of the benefits of digital recording is that the interviews can be stored under password protection in a secure sector. Recording will then be encrypted, transcribed and examined for themes that inform future best practice.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No payment will be provided to participants taking part in this research project.

Where will the research be conducted?

The location of this research will be conducted at <venue>.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Hopefully, this research study may be published.

Contact for further information   **Tricia Lunt. EMAIL XXXX**

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-coordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Co-coordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: **Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk**, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

Title

Using a realistic evaluation framework to explore what goes on in Peer Group Supervision within an Educational Psychology Service. Useful not useful?

CONSENT FORM
If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

Please Initial Box

- I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

- I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

- I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

- I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

- I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

Name of participant	Date	Signature

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 12

This Appendix includes an example of CMOs highlighted from a transcription and examples of Global Themes (Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes).

Example of a transcription highlighted into CMOs

Perceived Contexts	+ Perceived Mechanisms	= Perceived Outcomes
Promotes PGS I think PGS has been good that it's off site. E …so the environment was good, it's good to be away from the office, it's nice and quiet, you feel like you're not going to be disturbed. E The PGS model was well structured, I think it needs a structure and I think that structure is particularly supportive because although there are roles they're not threatening roles, they're not roles that you wouldn't do outside of your job as an EP so you would be facilitating conversations, you would be keeping things on track, you would be listening out for aspects of a case, so none of it feels threatening which is good and I think if you did not have that structure people would be tempted to sort of, go off on tangents which wouldn't necessarily be productive so I think yeah, it's been good to have structure .. M	**Promotes PGS** ..people were committed, they had all the times and dates and put them in their diary and people have been really good I think at sticking to them and seeing the benefit. C I think PGS was perceived as successful because it was well organised, it needs somebody like you driving it. It needs time to organise it, time to coordinate it and time to arrange it. T …obviously support and the backing of management that's needed... yes commitment from them. C ..it's the commitment of all the members that makes it work and group dynamics and trusting relationships that make it work. C EPs should prioritise PGS. T ..it has also been time cost-effective.., T The relationships within the team are an important factor or should I say a mechanism. R	…helpful to hear, at this stage in my career, how other psychologists practice and privilege to hear their internal cognitive process, thought processes in problem solving and decision making ....to hear the diversity within the team. E I think people felt well supported and not judged because we have a strong team. S Both professionally and personally it has been really very useful for me. I have believed PGS helped me to form very positive, supportive relationships with the team. S It was also a good opportunity for me to get to know my colleagues. PGS has helped me to feel part of the team. I felt my ideas and contribution was valued. S ..it supported and enhanced my self-confidence. S

	.. relationships, trusting of your peers are all-important aspects of PGS. R	…professionally and personally it was a good opportunity for me to meet my colleagues, to hear about what their interests are…both professionally and personally. PGS is a really useful framework to help build and form new relationships. Yes, an opportunity to not only hear about their professional practice but to get to know people personally. S
Inhibits PGS …obviously, time, organisational and systemic pressures on the team have meant that maybe a couple of us have missed one. T ..having nice refreshments was especially nice and thoughtful. The feeling that you're not going to be disturbed. The PGS model was well structured. M E = Environment M = Model T = Time	The relationships within the team are an important factor for it work. R **Inhibits PGS** T = Time R – Relationships C = Commitment	..I think listening to others. how they work through cases, I think it benefited me at this stage in my career. So much so, because I wouldn't have got the opportunity. Yes, especially when you're running around in schools, doing your job. So, it's been nice to have time out to reflect and hear about what more experienced professionals would do. E …I felt supported in PGS. It has helped me feel that I can speak up and ask for support ... it also felt good that my views were valued. S …so yes, it definitely helped me to access support from the team and get to know my colleagues on a

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		personal and professional level. S
		…PGS has also helped me to realise that people trust each other even though there might be differences of opinion on how people approach cases. E
		…it's nice to have something to look forward to in the week. I feel like you can relax a bit during PGS and sort of catch up with colleagues. GC
		It's good to feel part of a network of people. It felt good that we were able to discuss casework and talk about the general aspects of our practice. S
		PGS been supportive it has also been a positive learning experience. E
		You know sharing resources, ideas and knowledge. I think it has also been good for CPD. E
		…transference is another thing. it was reassuring to know and not that I want other people to feel anxious, but it's reassuring to know

		that other people worry about similar sorts of things and that everyone struggles, no matter what stage in their career, that no matter how many times you have been presented with a referral such as ? you are still perplexed by it in some way and it's nice to feel comfortable with the complexity rather than be worried over it so …and I have actually got a lot from hearing what other people have done and I have learnt a lot, I also had time to reflect on my practise, we all need time to slow down and think about things holistically. E ..I think people feel that they have got something out of PGS. Yes, I think PGS has a critical function for learning that it had a sense of purpose to it and most people I think got a lot out of it. E I always think even if I learn something, just one thing it's been beneficial for me… E PGS was supportive engaging and interesting. S

		I've already thought and reflected about lots of things we discussed and I went away and read a couple of papers on the back of one of the cases that (name) presented. I think it has a knock on and impacted on lots of different things. E
		PGS was especially beneficial for CPD and highlighting further training. E
		The social conditions were just right for it. I felt it was a very positive experience. I want PGS to carry on. O …….so I felt I gained a bit more confidence professionally in myself. C
		Heightened my awareness more of how people practice on the team…E ... Actually, for me I felt it was a very positive learning experience. E
		…my perception is maybe that PGS has brought people sort of closer together and feeling more supported. It helped with team cohesion. GC
		I think it's given people permission to have an emotional outlet when

things are difficult but also when things are not as complex. PGS provided us with the opportunity to discuss cases that went well… it felt good to celebrate something that has had a good outcome because sometimes only in the process of speaking about something do you actually realise what you've thought and what you've actually achieved. So, it can be sort of motivating…what's the word… affirming for people …S … I think it affirmed people's values and actions and their thought processes. Yes, it was affirming for people, … S

After a PGS session I also went off and continued to do a bit of research with (name). O That research informed my learning. E

I think PGS has been important and valued. We should continue to have access to PGS. O It helped to support the academic side of things E …. it's not always about reading research or reading papers, it's about application, impact and learning, isn't it? Yes, CPD E….and yes, I'm a big

| | | believer in research to inform practice. E Research is one of my main interests. I think that we learn through each other, I think PGS gave us the opportunity to learn from each other, that we learn through talk and we learn through socialisation and if we work in isolation from each other then we're not getting those opportunities. It is good to have our thinking challenged in a positive way and in a safe way. PGS also allowed us to have our actions and beliefs affirmed by colleagues. It was a learning process... E

PGS has motivated me…like re ignites my desire to learn. I think oh, I need to go out and research that area ….E

.. you've been really valuable to the team and especially to me I have really enjoyed PGS, the whole process, so I would like to thank you.
E = Educative
S = Supportive
GC = Group Cohesion
O=Organic |

Global Theme 1: Social Conditions Setting		
Contexts	**+ Mechanisms in operation**	**= Outcomes**
ENVIRONMENT	**Positive factors** Comfortable environment Nurturing environment Positive environment Non-judgemental environment Open and Supportive Respectful and secure, feel supported, safe and trusted environment Non- threatening environment Safe and friendly environment Calmer atmosphere and environment Environment was a key feature	**1Supportive Outcomes: _Emotional well-being_ _Reassuring_** Feeling emotionally reassured Feeling comfortable with complexity Feeling confident Feelings of not being judged Feeling valued More confident in approach **_1.1 Emotional Containment_** Emotional support Ability to offload Emotional outlet
SOCIAL CONDITIONS	**Positive factors** Relaxed setting Quiet setting Go physically to a place of purpose Venue away from the office Different location Not disturbed in that setting Not being constantly hassled Location has been a positive factor Another location is important Away from the office Not disturbed in that setting **Inhibiting factors** Open plan office is not good for private discussions	Managed stress and strains Prevented absence Prevented burn out Reduced stress levels Positive impact on stress levels **_1.2 Motivating_** PGS provide drive and motivation Re-motivated people Feeling invigorated Re-ignites a desire to learn PGS increased motivation **_1.3 Therapeutic_** Relaxing experience
LOGISTICS	**Positive factors** Coffee and biscuits being available Nice refreshments The social conditions meaning the layout of the room and seating arrangement	Nurturing and trusting Feeling more relaxed Almost relaxing Therapeutic process Facilitated self-awareness Relaxing location Maslow's Hierarchal of Needs being met, food, emotional support, etc.

Global Theme 2: Peer Group Supervision Model		
Contexts	**+ Mechanisms in operation**	**= Outcomes**
NON-HIERCHARCHAL	**Positive factors** No Hierarchy Emphasise that non-hierarchal element everyone equal EPs more able to express themselves Good to have a peer agreement and policy Non-judgemental process Opportunity to share and compare views without feeling judged Non- threatened/judged No power differential	**2.EDUCATIVE: Developing new skills /approaches/CPD** **2.1 Able to apply Psychological Models & Theories** Introduction of different models from peoples training Enabled me to adopt new approaches Exploring new opportunities Looked at different models to underpin work People bring in theories you may not know about/forgotten Linking theory to practice Applying more Psychology in professional role **2.2 Sharing Resources & Research Opportunities** Opportunities to keep the academic side Tunes your interest into other areas Went away and read papers and did research Took ideas back and researched more Learnt up to date practical things Ordered new materials for assessment Motivated to access research Overall, it's been about sharing resources Raised your awareness of other resources **2.3 Learning New Skills** Developing critical thinking and analysis of professional casework Developing competency Developed practical and developed consultation skills Developed skills in PGS models, process and problem solving Promoted listening skills **2.4 CPD & Highlighting Training Needs** PGS highlighted CPD & training needs Developing professional & personal skills Talked about different areas we want to work in To learn what's going on in the training courses Promoting CPD and new research Application, impact & learning **2.5 Awareness of another person's practice**

How people approach cases
Recognising alternative ways of working
Different people's perspectives and ideas
To hear what another professionals do
Hear people's suggestions and opinions
Benefit of people's different backgrounds and experience
Other frameworks or formulations
Gaining a deeper understanding of peoples practice
Opportunity to discuss difficult or tricky cases, listening to others
Gave me another direction to take
2.6 Opportunity to Learn from Others
We learn through each other
To learn from one another
Opportunity for sharing & learning
Learning from others
Useful in terms of solving own cases
2.7 Challenged EP's thinking
Opportunity to have your biases exposed
Having our thinking challenged
Challenging your views & opinions
Presenting it to be the subject of critical analysis
2.8 Learning through discussion
Discussing things as a team
We learn through talk & socialisation
Talking through something together
2.9 Sharing practice, knowledge, skills
Reciprocal learning- good for those bringing case but also people engage more because conscious of their role in PGS
Allowing us to share our practice
Sharing knowledge and expertise
2.10 Reflection on things discussed
Time of reflect and considered conversations
Reflected about lots of things discussed
Reflected on formulations
Reflection on Practice/Cases
2.11 Enabled me to understand my own practice
Reflect how we work and problem solve
A way of analysing cases
Allowed to reflect on casework
Reaffirmed that I need to keep questioning my own thinking and practice

		Opportunity to discuss cases that went well Reflect and improve our practice ***2.12 Reflection on PGS model, time, space, opportunity*** Allowed to stop, think and reflect Thought about how similar the PGS model can be to everyday practice Opportunity to reflect Opportunity to test out your own critical thinking Having a space to reflect Allowed time to reflect During the process, there were lots of exploring

Global Theme 3: Time		
Contexts	**+ Mechanisms in operation**	**= Outcomes**
LOGISTICS OF TIME	**Positive factors** Having PGS in the afternoon, had more time Section of the day in the afternoon was good Important factor was having the time protected and the time of day Key features were the frequency/time/location	_**3.Cost Effective**_ Time well spent on PGS Used time efficiently and effectively Been cost effective Time-efficient **3.1 Linked to 1:1 Supervision** Very good use of time and links to 1:1 supervision Fantastic way to supplement 1:1 supervision time Time well spent sits nicely alongside 1:1 supervision
COMMITMENT OF TIME	**Positive factors** People make the time in their diary EPs need to give it the status in their diary Diary blocked out time Important to protect the time Timetabled in advance **Inhibiting factors** Time system pressures/heavy workloads…EPs missed PGS	**3.2 Time to organised PGS** Organisation of PGS was good Good planning people knew their role and what was expected of them. Giving time to plan and organise PGS Good planning and organisation of PGS Thank you for introducing PGS and bringing it the team

Global Theme 4: Commitment		
Contexts	**+ Mechanisms in operation**	**= Outcomes**
INDIVIDUAL	**Positive factors** Attendance- people have turned up EPs commitment of time People were invested and prioritised the time EPs committed having PGS times and dates in diary Take PGS seriously and value PGS **Inhibiting factors** Some people cancelled due to work pressures/time	**4Engaging Practitioners** **4.1 Positive experience** I feel excited by the introduction of PGS PGS was enjoyable now committed PGS is engaging and interesting Looking forward to PGS PGS has been really inspiring Gained a much more positive take on PGS now than I thought I might have done **4.2 Valued and ongoing feature** Good to see how the team has benefitted from PGS PGS has been a big outcome PGS has been beneficial Important that we continue with PGS Should be an ongoing feature of our service delivery Extremely valuable People value it immensely and get something out of it PGS is essential for EPs Essential in terms of ensuring the quality assuring our EPS Gives PGS the level of status and commitment it deserves
TEAM	Individual commitment contributes to group effort Commitment of EPs The team prioritised PGS Everyone committed - all the people Committed as a team	
MANAGEMENT	Due to the flat management structure the team agreed that it would be appropriate for all the team to attend Feelings that PGS is not forced by management Senior members of team supported PGS PGS requires the backing from the management PGS has a level of status and is recognised by management	

Global Theme 5: Organic		
Contexts	**+ Mechanisms in operation**	**= Outcomes**
Embedded into EPS practice	**Positive factors** **Future potential of PGS** Needs to be outlined in EPS police and practice Benefits of PGS shared with others at the top Need to continue to monitor PGS Need someone like you to organise it PGS needs to stay it needs to carry on Future potential is maybe we could try and evaluate different models of PGS In the further we need to ensure that PGS is factored into our time	<u>ORGANIC</u> PGS created an EPS learning environment in general Future learning opportunities Positive learning experience lots things I need to consider in more depth Open process… evolving over time in developing our future learning A future learning opportunity in many ways Heightened my awareness of PGS going to use it in schools <u>Next Step</u> As a next step, we formed an 'interest group' PGS has a 'knock on' effect It allowed professionals to 'touch base' It has had a 'Snowball effect' There are little 'off shoots' that come from PGS PGS led to the development of the 'interest group'

Appendix 13

This Appendix includes an example of the quotes from transcripts.

Phase 2: Examples of quotes

Organising theme: 'Environment'

> *It should be sort of open, non-threatening, admissive environment in which to evaluate cases and… It's more about creating a kind of an organic, open, environment where everyone feels able to express themselves and where no one feels in any way threatened or opposed upon by others.*

> *…so, you have got to create an atmosphere of safety…feeling safe to come forward with things, because there are things that I think we all inevitably engage with that we're not certain about.*

> *An open and warm atmosphere.*

> *A trusting atmosphere.*

> *I think there needs to be a positive, open and trusting atmosphere... ... having a supportive working environment.*

> *Having a supportive working environment …trusting... and to make sure that you have got that safe and secure environment.*

Organising theme: 'Commitment of time'

> *...if people aren't sort of invested in it they are not going to attend PGS.*

Organising theme: 'Learning'

> *I will be taking PGS model as a learning opportunity to develop skills as well …..... hopefully it won't feel pressured and the model structure will give everybody in the circle a role... I think it will to promote CPD and learning within the team.*

Organising theme: 'Communication'

> *…building in time is important; having time to communicate, ask questions and get information and feedback from others would be of great value.*

Organising theme: 'Reflection'

> *...what you bring to peer group supervision is about having an opportunity to think about different cases…., you know how it reflects on our own casework…. whenever you sort of engage in a process of discussion about casework you are inevitably contributing but you are also taking from that process...it's very much a two-way thing because you are always reflecting on well ... okay ... you know … how that relates to this case that I've got or to that case that I had before.*

<u>Organising theme: 'Developing new skills and approaches'</u>

I am in favour of PGS particularly because I have just been asked to do something similar …recognising other people's new skills and experience and particularly people doing the doctorate who have lots of up to date research information.

<u>Organising theme: 'Self-Awareness'</u>

Self-awareness develops clear boundaries and reflective practice …. PGS may support our self-awareness. I personally think it is good practice to always think about oneself in relation to other people.

Examples of quotes: Phase 3

<u>Organising theme: 'PGS Model and process was 'Non-Hierarchal'</u>

…the structure was really enabling and empowering for everyone attending and it did not in any deeper sense feel restrictive.

…it's good to have an agreement and policy that there's going to be that confidentiality, that it's going to be non-judgemental you know all those sorts of things.

<u>Organising theme: 'PGS Model and process was 'Facilitating'</u>

...having the model and structure made you wait and you should listen, it facilitated listening... I can speak quite quickly and I know that I can cut people up so it's been good to kind of practise a bit of restraint because of the structure so yeah, it's definitely been really useful.

<u>Organising theme: 'PGS Model and process followed 'Structured Framework'</u>

The PGS model was well structured, I think the overall context of PGS needs a structure and I think that structure is particularly supportive because although there are roles they're not threatening roles, they're not roles that you wouldn't do outside of your job as an EP so you would be facilitating conversations, you would be keeping things on track, you would be listening out for aspects of a case, so none of it feels threatening which is good and I think if you do not have that structure people would be tempted to sort of, go off on tangents which wouldn't necessarily be productive so I think yeah, it's been good to have structure. .

…the model and structure was definitely needed; I think the structure was good though we sometimes needed reminding of it at the start of everyone until we get completely used to it.

<u>Organising theme: Social conditions promoted a 'Supportive Environment'</u>

...there is a potential for some people who attend PGS to feel threatened but in our case the fact was the environment was not at all threatening at all, it was a very positive context, a very constructive environment.

…you go into PGS knowing that it's a safe and nurturing environment and that people feel cared about and looked after.

Organising theme: Social conditions promoted a positive: 'Social Setting'

…the context and setting is really important. Having it in a different location, having it timetabled into your diary, those things are really important for making PGS work … because you know you value it … you're actually having to go physically to a place for a purpose so it gives it PGS some status within your timetable...having it in a different location... yes it was an important feature.

...it just felt more relaxed because you're away from the office really.

I think definitely the location has been a big positive factor.

Organising theme: 'Team'

…. therefore, that commitment helped a great deal in making a success of the peer group supervision...everyone appeared committed.

I also think everyone should take PGS seriously.

... people were invested in PGS they made space and prioritised time.

I think the team were committed to PGS and those who attended were committed to the process. The whole team protected the time and they were there for the right reason.

…. therefore, individual commitment helped a great deal in making a success of the peer group supervision.

Organising theme: 'Individual'

I missed a few due to work pressures and heavy work load ... I felt I had missed out.

I think also everyone taking it seriously, as they valued PGS...

Unfortunately, I had to cancel a couple due to meetings clashing at the same time as PGS.

...the commitment from individual people...

Organising theme: 'Management'

…obviously support and backing of management that's needed.

...a promise from people higher up to commit to PGS is very important for it continuing.

Organising theme: 'Logistics'

So, I think some of the key features that promote PGS is the location and having it in the afternoon.

I think a number of factors have been helpful in facilitating PGS, having time to get out of this building has been a big factor because this is quite an oppressive working environment and I think it's associated with quite a few negative factors. Being out of here, at a different site and somewhere else has been good and a positive factor.

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<u>Organising theme: 'Time management'</u>

I think obviously because it's like a section of time in the diary that you'll block out…. …definitely that time…it's that protected time.

Sometimes it was difficult to fit PGS in with work already negotiated.

<u>Organising theme: 'Cost Efficient'</u>

I think also importantly time-efficient and so a feeling afterward that everyone had achieved a… had used time efficiently and effectively.

<u>Organising theme: Team Dynamics 'Supportive Relationships'</u>

…so, you know you can feel safe within it to talk about things that sometimes you know, you're being honest about, you can go in there and be honest and say well I don't really know or I do feel… Like able to feel valued ...because of our supportive relationships... ...it worked well because of our supportive and trusting relationships... we are lucky we have a really nice team of EPs.

The professional and personal relationships within the team is a key feature and an important factor for PGS …I think the team is very supportive anyway so I've always felt as though I can nip in and ask people, and ask for advice.

Formed relationships, trust and mutual respect is very important …. PGS appeared to bring the team closer together.

<u>Organising theme: Supportive 'Reassuring'</u>

feeling emotionally reassured that you feel like you are doing what you should be doing in your role.

PGS set my mind at rest as I felt more confident in my approach when dealing with a complex case.

...it helped to improve my confidence, well it would confirm how I am approaching things is appropriate and that gives me confidence when I am in schools.

<u>Organising theme: 'Therapeutic'</u>

I felt PGS promoted a nurturing and trusting environment… which was important..…. we all need that emotional support from colleagues at certain times.

Certainly, PGS was a relaxing experience and an interesting experience.

I feel like you can relax a bit during PGS and sort of catch up with colleagues.

...reassuring, yes, emotionally reassuring, I think that other people who are competent, very experienced struggle, that they struggle with the same things so that gives you confidence I think that I'm not alone really.

<u>Organising theme: 'Motivating'</u>

PGS process was more about increasing motivation for me….as we get used to our own way of working.

I'd say a positive personal experience overall; I have an interest in PGS…. I enjoyed the sessions I attended ....

Organising theme: 'Emotional Containment'

...reducing stress levels and yes... I did find PGS extremely useful for reducing stress.

…another key feature and again has been the openness and emotional support of the team.

...easing and lessening pressures.

Organising theme: 'Promoted Supportive Relationships'

…intent on being supportive of each other.

PGS can be and was very supportive. PGS helped me to trust, it's about trusting, isn't it?

...because I know I got a lot of support from the team. I suppose I got access to team support through the PGS structured session, so yes, PGS has been great.

Organising theme: 'Strengthened Relationships'

… I think one of the valued outcomes….. has been that it has served to strengthen relationships in the team and I think people feel more able now to talk easily amongst each other even outside the peer group supervision.

Things had got a little strained around the office environment with one thing and another; I think PGS brought us closer together as a team.

Organising theme: 'Promoted a Supportive Ethos'

...it provided a supportive context which allowed me time to reflect on casework. It definitely promoted a co-operative and supportive environment.

PGS allowed an opportunity to talk through and reflect on your own casework but also other peoples in a supportive context.

The social conditions were just right for it... I felt it was a very positive experience.

Organising theme: 'Awareness of Other People's Practice'

I suppose it's just that access to people's ideas.

I felt professionally and personally satisfied with what had gone on, and maybe if there is an opportunity to say later, that PGS gave me another direction to take.

Appendix 14

This Appendix includes:
- PGS model (1).
- PGS model (2).
- PGS: Interactive Factors Framework for casework formulation (an adapted version of Interactive Framework of Problem Solving (Monsen, Graham, Frederickson & Cameron, 1998).
- PGS: 'Integrative model of formulation (Five P's stages of change). An adapted version of Weerasekera's (1995) Integrative model of formulation.
- PGS: Realistic Evaluation problem-solving framework for casework formulation (an adapted version of RE (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).
- Peer Group Supervision (PGS) and Force Field Analysis (FFA) used a problem-solving tool for systemic issues (an adapted version of FFA Lewin 1951)).

PGS Model 1

Outline of PGS

Agenda

- Introductions
- Roles
- Brief outline of the session structure – choosing roles
- Purpose of the session
- Peer Group Supervision session – Approximately 45 minutes

Who does it involve?

A supportive group of problem solvers (6-8 people), who are committed to assisting the 'Problem Presenter' find solutions.

Roles
- **Moderator (facilitator) -**guides session, ensuring the focus is kept, promotes autonomy and respect, confidentially, sets boundaries, safety, fosters an atmosphere of support, safety, etc.
- **Case presenter -** who has a problem, to which they are seeking solutions, discusses important pieces of information, thinks of key questions.
- **Secretary/Graphic designer -** takes notes, clarifies key question, checks understanding, focuses on groups constructive suggestions and provides a summary of the discussion.
- **Time keeper -**keeps track, moves things on, etc.
- **Consultants -**creative brain storm team they listen, comprehensive questions, offer ideas and perspectives.
- **Silent observer(s) -** observes the process and notices key parts in the discussion.

Structure
A structured six stage process is followed, with each stage having a time allocation for the whole process to be complete:
- **Case Presentation-** begins by outlining the problem outlines 5-10 uninterrupted minutes to outline the issues or problem, whilst the group listens.
- **Moderator-**listens and guides the session.
- **Key Question-** moderator asks for specific question from the case presenter. Consultants support the process.

- **Consultants-** using a round robin approach the consultants are invited to ask clarification questions of the current situation, Who? What? Where? When? How often?
- **Brainstorm-** consultants are invited to generate and pose a range of ideas and creative solutions are offered.
- **Secretary-**takes notes and provides feedback at the end of the session. The 'secretary then provides the case presenter with the record of the discussion.
- **Case Presenter**-responds at the end of the session.

Purpose/tasks/Issues, etc.

To finish, the group members are asked for their final rounds of words to describe their experience. The process then concludes where the case Presenter and the consultants decide on the first steps that are achievable within the next 3 days. This is discussed at the beginning of the next PGS session.

Time needed: Approximately 45 minutes. Those who attend will need to commit to staying for the full 45 minutes until the process is completed.

Phases of PGS
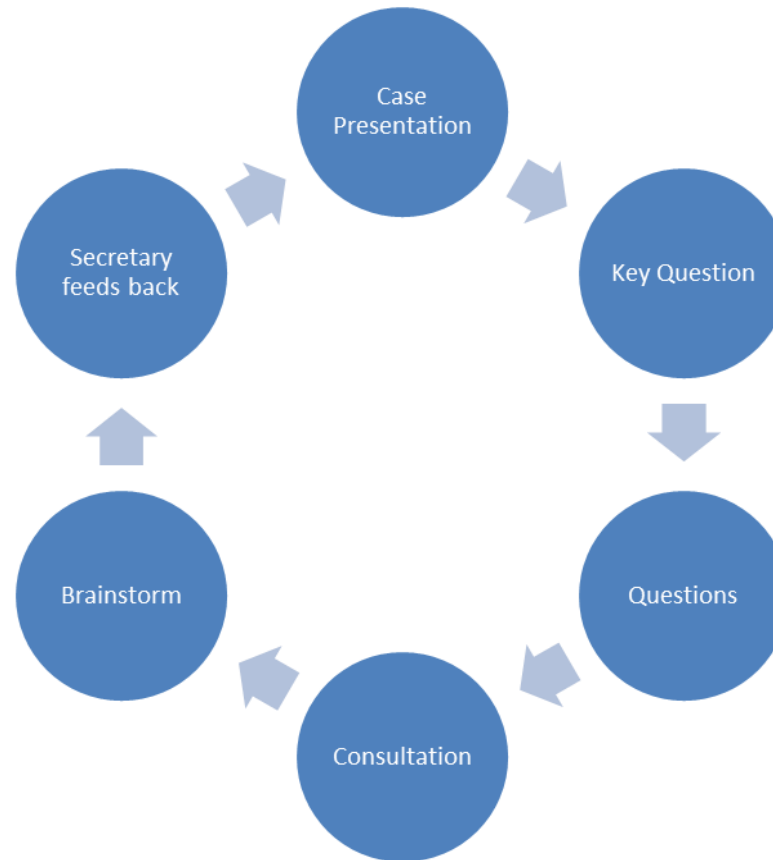
PGS Model 2

Agenda

- Introductions
- Purpose of the session
- Brief outline of the session structure – choosing roles
- Peer Group Supervision session – Approximately 45 minutes

Outline of PGS and roles

Who does it involve?

PGS is a process that involves a supportive group of problem solvers (6-8 people), who are committed to assisting the 'Problem Presenter' find solutions. All members of the group form a brainstorming team to support the 'problem presenter' in reaching their solution.

Peer group supervision consists of the following roles:

- **Moderator (facilitator):** The facilitator guides the session through each stage of the process, ensuring the focus is kept. They promote autonomy and respect and set boundaries, reminding that conversations should be kept confidential. This aims to foster an atmosphere of support, safety, etc.

- **Problem presenter:** The problem presenter 'brings' a problem to which they are seeking solutions. The case presenter discusses important pieces of information and considers key questions that they wold like answered.

- **Secretary/Graphic recorder:** The graphic recorder takes notes and provides a visual outline of issues discussed. They also check understanding if needed before recording and provide a summary after each stage.

- **Time keeper:** The time keeper keeps track of the times and reminds and provides the facilitator with 1 minute warnings.

- **Consultants:** Each group member takes the role of the creative brain storm team. They listen; ask questions and offer ideas and perspectives at each stage of the process.

Structure of PGS

A structured seven stage process is followed, with each stage having a time allocation in order for the whole process to be complete:

1. <u>Overview of the issue:</u> Case presentation begins by outlining the issue/problem whilst the group listens. This is outlined in 5-10 uninterrupted minutes. The graphic recorder produces a visual summary **(5 – 10 minutes)**

2. <u>Key question:</u> The moderator asks for a specific question from the case presenter. What question would they like to be answered through the process? This becomes the aim of the session.

3. <u>Questioning phase:</u> Using a round robin approach the consultants are invited to ask clarification questions of the current situation, Who? What? Where? When? How often? **(10 minutes)**

4. <u>Brainstorming stage</u>: Consultants are invited to generate and pose a range of ideas/theories that they think could be causing the issue ('hypothesising') **(10 minutes).**

5. <u>Generating solutions:</u> Based on the information and potential theories, creative solutions are offered. Again, a round robin approach will be used **(10 minutes).**

6. <u>First steps</u>: The case presenter begins to consider what steps they may take first in the next 3 days. Consultants have the opportunity to suggest first steps too **(5 minutes).** Progress with these steps can be revisited at the next peer group supervision session.

7. <u>Reflection of the process</u>: Case presenter responds at the end of the session.

Graphic Design and Visual Summary


```
1.  ASSESS
Present problem
```

```
2. HYPOTHESES
Testing possible
theories and
hypotheses, etc.
```

```
6. REVIEW
Next PGS session recap and
revisit suggested ideas,
solutions, next steps, etc. If
required assess existing
problem.
```

```
Key question to answer
Aims of PGS
```

```
3. FORMULATION
Using desired problem-
solving framework for
formulation.
```

```
5. DO
First steps:
Next 3 days
```

```
4. PLAN
Solutions, what
could we do to meet
our aim?
```

Peer Group Supervision (PGS): Interactive Factors Framework for casework formulation (an adapted version of Interactive Framework of Problem Solving (Monsen, Graham, Frederickson & Cameron, 1998).

Problem/questions:

Step 1: *Present the case*		Step 2: *Consultants clarify and ask questions*	Step 4: *Possible manageable outcomes*
Brief Background Information Age: Gender: Year group:	**Biological**		
Main Concerns School: Home:	**Cognition and Learning**		
	Behavioural and Emotional	Step 3: *Suggested next steps*	
Other agencies involved			
	Communication and Social Interaction		

Previous EP involvement	Sensory and Physical needs		**Step 5: Step 5: Meta-evaluation** *Case presenter and Consultants provide feedback. The whole group reflects on PGS process.*
	Strengths		
Environment			
	Additional Information		

PGS: 'Integrative model of formulation: An adapted version of Weerasekera's (1995) Integrative model of formulation, The Six P's Stages of Formulation		
	Individual factors (behavioural, emotional, cognitive thoughts, biological, psychodynamic, patterns of coping)	**Systemic factors (parents/carers, family, school, social, friendships, work)**
1. Presenting factors		
2. Precipitating factors (possible triggering factors)	(internal triggers)	(external triggers)
3. Perpetuating factors (possible maintaining factors)	(internal factors)	(external factors)
4. Predisposing factors (affect: possible influencing factors)	(distal internal factors)	(distal external factors)
5. Protective factors (possible defensive, resilient considerations that maintain emotional health)		
6. Precontemplation factors (possible influences for not wanting to change for the foreseeable future or cultural aspects for not seeing the issue as a problem).	(internal viewpoint)	(external viewpoints)

PGS: Realistic Evaluation problem-solving framework for casework formulation (an adapted version of RE (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Step 3
Context?

Step 1
Problem?
Issue?

Step 2
Desired
Outcomes?
(Wishful thinking)
"If possible it would be of
benefit /fantastic if…."

Step 4
Mechanism?

Step 5
Actions/next
steps?
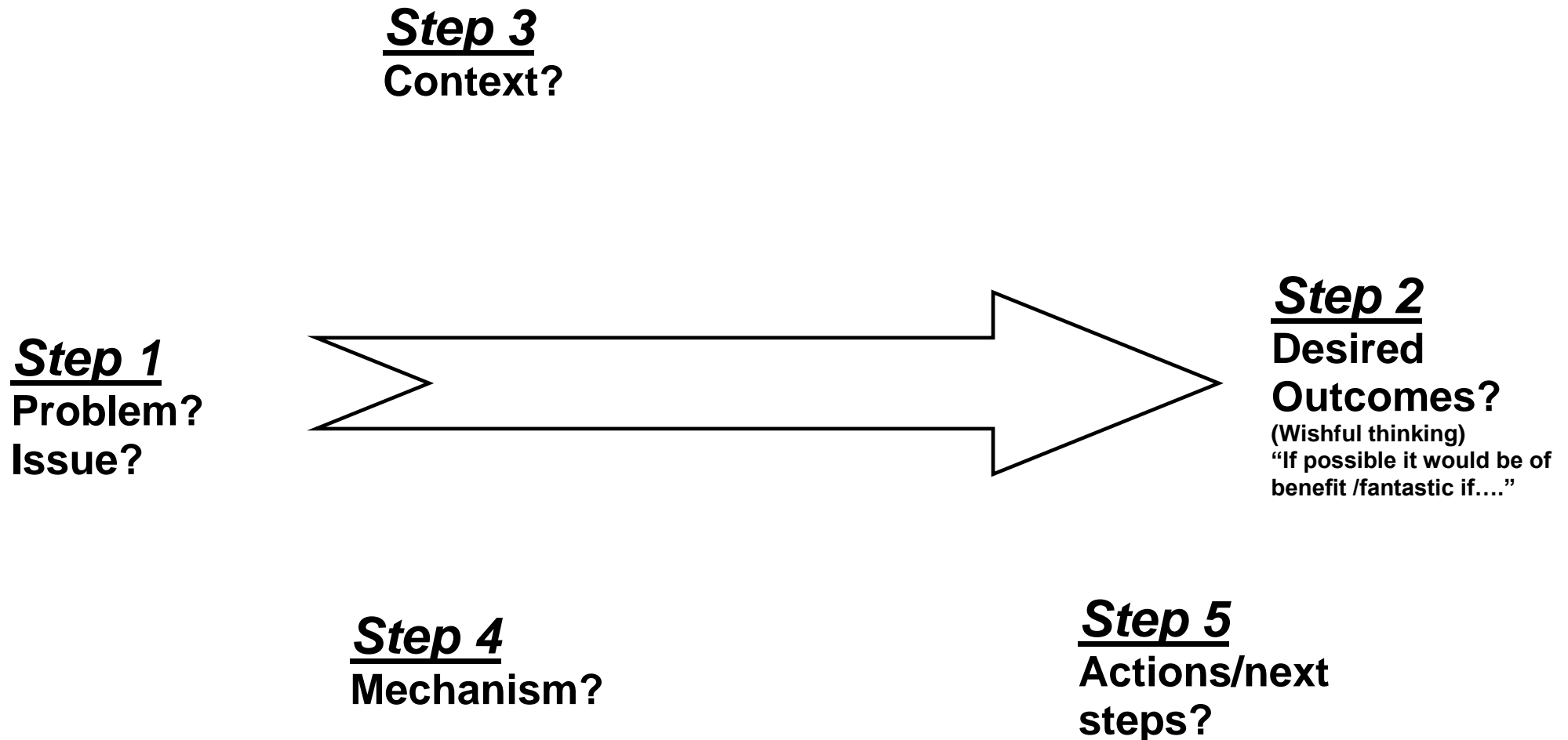
PGS: Realistic Evaluation problem-solving framework for casework formulation

Method:

This is a four-step process and can be carried out with any size group in less than an hour. First use three colours of removable post-it-notes (such as yellow, green and blue. standard 3×5 size. You need a flipchart or a room with wall space.

Roles:

Problem holder(s) or case presenter(s).

Facilitator helps to move the group from one step to the next. The facilitator can also contribute as a group member or play a neutral role.

Procedure

Step 1: Case presenter outlines the problem/issue.

Step 2: The Desired Outcomes are determined (this question drives the results)

Every session will have its own desired outcomes. sample questions are:

- If possible it would be fantastic for ……………to happen.

- What are the biggest obstacles in preventing ……...?

- What features do we need to …….?

- What goals do we want to achieve ……?

- What did we learn ………?

(It may be best to work or to focus on one outcome at a time, so as a group choose the most desirable /important one first).

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Step 3: Put apparent, noticeable or perceived contexts (or Data) onto post-it-notes.

- Put one context on each post-it-note, ask each group member to brainstorm as many contexts as they can think of.
- In random order, each member puts their post-it-notes up on the flipchart or wall. Then, they read other people's contributions. If, at any time, they think of something else that should be added, members will need to jot it down on a post-it-note and add it to the collection.
- Next, group similar items/themes: once everyone has had a chance to add their contributions to the flipchart or wall, the facilitator helps the case presenter to start grouping and linking the items into themes.
- Thirdly, the case presenter and facilitator assign a name that best represents each group. Some groups may have two or more themes.
- The next part of this step happens when the case presenter, facilitator and the group members rank the themes from most important to least important in order to reach a group consensus.
- Meta-analysis to understand the situation or to provide an explanation: Focus on connections, cause and effect, contradictions, single factors, internal/external factors, etc. Time can now be spent the contexts that are most important rather than spending time discussing unimportant contexts.

Step 4: (Put apparent, noticeable or perceived mechanisms (or Data) onto post-it-notes.

- Carry out the same steps as outlined in Step 3.

<u>Action:</u>

- Problem holder(s) or case presenter(s) generate alternative or an action plan of what to do next in order to achieve the desired outcome(s).

Peer Group Supervision (PGS) and Force Field Analysis (FFA) used a problem-solving tool for systemic issues (an adapted version of FFA Lewin 1951)).

FFA can assist PGS members to work together developing a shared perspective whilst promoting the voices of all those involved.

Stages to FFA

Stage 1

- Case presenter explains presenting problem (10 mins).
- Case presenter and PGS members identify a positive outcome/goal they wish to achieve and this is expressed in relation to an equilibrium (how things are now). The next step is to identify all forces that help or hinder achievement of this outcome/goal and to weight these in terms of their relative strengths. (These are written on post-it notes and affixed to a diagram with numerical assignment, as follows

Goal

Presenting problem…………………………………..

Hindering forces

Equilibrium --
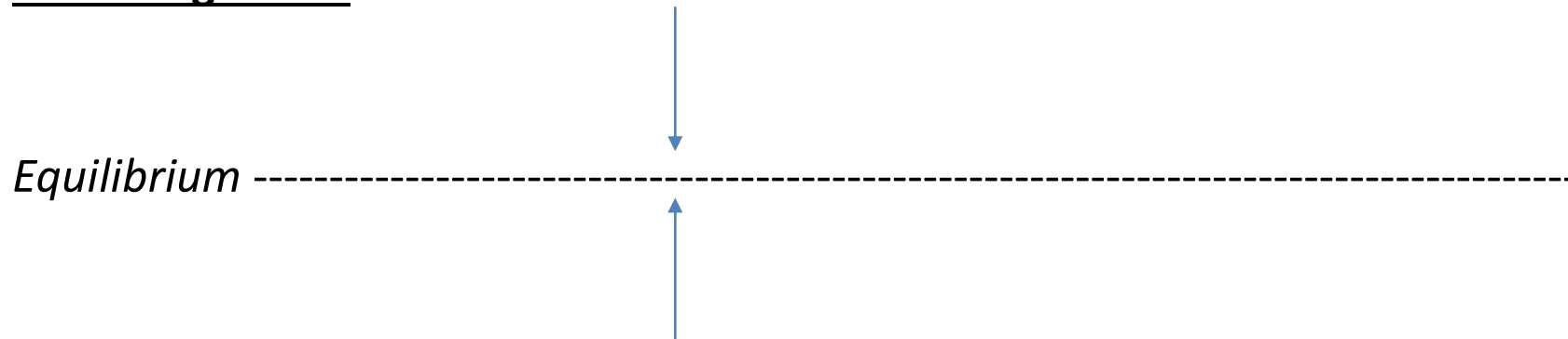
Helping forces

Stage 2

The second stage is devoted to a critical analysis of:
- *Minimising or removing some of the hindering forces*
- *Maximising the helping forces or adding new helping forces*

This can be helped by listing and ranking the importance of the forces and the level of influence one has over them, see the following:

Importance

4 = Significantly important.

3 = Somewhat important.

2 = Relatively/fairly important.

1 = Of slight importance.

Influence

4 = This is a force that can be easily changed.

3 = This is a force that could be changed with effort.

2 = This is a force that could be changed entirely with much effort.

1 = This is a force that is force is fixed and unchanging.

Stage 3

PGS members engage in a dialogue about which forces to focus their attention on. This can be done numerically by adding up the forces and looking for those which are both important and easy to influence or simply by viewing the diagram.

Stage 4

Next steps are drawn up on how the proposed changes with be implemented. This should also detail what needs to be done and by whom, where and when it will be done.

Appendix 15

This Appendix includes Phase 2 and phase 3 Comparison Table.

Phase 1 and Phase 3 Comparison Table

Global Themes	Organising and Basic Themes	Phase 1	Phase 3
Social conditions (Context)	Environment	X	X
	Ethos	X	X
	Social setting	X	X
	Logistics	X	X
PGS Model (Context)	Supportive	X	X
	Communication	X	X
	Learning	X	X
	Structured	X	X
	Non-hierarchal	X	X
	Facilitating	X	X
Time (Context in phase 1) (Mechanism in phase 2)	Frequency	X	X
	Reflection time	X	
	Cost-effective	X	X
	Commitment	X	X
	Pressures of time	X	X
	Logistics		X
	Time management		X
Commitment (Mechanism)	Individual	X	X
	Team		X
	Management	X	X
Relationships (Team Dynamics) (Mechanism)	Supportive	X	X
	Building of relationships	X	
	Emotional needs	X	
	Formed relationships		X
Preparedness (Mechanism)	Planning	X	
	Organisation	X	

	Readiness	X	
Educative (Outcome)	Developing new skills and approaches	X	X
	Highlighting training needs/CPD	X	X
	Sharing practice, knowledge, skills, resources	X	X
	Learning from others	X	X
	Develop critical thinking skills		X
	Awareness of other people's practice		X
	Reflection on PGS, model, cases, practice and discussions	X	X
Supportive (Outcome)	Positive engagement with colleagues	X	
	Team support	X	
	Open to other people's perspectives	X	
	Motivating		X
	Therapeutic		X
	Emotional containment		X
	Reassuring		X
Emotional Containment (Outcome)	Feelings	X	
	Emotional needs	X	
	Self-awareness	X	
Team Cohesion (Outcome)	Promoted supportive relationships		X
	Strengthened relationships		X
	Promoted supportive ethos		X
Organic (Outcome)	Linked to 1:1 supervision		X
	Learning opportunities		X
	Sense of purpose		X
	Next steps		X
	Valued and an on-going feature		X
	Positive experience		X
	Impact on practice		X

Appendix 16

This Appendix includes information about the characteristics of promoting the optimum conditions for setting up PGS within a group setting.

Optimum conditions for setting up PGS within a group setting

PGS participants work together to reach an agreement on the contract (boundaries and conditions) to create a productive, non-judgemental and trusting atmosphere for the case presenter.

Group Dynamics

Due to the nature and set up of PGS, it generally elicits stronger feelings than one-to-one supervision sessions. It is considered important to manage the 'emotional energy' of the group so that it becomes a resource rather than, "*an unruly animal that has to be tamed and controlled*" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012, p.180).

Group dynamics can sometimes be overlooked and disregarded (Steen, 2012). For new group members, they may approach the group with a mixture of anticipation or anxiety and view it as a risky situation (Proctor, 2008). It is suggested participants should be aware of group dynamics to normalise group experiences and understand interactions. For example, Tuckman (1965) offers a linear framework of group development, which is still widely used. He suggests that an effectively performing group passes through the first stage on to the second and so on until reaching the final stage. This is outlined in Table A.

Table A: Four Stages of Group Development (Tuckman, 1965)

Stages	Group development/process
Forming	Group members explore what the group will be like, finding the basis of forming relationships with other. Finding out that they are accepted. Tuckman (1965) sees orientation, testing and the establishment of dependent relationships as the chief characteristic of this stage.
Storming	Conflicts may arise as relationships are being formed, subgroups may emerge, differences are confronted and control becomes an open issue and is resisted, regardless of its source.
Norming	Contracts and rules start to emerge about acceptable ways of behaving and of carrying out the task of the group. These rules are allied in working with conflicts; the spirit of co-operation develops at this stage.

Performing	At this stage conflicts are resolved; energy is put into task accomplishment. The group works together to become operational and effective. The group has evolved to the point where it is supportive of task performance. Roles have become flexible and functional. Group energy is channelled to produce task outcomes. Group members begin to acknowledge individual uniqueness and permit individual differences to emerge. The standards and norms of behaviour are established.

Tuckman (1965) was quite critical of the idea of producing a generalised theory to apply to different types of groups in different situations. However, not all groups follow these stages exactly. There appears to be no allowance made for the context and history of a previously formed group or the purpose of the task. Also, it could be misused if applied too rigidly and uncritically such as, it could mask what is going on within the dynamics of the group.

It is important to note that such theories and frameworks should be treated with some caution. Frameworks for effective group performance and conflict resolution are more applicable to some types of group activity than others. Nevertheless, developmental theories of group processes can be extremely useful when trying to make sense of setting up a group or the group dynamics.

Adair (2009) offers an alternative framework 'Effective Team Building'. This focuses on the three needs of a group; individual, group and task needs. Additionally, Steen (2001) also offers a framework and advocates that the group supervisor (facilitator in PGS) works to keep the group needs in balance such as:

1. Task needs (on-task and focused).

2. Maintenance needs (good working relationships, group conditions and climate).

3. Individual needs (sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943), not to exercise power and influence (Adair, 2009).

Also, Bion (1961, 1974) studied the experiences in groups such as, the role of group processes in group dynamics. He referred to recurrent emotional states of groups as basic assumptions. Bion argued that in every group, two groups are present, i.e. the work group (focusing on the primary task and keeping the group anchored), and the basic assumption group (the unspoken and underlying assumptions on which the behaviour of the group is based). Bion identified three basic assumptions: dependency (attain security for the immature individuals), fight-flight (characterised by aggressiveness and hostility as the

group avoids addressing the task by chit-chatting, telling stories, arriving late, etc.) and pairing (two members carry out the work of the group through their continued interaction).

Bion suggested that the facilitator would gain insight regarding effective group work. Bion (1985) also hypothesised the theory of 'Containment'; he postulated that for a mother to provide containment to her child she herself must feel a sense of emotional security. Bion (1961) proposed that the containment process could also influence individual relationships within groups. To provide a containing function within a group context, members must be open and receptive to the process. Proctor & Inskipp, (2009) model of unconscious processes draws on Bion's (1961, 1974) work naming four categories of group climate:

1. Insecure and task oriented (angry group).
2. Insecure and relationship oriented (disappointed group).
3. Secure and task oriented (sensible group).
4. Secure and relationship oriented (solidarity group).

Proctor & Inskipp (2009) stressed that when a group engages in dysfunctional behaviour (Bion groups) their task is not always clear or there could be underlying agendas that are not voiced. They recommend that the group should discuss unrecognised difficulties or revisit the professional contract or working agreement to refocus on the group's initial intention. Proctor & Inskipp (2009) note that,

> '*the conscious and unconscious making of choices among a welter of possibilities is at the heart of the job.'* (p.141)

Group homogeneity

In terms of group membership, they can be either 'in house groups', such as colleagues or teams who work alongside each other or inter or intra multi-disciplinary configurations. PGS members are usually of similar experience levels, de Haan (2005) suggested that the aim of a PGS is to discuss specialist knowledge and to promote and monitor professional methodology and procedures with professionals from the same discipline. However, I have experience of both group homogeneity and diversity being valuable. Group diversity can facilitate and encourage the members to think flexibly about their work. However, similarity in theoretical orientation or professional culture can promote a shared understanding (Steen, 2012).

Group size and Occurrences

Practical issues, such as group membership and size, benefit from consideration when establishing PGS. The optimum group size often depends on several factors such as, the

purpose of PGS or whether PGS is the participants' only source of supervision (Scaife, 2009). With larger groups, there is a risk that some quieter members may feel inhibited about being open, although with a smaller group it may prove difficult to sustain attendance. Numbers of six to eight have been named as optimal, allowing enough variety and enough intimacy (Proctor, 2008; Scaife, 2009). PGS members usually meet on a regular basis, every three to four weeks.

Structure, models, participant's roles and responsibilities

The approach to PGS should be highly structured as it creates safety and assists members to maintain boundaries. Members usually decide on the model, roles, functions and the ways in which the group is structured. Different roles within PGS can be referred to as problem-owners and contributors (Mills & Swift, 2015). Some members may find the structure challenging but they quickly see the benefits in terms of the quality (Rae, 2015). PGS is likely to involve the exploration of different roles and various models to guide the processes of case formulations with peers (Squires 2010, p.288).

Contracts

Working alliance, effective contracts, collaborative goal and task setting inevitably all appear a central tenet in some characterisations of supervision and PGS. An effective contract should be established before the supervision process (Page & Wosket, 2001). Contacts are working documents with legal ramifications such as; they stipulate the ethical procedures, boundaries and help to clarify group responsibilities (Obsorn & Davies, 1996). By agreeing set markers to form a working agreement, it ensures an effective contract, which minimises hidden agendas and guard against power imbalances (Hewson, 1999). The rigour of contracting is linked to positive relationships, core values and ethical conduct (Lawton, 2000) plus working agreements facilitate positive working relationship (Proctor, 1997). Hawkins & Shohet (2006) also emphasised the importance of developing an agreed contract before commencing PGS. It is recommended that contracts should be reviewed regularly (Proctor, 2008). All tasks are negotiated and agreed in the form of a contract, which can be referred to or re-negotiated at any stage of the work.