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“Glimmers of hope and little pockets of opportunity”: A grounded theory study exploring the process of perspective change during educational psychology consultation meetings.

Holly Lynn Bruce

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

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ABSTRACT

Consultation is a widely used approach within educational psychology service delivery across the UK. Consultation seeks to promote perspective change and facilitate a shift in relational dynamics at a systemic level for the benefit of the child or young person (Wagner, 2000). Although much is known about the factors which constitute consultation meetings, there is limited evidence about how perspective change actually occurs (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). This thesis offers a theoretical framework explaining the process of perspective change during educational psychology consultation (EPC) meetings.

This study investigated the perspectives of educational psychologists (EPs) reflecting on their experience of noticing perspective change and relational dynamics during consultation meetings. This study was carried out in one educational psychology service from a semi-rural local authority in the South-West of England. Seven fully qualified and practicing EPs were interviewed, all of whom had a wide range of experience within the profession. The data collection was completed in two phases in line with grounded theory methodology, with phase two offering an opportunity to target questioning to facilitate data saturation (Charmaz, 2014).

The results indicate that the extent to which consultees experience openness through three factors relates to the likelihood that perspective change will occur: sense of psychological safety, sense of responsibility and sense of agency. Three socio-political mechanisms were identified that negatively impact consultee openness: feeling undervalued, a culture of blame, and bureaucracy. EPs facilitate change during consultation meetings by offering a therapeutic space, challenging narratives, and helping consultees to break down barriers. The results from this study offer insight into the generative mechanisms affecting consultee openness and how change can be facilitated (Oliver, 2012). These findings are intended to be useful to EP practitioners both in-training and for reflective practice to maximise positive change for the benefit of children and young people.

COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT

This research has been significantly impacted due to restrictions emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent lockdown and social distancing policy. This statement will summarise the key factors linked to planned research activities which needed to be changed or adapted.

At the start of this research project, I had planned to investigate the process of perspective change during EPC meetings by recording sessions live and performing discourse analysis to understand the patterns of conversation linked to perspective change. At the point where I submitted the ethics form to the ethics board for approval, the pandemic had gained momentum and it became clear that face to face consultation meetings would not be likely to go ahead. This had a significant impact on my planned method so I had to rethink how I could pursue my area of interest in line with social distancing guidelines.

This resulted in the rethinking of both the methodology and method to continue to pursue the process of perspective change without having access to the live sessions. This was a difficult shift to experience as I felt that analysing live consultation meetings using discourse analysis would offer a unique opportunity to add to current limited evidence around the mechanism of language within consultations, as well as exploring which techniques facilitated perspective change and which factors appeared to be barriers to change.

Therefore, I had to rethink the whole process of my research, including the participant group, method of gathering data, appropriate analytical framework, and subsequent ethical considerations. I identified that my data would have to be gathered remotely and that I needed to be mindful of the pressure on schools and parents during the significant transition that they were experiencing at the start of the pandemic. With this in mind, I decided to explore EP views regarding perspective change and reflect on past experiences of consultation meetings by using an adapted version of Interpersonal Process Recall to elicit rich, detailed memories and perspectives of face-to-face consultation meetings.

Overall, the redesign of my research methodology offered a different, but equally valuable opportunity for me to explore my area of interest and offer useful insight for the EP profession, however the significant changes in planning and research that I had to complete significantly impacted the timeline of my project.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, my deep gratitude extends to the participants who selflessly gave up their time and their energy to be involved in this research, no mean feat when managing life and work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your openness, honesty, and passion for improving outcomes for children and young people was inspiring, and I feel privileged as a researcher to have been given the opportunity to talk to you about your professional experiences.

I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr Rob Green for his support at every stage of this journey. Not once did I feel alone during what could have been a very challenging process, with the move to remote working during the pandemic lockdown of 2020 and 2021. I attribute this to your ability to offer support in an empowering and motivational way. A real skill which I both value and aspire to achieve in my own professional practice. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Dr Jon Symonds who has been an inspiration, challenging me to develop the most relevant and insightful findings that I could. As supervisors, you both have made this process a highlight of my doctoral training.

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To my family who have made so many willing sacrifices for me to achieve this dream. To my husband Phil, who has at times had to balance so many plates that he should be in the Guinness Book of Records, I hope I can repay you one day. To my parent Lynn, words cannot describe the impact of your unconditional love and support, this would not have happened without you. Finally, to my children, Evangeline, and Ariana. It is you who I have to thank most of all, you are my motivation, my inspiration, and my joy.

This is as much your achievement as it is mine.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ....HOLLY LYNN BRUCE........... DATE:.......26 AUGUST 2021.......

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPS	British Psychological Society
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Program
CBT	Cognitive behavioural therapy
CYP	Children and young people
EHC	Education, Health and Care
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPC	Educational psychology consultation
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
IPR	Interpersonal process recall
LA	Local Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NHS	National Health Service
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
TME	Target monitoring and evaluation
SEMH	Social emotional and mental health
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SFBT	Solution focused brief therapy
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VIG	Video interactive guidance

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis overview

This research explores the process of perspective change during educational psychology consultation (EPC) meetings to offer some clarity around the mechanism by which perspective change occurs. Although there has been significant interest from researchers regarding characteristics of EPC meetings, there is a lack of insight into the specific mechanisms by which perspective change happens. Based on the understanding that perspective change is pursued across a range of relational helping professions, this thesis seeks to explore how this translates to EPC meetings.

Within this study I have tried to both explore and to explain the process of perspective change, with the aim of developing a model which can be applied to EPC meetings. My intention was to offer increased clarity about the process to both inform and identify best practice in regard to meaningful outcomes for children and young people, as well as provide an alternative evaluation tool which can be used to offer a broader understanding of impact.

This research was approached from a critical realist lens as I believe that the world exists independently of human perception, but that our understanding of it is socially constructed. Therefore, I chose to pursue the broad framework of constructivist grounded theory methodology based on the approach suggested by Charmaz (2014), which was adapted to be congruent with a critical realist paradigm, by facilitating the identification of 'real' underlying mechanisms affecting the change process (Oliver, 2012). Seven fully qualified and practicing participants were interviewed via remote methods, using an intensive interviewing approach to gather rich data about their experiences of perspective change during consultations. Supplementary information is provided at the end of this research in the appendices section, including additional detail and examples of resources or tools used throughout the study. This will be referred to at varying points throughout this thesis.

1.2 Overview of introduction chapter

Within this introductory chapter I detail the rationale for the study which is supported by an overview of relevant contextual factors. I will first define perspective change as a concept,

moving on to explore educational psychology consultation within the UK. Current thinking regarding the evaluation of best practice and impact is then discussed, followed by an exploration of important influences on this research.

1.3 Defining key terms

This section will define key terms used within this research. It is important to offer a useful explanation of concepts where there is ambiguity with regard to the range of interpretations understood of each term. This thesis explores a number of concepts which may be interpreted in a range of different ways which may impact how existing literature is critiqued, as well as how the findings of this study are interpreted. Therefore, to promote clarity, I will first define my understanding of perspective change and how this is conceptualised for the purposes of this study, I will then offer a definition of EPC.

1.3.1 Conceptualising perspective change

To explore perspective change within educational psychology consultation meetings it is important to understand how change is conceptualised in other forms of relational therapeutic practice. In systems theory and family therapy, change is defined as 'therapeutic change' and conceptualised in two forms, first order change and second order change. First order change denotes the increase or decrease of symptoms within an individual, often described as "more or less of the same" (Davey et al., 2012). First order change can also be described as superficial changes within an existing system, where the rules of the system do not fundamentally change. Davey et al. (2012) reflected that first order change is not likely to shift the structure of the system and therefore any initial change is unlikely to be enduring.

Conversely, second order change is described as occurring when there is a qualitative shift in the rules that govern a system, this often results in relational change, change in patterns of behaviour between people or a change in meaning between people. Ultimately, the system will function differently as a result of the new rules, and change is more likely to be long lasting (Davey et al., 2012). With this in mind, second order change can occur with or without the presence of quantifiable first order change.

From this point forward, the use of the term ‘perspective change’ delineates second order change from first order change and will be used widely throughout this thesis to describe fundamental shifts in the rules of the system which may or may not affect quantifiable outcomes.

1.3.2 Defining educational psychology consultation

The work undertaken by educational psychologists (EPs) is both varied and broad. However, two key roles which are frequently undertaken involve statutory work providing advice towards education, health and care (EHC) needs assessments and consultation work. Both statutory and consultation work is underpinned by a framework of collaboration, transparency, ethical practice and accessibility (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2020), however statutory work requires EP advice to be compliant with legislation regarding outcomes, provision and specificity, as stated in the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education [DfE] & Department of Health [DoH], 2015). The focus on legislation can shift the role of the EP to an expert position when compared to the facilitator role taken by the EP during consultative work. As this research seeks to explore perspective change during educational psychology consultation, this area of EP practice will now be explored in more detail.

The word ‘consultation’ is a broad term defined by the Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries (2021) in three ways:

Definitions of consultation
“The act of discussing something with someone or with a whole group of people before making a decision.”
“A formal meeting to discuss something.”
“A meeting with an expert, such as a lawyer or doctor, to get advice or treatment.”

Figure 1.1: Definitions of consultation

These definitions indicate that there is a wide range of approaches and interpretations of consultation, from a joint collaborative approach to one of advice seeking and implied power differentials. Current EPC broadly fits within the first two definitions, with the seminal work

by Wagner (2000, p. 11) describing the process as, "a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems". Wagner (2000) further describes the framework of EPC as a recursive process which consists of collaborative exploration, assessment, intervention, and review, through focusing on developing solutions and empowering consultees. In line with legislation and current thinking within educational psychology practice at the turn of the century, Wagner (2000) did not specifically promote the involvement of parents or carers within the consultation process. However, with the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014, parent voice has become paramount to facilitating ethical and effective practice, this is reflected by a focus on including parents in consultation as suggested more recently by Wagner (2016).

Although the approach purported by Wagner (2000) is not the only consultation model used within educational psychology, as the leading approach to EP service delivery in the UK this thesis will be focusing on Wagner's (2000) framework in addition to facilitating parent and carer voice as a fundamental part of the wider system supporting a child or young person (CYP). A child is defined by the Education Act 1996 as a person under 14 years of age, with an individual aged between 14 and under 18 years of age being classed as a young person. However, in line with the Children and Families Act 2014, the term CYP used throughout this report will also include people with special educational needs (SEN) aged up to and including 25 years of age. In summary, it should be assumed that any reference to EPC throughout this thesis refers to the joint collaborative model purported by Wagner (2000), including a focus on parent or carer views and wishes. Alternative models of consultation which will not be explored in more detail include process consultation, behavioural consultation, and mental health consultation. More information about each of these approaches is explored by Kennedy et al. (2008).

1.3.3 Defining the process of educational psychology consultation

The consultation process as a whole involves an EP gathering information through a variety of methods, including observations of the CYP interacting within their environment, gathering the CYP's views, findings from cognitive assessments, as well as reports from other professionals. The consultation meeting typically involves the EP as a facilitator and the problem-holder from both the school and home contexts (often the main carer of the child),

as well as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Additionally, at times wider family members or teaching staff are also in attendance, as well as multi-agency professionals or the CYP themselves. A consultation meeting typically lasts between 45 minutes and one hour and is structured around the exploration of perspectives, collaborative solution finding and joint action setting (Wagner, 2000). A record of the meeting and list of the actions is then often written by the EP during or after the meeting and shared with the consultees. After a period of time (typically 6 weeks), the consultees and EP will hold a review consultation where progress is revisited, with further exploration, solution finding and action setting if necessary.

This thesis will focus on the consultation meeting element of the consultation process described above, as this is the main opportunity for relational change to occur. Therefore, the terms 'consultation', 'consultation meeting', 'meeting' and 'educational psychology consultation' (EPC) have been used interchangeably throughout the rest of this thesis and should all be interpreted as referring to the meeting stage of the consultation process unless otherwise stated.

1.3.4 Exploring the theoretical basis of educational psychology consultation

EPC is grounded in a number of theoretical approaches and psychological models. Consultation is an interactionist approach concerned with the change that occurs between people as a result of communication, understanding from systems thinking, family therapy and personal construct psychology (Wagner, 2000). Of key importance within EPC is the philosophical stance taken by the EP, which is often one of social constructionism with varying levels of pragmatism, seeking to understand the meaning consultees attribute to themselves and others, using this curiosity to understand the beliefs and concepts that may be affecting the opportunity for change.

Wagner (2000) discusses particular approaches within EPC meetings centred around systems thinking widely used within the field of family therapy (Burnham, 1986). Systems thinking focuses on identifying interactional patterns that happen between people which may contribute to maintaining a problem, rather than looking for within-person factors. For example, the effect of stressors on the system, circular patterns of causality and allocating a problem-owner as a 'scapegoat'. Furthermore, the move to third wave approaches within

family therapy has been mirrored within the EP profession, viewing the EP as part of the system rather than an independent and neutral observer (Davey et al., 2012).

Personal construct psychology contributes theories around how consultees understand meaning in relation to themselves, other members of the system and the situation or interaction. This offers EPs a framework for interpreting consultee constructs and how they may be impacting the problem situation. Wagner (2000) argued that it is the shift towards interactionist and systemic thinking that supports change. However, in practice, EPs can often take a pragmatic approach by doing 'whatever works' to enhance professional autonomy and flexibility when bringing about change. This can contribute to a lack of clarity about the psychology that is used and the process by which change happens.

In addition to employing theory from systemic practice, family therapy and personal construct psychology, educational psychologists also draw more broadly on theory from wider fields of psychology to support the consultation process (Kennedy et al., 2008). Kennedy et al. (2008) identified a number of key theories which were frequently used by EPs during consultation, including social learning theory, attribution theory and psychodynamic approaches. Each of these will now be explored briefly in turn.

Social learning theory emphasises the importance of the social context when an individual learns how to behave. Bandura (1973) described social learning as the learning acquired by individuals as a result of observing the behaviour of others and the extent to which it is positively or negatively reinforced. In the context of EP consultation, an example of social learning may involve school observing the EP offering empathy and understanding in response to parental defensiveness, and recognising that this reduced heightened emotions in the room which may influence how they react to a similar dynamic in the future.

Attribution theory is a broad field of study rather than a specific theory, seeking to understand how an individual conceptualises 'why' an event has occurred. Individuals attribute the outcome of an event in relation to a number of factors, including locus of causality, stability of factors and controllability of factors (Weiner, 1979). Therefore, it is theorised that an individual's construction of reality is underpinned by attributional biases, prior knowledge,

and their locus of control, which impacts causal beliefs attributed to the problem situation held by consultees.

Psychodynamic approaches consist of broad collection of theories underpinned by psychoanalytic concepts and ideas (Freud, 1961), which view human functioning as driven by within-person forces and with a strong focus on the unconscious and different structures of an individual's personality. For example, key psychodynamic theories relevant to EP consultation include splitting and projection, where consultees separate the feelings they find 'unbearable' from those that are deemed to be more 'acceptable', and projecting these towards other consultees (Pellegrini, 2010). For example, where a parent consultee may refer to school as 'useless' due to feeling a 'failure' as a parent which is then projected onto the school as a defence mechanism.

1.5 Evaluating best practice and understanding perceptions of value

Kennedy et al. (2008) discussed the importance of linking psychological theory as well as reflective practice to promote best practice. The researchers suggest that this offers an opportunity to promote consistency in service and quality assurance to avoid "drifting into practitioner folk psychology" (Kennedy et al., 2008, p. 615). In an attempt to further understand EPC, Nolan and Moreland (2014) explored how change may be facilitated during educational consultation meetings, by identifying discursive strategies used by EPs. This offered insight into the specific techniques that were used by the EPs, but did not go so far as to explain the process of change, understand best practice, or recognise change as an impact criteria.

When conceptualising the impact of consultation, the introduction of Every Child Matters (Department for Education [DfE], 2003), shifted children's services in the UK towards an outcomes-based agenda with investment into the 'Outcomes Based Accountability' framework (Eddleston & Atkinson, 2018; Chamberlain et al., 2010). While an outcomes-based approach is purported to benefit populations by moving away from efficiency and towards facilitating cultural change, Chamberlain et al. (2010) suggested that one of the key benefits of the approach lies within improving working practices rather than as a tool for evaluation.

This may be due to the confounding factors present in open systems such as experienced within child services.

As EPC is an example of a complex open system, attempting to attribute impact and value through linking quantifiable outcomes for the CYP sometime later can be challenging (Kennedy et al., 2008). Therefore, Kennedy et al. (2008) suggests that by aligning a qualitative and quantitative approach to evaluating professional competence, a deeper understanding of the 'how' and the 'why' of a process can be gained, as well as indicators that second order change has occurred, rather than looking at longer term outcomes for the CYP which may not be as representative of impact.

1.6 Important influences on this research

My interest in this area has grown from both my personal and professional experiences of group dynamics and noticing how systems function from a young age. More specifically, my interest in EPC has developed from indirectly hearing about, observing, and experiencing first-hand, the perspective shift that can happen during EPC meetings. Next, I will try to explain my interest in this research in more detail in line with researcher reflexivity as suggested by Charmaz (2014).

1.6.1 My motivation to engage in this research

From a young age I became interested in the power of communication, how it could be understood as a window into an individual's beliefs and values, but also used as a tool to promote change. As an adult I worked for a decade within a business and marketing role where influencing people was considered a core part of my job. However, experiencing ethical dilemmas on a daily basis motivated me to pursue a career change into an area I found more aligned with my values. To facilitate this, I retrained as an Early Years Teacher and undertook a course in systemic theory. The interactional and relational approach of systemic theory instantly connected with me. I decided to retrain as an EP so that I could work with the systems around CYP in a relational way and affect change that I felt was ethical and personally meaningful.

1.6.2 My experiences of consultation as a Trainee EP

During the three years I have spent training as an EP, I have been fortunate to both observe and facilitate a wide range of consultation meetings across different local authorities, different settings and for a variety of presenting problems, both remotely and face-to-face. The breadth of experience I gained further added to my deep personal interest in the power held in conversations to facilitate change, as well as the complexity of facilitating that to happen. I began to sense moments where consultees appeared to experience a shift in their perspectives, however, I found attributing the change to specific techniques or events was challenging.

As I developed my practice as an EP I became more confident in facilitating the consultation process. I found myself becoming increasingly interested in understanding the characteristics that facilitated or hindered the process of perspective change, particularly with regards to wider socio-political mechanisms that may be affecting the opportunity for change. Pursuing this research became an opportunity for me to be able to develop my understanding of an area I had gained a significant professional interest in, and one which I felt would be beneficial both to myself, the wider EP profession and most importantly children, young people and those that support them.

1.6.3 Recognising a need to facilitate best practice

I vividly remember one of my first seminars as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) discussing what constituted EP consultation. I listened as the tutors described the staged process of consultation with the aim of facilitating a shift in thinking. The conversation shifted to how EPs facilitate perspective change and what we as TEPs would notice when we were shadowing experienced EPs in the role. The response further ignited my interest when perspective change was described as ‘the magic’ that was ‘hard to describe’, but where you may just notice when something has shifted. From this point onwards I sought to understand and define ‘the magic’ of perspective change during EPCs so that I could develop my practice.

1.6.4 Recognising a need to promote the benefit of consultation

When thinking about the opportunity to contribute knowledge to the wider EP profession, it brought me to consider the challenges of attributing value and success criteria to EPC.

Throughout my experience on placement as a TEP, I noticed that the value placed on the consultation process changed between settings, and often between members of the system as well as with the commissioner. I reflected that it was often difficult to quantify the impact of the consultation beyond the review of the actions that were agreed and implemented, and often these did not seem to fully capture the essence of 'magic' or change that I observed during the consultation. My experience, coupled with my increased awareness of the need for schools to justify costs, led me to consider whether there was an additional way to conceptualise the impact of the consultation approach through recognising perspective change.

In line with the government agenda to demonstrate effectiveness of support services through measuring outcomes, I explored the approach taken by other relational therapeutic professions. Within the field of family therapy there has been a move towards evidencing impact by focusing specifically on second order change, a different approach than is taken by many other mental health services (Stratton et al., 2014). Stratton et al. (2014) sought to measure family functioning and therapeutic change based on the view that going beyond the first order change of 'transient symptom improvement', towards identifying changes in the way people relate may offer a more useful way to evaluate impact. Within EPC, a focus on evidencing the success of meetings using first order change principles has been widespread, including increases or decreases in the child's 'problem' behaviour and changes in attendance or attainment levels. Therefore, there is an opportunity to consider consultation impact beyond first order change by focusing on evidence of second order change. In combination with outcomes measures, this offers a mechanism to gather a more holistic understanding of the value of EPC meetings.

1.7 Thesis structure

This thesis is structured around six chapters, with each denoting a distinct stage of the research. The present chapter offers an introductory overview to the research and an outline of the key areas relevant to the study, as well as the underpinning rationale. In line with the constructivist grounded theory approach of this research, Chapter 2 will offer an overview and critical consideration of what is already known about perspective change in respect of EPC as a broad preliminary literature review (Charmaz, 2014). Chapter 3 describes the

methodology and methods I identified to be most appropriate for this study in light of my epistemological and ontological position. Chapter 4 presents the findings and explores the grounded theory model which is discussed at the end of the chapter. Chapter 5 details a more focused exploration and critique of literature relevant to the findings, and Chapter 6 is a discussion of the research findings in relation to the existing literature. Chapter 6 concludes with my reflections on the research and the strengths and limitation of the study. The next chapter describes the methodological approach taken within this study, as well as the philosophical paradigm which underpins this research.

CHAPTER 2: PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In line with Charmaz (2014) and Oliver (2012) an 'informed grounded theory' approach has been used to take advantage of pre-existing theories in a tentative and flexible way. Therefore, a purposefully broad preliminary literature review was undertaken to facilitate a critical and reflective stance regarding current knowledge of perspective change in the context of EPC meetings. A second, more focused literature review took place during the analysis stage of the research. This is presented in Chapter 5.

2.2 My research question

The main aim of this research was to offer a theoretical model which conceptualised the process of perspective change during EPC meetings, including the underlying mechanisms that facilitate openness to change in addition to signs that perspective change had occurred.

Therefore, the research question has been chosen to be purposively broad and seeks to investigate:

- How does perspective change happen during educational psychology consultation meetings?

I return to my research question in Chapter 6 where the findings are discussed in relation to existing literature, and explanations and interpretations in light of my research question will be offered.

2.3 Search Strategy

A number of sources were utilised to search for literature relating to the purpose of this research. This included three databases (PsychInfo, ERIC, and the British Education Index) using a combination of terms as described in Appendix B. Additionally, the electronic journal 'Education in Practice' published by the British Psychological Society (BPS) was searched for relevant literature. Finally, a manual search of doctoral theses using the British Library ETHOS online thesis database was actioned.

Articles were screened for relevance using the inclusion and exclusion criteria detailed in Appendix B and displayed in summary below:

Inclusion criteria for articles:
➢ Published within the last 20 years.
➢ Study conducted in a western country to promote cultural relevance of findings.
➢ Written in the English language.
➢ Peer-reviewed articles, published opinion papers or doctoral theses
Exclusion criteria for articles:
➢ Focus on business or organisational change due to different contexts (e.g., training).
➢ Direct intervention only with pupils.
➢ Focus on consultation as a wider service delivery model (e.g., referral process, model of delivery).

Figure 2.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for phase 1 literature review search

After filtering articles according to published date, they were subjected to a title search, followed by an abstract search. The remaining articles were read in full, which resulted in seven articles and three theses relevant to this study.

2.4 Results of preliminary literature search

All papers identified were of a qualitative or mixed-methods methodology. Therefore, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Qualitative Checklist was used to appraise the literature (Critical Appraisal Skills Program [CASP], 2018). The CASP Qualitative Checklist is used to systematically assess the trustworthiness, ethics, results and relevance of published articles, it was also used to appraise the unpublished doctoral thesis during the preliminary literature review. An example of the CASP appraisal can be viewed in Appendix C.

The 10 research papers ranged in date from 2000 to 2020 and were found to fall into four broad areas relating to perception change during consultation meetings. The areas are detailed below:

- The factors and processes underpinning EPC meetings
- The discourse used within EP consultation
- The perceived value of EP consultation

- The impact of EP consultation

These areas will now be explored in more detail.

2.4.1 The factors and processes underpinning EPC meetings

There were three articles which explored the broader factors and processes used within EPC meetings to elicit perspective change (Claridge, 2005; Wagner, 2000; Zafeiriou & Gulliford, 2020). These will now be explored in turn.

The seminal work by Wagner (2000) offers an approach to service delivery, exploring the opportunities of using consultation as a systemic and relational framework for practice which was subsequently adopted as the leading approach of EPC in the UK (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). Wagner (2000) framed EPC as a form of 'antidote' to the historical focus on individual assessment, which was argued to be less to do with problem-solving and more orientated towards within-child focus of needs. Wagner (2000) presented consultation as a collaborative and voluntary approach, focused on supporting the functioning of the system around CYP, with the aim of making a difference to multiple systems, from the individual child through to the school and wider governing systems.

Wagner (2000) argued that effective EPC is based on "symbolic interactionism, systems thinking from family therapy, personal construct psychology and social constructionism" (Wagner, 2000, p. 13). Of note is that Wagner (2000; 2016) made a distinction between the delineation of time within the EPC meetings attributed to problem talk versus solution finding, with a focus on the latter being suggested to offer more opportunities for change, however, this was not supported with robust evidence. Furthermore, Wagner (2000) provided a description of how these theories can be linked to consultation, but this was not supported by research. Wagner (2000) did offer evidence in support of the discussion around the importance of conversations when facilitating a 'difference', linking this with the processes which assist change: externalising the problem, getting meta, the paradigm shift and engaging in self-reflexivity.

Furthermore, Wagner (2000) quoted research from the United States of America (USA) that found consultation had a significant impact on many quantitative and qualitative outcomes whilst reflecting that evidence from the UK was beginning to emerge. However, there was no criticality offered of these findings. Overall, Wagner (2000) offers a framework which has had a significant influence on the process of EPC, as well as a conceptualisation of the underpinning theoretical basis. More broadly, the paper does not move past being an overview to the process of consultation, which therefore invites further critique and exploration to ensure the espoused benefits are grounded in evidence.

Unpublished research by Claridge (2005) was included as it was felt that the area of study was directly relevant to this research. This is in light of the limited evidence that currently exists more broadly around the process of consultation. Claridge (2005) sought to explore the meaning of consultation to EP and teacher participants, with the aim of identifying factors linked to effective consultations. The study used multiple data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews with eight EPs and 16 teacher consultees, 17 questionnaires with the consultant EPs, tape recordings of eight 'first' consultations and the recordings of participant feedback sessions. The research employed a grounded theory approach to analyse the qualitative data, and content analysis to analyse the transcriptions of the live sessions.

Claridge (2005) identified a five-stage process to consultation: Problem exploration, hypothesis setting, hypothesis testing, plan of action and evaluation. Particularly relevant to this study was the focus on the importance of perspective finding in the first two stages (problem exploration and hypothesis setting). Claridge (2005) reinforced the importance of considering the presenting issues from the lens of systems analysis theory, psychodynamic theory, personal construct theory and learning theory. Stage three is concerned with the reframing of the perspectives to develop testable hypothesis to be agreed upon, suggesting that by this stage perspective change may have happened. Claridge (2005) argued that without an understanding of the consultee's personal constructs, the meaning or relevance of their perspective change would be lost.

The findings of this study were strengthened by the wide range of methods used to gather and triangulate the data. However, the research was published 16 years prior to the writing

of this report so the changes and development in EP training and practice should be kept in mind. Interestingly, Claridge (2005) chose to perform a full literature review and state a hypothesis before engaging in the analysis, which they reflect may have contributed to researcher bias (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is not considered 'best practice' to engage in a full, in-depth literature review preceding analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, the findings of the study should be read with some degree of caution due to the possible effect of in-depth prior knowledge on theory building.

Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020) carried out a qualitative study to examine EP mental health casework in schools, with a particular focus on consultative methods. The goal of the research was to develop a theory which could explain the complex processes which occur when EPs work on behalf of a child who is experiencing social emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. The researchers used constructivist grounded theory to move beyond generating findings which were purely descriptive. Purposive sampling was used to recruit five EPs, all of whom worked in the same local authority (LA). In line with grounded theory methodology, theoretical sampling was employed later in the study by re-interviewing two of the EPs to refine the data once some analysis of the categories had been actioned (Charmaz, 2014).

Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020) suggested that EPC is a useful approach to support staff and parents who may be under pressure, so that they can best support CYP with SEMH needs. More specifically, EP involvement was suggested to create a context of caregiving for the adults supporting the CYP, who can often feel overwhelmed themselves. During collaborative problem solving, disconfirmation of an adult's hypothesis around the CYP's difficulties was, at times, found to cause the adult anxiety or feelings of anger if the perspective change was too far removed from their own point of view. Finally, the EP was identified to move cyclically between an attachment focus with the caregiver through offering congruence, acceptance and warmth, and towards a solution-focused approach to move the situation forward.

Although the study by Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020) focused on CYP who were experiencing mental health needs, the implication of the findings suggests that the process of EP support during consultation meetings centres around general psychological and therapeutic skills that are transferable across areas of need. The findings of the study were strengthened by the

clear and detailed description of the analytical procedure, use of memo writing to increase researcher reflexivity, and the effective use of quotes to support the results. However, the sample size was small, and the homogeneity of the participant's location may have impacted the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Overall, the research appears rigorous and offers a useful insight into EP support during consultation meetings for adults supporting CYP with SEMH needs.

2.4.2 Discourse used within consultation meetings

There were four research papers which explored the discourse used within consultation meetings to facilitate perspective change (Kennedy et al., 2008; Lewis & Miller, 2011; Nolan & Moreland, 2014; Ryan, 2018). These will now be explored in turn.

Kennedy et al., (2008) carried out research to explore how EPs apply the consultation model in practice to address shortfalls in previous research. They specifically looked at what EPs said they did when engaging in consultation, what EPs actually did when engaging in consultation and how practice maps onto embedded approaches. The study used a qualitative case study design with a sample size of 10 EPs. Each participant EP completed a pre-consultation questionnaire and audio-taped a minimum of one consultation meeting. In total, 17 consultations were audio-recorded and analysed using the framework approach to applied qualitative analysis (Pope et al., 2000). Kennedy et al. (2008) suggested that there was congruence between what EPs said that they did and what they actually practised during consultation meetings. During consultation meetings 'problem identification' was found to be the most frequently coded utterance followed by 'systemic focus', with both identified as 32% of the data. The third most common utterances were in reference to collaborative or joint working followed by the categories of solution-focused process and 'other'.

When considering the quality of the research by Kennedy et al. (2008), the purpose and findings were made explicit, and the analysis stage was a particular strength. There was also a clear explanation of how 23% of the data was initially analysed by two independent researchers and amended as a result, producing an 80-95% agreement across second level codes. However, the researchers did highlight that there was a particular difficulty differentiating between utterances of intervention possibilities and intervention planning, as

often the questions posed by the EPs could be interpreted either as actions or 'verbal wonderings'. Without data exploring the reflections of the EP, it is difficult to gain a sense of their intent which may impact the findings. Overall, the study offers the reader a useful insight into the balance of approaches used within consultation meetings and offers an example of EP understanding as to how different techniques can be used to meet different needs.

A study by Lewis and Miller (2011) investigated the use of institutional talk between an EP and a parent during a consultation. The researchers stated that a mixed-methods design was employed so as to draw on the strengths of both research paradigms. A consultation meeting was audio recorded and the transcript subject to the quantitative approach of content analysis through segmentation and coding according to five predetermined categories or 'speech acts'. The qualitative element of the study used aspects of both conversation analysis and discourse analysis to explore instances of institutional talk within the consultation. The research was based on a case study design, with one EP participant engaged in a consultation meeting centred around supporting the mother of a 13-year-old boy who was displaying challenging behaviour at school.

Lewis and Miller (2011) suggested that interactional patterns between the EP and parent during the consultation mirrors patterns found in other 'institutional' settings such as courtrooms, police work and healthcare. Examples of which include the use of rhetorical devices in narratives (O'Brien & Miller, 2005) and extended story telling as an attempt to resist or regain leadership control (Toolan, 1988). During the consultation, a number of instances were identified which highlighted the discourse strategies the EP and parent used to validate their perspective and gain control. The EP was noted as using professional 'opinion-based' summaries which do not invite a response from the parent, changing the topic to solution-focused content. Interestingly, the parent responded with a greater emphasis on problem talk, using detailed, descriptive and powerful 'fact-based' stories about her son's difficulties.

Lewis and Miller (2011) offered insight into the micro-analytic detail of a consultation meeting between an EP and parent, suggesting that the interactions mirror those of other institutional settings that may be viewed as having a greater power imbalance than would typically be expected within EP consultation. Due to the case study design, conclusions cannot be drawn

as to the interactions between consultant and consultees more generally in EP practice, however the authors make an interesting assertion that the institutional talk identified mirrors that in studies across other services, which suggests that the features are likely to be widespread. This assertion may have been easier for the reader to consider if there was more clarity around the professional approach and epistemological position of the EP participant. However overall, the study offers a useful basis to consider the power dynamics and discourse used in consultation meetings and how this could be considered in light of the ethical and legal responsibilities of EPs (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2014). Despite this, further clarification around the approach of the EP participant would be of benefit.

Nolan and Moreland (2014) carried out a discourse analysis on transcripts from seven audiotaped EPC meetings to explore what happened in consultations, the relationships between the consultant and the consultees, as well as how change may be facilitated. Following this, interviews were completed with the EPs, teachers and parents within a week of the consultation meeting, and follow up calls actioned three months later. It is stated that the sample size was kept small so that each consultation meeting could be considered as a case study. It is not clear how the EP participants were recruited; however, they appear to be from one EP service, with each consultation meeting being facilitated by two EPs so that one could focus on notetaking. Each consultation consisted of a teacher and parent(s), and at times a SENCO or Learning Support Assistant (LSA). The cases were chosen to be primarily primary aged children who were experiencing limited progress or lower emotional wellbeing.

The study highlighted seven discursive strategies that EPs used in consultation meetings. EP directed collaboration was one such strategy EPs engaged in to help consultees to feel comfortable to share their perspectives. This was achieved through phrases such as “I wonder if” rather than “I think”, using “we/us”, whilst also being explicit about the collaborate nature of the consultation. EPs were also found to demonstrate empathy and personal warmth to the consultees by supporting an emotionally safe and non-judgmental environment by checking understanding, reflecting back and active listening. EPs were found to use gentle questioning to check perceptions, explore possibilities and elicit further information, for example:

"…and, I guess we are having a wonder about whether she is quite ready to do that."

(Nolan & Moreland, 2014, p. 70).

The study also highlighted EPs use of focusing and refocusing during consultation meetings. EPs used comments intended to support the consultees to define which area of the 'problem' they wanted to prioritise in an attempt to help the meeting to stay focused. EPs were also found to help widen the perspective of the consultees by using questions which expanded the problem from being within-child to include the actions and effects of the system. Furthermore, the discursive techniques of summarising and reformulating offered consultees the opportunity to acquire information that may have been missed. In general, this was suggested to be a powerful way to reconceptualise the problem through the inclusion of alternative perspectives. This led the EP to invite a discussion around strategies aimed at moving forward in a tentative and exploratory way, arriving at a joint explanation of the problem. Nolan and Moreland (2014) highlighted a particular example of a parent experiencing a 'transformational perspective change' regarding the context of her son's challenging behaviour which she attributed to the EPC. However, it was not made explicit what had occurred prior to this shift. The final of the seven discourse strategies was 'restating/revising outcomes' and 'offering a follow up'. These were suggested to be more variable than the other strategies often due to limited time, but one discourse technique appeared to be the reiteration of a key point that was chosen as a legacy of the consultation, with the purpose of staying 'in the minds of consultees' to promote ongoing consideration.

Nolan and Moreland (2014) appeared to engage in a rigorous analytical process using a flexible framework. This was derived from methodological principles underpinning a number of models (Edwards & Potter, 1993; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Van Lagenhove & Harre, 1999). Data was triangulated using transcripts, observations of body language and information about the tone taken from the audio recordings, therefore strengthening the trustworthiness of the data (Rolfe, 2006). Although the researcher was not in attendance at the consultation meetings, the study fails to reflect on researcher bias which may have affected the interpretations of the data. The EP participants reviewed the findings, but trustworthiness may have been strengthened if the researcher had included the school and home consultees

in the respondent validation. Overall, the study offered an in-depth analysis of the discourse strategies used by EPs during consultations, which although small-scale, offers valuable insight for reflective practice and EP professional development.

Doctoral research by Ryan (2018) took a novel approach at comparing the processes and approaches of EPC meetings, compared with coaching sessions. Although this was both unpublished work and involved coaching which is an approach not directly relevant to this research, it was felt that the findings offered a useful insight in combination with the CASP qualitative checklist (CASP, 2018). The study looked to explore EP's perceptions of how coaching and EPC meetings facilitate positive change for clients, as well as understanding what was happening during the sessions. Nine EP participants were recruited using a convenience sample to take part in semi-structured interviews. Additionally, four consultant and consultee participants were audio-recorded during a consultation meeting. A six-stage process of thematic analysis was used to analyse the data which indicated that the theory of coaching and consultation was implemented practically within the discourse of the sessions.

Research by Ryan (2018) highlighted the similarities and differences between the processes at play during consultation and coaching. Whilst not directly relevant to the aims of this study, the findings support current research about the processes within the discourse of consultation meetings and how change is facilitated. EP participants spoke about adopting a 'gentle approach' to facilitating change indirectly, rather than explicitly stating that it was the system around the child that needed to change. Specific techniques were also highlighted, including forming a collaborative alliance, using affirming and validating statements as well as active listening. Ryan (2018) suggested that acts of summarising seemed to facilitate change during the audio-taped consultation and coaching sessions, however, it is not clear how this was deduced. Interestingly, summarising was not explicitly mentioned by the EPs during the interviews with the researcher indicating that this may be related to it being automatic and subconscious, raising a question around the accuracy of practitioner reflexivity. Additionally, the level of participant insight into their own practice may have impacted the lens within which the researcher analysed the 'in vivo' data, as the themes identified from the semi-structured interviews were used to frame the analysis of the coaching and consultations sessions.

To minimise the impact of reduced practitioner reflexivity, it would have been useful if Ryan (2018) had discussed the findings of the audio-taped session with the consultant and consultees for more holistic feedback. Overall, the research offered further evidence to support existing research around the importance of EP relationship building skills and the collaborative nature of consultation to facilitate change. However, the research was small scale and may have been biased towards recognising the processes of consultation that were explicitly recalled by EPs, therefore the breadth of the findings may have been impacted.

2.4.3 The perceived value of EP consultation

There were two research papers which explored the perceived value of consultation meetings (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). Both papers explored the topic within an Irish context but used differing methodologies and consultation frameworks.

Hayes and Stringer (2016) explored the perceived value of Farouk's teacher consultation group approach (Farouk, 2004). Although the approach purported by Farouk differs from the approach to consultation delivery typically used within services in England, it was felt that the role of the EP as collaborator rather than the 'expert' deemed the results relevant to this literature review. The goal of the research was to explore teachers' beliefs about the role of the EP during consultation and whether they felt it was a valuable use of EP time. The research also investigated teacher's perceptions of Farouk's teacher consultation group specifically, and the factors that helped and hindered its facilitation. The study used a mixed-methods approach, including semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Each of the three schools recruited for the study engaged in one consultation session each month, for a total of 10 months. The meetings followed Farouk's four-phase framework facilitated by the EP. Following this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school Principal and a core group member from each of the three participating schools. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data which was triangulated with quantitative data resulting from pre and post intervention questionnaires, however the quantitative data was limited due to a low return rate.

Hayes and Stringer (2016) indicated that teachers perceived the role of the EP as an 'advice giver' which was highly valued, despite the EP advising the teacher of the collaborative role

of the EP from the outset. The researchers comment that this perception of EP approach has built up over time and therefore would take considerable time to change. Similarly, two of the three schools felt that engaging in the consultation process was a valuable use of EP time, whereas the third felt that 'advice giving' would have been better. Teacher and senior leader willingness to change was identified as a facilitator to the success of Farouk's consultation approach, and the opportunity for teachers to have an organised time to reflect on their practice and share knowledge and ideas.

The findings from Hayes and Stringer (2016) highlighted the effect consultee perceptions of value can have on the success of consultation, and the opportunity for perspective change. The study was small scale and the researchers attempted to improve the robustness of the findings through triangulating with questionnaire results, however the low uptake limited the impact of this. The study indicates that it is beneficial for EPs to work in school for at least one year to allow relationships to be built, however, the researchers did not address whether this would be a transferable finding for all consultation frameworks. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of consultees having an awareness of the collaborative role of the EP during consultation, and how that can directly impact consultee perception of value and the possibility of perspective change occurring. Generalisations beyond Hayes and Stringer (2016) into different consultation contexts and locations should be taken with caution due to the homogenous context of the research.

O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) also studied the value of EPC in an Irish context, choosing to focus on exploring parent, teacher and EP perceptions of consultation due to the growing number of children identified as having SEN in Irish schools. The qualitative research used a sample of convenience to recruit nine participants from three different schools to engage in a multiple case study design. Each of the participants took part in a semi-structured interview and the findings were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework stages of thematic analysis.

The study indicated that teachers who regarded themselves as open to collaborative problem solving reported feeling an increased sense of empowerment as a result of the consultation. These findings were not replicated for teachers who preferred a within-child and expert

approach to individual assessment, and who felt that their expectations were not met. Interestingly, parents were more likely than teachers to view consultation as an opportunity to engage in joint problem-solving. O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) suggested that the difference between parent and teacher perceptions of EPCs may be a result of teacher's feeling they are not adequately trained to support children with SEN. Additionally, the researchers found that social and cultural factors can influence how parents perceive their relationship with schools, including the correlation between socioeconomic status, level of education and positive school-home relationship. This is an important consideration when the quality of relationships within EPC has been identified as a factor in successful outcomes.

O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) offer a useful insight into perceptions of EPC value, but the conclusions drawn are limited due to the study being small-scale. With only three case studies and recruitment of EPs through a sample of convenience, the findings may be significantly influenced by the participant's motivations to take part and the dynamics within each system. The analysis appeared thorough, with effective use of quotes to support the findings and strong inter-rater reliability. Overall, although the findings may have limited applicability beyond the context of the research, the importance of clarifying consultee expectations is clear and suggests that 'setting the scene' is a key facilitator when seeking to effect systemic change.

2.4.4 The impact of EP consultation

There was one paper which explored the impact of consultation relating to perspective change (Henderson, 2013). The research is an unpublished thesis but was chosen to be included in this literature review as it was deemed relevant to perspective change during consultation meetings.

Henderson (2013) explored the impact of consultation, focusing separately on teacher, parent and child perceptions of whether consultation had made an impact on outcomes. Additionally, EP views of the key factors that enabled consultation to support the CYP's progress were considered. The mixed-methods research employed a multiple case study design using semi-structured interviews and target monitoring and evaluation (TME) to evaluate the perceived outcomes. Three EPs were recruited through a sample of convenience

following a research proposal delivered by the researcher in the EPS within which they were employed as a Senior EP. Participants who were not directly line managed by the researcher were chosen for the study to limit bias and ethical risks linked to the merging of roles and power imbalance. A total of five cases were identified by the three EP participants to introduce TME monitoring to the consultation meeting. Following the consultation and review, the EP met separately with the teacher and parent to engage in a semi-structured interview. The researcher then met with the EPs individually to conduct further semi-structured interviews. The EP interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, however the researcher felt that the consultee interviews were not of sufficient depth to justify full thematic analysis, so the data was used quantitatively to support or contradict the themes identified from the EP interviews.

Findings by Henderson (2013) indicated that both EPs and SENCOs felt that the relationship between the EP and school was key to the success of the consultation, whereas teachers did not share this view. Interestingly, pupil progress was seen in all cases regardless of relationship quality. Findings also highlighted the importance of gaining a shared understanding of the consultation process, with a focus on being explicit and providing clarity around the expectations of the role of the consultant and consultee to promote effectiveness. TME was viewed by EPs and teachers as a useful mechanism to make targets more specific and evaluate pupils' progress, whilst acting as a tool for EPs to monitor their impact. It is interesting to note that TME monitors signs of first order change, but the researcher did not explore this delineation in relation to second order change.

The findings from Henderson (2013) may have been affected by the existing relationship between the researcher and the EPs due to a possible bias towards positive TME outcomes. This is not fully explored within the research so may have impacted the findings more than the researcher intended. The sample was small-scale and restricted to one EPS service which may limit the usefulness of the findings to other contexts. Overall, the outcomes suggest that consultation can positively impact outcomes for CYP if TME is used effectively, however, the perception of the importance of relationship quality and a shared understanding is not made as clear to the reader in relation to direct effect on the CYP.

2.5 Conclusions of the preliminary literature review

This chapter outlined the research aims, methodology and findings from 10 papers identified from the preliminary literature review search. This was conducted following the constructionist grounded theory approach advocated by a number of recent grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The preliminary literature review was conducted under the assumption that a researcher cannot be immune to the impact of prior expertise and knowledge, whilst also acting as a mechanism for identifying a novel, and purposeful area of research.

The aim of the preliminary literature review was to explore:

- *What the existing literature tells us about the process of perspective change resulting from EPC meetings.*

The literature search returned 10 papers relating to consultation meetings and perspective change. None of the papers focused wholly on perspective change, which indicates that it is an area where further research would be of a particular advantage to the EP profession, considering the importance placed on relational change within EPC meetings (Wagner, 2000). The papers were found to broadly fit into four areas of research into EPC meetings: the factors and processes, the discourse used, the perceived value and the impact of engaging in the consultation process. Within these broad areas, the findings relating to perspective change appeared to be centred around; expectations, relationships and the discursive techniques used within EPC meetings. Main conclusions following the literature search will now be explored.

There appeared to be some useful research exploring expectations of the consultation process and how this impacted perspective change (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Henderson, 2013; Kennedy et al. 2008; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Ryan, 2018). All five papers indicated that having a shared understanding of the consultation process was important to facilitating perspective change, with the collaborative alliance appearing to be a key expectation of consultation from the perspective of the EP (Kennedy et al., 2008; Ryan, 2018). However,

Hayes and Stringer (2016) offered insight into consultee's expectations of the EP as an advice-giver, which seemed to negatively impact the perceived success of the consultation. Consultee's expectations of the role of the EP appeared to be mixed, with O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) suggesting that one mechanism underpinning the teachers 'EP as expert' view may stem from internal feelings of under confidence at their ability to support children with SEN. Conversely, teachers who were open and ready to engage in collaborative problem solving often experienced an increased sense of empowerment following the consultation. Although Henderson (2013) suggested that EPs can facilitate shared expectations through explicitly and clearly stating the roles of everyone involved in the consultation beforehand, there was limited research into the underlying mechanisms which both hindered and supported the process of aligning expectations, implying that this may be an area which would be of value to further explore.

Relationships were highlighted as another key theme linked to the success of EPC meetings (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Henderson, 2013; Nolan & Moreland, 2014; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Wagner, 2000; Zafeiriou & Gulliford, 2020). The literature review offered a broad account of the importance of relationships and how different factors can act as barriers or facilitators to perspective change. The importance of viewing consultation from an interactionist and systemic perspective was raised as an important factor with regards to the success of the EPC meeting (O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018; Wagner, 2000). Henderson (2013) suggested that EPs and SENCOs highly valued the EP-School relationship, but this did not appear to be a view shared by teachers. Somewhat conflictingly, Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2000) suggested that EPs may offer adult consultees a secure base for emotional containment and caregiving when they feel overwhelmed, therefore more research would be beneficial to gain a greater sense of how teachers experience the role of the EP during EPC meetings and how this impacts expectations and sense of value.

When looking to understand how relationships can be strengthened, Nolan and Moreland (2014) highlighted the importance of general counselling skills such as active listening and empathy as important factors in building relationships. There appeared to be limited exploration into the wider generative mechanisms which may hinder or facilitate effective

working relationships beyond the socio-economic status of parental consultees as suggested by O'Farrell & Kinsella (2018), limiting understanding for professional practice.

Discursive techniques were highlighted by seven of the research papers as the third key theme emerging from this preliminary literature review (Claridge, 2005; Kennedy et al., 2008; Lewis & Miller, 2011; Nolan & Moreland, 2014; Ryan, 2018; Wagner, 2000; Zafeiriou & Gulliford, 2020). Kennedy et al. (2008) highlighted the importance of giving consultees space to describe their perspective of the problem, with Claridge (2005) suggesting that without the opportunity to elicit a consultee's personal constructs associated with their meaning of the problem, the opportunity to engage in perspective change will be lost. Research suggests that the most effective way to explore personal meaning is through tentative and exploratory questioning, using phrase such as "I wonder" and "I guess", with summarising and reframing offering an opportunity to support perspective change (Nolan & Moreland, 2014; Ryan, 2018). However, Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020) identified that a reframe too far removed from the consultee's existing hypothesis may lead to a negative response which was a barrier to perspective change. These discursive techniques appear to be broad and lack in-depth exploration of the factors which may facilitate or hinder their effectiveness at promoting change. More clarity was offered around the timing of EPs introducing solution-focused approaches, with Lewis and Miller (2011) suggesting that consultees may respond with increased problem-focused talk as a 'push-back' if they do not feel ready to move beyond problem talk.

This preliminary literature review highlighted that although there is some limited research exploring factors linked to perspective change in EPC meetings, the findings tend to be broad and do not offer a comprehensive understanding of how perspective change occurs, furthermore, they do not explore generative mechanisms or factors which may act as a barrier to change. Therefore, a gap in the existing research has been identified which supports the decision to pursue this as purposive and novel research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter will outline the rationale and purpose of the research along with presenting the research question. It will then detail the ethical considerations relevant to the research, followed by an exploration of the ontology and epistemology before describing the paradigm used within this study. An overview of qualitative research approaches is then offered, followed by an exploration of the methodology chosen to investigate the research question. The chapter then details the procedure of the research and a chapter summary.

3.2 Rationale for research

Although it has been widely argued that EPC meetings are centred around systemic perspective change, there is limited literature illuminating the process of how this happens. As previously discussed, Wagner (2000) reflected that within consultation practice EPs can often be pragmatic to what works, resulting in a lack of criticality and psychological practice. This view has been supported by Leadbetter (2006) and more recently, Nolan and Moreland (2014), who argued that it is essential for psychologists to explore the process of consultation in order to better understand how it works and how EPs can develop their consultation skills.

3.3 Research question

The research question has been kept intentionally broad to ensure the findings are not restricted by the parameters of the question. Therefore, this study will seek to answer:

- *How does perspective change happen during consultation meetings?*

3.4 Purpose of research

This research seeks to develop a theory explaining how perspective change happens during consultation meetings in order to develop EP best practice and offer a supplementary way to evaluate impact. This aim has an emancipatory foundation as improving the effectiveness of consultation meetings has the potential to empower disadvantaged groups, improve inequalities and ultimately improve outcomes for CYP.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This research was planned and delivered in line with the British Psychological Society (BPS) code of human research ethics (BPS, 2014). The School for Policy Studies Ethics Committee approved the research (a copy of the approved ethics form can be viewed in Appendix A). During the interviews, the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) was followed to ensure the participant experiences were positive and beneficial.

3.5.1 Informed consent

Participants were emailed a participant information sheet specific to the phase of data collection (Phase 1 Appendix E, phase 2 Appendix K). This included the rationale and aims of the study and information explaining how the data would be collected and stored. Participants were also emailed a consent form which was required to be completed prior to the sharing of information. The lead or principal EP of each LA was contacted and invited to provide email consent before team members were sent information regarding the study. Verbal consent was also requested prior to the interview commencing.

3.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The participant information form for phase one of the data collection (Appendix E) stated that the consultation record and information shared within the interview must be anonymised. All participants were informed that any instances where anonymity has been breached would be redacted from the transcription by the researcher. This was also reiterated verbally prior to the interview commencing.

Participants were informed that signed consent forms would be held digitally on the University of Bristol server. The consultation record and transcription would also be held on the University of Bristol server in a different server location using a unique number for identification purposes. Video recordings will be deleted once transcription is complete.

3.5.3 Right to decline or withdraw

Participants were informed at the beginning of the interview, in the participant information sheet and the consent form that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point

without giving a reason. However, they were advised that once data had been anonymised it may be difficult for it to be identified and removed.

3.5.4 Support information for participants

A potential ethical risk to participants was identified as the triggering of negative past feelings or experiences during the interview. To mitigate this risk, the interview would have been paused if the participant became upset and would only be continued if consent was given. All participants were emailed a support sheet after the interview ended (Appendix F) which detailed next steps if further help was needed. There were no instances where participants became upset, or where the interview had to pause or cease.

3.5.5 Supervision

Regular supervision was provided by the University of Bristol, with the opportunity to engage in reflective practice and consider ethical issues that presented during the research.

3.6 Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Hussain et al. (2013) described the objective of research to be the production and expansion of knowledge based on evidence. To do this effectively, it is essential that research is underpinned by an appropriate theoretical perspective, has a purpose, a robust method for data collection and analysis, make valid claims and have relevance and worth (Richards, 2003). The work of a researcher has become increasingly complex due to the growing literature on research paradigms and divergent opinions on methodologies. However, it is vital that a researcher adopts a philosophical position, as this forms the basis of a suitable research design and method. I will now explore ontology and epistemology in more detail, before detailing the paradigm view that underpins this study.

3.6.1 Ontology and epistemology

Ontology and epistemology are the fundamental philosophical pillars of any research (Pernecky, 2016). Pernecky (2016) explained that whether explicitly mentioned or not, researchers will have underlying assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge, and what this means for their findings.

Ontology is concerned with the study of reality or 'that which is' and depicts a hierarchy of levels of reality which represent beliefs of what exists in the external world. There are two main opposing ontological attitudes to the nature of social entities, realism and relativism (Willig, 2008). A realist belief considers that social phenomena and their meanings are independent of human perception and that the world is made up of objects and structures that have cause and effect relationships with one another. A relativist belief is based on multiple realities which are socially driven where general laws and order are not present (Oliver, 2012).

Epistemology is concerned with knowledge and how we as humans can acquire it (Walliman, 2011). At one end of the continuum is positivism (realism) which suggests that we as humans can directly access and describe accurately what is 'out there', with the goal of research to produce objective knowledge which is not impacted by human perception (Willig, 2008). Whereas social constructionism (relativism) is concerned with understanding different views and experiences of a phenomenon. Within the continuum of these perspectives a number of positions can be understood, from the extremes of naïve realist to radical relativist and a number in between such as phenomenological and critical realism (Willig, 2008).

To ameliorate the limitations of aligning oneself at the extreme ends of the realist-relativist continuum, a moderate positioning facilitates the synthesis of a realist ontology with a relativist epistemology and offers an opportunity to not "throw the real baby out with the relativist bathwater" (Oliver, 2012, p. 378). As mentioned previously, one such paradigm is that of critical realism (Pocock, 2015). Pocock explains that critical realism helps to overcome the extreme relativism critique of 'no anchor points' in relation to constructions, thus undermining the knowledge and ethical claims grounded within that approach. Critical realism will be explored in more detail to ascertain its suitability for this study.

3.6.2 Critical realism

Critical realism has gained popularity since the 1980s as a philosophical framework for social scientific research (Fletcher, 2017). Hoddy (2019), describes critical realism as a meta-theory, which offers a paradigm relevant to ontology, epistemology, methodology and method, resulting in a framework which can be used to merge philosophical ideas with practical steps.

It aims to develop causal explanations that identify the objects, mechanisms, structures and conditions of social phenomenon.

Critical realism gained momentum as a meta-theory following the positivist/constructivist ‘paradigm wars’ of the 1980s. It was founded by Bhaskar in the 1970s who combined a realist ontology with an interpretive epistemology to develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding than provided by positivism or interpretivism (Hartwig, 2011; Hoddy, 2019). Pocock (2015) reflected that critical realism has become increasingly employed within many subjects such as social work, economics, and cultural anthropology, with Oliver (2012), suggesting that this is because it offers the opportunity to explore a nuanced understanding which is highly regarded in subjects that deal with complex open systems such as those seen within the work of EPs.

Critical realists view the world as real, in that it exists independently of human perception but that our understanding of it is socially constructed and is therefore fallible and subject to change. The realist ontology allows the possibility of rational choice between differing constructions, with the assumption that some views are closer to the ‘truth’ than others (Pocock, 2015). In critical realist ontology, reality is stratified into three levels which start at the empirical (measurable) level and move to the actual and real levels, becoming increasingly more abstract and difficult to access (Hoddy, 2019). This is visually depicted in the iceberg model in figure 3.1 below (Fletcher, 2017, p. 183). This vertical explanation links events and experiences in the empirical level, to their inferred underlying mechanisms in the actual and real levels (Oliver, 2012). Whereas reality is considered to exist independently of our thoughts, critical realism considers our knowledge of reality to be interpreted through the filters of social context, meaning making and language, placing the epistemological position in line with interpretivism.

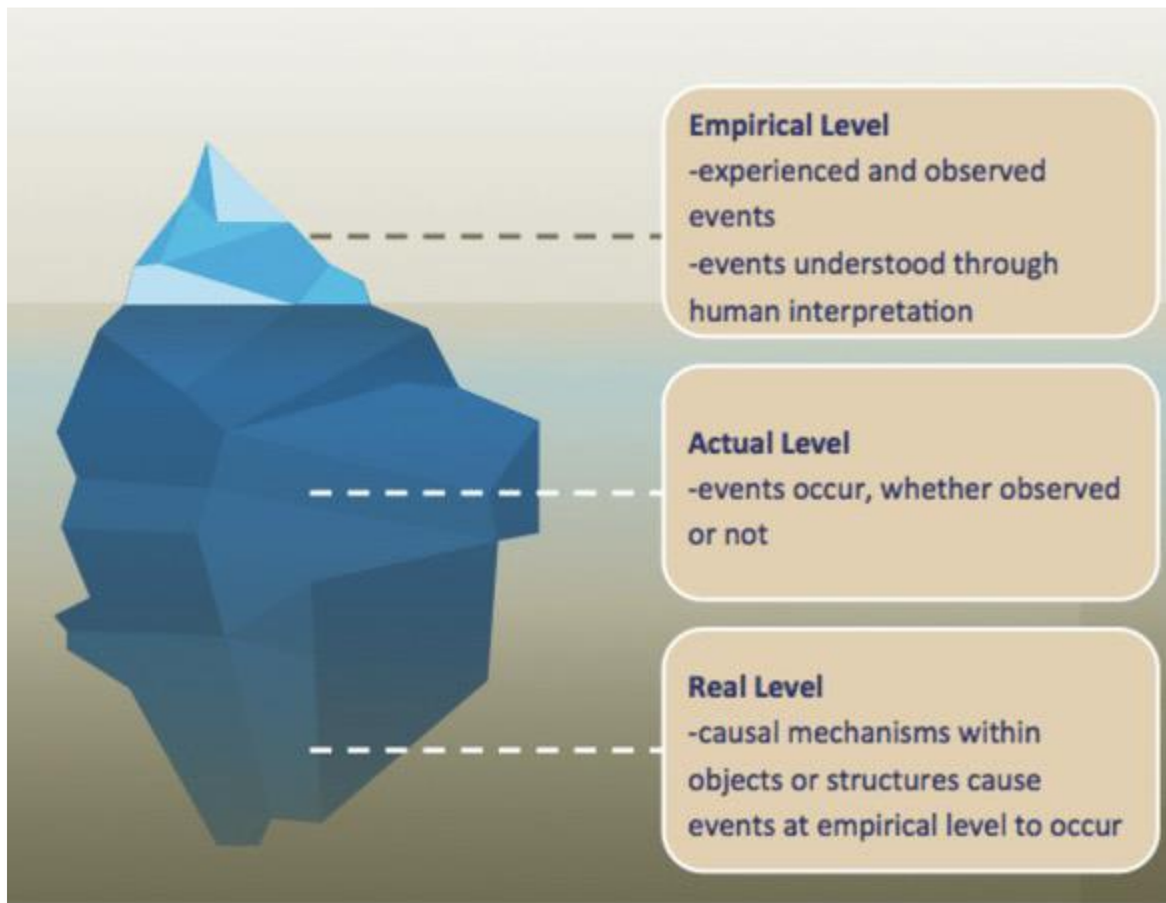


Figure 3.1: Iceberg metaphor to represent critical realism ontology and epistemology from: Fletcher, 2017, p. 183

A key principle of critical realism is that ontology is not reducible to epistemology, deviating itself from both positivism and constructivism, known as the 'epistemic fallacy' (Fletcher, 2017). This, in turn, allows proponents to gain knowledge of theories which can be more or less truth-like. Pocock (2015) argues that a realist ontology facilitates choosing between competing explanations, and allows the exploration of socially constructed explanations that may be deemed 'less true' even if they have been implicit in the functioning of the system. This is highlighted by Oliver (2012) as a useful process with which to pursue emancipatory goals, where surface appearances may need to be challenged to pursue truth as a moral good in the context of inequality (Bhaskar, 1979).

A further key principle of critical realism is the rejection of the successionist 'cause and effect' approach to causation as occurring between empirical events. Instead, critical realists talk

about causal 'powers' which cause tendencies for capacities to behave in particular ways and 'liabilities' which refer to susceptibilities to certain kinds of change, both situated within the deeper 'real' level and are inferred from what is, and can be measured empirically. These are described as 'potentialities' which may or may not be activated under certain sets of conditions being that it is an open system (Hoddy, 2019). This focus on uncovering tendencies rather than proofs, allows critical realism derived theory to be useful despite counter-instances (Oliver, 2012). Fletcher (2017) explains that the critical realist search for causation via tendencies makes it especially useful for research looking to explain social events through the triangulation of evidence and pre-existing theoretical positions using retroduction (Pocock, 2015).

Critical realism has been shown as a coherent, accountable and enabling meta-theory to underpin both social science research and clinical work, making it a particularly useful framework within which to base this study. A particular strength of critical realism is the opportunity to engage in explanation and causal analysis rather than focus on a description of a given event. This makes critical realism appropriate for analysing social problems and offering suggestions for social change.

As this study aims to explore EP's views of perspective change during consultation meetings, I have considered that a critical realist paradigm offers an opportunity to explore the underlying generative mechanisms that may act as powers or liabilities to perspective change within a complex open system. As mentioned by Hoddy (2019), the knowledge gained can be used tentatively as a reflective tool to consider ways to facilitate perspective change during consultation outcomes. The next section will consider the methodology of this study in view of the critical realist paradigm.

3.7 Qualitative research methodology

Qualitative methodology is concerned with meaning and how people make sense of the world within an open system where variables are not preconceived, unlike quantitative research (Willig, 2008). A meaningful outcome for qualitative researchers is to explore processes through 'how' and 'what' questions. As the present study is looking to explore EP views of how perspective change happens from a critical realist paradigm, it was decided that a

qualitative approach would be the most appropriate methodology with which to gain new insights in this under-researched area.

Willig (2008), distinguishes qualitative methodology into ‘small q and big Q’ methodologies, with the former interested in hypothetico-deductive research designs to check a hypothesis, and the latter seeks to gain new insights through open-ended research methodologies, which is where the present study and indeed most qualitative research sits. Willig (2008) further explains that the researcher has to draw assumptions about the meaning of the data which is congruent with the chosen epistemological and ontological paradigm. The following section will explore a range of qualitative approaches that were considered for the study followed by an appraisal of the chosen methodology.

3.7.1 Qualitative research approaches considered for this study

The exploratory aim of this research lends itself to a number of qualitative approaches, these were appraised for their appropriateness to uncover social processes. Discourse Analysis was considered for its strength in identifying the impact language has within interactions and the effect this has on social processes. However, as identified by Willig (2008), discourse analysis does not consider the meaning-making or cognitive processes that underpin the language used. As this research is looking at the reflections of EPs experiences during consultations, discourse analysis was rejected.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was also considered as it offered an opportunity to explore the meaning derived from participants’ experiences, culminating with an overall ‘essence’ of the phenomena under investigation (Willig, 2008). However, as IPA seeks to explore the way language is used to describe an experience within a given context, the description may change depending on when and where it is told. This focus on description rather than forming an overarching theoretical explanation of the phenomena, also resulted in IPA being rejected for this study. A critical realist approach to grounded theory was therefore decided to be the most appropriate methodology to align with the emancipatory focus of the work. Critical realist grounded theory can be used to explain the social processes underpinning the under-researched area of perspective change during consultation meetings, whilst allowing for integration of the social construction of participant experiences.

3.7.2 Grounded theory methodology

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in an attempt to offer a research methodology focused on inductive hypothesis development rather than hypothesis testing based on prior knowledge (Bunt, 2018; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory uses a set of techniques to synthesise data and make inferences about the increasingly abstract causal mechanisms within an open system in order to develop new theory about social phenomena (Hoddy, 2019). The approach is therefore particularly appropriate to research areas which are emerging and under-theorised and include divergent as well as convergent accounts (Burck, 2005).

Grounded theory is an approach where the researcher runs data collection and analysis in parallel, comparing incident to incident, incident to codes, codes to codes, codes to categories and categories to categories as depicted in figure 3.2 below (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 13).

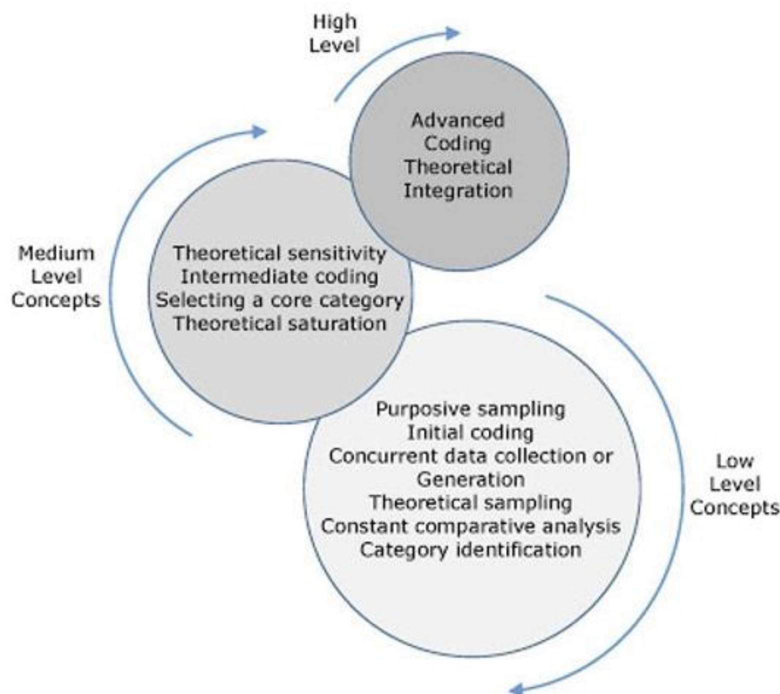


Figure 3.2: Conceptual ordering of general Grounded Theory methods, from: Birks and Mills, 2015, p. 13

The aim of a grounded theory study is to develop a fully integrated and comprehensive theory that explains a phenomenon which is grounded in the data (Birks & Mills, 2015).

While Glaser and Strauss' (1967) approach remains popular, the development of constructivist grounded theory has offered researchers an opportunity to acknowledge and engage in meaning-making, which may have been overlooked from an objectivist perspective (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Hoddy, 2019). Charmaz (2014) summarises this succinctly by stating that constructivist grounded theory can be used to make the participant's assumptions and unspoken knowledge explicit. Furthermore, Charmaz (2014) suggests that it is the 'meaning-making' that is being accessed rather than an objective reality, which itself can offer a useful contextualised theory for practical application.

Recently, researchers have explored the compatibility of the grounded theory approach within a critical realist framework. Bunt (2018) explained that critical realism is a flexible paradigm that does not have a prescribed set of methods attached, but offers a bridge between the objective ontology as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and the constructionist epistemology offered by Charmaz (2006). While there are significant differences in how grounded theory has evolved due to differing epistemological paradigms, there are specific 'core concepts' which need to be evident across all iterations to be consistent with grounded theory methodology (Birks & Mills, 2015). These concepts will now be explored within a critical realist framework.

As discussed previously, critical realism has a realist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology. The underpinning assumption of critical realism is that there is an external world which exists beyond our understanding of it (Bunt, 2018). This corresponds well to the process of grounded theory, moving from initial coding of observable data towards the inference of causal mechanisms. The constructivist epistemology of critical realism aligns more naturally with the works of constructivist grounded theorists such as Charmaz (2014), who holds the view that data analysis is affected by interpretation of events. The strength of a critical realist approach to grounded theory is that the findings can be elevated from a purely relativist individual meaning-making endeavour, towards one which can produce a theory with the potential for emancipatory goals due to the assumption that there is a reality beyond knowledge (Oliver, 2012).

The critical realist paradigm supports grounded theorists to pursue their goal of attending to social structure as well as individual action, whilst understanding the effect social events may be having on the researched phenomena (Oliver, 2012). Both grounded theory and critical realism seek an explanatory theory linking the observable effect in the open system to generative mechanisms through conditional 'tendencies' which occurs through inference. Where traditional grounded theory looks for a fixed point of knowledge saturation to ensure the 'truth' has been extracted from the data, a critical realist perspective aligns with the constructivist grounded theorists who consider that all theory is modifiable and therefore analysis should cease where there is no new knowledge that seems to make a difference to the 'theoretical story' (Oliver, 2012).

Traditionally, Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated the use of inductive inference techniques as he argued that theory should 'emerge' entirely from the data. Within this traditional approach, the researcher is expected to attend to the data without pre-existing knowledge to ensure compliance to its positivist roots (Hoddy, 2019). However, the emergence of a constructivist grounded theory which acknowledges researcher reflexivity challenged the mode of inference to one of abduction rather than induction, allowing the accommodation of pre-existing theoretical knowledge and tentative hypothesis as 'points of departure' (Charmaz, 2006; Hoddy, 2019; Oliver, 2012).

This shift in inference has brought the deductive inference of critical realism more in line with grounded theory. As argued by Oliver (2012), the only difference between the two being that retroduction is abduction, but with a specific question in mind. Both inference techniques look for generative mechanisms at a deeper ontological level and address the question "what must be true for this to be the case?" (Oliver, 2012, pp. 379). Finally, researcher transparency is key to ensure the integrity of a critical realist grounded theory study (Charmaz, 2014; Oliver, 2012).

In conclusion, the development of constructivist grounded theory has offered a foundation within which a critical realist lens can emerge. Critical realist grounded theory still meets the concepts underpinning the constructivist grounded theory approach, whilst facilitating an emancipatory and transformative theory development alongside a richness of meaning and

experience. Therefore, this study will use critical realist grounded theory methodology to develop a theory which can be used to develop and reflect on practice, as well as highlight generative mechanisms which may be further investigated in the future towards emancipatory change.

3.7.3 The quality criteria employed within this study

The importance of being able to effectively judge the quality of qualitative research is well-known, with Braun and Clarke (2013) identifying that quality criteria offers a framework of best practice to promote 'good' qualitative research. However, the criteria used to evaluate qualitative research is broad and far from universal. This is primarily due to the wide range of philosophical paradigms used within qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2013) explained that it is important for research to be evaluated by criteria which is in line with the orientation, therefore I chose to use criteria specifically developed for evaluating constructivist grounded theory proposed by Charmaz (2014, p. 337). Charmaz (2014) suggests four criteria which emphasise the importance of the meaning elicited from participants about an event, which I consider to be appropriate for this study. Furthermore, the underpinning critical realist paradigm used within this research also offers an opportunity for the quality to be considered both in respect of its applicability to the meaning of the event (Charmaz, 2014), but also to the event itself. Therefore, I will also evaluate the quality of my findings in relation to its ability at uncovering generative mechanisms and promoting emancipatory goals (Oliver, 2012).

Quality Criteria – Charmaz (2014 p. 337)
Credibility – To what extent has the study captured intimate familiarity with the topic and underpinned claims by logical links supported by evidence?
Originality – To what extent have the categories offered a fresh insight, or a new conception of the topic which challenges, extends or refines current ideas which have significance in practice?
Resonance – Have the categories portrayed the breadth of the studied experience and uncovered implicit meanings and deeper insights which makes sense to participants?
Usefulness – To what extent are interpretations useful in the real world and have any generic processes been uncovered which may contribute to knowledge and practice?

Figure 3.3: Quality criteria

The extent to which this study has met the following criteria will be discussed in Chapter 6.

3.8 Sampling

The present study commenced during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown and social distancing restrictions of 2020. Lockdown restrictions impacted the options available with regards to the sample inclusion criteria, sample size and sampling method. These factors will be explored further within the next section.

Due to the exploratory nature of the research, I decided to invite EPs as participants as it was felt that they would have well-developed reflective and reflexive skills to promote deep and critical thinking about the interactions that occurred, whilst keeping in mind alternative views. I felt this was important as the study area is under-researched, emphasising the importance of rich, exploratory data to promote theory development that has the potential to develop practice rather than being purely descriptive.

3.8.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In line with grounded theory methodology, inclusion criteria were kept to a minimum to promote the natural development of theory (Appendix H).

EPs eligible to take part in the study must have been fully qualified to practise as an EP and registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Participants must also have trained in the UK and have more than one year of post-qualification experience in the role to ensure a base level of experience and training was consistent across the participants. Furthermore, the EP participant for phase 1 were asked to identify and anonymise a consultation meeting report which they had facilitated face-to-face within the past 14 months and email it to myself as the researcher, a minimum of 48 hours before the interview. This was not an inclusion criteria for phase 2.

All EP participants for both phases 1 and 2 must have self-identified their practise as following a ‘collaborative problem-solving approach’ in line with Wagner (2000). However as reflected in Chapter 1, parent or carer involvement was key, therefore a representative from both

home and school must have been present for the duration of the meeting. The EPC meeting needed to have lasted a minimum of 45 minutes.

3.8.2 Sample size

Sample size for grounded theory, and indeed the wider paradigm of qualitative research, is defined by the number with which enough data is generated so that concepts, categories, patterns, properties and dimensions of the phenomena can emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, the sample size will vary depending on the purpose of the study and will not be able to be predetermined.

Despite this, there are practical examples and recommended guidelines for sample size of small-scale research which can help a researcher to plan to fall within a range of participant numbers. As this study is looking at a relatively homogenous group of participants working in an applied field and looking to understand a shared phenomenon, Charmaz (2014) suggests that a small number of interviews may be enough. Charmaz (2014) further argues that a very small sample can produce a study with depth and significance if the data gathering and analysis of the research was done with time and care. With this in mind, I aimed to interview between six and ten participants in total, with a final number of seven participants being recruited following no further novel insights after the phase 2 analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 1999; Oliver 2012).

3.8.3 Initial purposive sampling

Recruitment of participants was completed alongside analysis of the data in line with grounded theory procedures. Initially, the lead EP of one service was contacted by email (Appendix D), to enquire whether they would be interested in taking part in the study. Once the researcher received agreement from the lead EP, they were sent the participants information sheet (Appendix E) and consent form (Appendix H) to review and disseminate amongst the educational psychology team. Included in this was an invitation for the potential participants to contact the researcher with any queries that may have arisen. Three EP participants were initially recruited using purposive sampling.

3.9 The procedure

The procedure employed during this study was embedded within a critical realist grounded theory model. As identified previously, a critical realist paradigm merges a realist ontology with an interactionist epistemology. Therefore, Charmaz (2014) framework of constructionist grounded theory was used to underpin the procedure with regards to what can be known from the data, whilst keeping in mind that the analysis looks towards the causal mechanisms which exist from a realist ontology.

As grounded theory uses an iterative process of data gathering and analysis, the linear structure of the research procedure explained within this chapter was, in reality, more circular in its execution. The ‘back and forth’ nature of data-gathering and analysis should be kept in mind when reading the research procedure.

3.9.1 Memoing

Charmaz (2014) described memo-writing as the connecting step between data collection and writing paper drafts. Memo-writing offers the researcher a constant opportunity to stop and consider their thoughts and ideas about codes including comparisons and connections, hunches, and ideas for further investigation. This allows researchers to begin analysing data and codes with more depth and complexity than just with coding itself, facilitating increased abstraction (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pg. 215). The act of writing memos facilitates researcher reflection, they also provide an ongoing opportunity for critical reflexivity and provide a record of theory construction.

Within this study I kept an online methodological journal using Microsoft Excel, so that entries could be easily sorted and referred with. As my data collection and analysis was completed remotely and with the use of a computer, this allowed for the spontaneous recording of memos which is vital in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). In order to be able to navigate around the entries, make connections and comparisons, I used a coding system which identified the interview number, transcript page and line number. Each memo was given a specific title to identify the content of the memo accurately. The main body of each memo changed as the analysis progressed, with early memos focusing on what was happening in the data, identifying codes and areas for further investigation. Advanced codes later in the

analysis involved categorisation of the data and an explanation of how this emerged and changed, focusing on extensive comparisons between codes, sub-categories, and categories. An example of my memos can be seen in Appendix N.

3.9.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are described by Willig (2008, pg. 23) as the most widely used method of data collection within qualitative psychology research. Development of technology over recent years has enabled audio and visual communication over the web in real time, which has widened options for data gathering particularly where interviews cannot be facilitated in-person. Although drawbacks to remote interviewing have been noted such as increased formality and reduced participant commitment (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014), these limitations can be mediated to facilitate effective data collection through rapport building and email reminders.

This study used a semi-structured interview data collection method via Microsoft Teams to gather the views and experiences of EPs. Initial interviews lasted between 60 and 75 minutes and were recorded using the 'record' function within Microsoft Teams and a back-up audio file was also recorded via a separate encrypted device. The interviews were roughly transcribed using the 'transcribe' function available in Microsoft Teams, with myself as the researcher reviewing each transcription for inaccuracies and formatting. This was an opportunity for me to become familiar with my data, whilst allowing for extra time to dedicate to in-depth analysis as previously mentioned by Charmaz (2014). The transcription focused on the spoken word and did not include non-verbal or extra-linguistic features which would be present in naturalised transcription, so as to focus the data on rich details of experience rather than the mechanics of communication (Oliver, et al., 2005).

An intensive interviewing technique was used to gently guide participants to explore their experiences during consultation meetings, focusing on the interactions linked with perspective change. Intensive interviewing offers the opportunity for in-depth exploration leading to detailed responses which can follow unanticipated avenues and lines of inquiry (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 56). This was deemed the most appropriate method to allow for an interactional space between the participant and researcher where ideas could be discussed,

whilst supporting the flexible and emergent data collection approach purported by grounded theorists.

For phase 1 a broad and tentative interview schedule was developed (Appendix I). This was split into three areas of investigation:

- Part 1 - General views of effective problem-solving conversations,
- Part 2 - Individual case reflection
- Part 3 - Context and future thinking.

All three sections of the interview were guided by the participant using the interview questions in Appendix I as a cue to uncover processes, experiences and their meaning, when and if needed. Parts one and three focused on more general reflections of problem-solving conversations, whereas part 2 involved the discussion of an individual case to support the participant to identify specific examples of interaction within a consultation meeting, using a variant of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), which will be explored in more detail next.

3.9.3 Interpersonal Process Recall

Interpersonal process recall (IPR) is an interview strategy which was developed within counselling practice which uses audio or visual recordings of therapy sessions which act as a cue to discuss the therapist's thoughts, feelings and actions at a later date (Worthington & Bodie, 2017). The approach of IPR fits succinctly alongside intensive interviewing, using non-judgmental, flexible, and explorative questions to help the participant reflect on interpersonal dynamics and to support therapists develop self-awareness and assist in client growth. I felt that this approach could be used within this study to cue EP participants in to a specific consultation meeting so as to uncover insight and awareness in line with the research question of this study.

As IPR is primarily a non-standardised process, it is argued to be highly adaptable to a variety of situations where a supervisory approach is appropriate (Worthington & Bodie, 2017). Although it was not possible to record consultation meetings for the purposes of this research due to COVID-19 restrictions, consultation reports (or 'records' as they are often known) were

used in place of video or audio recordings. Although the use of a report may not elicit the full range of memories that may be activated from re-watching video, some initial investigations around the effectiveness of using a report had positive results from an initial pilot which is detailed in section 3.9.4.

Following this, the participants were asked to provide the researcher with an anonymised copy of the consultation record a minimum of 48 hours in advance of the interview. To ensure the chosen consultation met the requirements of the study, participants were asked to choose an example which lasted a minimum of 45 minutes and was attended face to face by a representative from both home and school.

3.9.4 Pilot

Initially, I decided that the consultation meeting must have occurred up to 12 months before data collection to limit memory decay. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions starting in March 2020 and the subsequent move to remote working, the window of opportunity was significantly reduced which impacted the number of participants who met the inclusion criteria. It was felt that increasing the consultation window from 12 months to 14 months would not significantly impact recollection of memory, as the consultation reports would act as 'cues', allowing detail to be retrieved (Sekeres et al., 2016).

In order to justify this adaptation, I ran a small pilot with two EPs who were asked two of the interview questions whilst using a consultation report between 12 and 18 months as a cue. The EPs commented that before being cued into the episodic memory they had limited confidence at remembering detail. However, after reviewing the consultation report their recall significantly increased to a level where they felt confident with their recollection of the consultation meeting. These findings are supported by research which indicates that the use of cues can support the retrieval of 'forgotten' memories (Sekeres et al., 2016).

3.9.5 Initial coding

The initial coding stage of analysis for each interview looks to label segments of data that encompass a category, summary, and account for each piece (Charmaz, 2014). I engaged in line-by-line coding as suggested by Charmaz due to being a novice researcher (see Appendix

O for an example of coding), moving quickly through the data to keep momentum and a relationship with the data. Line by line coding also facilitates criticality of the data that can be lacking when researching within your own professional area, such as is involved within this study. This ensured that ideas and meanings were not overlooked, which may have been pertinent to the overall theory development. I labelled codes as actions (or gerunds) to ensure they were grounded in the data and any conceptual 'leaps' did not happen until they were grounded in the necessary analysis. This also helped to place an emphasis on the processes and not individuals. Codes were held provisionally and flexibly, allowing me to adapt them to ensure best fit with the data when necessary.

Charmaz (2014) describes coding as the bones of the analysis, to which are formed together through theoretical centrality to form a skeleton. Throughout the initial coding process, I attempted to remain open to all theoretical directions that may account for the phenomena. As I made sense of the data, I noted my thoughts as a memo as explained in section 3.9.1 and I also became aware of areas where the data was limited. These gaps were recorded as a memo and impacted the direction of further data collection. This allowed me to go deeper into my data by exploring emerging themes in more detail that would have occurred without simultaneous data analysis and collection (Charmaz, 2014). I also engaged in ongoing constant comparisons among data, codes, and categories at different levels. This allowed the data to evolve and become more refined.

3.9.6 Focused coding and categories

From the avenues which emerged from the initial coding stage, I compared the codes to decide which ones should be subsumed by 'coding the codes' into focused codes (Charmaz, 2014). Those which appeared to be the most significant or frequent were used to synthesise the units of data to advance the theoretical direction of the study, often becoming more conceptual than the codes they subsumed (an example of focused coding can be seen in Appendix O). In line with a critical realist paradigm, I considered all possible theoretical explanations for the data and checked them by examining the existing data and codes. This was achieved through the identification of demi-regularities at the empirical level of reality, as causal law is not assumed so tendencies and rough patterns were sought (Fletcher, 2017). Keeping in mind the question 'what must be true for the phenomenon to be the case' helped

me to seek possible explanations at a deeper ontological level which were then noted down within memos (Oliver, 2012).

A critical approach to focused code development was taken by reflecting on the unique view I brought to the analysis. Reflection and memo writing supported the iterative process of constant comparison, ensuring that the development of focused codes was grounded in the data. Once the phase 1 focused coding had been completed, I used large sheets of A2 sized paper to conceptualise tentative categories so that they could be viewed all at once and my decision making would not be negatively impacted by the limited visibility of a computer screen when using data managing software (Maher et al., 2018). Categorising the codes developed from comparison between the data, incidents, contexts, memos and categories (Charmaz, 2014). The emerging relationships and patterns between categories supported me to critically consider the increasing abstraction of the analysis. At this stage I had a clearer sense of gaps in knowledge which needed to be explored through further data collection and analysis during phase 2 which is described next.

3.9.7 Theoretical sampling and saturation

The iterative nature of grounded theory allows for gaps in knowledge to be pursued through theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to seek pertinent data relevant to emerging theory so that categories can be refined and elaborated. This process can continue until saturation occurs and no more new properties appear (Charmaz, 2014; Oliver, 2012).

Following the initial data collection, coding and development of tentative categories I transferred the data onto the software package NVIVO so that it would be easier to manage as I added more data moving forward (Appendix O). I then engaged in theoretical sampling to add further definition and to further explore my developing hypothesis about underlying social processes, moving from individual actions, to reasons, to rules and finally social structures (Oliver, 2012).

I recruited participants for phase 2 who were identified as being the most likely to offer data linked to gaps from the initial analysis and categorisation, using an adapted interview

schedule (Appendix M). To do this, I followed the same process of recruitment as with the initial sampling, however the participants were not required to provide a consultation record or reflect explicitly on one consultation from the past 14 months, therefore an adapted consent form (Appendix L) and participant information sheet (Appendix K) was used. Data was analysed using the same procedure as in phase 1. Recruitment ceased following the analysis of data gathered from participant 7 as no further insights beyond the developing categories were found (Charmaz, 2014; Oliver, 2012). At this point the categories I identified were theoretically integrated by comparing them at an abstract level (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, I engaged in diagramming to visually depict the grounded theory, showing the connections between the categories and conceptualising the process of perspective change during EPC meetings.

3.11 Summary of chapter

This research aims to explore how perspective change happens during EPC meetings. Following a discussion about the ethical grounding of the study, the chapter then explored how merging a critical realist paradigm with grounded theory methodology offers the opportunity to uncover social processes and mechanisms which cause events at the empirical level to occur, with emancipatory change in mind. The iterative data collection and analysis process of grounded theory was discussed, with particular focus on coding, Memoing, integration and theoretical sampling to develop a theory grounded in the data.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter overview

In this chapter I present the findings of my research. I have given a detailed explanation of the categories which were identified during the analysis of the data, composed of the following three category headings: consultee openness to change, socio-political barriers and supporting new thinking as depicted in figure 4.1 below.

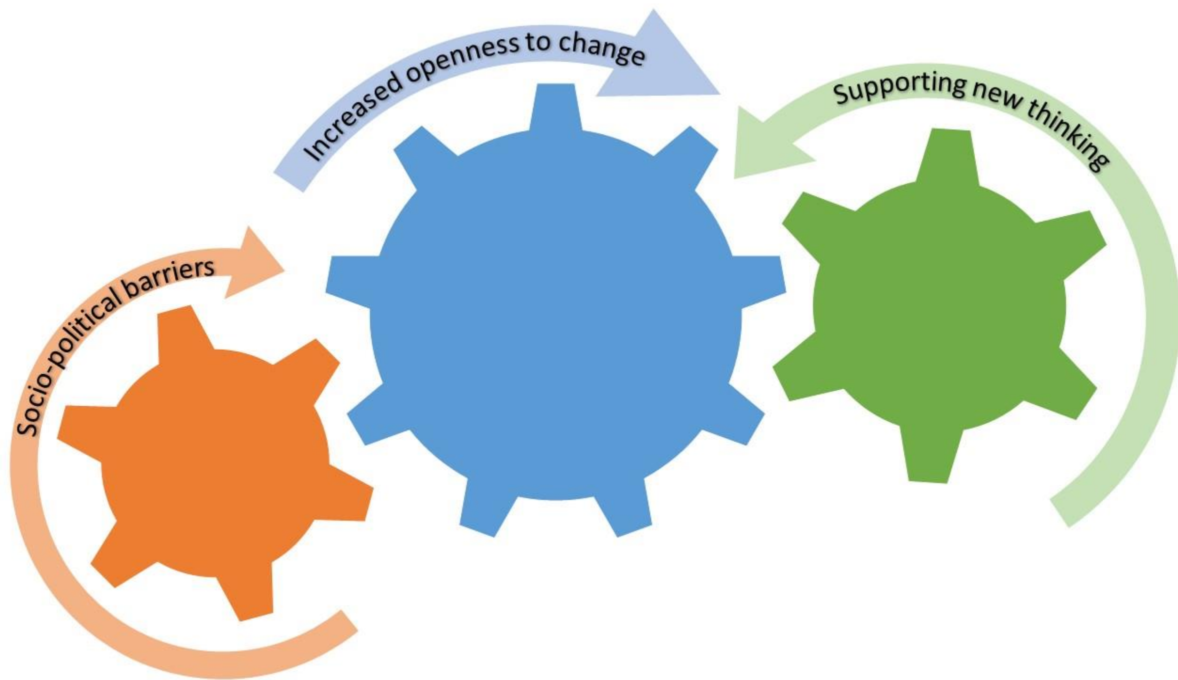


Figure 4.1: Overview diagram: process of perspective change during EPC meetings

Each of the three categories comprises of a number of sub-categories which are visually depicted and described throughout this chapter. Considering the process of grounded theory methodology, presenting supporting diagrams after describing the analytical development of the categories may have taken the reader on a more accurate path of the grounded theory development, however I deemed the negative impact on the readability of the chapter too significant due to the complexity of the theory. Therefore, to enhance clarity, I decided to present an overview visual diagram and brief description of each category and their constituent sub-categories at the beginning of each section. This is followed by a more detailed visual at the end of each sub-section which depicts the focused codes discussed

within the body of each sub-section. In addition, a copy of the full model can be located in Appendix S as a pull-out reference sheet which may be helpful to refer to throughout this chapter. It should be kept in mind that this is to support the readers' conceptual understanding and not as an indication of the approach to theory development which was grounded in the data as described in Chapter 3.

4.2 Consultee openness to change

I identified from the data that recognising 'consultee openness to change' is an over-arching core category which appears to underpin the process of perspective change in EPC meetings. Recognising consultee openness to change is conceptualised through three 'consultee senses', depicted as sub-categories in figure 4.2 below, consultee sense of psychological safety, consultee sense of responsibility and consultee sense of agency.

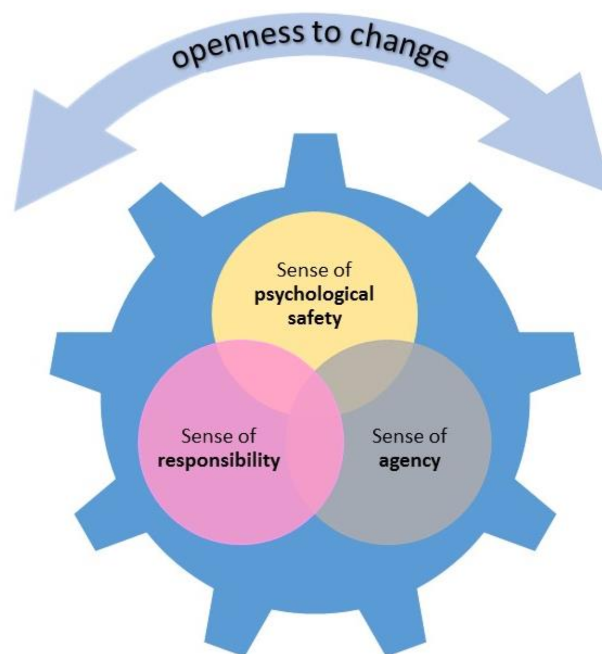


Figure 4.2: Core category overview: consultee openness to change

Consultee openness to change and each of the three constituting sub-categories will now be explored in more detail.

4.2.1 Sense of psychological safety

A strong theme I identified from the interviews involved participants noticing factors which appeared to impact consultee sense of psychological safety (depicted as the yellow inner circle in figure 4.2), which was in turn linked to their openness to change.

A number of participants told me about their perceptions of consultees sense of support for their agenda, and how this appeared to link with signs of their overall psychological safety during consultation meetings:

> *"But how would you then get to a point of a curious thinking space to work together, if you just feel like this group of people that don't know your child and have never met them, are making a decision about them that essentially is based on funding?"*
>
> *Participant 4, line 313 – 315*

Here, participant 4 suggests that a difference in agenda between consultees may have a direct impact on their openness to collaboration through activating a sense of needing to fight for goals which hold meaning for them, therefore reducing consultee sense of psychological safety to engage actively in the collaborative consultation process.

The negative impact of a dichotomy of agenda was further highlighted by participant 1:

> *"…where people come in and it's all very quiet and people have their notes in front of them and parents might get out their notes and start writing down everything that everyone's saying. And schools might be shuffling bits of paper."*
>
> *Participant 1, line 199 - 202*

Here, the presence of a quiet atmosphere suggests a limited working relationship between the consultees, implying that the focus on "paper" as concrete evidence, rather than on interaction, may be a safety seeking behaviour rather than trusting the collaboration process. This suggests that consultees may be experiencing a level of anxiety around gaining the support for their agenda, reducing their psychological safety and openness to change. Furthermore, participant 6 also talked to me about meetings where consultees all "look at

you" as the EP facilitator and do not acknowledge each other, further reinforcing a sense of conflict or mistrust between the consultees by positioning the EP as the mediator. This suggests a need to feel contained and held by the EP due to consultees experiencing a lower sense of psychological safety, and therefore limiting the opportunity for collaboration.

Conversely, a number of participants reflected on "cues" that consultees were able to engage in collaboration:

> *"I think those, um cues that you pick up when you're sitting in a meeting with people. Um, you can see the, read their body language so there might be tension in the shoulders. You can sometimes see, now, as you're going along in the meeting, that people do become much more relaxed and will sit back or, or, they'll engage more…"*
>
> *Participant 1, line 168 - 173*

By noticing consultee "body language", participant 1 reflects on their perception as the EP facilitator to recognise the process of consultees becoming "more relaxed". Participant 1 believes that this suggests the consultee will "engage more" as the consultation progresses, indicating that these signs are likely to be linked to increased psychological safety and reduced tension, with an implied increase in openness to collaboration.

Three participants reflected on the impact of power dynamics within consultation meetings and how this can seem to influence their sense of psychological safety to engage actively in the consultation process:

> *"…if you think about the power dynamics when it's, when the parents come into the school, is that kind of on the school turf, so the teacher is in charge. And also, I think about the parents that I'm thinking of right now, are the ones who've had negative experiences of school. So being called into the teachers office is really anxiety provoking for them."*
>
> *Participant 5, line 107 – 110*

Participant 5 spoke about their sense that the location and logistics of consultation meetings may trigger negative feelings and a power imbalance for some consultees. They believed that

this could cause consultees anxiety and perceived lack of control, which may further negatively impact their sense of psychological safety.

The impact of power imbalance on psychological safety was further suggested by participant 6 who spoke to me about noticing when SENCOs physically position themselves directly "opposite" a parent, perceiving the table as a barrier to collaboration. Additionally, participant 7 spoke about the nature of the relationship between parent consultees, and how they believed that the wife was "never in a position" to voice her views due to being positioned in a subordinate role by her husband. This implies that relational dynamics and positioning within consultation meetings may impact consultee sense of psychological safety as a result of power imbalance.

Another factor which was discussed by the majority of participants was their perception of consultees capacity to manage their emotions and the effect this appeared to have on their openness:

> *"I knew that it didn't make a change because I, I, I, just felt like the mother wasn't able to hear anything, she wasn't able to listen, able to think."*
>
> *Participant 5, Line 179 - 180*

Here, participant 5 believes that change had not occurred due to the consultee not appearing to be able to listen or to think. The participant's reflection that the consultee "wasn't able" suggests their view that the consultee was not necessarily in control of their openness and that their emotional needs may have been the main factor reducing openness, rather than a conscious choice not to engage in collaborative problem-solving. Increased emotional needs indicates that the consultee was likely to be experiencing a lower sense of psychological safety and needed to focus on her own agenda to help manage her emotions, resulting in her not being able to listen or process new information which may have supported perspective change.

Furthermore, participant 5 related their perception of the stress and anxiety experienced by consultees due to the COVID-19 pandemic with reduced consultee "energy" to "try something new" and lower levels of "tolerance" to emotional unsettling. This supports the link between the extent to which a consultee feels emotionally available and therefore psychological safe enough to try something new and manage the unsettling that may bring. This may therefore have an impact on openness to change.

Conversely, participant 1 offered reflections on their experience during consultations where consultees appear to be feeling confident in their capacity to manage their emotions:

> "…it's not just about what we gonna do about this behaviour, it's, it's that curiosity and that trying to understand where is it coming from? We want to find another piece of the behaviour um, another piece of the puzzle'. That wasn't me, those were the consultees words"
>
> *Participant 1, line 508 - 511*

Here, participant 1 reflects on a scenario where consultees use phrases such as "find another piece of the puzzle" which indicates they may have an increased sense of confidence in their ability to emotionally process and manage the new information that may be uncovered. This implies that curiosity is likely to be an indicator of emotional confidence linked to their sense of psychological safety, increasing openness to change.

In summary, I identified from the data that consultee sense of support for their agenda, consultee experience of relational power dynamics between individuals within the meeting, as well as consultee ability to manage emotions, are perceived by EP participants to be linked to consultee sense of psychological safety (figure 4.3).

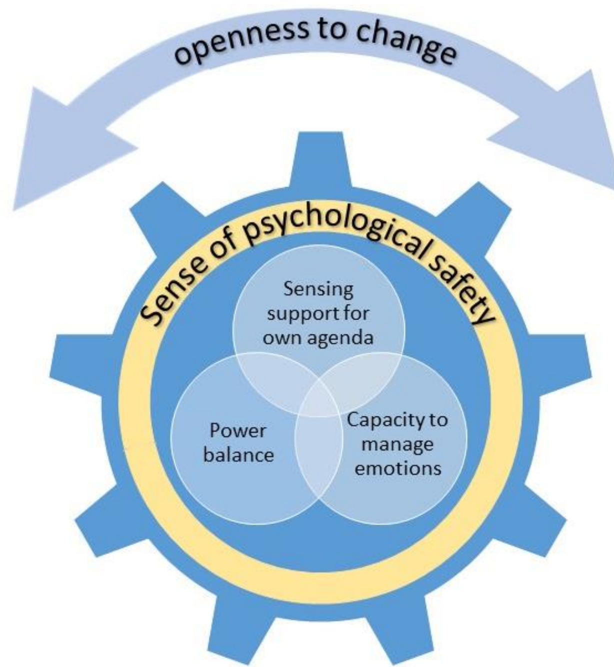


Figure 4.3: Openness to change sub-category – sense of psychological safety

These three factors were raised as focused codes during the analysis which were conceptualised into the sub-category of psychological safety. Although the focused codes were not given separate sub-headings within these findings due to the scope of this research, I decided to depict them in figure 4.3 as overlapping and interactive factors, to highlight their importance for consideration within professional practice. This is also the case throughout the rest of this chapter where I deemed the focused codes of significant importance to be highlighted visually in the diagrams.

4.2.2 Sense of responsibility

In addition to psychological safety, participants also spoke to me in depth about their views regarding consultee sense of responsibility and how it seemed to impact consultee openness to change. Therefore, 'sense of responsibility' was raised as the second of three sub-categories constituting the core category of 'openness to change' as depicted by the purple inner circle in figure 4.2.

The majority of participants spoke to me about their perceptions of consultees communicating their attribution of blame, and the effect this appears to have on consultee sense of responsibility:

> *"…the kind of consultations where you really get this, you, like the really tricky ones with the parents in that kind of background where they just, the parents feel like the school aren't helping and the, the school feel like the parents aren't doing a good job of parenting…"*

Participant 5, line 63 – 66

Here, participant 5 talked about their perception of linear attribution of blame between the consultees through hearing language such as "not helping" or "not doing a good job". This suggests a dynamic where each consultee may be judging the behaviour of the other without taking responsibility for the impact of their behaviour in maintaining the problem situation. Furthermore, both participants 4 and 5 told me that they felt the attribution of "blame" resulting from linear causality can result in the child being "forgotten" in the process, suggesting that the focus turns away from the child and towards shifting responsibility, which is likely to reduce openness to change.

The majority of participants discussed their interpretation of consultee perceptions regarding inclusive practice, and the relationship this appears to have on their sense of responsibility to positively influence the situation:

> *"…the sort of things that you put in place for a very happy loved child, isn't going to work and then sometime, and then they can't tolerate that frustration I think, and so then they do things which are actually further excluding like a part time timetable, and you know, not letting her go on trips."*

Participant 5, line 239 – 241

This quote from participant 5 highlights their experience of how inclusive practice may be affected by the local context. They perceived that some schools who may be less experienced at successfully managing a variety of needs appear to struggle with children who do not

respond to a ‘one size fits all’ approach. This suggests that schools’ sense of responsibility to adapt and meet a wide range of needs may be impacted by their perception of what is ‘normal’ which may result in further exclusionary practice such as a reduced timetable in an attempt to manage feelings of frustration, further perpetuating the cycle of reduced openness to taking responsibility. Furthermore, participant 3 noticed how the use of “categorising” language consultees use to describe children, such as having “peculiar” behavioural difficulties can feed into a “cycle of failure” through reduced openness to adapting to the child’s need in class. This suggests that where consultees perceive children to have unusual or unexpected difficulties, this is related to the sense of responsibility consultees may feel to adapt their support to meet the needs of the child.

Furthermore, the majority of participants talked to me about recognising consultees’ views regarding their ability to meet the needs of the child at their current setting, and how this relates to their sense of responsibility:

> *“So, I remember what in particular [sic] where they had already made the decision that they could not meet her needs whatsoever and that she needed to go somewhere else. I don’t think they necessarily had in mind where that somewhere else was…”*
>
> *Participant 2, line 144 - 147*

In this example, participant 2 perceives that the consultee’s rejection of responsibility may have had a direct effect on their openness to exploring the needs of the child within the consultation meeting, particularly evident when considering another more suitable setting had not been identified and the decision-making process appeared underpinned by an attribution of home being the source of problem. Conversely, participant 1 talked to me about meetings where consultees appeared to look beyond the behaviour that was occurring and wanted to explore “why” the problem situation was happening. They related this to a shift away from giving the behaviour pejorative labels such as “inappropriate” and towards find out “where it is coming from”. This suggests that the consultees were experiencing a higher level of openness to taking responsibility for their interaction with the problem situation.

Over half of the participants perceived that the consultees agenda was a factor in relation to their sense of responsibility:

> *"And so, this can be an arena where the other people in the room are working together to try to convince me of things that are really important to them…"*
>
> *Participant 3, Line 278 – 279*

Here, participant 3 talked to me about noticing when consultees appeared to be trying to "convince" them about the importance of their agenda. This suggests the consultees may have fixed views on how to move the situation forward, which centres around their existing beliefs, or that they may not feel that they have been sufficiently heard suggesting they hold lower responsibility for collaborating on ways to move forward. Implicit within this suggests a reduced openness to change.

The pursuit of an existing agenda was also reflected by participant 1 who spoke about schools "putting plans" in front of parents and saying, "we've been doing this" which may be construed as an attempt to prove they had adequately supported the child and avoid responsibility or as evidence towards their agenda. Furthermore, consultees experiencing a fixed agenda were found to be more likely to dismiss contradictory evidence, particularly where this may contribute to increased responsibility-taking which may reduce openness to change. Participant 2 suggests that when consultees appear to resist entering into a discussion which explores evidence which broadens the understanding of a situation, it may be a mechanism to avoiding feelings of "uncertainty" that may arise. Uncertainty may be an uncomfortable feeling that is resisted by the consultee due to the questions it may raise regarding the responsibility which they may have already attributed to others. Conversely, participant 6 links consultee motivation to hear new evidence from the EP with increased sense of taking responsibility for the problem situation.

In summary, I identified from the data that consultee attributions of causality, consultee perceptions of inclusion and the purpose of evidence sought from the EP are factors linked to consultee sense of responsibility and therefore their openness to change (figure 4.4).

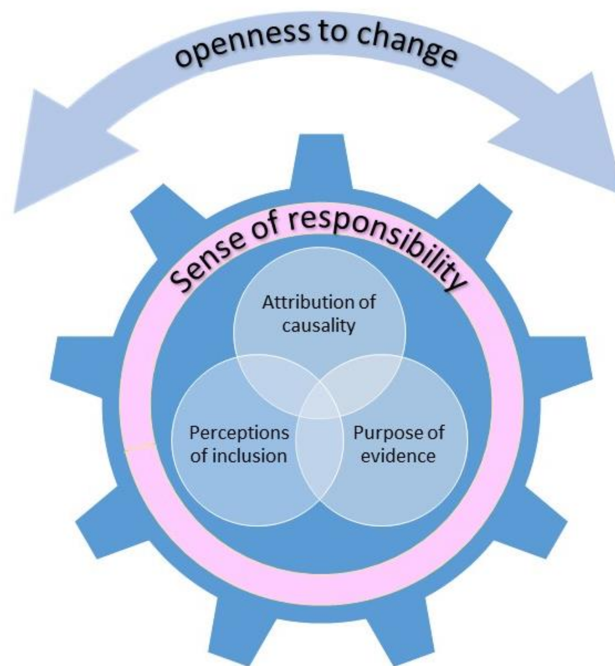


Figure 4.4: Openness to change sub-category – sense of responsibility

4.2.3 Sense of agency

In addition to the previous two sub-categories, participants also spoke to me about their views regarding consultee sense of agency and how this seemed to impact their openness to change. This is depicted as the grey inner circle in figure 4.2. Therefore, I chose to raise this as the third of three sub-categories which will now be explored in more detail.

During a number of interviews participants spoke to me about consultee confidence in managing competing demands and how this can appear to impact their sense of agency:

> *"I do recall a year two teacher, or a couple of year two teachers saying that, but not peevishly, it was just, they were just echoing the reality of the situation, one of whom said, 'well, I've just got to get all my class up to a year 2 standard in the year 2 curriculum. I can't spend more time with this child who is way, way behind in literacy'."*

Participant 7, line 255 - 258

Here, participant 7 talks about a teacher who appeared to feel a significant amount of external pressure to get the class up to the expected levels of literacy, and that the pressure left them feeling that they could not afford to "spend" the time needed to support a child in class who was behind. This suggests that external pressure to achieve expected attainment may have a significant impact on consultee sense of agency to meet the needs of all children due to viewing time as a commodity to be spent wisely, therefore impacting openness to change.

Time pressure was also highlighted by participant 2 who spoke about their experience of parents who appeared to find it difficult to dedicate time to the consultation process, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown when children were being taught at home and having to manage competing tasks which appeared to affect their ability to engage fully in the consultation process. An implication of this is a sense of resignation towards a situation out of one's control, and the impact on sense of agency that may have. Conversely, face to face meetings in school were positioned by participant 2 as offering "protected time" where it may be harder for consultees to be distracted by competing duties, however this was not always viewed as the case, with participant 2 further reflecting on a situation where consultees seem to have differing levels of investment in the consultation process linked to late attendance:

> *"…although we were all meant to be meeting together, only Mum was there and then we waited forever for the member of staff to appear…"*
>
> *Participant 2, line 145 – 147*

Here, participant 2 appears to imply that the time was not prioritised by the school consultee due to competing demands which they considered took precedence over the consultation process. This may communicate the level of engagement the consultee may be able to provide, and therefore their sense of agency to make positive changes.

Another factor that I identified from the data relating to sense of agency was consultee level of confidence in being able to overcome barriers. Participant 7 suggests that consultee openness to change can be negatively affected by factors they consider to be beyond their control, or that they are "not capable" to change, such as the physical infrastructure. This was

supported by participant 2 who talked about noticing when consultees appeared to want to be child-focused, but voiced their "worries" about how they would be able to actually implement change, further reinforcing the impact of lower agency on openness to change.

A lower sense of agency was extended to include consultee perception of skill as suggested by participant 7:

> *"…another teacher who said, 'I don't know how to teach reading, these children should be able to read when they come to me'…"*
>
> *Participant 7, line 258 – 260*

In this example the participant believes that the teacher may have been managing the uncomfortable emotions of feeling de-skilled. They reflect that the consultee appears to use external judgements and expectations that the child "should be able to read", in an attempt to manage their loss of agency resulting from the situation. Conversely, participant 5 reflects on language used by consultees which indicates increased openness, such as "Ok, let's give it a try". This suggests the consultee has a higher sense of agency and sense of responsibility to try something different. This is an example of an interaction between both sense of agency and sense of responsibility.

Two participants spoke to me about times they have noticed how a focus on quantifiability appears to impact consultee sense of agency:

> *"…like in terms of Ofsted and results and stuff. You know, I think that that can be a barrier because it's not is it [sic]? It's still like about the business of a school. I guess it's not worth it, not worth it to have some of these children in school because it pulls down your attendance. They're not going to achieve."*
>
> *Participant 2, line 162 – 167*

Here, participant 2 perceives a negative relationship between a culture of valuing results and performance measurements as an outcome, and the ability of a school to prioritise inclusive practice. The impact of this dichotomy is framed as a "barrier" impacting consultee

motivation to prioritise the needs of the child, suggesting that consultee openness to change may be impacted if they perceive the change to have a negative effect on targets. Furthermore, participant 3 spoke to me about SENCOs feeling under pressure "not to give the other SENCO problems" when children are transferring to another setting, indicating that at times, consultees may experience competing pressures which draw them away from the child's best interests, reducing their sense of agency and openness to change.

In summary, I identified from the data that managing competing demands, consultee confidence in overcoming barriers and a cultural reliance of quantifiability are key factors linked to consultee sense of agency and therefore their openness to change (figure 4.5).

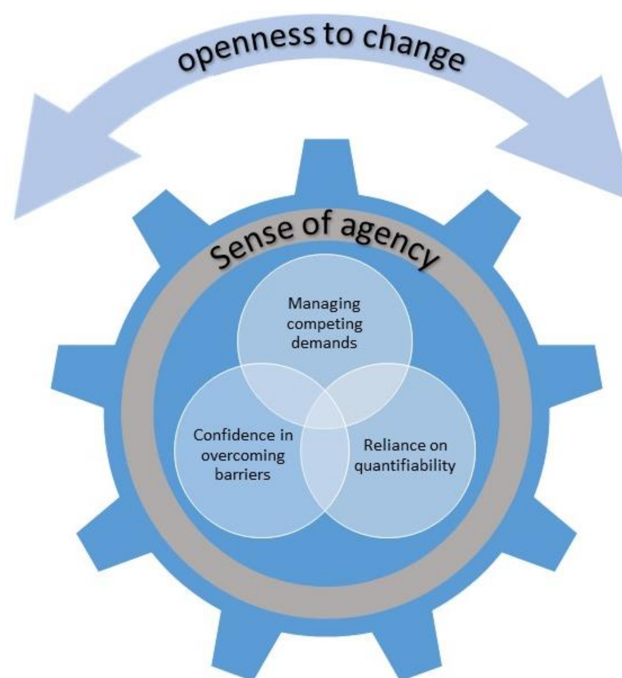


Figure 4.5: Openness to change sub-category – sense of responsibility

4.2.4 How openness to change relates to the theoretical model

I identified that consultee openness to change appears to relate to three sub-categories: sense of psychological safety, sense of responsibility and sense of agency. Although each were conceptualised as distinct sub-categories in line with systems theory, I consider them to be interrelated in that the extent to which each one may impact the others to varying degrees in the form of a feedback loop (see figure 4.2). A number of factors were identified and discussed

within each sub-category to offer a more concrete conceptualisation of how each of the three openness 'senses' may be influenced. These were visually depicted in figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

4.3 Socio-political barriers

The second category identified suggests the socio-political barriers which appear to negatively impact consultee openness to perspective change. In line with the critical realist approach used within this study, using abduction (Section 3.6.2) I identified generative socio-political mechanisms which appeared to be negatively impacting each of the consultee openness to change sub-categories, psychological safety, responsibility and openness. A visual depicting this process of abduction can be viewed in Appendix Q. I chose to raise these three mechanisms to form a category labelled 'socio-political barriers', depicted as the orange cog in figure 4.6. Each of the three generative socio-political barriers is colour coded to link with its corresponding openness to change sub-category, however these distinctions are to enhance clarity and as part of a complex open system, the relationships should be held tentatively and are likely to interact and overlap. Each of the identified socio-political barriers will now be explored further.

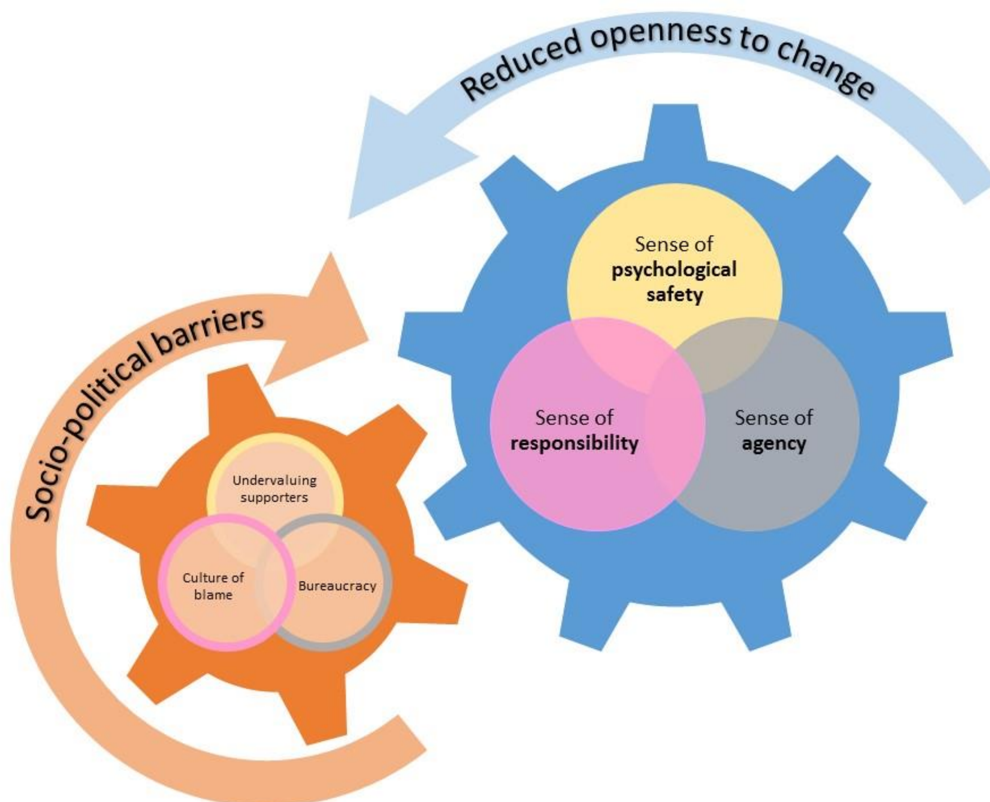


Figure 4.6: Category overview – socio-political barriers

4.3.1 Undervaluing supporters

I identified that undervaluing supporters appeared to be a significant barrier affecting consultee openness to change, particularly in respect of the sub-category sense of psychological safety (depicted as yellow in figure 4.6).

Three participants spoke about their perceptions of consultees feeling undervalued as a result of not feeling supported by the system, this appeared to have a direct effect on consultee openness to change:

> *"…and actually, if you're being paid like complete rubbish, then maybe that's, you cannot, it only goes so far I guess, like yeah, like a lot of the time we are drawing up on the, we're trying to draw upon maybe the, that good nature, that willingness, that dedication to inclusion and stuff. And I don't think the system really supports that…"*
>
> *Participant 2, line 188-191*

Here, participant 2 suggests that expectations placed on staff may not be realistic when considering their level of remuneration and overall support from the wider system. The implication of this suggests an overreliance by the wider system on staff morals, using their "good nature" and "willingness" as motivation to pursue inclusive practice. This suggests a culture of viewing inclusiveness as an individual moral decision, rather than a culture that needs to be facilitated through systemic and organisational processes. This was supported by participant 1 who spoke about their experience of school consultees appearing anxious and insecure in their role due to underfunding and concerns of losing their job, suggesting that there is likely to be a mechanism linking the undervaluing of supporters specifically with psychological safety, and therefore the opportunity for school staff to feel emotionally available when taking part in the consultation process.

Furthermore, the government's approach to the recent COVID-19 pandemic was suggested by two participants as having an impact on school staff moral and sense of being supported and valued. Participant 1 talked about their view that school staff had not being supported in line with the level of accountability attributed to them from the wider system. An implication

of this is that school staff may feel undervalued by the system, which appeared to suggest a negative impact on consultee psychological safety. This was supported by participant 5 who talked to me about hearing from staff that the “risk” of being in school is more than they are “willing” to take, suggesting that it is a position that they feel has been imposed on them and they feel uncomfortable with, further impacting their sense of being under-supported by the wider system.

Participant 5 spoke about the impact of the journey that parents may have been on prior to the consultation process, particularly with reference to children in alternative provision or those who have been excluded in the past:

> *“…you know, these parents have been through a lot. They’ve, their child’s been rejected and rejected, rejected by the time they’ve ended up in a provision like that, you know they’ve been excluded and there’s a very, there’s a lot of mistrust of authority and its well-placed mistrust because they’ve been let down a lot by lots of people.”*
>
> *Participant 5, line 59 - 62*

Reflecting on a pattern of system wide rejection, participant 5 talks about their perception of parents’ “well-placed mistrust” of authority, implying a sense that those who hold the power have systematically let down the parent consultees and their children. The resulting feelings of mistrust of authority figures is likely to have an impact on parental psychological safety, impacting their openness to change during the consultation meeting.

Furthermore, three participants reflected on the under-availability of EP time and how this may impact the opportunity for consultees to feel supported and remain open to change:

> *“I think the later it is, the more entrenched it is, and the more fixated people have got on the problem and then when you’re trying to shift the problem and say maybe that’s not the problem, maybe this is the problem they are already like ‘no, this is the problem’…”*
>
> *Participant 4, line 230 - 233*

Here, participant 4 reflects on their experience of problems becoming more “entrenched” the later they become involved, suggesting that this may be due to the development of increasingly “fixed” perspectives and therefore consultees are likely to be less open to alternative views. This is supported by participant 2 who talked to me about EP support taking “so long” to action, allowing the situation to become increasingly closed and “missing the moment” for change. Therefore, the access and availability of EP time is likely to be related to consultees becoming more fixed in their thinking as a reaction to feeling under-supported and reduced psychological safety as a result.

In summary, I identified that there is a generative mechanism at play of undervaluing supporters which may negatively impact consultee openness to change, and more specifically their sense of psychological safety as indicated in figure 4.7 below. It should be acknowledged that I do not consider this interaction to be direct but an indication that the mechanism of undervaluing supporters may, in certain circumstances, be activated.

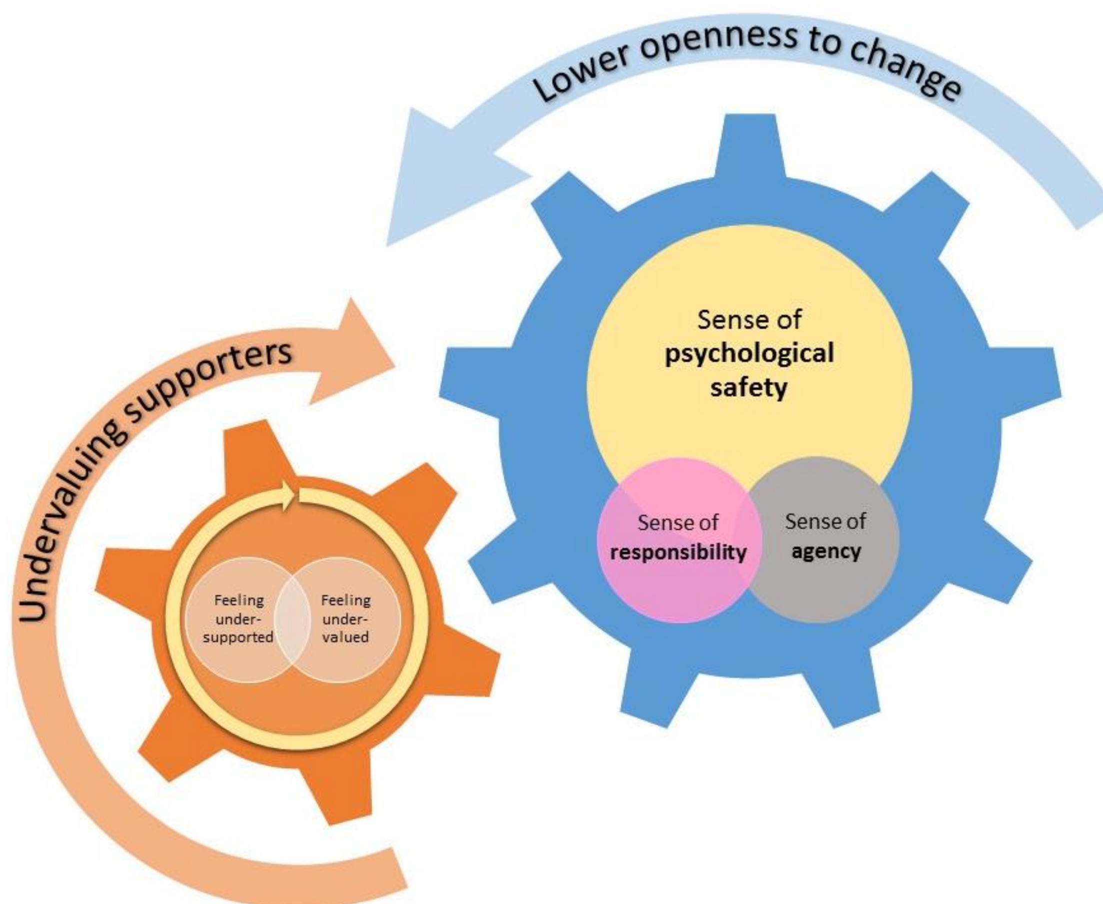


Figure 4.7: Socio-political barrier sub-category – Undervaluing supporters

4.3.2 Culture of blame

The data indicated that a culture of blame was a significant barrier to consultee sense of responsibility. I identified that consultees may feel blamed as a result of the wider socio-political culture around attribution and accountability:

> *"Academy chains, gonna, get just, you know, you know your risk of losing your job or something because your attendance is under and then I think, I think that's a major barrier".*
>
> *Participant 2, line 178 - 181*

Here participant 2 talks about the risk senior leaders may experience around losing their job due to being held personally accountable for quantifiable outcomes. There is a sense that the risk associated with not meeting quantifiable outcomes acts as a barrier to the consultation process, affecting consultee openness to taking responsibility through fear of attribution. This links with participant 2 who talked about consultee reticence to engaging consciously in perspective change, noticing that consultees can sometimes appear defensive if they realise the EP is trying to facilitate perspective change during the consultation meeting. This implies a level of fear which may be linked to increased accountability, therefore reducing openness.

Additionally, EPs may be considered implicit within a wider culture of blame due to their expert advice-giver role within statutory services:

> *"And what my role is in other parts of my work, where I, I am just that expert who writes reports or tells people what to do. And so, it's not even just that they have a misconception about what I'm trying to do in the meeting today. That's quite understandable view because that is what I do half of the rest of my time anyway."*
>
> *Participant 3, line 162 – 166*

Here, participant 3 considers it to be understandable when consultees view EPs as "experts", due to their involvement in more directive statutory work. I gained a sense that the participants feel that due to EPs undertaking both expert and non-expert roles as part of their role duties, consultees may perceive EPs as complicit in the wider system of blame, which

may therefore reduce consultee openness to engaging in collaboration during the consultation meeting.

In summary, consultee sense of responsibility appears to be negatively impacted by a culture of blame, underpinned by a fear of repercussions and a mistrust of the EP role in regard to attributing accountability. This socio-political generative mechanism is therefore likely to negatively affect consultee openness to change as depicted in figure 4.8 below.

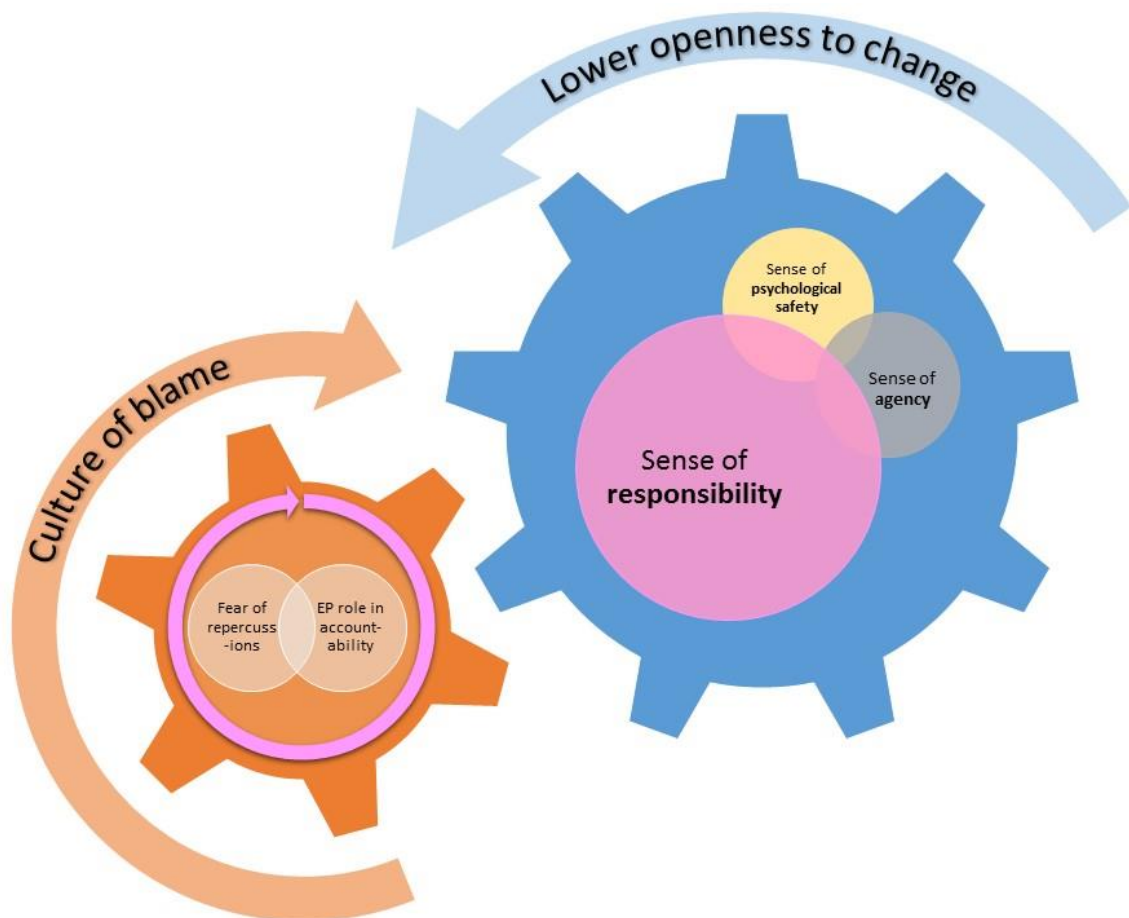


Figure 4.8: Socio-political barrier sub-category- Blame culture

4.3.3 Bureaucracy

The effect of bureaucracy and administrative processes appeared to be a distraction during consultation meetings, impacting the opportunity for change:

"There was basically that 'is the paperwork in order', 'is this administrative process all done properly?' …. if it's written on a piece of paper, it doesn't matter how beautifully it's written on a piece of paper and how much detail it's written on a piece of paper. The existence of that piece of paper does not change what's happening in the child's classroom."

Participant 3, line 399 – 407

Here, participant 3 suggests that there is a wider mechanism at play which values procedures, administration and documentation above the relational change which is in the best interests of the child. The negative impact of bureaucracy on consultee openness to change is also supported by participant 4 who suggests that the "capacity to think and reflect" should be system wide, implying that the wider SEN system may have become 'stuck' and therefore may not have the child's needs at the centre.

Additionally, I identified that bureaucratic processes can also have a direct impact on EP practice during consultation meetings. Participant 4 reflects a sense of frustration at the impact on their professional practice due to the level of administration required which they feel "grinds you down", reducing curiosity. This suggests engaging in bureaucratic processes can reduce professional energy, which then may impact an EP's ability to facilitate change as effectively.

The extent to which bureaucratic processes underpin access to support for children with SEN also appears to negatively impact consultee openness to engage in joint problem solving with the EP. Participant 1 spoke to me about noticing when consultees perceive the EP as a gatekeeper, and how this may cause a conflict of expectations. This dichotomy seems to be linked to a reduced openness to engage in joint problem-solving, and therefore a reduced opportunity for perspective change.

In summary, these findings indicate that there is likely to be a generative socio-political mechanism of bureaucracy at play which can negatively impact consultee sense of agency (depicted in figure 4.9). This is underpinned by the prioritisation of paperwork above relational change, as well as a system which may implicate the role of the EP as gatekeeper.

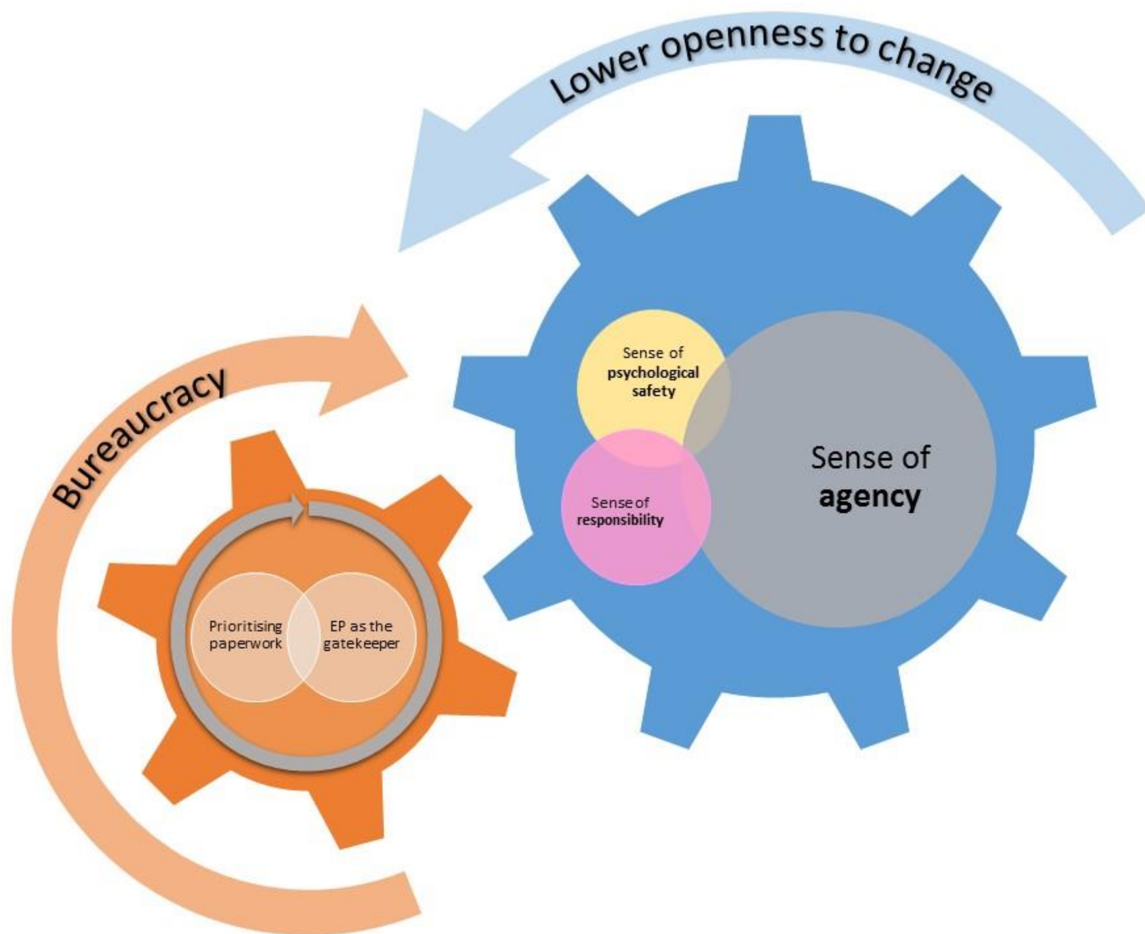


Figure 4.9: Socio-political barrier sub-category - bureaucracy

4.3.4 How understanding socio-political barriers relates to the theoretical model

The generative socio-political barriers of undervaluing supporters, culture of blame and bureaucracy appear to act as mechanism to reduce consultee openness to change. Each socio-political barrier has been found to have a key effect on a specific openness factor as highlighted by the corresponding colours in figure 4.6. However, this relationship should be held tentatively, with each of the other factors likely to be impacted as part of an open system.

4.4 Supporting new thinking

The third category was identified as the generative mechanism of 'supporting new thinking' which acts as a facilitator to consultee openness to change (see figure 4.10 below). Each of the three openness to change 'senses' is facilitated by a key approach taken by the EP, which

makes openness to change more likely. These are depicted by the corresponding colours yellow, pink and grey.

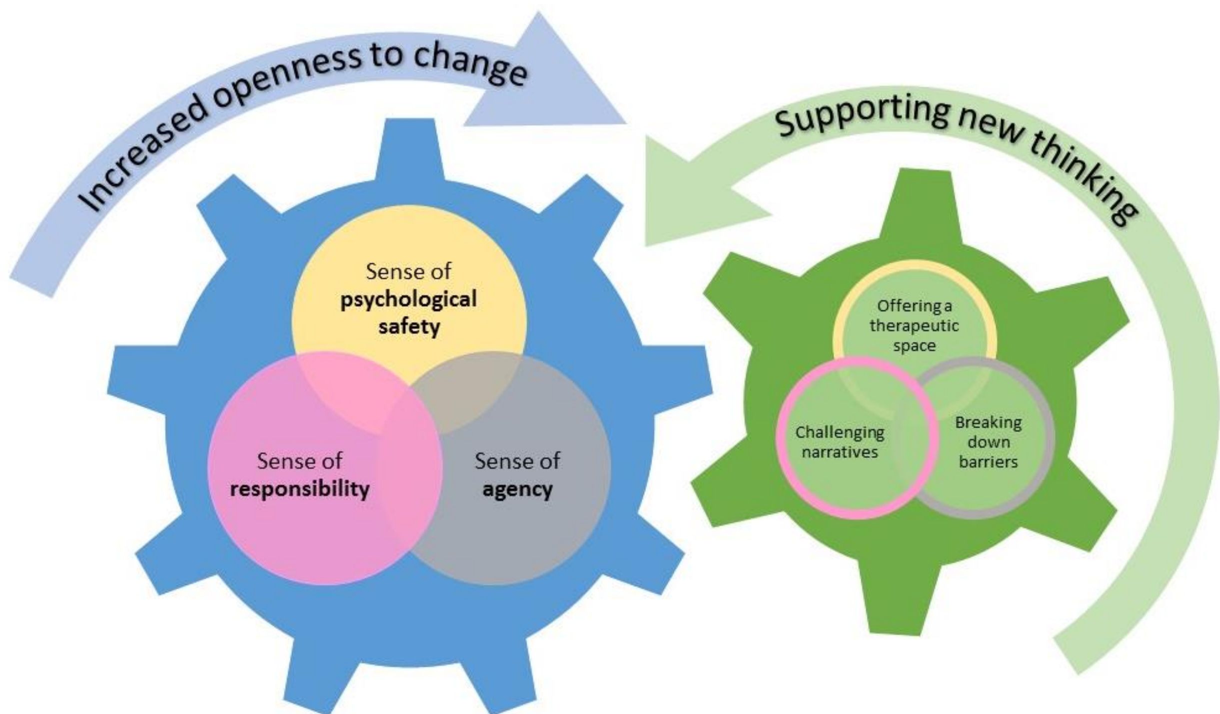


Figure 4.10: Category overview - Supporting new thinking

4.4.1 Facilitating a therapeutic space

EP participants spoke about their role in facilitating a therapeutic space as a mechanism for supporting consultee perspective change.

A thread running throughout all of the interviews was participant's views on the importance of effective rapport building to build a therapeutic alliance at the outset:

> *"…that is your time in the meeting, you've got to, you've got to make friends there and then, and it's gotta work."*
>
> *Participant 6, line 85 – 86*

Here, participant 6 emphasises the importance of building rapport in relation to the effectiveness of the rest of the consultation meeting. Building on this, participant 2 suggests that trainee EPs should focus their energy on planning how to build rapport, implying that rapport building was a fundamental building block of EP practice and a purposeful activity which should be planned and prioritised. This perspective was further supported by participant 6 who believes that rapport building is a key factor which helps to move the problem situation forward; these perspectives suggest that rapport building is fundamental to perspective change.

Participant 4 reflects on the opportunity to build rapport even during remote consultations where any shared experience can offer the opportunity for easy dialogue, such as commenting on "silly" backgrounds. Similarly, participant 5 reinforces the importance of informal conversations being light-hearted, suggesting that rapport building may be most effective when it is around a neutral subject which is less likely to trigger heightened emotions. Conversely, when thinking about remote consultations, participants found that informal discussions can be hard to facilitate due to reduced visual perception, with participant 2 commenting that the "natural to and fro" of conversation felt more stilted, in part due to not being able to "see people's facial expressions".

Overall, rapport building appears to help consultees to feel comfortable and relaxed as mentioned by participant 7, suggesting that it is integral in facilitating a therapeutic space which promotes openness to change.

I also identified that the setting of expectations at the start of the consultation appeared to support consultees to feel safe. Participant 6 reflects on the possible repercussions when expectations are not set before or at the start of the meeting, suggesting that consultees can appear to "hold onto" their agenda for the duration of the consultation which seems to reduce openness to change. This is supported by participant 2 who suggests that a mismatch of role expectations may cause difficulties with the process later on if it not addressed at the beginning of the meeting.

Furthermore, the importance of ascertaining consultees emotions and the meaning they attribute to the consultation process and problem situation was suggested as key to building a therapeutic space:

> *"I guess the defensiveness and anger is usually from a place of anxiety so kinda hearing and containing it practically, with not only by saying 'oh I hear it and I understand it', but also by saying 'this meeting is going to be an hour, we're gonna cover this, here's an email to say what we've covered' can help bring things down and stop people being quite so aggressive or anxious."*
>
> *Participant 4, line 357 - 361*

Here, participant 4 suggests that acknowledging the consultee's perspective as well as being explicit about the consultation process can appear to reduce consultee anxiety and "defensiveness" by moving towards a place of therapeutic alliance. This suggests that consultee expectations may be more fixed where they have reduced psychological safety, which can in turn be mediated by EP support through collaboration and being explicit about the process.

Another factor highlighted by all seven participants centres around the importance of empowering all consultees to have a voice, with the aim of facilitating a therapeutic space for all consultees. Participant 6 comments that they use a "slightly different approach" towards a more active advocating role if they feel a need to facilitate equality of voice for all participants. This tailoring of approach suggests there is professional skill in deciding how to support consultees to be respectful of each other, whilst trying to maintain a therapeutic space. In support of this, participant 3 reflects that when advocating for consultee voice, they will attempt to continue to facilitate the therapeutic relationship by employing active listening and using valuing and inviting statements such as "and what does so and so think?".

Facilitating equality of voice during remote consultations was believed to be particularly difficult by a number of participants, reflecting on the difficulties they have had managing the flow of conversation due to connectivity issues and recognising visual cues that indicate a

consultee is trying to speak. Conversely, a number of participants highlighted remote working as an opportunity to empower voice:

> *"Maybe some parents are more confident, or, in that situation, 'cause it's just over the phone and there's not that being in a school setting. There's not that seeing me as kind of a professional like, you know, with my proper bag and whatever like normal, you know like work trousers and stuff like it's all, I probably look teachery."*

Participant 2, line 413 - 419

In this quote, participant 2 talks about their perception of some parents appearing to be more confident when accessing remote consultations from home. The effect of visual cues indicating power differentials is highlighted as negatively impacting confidence, such as professional clothing. Lower confidence suggests these contextual triggers may impact psychological safety and therefore by adapting the setting of the consultations to the needs and power dynamics of the consultees, this is likely to support new thinking by offering a therapeutic space.

Finally, I identified that by exploring and validating consultee perspectives, EPs offer a therapeutic space which supports consultee psychological safety and openness to change. All participants spoke extensively about offering time for problem talk and not jumping straight to finding a solution:

> *"I've had quite a few conversations with her on the phone where she's done the same thing and then the last 10 minutes she's been able to be a bit more reflective. So, I think what, what she needed was that kind of therapeutic input of just a space to offload…"*

Participant 5, line 181 - 183

Here, participant 5 talks about a consultee appearing to become more reflective after she was given a therapeutic space to "offload", implying an increased sense of openness. This is supported by participant 5 who believes that building a therapeutic alliance through a foundation of valuing and validating the consultee's "point of view" but without "taking sides"

is an important technique to move the consultees forward. This suggests that consultees need to feel empathised with to feel safe enough to be open to hearing alternative perspectives.

To facilitate validation, participant 1 spoke about using "small reinforcements" as well as mirroring consultee use of language when appropriate. Participant 4 considers the importance of giving consultees their "full attention" and empathising with their situation by using techniques such as reflecting back what they have heard, as well as offering emotional containment by checking the consultee has somebody they can talk to after the consultation for support. Overall, consultee openness appears to be supported by offering a therapeutic space within the consultation, so that consultees can feel that their perspectives have been heard and validated without a sense that the EP is taking sides.

Four of the participants spoke about using therapeutic techniques to gain more insight into the perspectives of all consultees during the meeting. Participant 4 talked about their use of psychoanalytic concepts such as containment and denial to conceptualise what may be happening "under the surface". By doing this, participant 4 believes they have been able to support consultees to make links between their own school experience and the current problem situation by exploring "what is theirs and what is the child's". This level of deeper questioning appears to support consultees to explore the origin of their own perspective, and may help facilitate curiosity and openness as suggested by participant 5. However specific concerns were raised which linked directly to the psychological safety of the consultee:

> *"I don't feel as safe to do [consultation] remotely and I don't like the thought of going into somebody's psyche and leaving them behind. I think even if you're leaving them in the school, or even if they're walking out of school, you still feel like you held them in that place and that you, that work that took place there and then, they're leaving and they have a journey somewhere…whereas I just feel like 'oh bye' (click) and you're like, I don't know what I've left them with."*
>
> *Participant 4, line 514 – 519*

Here, participant 4 talks about their ethical decision-making when considering how deep to go when engaging in perspective finding and how the location and support structure available

to the consultee can impact their perception of consultee psychological risk. This appears to be a significant consideration when using remote consultation methods.

In summary, EP participants talked about offering a therapeutic space as a mechanism to increase openness to change, primarily by increasing consultee sense of psychological safety underpinned by the following four factors; rapport building, empowering consultees, setting expectation and validating perspectives, as depicted in figure 4.11 below.

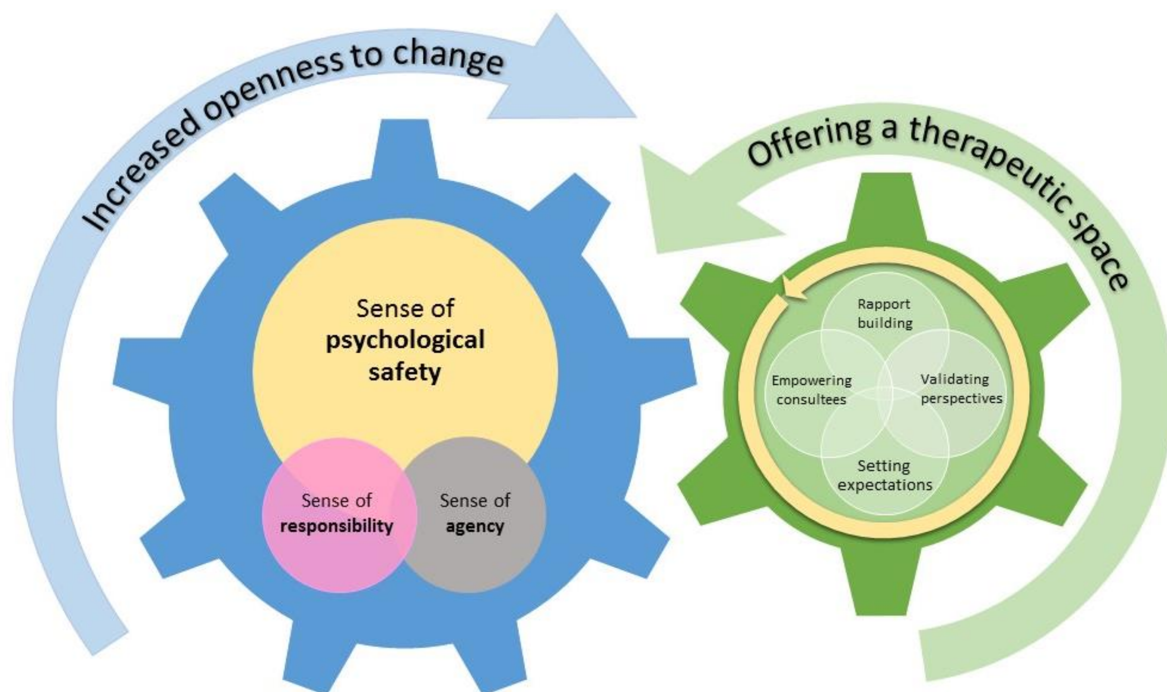


Figure 4.11: Supporting new thinking sub-category – offering a therapeutic space

4.4.2 Challenging narratives

A further key theme is conceptualised as how EP participants support consultees to take responsibility through challenging their narratives about the problem situation. This will now be explored in more detail.

The majority of participants talked about building empathy and finding a connection between consultees as a building block to facilitating change:

"…and they're like OK, so this is something they have in common here. They both understand being in the classroom, great. OK so I can push them a bit closer together and I'm now just the outside person who's just trying to understand."

Participant 6, line 255 - 257

Here, participant 6 talks about the EP trying to move from mediator to observer by facilitating a strengthened working alliance through identifying shared experiences between consultees. A focus on building working relationships is supported by participant 1 who told me that they see their role as supporting the people who are going to make a difference to the child's day to day life, therefore building an effective working relationship between the "supporters" is considered key.

Participant 3 believes that the first step towards relationship building and gaining a new shared narrative is just getting people talking:

"I think maybe just getting people talking…find some glimmers of hope and little pockets of opportunity."

Participant 3, line 322 – 326

Here, participant 3 suggests that facilitating conversation between consultees is key to recognising "glimmers of hope and little pockets of opportunity" towards moving things forward. This implies that perspective change is inherently an interactional process, reinforcing the importance of getting all consultees together so that a shared narrative can be facilitated.

The majority of participants talked about supporting consultees to look at the situation from the child's perspective as an indirect and less confrontational approach to finding common ground, with participant 2 guiding consultees to look more widely at the context of the problem situation and the child's prior experiences in an attempt to help develop a shared understanding. It is implied that the level of hostility between the consultees needs to be

understood by the EP when deciding on how direct or indirect they should be at facilitating a shared understanding.

Building empathy by focusing on the child also appears to support consultees to look beyond their perspectives and challenge a within-child narrative to the problem behaviour. The reframing of behaviour was suggested as another key approach voiced by participants which appeared linked to challenging narratives:

> *"…if they sort of say 'attention' then you can say, you say 'connection', you know actually he wants to connect with an adult. And what does it mean to him? Why does he want that attention? Then you can see them start to shift that perspective."*
>
> *Participant 5, line 100 - 102*

Here, participant 5 talks about offering similar but less pejorative language to reframe the child's behaviour as a relational need rather than a difficult behaviour, whilst also being curious about "what it [the behaviour] means" to the child. They suggest that the focus on the relational aspect of the behaviour prompts the consultee to look beyond within-child conceptualisation of the problem and see how a change in their behaviour can help, implying an increase in consultee sense of responsibility. Furthermore, participant 6 suggests that asking, "what problem are you looking to solve?" helps to shift the problem towards a more nuanced and interactional perspective which may also help to challenge within-child narratives and supporting the consultee to be more open to other ways of thinking.

Conversely, participant 6 suggests that it is important for the EP to be aware of the impact of their attempt at reframing by being aware when the recipient is "on board" or where they may be "losing them". This conceptualises reframing as only useful where the recipient is an active participant in accepting the new meaning. Where there is resistance to a reframe, participant 5 suggests that "broadening" out the reframe to centre on a situation external to the current context can be perceived as less attributional:

> *"And I think probably, by talking about it more broadly, so I might say 'some children I see'…I think that almost takes away from their actual situation, so they don't feel like you're focusing on them."*

Participant 5, line 65 – 71

Purposeful questioning was also highlighted by participants as a useful technique which can facilitate narrative change. Purposeful questioning appears to range from curious questioning through more direct methods. Tentative and curious questioning was used extensively by the majority of participants to increase openness to alternative ways of thinking, with participants 2 and 3 suggesting exploratory phrases such as "I'm wondering…" offer a gentle method for supporting consultees to explore their thinking. Furthermore, participant 4 highlights the usefulness of introducing naivety, such as "what made you think of that?" and "do you think that might have something to do with it?". This suggests that EPs positioning themselves in a place of 'not knowing' may help consultees to feel that they are not being blamed yet increasing their curiosity about the situation and how they can help, facilitating openness to taking responsibility.

Conversely, 4 participants talked to me about times where they felt a more direct line of questioning was needed:

> *"And in the end I only save it, like if I have to, but sometimes you do have to quote the legislation and say, well, actually that's what, that's what's entitled to, and you have to do that…"*

Participant 6, line 69 – 71

Here, participant 6 spoke to me about times where they felt an ethical obligation to quote legislative rights or to raise safeguarding concerns, however this appears to be a method that is avoided if possible, and only considered if deemed that it is ethically required. It is implied that direct questioning can be detrimental to the collaborative nature of consultation, which may reduce consultee openness to change.

A number of participants talked about facilitating consultees to look at the bigger picture. Participant 4 talks about their positive experiences of using a work discussion group model, where consultees are asked to remain silent so that they have the opportunity to listen fully to other perspectives. This suggests that facilitating silence may allow the space and time for information to “resonate” and become integrated into a new narrative. Interestingly, participant 1 finds that using visuals to represent the interactive nature of the problem situation appears to help consultees conceptualise how everything “fits together” in a “tangible” way. These findings reflect the challenge and importance of supporting consultees to conceptualise the complexity of the problem situation, and therefore accept the role they play, increasing openness to responsibility taking.

In summary, EP participants seem to increase consultee openness to change by facilitating their sense of responsibility through challenging narratives. However, similarly to previous findings, it should be noted that this relationship is overlapping and interactive, affecting other parts of the system as depicted in figure 4.12. Challenging narratives is considered a generative mechanism supporting new thinking, and is underpinned by four factors: facilitating empathy and connection, reframing behaviour, purposeful questioning and looking at the bigger picture.

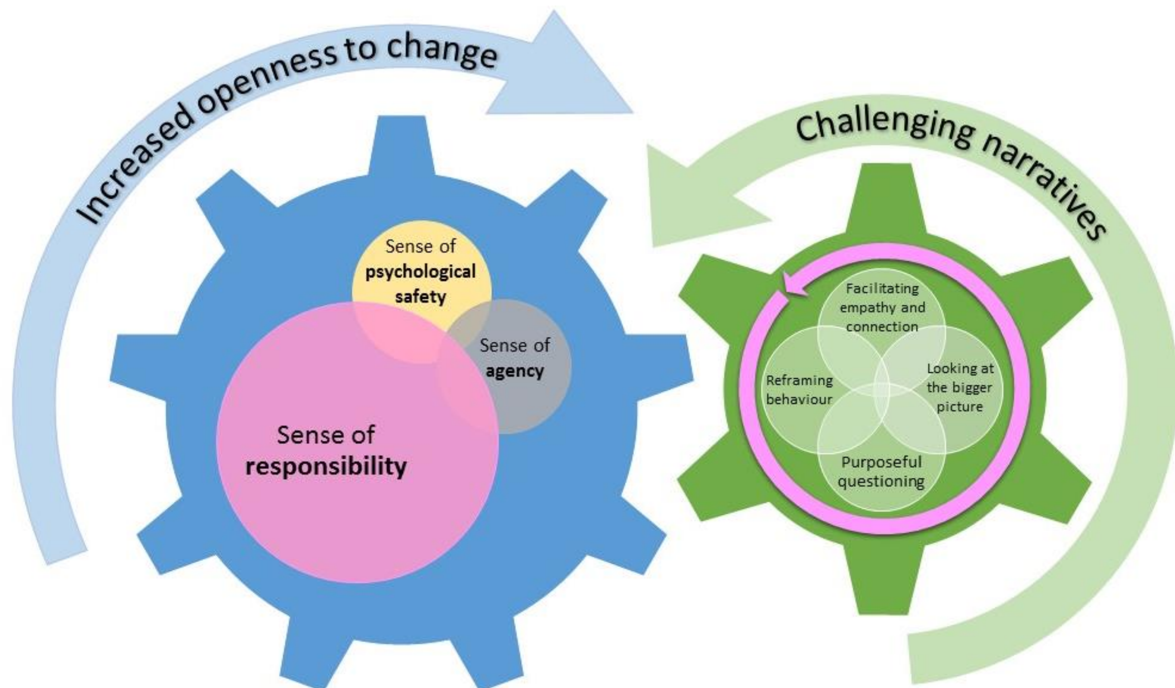


Figure 4.12: Supporting new thinking sub-category – challenging narratives

4.4.3 Breaking down barriers

The third and final sub-category which I identified from the data centres around the generative mechanism of supporting consultees to break down barriers. This appears to increase consultee openness to change, primarily through a mechanism of increasing consultee sense of agency.

The majority of participants spoke to me about the value of supporting the consultee to explore their role:

> *"…I often ask for what your role is meant to be, what's the task meant to be? What you meant to be doing? What does the young person think you're doing? What's the family think you're doing…?"*
>
> *Participant 4, line 47 – 49*

Here, participant 4 talks about supporting consultees to think systemically about the purpose of their role to help them identify conflicting agendas, goals and expectations between themselves and stakeholders involved in the case. This may help the consultee to break through competing pressures and conflicting agendas to feel empowered to make decisions with greater awareness and skill but without the EP reducing consultee sense of agency by taking on an advice-giver role.

Furthermore, participant 4 recognised the juxtaposition of keeping the task about the child, whilst simultaneously focusing on the needs of the supporters. For a number of participants, this appeared to be through a coaching capacity, helping consultees to decide what action they were going to take. Participant 3 echoed that developing reflective skills is "part of the journey as well" suggesting there is an element of skill transference between the EP and consultee which may increase consultee sense of agency and openness to change. However, participant 1 reflects on the fine balance between acknowledging and suggesting areas for consultee skill development and being interpreted by the consultee as identifying weaknesses, risking both consultee self-esteem and sense of agency.

A further strategy discussed by EP participants involves EPs supporting consultees to agree outcomes which are in the best interests of the child, but also have meaning for the consultee. Participant 6 told me that in situations where the consultees have different agendas and are not "budging", the role of the EP is to identify what is going to make them "tick" or what is important to them. Participant 1 offers specific phrases they used to move things forward when agreeing outcomes, such as "what would be useful?". Participants appear to be suggesting that a shared agenda needs to be collaboratively agreed so that it holds personal meaning for each consultee, therefore facilitating personal investment and an increased sense of agency at improving the presenting situation.

Participant 4 raises difficulties they have found when trying to develop a shared agenda if the outcomes were decided externally to consultees, for example if the purpose of the consultation was driven by a requirement for evidence rather than personal investment for change. They suggest this can lead to school consultees focusing on the EP "needing" to come in and provide evidence as requested by the external stakeholder. In this scenario, participant 4 appeared to take on an advocatory role for the school by feeding back to the stakeholder (in this case the LA SEN team) that evidence provided by the school should be respected and valued, therefore shifting power from the EP to the school consultees and increasing sense of agency.

Thinking about solutions was raised by the majority of participants to help support consultees to break through barriers:

> *"…if it felt like the people I was talking with were very, as you said, focused on the problem, focused on the past rather than the trying to think about how to move forward. I might explicitly start asking them 'OK, well, what are you hoping for going forward?...'"*
>
> *Participant 3, line 189 - 195*

Here, participant 3 believes asking consultees about their hopes for the future and reinforcing this through visualisation may help improve their sense of agency and openness to change. By focusing on the detail, this may help the consultee to feel empowered by increasing their

sense of agency and their sense of responsibility. The use of solution focussed techniques was highlighted by the majority of participants as a strategy to support consultees to look beyond a wide range of barriers which may be making the situation feel stuck.

However, when considering the timing of using a solution focused approach, participant 5 reflects that they tend to use it towards the end of the consultation rather than the middle, believing that thinking about alternative perspectives should be prioritised before moving towards solution finding. This suggests that consultees may not be ready to engage in active solution-finding before they have felt heard and validated, evidencing an area of overlap with psychological safety.

Scaffolding consultees' thinking around next steps also emerged as technique linked to breaking down barriers and increasing agency. Participant 7 explains that by scaffolding consultees to identify the next step themselves may avoid a dynamic which may prove disempowering to the consultee through the EP being viewed as the "gallant saviour". This is supported by participant 1 who described their approach to facilitate consultees to think systematically about the process of implementing a plan, chunking the process down so that the consultee can identify the next step to "focus on" rather than becoming overwhelmed by the whole process at once. This suggests that thinking about next steps and breaking down stages may support consultee sense of agency and therefore openness to change.

However, participant 3 appears to feel frustrated with the challenges of facilitating next steps when consultees are not all present at once, describing a scenario where consultees cannot physically collaborate together and how they feel that this shifts the responsibility onto themselves as the EP to find a solution. Therefore, it may be conceived that engaging in collaboration has a supportive effect on consultee sense of agency, and where this is not present, lack of collaboration becomes a barrier to consultee sense of agency and reduces the opportunity to break down barriers.

This is supported by the majority of participants who felt that recording key points from the meeting facilitated consultees to have something tangible and concrete to refer to, and to reinforce the purpose of what had been agreed. This seems to offer consultees a sense of

accountability which, being collaboratively agreed, may facilitate consultee sense of agency further. Interestingly, participant 2 reflected on their perceptions of consultees experiencing reduced agency and responsibility during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, due to having "no idea" when a consultation review could be scheduled. This implies that whilst recording points and next steps can help remind consultees about the agreed plan, a scheduled and timely review may further reinforce new thinking.

In summary, EP participants appear to increase consultee openness to change by increasing their sense of agency through breaking down barriers. However, similarly to previous findings it should be noted that this relationship is overlapping and interactive with the other factors due to being in an open system as shown in figure 4.13 below.

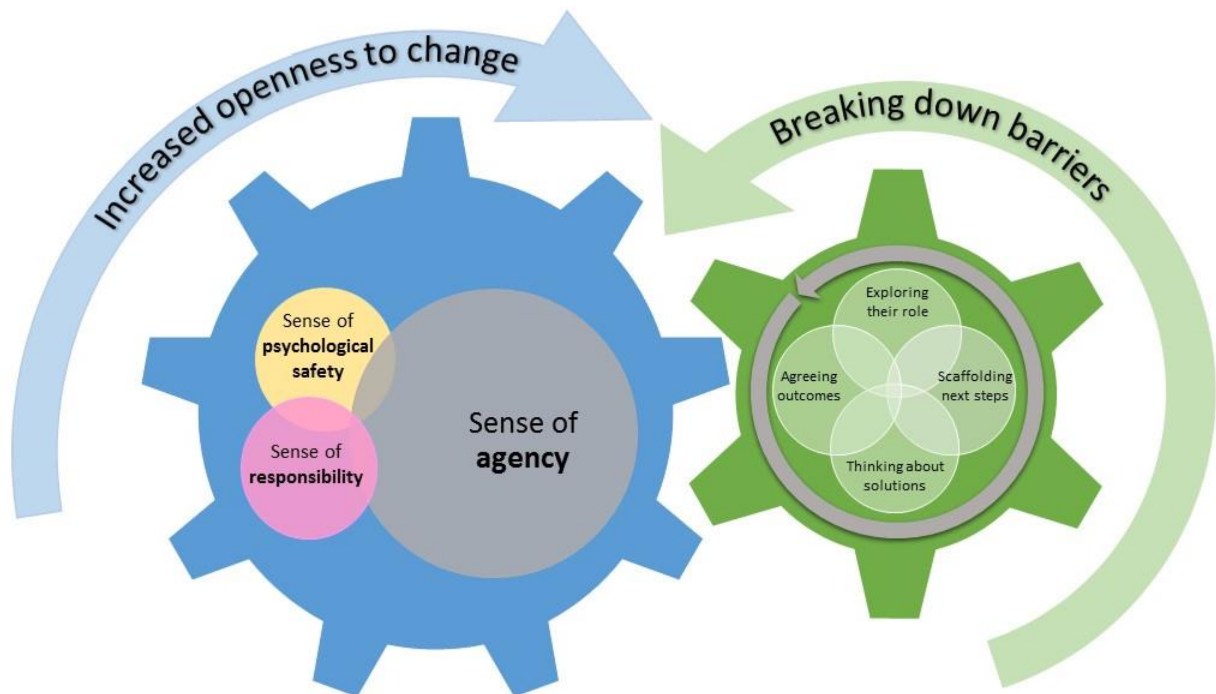


Figure 4.13: Supporting new thinking sub-category – breaking down barriers

Breaking down barriers as a generative mechanism to support new thinking is underpinned by four factors which were raised as focused codes and described in detail in this section. The four factors include helping consultees to explore their role, agreeing outcomes, thinking about solutions and scaffolding next steps.

4.4.4 How supporting new thinking relates to the theoretical model

The generative mechanisms which support new thinking including offering a therapeutic space, challenging narratives and breaking down barriers appear to facilitate consultee openness to change. Each mechanism appears to have a main relationship with an openness factor as highlighted by the corresponding colours in figure 4.13. However, this relationship should be held tentatively, with each of the other factors likely to be impacted as part of an open system.

4.5 My grounded theory model

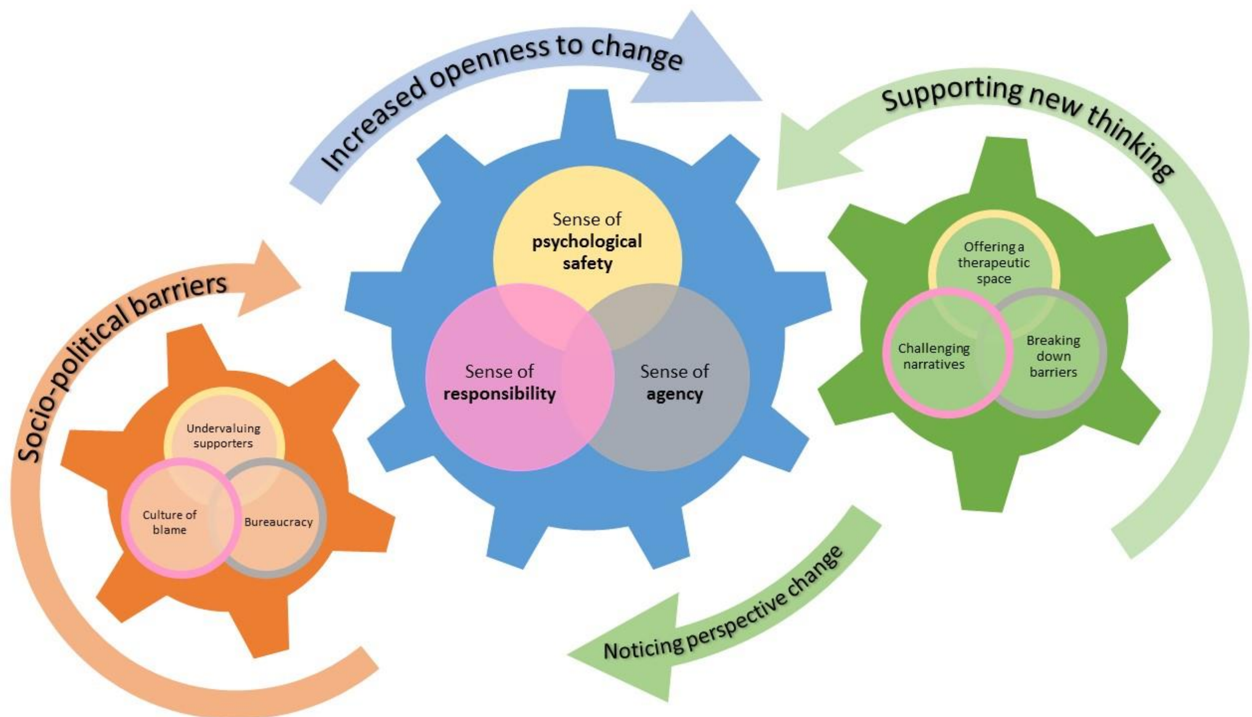


Figure 4.14: Model of perspective change during EPC meetings

Figure 4.14 above is a visual depiction of the grounded theory model which was developed following the analysis of my findings. The model above depicts the process of perspective change as an interrelated mechanism which, depending on a number of factors, makes change more or less likely to happen.

The model consists of three categories; openness to change, socio-political barriers and supporting new thinking. The category 'openness to change' is considered to be the extent to which a consultee is able to accept and engage with change. 'Socio-political barriers' constitute system wide social or political mechanisms which may negatively impact consultee openness to change. 'Supporting new thinking' describes a process by which a consultee is scaffolded to engage in, or experience, a new or different pattern of thought.

The core category 'openness to change', is represented by the large blue cog in the centre. I chose to raise this as the core category as I consider it to be influenced by both of the other two generative mechanism categories represented by the smaller orange and green cogs. I understand 'openness to change' as both an unobservable and observable event which occurs in moments in time during the consultation meeting, when consultees experience more or less openness. I found three factors relating to openness which were raised to the sub-categories: sense of psychological safety, sense of responsibility and sense of agency. Through my analysis, I inferred that each of the three factors is likely to have an overlapping and interactive effect on the other. For example, where consultee sense of psychological safety increases, this may further increase consultee sense of responsibility and vice versa.

In line with critical realist grounded theory (Oliver, 2012), I used abduction to explore the underlying 'real' socio-political mechanisms that may have generated the 'event' of openness to change and found that undervaluing supporters, a culture of blame and bureaucracy appear to negatively impact consultee openness to change. Therefore, I raised these as sub-categories within the category of socio-political barriers (indicated by the orange cog). I found that all three mechanisms had a negative impact on consultee openness to change, which is represented by the orange cog turning the openness cog the opposite direction to represent decreasing openness.

The final category which I identified in the data was a further generative mechanism positively impacting openness to change, I labelled this 'supporting new thinking' as indicated by the green cog. This category consists of three sub-categories of support which EPs provide during the consultation meeting which facilitate the process of change: offering a therapeutic space, challenging narratives and breaking down barriers. These mechanisms appear to counteract the negative impact of the socio-political barriers, therefore facilitating openness to perspective change.

Where openness to change is increased through the EP mechanism of supporting new thinking, the negative impact of socio-political barriers which may be affecting consultee openness is likely to be mediated. Therefore, it is more likely that consultees will experience perspective change which is noticed by EPs (indicated by the green arrow on diagram 4.14).

Signs of perspective change are discussed in Appendix R. More specifically, as a result of the abductive analysis employed within this study, each openness factor was found to be significantly impacted by a corresponding socio-political barrier and facilitated by an EP mechanism to support new thinking (Appendix Q). This relationship is indicated by the corresponding colours across the cogs of yellow, pink, and grey. Whilst a link has been identified, due to the open nature of the system each mechanism is likely to impact any of the openness factors in a myriad of ways, and therefore the key relationships should be held flexibly and tentatively.

CHAPTER 5: SECONDARY LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Chapter overview

A second literature review was conducted alongside the data analysis as I discovered themes and ideas. This is consistent with constructionist, as well as critical realist grounded theory methodology, giving credibility to the theoretical position of the emerging grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Oliver, 2012). In this chapter I will first describe the search strategy I employed to perform a sharply focused literature review, followed by an exploration of literature from across six relevant domains which I felt offered insight into the findings of this study (Giles & De Lacey, 2013).

5.2 Search strategy

Six different searches were conducted in order to explore the main areas which I identified as relevant from the data. Each individual literature search asked a question linked to the different categories and broad relationship within the grounded theory as detailed in the table below:

1) What is known about the impact of feeling unsupported on an individual's sense of psychological safety?
2) How is psychological safety best supported to promote change within a therapeutic environment?
3) What is known about the impact of a blame culture on an individual's sense of responsibility?
4) How is sense of responsibility best supported to promote change within a therapeutic environment?
5) What is known about the impact of bureaucracy and red tape linked to funding on an individual's sense of agency?
6) How is sense of agency best supported to promote change within a therapeutic environment?

Figure 5.1: Secondary literature review questions

In similarity to the preliminary literature review, the CASP qualitative checklist (CASP, 2018) was used as a framework for evaluating the quality of research (Appendix C).

5.2.1 Defining ambiguous search terms

When reviewing the literature relating to the categories identified in the findings, I discovered that relevant research within the field of EPC was absent. Therefore, to facilitate a useful search of existing literature, I decided to expand the search criteria to include research within similar or related professions which may offer insight relevant to this area of study. Due to the interactionist underpinnings of EPC meetings, I made a judgement that research from similar disciplines such as social work, systemic therapy and psychotherapy would be of relevance. These professions have been referred to as 'helping professions' at times throughout the remainder of this thesis, denoting an occupation that provides health, psychological, social support and education services to individuals and groups.

Furthermore, for the purposes of this literature review, 'psychological safety' is defined as "a belief that you will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes" (Macmillan Education Limited, 2021). For the context of this research, a therapeutic environment is broadly considered to be an environment of acceptance, empathy and unconditional positive regard which facilitates the sharing of thoughts, feelings and emotions to facilitate change (Rogers, 1951).

When thinking about the effect of wider socio-political mechanisms, the term 'bureaucracy' is considered to describe "complicated rules, processes and written work that make it hard to get something done" (Cambridge University Press, 2021). I also broadened my literature search to include papers exploring these wider mechanisms within state funded organisations such as the National Health Service (NHS) due to the limited evidence within an educational context.

5.3 Results of the secondary literature search

The literature search yielded 24 articles which met the inclusion criteria (Appendix J). The literature will now be discussed in light of the six areas which I identified as offering relevance and insight relating to the findings of this study.

5.3.1 Understanding psychological safety in the context of feeling undervalued

Goodman (2015) discussed the impact of the socio-political mechanism of undervaluing nursing and caring professions, exploring the concept of care work as being 'moral work' where employees were motivated to give 'over and above' what they were paid to do. He argued that in some cases this was done willingly, and in others there was a sense of being undervalued due to not being adequately remunerated. Goodman (2015) also commented that the focus on the role from a moral perspective appeared to be used by leaders to justify low pay, this appears to contribute to increasing expectations placed on staff, resulting in increased turnover, being overworked and staff shortages. Interestingly, Goodman (2015) made a link between the undervaluing of professions such as nursing, with those that have a higher proportion of female workers, although this assertion appeared anecdotal and was not supported by research. Despite this, Goodman (2015) suggested that the historical devaluation of women is being continued covertly due to the undervaluing of female orientated roles, which may be relevant to the context of this research.

When thinking in more detail how feeling under-supported can impact an individual's sense of psychological safety, Goodman (2015) highlighted a lack of support to up-skill workers' knowledge, which is suggested reduces workers' opportunity to engage in political action. This is positioned as a mechanism that may impact both psychological safety and agency to improve their situation. A sense of being undervalued was highlighted by Maxwell and Rees (2019) in light of the negative impact austerity measures appear to have had on the availability of social work support and the provision of early intervention for children and families. They commented that the increased waiting times further increases level of need, with an implied impact on the psychological wellbeing of children and families due to feeling unsupported.

Furthermore, Maxwell and Rees (2019) reviewed literature about practitioners becoming emotionally distanced from the families they support as an unintended consequence of themselves as practitioners feeling overworked and unsupported. Although insightful reflections, there was limited critique of the supporting evidence to these claims so they should be held tentatively, particularly as they are not directly relevant to an educational psychology context. Overall, the findings were considered relevant to the literature question

due to the mechanistic process of undervaluing supporters and subsequent effect on psychological safety, primarily due to similarities in gender split within child services.

Burgess-Manning (2021) carried out research to explore the psychological effects of using online digital platforms for family therapy sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in Australia. The study used a qualitative case study design of reflections following a panel discussion between family therapists and trainee family therapists seeking to understand the facilitators and barriers of online therapy. The discussion panel took place remotely over the online platform 'Zoom' and was attended by practitioners from Australia and the UK. The study suggested that particular disadvantaged groups may feel discriminated against due to lack of funding to access technology, lack of access to sufficient data packages and poor internet connection. Although the study was small-scale, it offered valuable insight into the shift towards remote working within helping professions, and therefore offers originality and usefulness in the current context. Furthermore, Mc Kenny, et al. (2021), also found evidence of poverty-related exclusion as well as disability related exclusion when accessing remote family therapy in the UK through a large-scale survey of family therapists. This suggests that moving to an online platform without wider government support can reduce access for certain groups, which may impact their sense of feeling supported and valued and therefore limit change.

5.3.2 Building a therapeutic space to facilitate perspective change

Balestra (2017) carried out a quantitative study to explore the therapeutic alliance and positioning employed by clients and therapist during two family therapy sessions based in Italy. The sessions were recorded and analysed by the researchers using a Likert rating scale to compare four dimensions of alliance, as well as changes in positioning to try to understand the elements that support therapists' relational competence. The researchers found that an established therapeutic alliance both acts to protect the client-therapist relationship when the conversation may be perceived as disempowering, whilst also being 'bolstered' during transformative conversations. This suggests that the therapeutic alliance acts as a mediator to the dynamic nature of conversations aimed at facilitating perspective change. However, the study size was limited, and the findings may have been impacted by cultural differences

in relation to the UK. Despite this, the interactive mechanisms and therapeutic alliance is considered transferable across contexts and therefore of relevance to this review.

Supporting these findings, Olofsson et al. (2020) investigated the therapeutic change process within psychotherapy for eating disorders in Norway. Using a grounded theory approach, the researchers interviewed 11 participants with a self-reported history of childhood trauma. The researchers suggested that the change process was directly mediated by the patient-therapist dyad. More specifically, a detached or distrusting relationship between the client and therapist was linked to reduced opportunity for positive change. Interestingly, clients who described their therapist as providing emotional support whilst also trusting their own ability as a client to change, appeared to experience the most significant therapeutic effect. These findings indicate that greater psychological safety may be associated with feelings of being emotionally 'held' by the therapist, but also being given a sense of agency with regards to their own ability to change. The study appeared to have a high level of trustworthiness due to co-analysis of the data, as well as high levels of researcher reflexivity. However, the usefulness of the findings should be considered in light of the particular context which relates specifically to trauma, and may therefore not be as relevant for wider presenting problems.

Maxwell and Rees (2019) explored the resurgence in relationship-based participatory approaches within social work. The research used a mixed-methods design to explore therapeutic change experienced by parents, following Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) interventions. The research focused on qualitative findings emanating from semi-structured interviews with 13 parents, performed six months post-intervention. The researchers suggested that effective partnership working and capacity to change was reliant on the VIG practitioner developing and sustaining an emotionally attuned relationship with parents. However, the study participants were mainly female, with only three fathers involved in the research highlighting difficulty interpreting findings for both parents.

The quality of the practitioner-parent relationship was identified to be key to therapeutic change, overcoming the contextual barriers of power imbalance, client ambivalence and reduced perception of ability to change. These findings highlight that a therapeutic alliance can support psychological safety where there is a power difference, and also have a mediating

effect on low sense of responsibility and low agency. However, care should be taken when interpreting these results in respect of fathers.

Furthermore, Mc Kenny, et al. (2021) employed a large-scale survey of 312 systemically trained therapists in response to the changing working conditions for family therapists in the UK. The researchers looked to understand how COVID-19 was changing family therapy practice through a series of closed and open questions. The results indicated that participants felt that online therapy facilitated increased engagement by previously hard to reach clients such as with fathers and teenagers. The researchers attributed this to clients' increased feelings of safety, greater power balance and more client control when accessing therapy online from home. These findings offered a useful insight into the benefits of remote therapy. However, they would have been strengthened by triangulation with the client's voice. When considered together, this indicates that previously harder to reach groups may benefit from accessing support from home, however as this is an emerging area, more research will need to be conducted, particularly from the client's perspective.

Considering barriers arising from remote therapy, Mc Kenny et al. (2021) commented on the negative impact of online therapy with regards to managing conversation flow successfully, highlighting this as a barrier to facilitating the therapeutic relationship. These findings should be understood within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic where working remotely was an emerging, but necessary skill.

Facilitating engagement through promoting equality of voice was also explored by Bradford et al. (2016), who studied the process of therapy during a two-session manualised solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) based intervention. Using a phenomenological approach, the researchers sought to illuminate the commonalities identified from the interviews conducted with six couples, focusing on their experiences of the process of change. The researchers identified that facilitating equality of voice was a key factor in facilitating change, with clients reflecting that they felt safe and comfortable 'opening up' during the sessions, and that the therapist acted as a mediator to facilitate a safe environment for sharing perspectives.

Bradford et al. (2016) linked the therapist role of providing a safe therapeutic space and facilitating equality of voice with clients increased awareness of the wider context. They reflected that this appears to support clients to empathise with their partner's perspective, which then facilitates conversation. The increased openness and engagement then appeared to contribute to most couples experiencing positive internal and relational change, which they reflect can even occur after a limited number of sessions. The researchers argued that there is a link between couple motivation and the therapeutic relationship, which then leads to therapeutic change. Data was triangulated from both clients and therapists, which was also well supported by quotes and therefore increased the transparency of the analytical process. However, due to the small sample size and homogenous profile of participants, the findings should be held tentatively.

5.3.3 Understanding responsibility in the context of blame culture

Pickard (2014) offered an opinion-based article describing the meaning of responsibility within a clinical context which was compared to the meaning of blame. Although there may be variations in cultural understanding of the two concepts, Pickard (2014) explored sense of responsibility from an individual perspective, linking responsibility with an individual's sense of agency and free will. Maxwell and Rees (2019) expanded on this to consider the 'assumed' responsibility that is placed culturally on an individual relating to their characteristics or role, in this case the responsibility of mothers to engage more than fathers in parenting support. Therefore, it seems that responsibility can be felt by the individual and also 'given' by wider society or culture. Pickard (2014) reflected that often responsibility and blame are considered interchangeably, however this is deemed to be an unhelpful comparison as blame is often experienced alongside hostile emotions, judgements, and a negative view of a person's overall character. It can be linked to punitive, aggressive, or rejecting reactions from others, resulting in a fear of taking responsibility. This view was also supported by Parker and Davies (2020), who reinforced the focus that blame has on an individual's sense of self, their beliefs, motives, and desires, rather than just their behaviour.

Considering the findings from Pickard (2014) and Maxwell and Rees (2019), it is easy to understand why feeling blamed can be a distressing experience for an individual and an emotional state to be avoided to protect one's sense of self. Furthermore, Lachman and

Bernard (2006) offered a commentary exploring the effect of blame culture linked with child protection services and how this has negatively affected responsibility-taking. They reflected on the perceived failures that have resulted in the strengthening of child protection laws, which have filtered down to result in increased inspection and identification of individual fault through inquiries. Lachman and Bernard (2006) argued that the focus on apportioning blame to individual front line workers is further reinforced by media coverage, resulting in key workers experiencing significant fear of blame. Despite this, it is useful to note that the authors reflected that although the findings from inquiries may improve practice, outcomes for children had not improved. The researchers attributed this to workers developing defensive attitudes as a result of feeling scapegoated and blamed, therefore reducing openness to change. The findings from Lachman and Bernard (2006) offer insight into an underlying mechanism that may still be relevant in the current context due to the continued focus on outcomes measures.

The link between a culture of blame and defensive practice is also evident within the medical profession. Defensive medicine was described by Catino (2009) as practice which is significantly impacted by the avoidance of triggers which may lead to malpractice suits, rather than being patient centred. Catino (2009) argued that the threat of litigation has been a significant obstacle to improving healthcare organisations and patient safety, further suggesting a link between a culture of blame and a negative impact on the client. Furthermore, a number of researchers argued that there needs to be a clear distinction between blame and responsibility, so that learning and openness can be promoted above fear and defensiveness, therefore facilitating change (Catino, 2009; Gorini et al., 2012; Lachman & Bernard, 2006). Furthermore, within the context of the UK education system Chatelier and Rudolph (2018) argued that the political move to 'professionalise' teaching has been a mechanism for attaching the responsibility for educational success or failure to the individual teacher. They argued that this has caused a shift towards teachers needing to 'prove' their expertise which is driven by a sense of mistrust and fear of blame, resulting in a shift away from the needs of the student.

Interestingly, in their opinion piece about stories of self-harm within a family therapy context, Amoss et al. (2016) took a more nuanced approach to exploring blame through their

exploration of vignettes. Whilst acknowledging that being blamed can be a barrier to change, they argued that the presence of feeling blamed can be a useful sign that something is wrong, therefore facilitating a step towards change if offered the right support. From this perspective, the authors suggested that the meaning of blame should be understood rather than blame being immediately diffused. This may give a greater insight into the emotions both shaped by the blame culture and any effect they have on further embedding the blame narrative. However, research is within the context of family therapy, where it is likely the client is experiencing a high level of psychological safety offered by the therapist in which to explore blame safely and in more depth. This should be kept in mind when considering the usefulness of the findings.

The findings by Amoss et al. (2016) would have been strengthened by the discussion of real case studies so that the reader could critique the method of analysis and interpretation more thoroughly. Despite this, the paper offers a useful insight into interactions which may be evident within EPC meetings and could benefit from further research. Moreover, Maxwell and Rees' (2019) study into the use of VIG raises important differences in relation to managing blame and understanding context. The dual role of social workers both as experts and non-experts is similar to that of the EP in regard to the dichotomy of statutory and consultation work. Maxwell and Rees (2019) reflected on the difficulties of managing both roles due to families being reluctant to be open and honest during the VIG intervention for fear of reprisals as a result of the child protection powers held by social workers.

5.3.4 Managing the 'blame versus responsibility' dynamic

Research exploring how to support openness through reducing blame and increasing sense of responsibility primarily centres around a therapeutic context. Pickard (2014) commented about the importance of offering respect, concern, and compassion, particularly with emotionally vulnerable clients within therapy. This is to reduce a heightened risk of disengagement, whilst avoiding the trap of suggesting that they 'couldn't help it' and therefore implying that they have no control to change. Pickard (2014) further argued that it is important to hold an individual accountable and responsible to facilitate a sense of agency, separating blame from responsibility. By facilitating a sense of contextualisation, the therapist can support the building of sympathy towards negative past experiences that may have

contributed to the situation, whilst still acknowledging a sense of responsibility for the choices which contributed to the problem. This, the researcher reflects, can provide an 'antidote' to blame, whilst keeping agency intact, facilitating greater openness and opportunity for change. The article is centred around adult clients experiencing significant mental health and behavioural difficulties, which should be kept in mind when considering the findings in relevance to EPC meetings.

A number of studies also support the link between a widening of perspectives, the reduction of blame and an increasing sense of responsibility (Bradford et al., 2016; Burgess-Manning, 2021; Doerries & Foster, 2005, Vaughn, 2004). Taking this one step further, Vaughn (2004) developed the concept of 'manoeuvring room' as a result of a mixed-methods analysis into how family therapists influence clients to view problems differently. Using grounded theory and task analysis to analyse sections from 18 recorded therapy sessions based in the USA, the researcher highlighted several different positions the therapist was able to take to introduce new perspectives. Underpinning this was an attempt to acknowledge the validity of each member through using a combination of expert and non-expert language depending on the dynamic, in an attempt to 'stretch' the client's conceptualisation of the problem and introduce a sense of responsibility.

Vaughn (2004) cited the creation of manoeuvring room as a common factor facilitating change during family therapy. By strategically using language to introduce doubt into clients rigid thought patterns, a different, yet plausible explanation may be accepted. Where alternative perspectives are not deemed to be plausible, change did not occur. Therefore, Vaughn (2004) argued that 'reality' needs to be mutually agreed by all parties through the sharing, interpretation, and acquisition of multiple perspectives for responsibility to increase and change to occur. Although the study was conducted in 2004, the findings are deemed to be relevant to the current context as relational change is unlikely to change significantly by time or context. The findings were well supported by quotes from the data, increasing the transparency of the analysis. However, it should be noted that the data was chosen from examples of best practice where clients acknowledged a different perspective of their problem. It would have been interesting to explore whether the outcomes changed in relation to a broader range of practice examples.

In addition to widening perspectives to facilitate change, Amoss et al. (2016) also talked about the impact of applying attribution theory to an interactional context. By shifting attribution in one domain towards unintentional action, they argued that this is likely to have a positive effect on linear perceptions of blame in other contexts, suggesting that casting doubt can challenge narratives and act as a facilitator to increased openness. However, Patrika and Tseliou (2016) argued that the pursuit of joint responsibility-taking can, at times, result in individuals feeling blamed by the therapist in their attempt to practice neutrality. Using discursive analysis of nine videotaped family therapy sessions, the researchers suggested that family therapists attempt at neutrality and reframing can result in client defensiveness and a possible sense of loss of control. They add that this can result in family members attempting to blame the problem-holder and maintain the status quo. Patrika and Tseliou (2016) highlighted the importance of ensuring participants do not notice attempts by the therapist to equalise responsibility, so that this does not trigger an attempt to reinforce patterns of blame and inadvertently reduce sense of responsibility.

5.3.5 Understanding agency in the context of bureaucratic systems

Agency is described by Williams and Levitt (2007) as an 'ability' to choose to act or think differently. It is conceptualised as an introspective sense or feeling that cannot be assigned to a person, unlike responsibility. When thinking about the context of perspective change, bureaucracy has been identified as a key mechanism which links with accountability to reduce sense of agency. Kardas (2019) reflected on a 'bureaucracy framework' within education systems which reduce autonomy and necessitate the adherence of assigned duties, formal expectations, obedience, supervision, conformity, and impersonality. The focus on hierarchical structures, compliance and rewards or punishments is argued by Kardas (2019) to link directly to a lower sense of agency. They suggest that this is due to being part of a rigid bureaucratic system which is both inflexible and resistant to alternative ways of thinking. Kardas (2019) argued that educators have moved to a position of accountability for measurable outputs such as attending and delivering a lesson, which appeared to reduce their sense of agency to prioritise less quantifiable outcomes. Although centred around the education system in Turkey, the researcher's views are likely to be relevant to many education systems around the world including the UK where there is a focus on promoting academic achievement through ineffective incentive mechanisms (Kardas, 2019).

The inverse relationship between bureaucracy and autonomy is reinforced by Kardas (2019) who theorised that by its very nature, bureaucracy favours control and centralisation. This argument is supported by Smith and Larimer (2004), who argued that the outcomes of bureaucracy fuel loss of agency, reflecting that within the education system one particular bureaucratic goal is to keep up attendance rates at school for marginalised children. However, without changing how performance is measured, overall school attainment rates are likely to be reduced, which then further reinforces a sense of failure and loss of agency felt by school staff. Although Smith and Larimer (2004) based their paper within the USA, their findings have been mirrored by a number of researchers (Maxwell & Rees, 2019; Murphy, 2009; Riddell & Weedon, 2010).

Exploring the impact of bureaucracy from a practical perspective, Maxwell and Rees (2019) discussed the effect of bureaucracy on social work practice, linking the managerialist approach with a focus on inputting data and recording information, rather than being responsive to the needs of clients. The authors referenced Munro (2011, p.95) who insightfully commented that there needs to be a resurgence of “doing the right thing” for children and families as opposed to the bureaucratic mechanism of “doing things right”. This further suggests that embedded bureaucratic systems can act as a barrier to client-centred practice by reducing practitioner sense of agency at being able to prioritise relationship-based approaches, therefore impacting the opportunity for change.

5.3.6 Clients as active agents in change

Delsignore et al. (2008) explored clients perceived level of control in regard to therapy outcomes during a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) intervention. Forty-nine participants were recruited to take part in 10 group-based CBT sessions for social anxiety, over a three-month period. Assessment measures for social anxiety, self-efficacy, depressive mood, and global symptom severity were taken before the intervention, post-intervention and after a three-month follow up. The researchers concluded that participants who scored ‘low’ in expectation of the therapist’s ability to help, predicted an improvement in all outcome measures at follow up. In addition, they suggested that client’s low expectations towards the therapist predicted their active engagement in therapy. This evidence suggests that client’s sense of agency is linked to their motivation to engage actively in the therapeutic process,

which therefore increases opportunity for change. The study focused on a homogenous sample of participants and was specific to CBT, therefore the findings offer insight into the importance of agency in facilitating change, but cannot be directly comparable to other modes of therapy or support. However, similar links between agency and increased opportunity for change have been found by a number of researchers across a number of disciplines (Olofsson, et al. 2020; Warren et al., 2011).

Warren, et al. (2011) explored parenting self-efficacy as a predictor of child psychotherapy outcomes in a community mental health setting in the USA. Two-hundred and seventy-one families took part in the study involving completion of a self-report measure on perceived parenting ability, a youth outcome questionnaire completed by the parents, as well as a therapy checklist completed by the therapists. All three measures were completed before, during and after the six-month therapy. The researchers found that parental autonomy was the best predictor of change over time. However, due to the quantitative nature of the study, the findings were unable to offer rich detail which may have offered insight into whether it was likely to be the therapy, the passage of time, or other factors which contributed to the change. Despite this, overall, the evidence indicates that agency is likely to be a key factor facilitating perspective change.

Williams and Levitt (2007) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the process of increasing agency during psychotherapy. Due to an acknowledged gap in research, the researchers conducted 14 semi-structured interviews which were analysed using grounded theory. The study suggests that agency was best supported by therapists reacting 'in the moment' to signs relating to the client's internal processes as they unfolded during the interaction. By being attuned to the openness of the client minute by minute, Williams and Levitt (2007) suggested that a scaffolding approach offering more or less direction within the session can help to build client agency without overwhelming them at times when their ability to be reflective appears lower.

When thinking about specific techniques, Williams and Levitt (2007) considered that by identifying and reflecting on internal and external constraints to client agency, not only could they develop a greater understanding of the wider context, but they offer an opportunity for

the client to increase their awareness of both the factors they can change, whilst reducing self-blame for those that are beyond their immediate control. The researchers argued that this approach offers a strategy for supporting clients to move beyond stagnation and continue to make progress. This is likely to increase their sense of agency, despite acknowledging factors that cannot be changed. The findings appeared to have a high level of rigour, in part, due to the analysis being conducted by two researchers which was then reviewed by the participants for feedback, therefore increasing confidence in the findings. However, of the 14 participants, three were close colleagues of the researcher which may have affected the results. Despite this, the findings offer useful insight into the interactive process of increasing agency, which is likely to be applicable across the helping professions.

Offering further thoughts on how to facilitate sense of agency, Blundo et al. (2014) wrote an opinion article about the importance of hope as a catalyst for change. Blundo et al. (2014) explored the use of SFBT based techniques to support clients to identify their best hopes for the future, what matters to them and what desired outcomes would look like to the client. They argued that a belief the situation can change is a direct consequence of hope, and it is this, which increases sense of agency. Blundo et al. (2014) firmly centres this process in a therapeutic environment of care and respect, suggesting a link with the therapeutic relationship is key for facilitating hope. This is supported by Pickard (2014) and Olofsson et al. (2020), who further suggest that a key part of the therapeutic environment is the therapist's own belief that the client has the power to change, and without this change is unlikely not occur.

5.4 Conclusions of the secondary literature review

This chapter sought to explore literature relevant to the developing grounded theory. In summary, each of the six questions posed at the beginning of this chapter will be explored next, followed by an overall conclusion about the breadth of the existing research.

When considering what is already known about the impact of feeling undervalued on psychological safety, the evidence falls primarily beyond the field of educational psychology and towards the nursing and social work professions. The findings suggest that there may be a wider socio-political mechanism of undervaluing female-orientated roles, relying on morals

as the main motivator rather than adequate remuneration and support. Furthermore, there appeared to be a link between professionals becoming emotionally distanced as a defensive mechanism resulting from feeling under-supported by the system, indicating a link between professional psychological safety and the support offered to clients.

More recently there have been studies from the field of family therapy which identified the impact of underfunding and under-supporting disadvantaged groups with regards to accessing remote therapy sessions. The wider systemic issue of poverty-related exclusion identified in these studies is likely to be mirrored across a wide range of helping professions including educational psychology practice. Evidence for supporting clients to engage in perspective change through providing a therapeutic space was found primarily from relational psychotherapy and social work research, possibly due to the focus on understanding group processes and a shift in thinking. There was a consensus across relevant studies that dimensions of relational change include balancing power-differentials, building trust, providing emotional support, and being emotionally attuned with clients, all of which support factors linked with client psychological safety.

Furthermore, therapists' belief in the client's ability to change was also linked to perspective change. Literature examining responsibility in the context of blame culture highlights a focus on individual accountability within the social work and health professions. Literature highlights the cultural interchangeability of responsibility and blame, and how this can be an unhelpful comparison due to a fear of repercussions and resulting avoidance of responsibility-taking. The socio-political shift towards outcomes-based practice has been found to increase accountability to frontline workers and therefore raise defensive-practice to avoid negative repercussions such as personal attribution of fault, litigation suits and job loss. Research shows that this has a negative impact on client's experience. Although there appears to be a clear link between a culture of blame and reduced responsibility-taking, its presence can offer insight into the wider socio-political process and be a mechanism for change.

Evidence considering the link between managing the blame versus responsibility dynamic suggests that client openness can be supported through acknowledging and sympathising with negative past experiences which may have contributed to feelings of being blamed.

However, it is important to keep intact client sense of agency so that change can be facilitated. These findings were derived from psychotherapy research but appear to be relevant to a range of relational contexts where change is prioritised. Furthermore, through a variety of questioning techniques, therapists can cast doubt on current narratives and 'stretch' the clients understanding of the problem and facilitate responsibility-taking.

When looking at evidence linking sense of agency with the impact of bureaucratic systems there appears to be limited research within educational psychology. However, broadening this out to the wider education profession offers evidence that bureaucratic processes have a direct impact on a professional's sense of agency due to the inflexibility and rigidity of the system. The focus on measuring quantitative outcomes such as attendance appears to further fuel a loss of agency, particularly when supporting marginalised children. Furthermore, within the field of social work the focus appears to have shifted to "doing things right", rather than "doing the right thing" (Munro, 2011. P. 95).

Research highlights the link between increased sense of agency and increased opportunity for perspective change, underpinned by greater motivation to actively engage in the change process. Furthermore, research indicates that therapists can support this by remaining attuned to the client's needs with regards to the level of support needed, as well as facilitating autonomy where possible.

Overall, this secondary literature review has found evidence supporting the categories identified in the findings chapter. However, the research appears to emanate from a range of differing professions, with limited research in educational psychology. In the next chapter the content of both the preliminary and secondary literature reviews will be discussed in light of the data findings.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Chapter overview

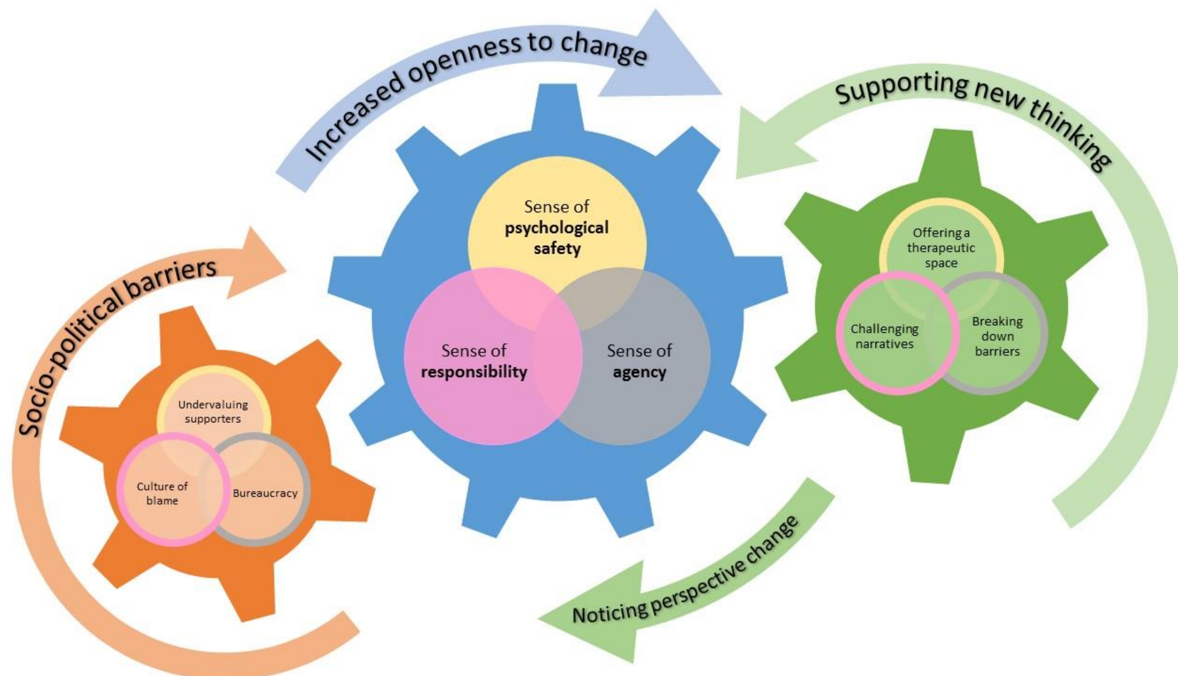
This Chapter identifies links between the existing literature and my findings in relation to my research question as identified in Chapter 1:

- How does perspective change happen during educational psychology consultation meetings?

Through my analysis I identified a number of themes relating to the research question. These will be explored in more detail in the following sections in relation to the existing literature. In the most part, literature was found from the wider context of therapy, social work, medicine, and other helping professions due to the limited relevant research within the field of educational psychology. Following this, I will discuss my concluding thoughts around reflecting on the process of perspective change during consultation meetings as both a mechanism of evaluating best practice, as well as recognising the impact and value in relation to EP involvement. Finally, I will comment on the strengths and limitations of this research as well as my own personal reflections.

Due to the grounded theory methodology employed in this study, I consider that the Findings Chapter answered the research question comprehensively, supported by the development of a theoretical model which visually depicted the process of perspective change in EPC meetings. I will now move beyond description and discussion of the findings to explore links with literature discussed in both the preliminary and secondary literature reviews.

6.1.2 Revisiting the grounded theory model



In revision of the grounded theory model as discussed at the end of Chapter 4, Figure 4.14 visually depicts the core category which was identified from the findings as consultee openness and is central to the process of perspective change. The findings indicate that consultee openness to change is underpinned by three consultee factors: sense of psychological safety, sense of responsibility and sense of agency, with higher openness related to an increased likelihood of perspective change occurring. In turn, the openness factors are negatively influenced by wider socio-political barriers and positively impacted by the skills and techniques employed by EPs to support new thinking. Relationships were found between each openness factor and their corresponding mechanisms as denoted by the colour categorisation; however, as EPC is an example of a complex open system, the links explored within the grounded theory model and discussed in this chapter should be held tentatively and considered to be overlapping and interconnecting as depicted in the model.

The three openness factors and their related themes will now be explored in light of the literature findings.

6.2 The role of psychological safety in perspective change

Consultee sense of psychological safety was identified as a key theme affecting consultee openness and is therefore an important consideration with regards to the process of perspective change. To fully understand and support consultee psychological safety to facilitate openness, EPs appear to seek to understand the impact of wider social-political mechanisms on consultee sense of psychological safety; they also recognise cues which indicate how psychologically safe the consultee(s) may be feeling during the meeting and seek to build this through employing a number of techniques and skills. Each of these influencing mechanisms linked to psychological safety will be explored next.

6.2.1 Recognising consultee sense of psychological safety

To identify how best to support consultees to engage in perspective change, gaining a clear understanding of consultee sense of psychological safety and the areas to develop appears to be significant.

The findings indicate that EP participants consider consultee openness to engage in curious thinking and collaborative working as being impacted by how supported they feel with regards to their agenda. Where consultees felt that there were conflicting agendas, EPs suggest that they sensed consultees needing to 'fight' for the outcome they were pursuing, therefore reducing psychological flexibility and openness to collaboration. EP participants recognised signs that indicated consultees felt they need to fight for support, including being 'very quiet' at the beginning of the EPC meeting, with very little verbal or non-verbal interaction between consultees. Interestingly, the EP felt positioned as the professional 'holding' the meeting. Consultees may also rely on pieces of paper as 'evidence' to refer to which support their agenda. This suggests a level of apprehension and tension in the room which acts as a barrier to psychological safety and openness to change. This is supported by Olofsson et al. (2020), who suggested that a distrusting relationship is linked to reduced openness to change. Although this research centred around a therapeutic context, feeling a sense of divisiveness and distrust is likely to impact consultee sense of psychological safety through a similar mechanism within EPC meetings.

These findings indicate that EP participants believe that consultees who actively engage with each other through eye contact, body language and conversation show greater levels of attunement and lower levels of defensiveness or aggression. Increased psychological safety may also be indicated through signs such as relaxed shoulders and increased openness to collaboration.

Another factor discussed within the Findings Chapter was EP participants perception of the impact power balance may have on consultee openness to change, particularly in relation to psychological safety. EP participants talked about the location of the consultation meeting and how this impacts the distribution of power, for example where meetings are held on school premises. This may be particularly evident where parents hold negative perceptions of their school experiences in the past, therefore shifting power away from the parent and reducing their sense of psychological safety.

Power balance was also believed to be affected by the positioning of consultees within the room, for example sat opposite each other with a desk in between to denote opposition, or conversely without a desk and next to each other to facilitate collaboration. Furthermore, existing relational dynamics between consultees may disempower individuals through a sense of fear or under-confidence, reducing their opportunity to engage fully in the consultation. Conversely, an equal division of power was considered by EP participants to be evident by noticing 'respectful listening' between consultees despite the presence of differing opinions. This increased openness to other consultee's perspectives appears to facilitate the opportunity for perspective change to occur through the acquisition of new information.

Furthermore, consultee capacity to manage emotions was also highlighted by EP participants as linking to consultee psychological safety. EP participants experienced consultees appearing to feel emotionally 'ready' to engage in the consultation process. When the consultee did not feel emotionally ready, EP participants noticed the consultees seemed unable to 'hear', 'listen' or 'think', suggesting they were experiencing a lower sense of psychological safety. Furthermore, a decline in consultee openness then appears to affect opportunity to engage in perspective change.

This research suggests that consultee capacity to manage emotions can be affected by a range of internal and external triggers. Specifically, EP participants identified the impact of health anxiety resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic as particularly significant, linking higher emotional stress with lower tolerance to being open-minded to other perspectives. Although this is specific to health anxiety, the mechanism of reduced openness is likely to be directly relatable beyond health to other forms of stress and anxiety.

6.2.2 Understanding the impact of feeling undervalued and under-supported

To support EP practice to improve consultee psychological safety it is important for wider socio-political mechanisms to be understood. The experiences of EP participants suggest that consultees may frequently feel undervalued and under-supported by the wider system. Through employing a critical realist paradigm, a number of generative mechanisms have been identified which will now be discussed in light of the literature.

Consultee sense of feeling undervalued is broadly consistent with literature exploring feelings of being undervalued in other caring professions such as nursing. For example, Goodman (2015) discussed how nurses and care staff felt a sense of being undervalued due to a perception of low pay and increasing expectations. This was based on the identification of a wider socio-political culture that assumed workers should be intrinsically motivated by their morals, rather than being motivated by improving working conditions and pay. This mechanism appeared to be mirrored within my findings, with particular emphasis on the expectations placed on school staff to go ‘above and beyond’ to facilitate inclusive practice, motivated by their ‘good nature’ rather than being extrinsically rewarded for doing so. Goodman (2015) noted the gender bias of female occupations in relation to increased expectations of being motivated by ‘moral work’; my findings indicate that gender bias may also be a contributary factor towards consultee sense of being undervalued, due to the imbalance of females in SENCO and teacher roles (DfE, 2021).

Furthermore, these findings highlighted the juxtaposition between consultee anxiety around job security in contrast with the high level of accountability placed on them during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a sense from EP participants that schools felt that they were told to take on high levels of risk to continue their important role of delivering education, yet their

own personal health and wellbeing was not supported, affecting their sense of psychological safety and openness to change. Maxwell and Rees (2019) discussed the impact for social workers who felt undervalued, overworked, and unsupported becoming unintentionally emotionally distanced from the families they support. This suggests that a sense of feeling undervalued can have a significant impact on the success of 'helping' professions in particular, due to the reliance on building emotional connectivity which may be stifled by lower psychological safety. This study supports the literature, but adds a level of complexity centred around high accountability underpinned by low support which may negatively impact consultee sense of psychological safety.

When considering parent consultee's sense of feeling under-supported by the system, the current findings highlight the sense of rejection and mistrust that may be experienced by parents and their children by the time they can access educational psychology support via consultation. The lack of EP availability and support at an early stage was a key factor raised by EP participants which may negatively impact parental psychological safety and reduce their openness to change. The literature search did not find any research looking specifically at the effect of delayed intervention and support on sense of psychological safety within educational psychology. However, Burgess-Manning (2021), explored the impact of structural barriers on disadvantaged groups, such as access to technology and data packages when accessing Family Therapy online, finding that a lack of funding and resources was linked to a sense of discrimination and feeling under-supported. Although this current research is not directly comparable in context, the mechanism of feeling under supported to access therapy appears to link with the findings of a sense of rejection, impacting psychological safety.

The findings from this study regarding the impact of consultees feeling undervalued and under-supported offers an educational psychology perspective on existing research considered from wider helping professions. This is an area which, to the best of my knowledge has not yet been explored within an educational psychology context but appears to have a direct implication on consultee openness to change.

6.2.3 Supporting openness by offering a therapeutic space

Through an understanding of the impact of feeling undervalued and a recognition of consultee sense of psychological safety, consultee openness is facilitated during consultation meetings by a mechanism of EP support centred around providing a therapeutic space primarily to support psychological safety through effective rapport building, setting expectations, empowering consultees and exploring and validating perspectives, each of these techniques and skills will now be explored in line with literature.

6.2.3.1 Building rapport with consultees

The findings from this study highlight that rapport building is considered by EP participants to be a fundamental building block of effective consultation meetings when considering openness to change. There was a sense of prioritisation and urgency in using time effectively to build rapport, and without this, the opportunity for perspective change to be supported was perceived to be negatively affected. Rapport building was described as a technique which needed planning both in regard to facilitating opportunities, as well as identifying discourse which would be a both a 'shared experience', as well as a neutral subject to use.

Rapport building as a skill or technique used within EPC meetings was approached more broadly within a number of studies looking at EP practice, primarily when describing active listening and problem-exploration (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). I was unable to find research within educational psychology which looked specifically into the process of building rapport, however Henderson (2013) explored the outcomes of effective rapport building; suggesting that SENCOs perceived the relationship between the EP and the school as key to the success of consultation. The interpretation of what is deemed a 'success' is a key consideration as the researcher highlighted that improved relationship quality was not related to improved measurable outcomes for children.

Similarly, when looking more broadly into literature from the wider helping professions to understand the effect of rapport building on openness to change, it is evident that rapport building is implicit within the area of the therapeutic alliance, rather than specifically discussed. For example, Maxwell and Rees (2019) suggested that relationship-based participatory approaches within social work was linked to increased client openness through

a mechanism of emotional attunement, however the mechanism by which this occurred in relation to rapport building was not explored. Therefore, the findings from this study concur with literature both within educational psychology, and more broadly within the helping professions to suggest that rapport building is valuable in facilitating a therapeutic space. Furthermore, insight into the practicalities of planning and facilitation to ensure the opportunity to build rapport is maximised, particularly within the context of limited time as often experienced within the consultation process.

6.2.3.2 Setting expectations to reduce frustration

Setting expectations between the EP and consultees at the beginning of the consultation meeting was highlighted by EP participants to be an important factor to help consultees feel safe enough to engage in the consultation process. Setting expectations around gaining a shared understanding of the EP role was believed to avoid feelings of frustration during the consultation and to also support increased openness beyond consultees initial agenda. In addition, setting expectations also extended to more practical elements such as schedule and timings, what will be covered, and the process moving forward. This suggests that addressing these elements may help to reduce consultee anxiety, which can directly improve sense of psychological safety.

Within the field of educational psychology, to the best of my knowledge I could not identify any studies which explicitly looked at the process of setting expectations during consultation meetings. However, the wider context of differing expectations, particularly with regards to the EP role did correlate with the findings from this study. For example, Hayes and Stringer (2016) suggested that the role of the EP was seen as 'the expert' by teachers, which made the collaborative approach of consultation significantly more difficult to facilitate. The researchers commented that this conflict in agenda resulted in teachers appearing to attribute less value to the consultation process, findings also supported by O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018). When looking more widely at research from other helping professions, there still appears to be limited research looking specifically at the impact of misaligned expectations and perspective change. However, it is useful to consider Olofsson et al. (2020), who suggested that the change process is directly mediated by the extent to which a patient-

therapist dyad experiences a trusting relationship, suggesting that an explicit discussion about expectations and agenda can improve trust.

The findings from the current study support literature within educational psychology and more broadly within helping professions that a difference of expectations can lead to negative feelings of frustration and mistrust and therefore reducing psychological safety. Beyond this, this research has highlighted the process of explicitly setting expectations at the beginning of consultation meetings as an important facilitator in aligning agendas and facilitating psychological safety.

6.2.3.3 Empowering all consultees to have a voice

Empowering consultees is a key mechanism by which EPs facilitated a therapeutic space within EPC meetings. This is supported widely within therapeutic literature, including O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018), who identified that consultees who were open to collaborative problem-solving reported feeling more empowered. EP participants believed that attempting to equalise the power dynamics by being an advocate for those with 'less voice' could be facilitated effectively through 'stopping the stream of dominant conversation', acknowledging and valuing spoken views and explicitly inviting other consultees to share their opinion. Furthermore, EP participants offered insight around a level of pragmatism within their practice, which offers flexibility to shift to an 'expert' role when gentle facilitation is not perceived as effective at facilitating change. Furthermore, EP participants use legislation as a form of concrete evidence to gain and hold power when needed, then shifting it between consultees to balance power.

This shift in epistemological approach from the collaborator to the expert was supported by Lewis and Miller (2011) who used discourse analysis to understand interactional patterns between EPs and parents during EPC meetings. They indicated that EPs showed similar patterns to those identified in other institutional settings where the power differential would be seen as more imbalanced, such as the police service or healthcare. These findings were based on a case study design so cannot be construed as reflective of how all EPs practice, but did highlight the rhetorical devices used by the EP and parent to gain or shift control. This aligns with EP participants who believe that they act as mediators of power and advocate for

equality during consultation meetings. Although many EPs align their practice with a social constructionist lens, their epistemological beliefs are often grounded in pragmatism with 'whatever works'. Interestingly, Balestra (2017) offered findings from a family therapy context, suggesting that an established therapeutic alliance acts as a buffer to protect the client-therapist relationship when the conversation may be perceived as disempowering. This suggests that EPs use of the expert role to challenge and equalise power may be more successful where there is already an established relationship between themselves and the consultees, possibly through a mechanism of greater psychological safety and openness.

The findings from this study also highlight a further mechanism by which power dynamics may shift within the consultation. Remote working has become more established as a result of COVID-19 restrictions which has brought to the fore particular barriers around visual and auditory communication which EP participants believe affect conversational flow, affecting their ability to manage power imbalance. However, at times, EP participants can sense a shift in confidence from parent consultees due feeling an increased sense of psychological safety being based at home rather than in a school context during EPC meetings. This was viewed as a way to help reduce inequality of power between consultees when needed.

Power dynamics within remote EPC meetings does not yet appear to have been explored, however, a number of articles have been published which supports the opportunity for remote meetings to balance power from a therapeutic perspective. For example, Mc Kenny et al. (2021) found that remote therapy sessions facilitated engagement from previously hard to reach groups such as fathers and teenagers. In support of the findings from this study, the researchers attributed this to greater power balance, more client control and increased sense of safety. In similarity to findings from this study, managing conversational flow when working remotely was raised as a significant difficulty within the findings of this study.

The findings from this study were supported by relevant literature which, when considered together, suggests that empowering consultees is a key factor linked to offering a therapeutic space and increasing psychological safety. However, it appears that at times, EPs shift to an expert role to gain power and redirect it to other consultees in line with professional ethics and legislation when needed. This shift is most likely to have minimal negative impact to

consultee openness when there is already an established relationship to act as a buffer. Furthermore, EPs now have the opportunity to facilitate equality of power balance through the use of remote consultation to empower families when needed. However, new skills and access to better technology needs to be developed to overcome barriers relating to conversational flow and managing power relations.

6.2.3.4 Exploring and validating perspectives

I identified that exploring and validating consultee perspectives was highlighted as a key mechanism which supports openness to change through the development of a therapeutic space. Giving consultees time to engage in problem talk in a safe space was found to reduce heightened emotions and if met with respectful empathy, build working relationships, and increase openness to alternative perspectives.

To facilitate consultees feeling validated, it was identified that EP participants would use a number of strategies such as making sure each consultee felt the EP 'was on their side'. This attempt at neutrality was seen as an important role of the EP. To support this, I found that EP participants said that they engaged in active listening, mirroring the consultees use of language when appropriate, reflecting back and summarising what the consultee had said. The importance of the use of these generic counselling skills within educational psychology has been well established (Nolan & Moreland, 2014; Ryan, 2018). Furthermore, supporting these findings in relation to the impact of validating perspectives on perspective change, Bradford et al. (2016) argued that client's increased awareness of the wider context was related to increased empathy, increased openness and engagement, followed by relational change. In combination with the current findings, this suggests that validating perspectives acts as a mechanism increase consultee sense of psychological safety facilitating increased empathy and openness.

Furthermore, the finding highlighted in this study indicate that there is the opportunity within EPC meetings for EPs to seek a greater insight into consultee perspectives, with the aim of finding out what may be happening 'under the surface'. This offers consultees an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the context underpinning the problem situation, identifying what may be 'projected around' and begin to see the problem situation from a

different perspective. This approach is supported by Claridge (2005), who identified a five-stage process to consultation meetings, with the first two stages including perspective-finding, using a broad range of approaches including psychodynamic and systemic techniques. Furthermore, Claridge (2005) argued that without gaining insight into the consultees' personal constructs at the outset, the meaning or relevance of their perspective change will be lost. This strengthens the importance of recognising perspective change as an outcome of the consultation approach.

However, 'going deeper' as an approach to gaining insight into the consultees' personal constructs was considered by EP participants only when deemed appropriate and safe to do so, due to the increased perception of psychological risk attributed to the consultee. EP participants believed this was particularly important where they were working remotely or were less likely to be 'held' by the school following the meeting. There does not appear to be any research within educational psychology specifically exploring psychological risk during consultation meetings, however when looking more broadly within a therapeutic context Olofsson et al. (2020), identified that therapeutic change during psychotherapy was supported by greater psychological safety and that in turn, was facilitated when consultees felt 'held' by the psychotherapist, suggesting that a similar mechanism may be seen within EPC. In combination, this implies that there is an opportunity for EP consultants to engage in therapeutic practice with a view to supporting perspective change. However, this decision is based both on the individual approach of the EP as well as considerations of ethical practice and psychological risk to the consultee.

6.3 Shifting to a sense of responsibility to facilitate perspective change

The current findings highlight that consultee sense of responsibility is a further key theme affecting openness, and is therefore another key consideration with regards to the process of perspective change. EP participants identified that understanding the impact of wider social-political mechanisms on consultee sense of responsibility is key, furthermore they also recognise cues which indicate the extent to which the consultee(s) may be taking a level of responsibility for the problem situation and then seek to strengthen this through employing a number of techniques and skills. Each of these three features of the perspective change process linked to consultee sense of responsibility will be explored next. The sections should

not be perceived purely as distinct categories as they will overlap and are likely to occur simultaneously. In addition, it should be considered that although the influencing mechanisms described below indicate a key relationship with consultee sense of responsibility, as part of an open system, they are likely to have an effect to varying degrees both on consultee sense of psychological safety as well as consultee sense of agency.

6.3.1 Recognising sense of responsibility

Consultee sense of responsibility was identified as a core factor affecting openness to change. Linked to sense of responsibility are three overarching and interconnecting factors, attribution of causality, perceptions of inclusion and purpose of evidence.

I identified that consultee attribution of causality appears to be related to their sense of responsibility. EP participants reflected on consultee attribution of causality (e.g., directing blame outwards towards others) which they believed acted as a function to prevent the consultee taking responsibility and therefore maintaining the problem situation. This often appeared to result in the child being 'forgotten' in the process due to reduced openness to change.

Consultee perception of inclusion also appeared to be related to their sense of responsibility, with more fixed, within-child views of inclusion resulting in lack of flexibility regarding understanding social barriers and changes to adapt to the needs of the child. Fixed views of inclusion both from an individual perspective or more broadly within the school culture, was believed by EP participants to impact consultee openness to take responsibility for the problem-situation. Furthermore, where school or home deemed the other to be the 'cause' of the problem behaviour, EP participants felt that consultee responsibility for engaging in inclusive practice may be affected, due to not feeling 'responsible' for the child's needs. Conversely, where consultees appear interested in 'why' the problem was occurring and 'where it is coming from', this indicates an openness to accepting some responsibility which is more likely to lead to perspective change.

The current findings suggest that the purpose and value which is assigned to the consultation process by consultees is related to their perception of responsibility for the problem situation.

Where the consultation outcomes were viewed as evidence towards a statutory assessment application or to access other funding or support, EP participants believe this to be linked to reduced openness to change through the pursuit of evidence rather than an improvement in the situation. In addition, where EP participants notice that a consultee seems to 'have things to prove' this indicated reduced openness to change.

Furthermore, where consultees dismiss evidence which does not align with their beliefs, EP participants believe that this may be linked to uncomfortable feelings around the uncertainty the new information brings and the questions it may raise around attribution and responsibility. Conversely, consultees who actively seek new evidence, or are interested in the EPs reflections are felt to have a higher sense of responsibility as they appear more open to integrating new learning which may shift their views.

6.3.2 Understanding the influencing mechanism of a culture of blame

To aid understanding and EP support to improve consultee sense of responsibility I identified that it is important for the wider socio-political mechanisms linked to consultee sense of responsibility to be understood. I also identified that consultees may be affected by a culture of blame driven by the wider system which negatively impacts their openness to take responsibility within the context of the problem situation. This will now be explored in light of the literature.

A further key theme which was incorporated into the current findings suggests that consultees are negatively impacted by a wider socio-political mechanism seeking to blaming individuals. This corresponds with research within professions where blame and attribution has been studied more broadly. For example, Lachman and Bernard (2006) spoke about the effect of blame culture in child protection services and how it has negatively impacted responsibility-taking. They commented on the focus of apportioning blame to individuals through inquiries, and how this sense of blaming frontline workers is further reinforced through media coverage, resulting in an avoidance of responsibility-taking and increased defensiveness. This mechanism corresponds to these findings which illuminates a socio-political mechanism of blaming within education which is underpinned by individual accountability for pupils reaching expected levels of attendance and performance. This

research has also identified fear and defensiveness as a key mechanism impacting outcomes for children, however my research highlighted this within the context of openness to perspective change within EPC meetings.

Maxwell and Rees (2019) offered a cultural view of blame through exploring the implicit societal expectations placed on certain groups, for example suggesting that mothers may experience a higher sense of blame due to their assumed responsibility for child-rearing. This was an interesting consideration which was not explicitly highlighted within these findings, but adds a richness to the experience of blame by different groups of consultees depending on cultural bias. Therefore, cultural assumptions of responsibility may further reinforce feelings of blame for consultees, which may not be made explicit, but nonetheless, effect openness to responsibility-taking and perspective change.

Another theme that I identified emanating from a culture of blame may result from consultees viewing the EP as an expert due to their role within statutory processes. In these findings, EP participants indicated that consultees may experience some reticence to being open to responsibility-taking due to perceiving EPs as part of the wider system of blame culture. There appears to be limited research into the effect of professionals who performed both 'expert' and 'non-expert' roles and how this impacted responsibility-taking. However, Maxwell and Rees (2019) looked into the role of social workers providing family support through VIG, and suggested that by keeping the statutory child protection and family support roles separate, this supported families to experience increased openness and honesty through reduced fear of blame and reprisals. As EPs often perform both statutory and consultation work simultaneously as part of their role, the extent to which consultees perceive EPs as implicit in a culture of blame may have a direct impact on consultee openness to responsibility-taking, as well as psychological safety and agency.

6.3.3 Challenging narratives to facilitate openness

Through an understanding of the impact of blame culture and a recognition of consultee sense of responsibility for the problem situation, this research has identified that EPs believe that they facilitated perspective change through supporting consultees to experience increased openness by challenging narratives. This appears to happen through a combination

of building empathy and finding a connection, the reframing of behaviour, purposeful questioning and pulling threads together in a cohesive and meaningful way. Although described below as distinct approaches, each one overlaps and interacts with one another.

6.3.3.1 Building empathy and finding a connection

This research identified that a key mechanism employed by the majority of EPs when attempting to challenge narratives is the importance of building empathy between consultees to reduce blame and therefore increase openness to responsibility taking. This finding is supported by Pickard (2014) who offered insight into the importance of showing respect, concerns, and compassion during therapy to reduce risk of clients becoming disengagement and feeling blamed. Although not within an educational psychology context, their discussion about the balance of reducing blame whilst avoiding promoting a sense of the consultee 'not being able to help it' is likely to be directly relevant to the current findings.

To support joint responsibility-taking and shift from blame and attribution, I identified that EP participants believe they facilitated the identification of a shared experience that all consultees could relate to without the EP seeming to take sides. Often, this involves looking at the situation from the child's perspective, avoiding blame but supporting responsibility-taking. This approach also helps to change positioning of the EP from mediator to observer, 'pushing' the consultees closer together. EP participants believed that by reflecting on a common experience shared between consultees and "just getting people talking" this offers "glimmers of hope and little pockets of opportunity" in the pursuit of perspective change.

6.3.3.2 Reframing behaviour

I identified that challenging narratives was also underpinned by the EP reframing behaviour to facilitate a shift in thinking. Through the EP shifting language from a within-child or a linear focus of blame towards an interactional view sharing responsibility, EP participants suggest that consultees can be supported to reduce feelings of blame and increase openness to taking responsibility for the problem situation. The link between reframing and perspective change has limited evidence within the EPC context, however Claridge (2005) identified that the reframing of perspectives was a key stage within the consultation process. Similarly, Nolan and Moreland (2014) suggested that EP consultants used reframing frequently as a discursive

strategy within consultation meetings, suggesting that this is a widely used approach. Furthermore, this research offers a link between EP experiences of using reframing and the effect this appears to have on perspective change.

Furthermore, the current findings highlight negative outcomes related to consultee openness if they sense a reframe has 'gone too far', with EP participants recognising consultees becoming defensive, suggesting the reframe has been rejected or the consultee has become aware that the EP is trying to change their perspective. To overcome this, EP participants spoke about refocusing the reframe onto an independent situation not linked to the presenting problem. This was considered to be a less confrontational way to challenge narratives. This appears to be consistent with findings from Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020), who identified that during a consultation approach to mental health casework in schools, school staff would become increasingly anxious and angry if a reframe was too far removed from their own view. Similarly, Patrika and Tseliou (2016) argued that introducing a 'relational perspective' regarding the problem situation can result in client defensiveness due to a loss of sense of control. They suggested that this can result in an increased attempt by consultees to maintain the status quo by further blaming the 'problem-holder'. In line with the current findings, Patrika and Tseliou (2016) reinforced the importance of ensuring clients do not sense that the therapist is attempting to equalise responsibility.

This supports the current findings that challenging narratives using reframing can be a successful strategy supporting the process of perspective change through increasing shared responsibility-taking. However, the EP must be attuned to whether the there is a sense of resistance, and reflect on the transparency of their agenda and the impact this may be having on consultee sense of control.

6.3.3.3 Purposeful questioning

The findings from this study indicate that 'purposeful questioning' describes a collection of techniques used frequently during consultation meetings to support a change in narratives. This ranged from tentative 'wonderings' to more direct evidence-giving. EP participants appeared to tailor the questioning techniques which they used dependent the relational dynamics in room and the outcomes with which they wanted to achieve. This is supported by

Vaughn (2004) who offered the concept of 'manoeuvring room' to describe how therapists use questioning to support narrative change and introduce new perspectives. They described the therapist as using a variety of questioning, both expert and non-expert depending on group dynamics, to 'stretch' client's conceptualisation of the problem.

Although I was not able to find any directly relevant literature within educational psychology, Nolan and Moreland (2014) offered some insight into the effectiveness of tentative questioning, which they found was often a more effective way to support consultee openness and responsibility taking. This supports these findings that EP participants sought to increase openness through the position of professional 'naivety' which shifted the power dynamics towards the consultee and reduced a sense of being blamed whist retaining a sense of curiosity. However, where there was perceived by the EP participant to be an ethical need to change behaviour and the consultee showed resistance to tentative approaches, the EP may shift into an expert role and use directive evidence-based language to facilitate responsibility-taking. This is in line with the findings by Vaughn (2004), however Lewis and Miller (2011) found that EPs use of expert language through 'institutional talk' and 'opinion-based summaries' was related to increased validation-seeking and problem-talk from the parent, suggesting an increased sense of being blamed and therefore decreased openness.

Furthermore, it appears that EP participants employ both a tentative and expert approach to challenging narratives through purposeful questioning. Tentative approaches have been linked to decreased sense of blame and increased responsibility-taking, however at times, an expert role may need to be adopted, but the effect on feelings of blame and openness needs to be considered by the EP.

6.3.3.4 Pulling threads together

The current findings identified that EPs considered that they challenge narratives and increase openness to responsibility taking by 'pulling threads together', with the aim of collaboratively developing an overall picture of the problem situation which describes the interaction between the child and their environment, as well as the impact of their past experiences. A number of techniques used by EP participants were identified to facilitate this, including

visuals and diagrams to indicate the interacting factors, as well as using work discussion group models and reflecting teams to support consultees to listen to other perspectives.

Research within the field of educational psychology has explored the role of the EP with regards to summarising and reformulating the problem situation (Nolan & Moreland, 2014; Ryan, 2018), but they do not go as far as to make clear links with the mechanism of how this facilitates perspective change. Outside the field of educational psychology, Vaughn (2004) argued that during family therapy the new 'reality' amalgamated through the sharing, interpretation and acquisition of multiple perspectives needs to be mutually agreed by all parties, or else it is likely to be rejected and change is not likely to occur. In addition, Amoss, et al. (2016) argued that a shift in attribution in one domain can have a positive effect on linear perceptions of blame in other contexts. This suggests that a new collaboratively agreed narrative not only supports increased opportunity for perspective change, but also increases openness across domains with regards to responsibility taking. This research offers weight to the current findings that summarising and pulling threads together offers an opportunity for consultees to come together to build a new conceptual understanding of the problem situation, allowing increased responsibility taking and opportunity for perspective change.

6.4 Promoting consultee sense of agency to facilitate change

The final of three openness factors that were identified as being integral to consultee openness to perspective change centres around consultee sense of agency. To support the process of perspective change, EPs appear to seek to understand the impact of wider social-political mechanisms on consultee sense of agency. They also recognise cues which indicate the extent to which the consultee(s) may be feeling a sense of agency at facilitating change to improve the problem situation, and seek to strengthen this through the mechanism of employing a number of techniques and skills. Each of these three features of the perspective change process linked to agency will be explored next.

In similarity to consultee sense of psychological safety and responsibility, the sections described below should not be perceived purely as distinct categories as they will overlap and are likely to occur simultaneously. In addition, it should be kept in mind that although the

influencing mechanisms described below have been found to have a key link with sense agency, as part of an open system they are also likely to have an effect to varying degrees on sense of psychological safety as well as sense of responsibility.

6.4.1 Recognising consultee sense of agency

The sub-theme of consultee sense of agency appears to be fundamental in supporting openness to change. Three broad interacting factors which contribute to the extent to which consultees experience a sense of agency include confidence in managing competing demands, confidence in overcoming barriers and the perceived importance of quantifiability.

The current findings indicate that EP participants believed that consultee sense of agency is affected by consultee level of confidence managing competing demands. It appears that the extent to which consultees manage competing demands may impact their openness to change, as well as the time they have available to dedicate to the consultation process, therefore impact the opportunity for perspective change to occur. These competing demands may be driven by external pressure such as senior leadership expectations, or driven internally through personal expectations or family responsibilities in the case of parent consultees, all of which can reduce consultee sense of agency at being able to spend the time needed to affect positive change.

Similarly, consultee confidence in being able to implement collaboratively agreed plans was also identified as a key factor impacting sense of agency. The extent to which consultees have a will, but express concern around being able to put changes in place is linked to reduced agency and reduced openness to trying something new. EP participants believe that this often centred around practical restrictions which they perceive the consultee may feel they have little control over, such as school infrastructure rather than a lack of understanding about a child's needs.

Similarly, where consultees feel deskilled in a specific area, this appears to affect their sense of agency at being able to implement actions which have been collaboratively agreed, therefore reducing their openness to trying something different. Conversely, signs that

consultees have a higher sense of agency in respect of overcoming barriers include willingness to ‘give things a try’.

The third factor which was identified as having a direct impact on consultee sense of agency is the extent to which they perceive the importance of their practice outcomes to be quantifiable. This is often underpinned by target-driven expectations set by the government and pursued in varying degrees by senior leadership or the multi-academy trust. Where there is a strong focus on improving performance or attendance, participants believed that consultees could experience reduced agency at pursuing softer outcomes often highlighted within EPC meetings such as ethical practice or inclusion, as these often negatively impact quantifiable data.

6.4.2 Understanding the influencing mechanism of bureaucratic systems

To aid understanding and EP support to improve consultee sense of agency it is important for wider socio-political mechanisms to be understood. Within the current findings, I identified that consultees may be affected by bureaucratic processes driven by the wider system which negatively impacts their openness to trying something new. This will now be explored in light of the literature.

Findings from the current research highlights the impact of bureaucratic systems on consultee openness, primarily relating to their sense of agency. A key theme that I identified centred around the shifting of consultee focus on the completion of paperwork as a priority, reducing openness to engaging in the collaborative problem-solving process. The prioritisation of paperwork was suggested by EP participants to reduce consultee sense of agency in exploring solutions, placing the onus onto the system to effect change. For example, Maxwell and Rees (2019) argued that a bureaucratically driven approach which prioritises the recording of information and inputting of data can act as a barrier to being responsive to clients within the social work profession. They argue that there needs to be a resurgence of “doing the right thing” rather than “doing things right” (Mundo, 2011, p. 95; Maxwell & Rees, 2019), the current findings suggest that this is likely to also be true within the education system, and may be a significant contributor to low agency within consultation meetings and a reduced openness to change.

Furthermore, this research highlights the negative impact bureaucracy can have on openness to inclusive practice. Through a focus on measurable outcomes, the findings suggest bureaucracy acts as a barrier to inclusive practice, for example when keeping a child in school impacts attendance or performance rates. Contrasting role expectations appears to be linked both with reduced consultee sense of agency as well as fear of blame as discussed in the previous section. These findings are supported by Smith and Larimer (2004), who also found a link between a bureaucratically driven focus on quantitative goals for measuring performance and a sense of failure felt by teachers who chose to prioritise inclusive practice. In combination, both this study and that from wider researchers, suggests that a bureaucratic focus on quantitative measurements may reduce openness to change through a mechanism of reducing consultee sense of agency.

Furthermore, EP participants suggest that consultee openness is negatively impacted by bureaucratic systems through the linking of EP role in consultations as a gatekeeper to accessing resources. Where there is a mismatch in expectations of the EP role, EP participants consider that this reduces openness to engage in joint-problem-solving, possibly due to a perception that the EP was the only one that could facilitate change. This corresponds with research by Kardas (2019) who identified that a 'bureaucracy framework' within education systems was linked with lower autonomy through a mechanism of obedience, conformity and completing duties. They suggest that a rigid bureaucratic system is, by its very nature, inflexible and resistant to alternative ways of thinking. Although Kardas (2019) was primarily reflecting on the Turkish education system, these findings support the relationship between educational bureaucracy and reduced sense of agency. Furthermore, this research also highlighting a sense of 'stuckness' within the system, suggesting that bureaucracy can negatively impact a system-wide ability to reflect on practice. EP participants considered their practice to be negatively impacted through a mechanism of 'grinding down' curiosity, due to the prioritisation of paperwork and statutory processes.

6.4.3 Supporting consultee agency to facilitate problem solving

In combination with an understanding of the impact of bureaucratic processes and a recognition of consultee sense of agency, this research identified that EPs facilitate perspective change during consultation meetings by supporting consultees to break down

barriers and engage actively in problem solving. This broadly happens through four key factors; supporting consultees to explore their role, collaboratively agreeing outcomes, thinking about solutions, and scaffolding thinking around next steps. In similarity to the previous section, although described as discrete processes, each should be considered as overlapping and interacting with the others.

6.4.3.1 Exploring the consultees' role

These findings indicate that a key approach used by EPs to facilitate consultees to break down barriers was to help them explore the purpose of their role was in relation to their own agenda, as well as what other stakeholders perceived it to be. This was considered by EP participants to both help consultees to develop their ability to recognise competing agendas, as well as to support their identification of personal development and skill enrichment through identifying what is in the best interests of the child. This supervisory approach was found to be beneficial by a number of researchers, for example, findings by Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020) suggested that in the context of mental health casework in schools, EPC is an important resource in supporting the adults so that they can best support children. The researchers suggested that the EP offers the adults a context of 'caregiving', who can often feel overwhelmed themselves, however they did not explore how this impacted consultee sense of agency or the process of perspective change. Offering a different viewpoint, Warren et al. (2011) argued that parenting self-efficacy and sense of autonomy is a predictor of child psychotherapy outcomes, suggesting that an increase in role confidence and sense of control is linked with increased openness to trying new things, which in turn, facilitates perspective change (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018).

This research builds on the findings from the literature which suggests the positive impact of EPs supporting consultees to develop a greater understanding of their role, increase their autonomy and therefore facilitate an increased sense of agency and psychological safety.

6.4.3.2 Collaboratively agreeing outcomes

EPs support consultees to break down the barriers which have prevented perspective change through facilitating a collaborative approach to agreeing shared outcomes which are in the best interests of the child. Furthermore, EP participants identified the importance of ensuring

outcomes hold meaning for each consultee so as to increase buy-in and personal investment. In addition, EP participants consider that the EP role can offer support to schools through challenging bureaucratic processes which impact school sense of agency, for example through challenging the need for standardised cognitive assessments if requested by an LA in response to bureaucratic processes to access further support.

Although research within the educational psychology field relating to collaborative outcome setting and the perspective change process is limited, more broadly within the helping professions Delsignore et al. (2008), indicated that increased sense of agency has been directly linked with increased motivation to actively engage in the therapeutic process, leading to increased opportunity of change. Considered in combination with my findings, this suggests that gaining consultee buy-in with regards to outcomes is key, both in increasing motivation, as well as increasing sense of agency and openness to change.

6.4.3.3 Thinking about solutions

Another factor which EPs consider that they use to support consultees to break down barriers that have prevented change centres around thinking about solutions. Through solution focused questioning, EPs support consultees to visualise their preferred future and develop a sense of hope to overcome feelings linked with low agency, such as 'there is nothing that can be done'. This 'drawing out' of solutions acts as a scaffold to help consultees feel empowered to find the answers themselves and feel more connected to their influence of 'achieving' their visualisation. This approach within consultation meetings is widely supported by literature within the field of educational psychology (Kennedy et al. 2008; Nolan & Moreland, 2014), however there did not appear to be any articles which explored the use of solution focused questioning with either increased agency or explicitly as a facilitator to perspective change. Greater insight into the use of hope to facilitate sense of agency is offered by Blundo (2014), who explored the use of SFBT techniques to increase hope, which in turn increases agency. Blundo (2014) also links hope with psychological safety, an interaction which was also mirrored within these findings.

When considering timings, I identified that solution focused thinking was more successful after consultees had been given the opportunity to be heard and validated, suggesting that

consultees need to develop a sense of psychological safety prior to engaging in thinking about the future to promote openness to new ideas. This offers a different perspective regarding the split between problem-talk and solution findings than offered by Wagner (2016), who suggesting that a greater focus on solution-finding offers more opportunity to move the situation forward. This research takes a more nuanced view, indicating that the balance should be tailored to the needs of the consultees, with the presence of conversation between clients in any form offering hope if supported effectively by the EP. Beyond this, there was limited literature exploring the impact of timing when engaging in solution focused questioning within the field of educational psychology. However, Williams and Levitt (2007) supported the findings from this research by identifying that client agency can be supported during psychotherapy when therapists react 'in the moment' to cues they notice regarding client openness and ability to be reflective. They found that this allowed clients to be supported to move beyond 'stagnation' when they were ready, and offered more support when the therapist sensed that it was needed. Furthermore, Pickard (2014) and Olofsson et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of the therapists' beliefs that the client has the power to change, suggesting that without this, change is unlikely to occur.

This research extends current evidence of the usefulness of solution focused questioning within EPC meetings to include links with consultee sense of agency and practical considerations around timing. Evidence from the wider helping professions extends my findings further by offering considerations such as EP-consultee attunement as a mediating factor to the effectiveness of solution focused questioning, as well as the effect of EP beliefs about the capacity of the consultee to change.

6.4.3.4 Scaffolding thinking around next steps

Findings from this study suggests that EP participants consider that they support consultees to break down barriers and increase openness to trying something different through scaffolding their thinking around next steps. This is identified as a practical approach towards making a plan through chunking the process down into manageable steps to help support consultee sense of agency. Important within this process is the EPs skill in supporting consultees to identify steps themselves, not being viewed as the 'gallant saviour' coming along to give the answers, and thus disempowering the consultee. This is supported by

Delsignore et al. (2008), who argued that clients' perceived level of agency in regard to therapy outcomes following CBT was directly related to the level of expectations they attached to the therapist, with lower expectations being linked to higher sense of agency and higher engagement in therapy by not perceiving the therapist as being there to 'fix' them. Although a different context, the mechanism of expectations placed on the EP is likely to be similar, corroborating with my findings.

However, both findings from this study, as well as evidence from Hayes and Stringer (2016) highlight the conflict that can occur when consultees see EPs as an advice-giver rather than collaborator, and the negative effect this can have on both relational dynamics, sense of agency and buy-in to the consultation process. Furthermore, O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018) suggested that teachers who were open to collaboration were more likely to feel empowered, and that overall parents were more likely to engage in collaboration than teachers. The researchers offer a link between lower consultee confidence in role with lower openness to collaboration, therefore mirroring the link between sense of agency and openness to try new things identified within this study.

This research also supports Nolan and Moreland (2014) who found that discussing strategies and next steps is an integral element of educational consultation meetings. However, EP participants considered that limited time within the meeting affected the opportunity to engage in 'review setting', suggesting time can be a barrier to reinforcing sense of agency and motivation, therefore reinforcing a need to explicitly plan time in so that setting a review does not get missed. Furthermore, having the time to record actions and arrange a review during the consultation meeting was identified by the EP participants as a key factor in sustaining motivation and a sense of agency, particularly when not all consultees are in attendance or the wider context is changeable and abstract, for example during the COVID-19 changes to educational settings.

6.6 Implications for EPs

Perspective change has long been an espoused goal of consultation within the educational psychology profession (Wagner, 2000). However, literature that explores the process by which perspective change happens has been limited (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). The

increasing government-led agenda towards quality assurance and subsequent shift to traded service has put EPC under increased scrutiny. This, combined with the realignment of EP training to doctoral level has put a greater onus on the EP as a scientist-practitioner, ensuring best-practice and evidencing the impact of consultation. This study has offered a theoretical model which offers an explanation regarding the mechanisms impacting the process of perspective change, centred around consultee psychological safety, sense of responsibility and sense of agency as key factors implicated in openness to change. How these findings can be used to support EP practice will now be explored in further detail.

6.6.1 Perspective change as a reflective tool for best practice

I have identified that although there have been a range of opportunities for EPs to reflect and develop their consultation practice, this has broadly related to distinct characteristics of consultation meetings, including the discourse used by EPs (Kennedy et al., 2008; Lewis & Miller, 2011; Nolan & Moreland, 2014; Ryan, 2018) and the stages or overarching process of consultation in general (Claridge, 2005; Zafeiriou & Gulliford, 2020). Beyond this, there has been limited research which can be used as part of evidence-based practice to support trainee and fully qualified EPs to develop their consultation skills. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge there has been no research exploring the socio-political mechanisms that may impact consultee openness to change, therefore, due to the critical realist paradigm underpinning this research, generative mechanisms were identified which are likely to make perspective change more or less likely to occur, highlighting areas for future practice and research in line with emancipatory goals (Bhaskar, 2011; Oliver, 2012).

These findings have identified EPs experiences of recognising consultee openness to change as well as how best to support this through specific techniques and interventions including: offering a therapeutic space, challenging narratives, and breaking down barriers. The socio-political mechanisms that are likely to have a wider influence on consultee openness include: being under-supported by the system, a culture of blame and bureaucratic processes. The identification of these mechanisms offers EPs and wider stakeholders the opportunity to focus future research on gaining a greater understanding of the extent to which these generative mechanisms may be impacting the success of EPC and outcomes for CYP, as well as offer a direction for social and political change. To support reflective practice and

consultation training I have developed a resource which can be used as a framework to support practitioners consider the process of perspective change which offers exploratory questions which may help facilitate best practice, this is introduced in Chapter 7.

6.6.2 Noticing the impact of educational psychology consultation

Evaluation of educational psychology practice and consultation in particular has been of increasing interest within educational psychology services in response to governmental agendas and the subsequent move towards traded services. However, measuring outcomes only as a result of first order change linked with 'more or less' of an outcome can result in the impact of EPC meetings on second order change being missed.

This research offers an opportunity for perspective change as an outcome measure within EPC meetings to begin to be embedded more widely as key success factor which is congruent with the relational underpinnings of the consultation approach, alongside more traditional quantitative outcomes measures (Chamberlain et al., 2018). However, it should be noted that the findings from this study are considered the first step towards recognising perspective change as an additional measure of success, with more research needed to triangulate the findings and offer a robust evaluation tool.

A preliminary evaluation tool has been developed as a result of this study (see Chapter 7) which offers an opportunity for EPS services and educational psychology researchers to explore and further develop the applicability and usefulness of the tool for evaluating educational psychology consultation meetings moving forward.

6.7 Strengths and limitations of this research

This section will start with my views on the extent to which the quality criteria explored in Chapter 3 has been applied (Charmaz, 2014). This will be followed by my reflections on the limitations of the research and conclude with a summary of the key strengths and suggestions for future areas of research.

6.7.1 Quality criteria

As described in Chapter 3, this study has employed quality criteria specific to constructivist grounded theory, as employing a constructivist view of grounded theory "emphasises interpretation and gives abstract understanding greater priority than explanation" (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 230). Charmaz (2014) proposes four main criteria to evaluate constructivist grounded theory studies: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. These will now be explored in light of my study.

6.7.1.1 Credibility

Credibility is described by Charmaz (2014) as a study having sufficient relevant data to allow incisive questions to be asked about the data including engagement in effective constant comparative analysis in line with the grounded theory method. To support credibility, the study should show in-depth researcher reflexivity throughout which is evident to the reader.

This research involved interviewing seven participants, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. The initial purposive sample consisted of three interviews, and following the initial coding phase I noticed that tentative categories began to emerge consistently across the three participants. Following this I engaged in theoretical sampling and coded the following four interviews. The sub-categories were further refined but no new categories were identified during this second phase, which indicates that I had reached theoretical sufficiency. To ensure I was fully aware of my impact on the findings, and in line with grounded theory method I completed memos during the interview and analysis stages, an example of which can be seen in Appendix N. The memos allowed me to remain connected to ideas and concepts that developed during the research, which I then used within my analysis to add transparency to the increasing conceptualisation and development of my theory.

I was aware of my influence on the research at all stages and sought to critique episodes of bias where they arose through the use of a research journal. I used this to cross check ideas and thinking with my memos and findings to make my decision making more transparent and explicit. In summary, although the scope of my research was small scale, the process of purposive and theoretical sampling yielded seven, hour-long interviews which produced a

very rich data set that I was able to reflexively analyse to conceptualise categories which reached theoretical sufficiency. Furthermore, Charmaz and Thornberg (2020) offer some insight into the relationship between the how controversial the topic of research is deemed to be and the required level of supporting data, with my study not indicating a high level of contention with existing literature I consider that the credibility of these findings is strong.

6.7.1.2 Originality

Originality is described as a broad quality criteria that can be judged in a variety of ways (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020), ranging from offering new insights to reconceptualising a recognised problem. This research sought to offer insight into the process of perspective change during EPC meetings as I identified that beyond a description of the elements within consultation, there was a scarcity of literature exploring the 'how' rather than the 'what'. In this respect, these findings have brought clarity around the process of perspective change from a critical realist perspective, therefore uncovering underlying socio-political mechanisms affecting perspective change, as well as what is observable within the consultation and deducing what events must have occurred for that to be the case. I feel that the critical realist underpinnings of this research have offered a greater breadth of insight into the process of perspective change than would have been achieved from a social constructionist ontology, whilst offering the richness of interpretation afforded by the constructionist epistemology.

6.7.1.3 Resonance

Charmaz and Thornberg (2020) describe resonance as the ability of the research to be representative of both their participants experience as well as provide insight to others. Underpinning this is the ability of the researcher to be attuned to the participants meaning and flexible enough to adapt concepts when appropriate. To pursue this quality criteria, I centred my first stage of interviews around broad, exploratory questions to gather experiences and meaning which did not seek to lead the participant (Appendix I). I also used a modified version of Interpersonal Process Recall (see section 3.9.3) which consisted of a section of each of the interviews in stage one being centred around a prior consultation record written by the participant. This facilitated the direction of questioning to be around the memories and experiences of the participant rather than my interpretation of concepts, facilitating the development of categories to be representative of the participant's views.

Once the categories had been tentatively mapped, the second stage interviews followed the first but with greater depth on filling in missing information to add breadth and richness to the categories and adapting them when needed. In a similar approach to stage one, questions remained exploratory and loose, with the direction of conversation broadly led by the participant to promote resonance. Due to time constraints, I was not able to submit my findings to participants for review and clarification of gaining the essence of their views, however after reviewing my memos and research diary I did not consider there to be any findings which appeared to be contentious or contradictory, or where I could not evidence my decision-making during the analysis of data, which satisfied my concerns.

6.7.1.4 Usefulness

Research 'usefulness' is described by Charmaz and Thornberg (2020) in a number of ways, from which offering a level of clarify for participants regarding their understanding of their everyday lives, underpinning policy, and practice applications, opening up new opportunities for research as well as revealing processes. This research has achieved its aim of offering a grounded theory model which seeks to uncover the process of perspective change during consultation meetings. Although the current findings have been analysed from one source of data and not triangulated with the perspectives of consultees for example, I consider that the use of a critical realist paradigm (see Section 3.6.2) offers an ability to interpret the findings beyond the EP participant's constructions through abductively identifying causal mechanisms which may be affecting the process of perspective change (Appendix Q).

In summary, the grounded theory developed in this study offers a framework to which EPs can use to understand how perspective change happens during consultations. The critical realist approach also offers an opportunity to gain insight into wider mechanisms that may be at play which impact the likelihood for perspective change to take place.

6.7.2 Strengths of the study

I attribute the main strength of this research to the development of a theoretical model offering a framework indicating how perspective change is likely to occur during EPC meetings. This, in combination with the identification of signs that perspective change may

have occurred, offers a significant contribution to both research and the EP profession to both support best practice and offer an alternative focus for evaluation. To the best of my knowledge, this area has not been explored prior to this research despite it being identified as a significant gap in understanding. I view this research as a first step towards understanding the process of perspective change during EPC meetings, which can be further researched and developed to add to evidence and understanding moving forward.

Furthermore, through the use of a critical realist paradigm, I have identified three underpinning social processes which appear to be acting as barrier mechanisms for consultee perspective change, under-supporting consultees, culture of blame and bureaucracy. The identification of these three generative mechanisms offers EPs and wider professionals the opportunity to further explore and problem-solve the extent to which these socio-political mechanisms may be impacting consultation practice, and ultimately outcomes for CYP.

6.7.3 Limitations of the study

As mentioned within my review of the quality criteria (section 6.7.1.4), data was restricted to interviews with EPs due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and reduced access to participants. Although I believe that my findings have illuminated the process of perspective change in EPC meetings, the opportunity to triangulate the findings with broader data collection methods emanating from the research question, for example observations of consultation meetings or interviews with consultees would have offered added richness to the findings (Charmaz, 2014).

Due to difficulties with recruitment, the participants were all recruited from one educational psychology service in one LA within the South-West of England, all of whom were colleagues of mine. Although this facilitated quick and effective rapport building, particularly when using remote methods which are widely cited as fundamental to the success of research interviews (Charmaz, 2014), participants' views of perspective change may have been skewed by their experiences within the specific context of the LA. However, all participants had worked in different services across the country either as trainee or fully qualified EPs during their careers, and reflected on a range of consultation experiences throughout their interviews.

Furthermore, participants may have felt restricted by our existing professional relationship and moderated their responses accordingly.

Finally, during the first phase of interviews consultees were asked to talk through a consultation record relating to a face-to-face consultation they had facilitated within 12 months of the interview to aid memory. However, due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, participants had not engaged in face-to-face consultation for a minimum of six months prior to interview, with one participant not having engaged in face-to-face consultation for over 12 months. I therefore decided to extend the time frame by two months to 14 months, following the success of the small-scale pilot. However, I was conscious that the time delay between the consultation and interview may have affected the participant's memories of the consultation during phase one, therefore I was conscious to reflect on this during my data analysis in case the findings from the case reflection section were contradictory to data gathered from the rest of the interviews. In conclusion I did not find this to be the case, so I did not consider the time to be significant with regards to the outcome of the findings.

6.8 My reflections on this research

My experience of completing this research is hard to conceptualise in a way that I feel accurately represents the journey I have been on. It has ultimately been a highly rewarding and enriching process, both personally and professionally, but peppered with challenges and obstacles. From the start of the research, I kept in mind that core to my methodology was the development of an integrated and meaningful theory which offered a useful explanation of the process of change during EPC meetings, an area that espoused very little research and therefore felt a valuable yet daunting pursuit.

From the outset, I felt very aware of the increased restrictions that may affect all stages of my research due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. My first consideration was related to remote working due to social distancing guidelines. By following university guidelines, my interviews were restricted to remote video conferencing. I felt that this affected my research both positively and negatively, allowing participants to take part who may not have been able to find the time if they had been face-to-face, as well as offering more flexibility to arrange further interviews following the theoretical sampling. However, I was

aware that the computer screen may have been a barrier to rapport building, however this was less of a consideration as the respondents to my recruitment drive were all EPs I already had a professional relationship with, in my service.

I did feel conscious that my participants were all recruited from one educational psychology service and wondered what affect that would have on my findings, however during the interviews I discovered that each participant had worked in a wide variety of services which they drew from when discussing their experiences. This allayed my concerns about the homogeny of my data. Furthermore, due to the timing of my data collection I found that there had a been a significant time lag between the interview and the face-to-face consultation record report which was used as a reflective tool during the first stage of interviews. This caused recruitment problems and resulted in less participants for stage one (n=3) than I would have liked. Fortunately, I found that the three interviews offered rich data which resulted in my development of tentative categories, these were then further defined and supported by four further interviews during stage two of data collection. I was aware that I may have felt subconsciously drawn to finding categories which may not be grounded in the data due to recruitment anxiety, so I made sure to write copious memos and reflect on them during the analysis process to recognise any episodes of researcher bias.

The latter stages of data analysis were the most challenging periods of the research process for me. I had significant amounts of data following four further hour-long interviews in addition to the three initial stage interviews. During the analysis of the first stage interviews, I had decided to use A2 sized paper and post-it notes to raise the focus codes up levels of abstraction to form themes (Appendix O). I found that a computer screen was just too small for me to manage and remember all the emerging categories to allow for effective constant comparative analysis to take place. I found that this process allowed for greater flexibility of thinking and helped me to feel a connection between my analysis and the data, resulting in the emergence of sub-categories that I felt confident were grounded in the data.
However, following this I realised that I needed to transfer all the data in its hierarchical form to a software package so that I could manage it more effectively when trying to make sense of the categories as an interacting theoretical framework rather than distinct categories. In addition, I realised that having the data linked to quotes would make writing the findings

chapter much easier. This stage took me a significant amount of time, coinciding with this, was the start of the COVID-19 lockdown 2021, which significantly impacted the responsibilities I had to manage within my personal life. On reflection, once the data was on the software package, I found it much easier to shift categories around which felt made more sense or held greater insight to the process of perspective change. It took me a long time to accept that a significant part of the theory development was grounded in myself and what I brought as a researcher. I found that this is where writing memos and reflecting on past entries was invaluable in order to ensure the balance of my decisions felt appropriate.

Once I had developed a theoretical model that I considered was grounded in the data and helpful in conceptualising the process of perspective change, I began to feel a shift in my own consultation practice, noticing that I would often find myself reflecting on the model when I was planning or facilitating consultation, experiencing what felt like a clearer understanding around the complexities of the meeting. I also became more aware of looking for signs that increased openness or perspective change had occurred which felt more congruent with my philosophical perspective as a scientist practitioner.

Although the research process was impacted by COVID-19 in a number of ways, both practically and emotionally, I have found the outcome to be both personally and professionally fulfilling. I feel that I have been privileged to pursue an area that spans my two significant interests, educational psychology and systemic practice to benefit those at the heart of the EP profession, the children and young people.

CHAPTER 7: DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH

7.1 Summary of key findings

The findings from this research suggests that consultee openness to change is related to the opportunity for perspective change to occur during EPC meetings. Consultee openness to change consists of three key factors, sense of psychological safety, sense of responsibility and sense of agency. Socio-political processes including undervaluing supporters, culture of blame and bureaucracy appear to act as mechanisms which may reduce consultee openness to change, whereas EP involvement to support new thinking may increase consultee openness. By understanding consultee openness to change and the socio-political mechanisms that may be negatively impacting this, EP support can be tailored to increase psychological safety, responsibility and agency where needed, therefore increasing the likelihood for perspective change to occur.

7.2 How the findings were developed into the framework for reflective practice

The findings of this research were intended to be used to develop a reflective and evaluation tool to support EP best practice and improve consultation effectiveness. Using the model of perspective change depicted in section 4.5, my aim was to develop a reflective and evaluation tool to support EP professionals before, during and after individual consultation work as well as develop EP understanding of perspective change during consultation approaches more broadly.

To meet these aims I decided to develop a comprehensive framework tool which consists of a description of the model along with supporting images to aid visualisation. I also decided to include a list of reflective questions grounded in the findings of this research which can be used as cues to facilitate EP thinking around consultee sense of psychological safety, responsibility and agency, and the socio-political barriers that may be impacting their openness to change. The questions were developed from the focused codes underpinning each category, as well as integrating specific examples from transcript quotes as prompts for thinking. Further questions were included as prompts to support EP professionals to explore or reflect on how they facilitate new thinking during the consultation.

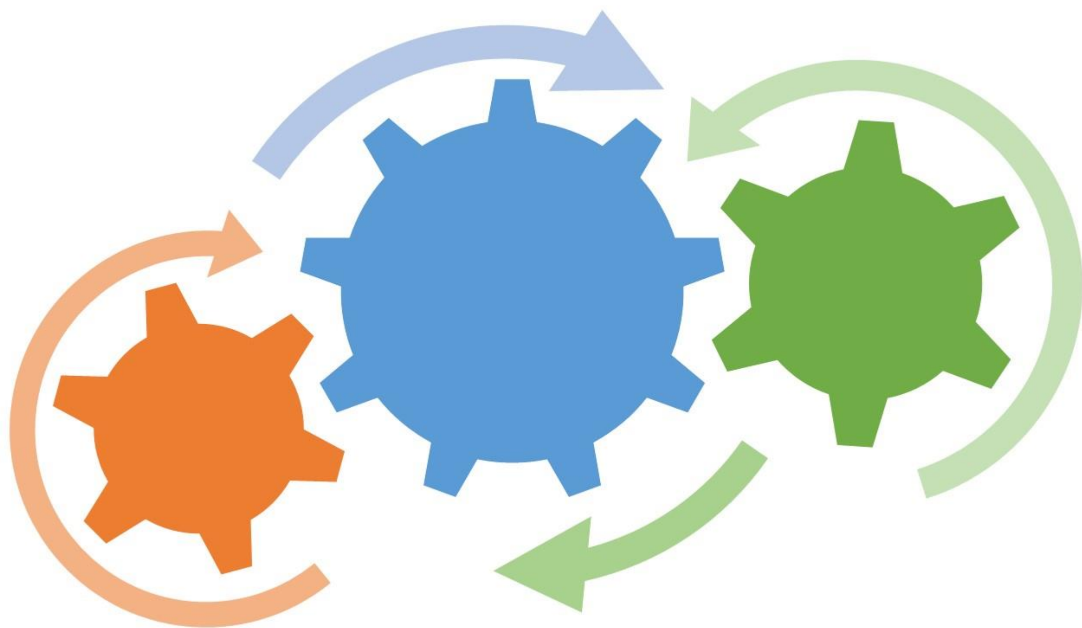
Finally, I developed an evaluation tool to support EP professionals to cue into signs that perspective change may have occurred. This was developed from the supporting category of 'noticing perspective change' which was not included in the final model of perspective change (Appendix R). The final framework for reflective practice tool can be viewed in section 7.3.

7.3 The framework for reflective practice tool

(continued over the page)

PERSPECTIVE CHANGE
IN
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
CONSULTATION

A framework for reflective practice



Holly Bruce

August 2021

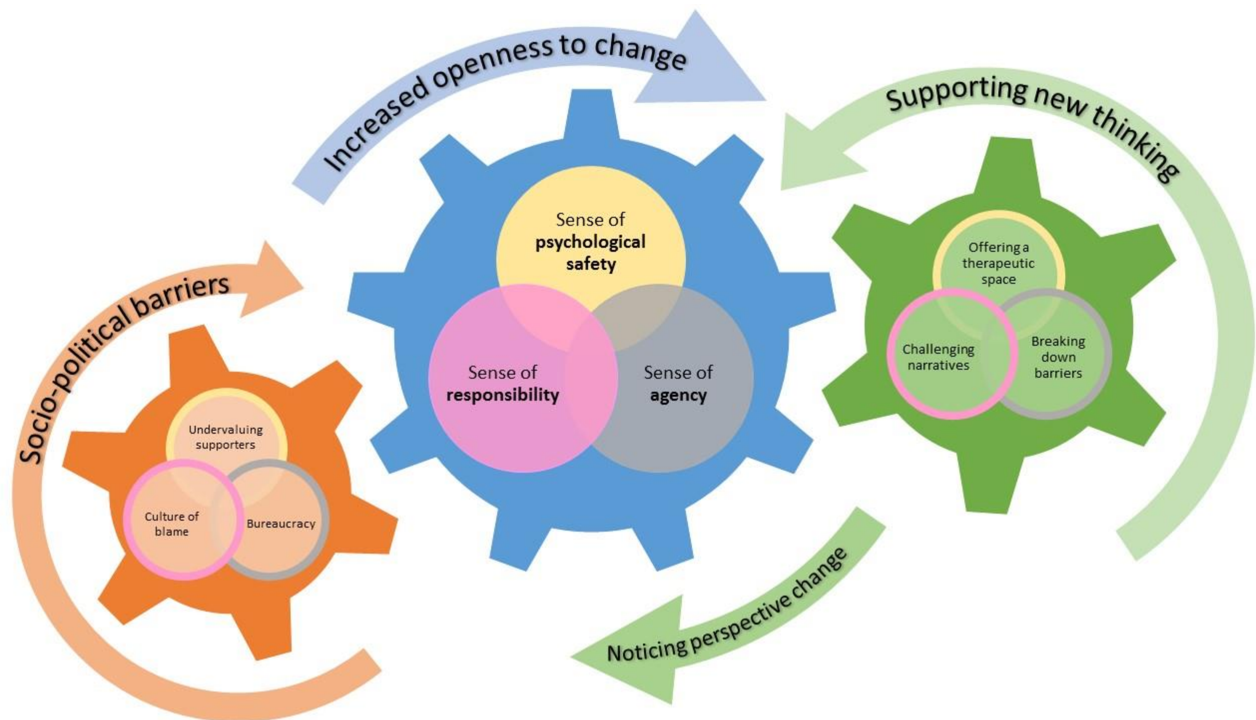
FRAMEWORK OF PERSPECTIVE CHANGE

- *This framework offers both a visual model of perspective change as well as exploratory questions that can be used to support reflective practice for trainee and fully qualified educational psychologists engaging in a joint problem-solving consultation approach (Wagner, 2000).*

- *This framework was developed following grounded theory research into the process of perspective change during educational psychology consultation meetings (Bruce, 2021). For further information regarding supporting evidence please refer to the articles referenced at the end of this document.*

- *The framework can be used in a number of ways:*
    - As a training tool for practitioners wishing to explore the process of perspective change during EP consultation meetings.
    - As a pre-consultation planning tool to highlight wider generative mechanisms which may affect change, guide hypothesis and also be used to plan appropriate support.
    - As a reference framework during consultation meetings
    - As a post-consultation reflective tool to consider next steps or during supervision to facilitate best-practice.
    - As an evaluative tool to recognise a possible shift in the functioning of the system around a child/young person.

THE MODEL



PROCESS OVERVIEW

- *The extent to which consultees experience openness to change has been suggested to link to three broad openness factors:*
    - Consultee sense of psychological safety
    - Consultee sense of responsibility
    - Consultee sense of agency

- *The three openness factors appear to interact and overlap, and may be experienced in differing levels by each consultee at any time, indicating the degree to which consultees are open to change.*

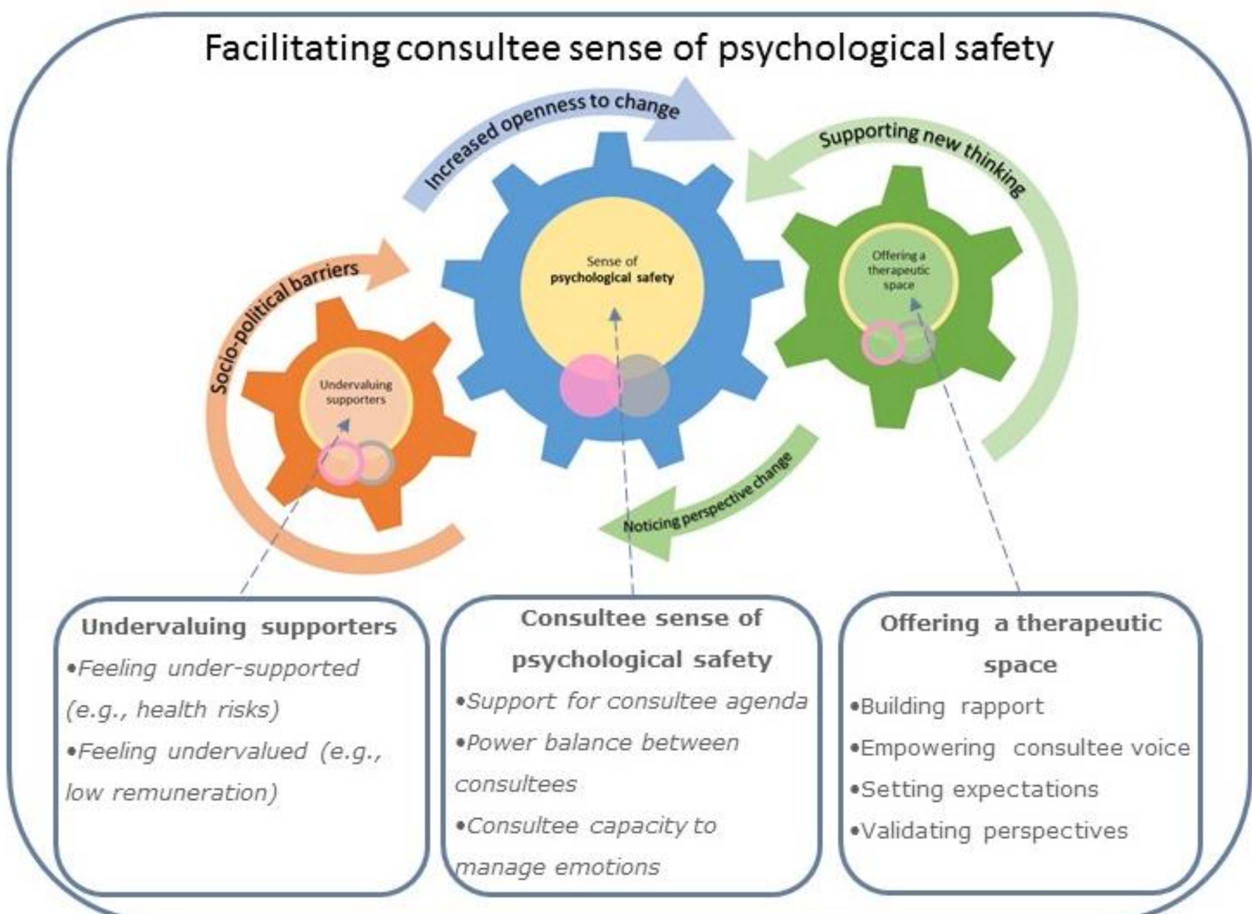
- *Consultee openness may be negatively impacted by three **socio-political barriers** to varying degrees:*
    - Feeling undervalued by wider systems
    - Experiencing the effects of a culture of blame
    - Feeling significantly restricted by bureaucratic processes

- *Consultees may be supported to experience **new thinking** through three key mechanisms facilitated by the educational psychologist consultant:*
    - Offering a therapeutic space
    - Challenging narratives
    - Supporting consultees to break down barriers

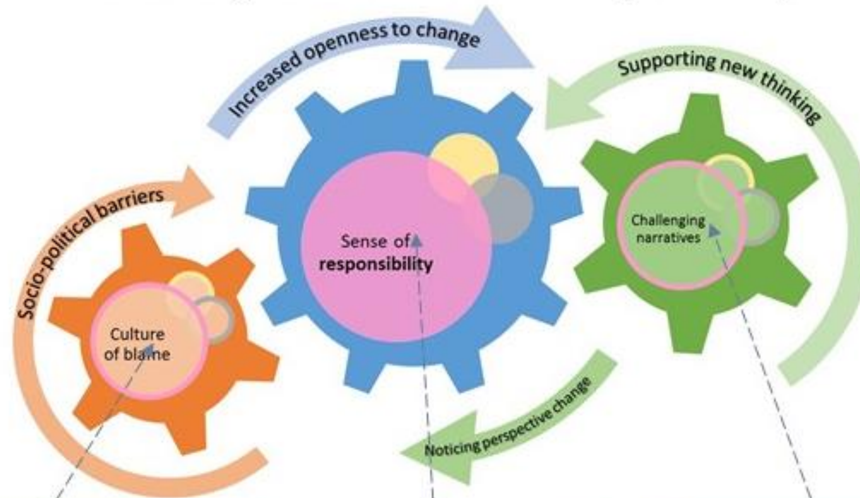
REFERENCE TOOL

- *This tool offers an overview framework of the key mechanisms which are likely to affect the opportunity for perspective change to occur during EP consultation meetings. It gives the reader the opportunity to consider consultee sense of openness, gain insight into the underpinning barriers to openness and plan how to effectively support new thinking.*

- *Each of the three openness factors: psychological safety, responsibility and agency are presented below as separate systems with the corresponding generative mechanisms that have a main affect to promote clarity, however they should be considered part of, and affected by the interrelated system as a whole.*



Facilitating consultee sense of responsibility



Culture of blame

- *Fear of repercussions*
- *Joint EP role in statutory services*

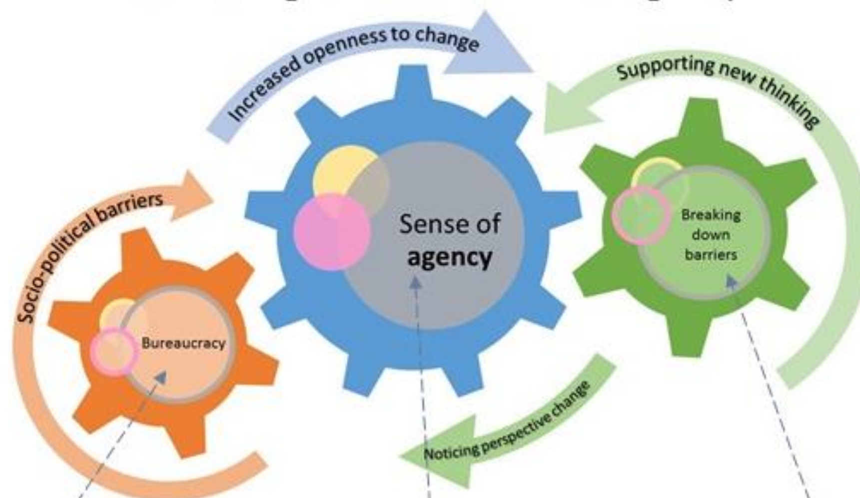
Consultee sense of responsibility

- *Attribution of causality*
- *Perceptions of inclusion*
- *Purpose of evidence*

Challenging narratives

- *Facilitating empathy and connection*
- *Reframing behaviour*
- *Purposeful questioning*
- *Looking at the bigger picture*

Facilitating consultee sense of agency



Culture of blame

- *Prioritising paperwork*
- *EP viewed as the gatekeeper*

Consultee sense of agency

- *Managing competing demands*
- *Confidence in overcoming barriers*
- *Reliance on quantifiability*

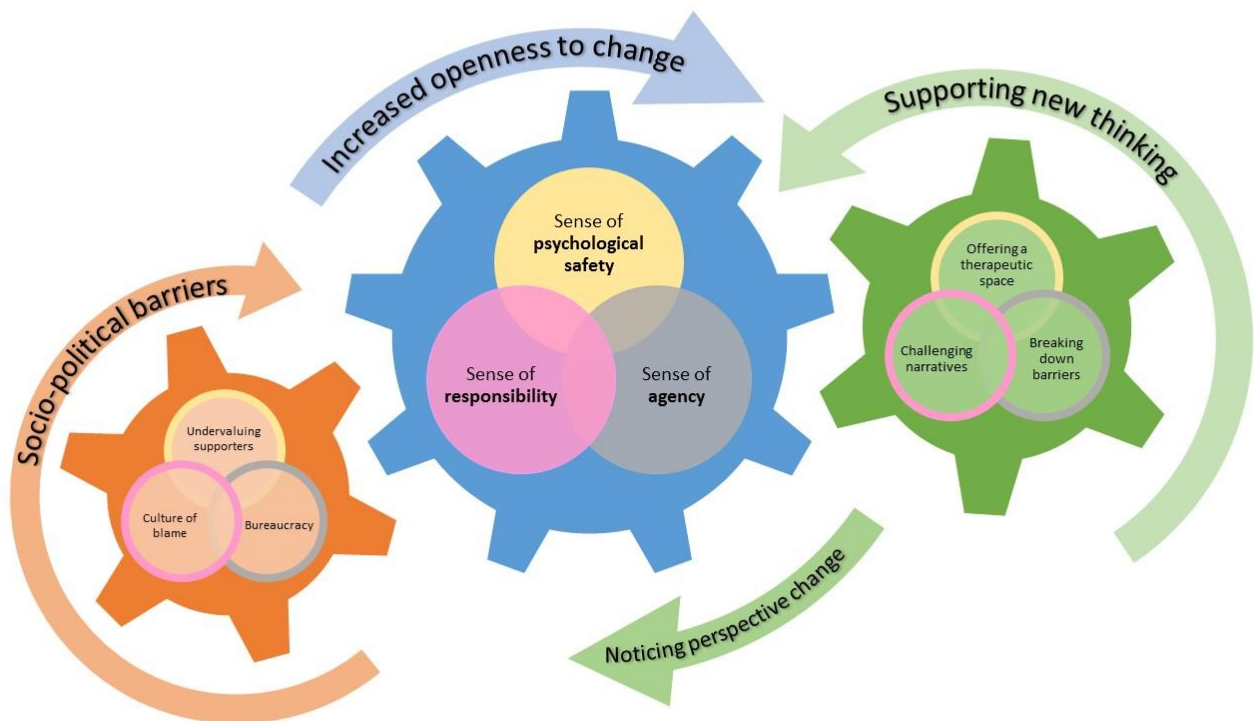
Breaking down barriers

- *Exploring their role*
- *Agreeing outcomes*
- *Thinking about solutions*
- *Scaffolding next steps*

PLANNING AND REFLECTION TOOL

UNDERSTANDING AND FACILITATING CHANGE DURING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTATION

- *This tool may be used in combination with the model of perspective change as a prompt to identify the factors which may facilitate best practice.*



Recognising consultee openness to change

*To what extent do consultees feel a sense of **psychological safety**?*

- What are parental consultees past experiences of school? Would they feel more empowered engaging face to face or remotely in consultation?
- Does it appear that consultees feel like they have to fight to get support for their agenda? Was there reduced communication between consultees at any point? Is this combined with a reliance on taking notes or referring to paperwork?
- To what extent do consultees collaborate with each other? How relaxed does their body language appear and do they show good eye contact and respectful listening with each other? Where are they positioned in the meeting room and what does this indicate about the group dynamics?
- To what extent do consultees appear to experience a lower tolerance to emotional triggers? Are they experiencing higher levels of stress or anxiety linked to contextual factors? (e.g., health concerns or workplace stress).
- How ready do consultees appear to be to engage in problem-solving? Do they need time to voice their experiences and be heard before they can actively listen to other points of view? Are they ready to explore solutions?

*To what extent do consultees feel a sense of **responsibility** relating to the situation?*

- Are their perceptions of the problem situation linear or circular? Do they recognise the relational nature of the problem or is the problem identified with a particular individual?
- What rhetorical devices are being/or are likely to be used by consultees and yourself as the EP? What is the purpose? What do they indicate?
- What is the consultees response to reframing?
- Are consultees seeking an understanding of why the problem was occurring or do they appear fixed on attributing a cause?
- What is the maintaining factor for episodes of attributing blame? What may they be trying to avoid? What does the meaning of this hold for them? Do they have a particular agenda to 'prove'?
- To what extent is the child being kept in mind by the consultees? Do attributions of causality shift the focus way from the child in an attempt to gain support for a perspective or agenda?
- How flexible do consultees appear to be with regards to overcoming barriers to inclusion? How does this fit with their beliefs and how motivated do consultees appear to be at finding a solution?

*To what extent do consultees feel a sense of **agency** at being able to improve the situation?*

- Are the consultees able to dedicate time to focus during the meeting? Are they likely to be distracted by competing tasks such as childcare or teaching?
- How many other demands on their time do consultees have? Are these likely to be significantly impacting their ability to making changes relating to the consultation process?

- To what extent may consultees feel restricted by structural barriers which they feel they have little control over (e.g., school infrastructure)?
- To what extent do consultees appear to feel conflicted when balancing outcome measures and inclusive practice?
- Do consultees feel confident in their skills and ability to support children? Do they feel under-skilled or are they confident to give things a try?

Socio-political barriers affecting consultee openness to change

Feeling under-supported by the system

- Is gender bias affecting consultee sense of psychological safety? (e.g., roles with lower pay)
- Is there a wider expectation of individual role motivation based on moralistic underpinnings which is not adequately supported by pay and role status? Do staff have to go "above and beyond"?
- Are the role expectations 'high risk' (e.g., physically, emotionally or medically), is this adequately supported?
- To what extent have parental consultees and their children experienced systematic rejection within the education system?

Experiencing a culture of blame

- To what extent is there a culture of individual accountability within the school or MAT? Is the effectiveness of individual practice strongly attributed to quantifiable measurements or is inclusive practice valued?
- What cultural expectations of responsibility may be at play? e.g., mothers being responsible for child-rearing.
- To what extent do consultees view the EP as the expert? How frequently are they exposed to EPs in a statutory or consultative role?

Feeling restricted by bureaucracy

- *To what extent is the consultation process viewed as an opportunity to gather evidence towards a statutory application? e.g., EHCP, transition support funding.*
- *How important does the consultation paperwork appear to be in relation to the collaborative discussion?*
- *How is performance measured in school? What is the culture of successful teaching evaluated by?*
- *Is there a focus on "doing the right thing" for the child, or "doing things right" within the system?*
- *As an EP consultant, how impacted do you feel by paperwork, policies and procedures? How does this affect your practice?*

Facilitating new thinking

Facilitating a therapeutic space

- How will you build rapport? Have you planned opportunities for doing so? Are there topics of shared interest but which offer a level of emotional neutrality?
- Are expectations aligned with regards to the roles of the consultant and consultee? What are the expectations of the consultation process?
- Who holds the most power? who holds the least? How will this be equalised? Where will the consultation take place to support this? What are the barriers of the location to each of the consultees?
- Will there need to be a shift to an expert role to equalise power? How will this be managed to maintain the therapeutic alliance?
- If facilitating remotely, how will power dynamics be managed in relation to technological barriers?
- To what extent is there the opportunity to 'go deeper' within the meeting? What would the benefit be? What is the risk involved and how can that be mitigated?

Challenging narratives

- Is there any conflict between consultees? What are the opportunities to find a shared experience or connection about the child or situation?
- How will you reduce consultee feelings of being blamed but support them to retain a sense of responsibility?
- Who is the problem holder(s)? How has this narrative been challenged and what was the response? What does this indicate about the functioning of the system?
- How did you decide whether to use tentative or direct questioning? what was your agenda? what was the response?
- Is there mutual buy-in and agreement for the new narrative? Does it represent everyone's views in some way?
- Is the summary and reformulation understandable and accessible to all consultees? How is it communicated?

Supporting consultees to break down barriers

- What does each consultee perceive their role to be? Do they identify any competing role agendas?
- Can the consultee identify any areas they could upskill?
- To what extent does each consultee need 'caregiving' from the EP? How can this be facilitated whilst retaining consultee sense of agency?
- How confident does each consultee appear to feel in their role?
- How will you notice when the consultee(s) are ready to engage in solution focused approaches?
- To what extent do you believe that the consultee(s) has the capacity to change?
- To what extent do consultees(s) perceive the EP as an advice-giver rather than collaborator?
- How will you ensure there is time to record actions and set a review date?

EVALUATION TOOL

Indicator of consultee perspective change	**Y/N**	**Detail** *(e.g., consultee, what did you notice? What changed?*
Verbal indicators of change		
Consultees making links with their own past experiences		
Consultees making links with the child or young person's past experiences		
Describing new relational conceptions of the problem situation		
Reflecting and using discourse reframed by the EP (e.g., connection seeking rather than attention-seeking).		
Increased collaboration between the consultees		
Acknowledging alternative perspectives (e.g., I see what you mean)		
Agreeing to try something new		
Non-verbal signs of change		
Increased eye contact		
More relaxed body language		
A shift to active listening and engaging in thoughtful pauses		

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7.4 Suggestions for future research

This research addresses an important and under-researched area of educational psychology practice, as well as identifying possible wider socio-political processes affecting the opportunity for change. Building on the grounded theory model developed within this study, future research may seek to explore the applicability and usefulness of the grounded theory model of perspective change in supporting EP best practice and consultee openness to change. By triangulating the findings with observations of consultations, gaining the views of consultees, and broadening the participant base to a wider demographic, this may offer further insight into whether the process of perspective change is differs depending on differing contexts, characteristics, and participant groups. It may also be useful to explore the socio-political mechanisms of undervaluing supporters, culture of blame and bureaucracy in more detail with a view to emancipatory change.

Linking to the usefulness criteria explored in section 6.7.1.4, findings from this research may be useful in providing training and supervision for trainee EPs and fully qualified EPs engaging in consultation, whilst offering a framework for evaluating success criteria based on perspective change. This offers numerous options for future research based on consultee evaluation and success.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to gain a clearer understanding of the process of perspective change during remote consultations in relation to face-to-face consultations. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and sudden shift in working practices due to social distancing, EPs are frequently using remote methods to overcome barriers such as physical location, time, and health risk. This is likely to continue, with EPs offering a blended practice of both face-to-face and remote consultations. Finally, research identifying the similarities and differences with regards to the process of perspective change in these two methods would help to inform practice and increase effectiveness.

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APPENDICES

A Ethics form

School for Policy Studies

SPS RESEARCH ETHICS
APPLICATION FORM: STAFF and DOCTORAL STUDENTS

- This proforma must be completed for each piece of research carried out by members of the School for Policy Studies, both staff and doctoral postgraduate students.
- See the Ethics Procedures document for clarification of the process.
- All research **must** be ethically reviewed before any fieldwork is conducted, regardless of source of funding.
- See the School's policy and guidelines relating to research ethics and data protection, to which the project is required to conform.
- Please stick to the word limit provided. **Do not attach** your funding application or research proposal.

Key project details:

1.	**Proposer's Name**	Holly Bruce		
2.	**Proposer's Email Address:**	*il18422@bristol.ac.uk*		
3.	**Project Title**	*What do EPs believe about change and how is it put into practice during consultation meetings*		
4.	**Project Start Date:**	*June 2020*	**End Date:**	July 2021

Who needs to provide Research Ethics Committee approval for your project?

Only the consent of the SPS REC is needed to provide approval of the project.

Who needs to provide governance approval for this project?

This project does not involve access to patients, clients, staff or carers of an NHS Trust or Social Care Organisation, and therefore does not fall within the scope of the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social.

Do you need additional insurance to carry out your research?

This project does not require additional insurance.

Do you need a Disclosure and Barring Service check?

Yes, this is required as the researcher will be transcribing video recordings of qualitative interviews with EPs which will involve the discussion of consultation meetings involving CYP, however all cases will be anonymised. EPC meetings are described by Wagner (2000) as a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach to facilitate change to improve the functioning of the system around a child or young person. They usually include a representative from home with parental responsibility, a key member of school staff and the EP (EP).

The researcher has a clear, up to date and fully enhanced DBS check. This will be provided to participant Educational Psychology services and settings prior to commencing data collection.

5. If your research project requires REC approval elsewhere please tell us which committee, this includes where co-researchers are applying for approval at another institution. Please provide us with a copy of your approval letter for our records when it is available.

Not applicable.

6. Have all subcontractors you are using for this project (including transcribers, interpreters, and co-researchers not formally employed at Bristol University) agreed to be bound by the School's requirements for ethical research practice?

Yes		
No/Not yet		Note: You must ensure that written agreement is secured before they start to work. They will be provided with training and sign a detailed consent form.
Not applicable	**X**	

7.	If you are a PhD/doctoral student please tell us the name of your research supervisor(s).

First supervisor – Rob Green
Second supervisor – Jon Symonds

Please confirm that your supervisor(s) has seen this final version of your ethics application?

Yes	**X**
No	

8.	Who is funding this study?

N/A

If this study is funded by the ESRC or another funder requiring lay representation on the ethics committee and is being undertaken by a member staff, this form should be submitted to the Faculty REC.

Post-graduate students undertaking ESRC funded projects should submit their form to the SPS Research Ethics Committee (SPS REC).

9.	Is this application part of a larger proposal?

No	**X**
Yes	

If yes, please provide a summary of the larger study and indicate how this application relates to the overall study.

10.	Is this proposal a replication of a similar proposal already approved by the SPS REC? Please provide the SPS REC reference number.

No	**X**
Yes	

If Yes, please tell us the name of the project, the date approval was given and code (if you have one).

Please describe any differences (such as context) in the current study. If the study is a replication of a previously approved study. Submit these first two pages of the form.

ETHICAL RESEARCH PROFORMA

The following set of questions is intended to provide the School Research Ethics Committee with enough information to determine the risks and benefits associated with your research. You should use these questions to assist in identifying the ethical considerations which are important to your research. You should identify any relevant ethical issues and how you intend to deal with them. Whilst the REC does not comment on the methodological design of your study, it will consider whether the design of your study is likely to produce the benefits you anticipate. **Please avoid copying and pasting large parts of research bids or proposals which do not directly answer the questions.** Please also avoid using *unexplained* acronyms, abbreviations or jargon.

1. IDENTITY & EXPERIENCE OF (CO) RESEARCHERS: Please give a list of names, positions, qualifications, previous research experience, and functions in the proposed research of all those who will be in contact with participants

Holly Bruce – Researcher

Doctorate of Educational Psychology - Year 2 Trainee EP

Foundation in Systemic Theory (Postgraduate level at Bath University)

MSc Psychology (Derby University)

Early Years Teacher Status (University of Gloucestershire)

BSc – International Business Studies (University of Portsmouth)

Previous research experience:

"Do psychometric personality feedback sessions affect trait emotional intelligence?" (Masters dissertation – sole researcher)

"An exploration of parents' experiences and perceived impact of attending a Cygnet parenting support programme for Autism: One-year post completion" (Doctoral research commission – joint researcher)

Function in proposed research:
Sole researcher, responsible for all the data collection, data analysis and report writing.

2. STUDY AIMS/OBJECTIVES [maximum of 200 words]: Please provide the aims and objectives of your research.

Research aim:

To explore EP's beliefs and experiences about how change happens during consultation meetings

Research questions:

1) What do EP's think about the process of change during problem solving conversations?
2) What are EP's reflections of the techniques and approaches they have used to facilitate change during consultation meetings.

3) What impact is COVID-19 having on EP's opportunity to engage in problem-solving conversations.

Method:

Data will be collected via Skype for Business video calling, using the screen sharing functionality to simultaneously view anonymised reports as a discussion tool during the meeting. Each interview will be recorded via Skype functionality as well as being recorded by a password protected phone as a backup. Once recorded, files will be saved on the University of Bristol server and deleted from Skype for business.

Analysis:

The researcher will personally transcribe the video recordings and analyse the data using an abductive variant of grounded theory. The researcher will anonymise the transcripts of the interview with participants if they accidentally use real names.

Oliver, C. (2012). Critical realist grounded theory: A new approach for social work research. British Journal of Social Work, 42(2), 1–17.

RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

(If you are undertaking secondary data analysis, please proceed to section 11)

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLING STRATEGY [maximum of 300 words]: Please tell us what you propose to do in your research and how individual participants, or groups of participants, will be identified and sampled. Please also tell us what is expected of research participants who consent to take part (Please note that recruitment procedures are covered in question 8)

Sampling:

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Purposive sampling (round 1)

1. EPs trained in the UK with one year (or more) post qualification experience. This is to ensure that the training is consistent with the aims of the Association of EPs (AEP) who oversee the quality of training in the UK.
2. Agreement from the Principal (Lead) EP (EP).
3. Participants will need to have identified a consultation record (report of the consultation meeting) to discuss during the interview to act as a prompt. The participant will ensure the consultation record is fully anonymised and based on a consultation meeting that occurred within 14 months from the time of the interview. The consultation meeting must have been facilitated face to face, with both a school and home representative present for the duration of the meeting, lasting a minimum of 45 minutes.
4. Participants must agree to discuss the case without disclosing real names or identifying features.

The remote Skype interview will be video recorded by the researcher following verbal confirmation of consent at the beginning (in addition to written consent being gained prior to the meeting). Participants will be asked to identify a consultation meeting which they facilitated with both home and school and be ready to discuss their thinking during the interview. The participant will be asked to fully anonymise the consultation record (consultation report) and email it to the researcher a minimum of 48 hours before the interview to allow the researcher to read the report and identify possible areas to discuss during the interview.

The consultation record will be used on screen during the interview as a prompt and talking point to aid discuss and trigger memories for the participant.

Purposive sampling (round 2)

1. EPs trained in the UK with one-year (or more) post qualification experience. This is to ensure that the training is consistent with the aims of the Association of EPs (AEP) who oversee the quality of training in the UK.
2. Agreement from the Principal (Lead) EP (EP).
3. Participants to consent to talk about their views and experiences around perspective change during consultation meetings and problem-solving conversations in general.

4. EXPECTED DURATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Please tell us how long each researcher will be working on fieldwork/research activity. For example, conducting interviews between March to July 2019. Also tell us how long participant involvement will be. For example: Interviewing 25 professional participants for a maximum of 1 hour per interview.

I will be conducting interviews between July and December 2020, interviewing between 7 and 10 participants for approximately one hour per interview.

5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND TO WHOM: [maximum 100 words] Tell us briefly what the main benefits of the research are and to whom.

- The researcher will develop a deeper understanding of the range of techniques used in consultations and how they can be used to facilitate change.
- The findings may help EPs to maximise the potential for problem solving and systemic change within consultations, through an evaluative tool and 'best practice' documents based on the findings of the study.
- The findings may help to improve outcomes for CYP through more effective consultations.
- The findings will support trainee EPs to gain a clearer understanding of the consultation process and how to maximise the opportunity for systemic change.
- The findings may be beneficial for the EP participants to be able to reflect on their own practice.

6. POTENTIAL RISKS/HARM TO PARTICIPANTS [maximum of 100 words]: What potential risks are there to the participants and how will you address them? List any potential physical or psychological dangers that can be anticipated? You may find it useful to conduct a more formal risk assessment prior to conducting your fieldwork. The University has an example risk assessment form and guidance : http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/media/gn/RA-gn.pdf and http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/policies/

RISK	HOW IT WILL BE ADDRESSED
Information shared during the interview may identify the EP participants or case participants	The transcription will be screened by the researcher for any information that may identify the participants. This will include:

despite measures being taken to anonymise the case.	• Name of setting • Names of EP participants or case participants. • Unique identifying factors e.g., description of location, demographics, personal characteristics. All the above will be anonymised by the researcher during transcription.
EP Participants may feel that their practice is being judged during the interview.	Information sheets will be provided to the EP participant which will explain the scope of the project and the aim of the research. This will include a description of the aim which is to identify their beliefs around perspective change and which techniques they felt were useful during consultation meetings. The researcher will ensure the EP is aware that the transcripts will be fully anonymised and that will have the opportunity to remove their consent at any time, but the researcher may not be able to comply with their request if their data has been anonymised..
EP Participant may experience negative feelings triggered by memories of a particular case or situation.	Researcher will pause the interview if the participant becomes upset and continue when the participant gives consent that they are ready. The interview will only be stopped if necessary. The researcher will talk through options of support and send through an electronic copy of the 'support for participant' information form which will explain next steps if further help is needed.
The researcher may identify safeguarding concerns linked to EP practice during transcription of the audiotape.	The EP will be made aware through the consent form that any safeguarding concerns will be raised to the thesis supervisor. The researcher will discuss safeguarding concerns with the EP in the first instance and then raised to the thesis supervisor.

7. RESEARCHER SAFETY [maximum of 200 words]: What risks could the researchers be exposed to during this research project? If you are conducting research in individual's homes or potentially dangerous places then a researcher safety protocol is mandatory. Examples of safety protocols are available in the guidance.

RISK	HOW IT WILL BE ADDRESSED
Researcher may be exposed to negative comments from the EP participant due to depth of questioning.	All participants to be given information sheet explaining what the researcher is exploring. This will be reiterated at the beginning of the interview so that the participant is fully aware of the type of questioning. Researcher to raise any difficulties during university supervision, as well as writing a reflective diary.
The researcher may be exposed to emotive content during the interview which may impact their emotional wellbeing.	The researcher will raise any personal reflections or challenges with their thesis supervisor. The researcher will keep a research diary which will include reflections of thoughts and feelings which may negatively impact the researcher personally or the findings of the study.

8. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES [maximum of 400 words]: How are you going to access participants? Are there any gatekeepers involved? Is there any sense in which respondents might be "obliged" to participate (for example because their manager will know, or because they are a service user and their service will know), if so how will this be dealt with.

Lead EPs (EP) from local authorities within a 50-mile radius of Bristol University will be contacted by email to scope for participation (Appendix 1). The email will request that the Lead EP cascade the information to EPs within the service if they would like to be involved. There will also be an offer for the researcher to meet virtually with the EPs to discuss the research and answer any further questions they may have if they wish to take part. Alternatively, the option to contact the researcher by phone or email will also be detailed. EP's which reply with interest to take part will be sent an email with the participant information sheet and consent form attached. This will explain;

- Aim of the study and research questions
- Brief background of the research area
- What is required from participants and the process involved
- The inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Confidentiality, anonymity and consent

Once consent has been returned directly to the researcher, the researcher will contact the EP via their preferred method (telephone or email, as stated in the consent form, Appendix 3) to explain the process and arrange an interview date and time.

Participants will have the opportunity to be interviewed over the summer holiday break when there is less pressure to complete statutory services. The researcher will also reiterate that participation is purely voluntary.

9. INFORMED CONSENT [maximum of 200 words]: How will this be obtained? Whilst in many cases written consent is preferable, where this is not possible or appropriate this should be clearly justified. An age and ability appropriate participant information sheet (PIS) setting out factors relevant to the interests of participants in the study must be handed to them in advance of seeking consent (see materials table for list of what should be included). If you are proposing to adopt an approach in which informed consent is not sought you must explain in detail why this is not considered to be appropriate. If you are planning to use photographic or video images in your method then additional specific consent should be sought from participants.

All potential participants will be provided with a detailed information sheet (Appendix 2). The information sheets describe participant inclusion criteria. It will discuss that the research is completely voluntary and video taping of the interview will be transcribed, anonymised and analysed. The information sheets will be clear that the research is looking to understand EP's beliefs of how change happens, and not at the specific case detail. It will be clear that information will be treated with the strictest confidence.

All participants will be informed via the consent forms that they have the right to remove their consent at any time, however the researcher may not be able to comply with this request once data has been anonymised.

Please tick the box to confirm that you will keep evidence of the consent forms (either actual forms or digitally scanned forms), securely for twenty years. X

10. If you intend to use an on-line survey (for example Survey Monkey) you need to ensure that the data will not leave the European Economic Area i.e., be transferred or held on computers in the USA. Online Surveys (formally called Bristol Online Surveys) is fully compliant with UK Data Protection requirements – see https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/

Please tick the box to confirm that you will not use any on-line survey service based in the USA, China or outside the European Economic Area (EEA).	N/A

11. **DATA PROTECTION**: All applicants should regularly take the data protection on-line tutorial provided by the University in order to ensure they are aware of the requirements of current data protection legislation.

University policy is that "personal data can be sent abroad if the data subject gives unambiguous written consent. Staff should seek permission from the University Secretary prior to sending personal data outside of the EEA".

Any breach of the University data protection responsibilities could lead to disciplinary action.

Have you taken the mandatory University data protection on-line tutorial in the last 12 months? https://www.bris.ac.uk/is/media/training/uobonly/datasecurity/page_01.htm

Yes	X
No	

Do you plan to send any information/data, which could be used to identify a living person, to anybody who works in a country that is not part of the European Union?
See https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-and-brexit/data-protection-if-there-s-no-brexit-deal/the-gdpr/international-data-transfers/)

No	X	
Yes		If **YES** please list the country or countries:

Please outline your procedure for data protection. It is University of Bristol policy that interviews must be recorded on an encrypted device. Ideally this should be a University owned encrypted digital recorder (see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/transcription/).

If you lose research data which include personal information or a data breach occurs, you MUST notify the University immediately. This means sending an e-mail to data-protection@bristol.ac.uk and telling your Head of School. See additional details at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/data-protection/data-breaches-and-incidents/

The UK Data Protection Act (2018) include potential fines of up to €20,000,000 for not protecting personal data – so please provide details about how you plan to ensure the protection of ALL research data which could be used to identify a living person.

- Consultation meeting data will be stored on an encrypted device and uploaded on to the University of Bristol server as soon as possible. Once uploaded, data will be deleted from the encrypted device. Once transcribed, the recordings will be deleted from the University of Bristol server.

- Files with the names of participants and an assigned unique identifying code will also be stored on the University of Bristol server in separate location to the transcribed files and audio recordings.
- Digital consent forms will be saved for 20 years in a location on the University of Bristol server separate from the list of names and unique identifier codes.
- I will comply with data protection regulations both of the University of Bristol and of the UK Data Protection Act, GDPR.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY	**Yes**	**No**
All my data will be stored on a password protected server	**X**	
I will only transfer unanonymised data if it is encrypted. (For advice on encryption see: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/uobdata/encrypt/device/)	**X**	
If there is a potential for participants to disclose illegal activity or harm to others you will need to provide a confidentiality protocol.	**X**	
Please tick the box to **CONFIRM** that you warned participants on the information and consent forms that there are limits to confidentiality and that at the end of the project data will be stored in a secure storage facility. https://www.acrc.bris.ac.uk/acrc/storage.htm	**X**	

Please outline your procedure for ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

1. Digitally signed consent forms to be stored electronically on the University of Bristol server.
2. Anonymised consultation records will be stored securely on the University of Bristol server
3. The interview will be recorded via Skype for business functionality, and also using an encrypted password protected iPad as a backup. It will be uploaded on to the University of Bristol server using a unique assigned number, saved alongside the anonymised consultation records but separately to the consent sheets and participant names. The recording from the iPad will be deleted once a copy of the interview has been uploaded on to the University of Bristol server.
4. The recording will be transcribed by the researcher with any instances where anonymity may have been breached by mistake being fully anonymised.
5. The transcriptions will then be stored alongside the consultation record on the University of Bristol Server under a unique number and the audio files deleted.

DATA MANAGEMENT

13 Data Management

It is RCUK and University of Bristol policy that all research data (including qualitative data e.g., interview transcripts, videos, etc.) should be stored in an anonymised format and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive. What level of future access to your anonymised data will there be:

- Open access?
- Restricted access - what restrictions?
- Closed access - on what grounds?

This raises a number of ethical issues, for example you MUST ensure that consent is requested to allow data to be shared and reused.

Please briefly explain;

1) How you will obtain specific consent for data preservation and sharing with other researchers?
2) How will you protect the identity of participants? e.g., how will you anonymise your data for reuse.
3) How will the data be licensed for reuse? e.g. Do you plan to place any restrictions on the reuse of your data such as Creative Common Share Alike 2.0 licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/uk/)
4) Where will you archive your data and metadata for re-use by other researchers?

Participants will be made aware on the consent form (Appendix 3) that they are consenting for the data to
be kept anonymised on the University server and future access to the data will be open access.
Participants will be randomly assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and identifiable data will
be removed during the transcribing process wherever possible. Data will be stored in an anonymised format and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the
data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

14. Secondary Data Analysis

Please briefly explain (if relevant to your research);

(1) What secondary datasets you will use?
(2) Where did you get these data from (e.g., ESRC Data Archive)?
(3) How did you obtain permission to use these data? (e.g., by signing an end user licence)
(4) Do you plan to make derived variables and/or analytical syntax available to other researchers? (e.g., by archiving them on data.bris or at the UK Data Archive)
(5) Where will you store the secondary datasets?

N/A

PLEASE COMPLETE FOR ALL PROJECTS

15. **DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS [maximum 200 words]:** Are you planning to send copies of data to participants for them to check/comment on? If so, in what format and under what conditions? What is the anticipated use of the data, forms of publication and dissemination of findings etc.? .
The Educational Psychology Services (EPS) will be offered a summary sheet of the general research findings and an option to receive a copy of the full dissertation if requested (once degree is awarded). The dissertation will be published as part of the researcher's Doctorate in Educational Psychology. In addition, the researcher hopes to have the opportunity to publish the findings in a peer reviewed journal. There is also the intention to provide EPSs with a 'best practice' document to support the training of effective consultations for trainee EP's and current EP's wishing to reflect on their practice. This will be developed by the researcher from the themes generated from the research along with evidence from the literature review.

16. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**: Please identify which of the following documents, and how many, you will be submitting within your application: Guidance is given at the end of this document (Appendix 1) on what each of these additional materials might contain.

Additional Material:	**NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS**
Participant's information sheet (s)	2
Consent form (s)	2
Confidentiality protocol	1
Recruitment letters/posters/leaflets	1
Photo method information sheet	0
Photo method consent form	0
Support information for participant	1
3rd party confidentiality agreement	0
Interview topic guide	2

Please DO NOT send your research proposal or research bid as the Committee will not look at this

SUBMITTING AND REVIEWING YOUR PROPOSAL:

- To submit your application, you should create a **single Word document** which contains your application form and all additional material and submit this information to the SPS Research Ethics Administrator by email to sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk
- If you are having problems with this then please contact the SPS Research Ethics Administrator by email (sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk) to discuss.
- Your form will then be circulated to the SPS Research Ethics Committee who will review your proposal on the basis of the information provided in this single PDF document. The likely response time is outlined in the 'Ethics Procedures' document. For staff applications we try to turn these around in 2-3 weeks. Doctoral student applications should be submitted by the relevant meeting deadline and will be turned around in 4 weeks.
- Should the Committee have any questions or queries after reviewing your application, the chair will contact you directly. If the Committee makes any recommendations you should confirm, in writing, that you will adhere to these recommendations before receiving approval for your project.
- Should your research change following approval it is your responsibility to inform the Committee in writing and seek clarification about whether the changes in circumstance require further ethical consideration.

Failure to obtain Ethical Approval for research is considered research misconduct by the University and is dealt with under their current misconduct rules.

Chair: Beth Tarleton (beth.tarleton@bristol.ac.uk)

Administrator: Hannah Blackman (sps-ethics@bristol.ac.uk)

Date form updated by SPS REC: November 2020

B Preliminary literature review search strategy

Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Consultation		
Educational psychology		
Change OR Perspective OR systemic OR thera* OR understanding OR perception		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	99	10

Inclusion criteria for articles:

- Published within the last 20 years.
- Study conducted in a western country to promote cultural relevance of findings.
- Written in the English language.
- Peer reviewed article, published opinion paper or doctoral theses

Exclusion criteria for articles:

- Focus on business or organisational change due to different contexts (e.g., training).
- Direct intervention only with pupils.
- Focus on consultation as a wider service delivery model (e.g., referral process, model of delivery).

Results of the preliminary literature review search yielded 99 articles and 3 Thesis. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied which reduced the number of relevant research papers down to 7 articles and 3 Thesis. A manual search then took place on the references of the literature using a ‘snowballing’ effect. However, this did not yield any further relevant articles resulting in a total of 10 research papers which were critiqued for this preliminary literature review.

C Example of CASP literature appraisal

BQ8 | There was no discussion of conflicting evidence, limitations of the study or comparison with literature findings within the discussion section.

AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS
ng discussions around (e.g. why some people not to take part	Consider if the setting for the data collection was justified		Consider if it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc)		Consider if the researcher has justified the methods chosen		Consider if the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how the interviews were conducted? Did they use a topic guide?		Consider if methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why?		Consider if the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc)		Consider if the researcher has discussed saturation of data		has critically examine their own role, potent bias and influence dur a) formulation of th research questions b data collection, includ sample recruitment a choice of location	
Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknes
There were no discussions around why some people chose not to take part, or what some people did choose to take part. There was no mention of how the questionnaire was delivered to families or whether there were opportunities for translated copies, support, or audible copies for families who cannot easily access written English. There was no explanation of how consent was gained from children (apart from parental consent) under 13. > Children only participated in 9 of the 18 interviews. The reason why was not made clear.		It was not made explicit where the interviews were conducted, or what effect this may have had on the participants. For example power dynamics	The researcher explained that data was collected via interviews, however it is up to the reader to attempt to interpret whether these were structured, semi-structured or unstructured as this was not made explicit.			No justification for methods chosen, or exploration of the benefits/weaknesses of other options. No explanation of why parents were included in the interview process, or what affect that may have had on the childrens voice.If therapy, who family included has benefits, if information gathering of within-child views then why parents?	> The invitations followed a protocol covering questions around the background to the referral for therapy followed by an invitation to participant to talk about and evaluate their experiences. However the exact method of this questioning was not clear. Could this impact the level of information gained?		Format of the questions was designed to be with adults, however the researcher explained she was prepared to modify the wording to include children in the conversation. Again this exact adaption was not made clear, or reflected on whether her strategy was successful.	Not made explicitly clear how questions were adapted for children	The researcher recorded the data on audiotape and explained that they were transcribed 'preciseley', following a system of notation borrowed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), she explained that it codes pauses, emphases, repetitions and other paralinguistic features of speech to denote volume and changes in pitch. She has included a figure to explain a full account of the conventions.			Data saturation was not mentioned in the study.	The researcher explained that care was taken to put the family at ease, particularly the children through the use of language, however further detail was not provided. She explained that she wished to communicate easily with them and appreciated their contributions. Time was taken to build report in an attempt to promote free-flow conversation.	no reflectic the researc role in the s was stated.

Qualitative critique | Sheet1

BQ8 | There was no discussion of conflicting evidence, limitations of the study or comparison with literature findings within the discussion section.

BG	BH	BI	BJ	BK	BL	BM	BN	BO	BP	BQ	BR	BS	BT	BU
r the researcher ata presented were original sample to analysis process	Consider if sufficient data are presented to support the findings		Consider to what extent contradictory data are taken into account		Consider whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation		Consider if the findings are explicit		Consider if there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researchers arguments		Consider if the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. traingulation, respondent validation, more than one analysis)		Consider if the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	
Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses
This was not made explicitly clear.	Yes, the study gives clear examples of data for each point made.			No clear use of contradictory data.	The researcher mentioned that they acknowledged the subjectivity of their analysis but did not give further detail on how this many have been affected. >	There was interpretation throughout the analysis, the basis of this was not explicitly indicated.	It was made explicit that the findings support the argument that children are active in constructing therapy through the particular positions that reflect the interplay of the discourses.		Hi	There was no discussion of conflicting evidence, limitations of the study or comparison with literature findings within the discussion section.	She did reflect that the themes that emerged were strongly represented throughout the participant group which increased the validity of the findings. However 'strongly' was not detailed. The number of participants who suggested the themes was not mentioned, neither were alternative views.	The analysis was not triangulated by another researcher to check whether the same themes emerged. > Researcher is herself a family therapist so may have an invested interest in promoting the benefits of the therapy, this was not mentioned.	The original research question was not explicitly addressed in the discussion section, however the implications of the findings can be related back to the aims of the research. The researchers stated that the findings indicate a gradient in the discourses of young people.	

Qualitative critique | Sheet1

D Email invitation to Educational Psychology Service leads

SUBJECT HEADING – Opportunity to be involved in doctoral research exploring perspective change during consultation.

Dear *(name of principal/lead EP)*

I am a University of Bristol trainee EP, and I am about to commence my doctoral research. I am emailing to take the opportunity to inform you about my study to see whether it is a project (*name of local authority)* Educational Psychology Service would like to be involved in.

My research seeks to understand how EPs view the process of perspective change during consultation meetings, the techniques which are used, as well as the factors which support and inhibit perspective change. I am seeking EPs who would like to be involved in an online video interview with myself which would last approximately one hour to discuss an anonymised case of their choosing. I intend to use the findings to produce an evaluative tool for consultations which can be used both within CPD and practitioner training and by EPs in a supervisory and self-reflection capacity.

If this is an area of research you might be interested in supporting I would be very happy to answer any questions you and your team may have either by Skype, email or phone. I have also attached the participant and consent forms for your information.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards

Holly Bruce

E Information letter to participants – Phase 1

School for Policy Studies

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Bristol BS8 1TZ
Tel: +44 (0)117 954 6738
Fax: +44 (0)117 954 6756
bristol.ac.uk/sps

Participant Information Sheet

It is well known that effective problem-solving conversations are a key strength of educational psychology involvement within consultation meetings. Research has highlighted how the consultative framework is implemented within services, but the process of consultation meetings has yet to be explored in detail. Nolan and Moreland (2014) argue that it is essential for psychologists to explore the process of consultation in order to better understand how consultation works.

The purpose of this research is to explore EP's (EP) perceptions of how perspective change happens during consultation meetings and the factors that promote or inhibit this. I am looking to recruit EPs who would like to explore this further through a one-to-one remote interview. The EP participant will be asked to identify a consultation which they have facilitated within the past 14 months which they would be happy to refer to as a prompt during the interview. The data will be captured through video recording of a Microsoft Teams remote interview, which will last between 45 minutes and one hour. The researcher intends to use the findings to produce a reflective training tool which can be used by both trainee and qualified EPs when evaluating the impact of consultation meetings.

As a trainee EP at the University of Bristol, I am seeking support from educational psychology services within a 50-mile radius of Bristol. I am looking to recruit EPs who have a minimum of one-year post-qualification experience. To participate in the study, the EP participant will be asked to identify a consultation meeting which they have facilitated within the past 14 months. This will be used anonymously as a reflective tool to aid discussions about perspective change that may or may not have taken place. Participants should talk anonymously when referring to cases within the interview. The consultation meeting does not need to have followed a particular framework for practice, other than a general collaborative problem-solving approach lasting a minimum of 45 minutes involving a representative from both school and home.

Once a consultation case has been identified, the EP participant will be required to fully anonymise the consultation record and email the document to the researcher a minimum of 48 hours before the scheduled interview. The anonymised consultation record will then be used as a prompt during the reflective discussion. It should be noted that permission will not be granted to share records that have not been fully anonymised. The record should not include:

- The name, date of birth or address of any research participant or case participants. Pseudonyms and a chronological age (where needed) should be given instead.

- Key characteristics which could identify any research participant or case participants.
- The name of the educational psychology service
- Setting names or key features which could identify the school/setting
- The date of the consultation, other than month and the year.

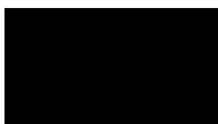
I would be delighted to answer any questions about this study both before and after giving consent if participants wish to be involved. Please email me at the address at the bottom of this letter in the first instance, if you have no further questions and are interested in taking part in this study I would be grateful if a signed copy of the consent form could be emailed to the address given on the consent form. Following receipt of signed consent, I will be in contact to answer any further questions you may have and arrange a suitable time and date for the interview. As a participant of the research, you can opt in to be kept informed of the findings and be supplied with the reflective training tool that is intended to be developed as a result of the study. This research has been approved by the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

If you do wish to take part please be aware that all transcriptions will be checked to ensure anonymity was upheld and any identifying information will be redacted. Anonymity in the thesis will be facilitated through the use of pseudonyms and a redaction of identifying characteristics. However, in line with the confidentiality protocol despite case discussions being anonymised, it is possible that highly individualised details provided may be identifying, particularly due to the research being based within services local to Bristol. However, the chances of this are lessened due to the small scale of this research.

Video recordings will be given a unique identifying number and stored separately to the anonymised transcripts on the University of Bristol server. Your contact information will be confidential and stored on the University of Bristol Server or an encrypted phone and deleted after the study ends. All participants of the study can remove their consent at any time, however, once the data has been anonymised this request may not be possible. With your consent, anonymised data will be archived and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive. Data will also be used throughout the thesis as quotes and may be used within the reflective tool as well as subsequent articles for publication.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information, if you would like to be involved in this research your support would be welcome and I will look forward to receiving your signed consent form. If you have any questions please email me at il18422@bristol.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Holly Bruce

(Trainee EP)

Contact details:

Holly Bruce (Trainee EP)

Email: il18422@bristol.ac.uk
Tel: 07855 504893

If you have any complaints about my research practice, please contact my supervisors using the details below

Rob Green (Supervisor) mhxrg@bristol.ac.uk

Jon Symonds (Second Supervisor) Jon.Symonds@bristol.ac.uk

F Support for participant sheet

School for Policy Studies

8 Priory Road
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bristol.ac.uk/sps

Support information for participant

Thank you for taking part in this study. If you have been affected by this research and would like to access further support, please consider contacting the organisations below.

MIND
Offering advice and support information on a range of topics including, types of mental health problem, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments and advocacy.
Contact 0300 123 3393 (09:00 – 18:00 Mon – Fri, except for bank holidays) SMS 86463

Samaritans
A confidential support service for helping people to explore their options, understand their problems better, or just be there to listen.
Contact 116 123 (24 hours a day 7 days a week) Email jo@samaritans.org

SANE
SANE runs a national, out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support and
information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.
Contact 0300 304 7000 (16:30 – 22:30, 7 days a week)

G Confidentiality protocol

School for Policy Studies

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Confidentiality protocol

This research project aims to explore EP's perceptions of how change happens during consultation meetings and what factors promote or inhibit perspective change. All data obtained through this study will be anonymised and treated with confidentiality, however there are limits to this confidentiality and anonymity. In the event that information is given relating to an illegal activity or an individual(s) being harmed, it is not possible to maintain confidentiality. In this instance any issues of concern will be discussed with the research supervisor as soon as possible in order to obtain advice or direction. The relevant/appropriate authority may need to be informed. The researchers will endeavour to speak to participants and alert them beforehand in the event that this needs to happen, however this may not always be possible. The researchers will still need to pass this information on.

Although case discussions will be anonymised, it is possible that highly individualised details provided may be identifying, however the chances of this are lessened due to the small scale of this research.

By agreeing to participate in this study you are agreeing to be bound by the terms of this confidentiality protocol and agree that the information you share will be treated in this manner.

H Consent form for participants – Phase 1

University of BRISTOL
School for Policy Studies

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Fax: +44 (0)117 954 6756
bristol.ac.uk/sps

Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
1. Taking part in the study		
I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	☐	☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. I understand that it may not be possible for my data to be removed once it has been anonymised.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part in the study involves; • Identifying a consultation meeting that I facilitated within 14 months of the interview date, based on a collaborative problem-solving approach, which was attended by both home and school and lasted for a minimum of 45 minutes. • The EP participant anonymising the corresponding consultation record and sharing this only in the anonymised form with the researcher a minimum of 48 hours before the scheduled interview. • Exploring experiences and views linked to the consultation meeting with reference to the anonymised consultation record during the interview. • The researcher video recording the remote interview.	☐	☐
2. Use of the information in the study		
I understand that information I provide will be used for publication as a thesis. It may also be published in a peer reviewed journal. The information will also be used to design reflective tools for practitioners to use.	☐	☐
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name, will not be shared beyond the researcher.	☐	☐
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs using a pseudonym so that I cannot be identified.	☐	☐
I understand that the data will be anonymised and stored on the university server.	☐	☐

I consent to the anonymised data being archived and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive.	☐	☐
I trained as an EP and have full accreditation with the HCPC.	☐	☐
I have a minimum of one years' experience post-qualification as an EP.	☐	☐
I follow a general collaborative problem-solving approach to consultations	☐	☐

I would like to be contacted in the first instance by the researcher via:

Phone ☐. ____________________________

Email ☐. ____________________________

Don't mind ☐.

______________________________	______________________	__________________
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]	Signature	Date

For participants unable to sign their name, mark the box instead of signing ☐

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form with the potential participant and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

______________________________	______________________	__________________
Name of witness [IN CAPITALS]	Signature	Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

______________________________	______________________	__________________
HOLLY BRUCE	Signature	Date

3. Study contact details for further information

Holly Bruce (Trainee EP) il18422@bristol.ac.uk

Rob Green (Supervisor) mhxrg@bristol.ac.uk

Jon Symonds (Second Supervisor) jon.symonds@bristol.ac.uk

I Interview schedule – Phase 1

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Tel: +44 (0)117 954 6738
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Individual interview topic guide (Phase 1)

Research goals of the interviews:

1) To explore EP's perspectives about the process of change during problem-solving conversations.
2) To explore EP's reflections of the techniques and approaches they have used to facilitate change during consultation meetings.
3) To explore the impact of COVID-19 on EP's opportunity to engage in problem-solving conversations.

The questions below form a guide to a range of questions that may, or may not, be used during the interview. Discussion will be led by the details in the particular case identified by the participant which will impact which questions are relevant to ask.

Initial questions will be identifying the EP's beliefs around how change happens

- With regards to your EP practice, how would you describe yourself?
  - What does this mean?
- Can you explain what you feel is important in successful problem-solving conversations?
- Tell me about what you are trying to achieve when involved in problem-solving with clients
  - What techniques do you use?
- What theories do you feel are particularly useful in your practice?
- Can you describe what you do to facilitate change during consultations/problem-solving conversations.
- How much of your practice in problem-solving is planned/routined across all situations?
- What do you think are the characteristics of the most favourable/challenging problem-solving scenarios?

- What do you consider that you might do differently, if anything, in these differing scenarios?

Further questions exploring a particular case, referring to the consultation record (report of the meeting)

- What do you remember thinking at that point in the session?
- What was your intention?
- What were you working towards or trying to do?
- What are your memories of how you were feeling at that time?
- How might have you been coming across?
- What was important about what the consultee's said or did?
- How did you feel when xxxx happened?
- Was there anything significant about how you spoke to the XXXX
- How did you feel about the way that was set up? What thoughts did you have about it at the time?
- Why did you decided to do XXXXX? what were you thinking may happen?
- What was your theoretical rationale?
- What changes did you expect from that discussion point?

Context and future thinking

- If you have been engaging in video or audio problem solving during the current lockdown, what are your reflections about how this has impacted problem-solving?
  - What would you do to overcome these?
- Are there any other ways you feel the current situation has impacted problem-solving conversations more generally?
  - Change in cultural beliefs?
  - Priorities?
  - Government legislation?

J Secondary literature review search strategy

Inclusion criteria for articles:

- Published within the last 20 years.
- Study conducted in a western country to promote cultural relevance of findings.
- Written in the English language.
- Peer reviewed article, published opinion paper or doctoral thesis
- Research context from a helping profession (Health, psychotherapy, psychology, education or social work)

Exclusion criteria for articles:

- Focus on business or organisational change due to different contexts (e.g., training).
- Direct intervention only with pupils.
- Focus on consultation as a wider service delivery model (e.g., referral process, model of delivery).

Secondary literature search questions:

1) What is known about the impact of feeling unsupported on an individual's sense of psychological safety?
2) How is psychological safety best supported to promote change within a therapeutic environment?
3) What is known about the impact of a blame culture on an individual's sense of responsibility?
4) How is sense of responsibility best supported to promote change within a therapeutic environment?
5) What is known about the impact of bureaucracy and red tape linked to funding on an individual's sense of agency?
6) How is sense of agency best supported to promote change within a therapeutic environment?

Search 1		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**

(*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)		
Relationship		
‘Educational psycho*		
Therapeutic		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	27	3
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**1**

Search 2		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Therapeutic relationship OR therapeutic environment OR therapeutic space		
Family therapy OR systemic therapy OR couples therapy		
Change OR perspective OR thinking		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	171	27
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**9**

Search 3		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Undervalu*		
Education OR school OR parent		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	37	2
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**1**

Search 4		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Blame culture		
Education OR school OR parent*		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	7	4
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**1**
Articles acquired through snowballing		**3**

Search 5		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Responsibility OR blame OR attribution		

‘Educational psychology’		
Change OR perspective OR thinking		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	72	2
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**1**

Search 6		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Responsibility OR blame OR attribution		
Family therapy OR systemic therapy OR couples therapy		
Change OR perspective OR thinking		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	153	20
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**2**

Search 7		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Bureaucracy OR administration		
‘Educational psychology’		
Consultation OR casework		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	72	0
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**0**

Search 8		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Bureaucracy		
Education		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	234	4
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**4**

Search 9		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Perspective change OR therapeutic change		
Agency OR self-efficacy		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	52	6

ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**2**

Search 10		
Keywords (no limiter used with keywords) (*indicates the use of truncation to include various word endings and spellings)	**Total of articles retrieved**	**Relevant articles**
Perspective change OR therapeutic change OR new thinking		
Signs OR indicators		
Total number of articles when search terms detailed above are combined.	33	4
ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION		**0**

TOTAL SEARCHES COMBINED		**Relevant articles to use**
		24

K Information letter to participants – Phase 2

School for Policy Studies

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Participant Information Sheet

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The purpose of this research is to explore EP's (EP) perceptions of how perspective change happens during consultation meetings and the factors that promote or inhibit this. I am looking to recruit EPs who would like to explore this further through a one-to-one remote interview. The data will be captured through video recording of a Microsoft Teams remote interview, which will last between 45 minutes and one hour. The researcher intends to use the findings to produce a reflective training tool which can be used by both trainee and qualified EPs when evaluating the impact of consultation meetings.

As a trainee EP at the University of Bristol, I am seeking support from educational psychology services within a 50-mile radius of Bristol. I am looking to recruit EPs who have a minimum of one-year post-qualification experience who identify as engaging in a general collaborative problem-solving approach when facilitating consultations with both home and school. Participants should talk anonymously if referring to cases within the interview.

I would be delighted to answer any questions about this study both before and after giving consent if participants wish to be involved. Please email me at the address at the bottom of this letter in the first instance, if you have no further questions and are interested in taking part in this study I would be grateful if a signed copy of the consent form could be emailed to the address given on the consent form. Following receipt of signed consent, I will be in contact to answer any further questions you may have and arrange a suitable time and date for the interview. As a participant of the research, you can opt in to be kept informed of the findings and be supplied with the reflective training tool that is intended to be developed as a result of the study. This research has been approved by the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

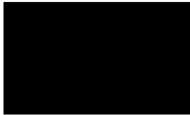
If you do wish to take part, please be aware that all transcriptions will be checked to ensure anonymity was upheld and any identifying information will be redacted. Anonymity in the thesis will be facilitated through the use of pseudonyms and a redaction of identifying characteristics. However, in line with the confidentiality protocol it is possible that highly individualised details provided may be identifying, particularly due to the research being

based within services local to Bristol. However, the chances of this are lessened due to the small scale of this research.

Video recordings will be given a unique identifying number and stored separately to the anonymised transcripts on the University of Bristol server. Your contact information will be confidential and stored on the University of Bristol Server or an encrypted phone and deleted after the study ends. All participants of the study can remove their consent at any time, however, once the data has been anonymised this request may not be possible. With your consent, anonymised data will be archived and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive. Data will also be used throughout the thesis as quotes and may be used within the reflective tool as well as subsequent articles for publication.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information, if you would like to be involved in this research your support would be welcome and I will look forward to receiving your signed consent form. If you have any questions, please email me at il18422@bristol.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Holly Bruce

(Trainee EP)

Contact details:

Holly Bruce (Trainee EP)
Email: il18422@bristol.ac.uk
Tel: 07855 504893

If you have any complaints about my research practice, please contact my supervisors using the details below

Rob Green (Supervisor) mhxrg@bristol.ac.uk

Jon Symonds (Second Supervisor) Jon.Symonds@bristol.ac.uk

L Consent form for participants – Phase 2

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Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
1. Taking part in the study		
I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	☐	☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. I understand that it may not be possible for my data to be removed once it has been anonymised.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part in the study involves the researcher video recording the remote interview.	☐	☐
2. Use of the information in the study		
I understand that information I provide will be used for publication as a thesis. It may also be published in a peer reviewed journal. The information will also be used to design reflective tools for practitioners to use.	☐	☐
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name, will not be shared beyond the researcher.	☐	☐
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs using a pseudonym so that I cannot be identified.	☐	☐
I understand that the data will be anonymised and stored on the university server.	☐	☐
I consent to the anonymised data being archived and made freely and openly available for other researchers to use via the data.bris Research Data Repository and/or the UK Data Archive.	☐	☐

I trained as an EP and have full accreditation with the HCPC. ☐ ☐

I have a minimum of one years' experience post-qualification as an EP. ☐ ☐

I follow a general collaborative problem-solving approach to consultations ☐ ☐

I would like to be contacted in the first instance by the researcher via:

Phone ☐. ____________________________
Email ☐. ____________________________
Don't mind ☐.

____________________________ ____________________ _______________
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS] Signature Date

For participants unable to sign their name, mark the box instead of signing ☐

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form with the potential participant and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely. **(only required for participants unable to sign their name).**

____________________________ ____________________ _______________
Name of witness [IN CAPITALS] Signature Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

____________________________ ____________________ _______________
HOLLY BRUCE Signature Date

3. Study contact details for further information

Holly Bruce (Trainee EP) il18422@bristol.ac.uk

Rob Green (Supervisor) mhxrg@bristol.ac.uk

Jon Symonds (Second Supervisor) jon.symonds@bristol.ac.uk

M Interview schedule – Phase 2

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Individual interview topic guide (Phase 2)

Research goals of the interviews:

4) To explore EP's perspectives about the process of change during problem-solving conversations.
5) To explore EP's reflections of the techniques and approaches they have used to facilitate change during consultation meetings.
6) To explore the impact of COVID-19 on EP's opportunity to engage in problem-solving conversations.

The questions below form a guide to a range of questions that may, or may not, be used during the interview. Discussion will be led by the details in the particular case identified by the participant which will impact which questions are relevant to ask.

Exploring experience of how perspective change happens in general problem-solving conversations.

1. With regards to your EP practice, how would you describe yourself?
   - How would other people know this/what would they see?
   - What do you feel are the barriers to you practising this way?
   - What helps you to practise this way?
2. Can you explain what you feel is important in successful problem-solving conversations?
   - Why is this important?
3. Tell me about what you are trying to achieve when involved in problem-solving with clients?
   - Why is this important?
   - What underpins these aims? (Past experience/constructs)
   - How do you know when you are achieving it? What are the other people doing? What impact does this have on you?

- How would you know if this is not happening? What are other people doing? What impact does this have on you?
- Are there any particular theories you feel are the foundations of your practice?

4. Can you describe what you do to facilitate change during consultations/problem-solving conversations?
    - How do you decide?
    - What are barriers to this?
    - How do you deal with these?
    - When is change not possible during a consultation meeting?
    - What are the facilitators? (Context/environment/ interactions)

Context and future thinking

- If you have been engaging in video or audio problem solving during the current lockdown, what are your reflections about how this has impacted problem-solving?
    - What would you do to overcome these?
- Are there any other ways you feel the current situation has impacted problem-solving conversations more generally?
    - Change in cultural beliefs?
    - Priorities?
    - Government legislation?

N Example of memo

Memo

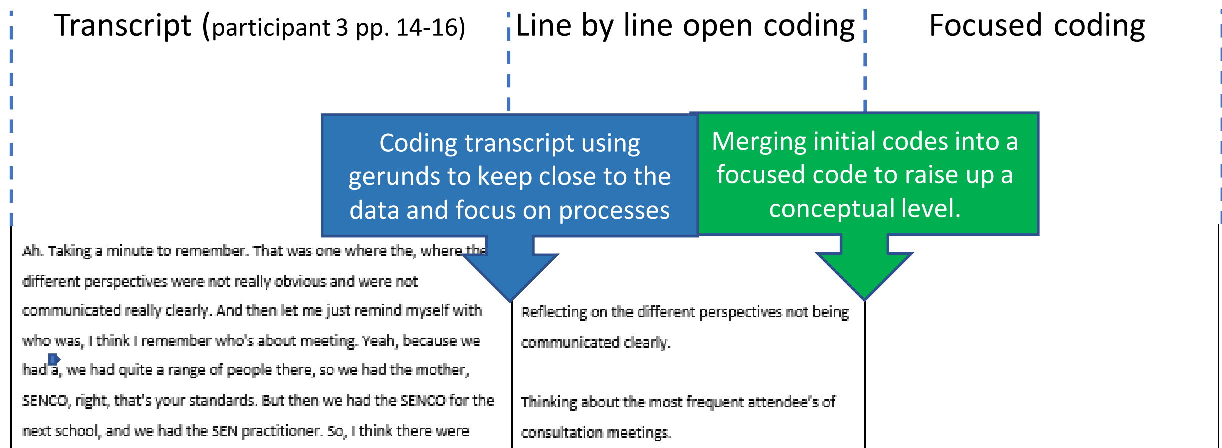
Number	Date started	Event	Title	Content
1	15/02/2021	Interview 1 open coding	Category name	Language as a signal of perspective change between consultee’s could use quotes as category or focused code names as they seem to encapsulate the process. "I see what you mean". This feels like it embodies a strong sense of perspective change and offers a useful example for the reader.
7	19/02/2021	Interview 2 open coding	Reflection - Coersion	Noticing defensiveness to perspective change.. what is this? Does it relate to coersion? I’m thinking of the balance of power and reference to institutional language paper.
8	22/02/2021	Interview 2 open coding	Reflection - school reputation	How does the EP’s perception of a school affect the strategies used? Or does it?
9	22/02/2021	Interview 2 open coding	Category name	Video consultation - ‘to and fro’. I think that encapsulates rapport building well.
10	22/02/2021	Interview 2 open coding	Category name	Consultation during covid= hypothetical "so when they go back". In vivo code. This has grab.
11	22/02/2021	Interview 2 open coding	Reflection - childrens rights, covid	Childs needs cant be fully met due to covid. How does this relate to childrens rights and ethics? Where does this sit with EP’s and how is it managed psychologically?
12	22/02/2021	Interview 2 open coding	Category name	Sowing the seeds of change...perspective change can happen after the consultation.
13	22/02/2021	Interview 3 open coding	Reflection - Remote consultations, quality worse but frequency better.	The quality of the problem solving conversations negatively impacted by remote working but the frequency is increased, as well as more opportunity to engage in multi-agency meetings.
14		Interview 3 open		EP presence has a direct and indirect affect on the system. Look at the change in dynamics, and

O Process of coding and analysing the data

(continued over the page)

Initial open and focused coding – phase one

The images below depict excerpts of two, phase 1 transcripts which were open coded in Microsoft Word. Using gerunds to focus on processes and keep close to the data, and forming focused codes from similar open codes to raise the analysis up conceptual levels.



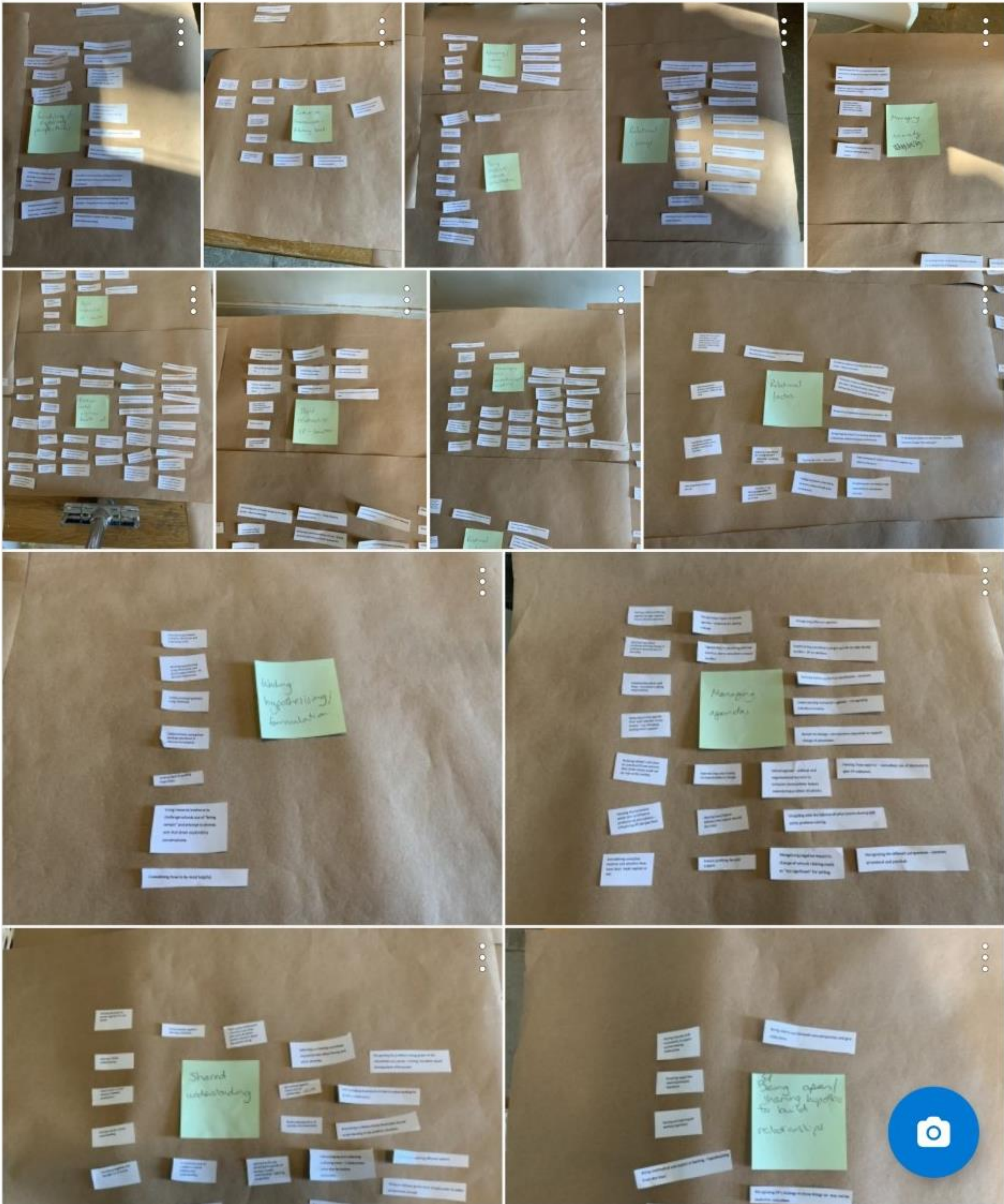
Transcript (participant 3 pp. 14-16)	Line by line open coding	Focused coding
Ah. Taking a minute to remember. That was one where the, where the different perspectives were not really obvious and were not communicated really clearly. And then let me just remind myself with who was, I think I remember who's about meeting. Yeah, because we had a, we had quite a range of people there, so we had the mother, SENCO, right, that's your standards. But then we had the SENCO for the next school, and we had the SEN practitioner. So, I think there were	Reflecting on the different perspectives not being communicated clearly. Thinking about the most frequent attendee's of consultation meetings.	

Transcript	Line by line open coding	Focused coding
different perspectives about what was considered the focus of the meeting, which was probably considered to be quite focused on things like the child's EHCP and what provision they need. But also, about the the other focus of this, like those these two focuses of the meeting, but the second focus, maybe there were, maybe some of the people would have been less interested in, was the challenges the child is experiencing right now. So for example, you have the SENCO of the, the child was in an Infant School and so would soon be moving to Junior School. So, you had the SENCO of the Junior School who has the focus of What does this, how am I going to support this child? What does this child need? What's the practical stuff? Where's the money? Is the paperwork in order to achieve those things?	Finding the focus of consultation is impacted by the views and range of attendee's. Finding the agenda of the consultee is impacted by their role. Noticing two main agenda's of the consultation driven by role of consultees. Finding consultees level of interest was centred on personal agenda e.g., SENCO transition to next school. Finding SENCO's focus was influenced by the systems in place (funding, how to meet needs, paperwork).	Linking agenda and role.
		Example of 5 codes suggesting EP 'linking consultee agenda and role' raised to focus code
And, I think there may have been a question about is this child too needy?	Noticing the SENCO wondered whether child was 'too needy'.	Noticing SENCO's judgements of child's needs.
Whereas I would say the SENCO of the current school would have been able to balance both that, because the SENCO has a pressure because the schools are connected, they have a pressure to help the other SENCO not give the other SENCO problems,	Noticing that established relationships between professionals impacts agenda (e.g., not making things difficult for other professional).	Recognising the impact of protecting relationships – unconscious collusion between professionals.
		Above shows two examples of raising a single code into a focused code as it had 'grab'.
but also was able to have in their mind, in her mind, their mind, whatever the, the current challenges, because the whole reason for getting me involved was supposed to be, well it was, I'm, I feel I don't know if I helped, was the child has experienced a lot of new challenges within the past I don't know six months or a year. So, the parents focus, perspective would have been, well, I'm aware that there's difficulties the child is facing, how are we going to help the child and and probably concern is the child getting right support.	Reflecting on EP's role to focus consultee's on how to best help the child. Not knowing if input helped. Recognising the different focus from each consultee.	Not knowing if consultation helped – managing professional uncertainty.
		Example of 5 initial codes raised into one focused code as an overarching gerund.
And then you've got the the SEND practitioners focus is is this paperwork in order is reflective, so are you really got You've really got that quite that strong contrast between actually those two roles that I was talking bout right	Finding the SEN practitioner focusing on paperwork.	Managing different agenda's – recognising impact of each on outcomes for the child.
at the start of this interview. There was basically that is the paperwork in order, is this administrative process all done properly? Which is an important thing, but to me is really different to, even though they would say it's about what are we doing to help the child in the school day today, it's actually completely different to that, because, again, if it's written on a piece of paper, it doesn't matter how beautifully it's written on a piece of paper and how much detail it's written on a piece of paper. The existence of that piece of paper does not change what's happening in the child's classroom. And that's actually a good example	Finding a strong contrast between the focus of the parent and SEN practitioner. Feeling frustrated about the focus on administrative processes by SEN practitioners – detracts from whats happening day to day for the child. Not valuing paper-based reports for changing child's experiences.	

Transcript (participant 1 pp. 10)	Line by line open coding	Focused coding
	Coding transcript using gerunds to keep close to the data and focus on processes	Merging initial codes into a focused code to raise up a conceptual level.
Yeah? So, um. What's what's a shame is I haven't. I know we haven't. We're not talking about this conversation yet, but once shame is, I haven't got his file with me because, I'm sure that this would have been one where there would have been lots of different things, um, written and some, actually sometimes when I am doing that somebody might say, "Oh", as if it's something they had never thought about before as well, and, and I think that's, that's another little shift that you can see and feel and, and I suppose if people are coming from different perspectives to hear somebody make a slight comment of "Oh, I, I see what you're saying", just again, develops that connected, connectiveness between, between people. So, so I suppose going back to your very first question, as an EP, I think. For me, I'm not the person that's going to make a difference in a child's day to day life, or young persons day-to-day life. It's those people who know that child best and who works, so the parents know their child best, the staff work with the child the most. It's about helping them develop that working relationship, so I suppose that's another thing that's always on my mind of how to bring that together and reinforce those little cues that you guess those little clues as well. That people are starting to see, see, that that they have got that connection with each other.	Noticing a consultee saying," oh" as a signal of perspective change. Noticing perspective shift that you can see and feel. Reflecting that noticing a shift in others can develop connectiveness between people. Reflecting that EP is not going to make a difference in the child's day to day life. Acknowledging that it is the people that know the child best that makes the difference to the CYP. Helping the system around the child to develop a working relationship. Keeping in mind building relationship between consultees. Reinforcing cues and clues to support relationship building between consultees.	Example of 2 initial codes forming one focused code of EPs recognising consultee perspective shift. Verbal cues of perspective shift – "oh, I see what your saying". Linking perspective change to connectiveness between people. Example of raising a single code into a focused code. Raised up a conceptual level. **Acknowledging the importance and prioritising the working relationship between the people the know the child best.** Example of 5 initial codes raised into one focused code around developing the working relationship between the adults as an overarching gerund.

Phase 1 finding themes and tentative categories

Images below depict some examples of phase one analysis using an iterative process of constant data comparison using large sheets of paper to aid visualisation.



Giving a voice

Refocusing on Child

Energy change (perspective change)

Content of consultee's /

Being explicit about consultation

Phase 1 themes

List of focused codes and tentative categories developed from phase 1 paper-based analysis (interviews 1-3) transferred to NVIVO. Iterative process continues, resulting in some label name changes and amalgamation of similar themes, continuing to raise conceptual levels. A worked example of the development of a category from focused codes is indicated in red below

The four processes raised as focused codes describe the EP shifting focus back on the child where this may have waned. Forming a theme of 'refocusing on the child'

Categories 1-3

Name	Files	References	Create	Created	Modi
Noticing perspective change	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Noticing visual cues	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing body language	3	6	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing thoughtful pause and consideration	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing respectful reactions and listening	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing verbal cues	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
I see what your saying	3	4	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing insightful comments	2	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Looking past the behaviour	2	3	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing consultee's link to external factors	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Lets find another piece of the puzzle	2	3	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Sensing a shift in energy	1	5	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Refocusing on the child	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Advocating for the child	3	9	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Focusing on hopes for the future	2	6	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Recognising inclusivity	3	3	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Considering collusion between professionals	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Challenging narratives	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Exploring the context	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Exploring biological factors	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Exploring child's past experiences	2	3	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Using evidence to challenge	2	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Acknowledging current context	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Whats theirs and whats the childs	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Being tentative	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Using the power of wondering	3	3	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Using indirect gentle questioning	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Using systemic techniques	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Reframing behaviour	2	6	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Widening perspectives	2	4	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Building relationships	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Building rapport	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Glimmers of hope and little pockets of opportunity	3	8	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Considering body language	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Empathising with individual contexts	2	7	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Recognising individual needs	2	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Managing flow	3	7	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Recognising dynamics	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing relationship between consultees	3	5	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Recognising EP's are invited	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Thinking about the affect of the EP on the system	1	4	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Supporting the supporter	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Making links	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Facilitating collaboration	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Reinforcing importance of collaboration	1	3	25/03/	HB	25/03/

Gaining a shared understanding	3	9	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Facilitating multi-agency working	2	5	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Managing conflicting views	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Acknowledging conflicting views	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Moving things on	3	3	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising inexplicit conflict	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Managing attempts at redirection to own agenda	2	3	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Pulling threads together	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Aligning agendas	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Taking one step back to look at the bigger picture	2	4	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Summarising	1	6	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Moving forward	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Considering barriers	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Recognising practical barriers	2	5	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising psychological barriers	2	3	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Supporting adults to change	3	8	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Recognising EP responsibility	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Being reflective and reflexive	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Practicing reflectivity	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Being affected by bureaucracy	2	2	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Making professional judgments	2	4	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Reflecting on EP practice	1	3	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Thinking reflexively	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Considering the power of the EP voice	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising own assumptions	2	4	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising experience and confidence	3	5	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising personal feelings	2	8	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising personal philosophy	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Managing agendas	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Being aware of own agenda as an EP	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Communicating purpose of consultation	3	5	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Setting clear expectations	3	7	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Being explicit about challenges	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Communicating the role of the EP	2	6	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Recognising attempts to get EP on side	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Noticing behaviours to influence	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Hearing narratives aimed to influence	3	9	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Empathising with consultee agenda	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Thinking about ecosystemic factors	3	9	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Understanding preconceptions	3	10	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Considering consultee self-efficacy	2	2	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Hypothesising	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Internal hypothesising	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Using psychological theory	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Considering how to be helpful	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,

Code					
Being aware of transference	2	4	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Considering relational maintaining factors	3	3	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Openness to change	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Whats happening under the surface	1	1	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Joint hypothesising	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Sharing and exploring working hypothesis	1	5	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Voicing in the moment thinking	1	2	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Finding all the pieces of the puzzle	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/0
Equality of voice	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Stopping the stream of dominant conversation	3	9	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Facilitating a therapeutic space	3	5	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Building a rich understanding	0	0	25/03/	HB	25/03/
Gathering a range of background information	2	8	25/03/	HB	25/03,
Focusing on hopes for the future	2	6	25/03/	HB	02/11,
Thinking about individual motivation	2	3	25/03/	HB	25/03,

Phase 2 analysis (interviews 4-6)

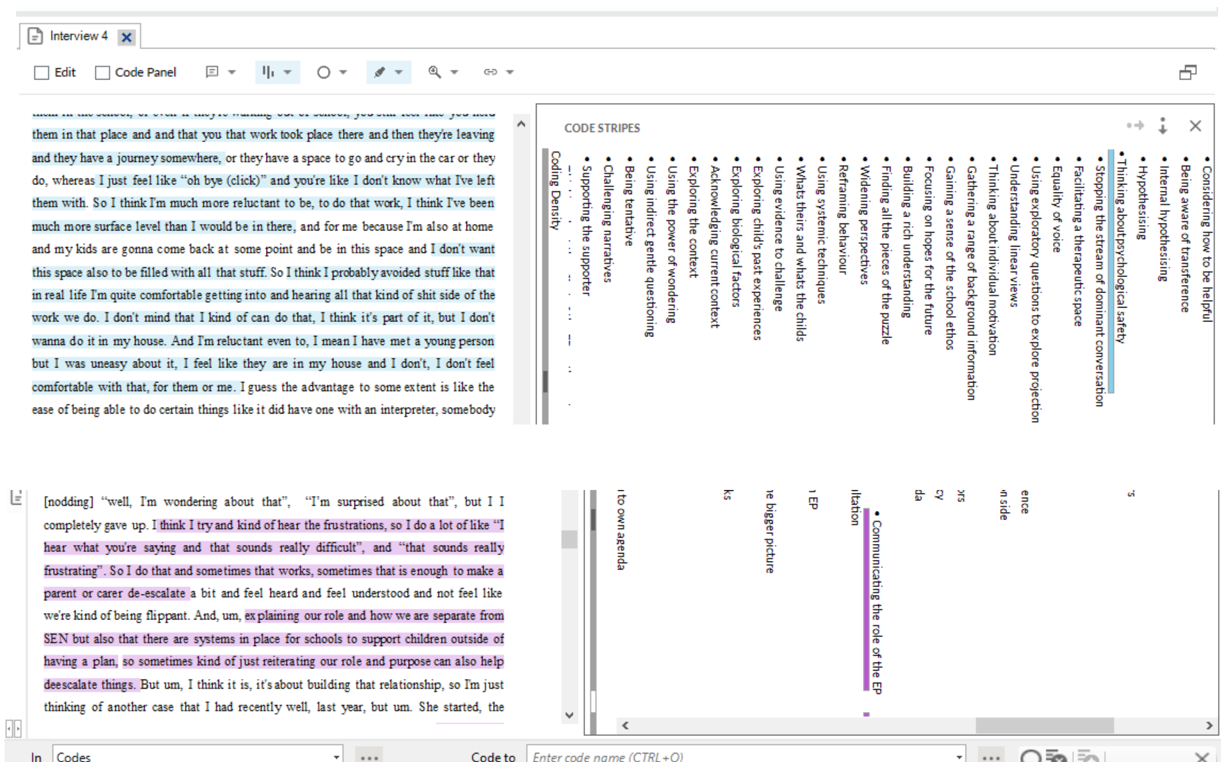
Initial coding in gerunds using Microsoft Word as it was felt there would be too many codes generated in Nvivo which would make it clunky and overwhelming.

The visual below depicts and example transcript of a phase 2 interview (4).

Transcript	Open coding
feel like in [LA], [redacted information] I do feel like that sort of task of doing full consultations is a little bit lost, so I don't, I don't feel like I do that as well and as regularly, but when I was in previous practice I think I would do that all the, like as standard, I would certainly and I still do ask about kind of birth and early years and will try and ask about the events that have happened. I think I try and do it within a containing framework, so that's a bit harder remotely I think, but trying to make sure that they feel safe with me and that I've set out I guess what my role is and why I'm asking, so I might say "these are questions that I ask everybody so that I can get a bit of a background and find out what's happening at home", so that you're you're trying to set the scene that you've not kind of picked something deliberate and I would try and make sure that, that they felt listened to and heard in the session that was giving them my full attention and that I was hearing and, um, I guess doing that, um, active listening. Kind of feeding back that "also what I'm hearing is this" or "that sounds really difficult, is there somebody you can talk to about that"? Or, you know, "is that something that we can share with the school 'cause that might be really helpful"? And, and I might do a bit of like psychoeducation around you know, sometimes worries that children and young people have can come from their parents and sometimes it can be helpful for parents to talk about that or get support. Um, and in terms of whether it's worked, I don't know that's tricky because, I don't know, I suppose my, my aim in doing it and why I'm doing it is to try and kind of open up thinking and try and sort of get people to think about things a bit differently and think about their involvement and what they	Asking about birth and early years – other events that have happened. Trying to ask exploratory questions within a containing framework. Trying to make the consultee feel safe. Setting out EP role and purpose of questions. Not singling consultee's out - I ask everybody these questions. Not wanting consultee's to feel singled out – questioning. Making sure consultee's feel listened to. Giving consultee EP's full attention – active listening. Feeding back "what I am hearing is this". Empathising with consultee "that sounds really difficult" Helping consultee to feel supported "is there somebody you can talk to about that?". Asking permission to share useful insights with other consultee. Using psychoeducation to change perspectives. Finding it tricky to tell if perspectives have changed. Trying to open up thinking – thinking differently. Trying to support consultee to think about their involvement Shifting away from within-child.

Following initial coding in Microsoft Word, focused coding was completed in NVIVO so that the data was easier to handle and compare as the number of interviews increased.

The image below depicts two examples transcript of interview 4 which was focused coded using NVIVO.



Development of categories following phase 2 analysis

Through constant comparison of data, codes were raising up conceptual levels by reflecting on 'what does this mean' as well as considering the critical realist underpinnings of the research. Therefore, subsuming codes into themes, and themes into categories whilst rejecting themes not directly relevant to research question.

The image below denotes the coding frequency of all 7 interviews, indicating the large amount of data that was gathered.

Files

Name	Codes	References	Modified on	Modified by
Interview 1	155	396	16/03/2021 14:03	HB
Interview 2	159	277	15/03/2021 23:52	HB
interview 3	160	327	19/04/2021 00:14	HB
Interview 4	112	414	25/03/2021 15:58	HB
Interview 5	109	306	28/03/2021 09:49	HB
Interview 6	117	358	29/03/2021 22:47	HB
Interview 7	85	216	30/03/2021 20:23	HB

The image below shows the themes and tentative categories after phase 2 interviews and iterative process of analysing the data alongside data gathering.

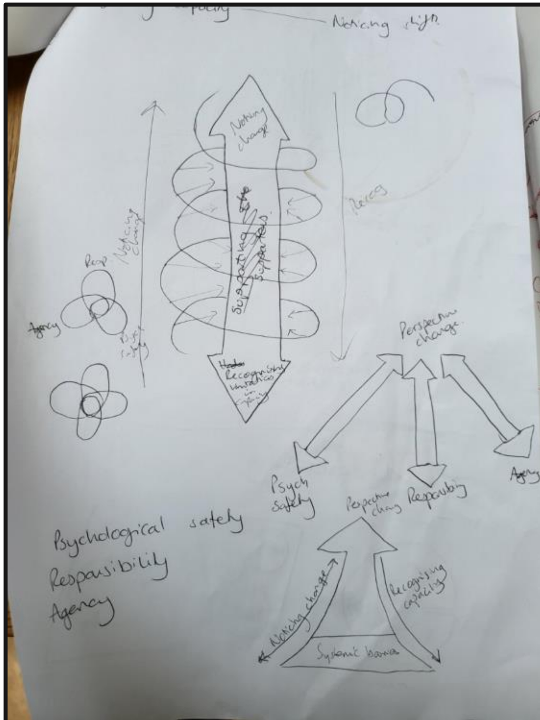
Perspective change in EP consultations

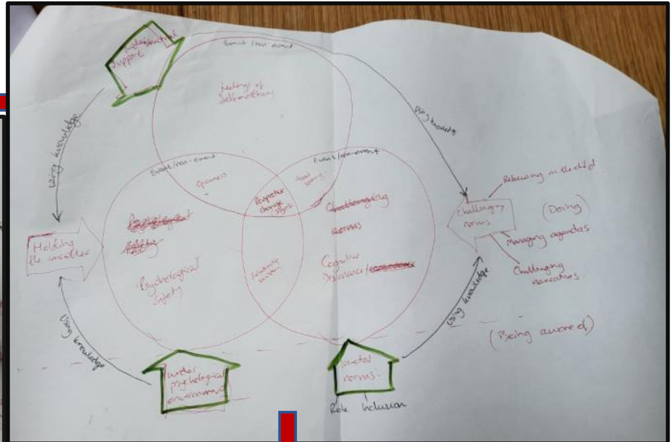
Name	Files	Referen	Created on	Created	Mod
Understanding systemic barriers	0	0	13/05/2021	HB	27/0
Undervaluing supporters	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	13/05,
Bureaucracy	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	13/05,
Blame culture	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	13/05,
RECOGNISING - Openness to change	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	27/0
Sense of responsibility	6	11	02/04/2021	HB	28/05,
Sense of psychological safety	4	9	02/04/2021	HB	28/05,
Sense of agency	4	8	02/04/2021	HB	28/05,
NOTICING - Consultees shift in thinking	0	0	21/05/2021	HB	21/0
Noticing increased openness	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	13/05,
Noticing consultees making new links	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	13/05,
DOING - Supporting new thinking	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	25/0
Offering a therapeutic space	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	05/04,
Challenging narratives	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	24/05,
BEING - Being a reflexive scientist practitioner	0	0	02/04/2021	HB	20/0
Making professional judgements	0	0	13/05/2021	HB	13/05,

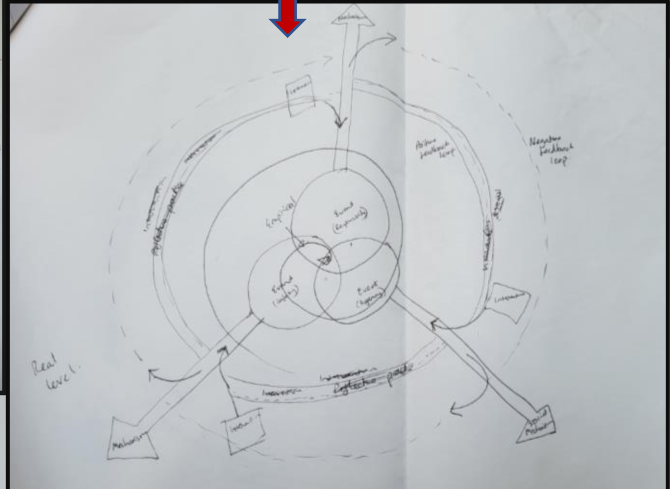
Diagramming and theorising

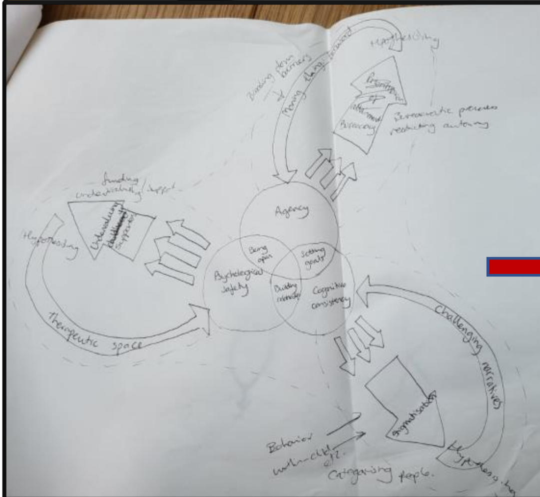
To support the development of categories and themes I engaged in diagramming Selected examples of initial diagramming. This involved continued comparison of all data sets, comparing memos to recognise relationships as well as referring to the critical realist model to conceptualise interactions.

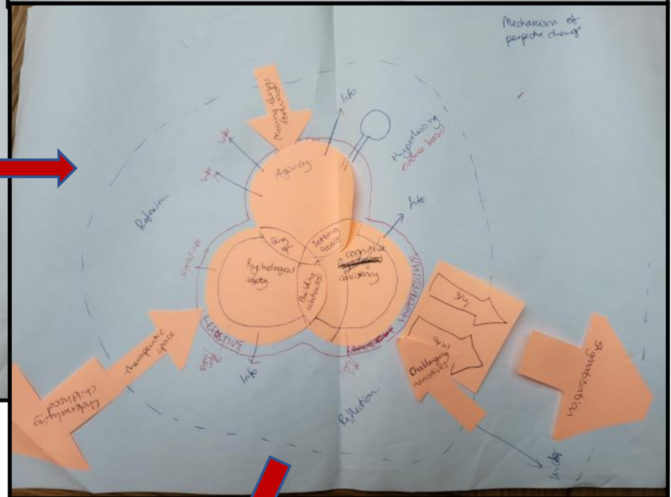
The images below are selected to show the overall development of the model.











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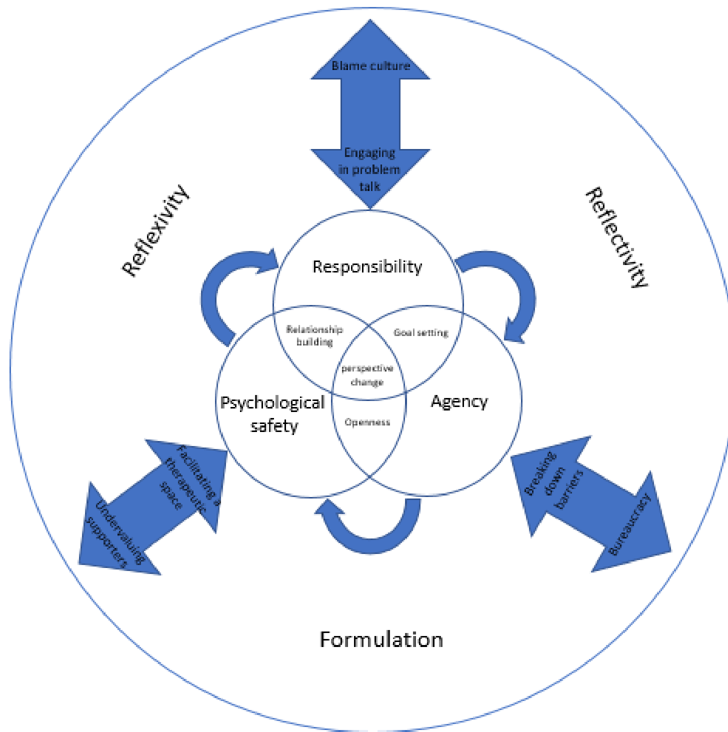
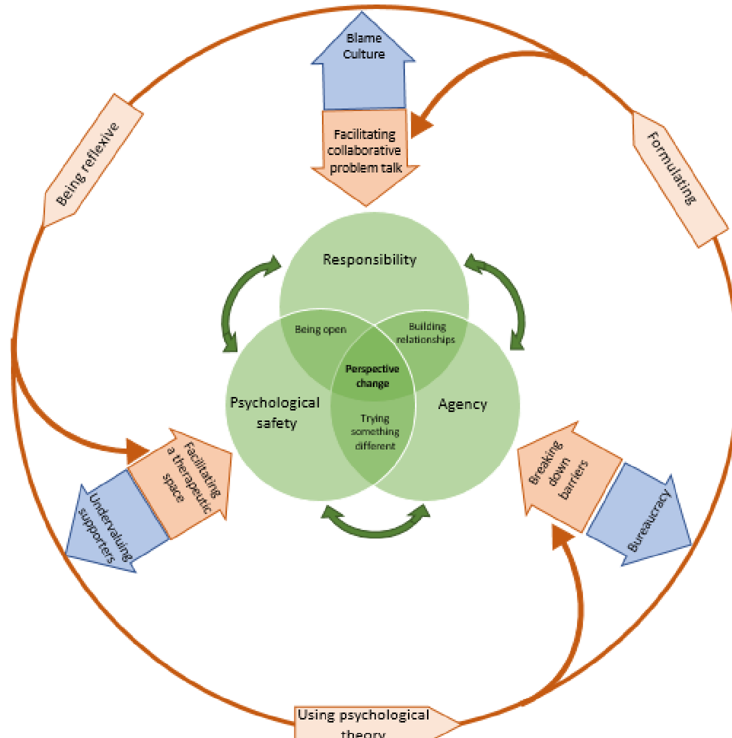
Initial model of perspective change
version 1



Initial model of perspective change
version 2



Diagramming and theorising continued

After reviewing the progression of the model, I decided that it was too complicated to be useful, primarily due to the richness of the data and the subsequent number of themes and categories that had been identified during the data analysis. Therefore, the themes 'being a reflexive practitioner' (reflexivity, reflectivity and formulation) as well as 'noticing perspective change' were removed from the model as it was felt that although they were indirectly related to the process of perspective change, they were not directly relevant to the research question. In addition, continued constant comparison of the focused codes and themes, and integration of memos resulted in some themes being subsumed into overarching themes, as well as label changes which felt more congruent with the theme.

The image below depicts the themes which were deemed directly relevant to the research question and therefore included in the final grounded theory model.

July 2021

Name	File	Referer
Process of perspective change	0	0
Openness to change	0	0
Sense of psychological safety	4	9
Power balance	3	3
Sensing support for own agenda	3	4
Capacity to manage emotions	3	9
Sense of agency	4	8
Reliance on quantifiability	2	3
Managing competing demands	4	7
Confidence in overcoming barriers	4	9
Sense of responsibility	6	11
Purpose of evidence	4	9
Engaging in denial	5	8
Perceptions of inclusion	4	6
Attribution of causality	6	15
Shifting responsibility to others	6	17
Sociopolitical barriers	0	0
Undervaluing supporters	0	0
Feeling undervalued	3	4
Feeling undersupported	3	7
Culture of blame	0	0
EP role in accountability	1	1
Fear of repercussions	2	4
Bureaucracy	0	0
EP as the gatekeep	3	8
Prioritising paperwork	2	9
Supporting new thinking	0	0
Challenging narratives	0	0

- Purposful questioning 0 0
  - Being direct - using evidence to challenge 4 12
  - Being tentative - the power of wondering 5 11
- Looking at the bigger picture 5 15
- Facilitating empathy and connection 6 15
  - Looking from the childs perspective 6 18
- Reframing behaviour 6 17

- Breaking down barriers 0 0
  - Scaffolding next steps 0 0
    - Taking practical steps 0 0
      - Recording and review 6 10
      - collaborating on next steps 7 20
  - Exploring their role 2 5
    - Coaching the supporter 1 1
    - Supporting skill development 3 7
  - Thinking about solutions 5 17
  - Agreeing outcomes 7 15
    - Facilitating a shared agenda 4 15

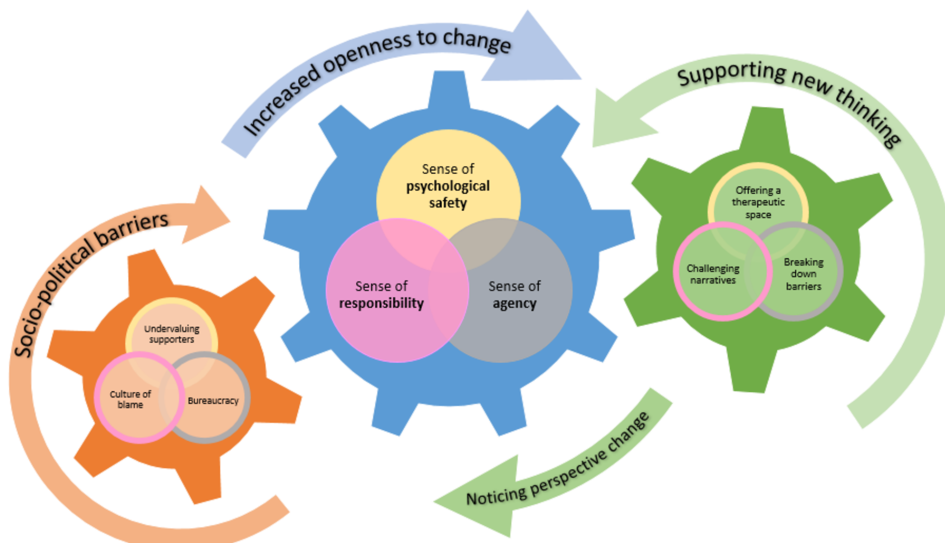
- Offering a therapeutic space 0 0
  - Setting expectations 6 22
  - Empowering consultees 7 20
    - Managing flow 5 12
  - Rapport building 7 24
  - Validating perspectives 7 24
    - Feeling contained 3 13
      - Thinking about how the unsettling lands 2 7
    - Going a bit deeper 4 14
    - Validating perspectives 7 31

Although not included in the main grounded theory, the theme 'noticing consultees shift in thinking' has been included for reference in relation to the evaluation tool. The themes are depicted below.

Noticing consultees shift in thinking	0	0
Noticing increased openness	0	0
Noticing imporved relational dynamics	4	8
Sharing example of the same thing	3	3
Finding another piece of the puzzle	5	7
Trying something different	5	10
Noticing consultees making new links	0	0
New meaning	0	0
Linking to past experiences	1	2
Reflecting EP discourse	1	2
Verbalising new thinking	2	5
I see what you mean	4	7
Seeing body language	2	3
Noticing thoughtful pause	1	3
Sensing an energy shift	2	2
Sowing the seed	2	3

Final diagramming and theorising

The image below depicts the final model of perspective change, showing the development of the final categories and sub-categories and the relationship between them.



P Table of themes and supporting quotes

Category/sub-category	Theme/focused code	Data example 1	Data example 2
Sense of psychological safety	Power balance	"If you think about the power dynamics when it's when the parents come into the school, is that kind of on the school turf, so the teacher is in charge. And also, I think about the parents that I'm thinking of right now are the ones who've had negative experiences of school. So being called into the teachers office is really anxiety provoking for them." *(Participant 5)*	"I think his wife possibly had some insight into the learning needs, but was never in a position to be able to voice those views." *(Participant 7)*
	Capacity to manage emotions	"…she just could not she was in a, in an emotional place state where she was not able to, not ready to, to hear any suggestions" *(Participant 5)*	"…in terms of health, health anxieties like physical health anxieties, in terms of mental health anxieties, that goes, goes across the board, that's that goes for everyone. So, I suppose always having in back in my mind when people are being quite forthright about their views about something, what else is going on for them?" *(Participant 1)*
	Sensing support for own agenda	"Whereas now I can see as a parent, you've got nothing, and you got your child with needs, and you've got some bloody panel saying, 'oh you can't have it'.	"…or whether straight when you sit down they both look at you. Your like, 'oh OK, you haven't even said hello to each other'." *(Participant 6)*

		But how would you then get to a point of a curious thinking space to work together, if you just feel like this group of people that don't know your child and have never met them, are making a decision about them that essentially is based on funding?" *(Participant 4)*	
Sense of responsibility	Attribution of causality	"And then we can move forward, and I think it's often the case, a lot of the time teachers blame parents, parents blame teachers and actually the child's been forgotten in that, that process." *(Participant 5)*	"Their construction of the problem, I mean they, they could look at things completely differently." *(Participant 6)*
	Perceptions of inclusion	"And then I've observed her trying to do literacy and she can't recognize letters and phonemes and so well, I rather than say, characterizing this as some peculiar behavioural problem she's developed, I mean, that's rubbish being stuck in a classroom with all these other kids who are reading and writing, and you haven't even got like a few basic phonemes and letters down." *(Participant 3)*	"…the sort of things that you put in place for a very happy loved child, isn't going to work and then sometime and then they can't tolerate that frustration I think, and so then they do things which are actually further excluding like part time timetable and you know, not letting her go on trips…" *(Participant 5)*
	Purpose of evidence	"Because when they churn out "well, we've done this, and we've done this", or "he's like this at home" or ra ra ra, you feel like	"And schools might be shuffling bits of paper and putting like targets or plans in front of parents and saying, you know,

		'oh, we, this person's been there, this is their kind of narrative and that can be really helpful, I'm not knocking that…" *(Participant 4)*	we've been doing this…" *(Participant 1)*
Sense of agency	Reliance on quantifiability	"…'they want to get rid of this child and I'm fighting really hard' and stuff and so I think definitely yeah, kind of the, um, yeah, that wider performance related kind of measurement…" *(Participant 2)*	"And also, they might have things that they don't need to normally express to each other relating to their roles. For example, the school SENCO maybe has other pressures that they don't need to talk to a parent about but they do relate to the system and how they work with the LAN and SEN." *(Participant 3)*
	Managing competing demands	"…we turned up, and although we were all meant to be meeting together, only Mum was there and then we waited forever for the member of staff to appear and then Mum had gone off and it was all just completely like, just I mean again, I suppose that's not one that you can't overcome, but that does make it difficult…" *(Participant 2)*	"I do recall a year two teacher, or a couple of year two teachers saying that, but not peevishly, it was just, they were just echoing the reality of the situation, one of whom said, 'well, I've just got to get all my class up to a year 2 standard in the year 2 curriculum. I can't spend more time with this child who is way, way behind in literacy'." *(Participant 7)*
	Confidence in overcoming barriers	"…I think that we're generally lucky because we're talking to the SENCO's so we don't, we don't hear that so much like, directly. But obviously you hear it more indirectly, like there are certainly SENCO's	"I think it's more challenging if you can see that, uh, the school, for example, or the school environment for whatever reason, structurally perhaps, it's not capable, or would have great

		who say that they'll never give us the funding for that…" *(Participant 2)*	difficulty in changing the way in which they do things." *(Participant 7)*
Bureaucracy	Prioritising paperwork	"I felt like a sort of SEN admin person. Really and no offence to SEN admin people, but that's not, that's not the EP role but I feel like it grinds you down a little bit. Lose some of that curiosity and then you try and get it back in enhanced work, but the situations are so embedded and so difficult, and schools have often lost the ability to be curious that you, I do it, but you are on an uphill…" *(Participant 4)*	"The existence of a piece of paper or a file on my computer does not change a child's experience in school." *(Participant 3)*
	EP as the gatekeeper	"Yeah, quite a mismatch between people's expectations of an EP's involvement but, the purpose of the meeting, and I'm just thinking back to a few meetings where parents have come in and they've been thinking that the meeting was very much about, the EP being linked to resources or something like that." *(Participant 1)*	"Like all those things that then you kind of think well, if you're sort of going in there and doing "oh how does it make you feel" they are just a bit like, 'shut up and just give us a needs assessment'." *(Participant 4)*
Culture of blame	EP role in accountability	"And what my role is in other parts of my work, where I, I am just that expert who writes reports or tell tells people what to do. And so, it's not even just that they have a misconception about what I'm trying	

		to do in the meeting today. That's quite understandable view because that is what I do half of the rest of my time anyway.” *(Participant 3)*	
	Fear of repercussions	“I think like at school level, I mean well and it's kind of beyond that, like in terms of Ofsted and results and stuff. You know, I think that that can be a barrier because it's not is it? It's still like about the business of a school. I guess it's not worth it, not worth it to have some of these children in school because it pulls down your attendance. They're not going to achieve.” *(Participant 2)*	“So, I guess sometimes you, you get stuff there like when you're trying to help them change their perspective, like almost like defensive if they can sense that that's what you're trying to do.” *(Participant 2)*
Undervaluing supporters	Feeling under-supported	“What, what, what else do they bring into a situation and I'm really aware that school staff have absolutely been shafted over the past seven months. They, they have been at the bottom rung, but at the top in terms of accountability of supporting children and young people, and I think that they, they have done the most amazing job and kept it together and every day they live a level at a greater or lesser extent…” *(Participant 1)*	“…so, there's a lot of feelings of, you know these parents have been through a lot. They've, their child's been rejected and rejected, rejected by the time they've ended up in a provision like that, you know they've been excluded and there's a very, there's a lot of mistrust of authority and its well-placed mistrust because they've been let down a lot by lots of people.” *(Participant 5)*
	Feeling undervalued	“I think the later it is, the more entrenched it is, and the more	“And I think it get, I think we're often brought in just when

		fixated people have got on the problem and then when you're trying to shift the problem and say maybe that's not the problem, maybe this is the problem they are already like no, this is the problem." *(Participant 4)*	they're about to be excluded and um that's when the relationship has broken down." *(Participant 5)*
Breaking down barriers	Agreeing outcomes	"So, I suppose having opportunities to really explore those different perspectives so you can come to some sort of, um shared understanding about what, what both players want as, as an outcome?" *(Participant 1)*	"…for every one, you almost gotta find what makes the, so let's say the SENCO or teacher is not budging, you've got to sort of by questioning, try to find what, um, what is going to make them tick." *(Participant 6)*
	Exploring their role	"…but actually, the majority of the consultation was about role, and her in role and what she thought her role was and where could she get support and what happened when she lacked confidence, and did she have to know everything? And how could she pass stuff back? And who could she share things with…" *(Participant 4)*	"I recognize and helping other people recognize what are, what are the different roles and capacities are, so basically the idea that I need to help you figure out what you're going to do? Because I can't do it for you and sometimes that's part of the journey as well." *(Participant 3)*
	Scaffolding next steps	"OK. What might be happening and what's, what's the next piece that we can perhaps focus on? But that isn't, isn't already in place?" *(Participant 1)*	"So let's make a plan, I'm gonna write down step one, step two, step three. If we, we've decided that we are gonna try position teaching right then when we gonna start it, If I were to check in with you next week, what will I see that's different? Um, if I was

			to check in with you in three weeks, what will I notice." *(Participant 5)*
	Thinking about solutions	"I think if yeah, if it felt like the people I was talking with were very as you said, focused on the problem, focused on the past rather than the trying to think about how to move forward. I might explicitly start asking them OK, well, what are you hoping for going forward? What do you hope from this meeting? Or what would you like to happen? Or asking them what do you think needs to happen? For example, what support do you think the child needs?" *(Participant 3)*	"…ones got to blend that together with the drawing out of consultation situations, the solutions, because I do think that is very very powerful, if one can draw out the solutions to the situation, through providing the right questions really and that's the, that's the real skill of it." *(Participant 7)*
Challenging narratives	Facilitating empathy and connection	"…that it is getting the teachers to understand that it's really hard being a parent, and parents have got lots of other things they're competing with and then, maybe, supporting the parents to understand the school perspective a little bit and how the parents can support school to get the child to learn." *(Participant 5)*	"…remind ourselves of where that child has been and what that might mean now. I think to help them understand where that child is coming from, and I think that, that can help with perspective change…" *(Participant 2)*
	Looking at the bigger picture	"I sort of like to take a step back and open up, um, the problem situation or whatever people are bringing to	"I reiterate what's going on, so I'd probably say, I think at that meeting, I was like at that meeting I

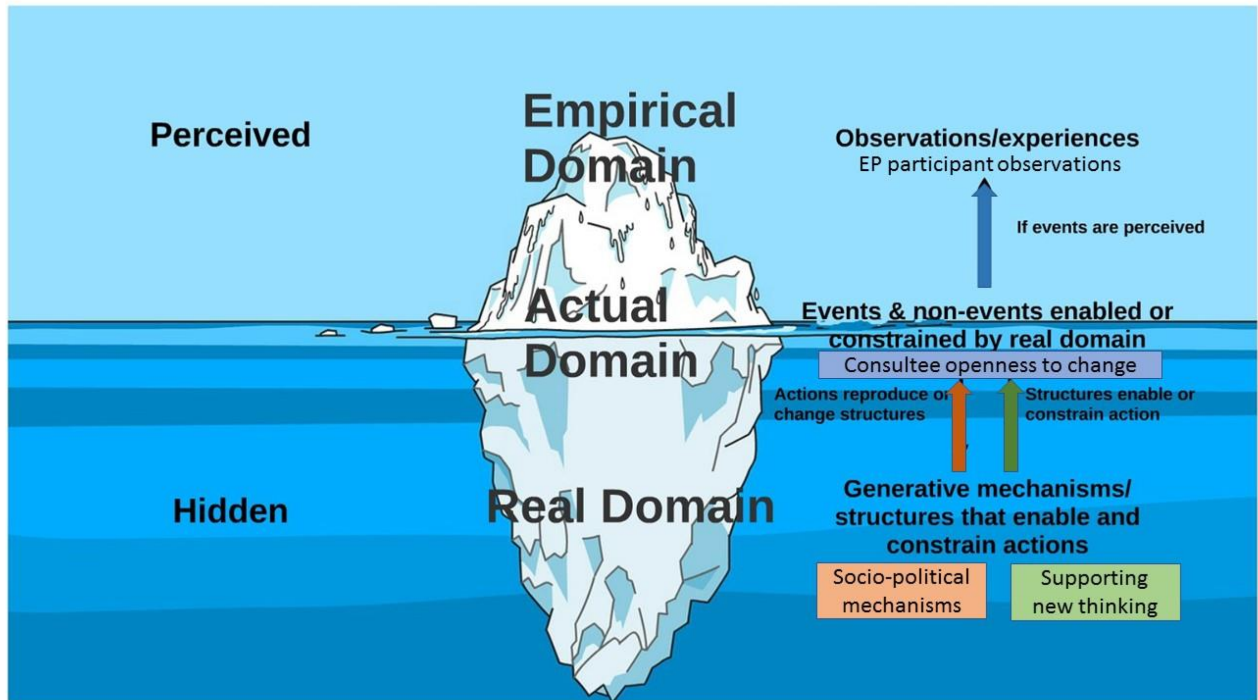
		the situation, to explore what might be going on overall before narrowing it down…" *(Participant 1)*	was like, OK, so this is what, this is the situation how I understand it, so school this is your position. The child, this is how he's feeling about it…" *(Participant 6)*
	Purposeful questioning	"I do find that the more experienced I become that I do have the confidence sometimes to say things. That, um, do adopt that more kind of expert model. I think sometimes that can be quite helpful to, especially when you're coming up to things which bordering on child protection or safeguarding issues. I think it can be quite helpful to just say you know we need to keep them safe or something like that, which is more kind of direct." *(Participant 5)*	"I guess a couple of things like I do the 'I wonder' a lot, like so 'I wonder why they might be doing that', or 'I wonder, like what that's saying' and things like that. Like if it was about behaviour and stuff." *(Participant 2)*
	Reframing behaviour	"But I think trying to help people see, what are the demands that are being made of this child and I'm trying I, I literally have written in that paragraph, it's understandable, because it's trying to say that you know, lets, lets think about what is a reasonable expectation of this human being, not just a child. Um, what how we would expect that person to feel and how we would expect	"And you know when you say things like it's not, if you think of, if you sort of say "attention" then you can say , you say "connection", you know actually he wants to connect with an adult. And what does it mean to him? Why does he want that attention? Then you can see them start to shift that perspective." *(Participant 5)*

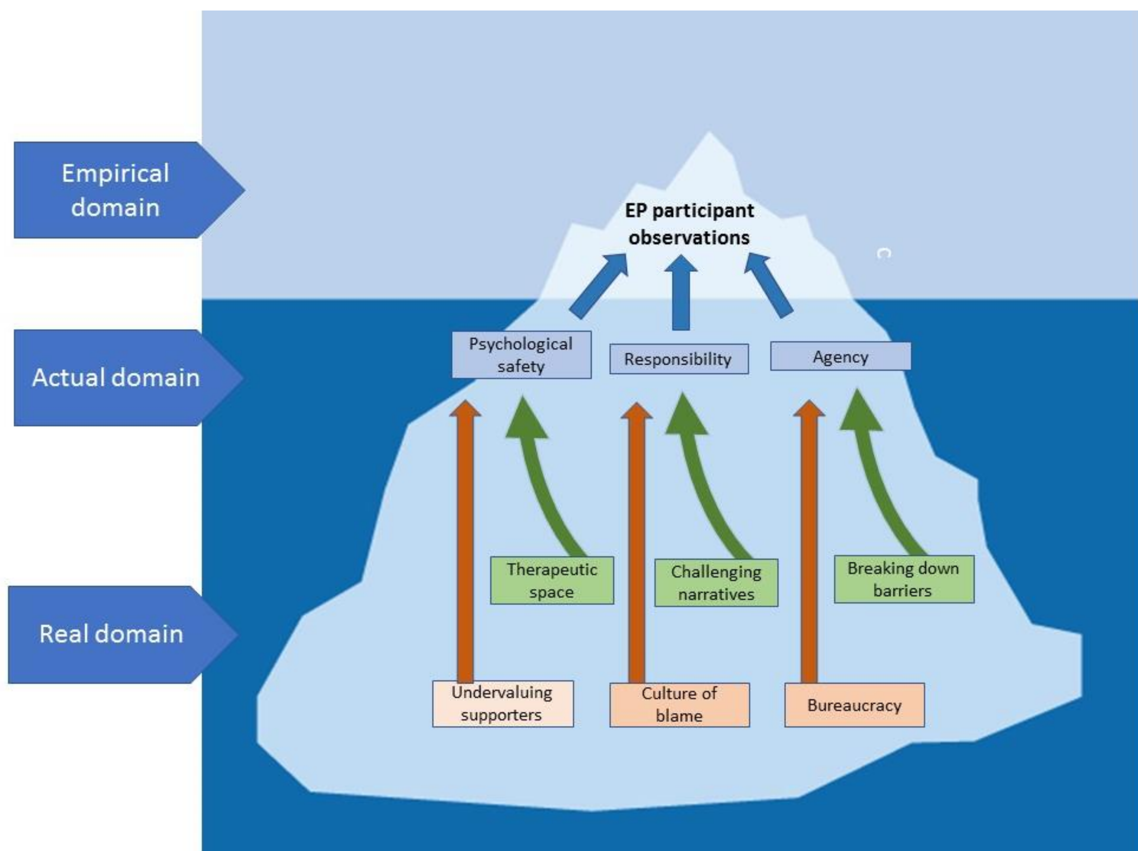
		that person to behave. And then we can also identify what the problem is. Making her feel crap about herself and giving her completely impossible things to try and do. Well, then you know, if you remove that, you might find that whatever that challenging behaviour and, and anxiety and avoidant behaviour is might magically disappear.” *(Participant 3)*	
Offering a therapeutic space	Empowering consultees	“…like on the positive side of things, I think it does give that 'cause you're doing it separately in, perhaps because it's over the phone and there's some kind of detachment. Maybe some parents are more confident, or, in that situation, 'cause it's just over the phone and there's not that being in a school setting. There's not that seeing me as kind of a professional like, you know, with my proper bag and whatever like normal, you know like work trousers and stuff like it's all, I probably look teachery. Like [redacted information] always says. And I I'm sure that that doesn't help sometimes.” *(Participant 2)*	“I can say, well I, I can find the diplomatic way of saying “now we need to hear from this person”. So, in reality the diplomatic way of doing that would be things like “Oh well, that's really interesting” or “that's really helpful”. You do some kind of demonstrating that you're listening and valuing, listening to and valuing what the person says, so you might do you're ‘saying it's interesting’, ‘saying that’s helpful’, reflecting back what they've said in other words, to make sure and then, so then you've stopped that stream of dominant conversation by doing that, and then explicitly saying, “oh, and what does so and so think?” *(Participant 3)*

	Rapport building	"…but usually you have that kind of "Oh, this is a funny room where in" or "do you want a cup of tea?" Or "oh, they've gone now" or "I don't know if someone is coming back" or "how funny were sitting on kids chairs?" Or "what's that noise out there" like you just get those things walking down the corridor that create a rapport to then mean that you've got more of a relationship to get to what's that about what is happening." *(Participant 4)*	"I think the main thing would be the rapport building might seem silly, but that's a massive thing that helps you move or not the situation forward." *(Participant 6)*
	Setting expectations	"So what's really, really important is to have that exploratory discussion right at the beginning with the problem owner, to explore how you're going to get involved and why you are getting involved and what the outcomes are, before you actually get to that consultation, collaborative meeting, so that you're clear about your involvement, other people are clear, and, and I suppose it is about being clear in the meeting, that that's, that's what's been contracted." *(Participant 1)*	"I think when you're working with people that are particularly anxious or particularly well, I guess the defensiveness and anger is usually from a place of anxiety so kinda hearing and containing it practically ,with not only by saying "oh I hear it and I understand it", but also by saying "this meeting is going to be an hour, we're gonna cover this, here's an email to say what we've covered" can help bring things down and stop people being quite so aggressive or anxious." *(Participant 4)*
	Validating perspectives	"Kind of feeding back that also 'what I'm hearing is this' or 'that	"…the meeting can be a consultation of coming together

		sounds really difficult, is there somebody you can talk to about that'?" *(Participant 4)*	where everyone feels like they've come from a position that they think that they, they feel like they've been heard then, um, we can try and get them to see things from the child's point of view." *(Participant 5)*

Q Visual of critical realist approach to theory development





R Supporting findings – Noticing perspective change

Running throughout all seven interviews was the notion of participants being able to recognise when perspective change may have occurred by noticing a range of visual, verbal and sensory indicators communicated by the consultees during the meeting. Although not integral to the process of perspective change, I considered that understanding and noticing when consultees had experienced a change in perspective was integral to the role of the EP in recognising the process of change and is therefore useful to consider in relation to the grounded theory model and reflecting on practice.

A number of participants spoke about noticing changes in non-verbal communication displayed by consultees, which they interpreted as meaning perspective change was occurring:

> *"…you'll get those moments, and they'll stop and be speechless from it and it's that, I think, is that moment that you think, or something happened…"*
>
> *Participant 4, line 142 – 143*

Here, participant 4 talks about recognising moments of speechlessness as an indicator that there was a shift in thinking. These pauses suggest that there are key points during the consultation where a quantitative shift happens rather than change happening gradually. This is supported by Participant 5 who reflected on "seeing" the shift in thinking through body language, which was noticed as often happening before it is communicated verbally.

Two participants talked about feeling an energy shift within the room indicating a shift in thinking has occurred:

> *"I suppose it is about energy and I think that's the thing which it's really hard to, it's hard to explain, it's probably nothing, you know it's not, not coming from anything that I was ever taught about, but you know you can, you can feel an energy shift at some point."*
>
> *Participant 1, line 191 – 194*

In the quote above, participant 1 talks about it being "hard" to describe the "energy shift" in concrete terms, but reflected that it was an indicator of perspective change that they had acquired through professional practise rather than being explicitly taught. This suggests a level of professional reflexivity that is needed to attune to shifts in energy and recognise subtle signs and indicators.

A strong theme that emerged from the majority of interviews was the opportunity to recognise a shift in thinking through consultee use of discourse:

> *"I think that moment which I love in a consultation, which you don't often get but when they go 'oooh, I haven't thought of it like that!'*
>
> *Participant 4, line 46 – 47.*

Here, participant 4 reflects on hearing consultees verbalise new thinking, indicating that they have made new links which has resulted in them experiencing and communicating a shift in their views. Participant 4 talked about situations where consultees have labelled their change in perspective by stating "I haven't thought about it like that!", and how as an EP, that "moment" can bring sense of professional enjoyment and satisfaction.

The majority of participants talked about hearing consultees acknowledge an alternative perspective through communicating that they can "see" the alternative perspective, and how this implies new links may have been made. Participant 5 spoke about a sense of being hopeful that the shift in thinking may facilitate a significant positive step forward in the child's best interests:

> *"…she was like "Oh yeah, no I can see that" and I thought, OK, right well we are on the steps towards hopefully the child not being excluded at 7 years old."*
>
> *Participant 5, line 263 – 264*

This is further supported by participant 2 who talked about consultees thinking about the child's experience as signalling a shift away from focusing on the impact of the behaviour. This shift to circular thinking suggests the consultee sees the situation from a wider perspective. Furthermore, participant 4 talked to me about recognising that shift in thinking may have occurred if consultees make links between the current context and past experiences. Participant 4 mentioned that this change in "narrative" implies that something "happened", and perspective change occurred. In addition, participant 6 reflected that a move towards "talking your language" as an EP, and therefore away from pejorative language is an "indicator" that perspective change may have occurred:

> *"They'll start talking your language, that's a little indicator, like when they start saying things like um, 'he was really struggling', or 'found it tricky' or when they start using the words I've been using."*

How is consultee perspective change recognised by EPs?

Recognising when perspective change has occurred was a secondary theme within my findings as it was not considered directly related to the process of change but offers a unique opportunity for EPs to evaluate whether the consultation meeting has facilitated a shift in the system. Recognising perspective change through non-verbal communication was a signal identified by EP participants. For example, noticing moments of speechlessness or pauses were considered to, at times, signal new links were being processed by the consultee. Furthermore, perspective change was noticed through the perception of an 'energy shift' during the consultation meeting. The findings from this research did not elaborate on the characteristics of the energy shift, but instead focused on it being recognised through EP attunement to the dynamics within the consultation.

I also identified that perspective change was recognised by EP participants as a result of the language used by consultees, using statements such as 'I haven't thought of it like that', as well as acknowledging when they understand a different point of view by saying statements such as 'I can see that'. Similarly, verbal signals of perspective change can include episodes of consultees shifting their focus from within-child or linear thinking to more systemic approaches, for example looking at the child's experience of the problem situation rather than the effect of the behaviour.

Finally, I identified that making links between the current problem situation and past experiences often signals a shift in thinking. For example, when a consultee makes a link between the child's past experiences and their current behaviour this indicates a shift towards normalising and understanding, rather than blame and attribution.

S Grounded theory of perspective change – pull out reference diagram

(continued over the page)

Full annotated grounded theory model of perspective change

Pull out model for reference