Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

Programme Director: Vivian Hill

Institute of Education, University College London

Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent Psychology

Exploring the Role of the Educational Psychologist during the COVID-19 Pandemic. How has Service Delivery Adapted to Online Working Practices?

Amy Moore

Student declaration and word count

I, Amy Moore confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Word count (exclusive of impact statement, abstract, appendices and acknowledgements, declaration, and list of references): 37,134

Abstract

This research explored the impact that the move to online working has had on the service delivery of Educational Psychology services. Educational Psychologists (EPs) have made significant changes and adaptations to their working practices since March 2020, which have been necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This research offers a critique of these new ways of working and explores the impact it has had on the profession.

Within a mixed methods design, the study explored the perceived differences between online and in-person consultations; the type of work that EPs and their professional colleagues found most acceptable and useful online, and the losses and gains associated with delivering an EP service online.

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with EPs or EPs in training and data were thematically analysed. Questionnaires were developed and completed by *n*=63 participants to provide an insight into the differences between EP service delivery when delivered online and in person.

Findings identify changes to EP working practices since the first national lockdown. EPs are making decisions about which work can be carried out online and which needs to be completed in person based on their experiences of working through the pandemic. Findings show that where relationships have been established and the systemic context understood, online working can provide convenience and accessibility to support follow-up work. Losses associated with working online were identified as not seeing children and young people in context; EPs feeling less confident applying psychological concepts online and connecting at a distance meant that the online interactions were not always given full attention by those involved. Gains were identified as online spaces providing a more equitable or neutral space that offers convenience and ease.

Results indicate that EP practice is likely to have changed following the necessitated move online with EP services moving towards a blended approach to service delivery. It is argued that online working should be seen as an addition to the EP toolkit and not as a replacement for in-person service delivery. Implications for EP practice and further research are discussed.

Impact Statement

This research explored the impact that the move to online working practices has had on EP service delivery. As evidence-based practitioners, it makes an important contribution to the burgeoning research literature which is growing significantly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge in online working this has brought. This research reports for the first time, Educational Psychologists' (EPs) perspectives on the change, the type of work that EPs and non-EP colleagues find the most acceptable online and offers a critical reflection on providing an online EP service.

The research adopted a mixed methods approach to gather quantitative and qualitative findings which demonstrate that online working has quickly become part of the EP toolkit. The findings demonstrate that online working is used at every level of EP work, (system, group and individual) and all aspects of EP work (assessment, consultation, training, intervention, and research) with varying degrees of success and applicability.

These findings show that online working proved a useful tool to ensure that service delivery has been able to continue throughout the pandemic and into the recovery phase with consultation proving a flexible tool with which to provide service. The evidence suggests that EPs find online working most useful when work is perceived to be straightforward and when relationships are established. Participants reported that online working was less useful when work was more complicated and when relationships with those involved were not established. The study also highlighted the loss that not seeing the child in context brought to EP involvement. There is also evidence to suggest that online working spaces can reduce hierarchical structures and reduce power imbalances. It is hypothesised that this could be due to the reduction in contextual information, and the equitable space given to all participants in online interactions.

Considering the findings, and the strengths and limitations of the research, future research would benefit from considering the following:

- Evaluating the impact of EP work that is delivered online in comparison to that which is delivered in person.

- Direct comparison of EP work that is delivered online and in-person which allows for the practices of the same individual delivering the work to be investigated.

The research provides initial evidence that online working is acceptable to EPs and those who work with EPs. There was wide acceptance from the EPs interviewed that online work came at a cost to relationships, attention, and their ability to work with the child in context. Online work was generally being viewed as an alternative to in-person work, rather than the new standard practice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has so kindly supported me with this research. Firstly, thank you to all the participants who so generously gave their time. Thank you to my university supervisors, Dr Jess Hayton, and Dr Cynthia Pinto. Not only have you given generously your time and insight to support this research, but you have also supported me through a very challenging two years. A heartfelt thanks to my placement supervisor, Dr Ellie Mortimer for her guidance and kindness throughout. I am so grateful to you all.

I owe thanks too to my friends who have tirelessly supported me with proofreading and ensuring a work life balance throughout the doctorate. Without your support these years would have been much harder and less joyful.

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely dad. I am sorry you didn't get to see the finished product, but without you, I wouldn't be who I am.

Martin Moore

21st March 1950 - 30th December 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Research in Context

On 31st December 2019, the World Health Organisation reported a cluster of cases of a novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, referred to throughout this study as COVID-19 or The Pandemic, in Wuhan, China (*WHO*, 2020). These cases quickly spread throughout China and the rest of the world with the UK reporting their first case on 29th January 2020 (Embury-Dennis, 2020). With no vaccine or known cure, and a mortality rate of about 1%, vast swathes of the world were put into lockdown to slow the spread of the virus. On 23rd March 2020, following a government announcement that schools would close and all non-essential contact with others should be restricted, like much of the UK workforce, Educational Psychologists (EPs) were instructed to work from home (Institute for Government Analysis, 2021). Almost overnight, EPs went from offering a peripatetic service, to working exclusively online, having to adopt new ways of working with very little guidance on how to do so or how this move would impact the delivery of the service. Throughout the lockdowns, the advice for EPs from the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) was for work to be conducted remotely (AEP, 2020a). Since the end of the first national lockdown, EPs have been able to offer some in person work, with many services offering a *hybrid* or *blended* model of service delivery, whereby a mix of online and in person service delivery is being offered. For this research, a distinction between these two terms has been made. *Hybrid* describes a session with a simultaneous mix of in-person and remote participants (Oxford, 2021); *blended* refers to some aspects of work being carried out in-person and some being delivered online (UCL, 2021). As the pandemic progresses into the recovery phase, working practices have likely changed forever. As new ways of working replace traditional ideas of how educational psychology should be delivered, the effectiveness and safety of new ways of working need to be considered (BPS, 2020a). It is important, therefore that EP services have a critical understanding of online working practices to best support those they are working with.

In the BPS *'Call to Action'* (O'Connor et al., 2020) the following question was posed as an avenue to be explored in future research.

'How can (psychological) support services be effectively delivered to vulnerable children and young people, families, and schools? With reduced resources and restricted movement, professionals (such as practitioner psychologists) have had to adapt and develop new ways of delivering services. Researchers in psychological science have a key role to play in working with practitioners and service providers to evaluate systems put in place for monitoring and delivering professional support during and in the aftermath of the pandemic.'

(O'Connor et al., 2020, p. 618)

The current research contributes toward evaluating the use of online EP service delivery by investigating the experiences of EPs working to deliver educational psychology and their professional colleagues working with EPs during the pandemic. The current research will provide a critical analysis of online service delivery by exploring the lived experience of EPs and Trainee EPs working with other professionals to support the individuals, groups, and systems during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the recovery phase. For the purposes of this report, the term EP will refer to qualified EPs and those in their second and third year of training. The current research has given an unprecedented opportunity to research adaptations across individuals and organisations as the pandemic continues to unfold and consider multiple perspectives for future service provision. The experiences of those directly impacted by the changes have been collected contemporaneously, and the lived experience of those involved in EP service delivery have contributed to the knowledge base which can impact the development of policy and professional guidance. The focus of this research is EP service delivery (defined in section 1.3), due to social distancing orders in place during the research, EP services had to be delivered at a distance which meant that much of the EP's work took a consultative approach. This research therefore has explored this aspect of EP service in more detail, although all aspects of the role are considered within the research.

1.2 Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event	Impact on workforce
23rd March 2020	First UK Lockdown announced.	Workforce instructed to work from home. Move to online working.
April 2020	1st interviews with 6 EPs conducted (Moore & Upton, 2020) AEP publish 'AEP Survey into the Effects of Covid-19 on the Provision of Educational Psychology Services in England'	
May 2020	BPS publish 'Adaptations to Psychological Practice - Interim Guidance During Covid-19' and 'Easing Lockdown - How Employers and Employees Can Prepare for the New Normal' AEP Publish 'Transitional Period Guidance' and 'Summative Report AEP Covid-19 Survey – England'	
June 2020	Phases re-opening of schools in England.' 2nd interviews with 6 EPs conducted (Moore & Upton, 2020). National lockdown eased for much of UK.	Some in-person EP work allowed in exceptional circumstances.
November 2020	Second national lockdown imposed	
December 2020	Tier 4 restrictions – 'Stay at Home' message for residents of England should not enter or leave tier 4 areas. (*gov.UK,* 2020)	UK workforce instructed to work from home if possible.
January 2021	School closure throughout the UK. 3rd National lockdown announced.	Working from home mandated by government.
8th March 2021	Schools in England reopen. 'Stay at Home' order remains in place.	
March – June 2021	Gradual lifting of restrictions across UK.	
July 2021	Most legal restrictions lifted in England.	
September – December 2021	Phase 1, online questionnaires distributed. Rise of Omicron variant Implementation of 'Plan b' measures *(Gov.UK, 2021a).*	UK workforce asked to from home if possible
February 2022	All COVID restrictions lifted	
March 2022	Phase 2, semi-structured interviews conducted.	

(Embury-Dennis, 2020; Institute for Government Analysis, 2021; *Gov.UK* 2022; *Gov.UK*, 2021a.;

Gov.UK 2021b; Gov.UK 2020; *WHO*, 2020)

1.3 Defining Key Vocabulary

1.3.1 EP Working Practices

For this research, the working practices of EPs are defined using the work of Frederickson et al. (2015), who suggested that EPs work at the level of the individual, group and system to carry out five core activities: consultation, intervention, assessment (including statutory assessments CYP outlined in SEN Code of Practice, 2015), training and research. Before 2020, information indicating how EP provision ought to be delivered is absent in the professional literature; since the onset of the pandemic, several documents from psychological professional bodies have been produced pertaining to online service delivery of educational and psychological services, (AEP, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; BPS, 2020a, 2020b). This is indicative of the seismic shift that occurred in the world during the pandemic, and it is suggested that the lack of explicit information about how psychological services ought to be delivered implicitly suggests that most EP work was carried out in person. From my own experience of being an EP in Training during the first two years of the pandemic, and from working with EPs for 10 years in my previous role as an Inclusion Manager, my experience of using online working practices to deliver EP services was limited to emails and telephone calls to support organisation of in-person visits; the rest of the role was carried out in person.

1.3.2 Telepsychology

For this research, telepsychology is identified as any part of an educational psychology service that takes place using an online video conferencing platform, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Skype. The current research is looking specifically at working practices that would have typically taken place in person before March 2020 and the first COVID-19 national lockdown. The following definition of telepsychology and online working practices will be used:

> '*Technology that allows for digital face-to-face meetings between clients and service providers using video conferencing software on two or more camera-enabled devices.'*
>
> (Fischer et al., 2017, p. 438)

The research will explore all aspects of EP service delivery that has moved online, including training, assessment, consultation, and interventions.

1.4 Guidance from Professional Bodies for Remote Service Delivery

Following the first lockdown in March 2020, a rapid review of guidance for online service delivery was carried out by the Psychological Professionals Network, 2020. This gives an insight into the type of guidance psychologists had as they entered the first lockdown. Concerning the risk and safety of using remote services, they cited the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) recommendations as '*Practitioners should consider whether providing services remotely may hinder their ability to make informed decisions in the best interest of the client'* (Psychological Professions Network England, 2020)*. The same review reported the British Psychological Society (BPS) advice recommendation for using online platforms to connect with service users, (including *Skype* and *FaceTime* where only the client and the psychologist are present) were used only '*when necessary'* and highlighted the importance of using platforms that encrypted the users' data safely. A notable omission of this paper was the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), which could indicate that no guidance existed for EPs, however, the paper refers to working mainly at the level of the individual and does not suggest how work can be carried out to affect change at a group or systemic level, as EP's work with schools and local authorities.

 In May 2020, The BPS published advice that psychologists could deliver remote psychological services *'where appropriate'* (BPS, 2020a) and provided reassurance to members that therapy delivered through a digital platform is usually acceptable to clients and that a therapeutic relationship could be made and established via online video consultation (Bashshur et al., 2016). Specific advice for the different divisions of the psychology workforce was not made in this advice, although an EP was listed as a contributor to the advice. The advice recommended that service users are involved in considering adaptions made to service delivery; specific mention of gathering the views of vulnerable and marginalised groups is also made (BPS, 2020a).

Looking to the future, the same paper assumed that a blended approach to service delivery may become the norm and that this has the potential to increase access to psychological services and enable greater continuity of care for vulnerable or transient groups. What is not addressed is the impact that online service delivery may have on those groups who have less access to technology and data connectivity and so may be excluded by a move to telepsychology (Song et al., 2020).

The guidance published during the first lockdown from the AEP (2020a) highlighted mainly practical issues that EPs were managing while delivering a fully remote service. These included balancing home and workspaces and broadband speeds. It made recommendations that tasks considered '*not appropriate*' for home working were identified by managers. What these tasks may or may not be was not explored, and it was left to managers to make decisions based on the individual EP and the need of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). It was also suggested that consultations would be an appropriate and transferable tool for EPs to use during the national lockdown.

> *'Educational psychology services should be able to provide remote consultation and advice to schools and to other professionals to help them to meet the needs of potentially vulnerable pupils, those who are looked after, on the "at risk" register or who are at the point of transition.'*

(Association of Educational Psychologists, 2020, p. 5)

While the guidance from professional bodies is useful to practising psychologists, the guidance is not prescriptive. For example, the guidance does not state which aspects of service delivery are transferable to an online platform and it does not suggest what the benefits and losses may be associated with delivering a service in this way. A move to a blended model of service delivery will mean that services may want to include guidance on when telepsychology may be appropriate and

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when it is not. This means that more must be known about how educational psychology can transfer to online spaces to ensure that service users are receiving the best possible support, not just though consultation (as suggested by the AEP guidance) but in all aspects of the EP role.

1.5 The Current Research

Using a mixed-methods approach, the current study aimed to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted EP service delivery. Across two concurrent phases, the study examined the differences between video consultations to 'traditional' in-person consultations, appraising the impact of the potential losses and gains in EP provision resulting from working remotely. In the first phase, the research compared professional and EP perceptions of video and in-person consultation. This questionnaire-based phase examined differences between the perceived impact of the consultation as well as the impact the method of consultation delivery has on establishing and maintaining the relationship between the EP and their professional colleague. This phase focussed on school-based consultations, asking EPs and professionals to complete online questionnaires via MS Forms (a web-based questionnaire/survey tool) after an online and/or in-person consultation. Descriptive statistics and t-test analysis was then used to analyse differences in Likert scores between the two conditions.

In the second phase of the research, semi-structured interviews with EPs and TEPs who have been engaged in EP service delivery before and throughout the pandemic were conducted. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to understand first-hand, and subsequently examine, potential losses and gains EP/TEPs experienced using online platforms to deliver educational psychology since the start of the pandemic. Last, interview data gathered was analysed using Nvivo 12 to support the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and salient themes were constructed from the data set. The findings offer a perspective into a moment in time and provide important information to inform evidence-based practice. These can support the integration of online services EP service delivery that enables an equitable, inclusive, and accessible service for all service users.

1.6 Personal and Professional Motivation for the Research

I came to EP with an interest in critical incidents (CIs) and the role that EPs have in supporting systems in the aftermath of a CI. Having been part of a school community that was impacted by the Grenfell Tower Fire in 2017, I saw the important role that EPs had in supporting schools in the aftermath, and I was interested to see that some schools that were impacted by the tragedy appeared to be resilient and experience systemic growth after a CI, while others seemed to experience more challenges and appear less resilient. My hope was to interview EPs and Heads of schools who had experienced CIs and to explore what made for a good response.

In March 2020, when I was hoping to start my pilot project in my first year, we found ourselves in the middle of an overwhelming event, and I could not ask participants to reflect on past CIs while responding and managing another. The pandemic gave me an opportunity to explore EPs responses to a CI in real time and to investigate the impact this was having on EP service delivery. During the first lockdown, I carried out a small-scale study exploring the EP response to the pandemic (Moore & Upton, 2020) which is explored in more detail in the Literature Review.

1.7 The Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. A review of relevant literature follows this introductory chapter, which provides a theoretical and historical background to this research, chapter two ends by identifying the research questions that the study will address. Chapter three presents a detailed account of the methodology used in this study and the procedure for each phase of the research, along with a critique of the research methods used. The findings are presented in chapter four in which the quantitative results are presented, and analysis of the codes and themes constructed from the qualitative data set are shared. Chapter five contains the discussion of the results concerning the research questions and draws links to existing theory, literature, and practice. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the study. Finally, chapter six considers the implications this study has for future research and EP practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

In this section, the relevant literature is reviewed concerning how EPs have traditionally carried out work, before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with what has been published since the start of the pandemic about delivering telepsychology. Although a systematic review of the data was considered, given the nascent area of research and the exploratory nature of the study, a traditional or narrative review of the literature was conducted. This allowed firstly, for the story of EP practice to be told, thinking about what happened before the pandemic, during the early stages of online working, and currently in EP practice. Secondly, the wider fields of psychology and scientific literature could be reviewed to make links and find commonalities. Finally, during the time the research was conducted, new research was being published which presented a significant barrier to conducting a systematic review, especially with delays in the peer review process. The narrative approach allowed for conference presentations and emerging professional literature to be included in this research so emerging research could be included. This means that some research is included which has not been peer-reviewed, but that represents contemporary thinking and practice at the time. The following literature review contains a comprehensive background of the role of the EP as it was before the first national lockdown (section 2.2); a review of the impact that the pandemic had on service delivery along with what is known about the impact that working remotely may have on individuals and systems (section 2.3). Finally, the picture of how EPs are working at the time of the study during Spring 2022, is presented in section 2.4. The chapter concludes with the research questions that form the basis of the study.

2.2 Part 1: EP Working Practices Prior to March 2020

The working practices of EPs have evolved and changed significantly since the appointment of the first EP in London in 1913. During the infancy of the profession, the focus was firmly on categorisation, and testing and adopted a within-child, deficit model, more strongly associated with

the medical model than with the biopsychosocial model currently applied in EP practice (Billington, 2017). In 1978, Gillham's work on reconstructing educational psychology suggested a move away from the medical model, towards a systemic approach working at the level of the child, the system, or influencing policy to affect change (Gillham, 1978). This shift toward systemic working continued into the latter part of the 20th century. Gutkin & Conoley (1990), suggested that to support the child most effectively, the EP must direct their attention to supporting the adults with whom the child interacts. This shift toward the end of the century towards an in-direct approach to service delivery, broadened the focus of EP work, with EPs not simply engaging in individual assessments of children, but engaging the systems that impact the child, from the direct (the family and the school system) to the more distant and indirect (that of the local education authority for example) (Frederickson et al., 2015). This multi-level work has been conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner's *process-person-context-time* model of child development, (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The bioecological view of child development sees child development as a bidirectional joint process between their characteristics and their environment. The model sees the interaction between children and the systems they interact with as the *process* with the *person* aspect recognising the characteristics of the child and their biological make-up as having an impact on how these interactions and relationships are formed. The *context* sees the developing child existing within five proximal systems, the *micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-* and *chrono*-system. The child is part of their *microsystems* (school, family) and the extent to which these systems interact is represented in the *mesosystem*. Systems of which the child is not part of, but that impact on their lives are in the *exo-system* (for example, their parents' workplace) and the cultural expectations and the way they interact with the developing child are represented in the *macrosystem*. Finally, the *time* aspect of the model represents changes over time that impact the developing child. This contextual framework allows for the child to be seen as being both a product of their environment and their genetic make-up. The shift that this model brings allows EPs to work in a way that recognises the impact of both these factors simultaneously while affecting change for the individual child.

In 2002, a review of EP practice in Scotland (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009) identified EPs work to deliver five core activities: assessment, intervention, training, consultation and research. These five activities can be delivered at the level of the individual child, at a group level, and at a systemic level (Wagner, 2000; Beaver, 2011; Frederickson et al., 2015). Furthermore, Farrell et al. (2006) recognised the breadth of work that EPs undertake reporting that EPs can work across a range of ages as well as through direct and in-direct work in the areas of early years, work with primary, secondary and special schools, and multi-agency work.

At the turn of the century, there was another shift in the working practices of EPs. Following the financial recession, a reduction in the number of public services that could be provided by many local authorities resulted in many EP services moving towards offering a partial or fully *traded* service (Fallon et al., 2010; Lee & Woods, 2017). With budgets for EP work now held directly by schools and other service users, it allowed EP work to be commissioned directly by service users. While this did bring with it opportunities to work with a wider range of commissioning services (Fallon et al., 2010) it also meant that EP time was now a commodity and those that EPs worked with wanted to maximise EP time to ensure value for money (Lee & Woods, 2017). These demands on EP time also coincided with a national shortage of EPs, with rising demands for statutory assessments, coupled with EPs retiring and leaving the profession in greater numbers than those entering the profession. A workforce survey in 2019 found that 68% of EP services were experiencing EP shortages and also highlighted a disparity between areas of the UK which have vacancies and those which are better staffed (DfE, 2019). This is relevant to the present study as these demands to the profession have happened to a service which has traditionally been carried out in-person, meaning the reach of individual EPs is limited. Exploring the impact of delivering remote EP services also allows for the exploration of the reach of individual EPs to be wider. It is important to know how appropriate it is for technology to be used to reduce these burdens and support the delivery of a more equitable service.

This first section of the literature review has given a very brief history of EP working

practices and highlighted some of the contextual issues EPs were working in immediately before the

start of the pandemic. The following section explores EP working practices in terms of online

working and the integration of technology to support service delivery before the move to online

working necessitated by the pandemic.

2.2.1 How EPs Were Using Technology to Support Service Delivery Before 2020

As outlined in the introduction, the lack of information about the possible and feasible

arrangements for EP service delivery before March 2020, suggests that the default for most of the

professions was to deliver services in person, making visits to schools and carrying out several pieces

of work during one visit. In the SEND Code of Practice England (Department for Education &

Department for Health, 2015), EPs are listed with other peripatetic services and in interviews carried

out during the first lockdown about EP practices before March 2020, EPs reported delivering

psychological services in person, with the technology used to assist the organisation of the in-person

visits using emails and telephone calls (Moore & Upton, 2020). This is not to say that EPs were not

using technology to support service delivery before March 2020. There are two examples within the

literature which demonstrate EPs using technology to enhance the service they deliver to those they

work with.

2.2.2 Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) and Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP)

A review of literature from Regan and Howe (2017) found that EPs had been using videos to

enable and support work with Children and Young People (CYP) since 1999 as a training and

intervention tool. For context, this was in a trend that has seen EP practice move away from

assessment-based forms of service, towards a strengths-based approach, supported by advances in

technology (Kennedy, 2014 cited by Murray & Leadbetter, 2018). When used in educational

psychology Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) sees EPs as VIG facilitators and the intervention usually

supports an adult and children interaction (Patterson, 2013). Typically, a VIG facilitator uses video

clips of the child and adults interacting to find moments of strength and, in reviewing with the client,

notice what is working well within the relationship. For the purposes of this study, VIG demonstrates

that EPs have been open to, and using technology to further their practice for the past two decades.

The following section explains how VIG has been adapted to support the professional development

of EPs and how technology has supported EPs to recognise successful interactions and 'attuned

interactions' in their practice.

Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) is a training tool used by EPs in training to reflect

on their practice and to develop 'attuned interactions'. According to Kennedy & Landor (2015), an

attuned interaction can be described as '*a harmonious and responsive interaction whereby both*

partners share a positive emotion within a communicative dance' (p. 312)*.* Again, using pre-selected

video clips of interactions, EPs in training are supported to notice moments of strength, in which

they have been attentive, encouraged and received initiatives, developed attuned interactions, and

deepened discussions (Murray & Leadbetter, 2018). Assuming that these principles do measure the

quality of interactions, being trained to notice these qualities in one's practice should mean EPs are

well placed to notice if these qualities are present or not when service is being delivered via online

platforms. The use of these tools also gives EPs conscious awareness of successful and less successful

consultations which may have supported practice given EPs were trying to recreate these moments

in online work.

2.2.3 Telepsychology

The earliest paper exploring the use of video conferencing within the field of psychology

found was a survey conducted in 2000, in which 596 psychologists from all fields in the United States

were asked how they connected with their clients (Vanden Bos & Williams, 2000). Although at the

time, technology was available to allow clients and psychologists to connect via online platforms,

only 2% of the respondents reported working in this way. This report expected the use of

telepsychology to rise as technology became more accessible for all. In a survey conducted before

the onset of the pandemic, Pierce et al. (2020) surveyed 1791 psychologists also practising in the

United States and found, however, less than a quarter (384) of psychologists surveyed reported

using online working practices to deliver psychology, despite huge advances in internet connectivity.

By contrast, in a rapid review of psychologist working practices conducted during the first COVID-19

lockdown, Sammons et al. (2020) found that 83% of the 3000 psychologists surveyed reported using

telepsychology within the first two weeks of the pandemic, and of those who had not yet begun to

work remotely, over two-thirds reported that they intended to do so to deliver services to clients.

Within their findings, it was acknowledged that some services e.g., consultation and one-to-one

therapy, had transferred better to online working than others, such as assessment and receiving

new referrals. What was not explored was the impact that this change had on service delivery, hence

this forms part of the rationale for the current study. Comparison from the two studies shows that

as many as three-quarters of psychologists are working in a way that they had not worked before

national lockdowns and in a way for which an evidence base was not yet established.

Backhaus et al. (2012) carried out a systematic review of literature on videoconferencing in

clinical settings and compared in-person to remote services they reported positive results for

efficacy, feasibility, and client satisfaction for individuals receiving psychotherapy remotely. The

same study did, however, show that the therapeutic alliance was not rated as strongly for all client

groups, specifically those with lower levels of technological awareness. They also noted that for

some clients, competing stimuli and differing levels of distractibility were noted when interacting at

a distance which could impact the success of the therapy.   In a scoping review of current guidelines

in telepsychology, McCord et al. (2020) found that the remote environment can cause higher levels

of distractibility in telepsychology because of environmental factors. Although these are not

discussed in detail, it is important for the current research as when offering an online service, EPs

will have much less control over the environmental factors that could impact the person they are connecting with remotely.

While the technology has existed and was used in some of the adjacent fields of psychology, a search of the literature returned just three references for educational psychology and telepsychology before the first national lockdown. Two studies conducted before 2020 that explored the role of Video Consultation in Educational Psychology were found, both were conducted in the United States, where Video Consultation was seen as a more feasible alternative for EPs travelling to remote, rural locations. Fischer et al. (2016, 2017) investigated the level to which teachers found teleconferencing acceptable when seeking support thinking about individual children by gathering the views of 60 teachers and three teachers in each study respectively. It should be noted that the following studies were conducted in American schools where the role of the educational, or school psychologist follows a model more akin to the within-child, medical model. Both studies looked at teachers' perceived and actual level of 'acceptability', i.e. their willingness to engage with the service, pre- and post- video consultation and revealed that once the teacher had experienced a teleconference, they reported them more highly 'acceptable' than before they engaged with the teleconsultation. It is important to note that this paper was written pre-March 2020 when there was a degree of choice over the method of service delivery for those in the study. The finding that exposure to video consultation led to greater acceptance is, however, important as the vast majority of the population at large has had no choice but to be exposed to online ways of working. While this finding might mean that now teachers are accepting video consultation as a method of service delivery, the question of the role of 'over-exposure' or the cognitive demands it places on those involved, for example, '*zoom fatigue' (*explored more in section 2.3.2), might now need to be considered after a year of working almost exclusively online. The same research also compared in-person consultations with teleconsultations to provide a unique insight into pre-pandemic attitudes towards online service consultation. The findings indicated that, at least on a surface level, teachers

are willing to engage with telepsychology and video consultation as a means of service delivery to support the children and young people they work with. What was not investigated in these studies was the extent to which teleconsultation had an impact on teacher practice; the extent to which the teachers found the consultation useful or the potential losses of no longer having in-person privilege, which in-person consultation may bring. The current research allows these to be ideas to be explored through a direct comparison of working practices.

Another study from the United States provides insight into the use of educational teleconsultation to deliver an evidence-based intervention comes from (Bice-Urbach & Kratochwill, 2016). They examined the impact of the intervention (a behavioural-based consultation) which had been delivered via teleconsultation. They found that teachers who had engaged in a behavioural consultation reported improvements in on-task behaviour after engaging in a teleconsultation with an EP. These findings mimicked those that had been found when the intervention was delivered in person. Their findings also corroborated the findings of (Fischer et al., 2016, 2017)and found that teleconferencing was an acceptable method of service delivery for teachers in rural schools in the United States.

The first section of this literature review has given an overview of EP working practices, their use of technology to support working and an overview of telepsychology, both within the wider field of psychology and within educational psychology. The following section explores the impact that the pandemic had on EP working practices and explores the literature from around the time of the seismic shift to online working.

2.3 Part 2: The Overwhelming Impact of the Pandemic

In 2020, the AEP released a document outlining the role the association perceived EPs to have during and in the aftermath of the pandemic (AEP, 2020b). Drawing on EPs' traditional role of supporting systems following critical incidents, that is events that could overwhelm the functioning

of the school system, the association suggested that EP skills in supporting such incidents could be transferred to supporting the re-opening of schools' post lockdown and supporting those children experiencing bereavement, loss, and anxiety. However, the AEP document does not suggest if these services should be provided online or in person and perhaps, given the release of the document in the second month of the first lockdown, (May 2020) it was implicit that provision would be delivered online.

As part of Beeke's (2012) research into EPs' work to support critical incidents, the following definition of a critical incident was given:

> *'A [critical incident is a] sudden and unexpected event that has the potential to overwhelm the coping mechanisms of a whole school or members of the school community. A serious and significant event, it is likely to be outside the range of normal human experience and would be markedly distressing to anyone in or directly involved with the school community.'*

(Beeke, 2012, p. 13)

Using this definition, it could be argued that the COVID-19 pandemic was (and potentially still is) a critical incident. While this definition gives a thorough definition of a 'traditional' critical incident, the definition does not encapsulate the overwhelming and all-consuming impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It does, however, point to the skills set, the flexibility, and the training the EPs have, to accommodate sudden unexpected changes. The uniqueness of working through this pandemic is that EPs themselves are responding to the same critical incident that they are supporting. Unlike more 'typical' critical incidents in which EPs tend to support after an event, the pandemic remains an ongoing event, affecting all. Although some groups will feel the impact of the pandemic harder or for longer, the pandemic is an event that has impacted every individual, group and system. One example of EPs working through an enduring crisis was explored by Dunsmuir et al., (2018) in which they explored the lived experiences of the professionals who had worked to support the community after the Grenfell Tower Fire, an event that caused trauma and confusion long after

the fire had been put out. Using semi-structured interviews, they found there was an opportunity for professional learning to occur alongside the tragedy. This means that there may be an opportunity for similar professional growth to occur, albeit from very different circumstances, from working in different ways. These findings chime with the opportunities for learning and growth outlined in the professional guidance from the BPS, (2020a) and Fonagy et al. (2020) in which the potential gains of working in a blended or more technologically focussed way are mooted.

Response to critical incidents is a well-established part of EP practice, (Beeke, 2012; Houghton, 1996). Beeke's (2012) research into critical incidents sought to explore the role the EPs played in responding. While this was a small-scale project that looked at typical critical incidents experienced by schools, they found that by responding to them, using consultation, applying positive psychology, and focussing on what is working within the system, EPs were well placed to support schools. Beeke (2012) proposed that espoused theory / theory-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1974) offered a framework with which to understand the psychology used when supporting following a critical incident. While espoused theory relates to the theory one believes to be using, theory-in-use refers to those that can be inferred from their actions. Professional competence occurs when these two theories align. Given the unique impact of the pandemic on working practices, professionals are working to apply espoused theories under novel conditions, this research allows for investigating if the two practices align and allow making EPs' use of online services more effective in the future.

Work from Moore & Upton (2020), discussed in the following section, reported that EPs felt that the response to the pandemic was akin to responding to a critical incident. The literature around critical incidents may also provide some insight into how EPs and their professional colleagues may be experiencing the overwhelming changes to their working lives. Bennett et al. (2021) suggest that higher levels of self-efficacy (in essence, believing in one's ability) are associated with lower levels of professional burnout. Drawing on the work of Bandura (1994) they suggest that mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and positive interpretation of semantic and emotional states all play a role in developing one's self-efficacy. Importantly, when

thinking in the current context, they suggest mastery experiences (or experiences of success) can mediate for failure. That is to say that if success is experienced before failure, failure will have less of an impact on levels of self-efficacy. This is important in the present study as, after two years of workings online, EPs will have had experiences of success and failure online which may impact their future behaviour.

Despite the overwhelming nature of the pandemic, EPs continued to deliver service during a national lockdown; they were able to adapt and transfer their skills to enable them to deliver to clients, on virtual platforms with very little time to adapt (Moore & Upton, 2020; Greenblatt et al., 2021). With the move to online working being experienced across much of the minority world, there was a boom in research, opinion pieces and news articles about the impact that online working was having on workers which are explored in the following sections.

2.3.1 Small-Scale Study (Moore & Upton, 2020 Unpublished)

Considering the enormous and overnight shift to social distancing and online working, a small-scale study was conducted by the researcher as part of the research requirements for the DEdPsy course in 2020. The small-scale study interviewed six practising EPs during the pandemic at two points during the first lockdown between April and June 2020. During the lockdown of Spring 2020, EPs reported changes in the way the EP service was delivered, with much of the EPs' work moving online (Moore & Upton, 2020). By following the experiences of six EPs working in the UK during the first lockdown; interviewing at two different time points during the first lockdown, once five weeks after the start of the pandemic and a follow-up interview five to six weeks later, the research gave an insight into how all areas of service delivery had to be changed quickly and how EPs had no choice but to adapt. Universally, the EPs reported an increase in the amount of client consultation being delivered during the lockdown and all reported delivering service provision using video conferencing software. Thematic analysis revealed that EPs were questioning the losses and gains of delivering psychological services via video conferencing software. EPs spoke about their role

in containing the containers (school staff) and described how consultation had been a flexible tool that had allowed for service delivery to continue during the first lockdown. The EPs did, however, raise concerns about working in a way that was not evidence-based, and for which they had not been trained. EPs spoke about how this had led to them feeling de-skilled and uncontained. The findings of this small-scale study have directly contributed to the design and running of the current research, outlined in the following section.

2.3.2 Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) differs from video conferencing in that it encompasses all forms of communication that happen on a computer, including text-based communication such as emails and instant messaging. In a piece examining the use of and the impact that it has on communication with others. Haythornthwaite (2002) found that CMC allows for fewer social cues to be exchanged than when in person. This led to them summarising that CMC was less effective for 'emotionally laden' exchanges, of which it could be argued that psychological consultations are. They also found that CMC was good at supporting communication with those with whom we have weaker ties. They suggest that initiating communication via a computer means contact can be made with people who have not met in person, who live great distances away and that hierarchical structures are less obvious (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Pickering & King, 1995) Importantly for the present study, however, they found that CMC struggled to replicate the incidental interactions that being in person allows, such as bumping into someone in the corridor and asking a question of a colleague over the desk. Their findings also show that when means of communication change or evolve, not all members of teams are happy to change and evolve with it. This could be done passively, so-called *non-use,* or actively, though remaining with old communication methods. Although this may not be so relevant to the present study as online working was enforced, it will be interesting to see if EPs plan to continue to offer an online service to

those they work with, or if EP service delivery will return to emulate that of the service that was offered before March 2020.

2.3.3 Zoom Fatigue

'Zoom Fatigue' or 'Zoom Gloom' are terms that have emerged into the lexicon since the first wave of lockdowns. Results from Google Scholar in March 2022 returned close to 20,000 results. This is a phenomenon explored by Lee (2020) that suggests that the combination of delays between the audio and visual of the video conferencing platform, the lack of non-verbal and unconscious cues being lost through the video; multiple distractions from the home and desktop environment and the difficulties making and sustaining joint attention due to not sharing the same environment can lead to 'zoom fatigue'. They surmise that, from a neuropsychological standpoint, video conferencing is low reward and high cost. The present study hopes to examine the impact these might have on consultations when not only are conversations happening but that they require constructive, interpersonal relationships to be built (Sancho et al., 2015).

The perception of delays caused by technology, on the phone and via video conferencing software, was explored by Schoenenberg et al. (2014). Using an experimental design of 44 participants, they found that a delay of as little as 1.2 seconds could make the person on the video call seem less attentive and friendly. These small delays appeared to not be perceived by the participants but did have an impact on their perception of the person on the other end of the communication. Although these findings have not been tested in a real-world setting, if replicated, this could have real implications for those working to deliver a service that is based on building an attuned relationship as with a consultation-based approach to educational psychology. It is worth noting though that this research was conducted with pairs or triads that were unknown to the participants. The impact that delays have on established relationships (as is usual for an EP and professional client) was not explored.

Empirical research from Shockley et al. (2021) supports this idea, suggesting that cameras being on can increase feelings of fatigue which subsequently impact levels of engagement within the meeting. Shockley et al. (2021) suggest that the reason for the phenomenon relates to theories of self-presentation and suggest that those who experienced heightened pressure to demonstrate their ability, experience higher levels of fatigue after an online meeting (newer members of teams and, the authors suggest, women). The media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) offers another explanation for the phenomenon. They suggest two factors are at play when information is being shared; uncertainty and equivocality, that is, how much information is being given and how open to interpretation that information is. The richer the media (the method of delivery) in reducing uncertainty and resolving equivocality, the easier the information is to receive. They suggest that in-person interactions are the richest, followed by the telephone, with unaddressed written information (e.g., flyers) being the least rich. When thinking about Zoom fatigue, Lee (2020) suggests that the reduction in the amount of eye contact, reduction in whole-body gestures and subtle facial expressions all increase the cognitive demands of those in the meeting, and therefore leave people's intentions open to interpretation, reducing the richness of the interaction and increasing the cognitive demands placed on those in the meeting.

It is worth noting, however, that these studies have been written about zoom meetings generally and not specifically about working in a client/therapist way, or in a way to support systems or to bring people together. It is, however, interesting to think of the added cognitive demands of video conferencing in addition to the further effort needed to mentalise with clients, outlined below concerning psychological interactions.

Fonagy et al. (2020) highlighted the smoothness of the interaction, mediated by the quality of the internet connection, as a variable that was out of the psychologist's hands and which could support or hinder the consultation. This finding is supported by the work of Cramton (2001), who highlighted the important role that silence plays in conversations. While these are a normal part of an in-person conversation which are accompanied by non-verbal cues, silences can be misattributed

when the interaction is mediated by the internet. The role of pauses and silences as a time to reflect and think were also highlighted as being different when meeting remotely and the ambiguity of these when meeting online; silence could indicate that extra consideration is being given to a point that has been made, or that the internet connection has been lost or paused.

2.3.4 How Transferable are the Core Activities of EPs to an Online World?

To support this part of the literature review, the proceedings for the 2021 and 2022 AEP and Division of Education and Child Psychologists (DECP) conferences were searched to form a picture of the professional learning that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic about online service delivery and the impact this had on working practices. Four presentations were identified as being relevant to the present study. Of these, one presentation was of the small-scale research project conducted by the author (Moore & Upton, 2020) and two of the presentations were obtained by the researcher from the presenters (Taylor, 2021; Yuill, 2021). This research is discussed in the intervention section (2.3.6) below. Attempts were made to contact the presenter of the final presentation, *Reconstructing educational psychology practice after the COVID 19 pandemic to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion for practitioners and service users,* delivered at the 2022 DECP conference in April, but at the time of submission, attempts to make contact had not been successful.

The following sections of the literature review will consider how the move to online working has impacted the five core features of EP work outlined by Frederickson et al. (2015).

2.3.5 Consultation

Since the publication of Wagner's seminal paper at the turn of the century, there has been a steady uptake by EPs and EPSs towards a consultation model of service delivery, and it is widely accepted that consultation is one of the five main components of EP work (Fallon et al., 2010). According to Eddleston & Atkinson (2018), consultation is a way of integrating the application of psychology into EP working practices. With the emphasis away from the 'expert' model of the psychologist having the answers to problems, it involves the process of joint planning, assessment

and problem solving being applied at the level of the child, group level or organisational level (Wagner, 2000). Larney (2003) suggested that the relationship between the consultee and the consultant was among the most important part of the consultation. A good working relationship allowed for an acknowledgement to occur between consultant and consultee that both shared expertise, but in different areas and that the good work happened when these two differing expert perspectives were brought together through consultation. It is important then to consider if the relationship can be maintained and the outcomes are as supportive for the child when the consultation moves online.

Moore & Upton's (2020) research into the experiences of EPs working during the first lockdown of 2020, outlined above, suggested that the move to online working practices made EPs worry about the service they were providing to those they work with. They drew on skills developed while working through critical incidents to enable them to apply theories of containment (Bion, 1967) to support their professional colleagues. The data also suggested that, although the EPs realised that online working was necessary to continue to support schools, families, and CYP, they wondered about how this was impacting their practice. While the gains and losses of video conferencing were not explored in detail, the perceptions of the EPs were. EPs considered the impact the move to online consultations was having on relationships; their ability to pick up on subtle, non-verbal cues, and their ability to apply psychology as they would usually during a face-to-face visit.

One tangible loss that EPs spoke about was that video conferencing had meant there were fewer opportunities to engage in more informal – but no less valuable - aspects of EP work, such as catching up with SENCos and offering support; providing informal supervision with staff and missing out on building rapport with parents at the beginning and end of meetings. This was a small-scale project which captured only the voices of the EPs, how these changes were received by those the EPs were working with was not explored. It is interesting, however, that the concerns of the EPs who

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were working in the field, are echoed by other published research, i.e., the work of Fonagy et al. (2020), who highlight non-verbal cues as potential losses to video conferencing work and Fischer et al. (2016, 2017) who found video consultations to be an acceptable form of service delivery for school staff. The EPs interviewed spoke about how consultation had been a flexible tool to ensure that service delivery continued.

Sheridan et al. (2000) suggest that consultation can work at the *micro-* and the *meso-*systemic level. Due to the indirect nature of the work, consultation tends to work through the key adults who work with the child and not through direct work with the child. When the COVID-19 pandemic is viewed using this model, the pandemic will have had an impact on every level of the model, and on the developing child. Changes in the *micro- meso-* and *exo-*system have meant that boundaries between school, home and work have become blurred. The micro-systems the child belongs to now have a different understanding of the challenges and successes each faces concerning the developing child. By engaging in consultation, interventions can be targeted at the level of school, family or community (Sheridan et al., 2000). They highlight the role of the consultee, defined as an individual responsible for delivering the intervention (usually the teacher or SENCo), providing context and expertise of the individual in situ. Importantly for this study, how the systems around the child interact may be different given the use of video consultation. According to Fonagy et al. (2020), video conferencing can reduce hierarchical structures that may exist between clients and psychologists. Video consultations too could affect change at the *meso-*systemic level by potentially levelling the experience and similarly shifting power. This means that the power sometimes that schools are perceived to have, or negative feelings that parents sometimes hold

about school could be mediated when meetings are held online, with parents joining from settings in which they are comfortable.

<u>2.3.6 Assessment</u>

The psychological professional body, BPS gave guidance in the wake of the first lockdown expressing that EPs should exercise caution when carrying out assessments online with those they work with (BPS, 2020a). Drawing attention to the unknown nature of delivering a test standardised to use in person, the advice suggested that caveats should be used to allow for reassessment to be carried out, or caution the reader when generalising the findings of the report (BPS, 2020a). In a small-scale study on one local authority, Greenblatt et al. (2021) reported that psychologists had found difficulty in delivering assessments during the national lockdowns due to the availability of resources testing online and that some clients did not have the appropriate technology to access assessment materials. They discovered that EPs found online checklists a transferable assessment tool for online assessments, with 35% of those surveyed using them online during the first lockdown. In contrast to the work of Moore & Upton, (2020) only 17% of those surveyed found consultation as a flexible tool for assessments. Interestingly, the study also found that EPs did not consider that their role has changed during the national lockdowns, but that the way service had been delivered had. This may indicate that the EP service in which the study took place was not a consultation service, but perhaps a more traditional service.

Caution about the use of standardised assessments online was echoed in the work of Song et al. (2020) who called for further research on the applicability of online assessments delivered over the internet. Measuring the effectiveness of standardised assessments carried out online is beyond the scope of the current study, however, assessments of the needs of CYP are a part of the core activities of an EP which has moved online and during the initial lockdown. EPs also discussed consultation-based assessments as part of their practice which was, for some, a change that was enforced by the move to online working (Moore & Upton, 2020).

2.3.7 Intervention

The DECP conference in 2021 gave two insights into how EPs had been working to deliver intervention during the national lockdowns. Interestingly, both presentations looked at the transferability of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) to online working (Taylor, 2021; Yuill, 2021). Both studies found that VIG had worked equally as well online as it had in person. Taylor (2021) concluded that the use of scripts to support technological failures, such as the loss of internet connectivity, was helpful. In a study of 13 practitioners supporting VIG online, Yuill (2021) found minimal differences in the VIG principles of attuned interaction. In a second part of the study the researchers surveyed 72 participants who had the experience of working online with VIG, they found benefits of working in a hybrid way when working online with clients, in that they reported it had created opportunities to include other family members to support targeted intervention, as well as a convenience on the part of the client to receive the intervention in their home and not have to travel to appointments. They also highlight the ease online working provides for multi-disciplinary teams to meet. It should be noted that these two studies do not claim to represent the EP population in their entirety and are two illustrative examples of how interventions were carried out when in-person contact was not permitted, allowing those in need time and space with an EP in otherwise impossible circumstances.

2.3.8 Training

In a small-scale study conducted of *n*= 11 participants in one local authority during the pandemic, Greenblatt (2021) found that training was an area of service that had continued over the lockdowns, and had been experienced as positive and successful, with a move to online platforms enabling this to happen, however, it was noted that this only accounted for a small percentage of the content analysis (12%) indicating that the move to online training had perhaps not been a key feature of the success of online working.

This second section of the literature review examined the impact that the move to online working had on the population in general and what was known about how EPs were delivering their core activities between March 2020 and July 2021 (the time when social distancing and work from home orders were in place). The review has seen that consultation was the area of work that EPs found most transferable during this initial stage, which is reflected in the larger review of consultation above. The next section of the literature review looks at what is known about how EPs are currently working and some of the theoretical underpinnings of their work.

2.4 Part 3: Current EP Practice

The move to online working, although necessary, has not been without its difficulties. Implementing telepsychology has been daunting for many practitioners (McCord et al., 2020) and EPs are likely to have felt a substantial impact of working in new ways as challenging as much of the population. The pandemic has had and will continue to have a lasting and profound impact on society (Song et al., 2020). Past disasters and traumatic events show the effects of them are disproportionately felt by those in society who are marginalised and vulnerable (Song et al., 2020; O'Connor et al., 2020). The move to online working has brought with it another potential barrier to working with marginalised groups, as they are less likely to have access to technology and data. So-called *tech poverty* or *digital poverty* means that those that EPs need to connect with the most, may remain the hardest to reach (Holmes & Burgess, 2020; Moore & Upton, 2020; Song et al., 2020). This is particularly important when working with minoritised groups who may have limited access to technology, data, space, privacy and referring services and limited funds to support technology and provide data.

Dubicka & Carlson (2020) suggested that the pandemic has '*put the technological revolution on fast-forward'* and technological advances have been adopted which would have simply not happened or taken many years to embed into practice. Tan and Fulford (2020) suggest that the use of telepsychology has the potential to increase access to psychological services for those most in

need by using technology to bridge the divide. The exact method in which this is achievable is not discussed in the paper, but it is emphasised that the lessons of the pandemic should not be forgotten and services simply return to the '*old normal*' when the crisis is over. While these opinions pieces offer some positive and hopeful outcomes, it is worth reminding ourselves that marginalised groups and those who live in poverty are most likely to be detrimentally impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (O'Connor et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020), and professionals will need guidance and procedures to support them to make decisions for the 'best' way of supporting those most in need.

These ideas are supported by the work of Fonagy et al. (2020) whereby potential gains and losses of offering online service delivery are explored in more detail. They identify sessions being carried out in familiar settings for clients, for many their homes, and the shift that meeting online has in the psychologist/client power dynamic as potential benefits of working online as the client no longer travels to the physical space of the therapist. Potential pitfalls of online service delivery are also highlighted: Lack of access to technology for clients and privacy to speak freely are potential negatives to working exclusively online. The role of psychologists to mentalise with clients, (to understand their mental state) notice subtle verbal and non-verbal cues and the cognitive load that working in this way has on the psychologist are framed as potential negatives to offering an online service. These findings are not supported by empirical research but do provide professional insight into the uptake of video conferencing services when working at the level of the individual.

The work of Abraham et al. (2021) found that offering an online service has the potential to open mental health services to marginalised groups and reduce barriers to access. They suggest that online working practices should be developed and that training and practice competencies should encompass the virtual space.

2.4.1 Is there an Opportunity to Remake Ourselves?

EP practice has long promoted evidence-based practice, meaning that EP practice should be borne out of evidence of what is known to work. Fox (2010) argues that evidence-based practice for EPs can mean different things, depending on the EP's worldview and if those they are working with have challenged their position. They argue that, rather than adopting an evidence-based approach to EP practice, EPs use experiential approaches to inform their practice. When thought of in the context of a move to online working, it is reasonable then, that EPs now feel they can make sense of what works in terms of service delivery. Fox suggests two ways of looking at EP practice, firstly using Dutton's (1995) model of working problems, i) Noticing patterns (what you did before will work again. ii) knowledge in the moment, referred to as an automatic and unknowing way of working borne out of having worked that way before and iii) naming and framing, using theory to frame problems and thereby providing solutions to difficult problems. It could be argued that, at the beginning of the pandemic, EPs were not able to notice patterns in the same way, nor draw on knowing in the moment, as they had not worked in this way before and therefore no prior patterns had been established. By now, two years into the pandemic, professionals may be drawing on these concepts more and more have had time to see what works, notice patterns, and draw on prior learning. The second way Fox suggests EPs work is again drawing on the espoused theory and theory in use concept (Argyris & Schon, 1974). EPs accept that every problem is slightly different and is constructed by a unique set of people and circumstances, but when something does not fit with the beliefs that are held, EPs can become positivist in their approach to work, believing there is a truth, which they understand. Fox proposes that if actions are changed without changing our underlying theory, then EPs engage in so-called *single-loop learning*, but if, when faced with a different reaction to our work, we change our underlying theory, and engage in double-loop learning, EPs are more likely to change their behaviour, and subsequently their practice, in the future.

While the pandemic is an event that none have worked through before, this theory/practice gap has been explored by Lunt and Majors (2000) in newly qualified EPs. Referring to the changes that time has on a profession, they surmise that being a professional requires that the professional can 'remake' themselves when navigating an uncertain modern world. They argue that adopting the position of a 'reflective practitioner' allows for the integration of knowledge, skills and understanding In EP practice. This paper was published before the introduction of the doctoral training qualification and the recommendations have since been integrated as part of the course, meaning that EPs currently practising will have been working this way for some years now. The paper, although over two decades old, now viewed through the pandemic lens, offers suggestions and support to those who are looking to 'remake' themselves as an EP using the internet to deliver online service delivery.

Stobie (2002) posits that change is learning, and their paper suggests that change and continuity coexist when learning occurs. Drawing on work of solution focussed brief therapy (De Shazer, 1985), Gestalt psychology (Kuhn, 1970) and Gillham (1978), Stobie suggests that learning can be achieved when thinking happens *upside down.* This work, now two decades old, when viewed two years after the first order to socially distance, resonates with the adage that the world was turned upside down by the pandemic. The pandemic and the changes that it has enforced may well have given us all a chance to learn new ways, change our underlying belief system, if we make it part of our ongoing practice.

2.5 Summary of Literature and Research Questions

This literature review has set the background and context for the current research by describing: how EP working practices looked before March 2020, how the move to online initially impacted the day-to-day working lives of EPs and has given a picture of how things are currently. The literature has explored EPs' skill sets in managing change and providing support for individuals,

grounds and systems when working in challenging and unexpected times and has looked at the

impact that online working has had on individual EPs.

The following research questions were identified to provide a focus for the current research.

1) How has the move from in-person to online EP service delivery, necessitated by the
   pandemic, affected EP practice?

2) How have the changes with online working been received by EPs and school staff?

3) What are the losses and gains of delivering an online EP service?

4) What aspects of online working are most useful and acceptable to EPs and school staff?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter details the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin the mixed-methods design applied in the project. The ethical considerations that were considered are explored and the methods used for data collection and analysis are then presented, detailing the development and rationale for use. Finally, the methods used to analyse the data are shared along with issues around trustworthiness and quality assurance.

3.1 Philosophical Stance

The research was undertaken using a pragmatic approach. This approach allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data; methods which historically meant assuming opposing research paradigms, each of which had contradictory assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and how knowledge is constructed (epistemology). Positivism views the social world as being observable and measurable by the researcher in the same way as the natural world, while the constructionist paradigm asserts that knowledge is socially constructed and sees the researcher as an active participant in the research process (Mertens, 2014). Gorard (2004), described how these paradigms can cause the researcher to become *'imprisoned'* within the paradigm and argued that as the real world is made up of both words and numbers, it is reasonable that research should too. Pragmatism then, does not commit to a single system of philosophy, rejecting this traditional dualism and as such, is concerned with answering the research questions being posed; matching methods to specific questions (Mertens, 2014*). 'Methods should be used as a tool serving the questions pursued, rather than allowing them to constrict the range of inquiry'* (Gorard, 2004, p4).

A key feature of the pragmatic approach outlined by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) is that pragmatism regards reality as both constructed and based on reality, thus emphasising the importance of human experience, and viewing findings as fallible and tentative. Furthermore, Shannon-Baker (2016) highlighted that the pragmatic approach allows the researcher to

simultaneously maintain a position of subjectivity in their reflections and objectivity in data collection and analysis. This is important as the current study was carried out by the researcher while also undertaking a professional EP practice placement, therefore my experience, values and beliefs when analysing the data were an aspect of human experience, which will have impacted the interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Critically, pragmatism supports the collection of quantitative and qualitative data proposed by the mixed-methods design. By adopting a pragmatic position, it allows for both the 'hard data' of the difference between video and in-person consultations to be explored in collaboration with the 'soft data' collected from the semi-structured interviews that explored the thoughts, language and culture through the participants' perspective and their lived experiences.

These three characteristics make this theoretical perspective particularly attractive when researching human experiences of a real-world phenomenon in the context of a global pandemic.

3.2 Research Design

Mixed methods can be described as: *'The researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.'* (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p17)

The study followed a sequential design whereby the questionnaire led the data collection, and a nested sample of respondents completed the semi-structured interviews (SSIs). This allowed for the responses of participants of the questionnaire to be explored in greater detail and allowed for their responses to form the basis of the SSI schedule.

3.2.1 Phase 1 Rationale

The primary aim of the questionnaire was to provide quantitative data comparing online EP interactions to in-person interactions. The questionnaire also allowed for views to be obtained about

which type of EP work suits best online and in-person delivery through quantitative and qualitative data collection. The focus of the quantitative phase of the questionnaire phase was to explore consultation by comparing online and in-person consultations. Although service delivery is much broader than only consultation, the focus here was justified as being an opportunity to directly compare one aspect of online and in-person service delivery EPs were regularly engaging in during the pandemic. The qualitative sections of the questionnaire asked about service delivery more broadly. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix c.

Questionnaires are a common method of data collection used to capture an individual's attitudes and retrospective behaviours (Stassen & Carmack, 2019). They also lend themselves to a mixed-methods design as they are flexible and can provide a large amount of data to be collected relatively quickly (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The questionnaire used a Likert scale, binary questions, and open-ended, short response items to gather participants' views. See appendix c for a copy of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher into three parts. The first asked questions to gather data on the type of consultation that was being reflected on. The second part asked participants to rate a set of statements that were based on the principles of attuned (Sancho et al., 2015, see appendix d for statements used). The statements used in Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) to reflect on consultations were re-written to make them affirmative statements that could be used as prompts to aid reflection on an online or in-person consultation., For example, *showing that you have heard* was rephrased to become *'I was able to easily show that I had heard others in the consultation.'* The final part of the questionnaire explored service delivery more broadly and asked participants to share their thoughts and experiences of working online by asking which types of service delivery worked best online and in-person and by giving space for open-ended short responses to the losses and gains of online working.

Self-administered, online questionnaires have the advantage of being straightforward to administer while giving insight into the participants' attitudes, motives, beliefs and values (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Questionnaires, however, are not without their inherent disadvantages. Respondents can sometimes misinterpret the questions, and these cannot always be detected by the researcher. Lengthy Likert scales can become fatiguing to the participants and open-ended, or short response questions can be open to misinterpretation if not directed by the language used in the question (Stassen & Carmack, 2019). Piloting the questionnaire with EPs and non-EP professionals addressed some of these limitations. Some minor adaptations were made to the statements about the interaction following feedback from participants which improved the clarity of the statements. At the end of the piloting phase, it was felt that the data gathered would answer the research questions posed by the research.

The quantitative sections of the questionnaire allowed for short answer responses from the participants. These short responses formed the basis of the SSI schedule and allowed for greater exploration of the EPs' view of online working as well as gaps in the data to be addressed. For example, their motivations and successes were missing from the online questionnaire; the SSI schedule was structured to ensure these were captured to answer the research questions as fully as possible.

3.2.2 Phase 2 Rationale

Following the sequential design of the research, using the data gathered in phase 1, the SSI schedule was then formed. Using the open-ended, short responses from respondents, the SSI schedule aimed to build on responses to think more generally about service delivery and to focus on how the changes had impacted how they were delivering psychological service. SSIs were used in the second phase of the research to gather qualitative data. The SSIs aimed to explore in greater detail the losses and gains associated with online EP service delivery and how service delivery had been impacted by the move to online working during national lockdowns. As the SSI phase followed the

questionnaire phase of the research, explanations of vague answers provided in the open-ended

questions in the questionnaire could be followed up on and explored in greater detail, (Teddlie &

Tashakkori, 2009), and participants in the SSI were matched to their questionnaires, to support the

exploration of equivocal answers. Semi-structured interviews are described by Robson and

McCartan (2016) as:

> *"The interviewer has an interview guide that serves topics to be covered and a default*
>
> *wording and order for the questions, but the wording and the order for the questions are*
>
> *often substantially modified based on the flow of the interview comma and additional*
>
> *unplanned questions are asked to follow up on what the interviewee says."*

(Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 185)

SSIs can provide in-depth information when completed by an interviewer with good

interpersonal skills and rapport with the interviewee (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Although

drawbacks of SSIs are the time-consuming nature of conducting, transcribing, and analysing, it was

felt these were balanced by the potential richness of the data that would be gathered. Another

criticism of the SSI is that the views gathered only represent those who have been interviewed,

however, it is arguable that this did not conflict with the pragmatic approach to the research

(Mertens, 2014).

Both phases of the research were mediated by the internet and were asking about online

working practices. Although this could have resulted in attrition in my results (Teddlie & Tashakkori,

2009), namely, those who do not like online working practices are less likely to participate in

research online and so may not have their views represented, it was felt that to reach the greatest

number of participants, during a time when social interactions were limited by coronavirus

measures, that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks of using internet-mediated research

techniques.

3.3 Sampling

A convenience and snowball sampling method were used to distribute the questionnaire phase of the research. Participants were EPs/TEPs as well as the professionals who are involved in the school-based EP work. EP recruitment was initially opportunity-based, using word of mouth and social media (Twitter using the hashtag #twittereps and on EPNET, an online forum for EPs) to promote the project. Potential and interested participants were asked to contact the researcher directly to receive the information sheet and consent form (see Appendix a and b). While convenience sampling had the advantage of being a quick and easy way to access a potentially large sample of T/EPs by using social media, it runs the risk of biasing the sample to only those EPs who access social media or who are known to the researcher. Another barrier to recruitment was that the professional colleagues were recruited through the EP participant and not directly by the researcher. This led to an underrepresentation of school staff in the data set. This is discussed in more detail in the data analysis section below.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Before the data was collected, ethical approval was sought from the University College London, Institute of Education Ethics board. Approval was gained in October 2021. (UCL Data Protection Registration Number: Z6364106/2021/03/145 social research). The research was conducted in line with the British Psychological Code of Human Research (2014). Through the process of applying for ethical approval, several ethical considerations were addressed. Participants were made fully aware of the nature of the study and the aims of the research (see the information sheet in appendix a). Consent was gained before the questionnaire phase and the SSIs and participants were made aware they could omit answers or withdraw their data until the completion of the data analysis. The original audio file was deleted from the recording device after transcription was completed. All data that was held about the participants was held in a secure online file, in line with IoE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society guidelines.

3.5 Phase 1

<u>3.5.1 Recruitment and Procedure</u>

Data were collected for this phase over the Autumn and Spring term of the academic year 2021-22 using MS Forms, a web-based survey tool.

Potential participants were contacted using the *#TwitterEPs* hashtag and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit participants through professional links. Both methods of contact asked the participants to express an interest in completing the research by contacting the researcher. After contacting the researcher via social media or email, potential participants were sent a link to the questionnaire which was hosted on MS Form (see appendix c for a copy of the questionnaire). EPs were asked to send the link to professional colleagues who had been part of a consultation, either online or in person for their views to be captured.

<u>3.5.2 Participants</u>

Sixty-three participants from across the UK completed the questionnaire. Of these, eight represented non-EP professionals. A table showing the participants' professional roles.

Table 3.1. The self-reported job role of the participants based on questionnaire data (n=63)

Response to your current job role.	Number of participants
TEPs	23
EPs	23
Teachers	3
SENCos	6
Senior leader in school	4
Other	4

Note: i) Participants could select more than one job role. ii) other categories of responses included *lecturer, speech and language therapist and Senior EP.*

3.5.3 Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire aimed to answer all four of the research questions, to give a broad overview of as many participants' views as possible, and it was understood that the data collected would be less in-depth and open-ended discussion would happen in the SSIs than that gathered by the SSI.

3.5.3.1 Development of Reflective Scaled Questions

All EPs are required to engage in a practice of reflection on and reviewing their professional practice as applied practitioners (HCPC, 2015). Professional reflection is also a large part of initial teacher training and is considered a process that teaching professionals should continue to engage with throughout their careers.

As discussed in the literature review (section 2.2.2), Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) is a tool that is used by EPs in training to reflect on practice by viewing video clips of themselves in consultations with their VERP supervisor. Murray and Leadbetter (2018) found that in viewing the clips of EPs, there is a tendency to look at the negative aspects of practice that could be experienced as a threat to competency. By using VERP principles for attuned interactions (Sancho et al., 2015) to enable self-reflection, the aim of the study was not to engage in self-criticism but rather to explore perceptions of the video consultation by using VERP as a framework. For this reason, the questions were intentionally positively phrased within the questionnaire. A copy of the VERP principles for use within consultation used to form the reflective statements can be found in appendix d. This approach is not without drawbacks, it relied on the memory of the participants, rather than the video clip evidence that VERP offers; an important aspect of the VERP process is exploring strengths together through discussion and exploration with the supervisor. However, as

this research explored individuals' perceptions of online working, rather than changing practice, it was deemed that the VERP principles would provide a framework to measure attuned interactions from the perspective of the EP and their professional colleagues.

3.5.3.2 Piloting

Before the questionnaire was distributed, a pilot test followed by a short interview was conducted with one EP and one non-EP participant neither of whom were familiar with the study. This allowed an opportunity to address misconceptions within the questionnaire and rework items to minimise response error (Fox, 1996), although it is accepted that the pilot phase was very small, so potentially did not illuminate all equivocations that could be experienced by participants. An option to omit any questions on the questionnaire was enabled, alongside '*not applicable'* options which hoped to minimise participants feeling forced to answer questions they do not fully understand. Similarly, a three-point Likert scale was used to mitigate response error and fatigue (Fox, 1996). The final stage of the questionnaire development involved piloting the process from start to finish with an EP and non-EP professional, both of whom were not familiar with the design of the test. The EP was given the written instructions designed by the researcher and was asked to complete the questionnaire after an online and an in-person questionnaire to ensure there were no foreseeable issues with the materials and process (Stassen & Carmack, 2019).

3.6 Phase 2

3.6.1 Recruitment, Procedure and Participants

Six participants were recruited from a nested sample of the participants who had completed the questionnaire phase of the research. A range of EPs at various stages in their careers, with between 2.5 and 25 years of experience delivering educational psychology, a mean average of 12 years' experience across the sample. The sample was made up of five females and one male; one EP in training, two main grade EPs, two senior EPs and one principal EP, from EPSs across the UK. Due

to time constraints of the study, the logistics of coordinating teachers' interviews proved challenging during the data collection phase of the study, and it was not possible, within the timescale of the research to gather the views of non-EP colleagues. Collecting the EP views was prioritised as the service providers and to follow on from that of the small-scale project conducted during 2020. The impact of this and the direction of further research is addressed in chapter five and six.

3.6.2 Procedure

The interviews took place over the Spring term of 2022 via Microsoft Teams. Participants were sent a copy of the information sheet and the consent form ahead of the interview via email (as described in appendices a and b). At the beginning of the call, a verbal introduction to the research was given along with confirmation of consent to participate. There was also an opportunity given for participants to ask any questions at the beginning and the end of the interview. The interviews lasted between 46 and 58 minutes.

3.6.3 Interview Schedule Development

The interview schedule was developed using principles of appreciative inquiry (AI) and appraisal frameworks. With roots in positive psychology, AI is a strengths-based approach that highlights what is currently working well and explores what might be in the future (Cooperrider et al., 2008). AI consists of four phases, *discovery,* appreciating the best of what is; *dream,* envisioning how things may be; *design,* constructing the ideal and planning how to get there, *and destiny,* sustaining supportive relationships (Reed, 2007). Using the *discovery* phase of appreciative inquiry to uncover what is going well and to think about how things may look in the future (Reed, 2007), the interview aimed to gather more detailed explanations and data which would provide answers to the four research questions. The interview was piloted with one main grade EP to ensure the questions posed were answering the research questions. A copy of the final interview schedules can be found in appendix e.

3.7 Data Analysis

The mixed methods design of the research means that the two distinct data sets were used to triangulate findings. In the current research, both the quantitative and qualitative data generated carry equal weighting to answer the research questions, as they both provided valuable information about how educational psychology service delivery evolved and adapted to online working practices. The two data sets were analysed in parallel and were, in part, combined, with themes being drawn out and both data sets providing evidence to add context, compare findings and answer the research questions. The qualitative data generated from EPs and non-EPs from the questionnaire phase were analysed separately and common themes from both sets were drawn out.

3.7.1 Phase 1 Data Analysis

Initially, it was hoped that the questionnaire would be carried out by the same EP and teacher after an online and in-person consultation, however, only eight pairs of respondents completed the questionnaire twice with not enough participants to analyse and ensure statistical power. As a result, the two data sets were used to compare statistical differences between the two conditions using a between-subjects design. Before the data analysis took place, the questionnaire data set was inputted into the SPSS Statistics Software package (v.28). The results and analysis of the data are presented in Chapter Four.

3.7.1.1 Likert Scale Questions

Each response was given a numerical value (1=not true; 2 = somewhat; 3= true). Descriptive statistics were used to compare the mean responses of each item and comparisons of the two data sets were made. Results are presented in Chapter Four.

3.7.1.2 Acceptability Questions

Each response was given a numerical value: best online =1; equal = 2; best in person = 3. Mean averages were taken from the data set and analysed. Full results and analysis of the data are in the following chapter.

3.7.1.3 Open-ended, Sort Response Questions

Open-ended, short response questions with a character limit of 4000 in the questionnaire provided data to the research question exploring the losses and gains of working online. Responses were split into EP and non-EP professional responses and coded at the semantic (descriptive) and the latent (interpretative) level. The data were coded into subthemes and themes and the differences between the two data sets were compared and used to support the data gathered in Phase 2, described below.

3.7.2 Phase 2 Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data generated by the semi-structured interviews. The thematic analysis was supported using the software package Nvivo12. The six-step process outline in Braun & Clarke's (2013) paper was used:
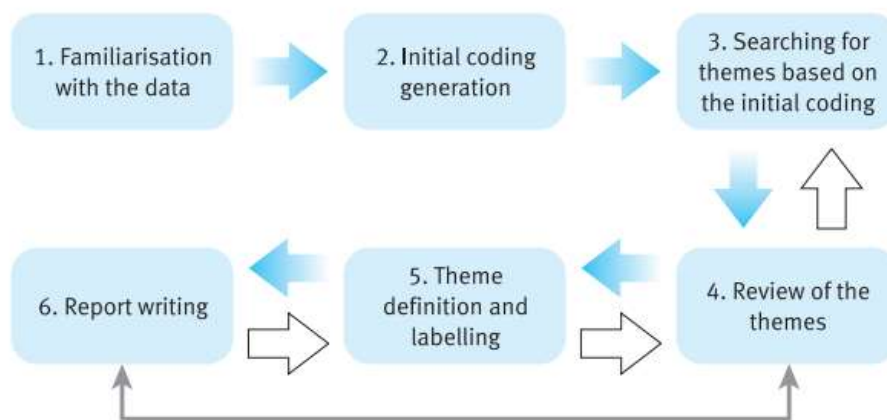
Figure 3.1: phase of thematic data analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013)

Phase 1: familiarisation with the data

- Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed manually to produce verbatim

    transcripts. Transcripts were read and re-read several times to be immersed in the data.

- The transcripts were read alongside contemporaneous notes made during each interview.

Phase 2: initial coding generation

- The data set was worked through line by line and initial ideas for codes were recorded using

    Nvivo12. See appendix f for the initial codes generated from this phase.

Phase 3: searching for themes based on initial coding

- The codes were sorted into potential themes by re-reading the data. Theme and some

    subtheme names were generated at this stage. An initial thematic map was generated

    displaying the tentative themes and subthemes.

Phase 4: reviewing themes

- At this stage, all the data was reviewed by re-reading the coded extracts and ensuring that

    the data was represented by the theme or subtheme name.

- Themes were revised and removed where necessary. For example, a theme had been constructed called *Impact of COVID on the EP* and contained data pertaining to working from home and difficulties balancing home and work commitments. However, this was removed from the data set as, on reflection, this did not answer the research questions and the data had come from EPs talking about their experiences of working online and digressing to speak about their personal experiences during the lockdowns of 2020-21.

Phase 5: defining and naming themes

- Each theme and subtheme was given a descriptive label (see appendix g) outlining the boundary and inclusion and exclusion criteria for data to be included in the theme/subtheme. The data set was then re-read to check that the inclusion and exclusion criteria were met for each piece of data.
- At this stage, some of the themes were renamed to better reflect the content of the data held within them, for example, 'hybrid working' was renamed 'working in the new normal' to distinguish it from 'a move toward hybrid working' subtheme.

Phase 6: producing the report

- The analysis of the data can be found in the following chapter which includes detailed examples of data forming each theme and subtheme constructed.

This method of data analysis was chosen as it is considered to be well-established, widely used and offers a systematic, comprehensive approach to constructing themes in a qualitative data set (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). The Thematic Analysis approach can be applied flexibly to a range of subjects, giving the flexibility needed for this exploratory study and is not committed to the parameters of one theoretical perspective. The thematic analysis allows for the content of the interview data to be explored at both the semantic and the latent levels. Themes and subthemes were generated around the four research questions to provide answers to this nascent area of research.

3.7.3 Quality of the Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Within the thematic analysis, the researcher is an active participant in the analysis process. This lack of neutrality on the part of the researcher can lead to biases in the data (Ahern, 1999). It is important to acknowledge that the researcher has their worldview, set of beliefs and experiences; these will have an impact on them and the research. This research was carried out by an EP in training, working using online service delivery as part of their professional development. There was potential for personal biases, preferences, and experiences to impact the research at each stage. To minimise the influence of this, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the research process as well as any salient developments or changes that happened in the UK's response to the pandemic. Ahern (1999) suggested being cognisant of areas of the research process which may suggest pre-existing biases, values and ideas the researcher may hold. These include identifying personal issues, values, and role conflicts; recognising feelings that could indicate a lack of neutrality; revisiting raw data to clarify any misconceptions and actively considering whether the literature supports the data analysis. These were kept in mind during the development and data gathering phases and a reflective diary was used by the researcher to capture these thoughts as they occurred. During the analysis, inter-coder reliability was assured by sharing the coding and theme generation with a consistent group of Trainee EPs. Although these TEPs had experienced a shift to online working during the pandemic, they were not directly involved in data collection and so were able to provide a critical contribution to the codes and themes that were constructed. This approach to data analysis sits with the pragmatic approach of the research, rather than ensuring reliability or validity, which are from positivist concepts (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

3.7.3.1 Peer Reviewing

Throughout the development and analysis of the data, the research was shared with a group of four consistent peers, who were also completing their thesis for the DEdPsy course and

completing a thematic analysis, so were considered competent and possessing transferable research skills. These peers reviewed research methods, materials, statistical and thematic analyses. The group were able to offer a critical lens and challenge the decisions I was making and, as suggested by Yardley (2008), were consulted at the coding stage of the data analysis to ensure the reflexive process incorporated the views of others and also made sense. It was suggested by the group that the sub-codes *feeling deskilled* and *consciously competent* were coding very similar ideas and could be combined. The subtheme was subsequently merged to *questioning competency* in collaboration with the peer group.

3.7.3.2 Representativeness

Data is represented from across the data set to ensure the spectrum of voices is heard.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

In this chapter, the results from the online questionnaire and the analysis of the interview data set are presented. The results of the qualitative data set generated from the questionnaire are presented first, which compares differing perceptions of interactions following an online and in-person consultation for all participants. This is followed by the qualitative data generated by the open-ended, short response questions of the questionnaire which compares EP and non-EP views of online working. Finally, the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews is presented which explores the views of EPs who have experience delivering an EP service before and during the pandemic.

4.1 Results of Quantitative Data Set

This section will present the results generated from the online questionnaires. Due to a low response rate from non-EP professionals (n=8), statistical power could not justify between-groups comparison. Thus, the data presented here represents both participant groups' perceptions of online and in-person consultations.

The data set was analysed using SPSS v28. Demographic data was collected for all participants (n = 63) (Table 3.1)

4.1.1 Type of Consultation

Participants were asked to reflect on the VERP principles following an online or in-person consultation. Figure 4.1 shows the different types of consultations that were reflected within the data set. Findings show that more joint school and family consultations were happening online and initial consultations were more likely to happen in person.
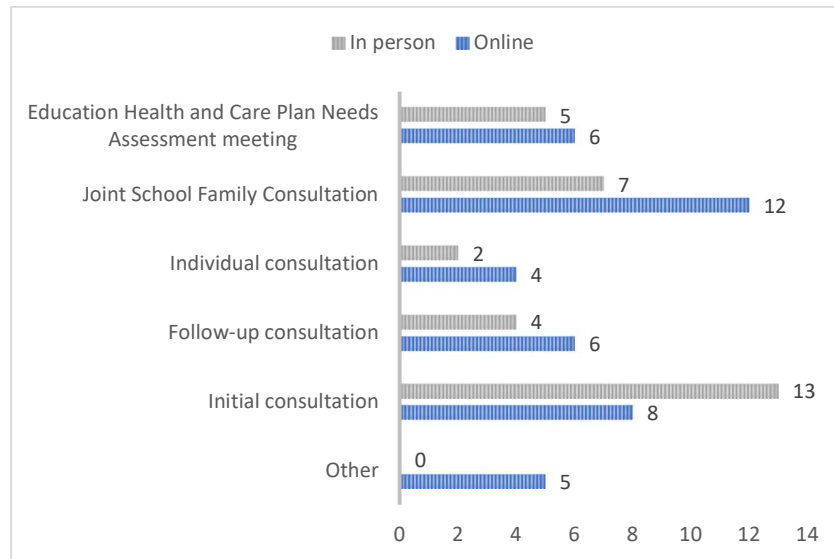
Figure 4.1: *Graph showing the types of consultations presented in the data set. Note: participants could tick more than one response to reflect the nature of the consultation.*

4.1.2 Comparison Between Online and In-person Consultations.

Comparisons of responses to the principles of attuned interactions between online (n=32) and in-person (n=36) consultations are presented below in table 4.1 (note not all participants completed this part of the questionnaire). Statistical significance was reported for four statements: *i) there was enough time and space given for everyone in attendance to give their views; ii) I was able to easily show that I had heard others in the consultation;* iii) *It was easy to show that I had understood the thoughts and ideas of others, and iv) Non-verbal cues were easily picked up on by others*. Table 4.1 shows principles that were rated more positively by participants, and appendix h contains a full statistical analysis performed on the data set.

Participants rated the statement *there was enough time and space given for everyone in attendance to give their views* more positively when consultations were taking place online and in the three statements, *I was able to easily show that I had heard others in the consultation; It was easy to show that I had understood the thoughts and ideas of others* and *Non-verbal cues were easily picked up on by others,* more positively when in-person.

Table 4.1: *Table showing the difference in participant perceptions of principles of attuned interactions during online (n=32) and in-person (n=36) consultations.*

Rated significantly more positive online	No difference	Rated significantly more positive in person
There was enough time and space given for everyone in attendance to give their views. [+]	There was a balance in turn-taking.	I was able to easily show that I had heard others in the consultation. [^]
	The consultation included problem-free talking.	Non-verbal cues were easily picked up on by others. [×]
	The consultation was 'emotionally warm'.	It was easy to show that I understood the thoughts and ideas of others. [*]
	Positive comments and affirmations were made throughout.	
	Follow-up questions were used, and ideas were built on by the EP.	
	Ideas were summarised effectively.	
	Each person in the consultation contributed ideas.	
	Ideas were received and responded to in a congruent way.	
	Where appropriate, further turns were given on the same topic.	
	Possibilities, hypotheses, and explanations were presented and discussed.	
	Ideas, perspectives and information were presented in a way that could be easily understood.	
	The perspectives of everyone at the consultation were explored.	
	Collaborative problem formulation was undertaken.	
	There was collaboration around creating well-formed outcomes or setting goals.	
	I felt as though my thoughts and ideas were understood by others.	

+ significant at .028, ^significant at .044, × significant at <.001, * significant at .031

A comparison of means was performed on items that explored how the consultation overall was experienced by the attendees (Table 4.2, below). There was no statistical difference found between the *ease of the interaction*, and *how successful* or *useful* the consultation was perceived to be by those in attendance in the two conditions although it was noted that in-person consultations scored higher for ease and usefulness, but not for success.

Table 4.2: *Comparison of means as to the overall perceived effectiveness of the consultation between online and in-person consultations based on questionnaire data (n=58)*

Question	Online Mean	In-person mean	T	*p*	Cohen's d effect size
How would you rate the ease of the interaction?	4.00	4.31	-1.55	.126	.750
How successful did you find the consultation?	4.13	4.04	.368	.714	.891
How useful did you find the consultation?	4.26	4.46	-1.03	.308	.743

Note: not all participants gave responses to these items.

Although the analysis yielded no significant differences between the two conditions, a large effect size was noted, (i.e., 0.7 and above) indicating that perhaps, with a greater sample size there may be a significant effect whereby 0.8 indicated a strong effect.

4.1.3 Descriptive Statistics of Acceptability of Online vs In-person Working

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to rate 16 common activities that make up the EP role in schools as being '*best online'*, '*no preference'*, or '*best in-person'*. The figure below shows EP involvement ranked from least acceptable online to most acceptable online.

Table 4.3 *Participant views of the best method of service delivery for common EP activities in schools*

Activity	n (number of respondents)	Best online	No preference	Best in-person
CYP observation	50	0%	0%	100%
Assessment with CYP	50	0%	2%	98%
Therapeutic sessions with CYP	50	0%	4%	96%
Intervention delivery	49	0%	6%	92%
Narrative approaches e.g., PATH	47	0%	8%	88%
Training with parents	50	6%	18%	68%
Joint School and Family Consultation	50	8%	18%	74%
Supervision for school staff	49	8%	52%	38%
Parent Meetings	49	14%	34%	52%
Initial consultation	50	14%	40%	46%
Staff drop-ins	50	12%	50%	38%
Follow-up consultations	49	22%	42%	34%
Information gathering with parents	50	24%	30%	46%
Information gathering with school staff	50	26%	48%	26%
Planning meetings	50	44%	38%	18%

Note: not all participants gave responses to these items.

Findings show that CYP observations were universally agreed to be best when taking place in person, while planning meetings, only 18% felt were best in person. Participants were given the option to elaborate on these answers using open-ended, short responses which are discussed below.

4.1.4 Analysis of Open-ended, Short Responses Exploring Acceptability of Online vs In-person Working

Two open-ended, short response questions were also asked in the online questionnaire:

1) A*re there some aspects of the EP role you would like to carry out online?*

2) *Are there some aspects of the EP role you would like to carry out in person?*

Open-ended, short responses yielded 39 responses that contained between one and 107 words. The content was analysed and grouped into themes.

The findings confirmed those of the closed questions, detailed above (section 4.1.2) with the following noteworthy additions: i) 13 participants said they would prefer multi-agency meetings online; ii) 8 participants said work could happen online if it was '*preferred*' or '*more convenient*' for parents; iii) 10 participants said they either wanted '*all work*' to be in-person or indicated that they felt none of the aspects of the EP role was preferable to carry out online; iv) 13 respondents suggested that when work was 'psychologically informed', it was better to be delivered in person; v) *n*=8 suggested that relationships were better-established in-person; vi) the views of participants on the acceptability of training and consultation online was divided with an almost equal number of participants preferring it delivered online and in-person.

Both EPs and non-EP were represented in both categories. Table 4.3 shows the themes that were constructed from the open-ended, short responses that summarised what was considered most effective online, in-person, or both.

Table 4.3: *Thematic analysis of open-ended short responses to practices that worked best either online, in person or both.*

Best online	Represented equally in both	Best in-person
Admin tasks including Planning meetings	Consultations	Direct work with CYP
Professional meetings	Training	When collaboration is needed
		When establishing a relationship
		Psychologically informed work

4.2 Analysis of Difference Between EP and non-EP Respondents from Questionnaire Data Set

4.2.1 Analysis of Open-ended, Short Response Questions

The questionnaire asked participants to provide open-ended, short responses of up to 4000 characters to the following questions:

a.   *What do you consider to be the gains of working online?*

b.   *What do you consider to be the losses of working online?*

c.   *What do you consider to be the gains of working in person?*

d.   *What do you consider to be the losses of working in-person?*

Responses varied in length between one word and 125 words. The responses to the questions above were first split into two broad categories of i) gains of working online, made up of questions *a* and *d* and ii) losses of working online, made up of responses from questions *b* and *c*. The data set was then split again to represent EPs and non-EP professionals and the data was thematically analysed.

11 themes were constructed from the data, given in table 4.4 below with example quotes for each.

Table 4.4 *Themes constructed from EP and non-EP open-ended, short response questions.*

Theme	Example quote
Convenience	*'It's nice to be able to have back-to-back meetings without the burden of commuting in between.'* [EP]
	'You don't have to worry about parking, venues, and rooms,' [Senior Leader]
CYP are more comfortable online	*'Equally young people who are finding it difficult to come into school may feel more comfortable with an online meeting'* [EP]
Bringing people together	*'Some consultations (especially with school staff, who might have access to appropriate technology and be less intimidated by online meetings with a psychologist)'* [EP]
	'It brings people together in ways that would not otherwise be possible - larger professional gatherings remotely is a huge benefit.' [Teacher]
Ease of parental access	*'Greater attendance from BOTH parents in two-parent families at joint school family consultations'* [EP]
	'Some parents find it easier to engage in online forums rather than face-to-face.' [SENCo]
Technology has enhanced working	*'People have their name at the bottom of the screen.'* [EP]
	'The ability to share one's screen if necessary to show a document.' [Inclusion Manager]
Better use of limited EP time	*'Time and resource saving. More efficient.'* [SENCo]
	'The EPs seem to be able to offer more flexible timings with meeting i.e., before school, at lunch or after school as meetings can be booked in for an hour at a time and not in blocks of afternoon or morning visits.' [Teacher]
Attuning to others	*'Nuances in conversational tone can be missed.'* [Teacher]
	'You do not get the same quality of interactions online than face-to-face (e.g., no shared room, small talk and rapport building prior to and following consultation, less naturalistic turn taking during interactions, cannot see all non-verbal communication)' [EP]
Giving interactions full attention	*'I've found the potential for others to be distracted or multi-tasking is huge - I can often hear people have their emails open and notice them trying to do multiple things at once'* [EP]
	'Conversations feel easier and fuller [when in person] everyone is here for the same thing' [Teacher]

Theme	Example quote
Technological issues and access	*'When connectivity issues occur, it can really pump the brakes on a meeting.'* [EP]
	'Technical issues, and the impact of technical issues on the atmosphere of the meeting' [SENCo]
Brevity of the interaction	*'Endings are less abrupt [when in person]- physically leaving the room allows for further social interaction, reassurances, clarifications, problem free talk'* [EP]
	'Conversation can be more stilted.' [SENCo]
Being in the room and person privilege	*'I think physically being at a school or workplace can give a strong message in terms of offering a containing space e.g., I am physically here for you, and I don't have any other distractions.'* [EP]

These themes were then analysed to look for themes that crossed the two groups of participants and those that were only present for one group. The figure below shows the losses and gains identified by the two participant groups based on responses to linked questions, i.e., items a&d, and b&c. Overlap between the two groups is shown as well as the losses and gains that are distinct to each group.
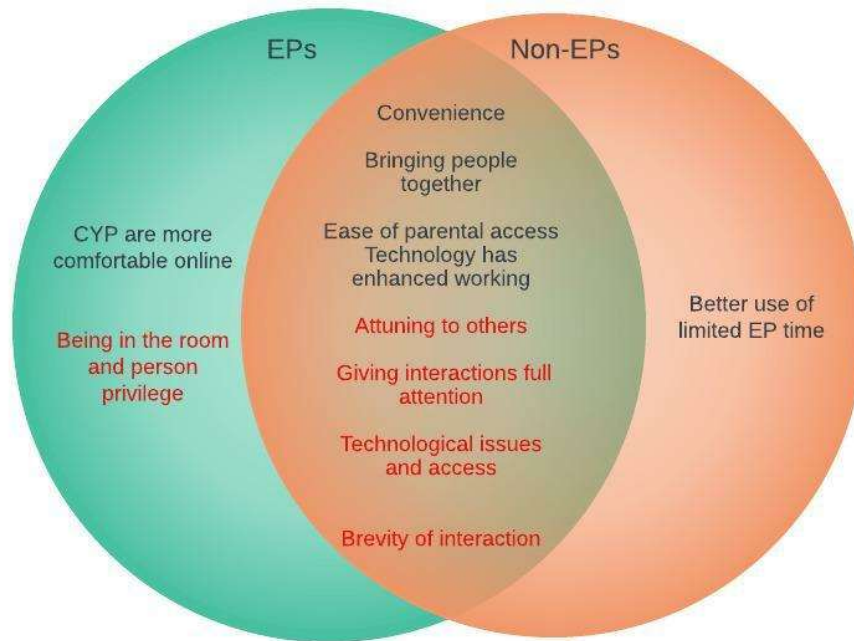
Figure 1: *Venn diagram showing thematic analysis of EP and non-EP responses to the losses and gains of working online. Gains =black, losses = red*

The diagram above shows that all participants converged in their agreement on three gains and four losses of working online. School staff found a gain to be the better use of EP time when connecting online, while EPs spoke about the gain they had noticed being CYP were more comfortable online. There was one loss unique to EPs which was constructed around data in which EPs spoke about missing contextual information about the school or system they were working with and the loss of a physical presence to allow EPs to come alongside problem holders to support understanding.

The following part of the chapter presents the thematic analysis of the six EP interviews.

Data from the semi-structured interviews of EPs were thematically analysed and constructed into eight broad themes. Figure 4.4 shows a thematic map of the eight themes constructed and the 24 subthemes of which they are made. Figure 4.5 below is a thematic map showing the themes in coloured boxes and their associated subthemes connected via grey lines and in grey boxes.

a. a move towards a blended service

b. frustrated by technology

1: Integrating Technology into the Role of the EP

d. same work; delivered differently

c. pandemic enforced digitalisation

a. improved access to psychology below.

2: Online Accessibility and Availability

b. responsiveness of an online service

c. barriers to accessing an online service

a. towards CYP

4. Power Shift

b. towards parents

b. working differently

a. revisiting practice

3: Learning Curve

c. questioning competence

a. managing the day.

5: Working in the New Normal

b. EP autonomy

c. flexibility and balance

a. natural interactions

6: Person Privilege

b. richness in person.

a. CYP are digital natives

7. Working with CYP

b. observations and individual work

c. assessments

a. online consultations

8. Working with Systems

b. online training

c. working with professional colleagues

d. building and maintaining relationships online

Figure 4.5: *Thematic Map of the Eight Constructed Themes.*

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Below, each theme and subtheme are explored with example quotes from EP participants which aim to give context and add clarity to the findings. Theme 1 starts with how technology had to be embraced by the first national lockdown and the impact this had on service delivery.

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Integrating Technology into the Role of the EP

I identified four subthemes within the broader theme of *integrating technology into the role of the EP* which are illustrated in figure 4.5. This theme explores how technology has integrated into EP working practices since the onset of the pandemic. It explores the frustrations and anxieties of working in a new way, and how the national lockdowns meant that EPs had to come together to make it work. EPs spoke about how little work was conducted online before the 2020 national lockdowns; the stark contrast to how work was delivered during the restrictions of the pandemic and how there has been a shift towards more of a balance more recently.
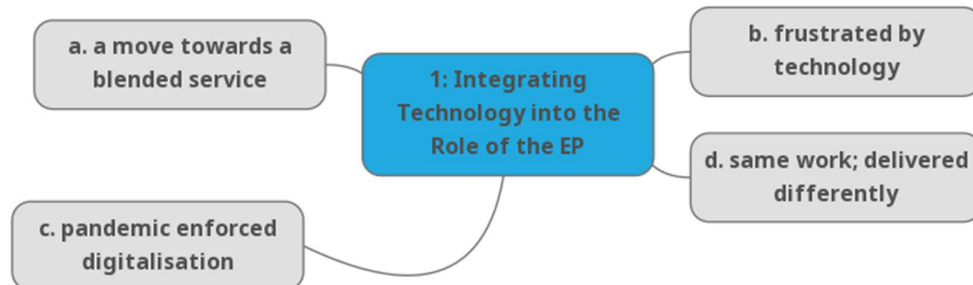
Figure 4.5: *Integrating Technology into the Role of the EP*

Theme 1 indicates that technology had to be integrated into EP working practices in response to the pandemic, or else service delivery would stop, so to ensure the service delivery continued during the lockdowns, EPs had to offer online only work. This has since evolved to a blended model, presented in subtheme a: *a move towards a blended service.*

Subtheme 1.a: A Move Towards a Blended Service

Participants spoke about how they felt that they were able to offer online, and in-person work as part of their core offer to the people they work with. All six EPs interviewed spoke about how they felt that online working would continue to a greater or lesser extent into their professional future.

"I think…, as much as there's been tricky parts of it, I have really liked being able to take forwards the flexibility of it and be able to work from home and kind of gelling it into a way that works for me…. But, for me, it will always be important that that in-person component is always there too" [EP5]

EPs talked about balancing the convenience of working online and the benefits of bringing more people together to the consultations, with the perceived payoffs that come with not being in person.

"But I'd also like the flexibility of being able to say to heads, SENCOs and parents if… we've got valid reasons … in terms of getting more of the key people to be able to attend or being able to access a wider group…but if there are legitimate reasons, then that is an option. And that we could weigh that up and make those decisions" [EP2]

Because of the abrupt shift to online working, EPs reported feeling frustrated, presented in subtheme b: *frustrated by technology* detailed next.

Subtheme 1.b: Frustrated by Technology

This subtheme was constructed around the frustrations and anxieties participants had experienced when working online and how this had made them feel as though they were not offering the same quality of service when online.

"Oh, the frustrations around Wi-Fi and technology and background noise and how

that almost on a personal level made me feel less professional in some way. And that I was

offering good a service… my Wi-Fi, I was crashing out, or they couldn't hear me, or I was

being interrupted by the front door. So that was a personal anxiety." [EP2]

EPs also spoke about the difficulties they experienced becoming accustomed to the online

way of working.

"So, in a big group, so if you know if there were 50 people in the room, I would have

found that… easier to do that face-to-face if I could see the faces and get that feedback.

Whereas if you're trying to get 50, black dots, to sort of engage with you in any way, or get

any feedback, I've just found impossible." [EP5]

This frustration was felt more acutely because EPs had to work in this way during the lockdowns, as

the pandemic had enforced digitalisation, presented below in subtheme c.

Subtheme 1.c: Pandemic Enforced Digitalisation

This subtheme was constructed around responses from EPs that spoke about the impact the

pandemic had on enforcing new ways of working online. Some EPs spoke about the opportunities

and unexpected consequences of moving some systems to think differently about the role of the EP

within their system. This appeared to impact the type of work that was being carried out by EPs,

with fewer cognitive assessments and more consultation work and training. This idea is explored

more in the theme *working with systems* (section 4.2.2.8)

"You know… the biggest changes, I think have been in schools that were the most

challenging to change the way they worked before because they were literally thrust into a

situation where they had to change. The [school's] that like…'Oh, God, we've got EP time to

use, what are we do with it?' They kind of had to look at its other way. So that's quite an

interesting difference." [EP6]

There was a sense from participants that moving to any form of online service delivery would not have ever been possible if national lockdowns had not necessitated the shift to online service delivery, even though the technology had been available beforehand.

"I want to say no to that I don't think we did anything online so it would have felt

completely alien to try to get a school to know how to use to use zoom for a consultation or

anything like that. No, I didn't wouldn't have done anything online." [EP4]

"We were using emails. And I think we had started to set up some…areas in teams.

First, for shared resources, … So there were definitely interest groups set up on there, and

chats, but there was there varying degrees of interest and engagement, and it didn't feel

necessary, or important and so there wasn't a full commitment, even though we tried…we

couldn't enforce it." [EP2]

As an indirect result of this enforced digitalisation, the provision EPs offered, had to be delivered differently. This is presented in subtheme d: *same work; different delivery.*

Subtheme 1.d: Same Work; Different Delivery

The different parts of the EP role were discussed in this subtheme and the impact that working online had on how these were able to be delivered. Broadly, EPs discussed how work previously delivered in person was transferred to an online space, but that it is not always easy, straightforward, or natural.

"I think everything we did, we still did. But we did it in a different way. And the

proportions differed. So, we continue to do consultations, but we did many, many more.

We've always done assessments. We did online assessments. But we did very, very few of them in general. So, the proportion of how we spent our time differed quite significantly." [EP1]

"Things that I would have imagined would have been really hard to reproduce virtually, but…people were attempting PATHS and tree of life virtually. That is a lot… because they're those sorts of things that you're managing so many things like dynamics in the room, and what you're writing and what you're saying…. And then, you know, doing that online, that's amazing! Just to be able to multitask in that way." [EP3]

As EP service delivery had to continue during the lockdown, online accessibility and availability needed to be considered, this is explored in theme 2: *online accessibility and availability.*

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Online Accessibility and Availability

This theme contains three subthemes that explore how participants felt that being online has opened access to EP service and made the service more accessible in some ways. The theme also explores technological barriers to accessibility and the impact that having an online presence has had on how responsive an EPS can be.

Figure 4.6: *Online accessibility and availability*

Within this theme, interview data revealed an improvement in access to psychology, presented next in subtheme 2a.

Subtheme 2.a: Improved Access to Psychology

Within this subtheme, participants spoke about how online service delivery had improved access to psychological services, both during the national lockdowns and since.

"In the [team that I work for], we do trainings, and I feel like for the people that can, doing it online does open up to more people... I feel like some of the things make your work more accessible." [EP6]

"And suddenly it was embracing teams, embracing zoom, and talking to heads and SENCos and saying, we are still here. We are here at 100%. And in fact, we can be even more flexible, even more available here... let's have a chat. Let's see how this can work." [EP2]

This change in access to psychology also impacted how responsive a remote EP service could be, explored in theme 2.b: *Responsiveness of an online service.*

Subtheme 2.b: Responsiveness of an Online Service

EPs spoke about the benefits online service delivery has in terms of how responsive you can be as an EP.

"I suppose the benefit was often quite quickly to be able to have those conversations sometimes take longer to get out to that school or go meet with that headteacher, whereas you could actually just catch up, within a couple of days. There's some benefits in all that they've been really responsive" [EP4]

Both the positives and the negatives of this perceived responsiveness were included within this subtheme.

"The feedback I got in the early days was wow, it was like 'you can get somebody this afternoon, wow.' And so, the flexibility really, really was well received… And that has become a millstone around your neck as this thing is going on." [EP1]

Connecting and responding remotely, however, was not accessible to all service users which is explored in theme 2.c: *Barriers to accessing an online service.*

Subtheme 2.c: Barriers to Accessing an Online Service

There were often caveats as the EPs spoke positively about online working, about technology not being accessible to all client groups. These barriers were contained within this subtheme. EPs spoke about how some educational settings found it more difficult to engage with an online service delivery service, while others spoke about tech poverty or families for which there were issues around accessibility.

"I think it can be restricting because it can assume or require a lot of people to have fundamental basic skills. Which I've already met a number of parents that don't have those skills and kind of separate to that, I think IT can be a bit restricting. If you're working with EAL parents… And if the Wi-Fi is disconnecting, or somebody's freezing at the same time, English is the additional language, it just the complexities that can be a bit much." [EP5]

"[I've been thinking about] preschools and actually, their technology was often not to the same level as at school. They really, really missed us being out there face-to-face with them, because of the quality of the contacts and support with them was really it was pretty poor, where schools were super slick [with technology]." [EP3]

The changes necessitated by the pandemic explored in the first two themes led to EPs embarking on a steep learning curve to integrate the technology and continue to deliver an online service. This is introduced in theme 3: *The learning curve.*

4.2.2.3 Theme 3: The Learning Curve

This theme is made up of three subthemes that looks at the impact that online working has had on EP practice, coded as *the learning curve*. Data in this theme explores the opportunities and difficulties the move had. Within this theme, EPs discussed how their practice changed; how only the delivery method changed and the thoughts, feeling and emotions that were associated with the changes.
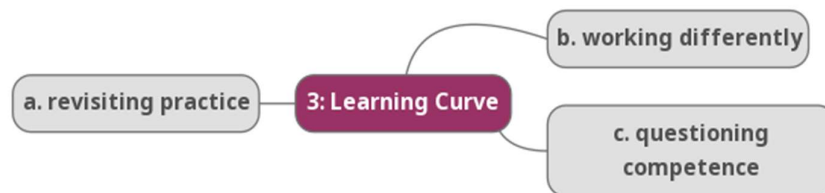
Figure 4.7: *The learning curve*

In subtheme 3.a, professional learning around how in-person practice was revisited to fit with an online service are explored in subtheme, 3.a *revisiting practice.*

Subtheme 3.a: Revisiting Practice

EPs found that enforced online working allowed them to reflect on and revisit their current practice. Re-thinking practice, re-working existing practice and problem solving were all coded together to construct this theme.

"Learning to make webinars, working with [colleagues] during consultation development, working with [colleagues] and others who have really brought a whole wide range of interactive frameworks and tools for engaging children in interviews, and getting children engaged and thinking about their learning and ways of talking to them and engaging them with use of technology and the visuals than I would in the past, I would have relied much more on things that I brought in my bag, perhaps pieces of paper and drawing and things which I would have used if needed differentiated materials for children who might have difficulty accessing spoken language" [EP2]

EPs also spoke about how they had found an opportunity in revisiting offline work, as a result of the changes. Below, EP5 talks about how they have revisited how they contract work with CYP.

"I've sent videos of myself to explain who I am, to make sure they are happy to meet with me. And I've got children who have sent me back videos about themselves, or I've written them a letter and they've written me a letter back. Prior to lockdown, I would have just turned up at the school and introduced myself" [EP5]

Participants also began to reflect on how changes that were necessitated by the pandemic had not all stuck, and choices were being made about which types of work could be carried out online and which should go back to being in person.

"I tend to try and do the initial [consultation] face-to-face to be honest. But then I will sometimes do the review online, you know, depending on how the first one went. If I know from the school, how it's going, and that kind of thing, sometimes it feels a little bit more like we just need to check-in." [EP6]

In subtheme 3.b the opportunities and challenges the move online gave EPs to work differently are explored.

Subtheme 3.b: Working Differently

Most of the EPs spoke about ways the necessitated online working practices allowed EPs to approach work in a new or different way that had not been considered before. This impacted the way work was approached bringing opportunities to work differently.

"I think different ways of working have gradually happened as people come a bit more comfortable with working online. I do think there have been new ways of working. When there were some children coming into schools, we did online observations, and even some online sessions with young people." [EP6]

The EPs described how online working had impacted how the service was delivered, which came with the benefit of saving time and resources.

"The gains for us as a digital authority is dead straightforward, if you're not travelling, you're saving time and you're not spending money…. My travel budget's massive every year. So being able to deliver a service and not have to travel for hours and hours on end to get to a school for a one-hour meeting and then travel for hours to come back." [EP1]

Within this theme, data was coded that included times that EPs felt they were working differently but that they were drawing on familiar frameworks, theories, and practices.

"I think my consultation skills, [and] questions that I would ask, those fundamental kind of questions and core theories of psychology, were still the same" [EP5]

"Use of the consultation frameworks to inform the meetings, the questions we would use, the psychology I was bringing to the consultations stayed the same. Obviously, through videos… It would mostly be about what would I bring into a room with a teacher and a parent? And how do I recreate that in an online room?" [EP2]

"[The team I work for] uses...solution circles... they're like a structured thing. I think they use them so much because when you're online, like in a way the structure helps, because the fluidity of the conversation doesn't work. For me, sometimes I feel like it doesn't work as well, especially if you create a structure." [EP6]

This seismic shift to online left EPs with a sense that they were perhaps not as confident or competent when delivering a role they were familiar with in person and this idea is explored in subtheme 3.c *questioning competence.*

Subtheme 3.c: Questioning Competence

EPs described the way that the move to online working had made them, at times, question the skills they felt they had.

"So that was that part of it, then consultation. I think I found that quite hard at first, I found it hard to talk on online, it felt so disconnected just being sat in your living room talking to the computer, I found it quite difficult to engage with people they way I usually would." [EP4]

"'I did try and do a group intervention online [but it] was just... too daunting. I just avoided intervention work [during the first lockdown]." [EP4]

They discussed ways in which they had overcome this by developing scripts and adding caveats to their work.

"I think my consultation skills, like those kind of questions that I would ask, those fundamental kind of questions and core theories of psychology, were still the same. However, there would have been a lot of kind of caveats involved. So, this will be online, hopefully, our

connection will be okay, or asking people to mute themselves. So, there were almost

additional layers of language and caveats needed to be used." [EP5]

EPs also felt it was important the training needs of those entering the EP profession were addressed as a result of the new way of working.

> *"I would definitely say anybody entering the profession, or a team should have an*
>
> *induction in {how to} host training, how to deliver a webinar"* [EP2]

The first three themes have explored how EPs experienced the online shift, the following three themes explored some of the losses and gains associated with delivering EP services in the physical and online space. Theme 4: *power shift* explores changes that EPs noticed in the balance of power when working online.

4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Power Shift

In this theme, EPs spoke about how using an online platform to connect shifted the perceived position of power away from the school or EP, towards the people they were working with, either because CYP are more accustomed to working online, or because EPs were meeting clients on neutral territory. This theme is made up of two-subthemes which explore this, illustrated in figure 4.8.

a. towards CYP ── 4. Power Shift ── b. towards parents

Figure 4.8: *Power shift*

The first subtheme explores how power shifted towards CYP.

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Subtheme 4.a Towards CYP

This subtheme was constructed around the data that talked about CYP having more autonomy and control in meetings in a virtual space and engaging in a way in which they felt comfortable.

"It just really struck me how different that was from being brought by the Head of Year, into the meeting; the room in the school where the Head of Year is suited and booted. And think the teachers are there, it's a formal room, that parents are there looking slightly uncomfortable and out of place, as opposed to being home with parents or trusted adult and being able to talk" [EP2]

"Young people joining and doing some groups with young people online as well…and a lot of those children like not having their screens on." [EP6]

EPs spoke about this way of interacting with CYP online as contrasting with ways in which they have worked in the past. Below, EP3 described information gathering session with young people in a room in school being in contrast to meeting them online.

"Particularly for children…if we followed the [in person] model...you get them out a lesson at half one to half two, go and sit in a room and [gather their views]. I never got that much out of that. Whereas actually, virtually… they are much more comfortable, much more able to kind of really tell you what matters to them, and what have you." [EP3]

CYP were not the only service users to experiences changes power balance, their parents and carers were too which is explored below in subtheme 4.b.

Subtheme 4.b Towards Parents

Here, ideas were explored around parents meeting on neutral territory online. EPs felt this was particularly useful when there was tension between the school and the family. EPs also spoke about the advantages online working held for working parents meaning they did not necessarily have to take time off work to meet with the EP.

"Another advantage is… it pushed us to be a bit more flexible in terms of how we work. So, you know, some parents who can't get to school or don't want to get to a school, but do want to talk to us" [EP3]

EPs also considered the advantages of this way of connecting those parents who live separately.

"Sometimes it can work well for them because they can do outside of work or parents who don't perhaps live together can join in a safe space" [EP5]

Changes in power dynamic were one change that online working brought, the following theme explores how some of other changes have been experienced by EPs in theme 5: *working in the new normal.*

4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Working in the New Normal

This theme explores what EPs have learnt from working exclusively online and how they have integrated this into their current way of blended or hybrid working. This theme excluded data that referred to how the EPs were delivering psychology to clients (explored in the theme *The learning curve)* and instead coded data that spoke about the day to day working as an EP in a digital and physical workspace. This theme was made up of three subthemes, illustrated below in figure 4.9.
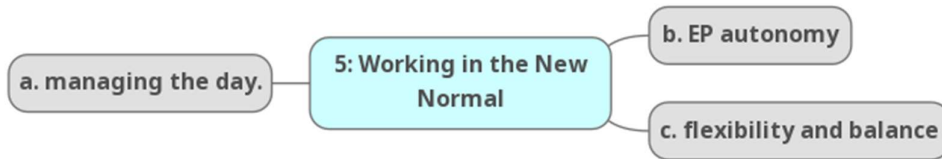
Figure 4.9: *Working in the new normal*

Learning about what works and what helps when delivering an online service is explored in subtheme 5.a: *managing the day.*

Subtheme 5.a: Managing the Day

This subtheme consists of reflections from EPs about things they have learnt about managing their time to enable them to work at their best when working online. EPs spoke about online meetings overrunning, the tendency to fill the diary back-to-back and the intensity of working exclusively online.

> *"I think a good day for me is meetings, not overrunning, having space in between calls, being able to break things up, maybe having meetings where you're sharing things on screen and jointly figuring things out…. also having a lunch in order to get up, stretch my feet and walk about. I think what you have all missed, in terms of not having travel time is not having processing time because a lot of processing happens whenever you're travelling. And even if you're just walking on the corridor from one office to another, you're still preparing yourself."* [EP1]

Broadly speaking, EPs spoke about online day-to-day work mimicking that of a typical EP working day before the start of the pandemic.

"I would stop and actually leave my [room], to kind of recreate the end of school visits. And actually, the temptation is to turn off Teams and go to emails, and not do that. So, I'd actually physically leave the room, go for a walk, take the dog out, go down the high street for coffee, and then come back." [EP2]

With online working no longer necessitated, EPs are now able to choose which parts of their day are delivered online and which are delivered in person. These ideas are explored in subtheme 5.b *EP autonomy.*

Subtheme 5.b: EP Autonomy

Each one of the EPs spoke about how they value their professional autonomy, or that they felt the team they managed valued their professional autonomy. This subtheme was constructed around data that spoke about EPs wanting to work in a way that they felt was suitable for the work. EPs did not feel they needed direction to gauge what should be online and which work should be in person.

"So, yeah, I do tend to think about the case, basically. And I think it can go online. And as I say the vast majority, I still try and do face-to-face, at least initially." [EP4]

"'[If] it's very simple…And the school just want to know, like, what is the learning problem here? I might do that online." [EP6]

Below a participant discusses what had happened recently at a team meeting when it had been suggested that there be a directive of what EP work is carried out online and which should be in person.

"They absolutely did not like it…it was really interesting to me that, although they are pushed for time, and they are concerned and wondering, how are they going to provide

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this blended model and they want to… I don't know what this is about, but they didn't really want to have guidance about what you would do online and what you would do face-to-face, I think they still feel that they can judge that quite nicely themselves." [EP1]

As well as differing levels in autonomy, EPs also spoke about the option to work online has enabled more *flexibility and balance* this is explored in subtheme 5.c below.

Subtheme 5.c: Flexibility and Balance

EPs felt that they had appreciated the flexibility that online working had given them. They spoke about how this had led to better engagement from certain groups and meant more could be achieved in a working day. However, they also acknowledged that this was often at a cost to some other part of EP practice, and so acknowledged the importance of a balance of online and in-person work.

"I think about today, I was like report writing. And then I had like a supervision session. And then I had a consultation with like a social worker. And now I'm doing this, and I feel like in the day before, you wouldn't have been able to do that….it seems crazy, none of those meetings would have happened online. [EP6]

"I think if you try if you're trying to particularly work with hard-to-reach families for whatever reason, sometimes the virtual component can be a bit tricky, but then on the flip side, it sometimes it can work well for them because they can do outside of work." [EP5]

From working in a blended way, EPs have noticed that there are certain pieces of work that require them to be physically present. This idea is explored in theme 6: *person privilege*.

<u>4.2.2.6 Theme 6: Person Privilege</u>

In this theme, the EPs spoke about the power that comes from being in person with someone. Although few hypotheses were formed by the participants, they generally spoke as though in-person was the gold standard of EP work. Figure 4.10 below shows the two subthemes that made up this theme.

Figure 4.10: *Person privilege theme and two subthemes*

The following subtheme explores the impact working online has had on *natural interactions* with colleagues and service users.

Subtheme 6.a: Natural Interactions

This subtheme consists of mainly semantic data for the incidental conversations, learning and camaraderie that comes from being in person which felt impossible to recreate when working online.

> *"I feel that you benefit from the interactions that you get working in an office. So just sort of like bumping into [someone at the] photocopier and asking a question, I think I probably would have learned more, or I feel like I've missed a lot of learning."* [EP4]

Within this theme was data that contained information about the losses that comes from only having an online space to meet with people, ask questions and check information.

"I was conscious of other people who were… new trainee EPs or newly qualified EPs, you've got nothing of that sense for that kind of incidental learning, of being around other people being able to kind of just say, 'Can I ask you about this?' [they'd have to] put a meeting in your diary to ask you about [it], which they would never do" [EP4]

"Like, even things like [assessment materials] …I would love to be able to use that [online]. But I think in our team, there's probably only one or two people that know how to use [the online assessment materials]. And again, I haven't seen them to quickly ask them. It's trying to bring everyone together in a space where we can just say 'Can you quickly show me…?' [EP5]

The experience of being together physically with others when delivering EP service; times when this is necessary and times when it is less so, are captured in subtheme 6.b *richness in person.*

Subtheme 6.b: Richness In-person

EPs emphasised the value they placed on being in person, throughout the interviews. At both the semantic (what was said) and the latent level (the interpretation of that which was said), EPs expressed that their work is richer when they are in the room, physically with other people. One EP suggested that this was because when you are with someone, they feel you have a better understanding of the difficult situation they face.

"You might know what the answer is, but you need to get the buy-in, you need to get people who are actually going to be in that child/young person's life… finding their own solutions that fit in their own context that feel achievable, that feel like what they want to be doing. And actually, I don't know, I think you can do that virtually. But I think being face-to-face lends itself better… We're there to support the people who are doing the work; would be showing up every day…I think they do need to feel a sense that we're alongside them, and

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there for them. And I think actually… sitting in a comfortable office at home when they're in

school, even though you might have exactly the same conversation, I think there's something

in that distance, which can feel less, the connection between you and them is less strong and

consequently, that kind of buy-in for them, feeling empowered and confident to make that

change is reduced." [EP3]

"If I notice the background of the family, that's difficult. If I know there's any

difficulties between the relationship between school and home, if I know that the young

person is very vulnerable in any way, you know, being like looked after or anything like that

all of those things would have made me maybe want to do it face-to-face, because I just feel

like there's a lot more that's like, a power in how the meeting goes rather than what you

glean from it." [EP6]

Another reflected on the barriers that technological devices can present, physically and
metaphorically.

"And the phone, it's almost like its objective, it's a third-person thing, you're not

actually there with the people and I think it can be a way for parents to protect themselves.

But it also affects their engagement in the process. And I think you could say the same for

anyone in a meeting because you could choose to have your camera off, and you can choose

to be half present by checking your phone, checking your emails, there is much more of an

option of not being 100% present in the meeting." [EP2]

"I think we have found that particularly difficult to engage in those situations and to

not be in a meeting, where a parent has started to cry. So, you can't hand across the tissue to

not have that human connection has been really very, very tricky and very difficult." [EP1]

Participants also spoke about how they felt that they were missing important information from people when they were not sharing a space with them.

"What hasn't worked well, with the family, just making the connections with them, I think has been trickier online and being able to read their body language, pick up on nonverbal cues, build the relationship, build the rapport, that's not been working as easily." [EP4]

"I also think it's easier to ignore people that are not participating fully. Whereas in the room, it's less easy to ignore. And I would be very attuned to somebody that wasn't engaged. And I would almost make eye contact …and draw them in that way. I can't that's very difficult online." [EP2]

Participants spoke about how being online has changed the way interactions were taking place which they felt was making them feel stilted or abrupt.

"I think the endings of something that feel quite dissatisfactory in an online presence, that whole kind of everybody wave and then button and then [the meeting has ended] and there isn't that kind of transitionary period where, you know… I might close my notepad, parents reaching for their coats, SENCos might be saying, 'Oh, it's raining, have you got an umbrella?' …there's a kind of natural debriefing." [EP2]

Finally, and with overlap to the theme *integrating technology,* the participants spoke about how they were seeking to strike a balance between online and in person working.

"I think my ideal working would be hybrid, with the relationships being established in person and some of the work and training happening online… but then… seeing people in the office and keeping that human connection [with colleagues]." [EP5]

The people that make up the services that EPs work with is explored in the following two themes, beginning first by exploring the impact the move online had on CYP EPs work with.

I identified three subthemes that related to the theme of *working with CYP.* This theme is made up of data that explores how different aspects of working with CYP have transferred online; the losses and gains and how EPs have perceived these changes have been experienced by the CYP they work with (figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11: *Working with CYP*

EPs spoke about times when being online had supported engagement with CYP. Ideas that EPs shared around CYP being digital natives are captured in subtheme 7.a.

Subtheme 7.a: CYP are Digital Natives

The EPs suggested that CYP may have found the move to online working easier and more natural because of how familiar they had been connecting over technology before the start of the pandemic. This theme links with the power shift that EPs spoke about in section 4.2.2.4 but had slightly different parameters in that this subtheme discusses CYP feeling more comfortable and more at ease online and how EPs have engaged differently with them in this digital space.

"There was a real sense of that they are much more familiar and communicating via this media than us. And I really liked that their levels of engagement, their enthusiasm, their contributions, and I will be really curious about how we capture that." [EP2]

The participants also spoke about how meeting online had supported children for whom the school was anxiety-provoking and the way that being online had mitigated this anxiety.

"This really kind of lovely collaborative stuff done and again, particular populations of children like those who maybe find schools quite an anxiety inducing place or new people who probably got a lot more out of them" [EP3]

Even with these positive experiences, EPs also reflected on difficulties and challenges they had faced when working with CYP. The first challenge was in *observation and individual work* explored below.

Subtheme 7.b: Observations and Individual Work

This subtheme explores how *observations and individual work* with CYP have been impacted by working online and how these changes have affected EPs working practices. There was a mix of both positive and negative experiences spoken about by the participants within this subtheme. There was a sense that EPs made observations and individual work with CYP work when online working was necessitated by the pandemic, but that given the choice, these types of interactions are best conducted in person.

"So, I think it took us a wee while to figure out what we could do with kids, that would be helpful when we we're getting involved and asked to be involved in assessments. And had to think differently about what we were actually being asked to assess and how could we do that, without being face-to-face with somebody and some of those things were

just left if we decided that we needed to do it face-to-face. And we didn't do any of that

during the first lockdown. And others, we just kind of thought around in a different way -

took a wee bit of thinking... But we started to do things that were a bit different, we

adapted." [EP1]

"I did do observations, but it was more through video clips, and bringing video, video

clips to consultations and exploring the video clips together." [EP5]

EPs spoke about not seeing children in context as being a loss of working online and one that was
not easily replicated or could be replicated with the same richness.

"I think that [we] still need to go into schools…I think like observations… although

people have lots of creative ways of working [online] it is really nice to see a young person

face-to-face and in context, you do get something from that. I think those kinds of things

should persevere face-to-face." [EP6]

"[For the] teacher, until I see that kid, I set eyes and is the one that is evoking these,

strong emotional responses from them, and probably keeping them up at night…until I've

seen that, then they're not open to having the conversation. So, I think again, the power is

sort of, again, kind of getting alongside people" [EP3]

A key part of individual work that EPs take part in has to do with assessing CYP. The
challenges and opportunities that EPs noticed in working online to carry out assessments is explored
below.

Subtheme 7.c: Assessments

This subtheme was constructed around references EPs made to assessments of CYP being
carried out differently in online delivery. It made up a separate theme from subtheme 7.2 (above) as

within this subtheme, EPs were questioning how fit-for-purpose and transferable assessment materials were from in-person to online.

"So, working with children… access to resources [for assessment purposes] … it's quite tough. I think that's probably the one [thing] that's had the biggest impact is working with children. And doing that online, I feel that you just lose so much connection and understanding. You know, things are not standardised to be used online, some of the assessments … also just talking to them about school and observations as well, totally lost… That's really gone being able to go into class and watch them in that class. And I couldn't do [an assessment] for a long while. but that was the first thing that went because it couldn't have been done in other way" [EP4]

The participants spoke about how they questioned how assessments could be carried out with younger children effectively.

'"And some of the more assessment kind of stuff, when you get down on the floor with a with a pre-schooler or somebody who's quite young and, and you're getting them to draw for you, or you're getting them to play with …you can't do that in [an] online format. So, the drawbacks of those types of things… we've not been able to do them at all." [EP1]

The EPs talked about assessments they had adapted to use successfully online and how their assessment practices had changed as a result of the shift to online working.

"I think what has helped schools, is thinking about time a bit differently because we are restricted and what you can actually do with the young person. Probably move away from needing like cognitive assessments and possibly in, later lockdowns, even thinking about how you can do dynamic type assessment online or use dynamic assessment principles to try and unpack a bit of learning online and all those kinds of things. I never really knew

how much it was based in evidence-based practice. But you know, it's explorative and

creative. I seem to be able to draw some conclusions about the young people." [EP6]

Another key group of people that EPs work with are those who make up systems (of the

schools, the local authorities and multi-disciplinary teams). How online working has impacted this

work is explored in the theme *working with systems,* below.

4.2.2.8 Theme 8: Working with Systems
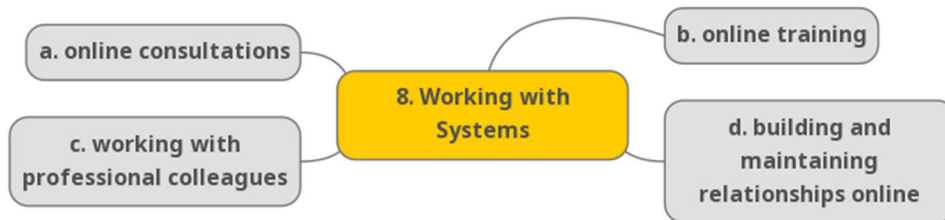
Figure 4.12: *Working with systems*

I identified four subthemes that were coded within the theme of *working with systems*. This

theme explores how EPs have been experiencing working with systems to affect change for those

they work with. Included in this theme are references made to *building and maintaining*

relationships online and include codes of when EPs referred to relational aspects of systemic work,

which could be described as *mesosystemic* (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Parts of systemic work EPs spoke about that had transferred well are explored in the

following two subthemes, starting with *online consultations* below.

Subtheme 8.a: Online Consultations

EPs reported that consultations had become an important part of online working. They have either found the skills and frameworks they used to be easily transferable, or they reported them to be useful tools with which they could support clients.

"We continued to do consultations, but we did many, many more." [EP1]

"But we delivered a number, a really high number of consultations, schools have rated quite highly, and they have been really impressed with how flexible we've been able to be in terms of meeting needs." [EP1]

Responses in this subtheme were broadly positive, although there was often a sense that there were still compromises being made when delivering consultations online.

"But we slowly kind of got used to that. And I think you know, people get used to using online things and started to do a lot more online consultation… so, consultations… bearing in mind, what I said before about how I think it changes it, but those we can still do, and we can still deliver." [EP6]

'But in terms of psychology, I would think some stuff stayed the same. And it was difficult. [I] think a lot about what does the silence say? And the person not speaking? What who do they represent? So, there's a lot of… unconscious dynamics and unsaid dynamics that were more tricky [that] you couldn't really unpick…virtually because… you're not getting a sense of a room because you're not in a room." [EP4]

Another systemic way of working for EPs is explored in the subtheme *online training* below.

Subtheme 8.b: Online Training

Almost all the EPs spoke about online training and those that did agreed that there are considerable benefits to an online offer. With overlap to the subtheme *integrating technology into EP work,* this subtheme is made up of the data that refers to online training being more accessible and the possible reasons for this.

> *"Certain types of training, just doing it all online, like with a webinar that someone can watch anytime they want. I think it's really positive. And we're developing that where I am now, in terms of a training offer and thinking about what different types of training for different things."* [EP3]

> *"'And since then, training has just moved on. And that's not been a problem… I've quite enjoyed going to training now…you can just…sit and listen… in a sense…easier [online]."* [EP4]

EPs spoke about the feedback they had received from non-EP colleagues about how online training had been received and how the online space had reduced power dynamics across systems.

> *"The feedback from trainings was Heads would say to me, 'We've never had 100% attendance for these sessions before.' And they would also be saying 'My gosh, midday supervisors were really chatty in the breakout groups' or 'I've never noticed them contributing in the same way.' Whereas in the school hall, they'd be kind of huddled in the corner and kind of keeping themselves to themselves."* [EP2]

Participants made the distinction between synchronous training sessions, where delivery is 'live' from another location and viewed online, and a-synchronous training, for example uploading

training to online platforms to be watch at a time that suits trainees. They also spoke about opportunities to combine these two methods of training delivery to suit trainees.

"*They get the input there… give some input on the theory…and then actually [ask] 'What do you do?' [you can] get people to bring what they do in their schools.*" [EP4]

Data that spoke about EPs meeting together for Continuous Professional Development was also coded within this theme and there were some similarities seen in online space providing a more equitable space that supports participation.

"*I'd say there's been more active engagement [in team meetings] through use of breakout groups and feedback. Of course, we'd have that in in person too but I'd say team meetings in person, we would definitely hear more from a smaller minority, whereas I think team meetings online, there's more equality and voice and more opportunity for people to contribute.*" [EP2]

The impact that online working had on professional relationships is further explored in the subtheme *working with professional colleagues*

Subtheme 8.c: Working with Professional Colleagues

Broadly speaking, EPs felt that working with other EPs and professionals who made up multi-agency networks, of which the EP is part, lent itself well to online ways of working. This subtheme contains responses constructed from times EPs had referenced multiagency working online and working as part of an EP team and network.

"*I think being able to probably network with people a lot better. So maybe like the AEP or BPS… that's something that you can join online at home, if you want to and meet different professionals and in different EPs.*" [EP5]

"But for kind of business management stuff, which I think there was quite a lot of that kind of managing, business heavy, [meetings it] actually made a lot more sense not to be driving loads to just go and tell people stuff when you tell people stuff virtually" [EP3]

The participants made frequent reference to multi-agency meetings as working well online as there was less need to collaborate at these kinds of meetings.

"I think to be honest, things like professionals' meetings where there's just a lot of sharing information and agreeing a plan, things like that. I think they work like in terms of practicalities. And people just need to log on from wherever they are… those things work really well online." [EP6]

Within this subtheme, drawbacks, and questions about the usefulness of multi-agency working online were also coded and formed part of the analysis.

"You also invite the cast of 1000s, virtually... and sometimes I think that's a positive, you know, a lot of parents will tell you, 'Oh, speech-language therapists…we could never get to the meetings…' Which is great, but maybe we can actually see, like a false sense of value in [having lots of people there because it is convenient]." [EP3]

Working with professional colleagues and all service users required EPs to be able to *build and maintain relationships* the extent to which this can be done online is explored in the final subtheme 8.d.

Subtheme 8.d: Building and Maintaining Relationships Online

This subtheme is made up of data that refers to establishing, developing, and maintaining relationships online within the systems of which children are a part.

"With the family, just making the connections with them, I think has been trickier online and being able to work it all out, read their body language, pick up on nonverbal cues, build the relationship, build the rapport, that's not been working as easy" [EP4]

"I particularly found it really difficult because I'm still establishing relationships with schools, these are brand new relationships. And we didn't have that trusting relationship for them to perhaps feel they could confide in me. They haven't said that. So, this is just kind of the reflections that I've had." [EP5]

The participants universally agreed that relationships were better made, maintained and observed in person and that the EPs felt they had more opportunity to affect change in a relationship when they are working in person.

"If I know there's any difficulties in the relationship between school and home, [that] would have made me maybe want to do it face-to-face, because I just feel like there's a lot more that's like, a power in how the meeting goes rather than what you glean from it." [EP6]

EPs also discussed the frustrations they felt when other professional colleagues could return to in-person work and they were still working online and that this may have had an impact on making and sustaining relationships.

'In terms of relationship building with SENCo, it was…tricky. We took a service level approach to saying, 'we're not coming in' so that was hard, especially when other services were going in, or different EP services were.' [EP3]

4.2.3 Summary of Participants' Experiences

EP experiences of working online have been varied however, there was an overriding sense that online service delivery will remain a part of the EP role. EPs reported a range of benefits to

working online, including its ability to bring people together, provide a neutral space in which to meet and act as a convenient alternative to in-person working. EPs reported being able to make good judgements about when work could be carried out online and when it should be delivered in person. EPs spoke about the professional learning they had undertaken during the national lockdowns and how this period of uncertainty and working with what was available to support continuation of work, EPs had found new ways of working and thinking about their practice. All EPs referenced in-person EP work as being the ideal way to deliver Educational Psychology and none suggested that online could fully replace the pre-2020 way of working.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The findings of this study give an insight into how the working practices of EPs changed since March 2020, and how these changes have impacted EP work during the recovery phase of the pandemic. The study has identified previous working practices of EPs before the first national lockdown, has explored the professional learning that happened when EPs were working exclusively online and has given an insight into how EPs and their professional colleagues are working now there is a choice between working online and in person. This chapter will first discuss the findings of the study concerning each of the four research questions and pull together how the findings reflect the topics covered in the literature review. The chapter ends with an evaluation of the methodology along with concluding remarks.

5.1 Research Question 1: *How has the move from in-person to online EP service delivery, necessitated by the pandemic, affected EP practice?*

The data was collected during a time when EPs were delivering a *hybrid* or *blended* service to schools. That is to say that either there was a mix of people joining online and in person or that some of the work was being carried out in person, and some was being carried out using video conferencing software. The questionnaires were distributed during the autumn term of 2021, during which time there was a surge in the Omicron variant of the Coronavirus. Although this variant did not trigger a national lockdown, the law required those who tested positive for COVID-19 to isolate for 10 days and those who were not vaccinated to isolate if they came into close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. (*Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Infections, Including COVID-19, in the Workplace*, 2021). All the participants had lived experience of delivering an exclusively in-person EP service before the onset of the pandemic and all worked through the national lockdowns of 2020-21 when online working was the only method of service delivery.

During the interviews, the participants spoke about how they were currently working and how they expected to work in the future and reflected on their personal experiences of working under these three circumstances. The themes relevant to this research question are *online accessibility and availability* and *integrating technology into the role of the EP.* Data collected from the questionnaires provided a window into the type of work that was being carried out online and in-person during the hybrid phase of service delivery, therefore the impact that the option of working online is currently having on service delivery could be assessed from multiple sources of information.

Within the broader theme of *integrating technology into the role of the EP*, there was a subtheme - *same work; delivered differently,* which captured the idea that EPs reported that much of the work they delivered pre-March 2020 could still carry on, but that some transferred more easily than others online. Using the five core activities EPs engage in - consultation, training, intervention, assessment, and research, (Frederickson et al., 2015) - the following sections look at how the move online impacted the day-to-day work of EPs.

5.1.1 Consultation

Questionnaire data, and that generated from the SSIs, indicated that consultations transferred well to online service delivery. This is supported by the quantitative data that suggests that consultations were happening online and were considered to be acceptable by both EPs and their professional colleagues, who reported successes with the move from in-person to online consultation. Both sets of participants also felt that the change had been well received by parents. Findings indicated three reasons for this: i) convenience ii) the indirect nature of consultation work and iii) the structures and frameworks used to support the consultation. Firstly, participants spoke about how setting up an online consultation was easier for those involved. Quotes from the questionnaire data demonstrate how online consultations provided convenience for parents, teachers, and EPs with online meetings meaning that the EP could offer greater flexibility with when

to offer consultations. EPs reported that they were able to respond quickly to requests for consultations from schools during a time when things felt very uncertain for school staff. Being online also meant that EPs were able to involve more people within the consultation, referring to other professionals, both parents, working parents and teachers. The findings show that this convenience meant that parents could join meetings from work or home settings, that teachers could meet at a time that suited their timetable and gave EPs the freedom to provide consultations when suited to those involved, rather than as part of a pre-agreed block of time in a school. This shows that the option to deliver online services to service users has made the service more accessible and possibly opened the service to meet the needs of a greater number of people, who have access to technology.

One explanation for the increase in the amount of consultation work undertaken since March 2020 is the indirect nature of the approach. Gutkin & Conoley, (1990) suggested that through consultation EPs can work to affect change by working indirectly with the child through non-EP (typically the teacher) colleagues. Using the definition of consultation defined by Monro (2000) as "*purposeful [conversations] which [use] techniques of listening, clarifying, problem-solving, challenging, questioning, and reflecting*" (p. 55), it can be argued that all those principles can transfer to being delivered using video conferencing software, without being impacted by the physical distance between the EP and others in the consultation. This finding suggests that the levels of uncertainty and equivocality experienced in online consultations, as proposed by Daft and Lengel, (1986) are not significantly impacting the quality of the interactions which could be explained by the interaction being supported by those in the consultation being visually present on the screen.

Finally, the EPs spoke about the important role that the existing frameworks, both psychological and structural, had in supporting the transfer to online working. The findings show how EPs felt these were helpful and, it was inferred, gave them a sense of familiarity and self-efficacy. A notable missing aspect of consultation which was reported in the data was the

observation of the child in the context which EPs would typically carry out as part of the consultation process (Wagner 2000). EPs reported finding ways around this by asking professional colleagues to bring video clips to the consultation to be shared, but ultimately, it was felt that seeing the child in context was a key feature that was missing from online work. The findings show that seeing children in context forms an important part of EPs' work, not just to guide their understanding, but also to create professional ties and create opportunities for a shared understanding.

Overall, there is clear evidence in the findings that consultation has transferred well online. EPs spoke about the frameworks and the guiding psychological principles transferring well to the online space, which allowed the EPs to continue to work in familiar ways with professional colleagues. A key loss of delivering consultations online is that there are reduced opportunities to see CYP in context, which EPs felt could lead to uncertainty and equivocality in the quality of their work. Again, this fits with the work of Daft and Lengel, (1986) and suggests that something is lost in communication when we are not physically present with others. Although innovative workarounds were found when necessitated by the pandemic, these were seen by EPs as being less rich and less useful. There is evidence from the data to suggest that some types of consultations are better carried out in person. This idea is explored more in answer to research question four (section 5.7.1).

5.1.2 Training

The findings of the research paints a mixed picture of the impact that online service delivery had on the delivery of training. EPs spoke about how online platforms had lent themselves to training well and how there was some suggestion that it had opened psychological training to a wider audience. However, the questionnaire data gave a mixed picture of the transferability of training to online spaces, with opinions being divided between both EP and non-EP groups. The qualitative data indicated that participants felt there were benefits and losses to each method of training delivery. In the SSI, broadly speaking, most of the data about training spoke positively about the move to online, suggesting that online training increases opportunities to access training more

widely. Participants spoke about the opportunities that online working had had on allowing training to be delivered in different ways, either through a-synchronous methods such as webinars, or following up on pre-recorded sessions with workshops or drop-in sessions for staff. Participants also spoke about the use of interactive measures such as the use of the chat function and break-out groups, that can support the inclusion of those who may not typically access or contribute during in-person training. This could be explained in terms of a reduction in the hierarchical structures in place when connecting online (Haythornthwaite, 2002) or in terms of *at-home privilege* suggested by Fonagy (2020) whereby connecting with others in an environment you are more familiar with increases participation.

The quantitative data set recorded online training as being a preference for just 6% of respondents. It is not clear why the respondents of the questionnaires had such different views from the online six EP participants, but one explanation comes from the open-ended, short responses from the questionnaire data. Coded within the subtheme, *giving interactions full attention* participants spoke about people being less engaged, distracted by their environment and less invested in interactions when they were hosted online. It may be that, while there are many benefits with convenience and accessibility, there is a payoff in the perceived level of engagement of participants.

Overall, EPs spoke about online training as being supportive of the systems they were working with. They spoke about convenience for accessing training and an increase in active participation of those who were receiving the training. The questionnaire data, however, did not fully support this view of training with EPs and professional colleagues, indicating that training tends to work better when delivered in person. This may indicate a personal preference for those who responded to the questionnaire, while the EPs interviewed often spoke about being able to deliver training to a wider audience when training is delivered online through synchronous (via video conferencing software) or asynchronous (e.g., webinars and YouTube) delivery methods. It is a

limitation of this study that the views of those who rated online training as less acceptable were not investigated further.

<u>5.1.3 Intervention</u>

Direct work with CYP, including intervention, was reported by the respondents to the questionnaire to be the least transferable to online working and EPs did not report an increase in working with CYP online to deliver interventions. With 98% of respondents considering that it works best in person, during the SSIs and in some of the open-ended short response data, participants spoke about how CYP were sometimes more comfortable interacting online with others. This idea is explored further in the sections below in answer to research question three (section 5.6). EPs spoke about how children with anxiety around attending and participating in school seemed to be more willing to meet with EPs online and they wondered if this was because it was a non-threatening, neutral space, this supports the ideas of Tan and Fulford (2020), who suggest that meeting clients online can reduce power imbalances, reduce feelings of intimidation, and reduce the stigmatisation of visiting a clinical setting.

EPs again spoke about how indirect work with CYP through teachers and parents, worked well online and interventions with adults were spoken about more positively in the findings. EPs reflected on the support they had found in using structures and frameworks to deliver interventions online. These findings are similar to those discussed around consultation, in that structures, frameworks and existing practices allowed for EPs to work differently, while still experiencing self-efficacy. This finding also fits with one of the assumptions of appreciative inquiry (AI) *People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).* (Hammond, 2013).

The subtheme, *same work; different delivery* captured the ideas that EPs were holding on to their familiar core activities, while simultaneously questioning how to make them work online. The delivery and use of psychological assessments was one area in which the EPs reported a mixed experience. Much of the data showed a shift away from cognitive assessment, and a move towards thinking differently with professional colleagues as to how assessments could take place and be meaningful in other ways. The findings show that EPs moved towards delivering dynamic assessments online and that EPSs were quick to purchase online versions of traditionally physical or paper-based resources.

EPs questioned the validity and reliability of online assessments, considering the method with which the assessment materials would have been standardised. They spoke about caveats in their statutory work, some of which involved explicitly mentioning that the assessment had been carried out online or recommending that the child should be seen as soon as it was safe to do so. This work appeared congruent with the messages being given by the BPS during the national lockdowns (BPS, 2020a). The interview data also showed that assessing very young children online was also felt to be inappropriate at both the level of the individual and the organisation. EPs spoke about young children who had limited language, or for whom assessments were play-based, which meant that they did not transfer onto online spaces. Again, findings here chime with the richness of media theory (Daft and Lengel, 1986) when thinking about assessments being carried out online having a high level of equivocality, it could be argued that by finding different ways to assess CYP, for example, through consultative approaches, EPs were reducing the ambiguity of the assessment and mitigating for the loss of information that can be collected when working in-person.

Based on the findings of this study and given that participants rated individual assessments with CYP as being best carried out in person along with the finding that observation too was rated as

most acceptable in person, it seems unlikely that there will be a shift towards using online assessments with CYP in the future while there is an option to do this in person.

<u>5.1.5 Research</u>

Although the participants in the study did not mention research directly within either phase of the research, the EP participants were reflecting on learning that had occurred during the national lockdowns. Fox (2010) argues that many EPs know how to practice because of their experience, not the research base. Dubicka et al. (2020) provide a more recent example of psychologists working in a value-based way, they suggested that psychologists are not simply considering how something is, but are considering if it is right for those they work with.

Fox (2010) further argues that EPs are value-based practitioners and as such, are not likely to change their practice when presented with information that contradicts their values. It appeared that EPs in the present study were forming their expertise in online working through their experience. That which aligned with their values would remain part of their practice, and what they had felt was less successful online and so would be left behind. This type of *practice-based evidence* is referred to by Fox (2010) and described EPs using their knowledge of what worked and did not work during the national lockdown to make decisions about how to work now that they can offer in-person work once again.

The findings suggest that the participants in the study may be at a point now, after over two years of working online, to be able to draw on their experiences of previous cases, referred to by Dutton (1995), as *pattern recognition*. EPs who were interviewed already appeared to have a set of rules they were applying to new casework, to see if the work could be carried out online or in person. These included judging the complexity of the work, prior involvement and if the case was known to the EP and systemic factors of the family (parent/school relationship or availability of other professionals). It seems that EPs are already weighing up lots of factors to guide their thinking

about the best method of service delivery, which would allow the best outcomes for those they are working with.

5.1.6 Summary of RQ1

In answer to the research question, there is no doubt that the finding shows that the move to online working has affected service delivery at every level of the EPs role. Reflecting on working remotely during the pandemic, the findings show that EPs needed to think quickly and carefully about how to best support those they work with while still providing a service that was ethical and evidence-based. The questionnaire data shows that this was received generally positively by professional colleagues and, although online working is no longer necessitated, some parts of practice have and will remain. EPs did this by using what was familiar to them (psychological frameworks, existing methods of service delivery) and transferable (indirect work with CYP, talk-based interventions) and echoes the work of Greenblatt et al. (2021) who also found that the type of work EPs delivered remained largely the same, but the method of service delivery changed.

The study shows that EPs have adapted and changed their way of working to fit the online world. While this was initially a change that was forced upon EPs, it seems now that some aspects of online working have stuck. EPs are now offering a blended service, making decisions based on their experience of lockdown to make decisions about what and when online or in-person delivery is most appropriate. This finding chimes with the work of Fonagy (2020), it seems that EP work too has experienced its digital fast forward. EPs reflected on how it felt like an impossible task to have moved all members of the team towards using online working, had it not been mandated by the government which could be explained using the conscious competence model (Howell, 1982) which sees learners move through four stages from novice to master, moving from *unconsciously incompetent* (you do not know what you do not know) to *consciously incompetent* (you are aware of what you do not know) to *consciously competent* (you know what you are doing) to *unconsciously competent* (you have mastered the skill and it is automatic to you). With EP practice remaining in

the comfortable quadrant of unconsciously competent before the onset of the pandemic. The data

points to uncomfortable feelings associated with moving one moving EPs initially into the

consciously incompetent quadrant and then, as time moved on and as experience grew, into the

consciously competent quadrant in all aspects of service delivery. It is hard to imagine how this type

of change would have been initiated and then sustained through the consciously incompetent phase

if online working had not been necessitated by the pandemic.

5.2 Research Question 2: *How have the changes with online working been received by EPs and*

school staff?

   Ratings of the principles of attuned interactions, gathered from the questionnaire data,

show that there were very few differences between the scores given by participants following online

or in-person consultations. There were, however, some significant differences found. The

statements *I was able to easily show that I had heard others,* and *non-verbal cues were easily picked*

up on were rated by participants more positively when the interaction had taken place in person.

This is supported by the qualitative data set, in which participants spoke about how they

experienced difficulties reading the intentions and emotional states of others when online. These

findings share some foundations with the *Richness of Media* model (Daft & Lengel, 1986) and may be

explained in terms of online video conferencing software, while able to provide a high level of

information, much of the interaction remains open to interpretation. This leads to increased levels

of equivocality, which, in the findings of the present study, has led to those involved in the

consultation feeling that they have not been able to show that they have understood and heard

others.

   Remarkably, there were no significant differences in the statements that relate to how

others were received during the consultation*, I felt as though my thoughts and ideas were*

understood by others indicating that participants worried that they had not made others feel they

had been heard, rather than not feeling heard and understood themselves.

Interestingly, the statement *there was enough time and space given for everyone in attendance to give their views* was rated more positively when the interaction had taken place online. This is noteworthy as, in the SSIs, EPs spoke about finding it difficult to engage those online who were quieter or less obviously present. One explanation for this is explored in the experiential model of learning (Howell, 1982) and the conscious competence model of learning. It may be that being cognisant of the idea that you may ignore someone in an online forum, (being in the consciously competent quadrant) may paradoxically mean that additional time and space are given to ensure that the views of everyone are heard.

With all participants on the screen having equal physical space, along with a reduction in non-verbal cues, such as where they position themselves in the room, and whom they sit next to, it may mean that online consultations provide a more equitable space for those in attendance. This idea fits with the findings of Pickering & King (1995) who suggested that email communication was useful for reducing hierarchal structures due to the reduction in social information available when communicating online. It may be that because of the reduction in non-verbal information when engaging online, there are fewer assumptions made by those in the meeting about the intentions and feelings of others. This potentially supports their inclusion, firstly because they need to verbalise their feelings and secondly because their feelings cannot be clearly inferred by their presentation.

The questionnaire data also explored the perceived difference in the ease of the interactions, how useful the interactions were and how participants perceived the success of the interaction. These questions indicated that there was no difference in these three areas and that the online and in-person consultations were rated similarly in all three areas. These findings support the work of Yuill et al. (2021), who also reported minimal differences in interactions online and in-person and support the idea that while EPs may be more conscious of the work they are delivering and how it is received, they are still competent in the service they are delivering. There was some suggestion from some of the participants in the study, that online work did not suit everyone. Some of the

responses to the short answer questions in the questionnaire indicated that some respondents disliked *everything* about working online. It was inferred then that some EPs are not currently working online at all now it is no longer necessitated by the pandemic, and that they will not continue to offer online working unless mandated by their service. Haythornthwaite, (2002) refers to this as the *non-use* of new communication methods and the finding from this study suggests that some EPs, and perhaps some EPSs, will return to a fully in-person method of service delivery as soon as possible. It seems likely from the findings of this study, that many EPs will continue to offer at least some of the service online in the future, some EPs or their services not offering this raises the question of equitable service for those they work with.

5.2.1 Questioning Competence

A subtheme that was constructed from the data explored how the EPs have felt that the abrupt move to online service delivery had impacted their competence. These reported feelings seem to fit with Howell's (1982) model of experiential learning, described in the section above. It is possible that experienced EPs were working at the unconsciously competent level pre-pandemic, but the move to online service delivery moved them back to consciously incompetence (if they were not sure about how to use the technology) or to consciously competence, when they may have been very aware that they were using all their IT skills to be able to connect with their clients. The findings suggest that as EPs have been working this way for over a year now, they are moving towards unconscious competence, but that technology failures or connection difficulties can move them back into a space where they feel less competent or are more conscious of the challenges they must overcome. Both data sets show that when things go wrong, it can leave those working feeling less competent than they perceive themselves to be. Developing scripts to use at the start of the work with clients and explaining what will happen if there is a problem with the technology seems to be a way that many working in this way have used to overcome this hurdle. This is a finding consistent with that of Taylor (2021) who also found that scripts supported working in new ways online.

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Opportunities to work differently were captured in the subtheme *working differently.* Here EPs spoke about the activities that did not transfer to online working so readily, and the opportunities it gave to approach problems from a different direction. The medium of delivery perhaps acted as a non-threatening enforcer to help schools that were more reticent to change to experience systemic approaches to EP work, perhaps for the first time. Again, this could be viewed through the conscious competence framework, the changes have shone a light on the why of the work that EPs do, and EPs saw an opportunity to engage with clients differently and look at things from a different perspective.

5.2.2 Summary of RQ2

Overall, the data showed very few tangible differences between EPs' and other professionals' perceptions of interactions that were conducted online and those that were held in person. This section has explored the differences which were found to be significant, and which were constructed into a theme exploring how the move online has impacted EPs self-concept.

5.3 **Research Question 3:** *What are the losses and gains of delivering an online EP service?*

This section begins with an overview of the perceived losses and gains of online working. The losses and gains are then explored in greater detail within the narrative to answer the research question. Table 5.1 explores the losses and gains associated with online EP service delivery that the participants identified.

Table 5.1: *Losses and gains of delivering an online EP service.*

Losses of working online	Gains of working online
More difficult to notice, recognise and consider systemic factors impacting the situation.	When working with anxious CYP, especially those for whom the school is anxiety-provoking place.
Seeing the child in context.	Having two parents join Joint School Family Consultations.
Less problem-free talk with unsatisfactory beginnings and ends.	Providing a neutral space away from the school.
More difficult to provide containment around emotive subjects.	Involving more professionals in consultations.
Difficulties delivering assessments online, especially assessing very young children.	Technology enhanced working practices.
Participants may not be fully present during the consultation.	Amplifying the voices of those who would otherwise be quieter or less involved.

The ideas presented within Table 5.1 are each considered in turn in more detail in the following two sections.

5.3.1. Losses Associated with Online EP Service Delivery

More difficult to notice, recognise and consider systemic factors impacting the situation.

The data coded within *person privilege* refers to the online world as being an imperfect substitute for in-person work, rather than a replacement for in-person work. The data shows that participants felt much more contextual information could be gleaned from in-person work, and EPs reported feeling more part of the school system when they worked in the physical space of the school. The open-ended, short response data gathered from the questionnaire also showed that attuning to others was felt to be easier when people were gathered in a physical space, this finding shares commonality with the richness of media theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) and suggests that, although online video conferencing allows for others to be seen in communicative exchanges, there is something that is lost in the exchange that cannot be replicated without a physical presence. Some participants suggested that to make a day feel successful, they tried to mimic a day offline. This may provide more evidence that EPs feel that online service delivery is less than that which they can offer in person and that the preferred style of service delivery remains in person. Drawing on the ideas of Howell's (1982) model of experiential learning, this finding may show that EPs are pulling on their past experiences of working in person that made them feel competent when working pre-pandemic to support their working online.

Less problem-free talk with unsatisfactory beginnings and ends.

There was a suggestion in the data that the brevity of online interactions may have something to do with those interactions not feeling as natural or easy. Participants spoke about endings feeling forced, or missing the important, problem-free talk at the beginning and end of the consultation which gave important contextual clues but also allowed those at the consultations to connect on a level that was not just as problem holders. This was captured in the interview data and by both EP and non-EP participants in the code *brevity of interaction* which was identified as a loss in both EPs and non-EPs suggesting that there is value *Seeing the child in context.*

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A key loss to online working spoken about by EPs and non-EPs was the missing element of EPs seeing children in context and observations not taking place as part of assessments. EP participants spoke about the impact this had on their work and discussed that assessments that took place without observations taking place, or without meeting the CYP in context, were caveated with explanations that this should take place at a future opportunity, or that the assessment should be read with this in mind. EPs also discussed workarounds that were found during the lockdowns, but there was a sense that these practices would not inform future practice now restrictions have eased. There was further evidence from the questionnaire data that fewer initial consultations were taking place online, suggesting again that initial work (including observations and meetings with CYP) were taking place in person.

More difficult to provide containment around emotive subjects.

EP participants in particular thought that online work was a balancing act, or that there was a payoff to working this way. It showed that decisions are being made about what work can be carried out online and which should be carried out in person. EPs referred to carrying out a mental checklist – Is the work emotionally demanding? Is there a lot of feeling in the room? Do I already have an existing relationship with this person? Does this person have access to technology or any other barriers to engagement? This type of checklist is in keeping with the espoused theory/theory in use (Argyris & Schon, 1974). EPs are developing theories of how to work in these new situations, and the data collected about the types of work they were conducting online seems to indicate that many more review consultations are taking place online than, for example, initial consultations. This could be explained by review meetings being less emotive and relationships already being established. Haythornthwaite's (2002) work offered a framework explaining how computer-mediated communication could maintain strong or weak social ties. They suggested that computer-mediated exchanges cannot support every type of communicative exchange, and, for example, emotional and instrumental communicative exchanges are not equally well supported by computer-

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mediated communication. In this example, we see that emotional communication is being reported by participants as being less well supported online and supports the idea of in-person privilege being important in therapeutic relationships, (Fonagy et al., 2020).

EP participants in particular spoke about feeling that consultations and psychological services are more useful in person when they presumed there would be a heavy psychological load to the work. When this was unpicked in the interviews, EPs spoke about psychodynamic theories they drew on during consultative work, providing containment for professional colleagues (Bion, 1985), and wondering about the role of silence in the meetings. EPs felt that when there was more complicated work, being in person was necessary. Teachers feeling uncontained can have a negative impact on their work (Hulusi & Maggs, 2015) and it has long been an established part of EP work to contain the containers when engaged in critical incident work (Beeke, 2012; Houghton, 1996), as the pandemic could be described as being (AEP, 2020a). It could further be argued that EPs may feel less contained by having to work in a way that made them feel vulnerable, as discussed above in the conscious competence model.

Difficulties delivering assessments online, especially assessing very young children.

As discussed in section 5.4.4, a key loss was felt to be that assessment materials were not necessarily fit for online administration and that assessing young children was not appropriate due to the play-based assessments usually carried out with younger children. Again, when using Haythornthwaite's (2002) framework of communicative exchanges, we can see that this complex task, which involves more than the giving and receiving of information, cannot be replicated online. It shows that many of the EP tools and assessment techniques require a physical space, where the child can be seen within their context and preferred environment.

Participants may not be fully present during the consultation.

While there were very few tangible differences in the attuned interaction between EPs and the professional colleagues during the online interactions, EPs did wonder if people were less

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present, or emotionally available during the online consultations. EPs spoke about times when those they were working with online had been distracted by their environment or that they were using technology that they felt was not conducive to easy interactions (dialling in on a small phone or borrowed technology, for example). EPs wondered if there was something in the distance or the hardware that allowed for those in the consultation to be less present. EPs made comparisons to in-person consultations when this was not a problem they had regularly come across. These findings are consistent with those of McCord et al. (2020), who found levels of distractibility to be higher when connecting remotely with others. It may be that future remote EP practice encompasses checking in with those connecting online that their environment is conducive to the task at hand, to ensure as fuller participation as possible for all.

5.3.2 Gains Associated with Online EP Service Delivery

When working with anxious CYP, especially those for whom the school is an anxiety provoking place.

The idea that CYP were more comfortable online than perhaps many adults was constructed into the subtheme of *CYP as digital natives*. By this, they meant that making and sustaining relationships online is far more *normal* and natural for the younger generation. This idea was discussed by participants in terms of a rise in the cases of Emotional Based School Avoidance in the wake of the pandemic (Wallace, 2020) and CYP experiencing high levels of anxiety returning to school after the breaks provided by the national lockdowns (Song et al., 2020). Participants found that away from the school, when engaged online, working online meant that EPs had an opportunity to work with CYP in their preferred spaces; as such it will be important for EPs to remain up to date with technology to ensure that it is a space in which EPs feel comfortable enough to be able to work effectively with CYP in this space.

Rates of anxiety in CYP have risen since the pandemic (Song et al., 2020) and online provides a space where rates of anxiety might be reduced in CYP and allow EPs to work directly with this

vulnerable group to provide support to the system without inducing more anxiety by only offering this support in school. The online space also offers choices to the CYP about ways to engage which may feel empowering to them in a way that in-person communication, mediated by school staff does not.

Having two parents join Joint School Family Consultations.

Participants commented on the positive impact the virtual working space had for working parents to join consultations more easily, and for those parents who do not live together to join the consultation from their respective locations, without having to share a physical space; take time off work or to have to attend the school setting. Again, this can be convenient, for example for working parents, but it also means that the parents can join from familiar settings, which could make them feel more comfortable and lead to better outcomes for them (Fonagy et al., 2020). In the interviews, EPs spoke about the impact this had on parental engagement, commenting on how this was especially useful when there had been difficulties with communication and relationship between the school staff and parents as by offering an online consultation the EP can work with the parent without having to come into the school building.

Providing a neutral space away from the school.

The theme *power shift* was constructed around data that indicated a shift of control away from school staff towards parents and CYP that EPs work with. Traditionally, the school would facilitate the EP visit by arranging a space to meet parents and CYP. Crucially the parent or CYP needed to be physically in the school building to meet with the EP. The current research has found that the move to online working has meant CYP and parents can meet with the EP from their home if necessary. This provides a neutral space for EPs to meet with those they work with and provides convenience, flexibility, and efficiency to how they work.

When working with those who are experiencing difficulties engaging with systems with which the EP is working online could work as an advantage, with EPs wondering if joining the meeting from a familiar space (the office or their home) gave the sense that the EP was separate to the school system within which the difficulty being discussed may lie. These factors may all be contributing to the building of rapport between parents and the EP. Beaver (2002) suggests that rapport is built when we *recognise* another's view of the world, provide *reassurance* that others can demonstrate their world view and *respect* the information we have been provided with. Beaver suggests that these three elements must be received congruently, both verbally and non-verbally. It could be argued then, that when EPs are managing difficulties within relationships between parents and school staff, that being in a neutral space, away from the school in which the problem is typically located, may provide parents with a non-verbal message that their worldview is safe to be shared with the EP in the consultation.

Involving more professionals in consultations.

A theme within the data that many of the participants spoke about was the convenience that online working had brought. Participants spoke about the ease of scheduling online meetings in comparison to in-person meetings; having more variety in their day; being able to collaborate with different professional colleagues and being able to share resources quickly and effectively.

Technology enhanced working practices.

A gain that many of the participants spoke about was the way they felt that technology had enhanced their work, making it easier. Open-ended, short responses exploring the benefits of working online had meant that technology had made remembering people's names and sharing electronic resources easier as well as supporting scheduling and connecting with more people.

Amplifying the voices of those who would otherwise be quieter or less involved

There was also overlap within the *power shift* subtheme with the subtheme *improved access to psychology* as data was coded within both themes which spoke to amplifying the voices of those who would otherwise be quieter or less involved. These ideas have been explored in more detail in RQ1.

<u>5.3.3 Summary of RQ3</u>

EPs generally reported having made online service delivery work and have learnt much from the experience, however, it was deemed to be less acceptable for delivering psychological services to schools. While administrative tasks can be performed well online, it was felt that much of the role was lost. The data showed that the losses and gains of online working are not straightforward and the same for every piece of work that EPs are involved in. This means that EPs are currently making decisions based on their experience and feelings about casework and echoes the findings of RQ2, which suggested that EPs are using value-based judgements built on their growing experience of working online. The following section explores in greater detail what these perceived differences are.

5.4 Research Question 4: *What aspects of online working are most useful and acceptable to EPs and school staff?*

As discussed, EPs appear to be making value-based judgements formed by the individual circumstances of each piece of work. The following section will explore how the components of communicative exchanges (Haythornthwaite, 2002) are impacting the judgements that EPs are making in collaboration with their professional colleagues as to the method of service delivery. Online media cannot sustain certain types of exchanges due to the reduced social cues and the lack of physically being there. Haythornthwaite, (2002) suggested that certain types of exchanges lend themselves to different media. These types of exchanges can be said to be emotional and instrumental, simple and complex, and verbal and non-verbal (Haythornthwaite, 2002). Table 5.2 uses these types of exchanges along with illustrative quotes to make inferences about which method of service delivery is deemed the most appropriate.

Table 5.2: components of communicative exchanges (Haythornthwaite, 2002) with illustrative quotes and inferred preference

Type of exchange	Quote	Inferred preference
Emotional	*'I think we have found that particularly difficult to engage in those situations and to not be in a meeting, where a parent has started to cry. So, you can't hand across the tissue to not have that human connection has been really very, very tricky and very difficult.'*	In-person
Instrumental	*'But for kind of business management stuff, which I think where I was there was quite a lot of that kind of managing business heavy, actually made a lot more sense not to be driving loads to just go and tell people stuff when you tell people stuff or virtually'*	Online
Simple	'[If] it's very simple…And the school just want to know, like, what is the learning problem here? I might do that online.'	Online
Complex	*'If I notice the background of the family, that's difficult. If I know there's any difficulties between the relationship between school and home, if I know that the young person is very vulnerable in any way, you know, being like looked after or anything like that all of those things would have made me maybe want to do it face-to-face, because I just feel like there's a lot more that's like, a power in how the meeting goes rather than what you glean from it.'*	In-person
Verbal	*'And since then, training has just moved on. And that's not been a problem… I've quite enjoyed going to training now…you can just…sit and listen… in a sense…easier [online].*	Online
Non-verbal	*'But in terms of psychology, I would think some stuff stayed the same. And it was difficult. [I] think a lot about what does the silence say? And the person not speaking? What who do they represent? So, there's a lot of… unconscious dynamics and unsaid dynamics that were more tricky [that] you couldn't really unpick…virtually because… you're not getting a sense of a room because you're not in a room.'*	In-person

The table above shows that EPs are making decisions about how useful and acceptable online service delivery is using ideas that can be thought of in terms of the components of the communicative exchange. It seems that EPs are making these decisions, not as evidence-based practitioners, but as value-based practitioners, thinking about how they want to work and be received. This supports the ideas of Tan and Fulford (2020), who suggest that the move to online working can support a move to value-based practice.

To explore the EP views of which type of work is most acceptable and useful online, the themes of *working with systems* will be discussed. Again, the data from both phases of the research have been integrated into the discussion and will be presented together. The thematic analysis of open-ended, short responses from the questionnaire will also be discussed. The section ends with a summary section which maps out one hypothesis for how EPs are making decisions on which parts of work should be delivered in person and which can be delivered online based on the type of exchange (Haythornthwaite, 2002).

5.4.1 Working with Systems

A key aspect of working as an EP is the relationship and rapport that is built between the EP and those they work with (Beaver 2002). It forms the basis of much of the consultative work that takes place as well as conversations around negotiating work. It is not surprising then that the EP participants were concerned about the way that relationships are made and sustained online. The analysis of the losses and gains of working online showed that 'missing contextual information' was a loss experienced by EP and not the non-EP professional participants. The EPs discussed the appreciation they had felt when they were able to work with systems i.e., families and school staff, with whom they had an existing relationship and trepidation about trying to build new relationships online when these were not established. Although the researcher suggests that relationships can be built and maintained online (Haythornthwaite 2002), within the fields of psychology, there is conflicting evidence as to whether a therapeutic alliance can be built with all client groups online

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effectively (Backhaus 2012). The findings from this study would suggest that EPs would choose to make relationships in person and then, if needed work online within that existing relationship. There is an added complexity for EPs in that they do not typically work with individual clients, part of their work is to make sense of, and support the system of the school.

Asking the participants which kind of consultation they were reflecting on meant that data was collected on the types of activities being carried out online or in-person during the blended phase of working. Interestingly, data collected indicates the EPs were completing more Joint School and Family consultations online and fewer initial consultations online. The qualitative data collected from the SSI and the free-text responses in the questionnaire offer some insight into why this might be. One EP suggested that starting a piece of work in person, meeting those they will be working with and then reviewing it online was a model that was working for them during blended working. This finding sits within the *richness of media* theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986). The theory suggests that conveyance of information and convergence of understanding needs to occur for an interaction to be successful. The findings of this study suggest when there is a need to convey information, online is useful and acceptable. There is some evidence to suggest that when there also needs to be a convergence of understanding, there are some circumstances when online might help. For example, when there is a difficulty at the mesosystemic level, the school staff and the parents have fallen out perhaps, or when the emotional affect is so high that the physical space of the school is no longer conducive to working. However, when convergence of understanding needs to take in those non-verbal cues, perhaps when the psychologist needs to feel the emotional temperature in the room or see the relationships, then in person is best.

5.4.2 School Staff

The findings indicate that to school staff, EP work online has been acceptable, useful, and convenient during the COVID-19 pandemic. Professional colleagues reported that EPs seemed more available and amenable to having consultations with teachers when this suited them, rather than

during a visit, typically a morning or an afternoon when cover is needed for classes and rooms are needed to be made available. These practicalities mean a lot to professional colleagues and could mean that EP time is used more efficiently. This finding raises questions about how EP work is delivered, given that school staff may prefer to work in a way that they perceive to be more efficient, and EPs may prefer to work in a more personal way. In the context of delivering a traded service, where the school commissions work directly from the EPS, it may be that schools commission work that is online, and EPs need to be clear on how work is best delivered and why. There are implications for the EPS and what type of service they offer to commissioners. The geographical context in which the EPS sits will no doubt be an important fact for EPSs to consider when thinking about service delivery. Those EPSs that serve a larger geographical area, or those that serve remote schools may find offering a remote service acceptable to both schools and EPs. It is important that the move to online is not seen as giving EPs the chance to 'do more with less' (Kennedy et al., 2009) by offering a more convenient and efficient service but with less opportunity to have an impact on those with whom EPs work.

EPs and school staff data did converge on certain types of work being more acceptable and useful online. The findings show that meetings with a clear agenda, structure and where information is given, rather than relational work, are acceptable online as it provides convenience. Multi-agency meetings are further supported by online working as they offer convenience, ease of scheduling, and save time and travel and resources.

5.4.3 Summary of RQ4

Findings from this study show that decisions are currently made about different types of work being delivered online or in person. These have been looked at using components of communicative exchanges (Haythornthwaite, 2002), and show that certain communication that is low in emotion, verbal load and complexity are suitable for online working for both EPs and their professional colleagues. One aspect that the model does not allow for, but which participants were

considering, is the role of convenience and preference. EPs and professional colleagues were mindful of the benefit that online working had in offering an acceptable way for parents to connect with school staff and EPs. It was beyond the scope of the present research to explore the views of parents towards online working, but this could play an important part in future research in this area.

5.4.4 Summary of Research Questions

The study has shown that before March 2020, EP services were delivered in person, with technology playing a supporting role in enabling communication (emails and telephone calls); laptops being used to take notes in meetings and cloud services being used to store shared resources. Some EPs spoke about technology being available to play a larger role than it did before the first lockdown and described online collaborative working spaces as being available but largely unused.

EPs spoke about the move online as being quick and described how this was supported by the technology infrastructure of laptops, collaborative working spaces such as Microsoft Teams, and having access to the internet that could support video calls as being supportive to the move. EPs also spoke about how the move online was supported by everyone being in the same position, and the goal of remaining accessible to services was a shared goal across all team members. EPs spoke about still delivering the same work as they did before lockdown, but the proportions of this work changes, with a shift away from cognitive assessments and towards a more consultative approach to service delivery. These findings are consistent with the findings of Moore and Upton (2020).

EPs reported that during the necessitated online working phase of service delivery, they experienced what could be described as *zoom fatigue*. They spoke about the ways they had managed to work around this, having shorter meetings to stop meetings running back-to-back and allow for a screen break, and working to recreate an in-person visit by building in time to have *problem-free chat* and offer informal supervision.

Consistent with the thoughts of Fonagy (2020), this research sees that the pandemic has put the technological revolution on fast forward for educational psychology, with EPs acknowledging that their working practices would not have changed so dramatically if the pandemic had not necessitated it. This was explored in the theme *integrating technology into the role of the EP* and the subtheme *pandemic enforced digitalisation.* There was further evidence found in the current study to support the ideas of Fonagy (2020) who suggested that offering a remote method of service delivery had the potential to shift the power dynamic between the psychologist and the client by delivering service in a space in which the client is most comfortable. The current study adds to this idea and the theme of *a shift in power dynamics* explores how the use of neutral online spaces saw a reduction in the perceived hierarchical structure which sees the school hosting and facilitating meetings.

The study also highlighted EPs and their professional colleagues as having concerns about the digital divide and the disproportionate impact this may have on access to EP services for marginalised groups. EPs also highlighted different client groups who have less access to technology, especially those in the private, voluntary, or independent nurseries sector, and clients for whom language is not easily accessed.

EPs reported that they continued to work at the level of the individual, group and system and that online working seemed to lend itself better to multi-agency working, or meetings that had a business focus, as opposed to meetings where collaboration was needed.

5.5 Evaluation of the Methodology

In evaluating the methodology used in the study, several strengths and limitations were noted, both in the proposed methodology and when carrying out the research.

Firstly, although attempts were made to distribute the questionnaire as widely as possible, using social media channels and EP forums, the sample would have been representative of those EPs

who use social media and internet forums to connect with others. It could then be argued that the sample did not represent those EPs who held less favourable views about online working. The research flyer was also distributed via personal links and links that fellow trainees had with EP services in the hope to represent a broad spectrum of views and experiences. As the questionnaire data was submitted anonymously, it is not clear how many of the samples came from social media and how many came from the snowball method of sampling.

Similarly, while the number of participants who completed the questionnaire was relatively high, there was not a balance achieved between the number of EP participants and non-EP professionals, as was hoped. The quantitative aspect of the current research was designed to be completed by the same EP participant after an online and in-person consultation. Unfortunately, there was an insufficient number of EPs who completed the questionnaire under both conditions to yield enough data to assume sufficient power. For this reason, the two data sets were analysed to compare the difference between subject and method of service delivery. On reflection, rather than asking EPs to recruit their professional colleagues to the study, it may have been more effective to advertise the study to SENCos and teachers separately to increase participation.

A further limitation of this study was the representation of the six EP participants who took part in the SSI. Attempts were made to gather a range of geographical locations however, the participants recruited ended up being mainly from the south of England with one EP representing Scotland. These EPs represent about 2 per cent of the EP population across the UK, which does raise some questions about the generalisability of the findings.

The study findings refer to parents and CYP and explore the impact that online working has had on their access to the EPS, however, neither the voices of parents nor children, both key stakeholders in EP work, are represented in the study. A future focus of research may therefore consider the views of these stakeholders on working online with EPs.

The trustworthiness of qualitative data may have influenced the theoretical constructions the researcher brought to the findings. These risks were somewhat mitigated by using the reflexive thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke 2013) to code and analyse the qualitative data in both data sets. The peer consultation group, described in the methodology was also utilised to reduce researcher bias, however, it should be noted that all the members of the peer consultation group were EPs in training who had all worked through the pandemic and so brought with them their own biases and experiences.

Both the questionnaire and the interview were piloted, and minor semantic changes were made to some of the items in the questionnaire to improve clarity. However, had the questionnaire been distributed and data analysed first, and then the SSI schedules constructed it may have allowed for more significant findings to be explored in greater depth. Member checking could also have been employed in the current study to check that the findings of the thematic analysis ring true with the participants. Due to the time constraints of this research, this was not possible.

Despite the limitations of the research outlined above, the research was able to answer the research questions it set out to discover. This piece of research has explored the role that online working has had on service delivery for Educational Psychologists in the UK, a novel and original contribution to an area that had not been researched in this way before.

In keeping with the research paradigm, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data sets were triangulated which has helped to provide a richer understanding of the issues that were addressed. Throughout the research process, peer review and coding were used, which provides some assurance that the same conclusions would have been made if the research and analysis had been conducted by another researcher.

It should be held in mind that the study was explorative, due to the scarcity of studies carried out in the field of educational psychology in the UK regarding online working practices. The

research has captured a reasonably wide range of views from EPs for the first time and may be able to act as a basis for future research as a result.

5.6 Future Research

The research has explored the experiences and practices of EPs during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the voices and experiences of EPs have been well represented. Future research now should look at the effectiveness of online working practices in affecting change for those that EPs work with. There have been several studies which have looked at an EP's ability to affect change within a system (Chidley & Stringer, 2020), as well as studies looking at the effective aspects of consultation (Langford, 2021), but none on how the method of service delivery impacts these and the opportunities and limitations that supporting those EPs work may have on outcomes.

5.7 Conclusion and Key Contribution

Through evidence-based research, this study has the potential to support the building of the foundations of a new age of working for EPs. The findings of the current study will contribute to knowing what works, and should therefore be kept, as the profession moves towards a post-COVID age. Although the COVID-19 crisis has brought with it many difficulties, it is arguable that the pandemic may have had a positive impact on client access to psychological services (Fonagy et al., 2020). It should be noted that research conducted during other disasters, for example after the Ebola outbreak (Thompson et al., 2017), has shown that those who have prior experience of exposure to *'acute stress'* are likely to be impacted disproportionately negatively by the sequela of events due to the cumulative impact of multiple traumatic events (Masten & Osofsky, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020) and research has shown that the impact of COVID has been disproportionately felt by those who live in poverty, have low paid jobs or live in poorer communities (Whitehead et al., 2021). With reports of Asian and Black ethnic minorities being at greater risk of dying or needing hospitalisation due to COVID-19, (Kapilashrami & Bhui, 2020), it can be seen that the pandemic is having a detrimental impact on minoritized groups. The research has

two potential benefits to the EP profession. Firstly, it is important that EPs, who often work directly or indirectly with those most in need, and those from minoritised backgrounds, do not adapt EP practice to further create disparities and barriers to access EP services. Secondly, the research has the potential to form part of the knowledge base about what is gained and lost by operating an online, blended or hybrid EPS which can inform future service delivery and ensure an equitable and accessible service for all service users.

The study has found that by identifying new ways of working and connecting with others online, EPs have created additional opportunities to work with others and provide support for service users and in doing so, they have another tool in their tool kit to offer. When working in a consultative way, having a remote service option has given EPs a neutral space to meet with others and provide support and has ensured that service delivery has continued under extraordinary circumstances. This should be borne in mind for EPs that this space may be more accessible for some – older children and adult clients where there may be a perceived imbalance in power. There is evidence to suggest that the equitable space online and a reduction in non-verbal information may support these situations to provide those with an underrepresented voice to be heard.

The study indicates online work is unlikely to completely disappear as it provides a level of convenience and practicality that the profession is already using to its advantage to support training, consultation, and assessments, however, the study also shows that there is a payoff when working online. EPs may have less of a sense of the systems they are supporting and relational aspects of interactions may be harder to pick up on, it also seems that the convenience of connecting quickly and easily may come at the cost of presence and full participation from some.

More research is needed into the applicability of applying psychology at the group and systemic level, and the usual practice-based evidence provides a good indication that more practical (information) interactions can and are happening online successfully.

In conclusion, while there are shortcomings of the study in that this only represents a very small portion of the EP population, and a much smaller proportion of school staff views, the study has shone a light on the views of EP and their professional colleagues during the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. While EPs must be mindful of how accessible online working is for all those they work with, it seems that online working is here to stay and has the potential to add value to EP work, when offered to support and enhance the in-person work that is also taking place.

Chapter 6: Implications for EP practice

This research has shown that EP working practices have changed considerably since March 2020 with a move to online working necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic now becoming part of a blended model of service delivery that EPs are currently delivering.

EPs are making decisions based on their experiences during the national lockdowns as to which parts of online working are acceptable and useful for delivering EP services to those who need them. This research has triangulated views and perceptions of professionals working to deliver EP services over the past two years and examined statistical differences between online and in-person consultations. The study could have been improved by having a more equal number of non-EP voices in the study and by comparing the impact of EP work that was carried out online to that carried out in person. These two limitations could be a direction of future research in the area.

The research has shown that there are considerable gains for EP practice by connecting with those with whom they work online. When working with CYP and their parents/carers, connecting online provides a neutral space away from school, often the location of problems, for meetings. The neutral space may reduce hierarchical structures and allow EP support to happen when accessing the school is not possible or appropriate. Secondly, the findings point to equality of contribution from all those who attend online meetings in a way that is perhaps not replicated in person. It is hypothesised that this may be because of a reduction in non-verbal communication, equal space on the screen for each person and that connecting in this new way has drawn awareness to all those who are taking part.

The research has also highlighted losses which have the potential to impact EP service delivery. There is evidence to suggest that connecting across online platforms allows for others to only partially be present. This may be because of the physical distance between those connecting online, the device that people are connecting on acting as a barrier to complete engagement or

interruptions and disturbances being more likely when connecting online. Other notable losses are the lack of contextual factors when working with individuals to carry out assessments, groups when meeting with parents and school together or having a sense of the system when connecting exclusively online.

This research has given insight into how EPs responded to a once-in-a-lifetime event and has shown the profession to be flexible and adaptable in the face of adversity, adopting new ways of working and embracing change. The research shows that EPs have learnt from the challenges and the successes that the pandemic brought and captures this learning in a way that can directly impact the future practice of the profession. The research shows there is potential for EPS to save time and resources by working efficiently online without compromising the quality of service delivery when working online by using technology to connect with professional colleagues or when wanting to provide convenience or ease for those they are working with. Moving forward, EPs need to ensure that all those with whom they work have access to technology when offering a remote service to ensure that the needs of the caseload can be appropriately met. The content of this thesis will be presented at the UCL IoE TEP conference in the summer 2022 and will be made available online through the university repository. At least one journey article will be prepared for publication and attempts to disseminate findings at professional conferences (online or in person) will be made.

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Appendix a: Information Sheet for Participants

Participant Information Sheet For Educational Psychologists

Title of the Study:	An Exploratory Investigation into the Professional Perspectives the impact the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on Educational Psychology.
Start date:	March 2021
End date:	July 2022
Department:	Psychology and Human Development

About the researcher:

My name is Amy Moore, I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Educations. I am inviting you to take part in my research project 'An Exploratory Investigation into the Professional Perspectives the impact the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on Educational Psychology.'

This information sheet will try and answer any question you might have about the project but please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know. I very much hope that you would like to take part.

Purpose of the study:

The study is being conducted as part of the researchers training for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

The study aims to explore the lived experiences of professionals working through the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically looking at the gains and losses from online service delivery. By exploring what is working well, the research hopes to contribute to the working practices of Educational Psychologists (EPs) into the post pandemic era.

How the research will be conducted

The interviews will explore your experiences working online to deliver Educational Psychology between March 2020 – current time. Interviews will take between 45-60 minutes each and will be conducted vis Microsoft Teams or similar.

You have been invited to take part in these interviews because you are currently working as an Educational Psychologist and have experience of delivering Educational Psychology to clients both in person and via online platforms.

Your participation in the study:

Please be aware of the following when deciding whether or not to take part in the study.

You have the right to decide whether you take part in the study or not.

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the study.

You have the right to not answer any of the questions within the interview.

When presenting the findings in a report your identity will be kept anonymous.

The data you provide will be kept anonymously in a password protected laptop.

If you are unsure about any of the above, please contact the researcher via e-mail to have any queries you have answered.

If you have any further questions before you decided whether to take part, you can reach me at **amy.moore.19@ucl.ac.uk**

If you would like to be involved, please complete the attached consent form and return it to **amy.moore.19@ucl.ac.uk** as soon as possible.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

 The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. This information is explained fully in the UCL Research Participant Privacy Notice, which you can access here: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions about the above research project, wish to exercise your rights as a research participant, or wish to make a complaint, please send an email with details to the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee on ioe.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk so that we can look into the issue and respond to you. You can also contact the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee by telephoning +44 (0)20 79115449

Appendix b: Consent form for Participation in Semi-structured Interviews

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Study: An Exploratory Investigation into the Professional Perspectives the impact the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on Educational Psychology.

Department: Psychology and Human Development

Name and contact details of researcher: Amy Moore – Amy.Moore.19@ucl.ac.uk

Purpose of the study: The study is being conducted as part of the researchers training for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

The study aims to explore the lived experiences of professionals working through the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically looking at the gains and losses from online service delivery. By exploring what is working well, the research hopes to contribute to the working practices of Educational Psychologists (EPs) into the post pandemic era.

Should you choose to take part, the interview will take between 45 - 60 minutes. You will be taking part because you are currently and Educational Psychologist with experience of working online and face-to-face.

Your participation in the study:

Please be aware of the following when deciding whether or not to take part in the study.

- You have the right to decide whether you take part in the study or not.

- You have the right to not answer any of the questions within the interview.

- When presenting the findings in a report your identity will be kept anonymous.

- The data you provide will be kept anonymously in a password protected laptop.

- You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point and any data you have provided will not be used.

If you are unsure about any of the above, please ask either now or contact the researcher via e-mail to have any queries you have answered.

Statement of consent:

Please circle

I have read the information sheet about the research

Yes   No

I understand that the participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without access to services being affected in any way

Yes   No

I understand that I can contact Amy Moore amy.moore.19@ucl.ac.uk to discuss this study at any time

Yes   No

I am happy for my interview to be recorded.

Yes   No

I understand if the research changes I will be contacted for a renegotiation of my consent using the details provided.

Yes   No

Name

Contact email

Contact telephone

Signature   Date

Data Protection Privacy Notice

 The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. This information is explained fully in the UCL Research Participant Privacy Notice, which you can access here: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice

UCL General Research Participant Privacy Notice | Legal Services - UCL - London's Global University

UCL's approach to research and personal data. UCL aims to conduct research in accordance with the highest standards of research integrity. Our research is underpinned by policies and procedures designed to help ensure we comply with regulations and legislation that govern the conduct of research, including data protection law.

www.ucl.ac.uk

Appendix c: Copy of Online Questionnaire Completed by Participants

Questionnaire Following an EP

Consultation

The survey will take approximately 15 - 20 minutes to complete.

My name is Amy Moore, I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Education. I am inviting you to take part in my research project 'Exploring the Role of the Educational Psychologist during the COVID-19 Pandemic: How have Online Video Conferencing Working Practices Impacted Service Delivery?'

This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project but please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know. I very much hope that you would like to take part.

The study is being conducted as part of the researcher's training for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.
The study aims to explore the lived experiences of professionals working through the COVID19 pandemic, specifically looking at the gains and losses from online service delivery. By exploring what has changed, the research hopes to contribute to the working practices of Educational Psychologists (EPs) into the post pandemic era.

You are being asked to complete a questionnaire based on an EP consultation you have recently been part of. As well as collecting information about the consultation, you will be asked to rate a series of statements that explore some of the aspects of the consultation.
Your views on online and face to face working during the pandemic will also be collected.

Please be aware of the following when deciding whether or not to take part in the study.
•   You have the right to decide whether you take part in the study or not.
•   You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the study.
•   You have the right to not answer any of the questions within the questionnaire.
•   When presenting the findings in a report your identity will be kept anonymous.
•   The data you provide will be kept anonymously in a password protected laptop.

If you are unsure about any of the above, please contact the researcher via e-mail to answer any questions you have.

Local Data Protection Privacy Notice
The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice: For participants in research studies, visit: gal-services/privacy/uclgeneral-research-participant-privacy-notice

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data is: 'Public task' for personal data. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. * Required

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data- protection@ucl.ac.uk. If you have any further questions before taking part, you can reach me at amy.moore.19@ucl.ac.uk. Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

1. I confirm I have read and understood this information. *

    ◯ Yes

    ◯ No

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. *

    ◯ Yes

    ◯ No

3. I know that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions. *

    ◯ Yes

    ◯ No

4. If you consent to be contacted for a follow up interview as part of this research project, please leave a valid email address or contact telephone number.

    [   ]

    Firstly, some questions about the consultation you have recently been part of.

5. Please enter the date of the consultation.

    Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)   🗓

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6. And the time of the consultation

[ ]

7. Did the consultation take place online, or face to face?

○ Online

○ Face to face

○ Other

8. Please indicate who was present.
Tick all that apply

☐ Teacher

☐ SENCo / Inclusion Manager

☐ Headteacher

☐ Educational Psychologist

☐ Educational Psychologist in Training

☐ Parent

☐ Student / Pupil

☐ Other

9. Please indicate the type of consultation.
    Tick all that apply

    ☐ Initial consultation

    ☐ Follow-up consultation

    ☐ Individual consultation

    ☐ Joint school and family consultation

    ☐ Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment consultation

    ☐ Not sure / Don't know

    ☐ Other

10. Briefly describe the focus of the consultation.

    _____

11. Which area of need best describes the nature of the child's needs?
    Tick all that apply

    ☐ Cognition and Learning

    ☐ Speech, Language and Communication

    ☐ Social, Emotional and Mental Health (including behaviour)

    ☐ Physical and Sensory

    ☐ Other

Thinking specifically about the consultation you have just described,

12. To what extent are the following statements true?

	True	Somewhat true	Not True	N/A
There was enough time and space given for everyone in attendance to give their views.				
There was a balance in turn-taking.				
The consultation included problem-free talking.				
The consultation was 'emotionally warm'.				
Positive comments and affirmations were made throughout.				
Follow-up questions were used, and ideas were built on by the EP.				
I was able to easily show that I had heard others in the consultation.				
Ideas were summarised effectively.				
Each person in the consultation contributed ideas.				
Ideas were received and responded to in a congruent way.				
Where appropriate, further turns were given on the same topic.				
Non-verbal cues were easily picked up on by others.				
Possibilities, hypotheses, and explanations were presented and discussed.				
Ideas, perspectives and information were presented in a way that could be easily understood.				
The perspectives of everyone at the consultation were explored.				

13. How would you rate the ease of interaction

very poor ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ excellent

14. Please comment on the overall ease of interaction.

15. How successful do you think the consultation was?

Not at all successful ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very successful

16. How useful did you find the consultation?

Not at all useful ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Very useful

Now some questions about working online generally

Thinking back over the course of the pandemic and your interactions online and face to face with professionals during this time, please comment on the following.

25. What do you consider to be the benefits of working online?

26. What do you consider to be the shortcoming of working online?

27. What do you consider to be the benefits of working face to face?

28. What do you consider to be the shortcomings of working face to face?

29. Given the choice, are there some aspects of the EP role that you would prefer to carry out face to face?

30. Given the choice, are there some aspects of the EP role that you would prefer carry out online?

31. Thinking of activities that EPs can be involved with, which of the following do you think fit best with online working and which fit best with face to face working?

Activity	Best online	No preference	Best in-person
CYP observation			
Assessment with CYP			
Therapeutic sessions with CYP			
Intervention delivery			
Narrative approaches e.g., PATH			
Training with parents			
Joint School and Family Consultation			
Supervision for school staff			
Parent Meetings			
Initial consultation			

Staff drop ins

Follow-up consultations

Information gathering with parents

Information gathering with school staff

Planning meetings

Finally, some questions about you

33. Sex

Female

Male

Prefer not to say
Other

34. Age group

○ 20-29

○ 30-39

○ 40-49

○ 50-59

○ 60+

○ Prefer not to say

35. Your current job role

☐ Teacher

☐ Other (please specify)

☐ Head Teacher

☐ Senior Leader in a school

☐ SENCo / Inclusion Manager

☐ Educational Psychologist in training

☐ Educational Psychologist

☐ Other

36. Length of time in current role

[   ]

37. Which of the following statements best describes the stage at which you are in your career:

○ More established in role

○ Recently qualified

○ In training

○ Other

Finally, please enter your email address. This will be used to connect multiple responses from individuals and **will not be used to contact you** Once responses have been matched your email address will be deleted.

Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire.

Appendix d: Video Enhanced Reflection on Practice Principles for Attunement within Consultation.

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

Programme Director: Vivian Hill

IOE LONDON

Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

Video Enhanced Reflection on Practice
Principles for Attunement within Consultation

Yes-Series ATTUNED COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOURS	Positive Responses to Client initiatives What did I see and hear when I reviewed my film?
Being Attentive and Inclusive ■ Creating ease, e.g. problem free talking, looking interested with friendly posture and intonation ■ Giving time and space for the other person ■ Wondering what the other person is doing, thinking or feeling. ■ Clarifying purpose / expectations / hopes ■ Receiving and returning/ sharing turns / balanced turn taking Using accessible language	
Encouraging Initiatives ■ Waiting ■ Active listening behaviours - friendly intonations / positive comments / affirmations ■ Showing emotional warmth - labelling / naming what you hear, see, think, feel ■ Asking what you want to know / using follow up questions ■ Saying what you are doing	
Receiving Initiatives ■ Showing that you have heard / noticed the other persons initiatives (verbal and non-verbal reception) ■ Repeating / using the other persons words ■ Building on the other's response / asking follow up questions ■ Summarising	
Developing Attuned Interactions ■ Each making initiatives ■ Receiving and returning / sharing turns / balanced turn taking ■ Receiving and then responding in congruent way ■ Asking / giving/accepting/exchanging opinions ■ Giving second / further turns on the same topic ■ Checking you are being understood and that the other person is understanding you.	
Guiding ■ Eliciting & naming hopes, intentions / co-constructing agendas ■ Problem analysis - Inviting & supporting predictions, probing / investigating opinions ■ Accessing prior knowledge, exploring attributions / constructions ■ Noticing, naming, exploring contradictions (real or	

Helen Upton Professional & Academic Tutor 2013
Adapted from:
Kennedy, H. (2011) What is Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)? In Kennedy, H., Landor, M., Todd, L., (2011) *Video Interaction Guidance*. London: JKP.

Appendix e. Copy of the Interview Schedule Used

<div align="center">

Interview Schedule

</div>

Opening statement

This piece of research is looking at the impact that online working practices have had on EP service delivery. Thank you for your time and agreeing to talk with me, how are you? We'll probably be speaking for about an hour, is that ok? (check in with participant how are you is now a good time to talk?)

I have some questions for you focussing on your experiences of working through the pandemic and about your online working practices. I realise that you may not be working exclusively online at the moment (unless they are) but I'd like you to think back to when you were working mainly online and how this time has impacted how you currently work or may work in the future. There aren't any right or wrong answers to the questions. I am just interested in finding out about your experiences and what you found helpful.
Is that what you were expecting?
Do you have any questions at this point?
Have you seen the information sheet I sent to you? I have your consent form, thanks for getting that back to me (or prompt to send). All of your answers will be treated in confidence and you will not be identifiable in the write-up of the project. If for any reason you'd like to stop the interview as we are talking, that's absolutely fine, please do let me know.

I'll be recording the audio of this interview as we go but not the video and I'll be making some notes as you speak. Are you ok to go ahead?

Interview Questions

1. Please start by telling me a bit about you, how long you have been qualified and in your current position and your position in March 2020.
   - What is your current role?
   - How long have you been a main grade/senior/manager?
   - How long had you been at the service prior to March 2020?

2. I'd be interested to hear about how your work changed during the first lockdown and subsequent lockdowns during the last 2 years. (RQ1)
   - Did you deliver any parts of your work online prior to the first lockdown, if so what?
   - How did you deliver EP services during the lockdowns?
   - What changed? What stayed the same?
   - What did you/your service identify as your priorities during this time?
   - What aspects of your role were you able to still deliver during lockdown? How did you manage this?
3. What worked well for you when service delivery moved online? (RQ3)

   - And what worked less well during this time (RQ3)

4. I'm wondering now, in relation to the service you have delivered during the pandemic:

   - What accomplishments are you have been most proud of? (RQ2)

- What have you valued most about your work during the last 2 years OR What have you valued most about working online? RQ2
- How do you think your practice has helped make a difference in schools? RQ2 / 3

5. I'd be interested to hear your reflections about online working during the pandemic and working from home, what kept you motivated to get your job done? RQ1/3
   - Can you describe what a 'good day' has looked like during the pandemic RQ3
   - Can you describe what a 'bad day' has looked like during the pandemic. RQ3

6. Since online working has become more part of our day to day lives, I'm wondering what online approaches or practices have you observed that have inspired you? RQ1
   - And have you had a chance to develop these or try them out yourself RQ2

7. What aspects of your work around online work would you like to see developed? RQ3

8. Thinking as broadly as possible now, so not just focussing on your personal experience of working during the pandemic, what do you consider to be the gains of working online?
   - And what about the losses of working online (RQ3)

9. Lots of us now are working in a hybrid way, I'm wondering what is happening, or what more could happen to support you, your training and development to support you to work in this way? RQ2
   - Have you had any training around online working practices? (RQ2)
   - How have you navigated the technology, what has supported you and what more could have been done. (RQ2)
   - How have your professional colleagues managed the move to online? Have there been any significant barriers to working online because of professional colleagues working practices? (RQ2)

10. Looking to the future now, and thinking about when we are on the other side of the pandemic, whatever that may look like, what are your ideal working conditions to be the most productive / achieve greatest job satisfaction? RQ1

11. Are there bits of online working you will take forward with you into your practice and what bits you will be happy to leave behind.

12. And finally, what is your 'dream wish' for the EPS and schools you work in moving into a post pandemic world of work?

13. Thank you for answering all my questions today, as the interview draws to a close now, is there anything more you would like to tell me about what we have covered and about how your work has changed since March 2020?

Closing statement

That brings us to the end of the interview. Thank you so much for your time and for your really thoughtful answers. How was the interview for you? (discussion about any emotive topics, and acknowledging the hard work they are doing under extraordinary circumstances, sign posting if necessary and checking self-care is in place, as discussed)

Over the next few weeks, I'll be listening back to our interview and be writing about it. If you feel like you don't want me to write about our interview you can tell me now and I won't use it and that's absolutely fine. I can also remove one or more of your answers from the transcript and write up, please let me know before the end of the month (Dec / Jan 2022) If you change your mind in the next two weeks, I can delete the interview. I'll be interviewing other people too and, once I've thought about what, generally, people have found helpful, I'll write some general findings which I'll send to you in the via email. Is that okay?
Do you have any questions about that at all?
You can get in touch with me via email if you have any questions or would like to speak to me.
Amy.moore.19@ucl.ac.uk
You have my email address in the meantime if you want to get in touch for any reason between now and then.

Thanks again for your time today

Appendix f: Initial Codes Generated during Phase 2 of Thematic Analysis

Name	Files	References
Change of pace (RQ1)	1	1
Clients overwhelmed by the change (RQ2)	1	1
Increase in systemic work (RQ1, 3)	1	4
Therapeutic work with YP increased (RQ1)	1	1
Within child issues can be discussed online (RQ4)	1	2
Mesosystemic issues are better addressed in person	1	1
EP preference to be face-to-face (RQ4, 2)	1	1
Loss of natural interactions (RQ3)	1	1
increase in connections potential online	1	1
Structure supports online working	1	1
Equitable - delivering an equitable service (RQ2)	1	1
making sense of it (RQ2)	1	2
unconscious dynamics online are different (RQ3)	1	1
Some aspects of role transferred online (RQ1)	1	2
making the role fit with you (RQ3)	1	2
Tech stopping EPs carrying out their role (RQ3)	1	1
completely new way of working (RQ1)	1	1
different demands for individuals (RQ3)	1	1
change of mindset (RQ1)	1	1
motivation to work at home or online (RQ3)	1	3
Virtual work not as 'full' (RQ4)	1	1
difficult to get buy in virtually (RQ3,4)	1	1
coming alongside problem holders is better in person (RQ4)	1	2
moving forward when things are stuck better in person RQ3	1	1
false value in multidisciplinary meetings RQ1, 2	1	1
Easy isn't always better in EP work (RQ4)	1	1
more flexible for clients (RQ1)	1	1
tech infrastructure a fundamental (RQ1)	1	1
collaborating with professional colleagues - power (RQ 2)	1	1
service users getting values for money (RQ2)	1	1
responding to what the clients need (RQ1)	1	1
online work is a payoff (RQ4)	1	1
accessible online training - power (RQ3)	1	2
online opens opportunities (RQ1)	1	1
active participation online (RQ3)	1	1
power - CYP (RQ1)	1	1
There but not present (RQ3)	1	3
tech hinders engagement (RQ4)	1	2
no substitute for being in the room (RQ2)	1	3
EPs being part of the context in person (RQ1)	1	1
online is one dimension we can offer (RQ1)	1	1
natural endings vs forced endings of meetings (RQ2, 4)	1	1

Name	Files	References
less collaborative online EP expert (RQ1)	1	2
Completely different way of working (RQ1)	2	5
An opportunity to work differently (RQ1, 2, 3)	2	5
Power shift towards YP (RQ3)	2	2
Working with EP colleagues suits online (RQ4)	2	4
Less containment online (RQ4)	2	4
Shift towards CYP wellbeing (RQ1)	2	2
Variety (RQ3)	2	2
Services more accessible when online (RQ3)	2	3
Involving both parents when online (RQ3)	2	2
interactions are reductive (RQ3)	2	2
new ways of working are easier for those who are new to role	2	3
constant availability online is misunderstood (RQ3)	2	3
hard to understand a system when online (RQ3)	2	3
New skills have been acquired (RQ3, 4)	2	4
team knowledge is scattered when we are not in the office (RQ1)	2	2
shared common tech goal (RQ1, 4)	2	5
constant availability online is millstone (RQ3) (Nodes)	2	2
Keeping to your block of colour (RQ1, 4)	2	3
Time to process processing time (RQ4)	2	3
opportunity to revisit practice (RQ1)	2	3
clients at home (RQ3)	2	3
basic needs being met (RQ3)	2	2
Support anxiety in CYP (RQ3)	2	2
no choice no control - It was hard! (RQ3)	2	2
power in person RQ3	2	4
Consultation is robust when delivered online (RQ4)	3	4
A move away from cognitive assessment (RQ1 RQ3)	3	7
Assessments carried out differently (RQ1)	3	5
Flexibility and balance (RQ3)	3	10
Feeling deskilled (RQ2)	3	8
Less fluid conversations online (RQ3)	3	4
Online suits when things are good easy simple (RQ4)	3	5
Conscious competence (RQ2)	3	6
Observations and individual work less robust online (RQ4)	3	4
home work divide (RQ3)	3	4
Non-verbal cues are lost online (RQ3)	3	5
giving psychology away (RQ1)	3	7
thwarted by tech (RQ1)	3	5
Travel (RQ1)	3	5
Touchy Feeling connections in person (RQ4)	3	4
EPs Containing the containers (RQ1)	4	10
Being online is acceptable to CYP (RQ4)	4	9
Multiagency working suits online (RQ4)	4	8

Name	Files	References
Training needs of EPs (RQ2)	4	4
incidental professional conversations (RQ3)	4	5
Improved access to EPs for parents (RQ1, 3)	5	6
Similar work, delivered differently (RQ1, 4)	5	14
Accessibility must be considered (RQ3)	5	6
Relationships are better built in person (RQ4)	5	11
Online working is more responsive (RQ1)	5	8
Pandemic enforced different ways of working which have carried on (RQ1)	5	7
tendency to fill the diary (RQ3)	5	9
value in human connections (RQ4)	5	20
A move towards Hybrid as the norm (RQ1)	5	10
online training works well (RQ4)	5	12
Time to adapt to the new normal and to tech (RQ2, RQ4)	6	17
EPs value autonomy (RQ1 3)	6	13

Appendix g: descriptors of each theme and subtheme with examples

Research Question	Theme and descriptor	Subtheme and descriptor	Example
RQ1 how has the move from in person to online working impacted service delivery?	.1. Integrating Technology into the Role of the EP . *This theme looks at how technology has integrated itself into EP working practices. It explores the frustrations and anxieties of working in a new way, and how the national lockdowns meant that EPs had to come together to make it work.*	A move towards a blended service. Participants spoke about how they felt that they were able to offer online and in person work as part of their core offer to the people they work with. 6 participants 14 references	With hybrid model, and I feel like I've got sort of like a nice mix really between face-to-face. and working from home, and I do quite value both elements now. I think I've worked better, but that's just me maybe? EP4 I think it's almost become second nature now, like being able to work virtually. And being able to kind of flip between the two quite easily. EP5 So if you can do things more quickly, because you can go online, that's something that we want to hold on to that flexibility. It's not the be all and end all. What we certainly want Hold on to. EP1
		Frustrated by Technology Participants spoke about frustrations and anxieties they had experienced	Oh, the frustrations around Wi Fi and technology and background noise and how that almost on a personal level made me feel less professional in some way. And that I was offering good a service, if you like it, my wifi, I was crashing out, or they couldn't hear me or I was being interrupted by the front door. So that was a personal anxiety. EP2

		when working online and how this had made them feel as though they were offering a sub-standard service

4 participants
6 references | I tried to do CBT intervention online, which is just a disaster in one sort of therapeutic stuff, I think was mine. But what other interventions we try and do I think I just sort of gave up on the idea of trying to do a group intervention online was just sort of too daunting. I didn't really, I couldn't imagine that working really with children say on a computer, I just avoided intervention work. EP4 |
| | | Pandemic enforced digitalisation

This subtheme explored the no alternative to online working and how this has been a vehicle for change to long term practice.

6 participants
13 references | I think what worked well for us is because everybody was working from home or offices were all closed, it meant that we had to make it work. So it wasn't a case of one or two innovative people trying to do things that were different. We were all aiming to develop and deliver the service online. And so we were all working in real time to get things that were useful to children, family sooner and our partners. And that meant we were all kind of singing from the same hymn sheet. And we're striving towards achieving the same things.

EP1

[taking about prior to March 2020] We were using emails. And I think we had started to set up some team areas in teams. First, for shared resources, we were kind of we were all fed up with SharePoint Online and thinking could teams be a different place for sharing resources. So, there were definitely interest groups set up on there, and chats, but there was there varying degrees of interest and engagement, and it didn't feel necessary, or important. And so there wasn't a full commitment, even though we tried to be a kind of top down. This is how we're going to be working. It you know, there just wasn't, we couldn't enforce it. EP2 |

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| | | Same work; different delivery

This subtheme is constructed around the idea that online work allows for all aspects of the EP role to be delivered, but that practicalities and delivery must be thought about and potential problems overcome.

6 participants
19 reference | I think everything we did, we still did. But we did it in a different way. And the proportions differed. So for with that consultation, we continue to do consultations, but we did many, many more. We've always done assesEP5ents. We did online assesEP5ents. But we did very, very few of them in general. So the proportion of how we spent our time differed quite significant. And that was largely because one people didn't feel confident in doing online assesEP5ents. EP1

Use of the consultation frameworks to inform the meetings. The questions we would use the psychology I was bringing to the consultations stay the same. Obviously, through videos. But yeah, it would mostly be about what would I bring into a room with a teacher and a parent? And how do I recreate that in an online room?
EP2

I did do observations, but it was more through video clips, and bringing video, video clips to consultations and exploring the video clips together. Some dynamic assesEP5ent was also still done,
EP5 |
| | 2.Online ~~working has impacted~~ Accessibility and availability

Participants spoke about how being online had opened access EP service, and made the service more accessible in | Improved access to psychology

This subtheme explores how EPs could deliver training and consultation to more people in ways that had not been considered viable before. | Okay, well, they thought about things like accessibility, and they've been like, well, as soon as you put training online, we can have 20 different schools coming to training while they're doing it on one school. So they thought about groups, you know, if we put groups of children online, you can have children coming, like in the middle of their school day or something, you know, if you can facilitate them joining online, they've thought a lot more about the potential for online working can give you
EP6

And yeah, there was lots of materials produced to kind of webinars and online Q and A's and things like that, which I think, again, was pretty, pretty slick as far as local authorities going out and I think well received. |

		5 Participants 11 References	EP3 So being able to use Google meets was great 250 People at once on google meets so you could do some of the training that is that needs to be delivered, live with questions, and all the rest of it could be done so so we can get information out quite quickly to a large nuEP3er of people. Or we can keep it quite EP5all. And we could do something that was much more interactive and getting people into EP5aller groups even to talk things through themselves. EP1 And suddenly it was eEP3racing teams eEP3racing zoom, and talking to heads and SENCos and saying, we are still here. We are here at 100%. And in fact, we can be even more flexible, even more available here to to invite let's have a chat. Let's see how this can work. EP2
		Responsiveness of an online service EPs spoke about how quickly they can respond to clients when working online and how this was received by professional colleagues. 6 Participants 15 references	The feedback I got in the early days was wow, It was like 'you can get somebody this afternoon, wow.' And so the flexibility really, really was well received. And, and that's great, actually, because some of our schools were themselves in crisis, or some of our schools are very EP5all rural schools where you've got two teachers in school… And that has become a millstone around your neck as this thing is going on. EP1 I suppose the benefit was often quite quickly to be able to have those conversations sometimes take longer to get out to that school or go meet with that head teacher, whereas you could actually just catch up, within a couple of days. There's some benefits in all that they've been really responsive EP4
		Barriers to Accessing an Online Service EP reflected on how some people EPs	We generally used Google for those meetings in the early stages, because parents could access Google meets, but they couldn't always access Skype for Business. EP1

		work with have less or restricted access to technology. 6 Participants 6 references	I think it can be restricting because it can assume or require a lot of people to have fundamental basic skills. Which I've already met a nuEP3er of parents that don't have those skills and kind of separate to that, I think IT can be a bit restricting. If you're working with EAL parents, and you know... I think at the best of time sometimes understand people can be a bit tricky, virtually anyway. So like, I've got an accent. So even sometimes the I say things might be a little bit different. Yeah. And if the Wi Fi is disconnecting, or somebody's freezing at the same time, English is the additional language, it just the complexities that can be a bit much. EP5
RQ2 how have the changes associated with the move to online working been received by EPs and school staff?	4. The learning curve. *This theme explores the impact that enforced online working has had on EP practice two years after it was enforced by national lockdowns.*	Revisiting Practice This subtheme was constructed around refences EPs made to having to re-think and re-work existing ways of delivering an educational psychology service. 4 participants 4 references	Learning to make webinars working with [colleagues] during consultation development, working with [colleagues] and others who have really brought a whole wide range of interactive frameworks and tools for engaging children in interviews, and getting children engaged and thinking about their learning and ways of talking to them and engaging them with use of technology and the visuals than I would in the past, I would have relied much more on things that I brought in my bag, perhaps pieces of paper and drawing and things which I would have used if needed a differentiated materials for children who might have difficulty accessing spoken language. EP2 And again, into online recording online notes You know, those being the school visits you do where Joe Bloggs is mentioned and you take a wee note just in case it comes up again...But if you want to talk about a child, you have to get parental permission. And by and large, our schools have been quite good. But where they have slipped up, we haven't pulled them up necessarily. Sort of now being much, much clearer about that as for face-to-face, as well as being online. EP1
		Working differently Enforced online working practices gave EPs an	I think different ways of working have gradually happened as people come a bit more comfortable with working online. I do think there have been new ways of working. When there were some children coming into schools, we did online observations, and even some online sessions with young people. EP6

| | | opportunity to work in a new or different way.

5 participants
16 references | So dipping our toes in the waters with schools who are just 'what on earth' in the same way that we will 'what on earth?' so that kind of reaching out over technology making sure we felt competent with how it worked, but kind of saying let's make it work together with schools.
EP2

The gains for us as a digital authority is dead straightforward, If you're not travelling, you're saving time and you're not spending money. So you know, my travel budgets massive every year. So being able to deliver a service and not have to travel for hours and hours on end to get to a school for a one hour meeting and then travel for hours to come back.
EP1 |
| | | Questioning competence

In this subtheme, EPs spoke about how the move online had made them question the skills they felt they had and how they developed scripts and work arounds to support their online service delivery. The positives and negatives to this are explored in this theme. Also includes | So that was that part of it, then consultation. I think I found that quite hard. At first, I found it hard to talk on online, it felt so disconnected just being sat in your living room talking to the computer, I found it quite difficult to engage with people the way I usually would.

EP4

I think my consultation skills, like those kind of questions that I would ask, those fundamental kind of questions and core theories of psychology, were still the same. However, there would have been a lot of kind of caveats involved. So this will be online, hopefully, our connection will be okay, or asking people to mute themselves. So there was almost additional layers of language and caveats needed to be used. But in terms of psychology, I would think some stuff stayed the same.
EP5

And actually, like, we as a count myself, and someone's been called for a bit longer learn a lot from like, newly qualified and trainees during that time who were just a bit in that learning phase. So a lot more experiments. So and again, really nicely changed the hierarchy a little bit and the dynamics within the team about people's |

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		training needs identified by the EPs	perspectives and narratives on what experience means and that kind of thing. So I think that's really nice. EP6
		Merged to include Training needs of EPs 5 Participants 26 References	I would definitely say anybody entering the profession, or a team should have an induction in how to how to host training, how to host about how to deliver a webinar, I still don't know how to do. Or I wouldn't know how to do one of those major whole local authority ones where you've got participants in one room, and then you've got a panel of people. So I've been part of a panel with people where the participants can only engage with certain people a bit like the AEP ones where, you know, there's obviously, so I don't know how they work. So there's still layers and layers that I don't know. But definitely having that as a tool will be really important. I don't know if you've had anything at the Institute on how to use it. EP2 I remeEP3er we did get training on like Bitmoji classrooms. But to be honest, I couldn't I set up a classroom, but I had no idea how to use it. But we did, I think we did have a bit of I can't remeEP3er where I sourced this training from? But I remeEP3er I did attend a session somewhere about online assesEP5ents. And that was really helpful for learning about how to do dynamic assesEP5ents virtually and staying kind of ethical and safe within any type of assesEP5ent doing it online.
RQ3 what are the losses and gains of delivering an online service?	5. Power shift *In this theme, EPs spoke about how using an online platform to connect shifted the perceived*	Power Shift Towards CYP This subtheme was constructed around the data that talked about CYP being digital natives, or	The other thing that I found extraordinary, which is less likely to happen in the future, and less children are being homeschooled, or maybe out of school, for example, with emotional based school avoidance is young people, I'm not talking sort of 11 plus their engagement in the joint school family consultations online when they came along for the last 15 minutes, or even the entire meeting. And I've got such memories of, you know, a young teenage boys, you know, sidling up to his mother and coming sitting alongside or on the kitchen bench. And being part of that conversation. It just really struck me how different that was from being

	position of power away from the school or EP, towards the people we were working with, either because CYP are more accustomed to working online, or because EPs were meeting clients on neutral territory.	feeling more comfortable meeting in a virtual space. 4 Participants 5 References	brought by the head of here, into the meeting; the room in the school where the head of year suited and booted. And think the teachers are there, it's a formal room, that parents are there looking slightly uncomfortable and out of place, as opposed to be home with parents or trusted adult and being able to talk and, and also the curiosity they had around that to seeing see the teachers in their home environments perched on the edge of the bed with children pulling their arms or photographs of the partner on the wall and saying Miss, miss is that your daughter on the wall, EP2 But in the autiEP5 advisory there's a lot more therapeutic aspects of my job and having to do some of those online, the young people joining and doing some groups with young people online as well. That was definitely the later lockdowns and a lot of those children like not having their screens on EP6
		Towards parents Here, ideas are explored around parents not being called into school for a meeting or being able to connect from home or their place of work. 5 Participants 9 Reference	And I think there was benefits to that in terms of again, kind of families being able to do that from the comfort at home. EP3 Another advantage is kind of pushed us again, not that we couldn't keep doing a bit, it pushed us to be a bit more flexible in terms of how we work. So you know, some parents who can't get to school or don't want to get to a school, but do want to talk to us, EP3 sometimes the virtual component can be a bit tricky, but then on the flip side, it sometimes it can work well for them because they can do outside of work. EP5

	6. Working in the new normal

This theme explores what EPs have learnt from working exclusively online and how they have integrated this into their current way of hybrid working. | Managing the diary

EPs spoke about online meetings overrunning, the tendency to fill the diary back to back and the intensity of working exclusively online.

5 Participants
11 References | I'd say at learning to switch off after school because it the idea that you'd be walking back to the town hall, potentially grabbing coffee seeing friends just whereas she'd go straight from one to one to one. And things became back to back. And I think we bent over because we were in crisis respond mode. And so diaries just became exponentially bigger in order to kind of and we all must be leaping from one school setting to another school setting.
EP2

So being able to fit in more meetings. But then on the flip side of that is when you work when you work at home, or I find when I work at home or virtually, you do much more in a day than you perhaps would do if you're in an office.
EP5 |
| | | EP Autonomy

This subtheme was constructed around data that spoke about EPs wanting to work in a way that they felt was suitable for the work. Exclusively, EPs did not feel they needed direction to gauge what should be online and which work should be face-to-face. | So this is really interesting, because we had a team meeting last week, and I presented just exactly that. So here is a document that was cribbed from another Scottish local authority. And they had already created it so not want to recreate the wheel. Make sense for me to take that team meeting? How about this as a kind of a way of making decisions about not to take away your professional autonomy own professional decision making really but, if you're thinking about consultation, can these consultations be done online, or didn't have a decision making space for them to be thinking? And I have never seen my team so animated in the last two years. Because they absolutely did not like it. so that was a real eye opener to me, it was really interesting to me that, although they are pushed for time, and they are concerned and wondering, how are they going to provide this blended model and they want to, you know, they can see the benefits of the things that we've been able to do that these kind of conversations, let's have these conversations face-to-face, ah, if you really helpful without having to travel, but they didn't really want. I don't know what this is about, but they didn't really want to have guidance about what you would do online and what you would do face-to-face, I think they still feel that they can judge that quite nicely |

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		6 Participants 14Reference	themselves. So what we have come out with is, okay, if you can do something online, and it feels the right thing to do, and it's safe, and it's professional, do it online. EP1 Definitely Hybrid, but with flexibility to it I think, yeah, I think just flexibility to use my professional judgement for when a meeting needs to happen face-to-face or when it needs to, when we could do it online and to still have that as an option. And so just have a bit of a mixture, really, of both working styles, which I think it will be how it is. Yeah, to be honest with you, so a mixture of both. EP4 So, yeah, I do tend to think about the case, basically. And I think it can go online. And as I say the vast majority, I still try and do face-to-face, at least initially EP6
		Flexibility and balance This subtheme explores the pay-offs of the benefits of online working. 4 Participants 14 References	I think there's something in that distance, which can feel less the connection between you and them is less strong. And consequently, that kind of buy in for them feeling empowered and confident to make that change is reduced. But the flip side of that is, I suppose probably fitting four of those of the day rather than two if I'm not driving everywhere, so maybe you're doing less good stuff, but there are lots of trade-offs, I think. EP3 I think about today, I was like report writing. And then I had like a supervision session. And then I had a consultation with like a social worker. And now I'm doing this and I feel like in the day before, you wouldn't have been able to do that. Because you would have even though it seems crazy, none of those meetings would have happened online, you would have had gone to meet the social worker like we wouldn't be meeting somewhere for this this interview, like even thesis interviews I did before it went online. So I don't know, I just think it can allow you

			to just connect with like, really, within a day and so much variety in our job. Maybe it just brings it a little bit more like so I quite like that aspect of it. I do like I do you like the flexibility of being able to work from home. To a to a degree. I like can't Yeah, I did not like it in the pandemic. You'd like it to be a choice. EP6
	7. Person Privilege In this theme, the EPs spoke about the power that comes from being in person with someone. Although few hypothesis were formed by the participants, they generally spoke as though in person was the gold standard of EP work. .	Richness in person EP soke about power, value and unconscious dynamics that were present during in person interactions that were not re-creatable online. 5 Participants 38 References This subtheme encapsulates the data that talks about when EPs judge online working to be acceptable, and when things are deemed too complicated or emotive to be best supported online.	But what really stands out to me as key benefits were I noticed a significant increase in attendance of two parents when it was a two parent family. And even if they were, even if both parents were dialling in from their from different homes, or from different workplaces, and suddenly that became a possibility. That hadn't been a possibility as much before or people perhaps hadn't imagined, it could be a possibility. So that is something I'm going to continue to offer long term to schools, would it make a difference? Do you think both parents if it is a two parent family might be able to attend, if we were to have this as an online meeting and weighing up the pros the benefits of an online as opposed to the losses if it was in person, but only one parent. EP2 keeping in mind that there are things you can't quite recreate with the same power or value as doing in face-to-face. And that's both kind of as a team connected with each other, but also support people out there, schools and settings. EP3 So like, as a tavi trained psychologist, we think a lot about what does the silence say? And the person not speaking? What who do they represent? So there's a lot of kind of unconscious dynamics and unsaid dynamics that were more tricky. When you couldn't really unpick over. You know, virtually because you don't, you're not getting a sense of a room because you're not in a room. EP5 In a consultation when the topic is difficult, emotive challenging. It's so easy to be half half present in an online consultation. It's easier to attend, because it's just

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		Aggregated from online works when things are goo, easy, simple	through your phone, it might be harder to be there in person emotionally to actually get into the room. But once you're in the room, you are physically present and emotionally present. EP2 I would say if it's, you know, it's gonna say it's very straightforward an issue, then I would do online, like if it's very much to do with like learning or something like that. EP6
		Natural interactions 5 Participants 7 References *This subtheme consists of mainly semantic data for the incidental conversations, learning and camaraderie that comes from being in person.*	Or when you want to just run this case past you those tea break kind of conversations, being face-to-face at team meetings. So being back in the office, ideally, or those types of things and making the connections with the team. EP1 if you've got a report to write, I think I'd write that better at home. But then because I think just crack on a bit and get distracted or like, wanted to go and break cups of tea and stuff, like, you know, but equally, I feel that you benefit from this sort of like interactions that you get working in an office. So just sort of like bumping into photocopied ask the question, I think I probably would have learned more, or I feel like I've missed a lot of learning. EP4
RQ4 what aspects of online working are most useful and acceptable in EP work?	8. Working with CYP This theme explores how acceptable and useful EPs experienced	CYP are digital natives This subtheme is made up of data that talks about CYP feeling at home online, and how this	but you know that that and there was a real sense of that they are much more familiar and communicating via this media than us. And I really liked that their levels of engagement, their enthusiaEP5, their contributions, and I will be really curious about how we capture that. EP2

		working with CYP online.	has been conducive to working with CYP online. 4 Participants 9 References	again, young people, you know, anxious ones that, you know, kind of really welcoming them to share their views, but would find that anxiety inducing sort of a meeting with a strange person, new, unfamiliar person in a school environment, so that is positive. EP3
			Observations and individual work This subtheme explores how observations and individual work with CYP has been impacted by working online and how these changes have affected EPs working practices. 3 Participants 4 References	So I think it took us a wee while to figure out what we could do with kids, that would be helpful when we were getting involved and asked to be involved in assesEP5ents. And had to think differently about what we weren't actually being asked to assess. And how could we do that, without being face-to-face with somebody and some of those things were just left if we decided that we needed to do it face-to-face. And we didn't do any of that during the first lockdown. And others, we just kind of thought around in a different way - took a wee bit of thinking... But we started to do things that were a bit differently, we adapted. EP1 What we couldn't basically was individual work with young person. Observations of the young person. I think in that very first one, [we didn't]. EP6
			Assesments This subtheme was constructed around references EPs made to assessments of CYP being carried out differently in online delivery.	We've always done assessments. We did online assesEP5ents. But we did very, very few of them in general. EP1 And I think it took us quite a while to think, okay, what are the things we can use? What cognitive assesEP5ent or even, you know, other forms have been taken out of the picture. EP6

		4 Participants 11 references	So it was trying to get really good quality psychological advice without seeing the children face-to-face. Because again, you can do it virtually. So I do think actually moved quite quickly to doing some pretty good stuff. EP3
	9. Working with systems This theme explores how EP experience working with adult to affect systemic change online and how useful and acceptable it has been for those they work with, and how it has been experienced by EPs.	Online consultations In this subtheme, references to online consultations were coded. EPs spoke about an increase in the number of consultations they were delivering online. 3 Participants 4 References	But we delivered a number, a really high number of consultations, schools have rated quite highly And they have been really impressed with how flexible we've been able to be in terms of meeting needs. EP1 the biggest achievement for me was the recognition that the consultation is so robust, and that it works online. And that's not a surprise. But, you know, to have a joint school family meeting where people were leaving feeling invigorated and optimistic about change. And that had been able to come together despite what was going on. That was fabulous. EP2 But we slowly kind of got used to that. And I think you know, people get used to using online things and started to do a lot more online consultation, EP6
		Online training With overlap to subthemes 'integrating tech into EP work', this subtheme is made up of the data that refers to online training being more	So being able to use Google meets was great 250 People at once on google meets so you could do some of the training that is that needs to be delivered, live with questions, and all the rest of it could be done so so we can get information out quite quickly to a large nuEP3er of people. Or we can keep it quite small. And we could do something that was much more interactive and getting people into EP5aller groups even to talk things through themselves. So we use Google meet a lot, for our live training still do. But we also did voiceovers on PowerPoints so that we can talk people through and be completed other PowerPoints and just had notes that were quite obvious that people could just in their own time, have a look and do that. We also created a nuEP3er of just helpful information sheets, I suppose, you know, just information about the pandemic about using visuals to

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		accessible and the reasons for this. It includes feedback EPs have had from non-EP colleagues about training and training that has been more available to EPs for the purposes of CPD. 5 Participants 14 References	support kids with significant communication needs to to help them understand the pandemic. A lot and there still has been a lot continues to be so, on just worry and anxiety generally. And what that means that makes you feel largely focused on children and families in the early stages. More so as we've gone through the last two years, people focused on staff and support staff EP1 I think, training. I think there's a real benefit to that. Because it was a lot of like, again, I think I think if you almost start from a position, there's always nothing will be as good as it is will be face-to-face, but the gains face-to-face are sometimes margin, we definitely don't justify all the other stuff. But yeah, training is one where certain types of training, just doing it all online, like with a webinar that someone can watch anytime they want. I think it's really positive. And we're developing that where I am now, in terms of back a training offer and thinking about what different types of training for different things. I think we almost like for the high quality teaching stuff. I think just snappy, 40 minute webinars, but some resources, it's really good. But other things, you can maybe do a slightly longer one, but then with interactive q&a, and things, I think training can be more flexible and more impactful during that way and reach more people. So that's a positive EP3
		Working with professional colleagues This sub-them contains semantic data for when EPs had referenced multiagency working online and working	And you also invite the cast of 1000s, virtually and stuff as well. And sometimes I think that's again, I suppose as a positive that, you know, a lot of parents will tell you, Oh, speech language therapists, you know, we could never get into the meetings, because they're so stretched. And now we, you know, maybe we can actually see, like a false sense of value in that in that there. EP3 I think to be honest, things like professionals meetings where there's just a lot of sharing information and agreeing a plan, things like that. I think they work like in terms of practicalities. And people just need to log on from wherever they are. And

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		as part of an EP team. It explores both the benefits and drawbacks as well as including EPs feedback from parents about the perceived benefits. 6 Participants 14 References	in terms of like, they're not being down to where those things work really well online. I think that like, EP6 I think being able to probably network with people a lot better. So maybe like the AEP or BPS, or, you know, an organisation is wanting training. But that's something that you can join from online at home, if you want to do and meet different professionals and in different EPs. I was one of the mentors for we did the West London mentoring scheme for black and minority candidates for the EP. Back to training. Yeah. And actually, I think that works really well. Being able to bring obviously loads of different EPs from loads of different boroughs, and candidates for all over London, really. And that was quite good. Because that was an evening. Nobody had to travel anywhere. Yeah, I mean, when I was doing those mentoring sessions, again, it was kind of a time that will that will work about me didn't have to meet up anywhere I live in like I said, I live in (redacted). So I think there's definitely gains to working online. It makes it a lot more accessible perhaps. EP5 But for kind of business management stuff, which I think where I was there was quite a lot of that kind of managing business heavy, actually made a lot more sense not to be driving loads to just go and tell people stuff when you tell people stuff or virtually. EP3
		Building and maintaining relationships online This subtheme is made up of data that refers to establishing, developing and maintaining	But if you can't, then you can travel and stuff, face-to-face. So online should be the option because that can cut travel time. But obviously, if something needs to be face-to-face seen you do face-to-face, but for a whole variety of pieces that maybe need to be face-to-face because you don't have a relationship with somebody, you don't know how it's going to go EP1

| | | relationships online. The participants universally agreed that relationships were better made, maintained and observed in person.

6 Participants
16 References | with the family, just making the connections with them, I think has been trickier online and being able to sus them out them out, read their body language, pick up on nonverbal cues, build the relationship, build the rapport, that's not been working for as easily,

EP4

And then, in particular, the first lockdown, I particularly found it really difficult because I'm still establishing relationships with schools, these are brand new relationships. And we didn't have that trusting relationship for them to perhaps feel they could confide in me. They haven't said that. So this is just kind of the reflections that I've had. And also, I think in terms of when we took service positions on not going in (to schools) that was really challenging to relay as a message when school hadn't developed that relationship with me to know what my delivery of online therapy practice would be like. So a lot of the practice was was virtual and it just, I mean, it's up and running now.

EP5 |

Appendix h: *Comparison of means between online and in-person consultations based on*

questionnaire data (n=58)

Principle	Online mean	In-person mean	t	p	Cohen's d effect size
There was enough time and space given for everyone in attendance to give their views.	2.84	2.54	2.258	.028*	.512
There was a balance in turn-taking.	2.59	2.69	-.606	.547	.616
The consultation included problem-free talking.	2.48	2.50	-.079	.937	.595
The consultation was 'emotionally warm'.	2.66	2.77	-.719	.475	.595
Positive comments and affirmations were made throughout.	2.72	2.73	-.092	.927	.493
Follow-up questions were used, and ideas were built on by the EP.	2.75	2.73	.163	.871	.446
I was able to easily show that I had heard others in the consultation.	2.56	2.85	-2.06	.044*	.522
Ideas were summarised effectively.	2.80	2.77	.275	.784	.418
Each person in the consultation contributed ideas.	2.84	2.85	-.025	.980	.368
Ideas were received and responded to in a congruent way.	2.66	2.81	-1.28	.206	.448
Where appropriate, further turns were given on the same topic.	2.66	2.77	-.931	.356	.460
Non-verbal cues were easily picked up on by others.	2.03	2.69	-3.79	<.001*	.662
Possibilities, hypotheses, and explanations were presented and discussed.	2.66	2.77	-.931	.356	.460
Ideas, perspectives and information were presented in a way that could be easily understood.	2.66	2.77	-.805	.424	.532
The perspectives of everyone at the consultation were explored.	2.75	2.85	-.808	.423	.451

Principle	Online mean	In-person mean	*t*	*p*	Cohen's d effect size
Collaborative problem formulation was undertaken.	2.56	2.69	-.835	.407	.589
There was collaboration around creating well-formed outcomes or setting goals.	2.66	2.50	-.812	.420	.728
I felt as though my thoughts and ideas were understood by others.	2.72	2.81	-.778	.440	.433
It was easy to show that I had understood the thoughts and ideas of others.	2.56	2.85	-2.21	.031*	.487

Note. * Significant at .05 (two-tailed)

Statistical significance was not reported in the remaining items. The effect sizes for all items were around the 'medium', (.5) threshold which is generally accepted in interpreting Cohen's d effect size (Field, 2009). Although the effect size is not trivial (i.e., around the .2 'small' threshold), it is, arguably, plausible yet unclear if a larger sample size would yield statistical significance.