

Doctoral Thesis

**“Behind the closed door”: Educational Psychologists’
experiences and views of home-educated children with
special educational needs**

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Abbreviations

BPS	British Psychological Society
COP	Code of Practice
CYP	Children and Young People
DCFS	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ECM	Every Child Matters
EHC	Education health and care
EHCNA	Education health and care needs assessment
EHCP	Education health and care plan
EHE	Elective Home Education
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HE	Home education
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PRU	Pupil referral unit
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special educational needs coordinator

SEND Special educational needs and disability

SENDCo Special educational needs and disability coordinator

SEMH Social emotional and mental health

TA Thematic Analysis

UK United Kingdom

US United States of America

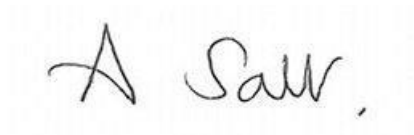
YP Young People

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Declaration

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Salt,". The signature is written in a cursive style with a comma at the end.

Signed Alison Salt (Candidate)

Abstract

This study considers the experiences and views of educational psychologists (EPs) of those children and young people who have special educational needs and who are being home-educated.

The literature review highlights that there is limited research on this area and that there is an increasing population of children becoming home-educated, especially those with special educational needs, given the difficulties presented by a school education. Educational psychologists, nevertheless, have limited experience and knowledge of working with home-educated children.

A qualitative method which employed semi-structured interviews conducted with nine educational psychologists with experience of working with home-educated children with special educational needs was utilised. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was used to consider the data. The findings from these data showed that educational psychologists viewed the home education of children with special educational needs as a 'last resort' because there were no other options, as opposed to a positive and deliberate choice of education. The findings also revealed that a number of factors were at play in prompting parents' decision to home educate, including their child's special educational needs not being met at school, the lack of inclusive practice in schools, and the impact of changes in educational practice due to government policy such as a movement towards a traded model of educational psychology service and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (Department for Education (DfE), 2014). Educational psychologists constructed home education as an inferior form of education in terms of what, where and how it happened and compared it to the preferred and established educational setting of the school. The school, as an educational establishment was constructed as the preferred option and natural domain of educational psychologists.

The findings from this study have a number of implications for EP practice, including a consideration of how a school-dominated role is impacting the profession, how trading has affected those children with no commissioner (i.e., the 'unsupported'), and how the failure of schools to address the needs of children with special educational needs leads to their becoming home-educated due to having no other option.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Home education

Home education has become an increasingly popular alternative to school education in England, particularly over the past five years, with numbers rising year on year (Association of Directors of Children's Services, 2020). There appears to be many home-educating families, each with varied reasons for why parents choose this alternative form of education (Morton, 2010). As such, rather than being one homogenous group (Rothermel, 2003), these elective or autonomous home educators (Webb, 2011), as they are frequently termed, comprise those who purposely choose an alternative to school education for philosophical, religious, social, and moral reasons (Morton, 2010). Additionally, there are also those that find the school environment dissatisfying for a diversity of reasons and therefore choose to reject it (Arora, 2003; Hopwood et al., 2007; Ofsted, 2019/20), as an educational choice. There has also been an increase in the number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have moved from a school to a home education as a result of schools not meeting their needs (Arora, 2006; Parson & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016).

The media has been fascinated by the subject of home education over the years (Lees, 2011), most notably in relation to tragic cases of childhood death such as those of Khyra Ishaq (Carter, 2010) and Victoria Climbié (Curtis, 2003), neither of whom was attending a school at the time of their deaths. The focus on the safety and wellbeing of home-educated children continues to be a matter of concern for successive governments who have attempted to revisit the area by publishing guidance for local authorities (Badman, 2009; Department for Education, (DfE) 2019/20) on home-educated children. There is, however, still no legal obligation for parents to register their intention to home educate, to gain approval when taking their child out of school unless enrolled at a special school or to follow any national curriculum (Department for Children Schools and Families, (DfCSF) 2007). Indeed, there is still no national register of those who are home-educated and although there is the perception that home education has increased, figures remain unreliable given the lack of government oversight (DfE, 2019).

Between 2020 and 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increased emphasis on home education as a result of schools closing for many weeks in the national ‘lockdowns.’ As a consequence, parents have been forced to teach their children at home for long periods of time (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2020). This commonly termed ‘homeschooling’ took on a new importance among the general public and as a consequence of spending this prolonged time at home, large numbers of children have, according to media sources, (Osbourne, 2021), failed to return to school upon their reopening. Home education as an alternative to school therefore remains a current topic of interest.

The researcher came in to contact with home-educated children with special educational needs as a result of an increase of parental and professional referrals for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) needs assessment after the introduction of the updated Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2014). Having to undertake a home visit and carry out an assessment of the child’s needs at home, without the familiar surroundings of a school environment, was something of an unusual experience for the researcher. At these meetings, parents also expressed their disappointment at having to withdraw their child from school owing to the dissatisfaction caused by the school not meeting their child’s special needs. As this became an increasingly familiar experience, the researcher’s interest in the home education of children with special educational needs generated an impetus for the current study. This research aims to explore educational psychologists’ experiences and views with regard to children and young people (and their families) who are home-educated and who have special educational needs.

1.2 Terminology and definitions

In this thesis, the term ‘home education’ has been chosen in favour of the commonly used ‘elective home education’ (DfE, 2019). The reason for this is that the word ‘elective’ is suggestive of a conscious and positive choice by parents to home educate, something that stands in opposition to the experiences highlighted in this thesis as well as other research on the subject (Arora, 2003; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016). Indeed, this research has indicated that home education often does not arise out of choice, but of there being no alternative option.

At the start of the semi-structured interviews of this study, participants were asked what they understood about the term ‘home education’ to ensure from the outset that they had

a clear and accurate understanding and that there was no ambiguity about the definition. The interviews for the research were undertaken just prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in 2020. Had the interviews being conducted after this point, it would have been necessary to identify the differences in the meanings of the terminology 'home-educating' and 'homeschooling.' The latter definition has become synonymous and widely used for children who were not able to attend school owing to the pandemic 'lockdowns' and who were thus taught at home by parents with oversight from the school (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020).

The term, 'child' or 'children' is used in this study to indicate a person of school age (5–16 years of age), with the term 'young person' being used to describe older children (from 16–25), the age at which an Education, Health and Care Plan ceases and thus when educational psychologists generally end their involvement. The term student or pupil is also sometimes used to indicate a child or young person of school or college age.

The term 'family' is used to indicate the significant people in a child's life, including those who have parental responsibility, those related to the child, or those adults who live with the child. The term 'parent' is also used when the participants refer specifically to the adult as a parent or where it is deemed to be an accurate description.

This study has chosen the term 'special educational needs' (SEN) to describe the cohort of children, as it is currently a widely used and understood label (Solity, 1992). Indeed, the label has now been updated to include special educational needs and disability, as featured in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 (DfE, 2014). For the purpose of this study, however, special educational needs will be used to include those that also have a disability. At present, special educational needs are described in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) as follows:

- A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.
- A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability that prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions (p. 15).

This study will include all special educational needs as a means to capture the range and variety of learning, physical, social, emotional and mental health and communication needs that children and young people experience.

1.3 Context of the study in England

The political and economic situation in England, the location of this study, has a significant bearing on the context of this thesis for both educational psychologists and children and young people with special educational needs. The circumstances within which educational psychologists are employed by local authorities has changed dramatically over the course of the previous decade owing to two main factors. The first of these is that many local authority services in England have moved to a traded or partially traded service of delivery (Lee & Woods, 2017) rather than providing services that are accessed by users without cost. The second is that over the course of the preceding decade there were major changes in special educational needs legislation that had an impact on the profession (Webster, 2014; Morris & Atkinson, 2018).

The Coalition Government in England undertook a comprehensive spending review (Gunter et al., 2016) to reduce the country's economic deficit after the financial crisis of 2008/2009. One major impact of this was that there were financial cutbacks to local and national funding that resulted in a reduction in the range and number of services available to the general public, including those in education (Aylot et al., 2012). Those such as local authority educational psychology services were forced to consider their future economic survival as they were no longer fully funded by the local authority in many circumstances. They, therefore, opted to 'trade' their services as a means to bring in income. The commissioners of these traded services were predominantly schools, and this became the new model of working for educational psychologists (Islam, 2013).

In this new era, schools who had previously gained the services of an educational psychologist through their local authority at no cost to them, were now required to purchase services under the newly created 'traded' model of service delivery. Both the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018) and the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP, 2011) published a response to the situation that reflected a number of professional concerns that arose out of the new model. Consideration was also given to the changing nature of the role of the educational psychologist given the new role of schools as commissioners and their influence on which children were prioritised for involvement. A further matter was that of the equality of the service, particularly for those children who were most in need, something which prompted professional bodies to issue ethical guidance (BPS, 2018; AEP, 2011). This is particularly pertinent for the 'unsponsored child' (Hardy et al., 2020, p. 184) such as those who, being home-educated, have no commissioner to purchase educational psychology services. Falling outside the remit of the school system, these children have no one to refer them to the service and, more importantly, to pick up the costs. There appears, however, to be no resolution from the profession to the dilemma of children who have no commissioners (Islam, 2013), which thus remains an issue of significant ethical concern (Hardy et al., 2020).

Another important consideration in the last decade is the English government's review of the special educational needs system. In 2014, the Conservative government published the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, an updated overhaul of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) which relates to Part 3 of The Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014). The changes to the statutory process of assessing a child's needs which the Code proposed included significant changes, most notably in the form of education, health and social care services working together to produce a final document—entitled the Education Health and Care Plan—that would cover all the child's needs from their combined perspectives. Similarly, a greater focus on parental preference and involvement, as well as an emphasis on the child giving their own views so that they might become an integral part of the process, were also significant enhancements. A further notable change was that the Education Health and Care Plan would span the years 0-25 rather than terminating at 18 years as did the previous Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Combined, these two major aspects of change have had a significant impact on the role of educational psychologists, the manner in which they are employed and the kinds of work they undertake, all of which are highly pertinent to the current study.

1.4 Outline of the remaining thesis

The thesis presents an exploration of educational psychologists' experiences and views of home-educated children with special educational needs using a qualitative research methodology. The remaining content of the thesis will be divided into several chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, will consider the literature relating to the topic of home education and children with special educational needs as well as the role of the educational psychologist. Chapter Three then describes the methodology undertaken to conduct the study. This includes details regarding the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher as well as the methods used and details regarding data collection and reflexive thematic analysis. (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013) The findings of this data collection are analysed and discussed in Chapter Four, where a description of the themes found in the data are also linked to the relevant literature. The final chapter, Chapter Five, draws together the conclusions of the research in relation to the research questions. It also considers further areas for future research as well as the limitations of the current study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Part 1: Introduction

2.1 The narrative literature review

The literature review is considered to be a detailed and critical evaluation of the published research on the area of interest (Allen, 2017). It summarises an area of research and provides a 'bigger picture' on the subject (Mertens, 2019) so that the reader is aware of where the current study is positioned in relation to the wider research. There are several different types of literature reviews, the main types being a systemic review, a critical scoping review and a narrative review (Grant and Booth, 2009). The current study adopts the approach of a narrative review because an initial search of the literature produced very limited results. For this reason, it was considered that a systemic literature review would offer too narrow a focus through its methodology (Collins & Fauser, 2005). Instead, the narrative review will provide a comprehensive review of the areas of home education, special educational needs and educational psychology but also covers a wide range of other issues within the topic that could be of interest to this little researched area. As it emerged that there was a lack of research on the subject, indicative of a gap in the particular subject of the involvement of educational psychologists with children with special educational needs who are home-educated, it was considered that a narrative literature review could provide a rationale for the study.

2.2 The literature search

An initial literature search relevant to the topic, was conducted in January 2018 with a further updated search undertaken in January 2022 using the following search terms: *home education, elective home education and educational psychology or education psychologists*. Boolean logic was also utilised to ensure that a wide variety of articles were located by the insertion of terms 'and' and 'or.' This yielded a few articles from the United Kingdom. Further searches using *educational psychology/psychologists* and *special educational needs* resulted in more studies, although these were primarily concerned with special educational needs more generally. A search for *educational psychology/psychologists, home education and special educational needs* yielded only

one article: Arora (2003). The term *homeschooling* produced more results but as this term is used mainly in North America, it was not wholly appropriate to the current research (which takes a United Kingdom, and specifically England, focus). Owing to the paucity of studies, it was deemed necessary to refer to a wider research base from around the world, for which reason a few studies from regions other than the United Kingdom were used.

A search was conducted using evidence from a variety of sources and databases: PsychINFO, PsychArticles Full Text Cardiff University Books @ Ovid, and ERIC. Further peer reviewed journal articles as well as government documents were sourced using Google and Google Scholar. The literature search specifically utilised a number of sources, including academic journals such as Educational Psychology in Practice (EPIP); the British Library; EthOS; and books on home education, special educational needs, and educational psychology. Systemic reviews and meta-analysis were also considered. A 'snowballing' technique (Creswell, 2009) was carried out manually where references and citations of key articles were utilised to identify additional papers of interest that were subsequently sought.

2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature

The search of the relevant literature was filtered using the following inclusion criteria:

- Published in the English language
- Published during the period 1920-2021
- Including topics related to home education and/or special educational needs and educational psychology.

Conversely, studies were not included if they met the following exclusion criteria:

- Published in a language other than the English language
- Published outside the period 1920-2021
- Not including topics related to home education and/or special educational needs.

Part 2: Literature Review of Home Education

2.4 Education in England: Function and purposes

The word 'education' is derived from the Latin word 'educere,' which loosely translates as 'a bringing out of inner skills and talents and to nurture and cultivate qualities' (Thomas, 2013, p. 3). This definition, which focuses on the individual and the notion that education is required to bring about personal growth, lies within the spectrum of definitions for education. Other definitions consider education to be a benefit to society as a whole, as 'functioning to support societal enterprises' (Parsons, 1999, p. 1). The combination of the individual's and society's educational needs, poses a tension for some (Clough and Corbett, 2000) who postulate that the nature of education embodies a fundamental problem by attempting to do two very different things: to educate the individual and fulfil social purposes and functions. That education can be defined in different ways and for a variety of means or purposes situates education in a somewhat dichotomous position. Education encompasses the concerns of both the individual, their strengths, and their needs, as well as ensuring that a society's needs are met (Vodeboncoeur, 2005).

Compulsory education for the mass population in England was first legislated for in the Forster Act 1870 in order to ensure that the population were both literate and numerate (Ward, 2013). The impetus was thus not to enhance the individual's personal attributes, but to ensure that the country's workforce would be in a better position to compete financially with other countries—particularly the USA and Prussia, who had already provided its population with free compulsory education—in a global market (Thomas, 2013). Education is therefore intrinsically interlinked to a society's political ambitions and priorities at a certain period in time. Illich (1971) proposed that education, and in particular, schools, are instruments of social control as they serve governments' purpose in socialising children into economic units through their acquisition of skills and knowledge. Auld and Morris (2016) also postulate that schools' purpose is to develop citizens that can compete in the global market. However, this narrow function of education to produce citizens for employment and engagement in consumer society has been challenged. Instead, Gatto (2017) places emphasis on an individual's personal development and the advancement of reflective thinking regarding society's beliefs and values (Tate, 2015; Lovat & Hawkes, 2013). Gatto (2017) moreover concurs that education that encompasses the self discovery of the individual would also lead to benefits for the society thus combining the requirements of both self and society.

Biesta (2009) considers that a combination of both individual enrichment and autonomy and the knowledge and skills required for employment and participation in society are at the heart of the aims of an education. As such, education encapsulates a diverse range of views about its purpose and function.

Education has been also been shaped by governmental priorities, as exemplified in a speech by Nick Gibb, the then-School Minister, in a discussion about the purpose of education, 'Education is the engine of our economy, it is the foundation of our culture and it is an essential preparation for adult life' (Gibb, 2015). In addition to considering individual development in light of the future, the speech also considers societal aims for a prosperous economy and the capacity to shape the culture of the country. The state arguably (Donnelly, 2016), therefore, seeks to influence education in a way that it feels would benefit the country and can therefore become intertwined with the political aims of a government. This can then dominate societal views regarding education's purpose and function.

2.5 Education theories

What constitutes education has divided philosophers through the ages. Illich (1971) in 'Deschooling Society' was highly critical of schools as a vehicle for education, suggesting that as schools had become the dominant institution for education they had invalidated other places, such as the work place, the family, leisure activities etc., as centres of education: 'schools appropriate money, men and goodwill available for education and discourages other institutions from assuming educational tasks' (Illich, 1971, p. 5). Illich (1971) therefore proposes that education is the domain of the whole of society and should not be restricted to the more limiting environment of the school. Indeed, the purpose and function of education may be described as 'neverending' (Govaerts, 2020, p. 3) as it encompasses many philosophies and views about what it should look like (Tate, 2015), something which may be traced back to the early philosophers such as Confucius, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (Rorty, 1998), for whom identifying the purposes of education was an important aim. This consideration of what education should be comprised of has led to some writers developing theories that explore it more fully.

It has been proposed that a model of education should focus on at least three primary objectives: the education of the individual along with their skills and attributes; the

education of society; and the education of the culture (Egan, 1997; Lamm, 1972, Rorty, 1999). The notion of education having a number of objectives is exemplified by Biesta (2009), whose theoretical model of the three domains of education is entitled 'Qualification, Socialisation and Subjectification' (p. 3). These three domains provide insight into the 'multidimensionality of educational purpose' (Biesta, 2013a, p. 128): the domain of qualification emphasises individual 'qualification' in the widest sense—i.e., as the enhancement of personal skills and qualities through the acquisition of knowledge so that one may be able to 'do' and be qualified to do something. Socialisation, by contrast, is considered to be education that is based upon societal interests and needs such that children are introduced to the traditions and cultures of a society and can be best educated to fit into it. Subjectification, the third domain, is deemed necessary for developing autonomous thinking in the individual so that they have the freedom to become independent and responsible thinkers within the world.

Biesta's theories, particularly the subjectification domain, have received significant criticism (MacAllister, 2016) for being focused on individual learner education as opposed to considering learners as larger social groups. Carter (2019) also argues that Biesta's three domains are skewed towards individualistic concerns rather than the common good of society. Further criticisms have been levied with regard to the three domains being too exclusive and simplistic, with a lack of recognition of their overlapping nature as well as their failing to regard education as a scientific problem (Jorg, 2011). Other educational theorists have nevertheless developed models along similar lines to Biesta (2009). Neuman and Guterman (2017) postulated that the aims of education are 'to shape the character of young people' (p. 265) and considered that that are also three main objectives of education, which should be orientated towards the individual and their own development; their socialisation for society's benefit; and their acculturation for cultural benefits (p. 266). This theory too emphasises that education serves a variety of purposes for both the individual and the needs of society.

One model of education which is important in considering how schools in England conduct and impart education is that developed by Hirst and Peters, (White, 2009), who introduced their beliefs about school education and what it should include through their seven forms of knowledge (White, 2009). This theory was generally adopted and formed the National Curriculum in England (DfE, 2014), a curriculum which has since been developed and refined in schools, having been subject to constant change and scrutiny owing to changing government priorities (White, 2010). The National Curriculum, nevertheless, forms a significant basis of what is considered a 'traditional' education (Thomas, 2013),

covering what children and young people learn throughout their school age years. This prescriptive curriculum in schools stands in contrast to that of the progressive, child centred methods often followed by home educators (Davies, 2015) within the home, where there is no onus or legal requirement to follow a set curriculum (DfE, 2007; DfE, 2019) and thus parents can decide how and what education is delivered.

2.6 The role of parents in their child's education

A number of government reviews and sources have explored the advantages of parents being involved in their child's education. The most colloquially known of these is the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for England (CACfE), 1967) which was one of the first to devote a full chapter to the topic. This report highlighted the positive impact of parent participation on a child's education and made seven recommendations to facilitate their involvement, including developing a relationship with the family prior to the child starting school, improving communication between home and school, giving parents greater information on their child's educational progress, and including parents in out-of-school activities (CACfE, 1967). The principles of equality and democracy furthered the empowerment of parental involvement in their child's education in the following decade (Rust & Blakemore, 1990). Indeed, the Taylor Report (1977) and the Warnock Report (1978) made recommendations to extend the role of parents in their child's education by seeing parents as equal partners and thus promoting parental involvement in their child's schools, as well as by establishing their role in the governing bodies of local education authorities. Wolfendale (1992) also highlights how government documentation in this era was legitimising the democratic rights of parents to have a greater say in their child's education.

Indeed, parents have not always been treated as equal partners in government documentation; the Bullock Report (1975), for instance, identified the limited linguistic skills of working class parents—as opposed to their middle class counterparts—as a reflection of lower attainment in working class children, suggesting that schools take remedial action in order to bridge the gap in language skills. The research by Tizard and Hughes (1984) nevertheless counteracted Bullock's (1975) assertion that working class children underachieve at school owing to language deficits at home, by studying preschool children's conversations in home and preschool settings. They noted that 'conversations in working class homes were just as prolific as those in middle class

homes' (Tizard & Hughes, 1984, p. 8) and that there were 'few signs of language deprivation that were so often being described' (Tizard & Hughes, 1984, p. 8).

The following decade (i.e., from the 1980s onwards) gave rise to a societal view of parents as consumers, including in relation to their child's education (Solity, 1992). Schools also saw themselves being subject to greater accountability for the education they offered (Bastiani, 1987), something which extended to the greater emphasis placed on parents' attitudes and needs in the implementation of many school policies (Elliott et al., 1981), as well as parents gaining a choice over the school their child attended as outlined in the Education Act (DfE, 1981).

Research on the subject has established that a positive parent-school relationship is crucial in the social development and academic progress of children (Epstein, 1984, 1985; Wolfendale, 1983, 1985a; Waller & Waller, 1998). Various models of encouraging parent participation have thus been used as a framework to outline the stages of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001; Haitt-Michael, 2001) to ensure schools foster increasing participation among parents (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The parent and school relationship has not been without its tensions, however (Bevington, 2013), with a range of reasons being cited for this. Some have suggested that the partnership between the two is not naturally occurring but one borne out of necessity (Hughes & Reed, 2012). A further reason is that parents themselves may not have had a positive experience in school, which then impacts their relationship with their child's school (Sims-Schouten, 2015). Other parents can be 'hard to reach' for a variety of reasons, requiring a great deal of time and effort to build a relationship between them and school (Watts, 2016). Although the benefits of having positive parent school relationships is noted, it is also acknowledged that there are significant gaps between the rhetoric contained within the research and government documents and the reality of what actually happens in schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Hornby and Lafaele (2011), for instance, cite a number of barriers which collectively impact the development of parental involvement in their child's education such as low levels of parental education, teacher attitudes, economic constraints etc and it is also acknowledged that schools are at times inconsistent in promoting the parent-school partnership (Waller & Waller, 1998).

For parents of children with special educational needs, the Education Act (1981) also recognised that parental involvement in the statutory assessment process was important. The Act (1981) highlighted the rights of parents to attend the Annual Review of the

Statement of Special Educational Needs as well as to appeal local education authority decisions made about a child's needs and provision to meet those needs. Parents of children with special educational needs have thus been afforded greater powers in their child's education with the introduction of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) and the subsequent introduction of documents such as The Green Paper, Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), which placed importance on providing parents with information and advice as well as directly engaging them in supporting their child's development through interventions such as Surestart. The Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) is the most recent government document to set out principles to empower parents by, amongst other significant changes, gaining and listening to their views, wishes, and feelings, thereby giving them a greater role in decision-making through choice and control over the support and provision their child receives. Despite the emphasis in legislation, there are arguments that the statutory Annual Review process is difficult to negotiate for some parents, with continued barriers around power imbalance (Jones & Swain, 2001). Bentley's study (2017) supports this argument by noting that parents' views on the statutory process of assessing a child's special educational needs fell within the helpful/harmful dichotomy owing to their treatment during the process (p. 111). Parents also viewed the request and assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan as, 'lengthy, highly emotional and stressful' (Bentley, 2017, p. 111), indicating that although parents may have been afforded power in legislation in practice, this remains to be established fully.

Part 3: Special Educational Needs in England

2.7 The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014/5) in England

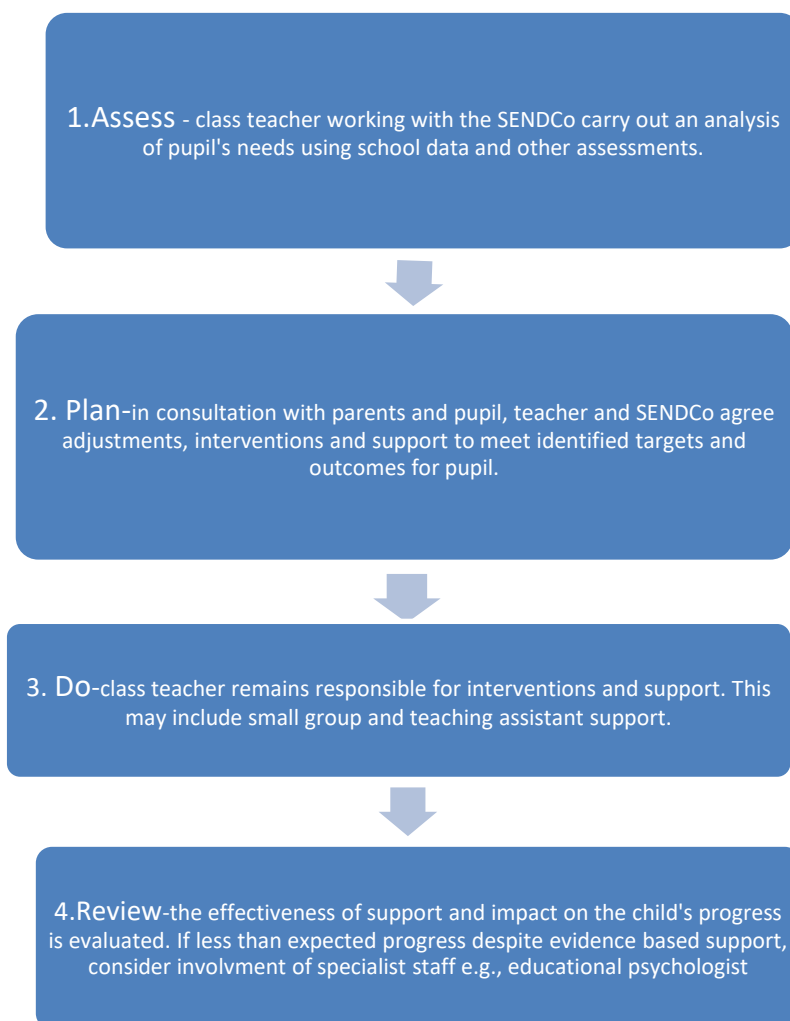
The researcher has specifically chosen to focus on a particular cohort of home-educated children: those with special educational needs. The Special Educational Needs Guide for Parents and Carers (DfE, 2014) outlines the basic premise under which the Code of Practice (2014) operates with regard to children with special educational needs. It states that:

All children have a right to an education that enables them to make progress so that they:

- Achieve their best
- Become confident individuals and live fulfilling lives
- Make a successful transition into becoming an adult
- Further and higher education, training or work (p. 11).
- In order to establish what special educational need a child may have and its extent, the Code of Practice (2014) outlines the requirements of schools and other educational settings to address the needs of children who are not making the expected progress. Special educational needs are categorised into four areas:
 - cognition and learning
 - social, emotional and mental health
 - communication and interaction
 - physical/medical.

Pupils found to be struggling to progress by the class teacher or parents owing to needs in any of the four areas should be given additional focus through the 'graduated approach,' a four-part cycle of assess, plan, do, and review.

Figure 1: A graduated approach to SEND: A four-part cycle



When children are felt to require additional support or provision to address their needs, this is called Special Educational Needs Support (DfE, 2014). After a concern is highlighted about a child's needs, it is the responsibility of the class teacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) of the school to assess the difficulties at Stage 1, using the data in school, progress information, and their own testing. At Stage 2 of the process, schools should plan the adjustments, interventions, and support necessary to meet the child's assessed needs.

This is followed by Stage 3, the implementation of a plan of additional support through interventions and small group work etc. to target the needs. This remains the responsibility of the class teacher and SENCo. After a suitable length of time, Stage 4

involves a review of the progress made in light of the interventions and support put in place at Stage 3. If, despite effective support, less progress has been made by the child than expected, it is at this point that the school could consider involving specialist services, such as those of an educational psychologist. If the needs persist, despite the assess, plan, do, review cycle, schools or parents can apply for an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (DfE, 2014) which is a statutory assessment of a child's special educational needs.

2.8 Statutory assessment of special educational needs and Education, Health & Care Plans

The Local Authority in which a child or young person lives has a duty to undertake an assessment if they are presented with evidence from a school, parent or other professional that the child may have a special educational need.

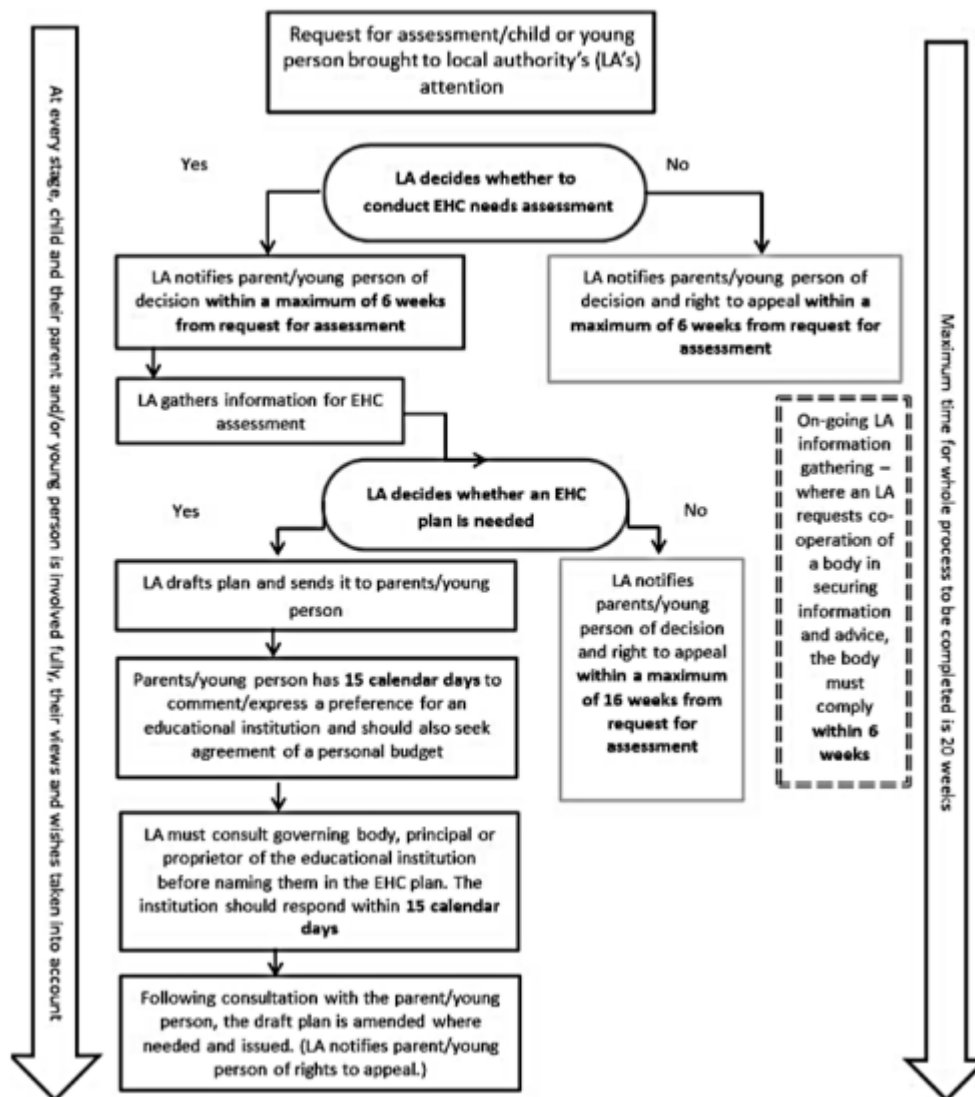
Local Authorities must carry out their functions with a view to identifying all the children and young people in their area who have or may have SEN or have or may have a disability. (Children and Families Act 2014, Section 22)

The Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) replaced the Statement of Special Educational Needs as the statutory document defining the needs and necessary provision required to meet the needs of children and young people. Requests for Education, Health and Care needs assessment can be made by the parent, young person aged between 16-25 years old, the school or another professional. Whilst the particular criteria for whether the child's needs meet the requirements for an EHCP are at the discretion of individual local authorities, the Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) generally advises these authorities to consider whether the education provider has taken sufficient measures to identify and support the additional needs of the child through the 'graduated approach', (Figure 1). It also considers whether the child continues to make less than expected progress despite the measures put in place.

An EHCP needs assessment includes assessments and reports from the key professionals involved with the child as a means to provide a holistic view of their needs. Information from the key areas of education, health, and social care departments should be collated through the special educational needs team of the local authority, with

educational psychologists taking the role of assessing the child’s needs, considering other professionals’ information, and then writing the psychological advice for the plan. *Figure 2* illustrates the national EHCP needs assessment process.

Figure 2: The LA Education, Health & Care Plan decision making process



Although the EHCP was designed for those children with ‘more complex needs’ (DfE, 2014, p. 19), figures show that the number of new plans being introduced has increased year on year since their introduction in 2014. As of January 2021, the number of children with plans totalled 430,700 (Explore education statistics, 2021). This is contrary to what SENCos of schools predicted would occur when the new code came into practice (Pearson et al., 2015). The rise in both referrals and agreements to issue a plan has

resulted in an increased workload for educational psychologists. Indeed, when the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE, 2019) to conduct research into the educational psychologist workforce in England (DfE, 2019), their findings recorded that most commonly cited reason for the shortage of educational psychologists was the increase in statutory assessment work following the special educational needs reforms in 2014/5 (DfE, 2019). It was also noted that three quarters of the educational psychologists surveyed thought that their workload was increasing (78%) as a direct result of this factor.

The primary purpose of the EHCP is to summarize the child's needs and to set provisions and objectives for educational establishments to meet such needs. This becomes a statutory document which outlines both the local authorities' and the individual schools' duties to meet the needs such that the child can access and make progress in their mainstream school or specialist provision. Indeed, educational access for children with special needs and disability has not always been deemed appropriate, necessary or a right in society, as will now be explored further.

2.9 Access to education for children with special educational needs & disability

The slow development of education for children with special educational needs has taken place over the course of centuries. Historically, it began from a position of exclusion, given that most children with special educational needs were at one time deemed 'uneducable' (Thomas, 2013; Armstrong & Squires, 2012). This paralleled societal views at the time, which held that people with special educational needs neither required nor deserved an education (Thomas, 2013); one such example of this was how children with a visual or hearing impairment were routinely placed in asylums offering very little by way of educational instruction (Thomas, 2013). It was children with these defined disabilities, however, that were some of the first to be considered suitable to receive an education. As such, the first school for the 'deaf,' set up in the 1760s, was followed by the first school for the 'blind' in 1791, both of which were run by charitable organisations; it was not until the 1870 Education Act, however, that special state funded classes for those with sensory needs were implemented (Solity, 1992). This was the first acknowledgement of the necessity of children with a disability or special need to gain access to education.

The separation of children with special educational needs into different subsets through medically endorsed categories such as 'educationally subnormal' (MacBeath et al., 2006, p. 2; Armstrong & Squires, 2012) was developed early on in educational practice (Solithy, 1992; Arnold & Leadbetter, 2013). Intelligence testing was used by educational psychologists such as Cyril Burt—arguably the first educational psychologist (Arnold & Leadbetter, 2013)—to clarify this process by assessing children's ability via an intelligence quotient (IQ). Those who achieved a score of less than 70 were deemed to require special school provision and segregated from their peers (Dyson & Milward, 2002). In the first part of the twentieth century, the climate therefore remained one of segregation from mainstream schooling.

Although different types of special needs were deemed to require specific schools, there was little in the way of the entitlement and rights of an individual child with needs, nor did there exist any parental choice at this time. Depending on the perceived or assessed need of the child—initially according to a medical doctor and then later to an educational psychologist—attendance at the designated establishment for the specific need was stipulated. The formal rights of children with special educational needs were not acknowledged until the 1970s, when children then gained the rights of a citizen (Borsay, 2004).

It was also not until the introduction of the Education Handicapped Children's Act (1970) that there was an ideological change in how people with special needs and disability were viewed in society. Indeed, the medically diagnosed categories of special needs were being questioned at this time (Armstrong, 2007) as there was a growing awareness that special educational needs and disability was a socially constructed phenomenon. Negative perceptions of disability could therefore be questioned or changed with this growing awareness. This social model of disability (Avramidis & Norwich, 2016; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009) stood in direct contrast to the medical model of disability.

At around the same period, the educational psychology profession also questioned the use of intelligence quotient testing (IQ), particularly with regard to the cultural bias of the assessment (Gilham, 1978). As some argued, the results of the IQ test should be linked to access to appropriate learning opportunities rather than a judgement of an individual child's potential ability (Solithy, 1992).

This change in society's thinking ultimately led to what has been posited as a landmark policy (Gardiner, 2017) which arose out of the recommendations of the Warnock Report

(1978). Nevertheless, to present the issue of special educational needs acceptance in society and thus in education as a linear move from a medical model to a more socially inclusive one, would neither be wholly accurate nor representative of the current situation for children and young people with special educational needs.

2.10 'Inclusion' of children and young people with special educational needs

For children with special educational needs, the Warnock Report (1978) focused on the possibility of their access to education through their integration into the local mainstream school setting alongside their peers. Integration, Lindsay (2007) postulates, however, is best described as the child adapting to fit into the current educational system. To this end, integration was not felt to be the ideological position that best served children with special educational needs, owing to the onus it placed on the child to fit in and adapt to the environment. This led to social and political movement towards a stance which deemed it neither appropriate nor desirable for children to fit into an existing system; rather, the environment should look to adapt to the needs of the individual.

The most widely used term that developed out of this movement, replacing that of integration, was inclusion. Though this new term has been criticised for its lack of specificity (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Benjamin, 2020), it is generally accepted that 'inclusion' is a stance which is proactive in meeting the needs of learners (Mittler, 2012). In English legislation, the change from integration to inclusion was influenced by the release of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the prevailing Labour government. Inclusion as a concept was further endorsed in government documentation (e.g., DCSF, 2010; Ofsted, 2004) and indeed contemporary legislation continues to reflect the inclusive philosophy that children should be educated in their local mainstream school (DfE, 2014). Nonetheless, there remain caveats to this approach.

The road towards an inclusive system of education has not been straightforward. Most notably and interestingly, three decades after inclusion was first introduced Warnock (2005) criticised the effort, calling for a reversal of inclusion and greater segregation for children with special educational needs. Citing many instances to support her claim (e.g., incidents of social isolation, bullying, emotional suffering, and neglect as a result of children with special educational needs attending their mainstream school), she now saw inclusion into the mainstream as inappropriate in some instances. Warnock's (2005)

points are emphasised with references to data on instances of bullying, exclusion, and pupils attending Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or independent special schools.

Nevertheless, some aspects of Warnock's (2005) report can be challenged—for instance, Warnock refers to many scenarios without substantiating their authenticity, which makes the report read rather anecdotally. Moreover, the report does not balance the point about children's wellbeing with an analysis of the views of pupils attending a special school—the subject of a study by Norwich and Kelly (2004). The latter study sought to compare the experiences children who have special needs receiving mainstream provision against those receiving specialist provision. This research highlighted how children attending both types of school saw bullying as an issue not solely as a product of the school, but also of the outside community.

Another interesting finding of the study (Norwich & Kelly, 2004) involved asking children with special educational needs about their desired schooling: 18 out of 50 pupils at special schools indicated a desire to attend mainstream school, but only one out of 51 pupils indicated that they wanted to attend a special school. The research therefore presents inclusion as a complex issue that is beneficial to some pupils, highlighting the need for quality in whatever teaching and support is offered. This was further addressed by Ofsted (2010) and Lindsay (2007) in their reviews of the effectiveness of mainstream and special school placements. Both reviews concluded that neither placement produced better outcomes for these children; instead, Ofsted (2010) pointed to the quality of provision and support that the child received as the most important factor in achieving desired outcomes.

Galton & MacBeath's (2015) study into the views of school staff, pupils and parents also highlights some interesting developments regarding inclusion. Pressures on the senior leadership teams of schools to not accept certain pupils (namely, those with special educational needs) who could adversely affect their league table positions and examination results, is cited as a significant barrier to the inclusion of special educational needs pupils. This development—i.e., of schools seeking to maintain their status in league tables and in examination results—has occurred in the period of time following the marketisation of schools and education which has changed the landscape of schools (Hall et al., 2013). There are now academies, free schools etc. which operate outside of local authority control and are thus unregulated (Ofsted, 2017/18). It could be postulated therefore, that as schools have become self-governing this has impacted their inclusiveness. Local government have no duty to advise or oversee these schools in a

way that ensures the schools are accountable for the inclusion of special educational needs pupils (Ofsted, 2017/18). The effect of self-governing schools who keep a keen eye on their position in the league tables, is that children with special educational needs could be being put forward for an Education Health and Care Needs assessment with a view to being moved into specialist provision or excluded from school altogether (Nye & Thomson, 2018; Ofsted, 2017; Weale, 2018).

2.11 'Off-rolling' and exclusion

A further recent development is the increase in the exclusionary practice of 'off rolling' of pupils from the school attendance roll towards home education. Although there is little information regarding why schools are using 'off rolling', (Done et al., 2021). There are arguably a number of reasons that it is used, including as a means to alleviate financial burdens on schools or as mentioned above, to ensure that the school's academic performance in the league tables is not affected by low achieving pupils (Long & Danechi, 2020). Despite the growing concern—particularly that is occurring through various unofficial means (Ofsted, 2017/18; Children's Commissioner for England, 2019)—there is 'no official definition of 'off-rolling' and it remains unaddressed as a phenomenon despite compelling data' (McShane, 2020, p. 260). The current position of school accountability and assessment places the onus on schools to evidence the academic and attainment progress of all students through league tables and Ofsted inspection criteria. Nevertheless, the concerns from government about the use of 'off rolling' are such that it is now part of the Ofsted review framework (2019) and any schools found to be 'off rolling' pupils face being judged as 'inadequate' for management and leadership (DfE, 2019). Despite this acknowledgement by government, however, there has been limited discussion of how to resolve the issue (McShane, 2020).

Recent interest has added to the debate with concerns about the lack of options for children and young people with special educational needs as well as the inability or unwillingness of mainstream schools to meet these needs, (Maxwell et al., 2018; Ofsted, 2017/18; Weale, 2018). As mentioned above, the reasons for the 'informal' removal or 'off-rolling' of students from their mainstream school includes removing those students thought, due to their low ability, to adversely affect the school examination results in the league tables (Weale, 2018). This makes it very difficult to maintain an inclusive ethos where all children are valued regardless of ability (Maxwell et al., 2018). Difficulties were also found with regard to the willingness of schools to work in partnership with the parents

of children and young people with special educational needs to resolve a situation once identified (Kendall & Taylor, 2016). More ominously, parents were put in a position by some schools where they felt coerced into 'off-rolling' their child to home education for the school's benefit (McIntyre-Bhatty, 2008; Ofsted, 2010, Baynton, 2020).

Part 4: Overview of Home Education

2.12 Definitions and background

Although there is no agreed definition of what home education is (Morton, 2010), it can generally be described as ‘parents’ decisions to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school’ (DfCSF, 2013, p. 4). For the most part, in the United Kingdom, children gain their education in a school—whether that is in a state mainstream, a special school, an academy, free school or independent school. There is, however, a growing number of families that are educating their children at home as opposed to in the school system (House of Commons Education Committee, 2021). Since the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, schools have been forced to repeatedly close their doors during the ‘lockdowns’ enforced by the government in order to stem the rise in virus numbers and COVID-related deaths. For extended periods, parents experienced first-hand what it was like to be home educators. This was described as ‘homeschooling’ rather than home education, presumably as the content of what was being taught at home was, to varying degrees, controlled by schools, albeit from afar. Once schools reopened their doors and resumed their service, not all children returned, with some reports suggesting as much as a 75% increase in pupils registered as missing from education or de-registered from the school education system in favour of being home-educated (Weale, 2022).

The term ‘home’ education can be misleading and ambiguous in that lots of children’s learning takes place both inside and outside of the home. Indeed, it is generally accepted that education starts within the home with parents, and that the home environment is an important aspect in a child’s development and ultimate academic achievement: ‘for most children education begins at home and develops within the home’; ‘where it does not, we consider it a tragedy’ (Davies, 2015, p. 534). Despite this acceptance, home and school education are perceived as separate entities once children become of school age, at which time it is generally accepted that children are subsequently educated within the United Kingdom’s school system.

For this reason, home education is positioned as ‘other’ or an ‘alternative’ form of education in comparison to the dominant school system (Lees, 2013; Pattison, 2015) and can be seen as distinct to the philosophical position of a traditional school education. The latter is structured and organised into lessons within a curriculum, the focus of which falls

on academic progress and attainment (Thomas, 2013; Webb, 2011); in comparison, home education is not subject to the same regulations for education within school: home-educated children do not have to follow a curriculum, they are not assessed by age-based targets, and they do not sit tests (Education Act, 1996).

Home education's foundations reflect those of progressive education, which is child centred and led by the child's interests with parents guiding and encouraging learning from their child's perspective (Webb, 2011). This is also known as 'autonomous' education, a term which originated from Fortune-Wood (Webb, 2011). Autonomous education or those forms of learning similar to it have their foundations in the work of those philosophers such as Karl Popper and his evolutionary theory of the growth of knowledge (Bailey, 2018). The theory suggests that learning happens in the environment and from the experiences within it (Bailey, 2018). John Holt, another influential home education proponent, argues that the school system fails children and home education or 'unschooling', (Holt, 1966) can offer a valuable alternative, a pedagogical ideology which many home-educating parents have been reported to support (Meighan, 1995; Webb, 1999; Fortune-Wood, 2000; Rothermel, 2011). The premise on which autonomous education is based, however, has been questioned by other home educators; Webb (2011), for instance, feels that it is a 'preposterous' (p. 28) notion that the acquisition of literacy and numeracy may be left to a five year old child rather than being taught by an adult. Naturally, other home educators have challenged Webb's view, with Thomas and Pattison (2007) conducting research to demonstrate that children may learn to read without formal instruction, simply by absorbing the world around them. The flaws in this research were nevertheless explored by Webb, (2011), who demonstrated the complexities of home education philosophies, not only between home educators themselves, but in contrast to school based educational philosophy.

In order to consider what education looks like for home education families, some attempts have been made to research what sort of education takes places within the home as well as how it is delivered, although these are relatively sparse (Fortune-Wood, 2002; Thomas & Pattison, 2007). In relation to this research, it has been argued that many of its relevant studies are based on interviews with home-educating parents that are conducted by researchers who are themselves advocates for home education (Thomas & Lowe, 2002; Thomas & Pattison, 2008), thus generating bias in the studies. Indeed, the difficulty of capturing and researching informal education taking place at home is acknowledged (Cartwright, 2012). Attempts have nevertheless been made to compare the education of children who reside at home to those attending a nursery setting (Tizard & Hughes, 1983),

research that, with the home-based group of children demonstrating a higher level conversational skills than their peers in a nursery setting, challenged assumptions about how young children learn and how best to teach them. Despite these attempts, it remains difficult to gain good insight into what happens for those educated at home given that home educators do not need to be qualified teachers or follow a particular curriculum (Education Act, 1996).

2.13 The legal position regarding home education

The 1944 Education Act (DfES, 1944) set out legislation regarding the education of children and young people outside a school environment. Explicitly stating that while education is mandatory, school attendance is not (DfES, 1944; Smith & Nelson, 2015), the 1944 Education Act asserts a parent's right to choose the site of education, which can include the parents' home. This right to choose was incorporated into Section 7 of a later revision, the Education Act (DCSF, 2007), an Act which was predicated on Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention of Human Rights: Right to Education (1988) which stated that:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. (Protocol 1, Article 2, 1988)

The most recent legislation, the 1996 Education Act, places emphasis on parents and guardians to ensure they provide some form of full-time education to children through attendance at a school or 'otherwise.' This statement of 'otherwise' has since become synonymous with home education and it is through this Act that home education gained its legal legitimacy (Monk, 2009).

The terminology of the different Education Acts has sparked much debate. Ultimately this has led to the legal clarification of definitions, particularly in regard to home education. For example, Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states:

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

- a. To his age, ability, and aptitude; and
- b. To any special educational needs, he may have either by regular attendance at school or *otherwise*.

The case of *Harrison and Harrison v Stephenson* (appeal to Worcester Crown Court 1981) confirmed the term 'suitable' education as one that enabled children to achieve their full potential (Webb, 2011). As such, it was to prepare children for life in modern, civilised society. The term 'efficient' education was also clarified as part of the case and was ultimately defined as an education which achieves that which it set out to achieve. The responsibility therefore lies with parents to educate their child; the Education Act merely affords them the autonomy and choice around how that it is undertaken. They may, for instance, choose not to teach, but instead allow children to learn incidentally or autonomously (Rothermel, 2002). When one local authority questioned in law whether the autonomous method of learning may be regarded a 'suitable' form of education, the judge held that it was both an 'efficient' education and one that prepared the child for modern life (Rothermel, 2002; Webb, 2011). 'Suitable' and 'efficient' education has therefore been subject to much scrutiny under case law, but remains open to legal interpretation (Gabb, 2005; Taylor, 2000).

In terms of the parental responsibility to inform the local authority of their intention to either take their child out of school (de-register) or indeed not send them to school at all, no onus falls upon the parents. As outlined in the Education Act (DfE, 1996, Section 7), parents do not need to register or seek approval from a local authority to educate their children at home, however, parents who have children with special educational needs are required to inform the local authority if they are taking their child out of a special school or if their child has an Education Health and Care Plan. Other than these two stipulations, however, no other legal requirements are imposed on the general home-educating population beyond providing a 'suitable and efficient' education.

Local authorities have no statutory duties to monitor the home education of children in their geographical area (DfE, 2019). They are able to intervene if they believe parents are not providing a 'suitable' education, although guidelines suggest that local authorities generally work informally with parents to rectify any problems (Ofsted, 2010). A school attendance order can be served if, after negotiation, there are still concerns, however data suggest that this method of intervention is rarely used (Badman, 2009). Under Section 175 of the Education Act (DfE, 2002), the local authority also has a duty to safeguard and

promote the wellbeing of children. Nevertheless, there exists no legislation which requires the local authority to enter the homes of children in order to monitor their education (DfE, 2019).

The Green Paper 'Every Child Matters', (DfE, 2004) which was presented to Parliament in 2003 and which later became legislation in the 2004 Children's Act, further complicated the status of local authority involvement with the home education community by stipulating that it had a duty to safeguard all children in addition to addressing all aspects of a child's wellbeing. The Department for Education, *Elective Home Education: A guidance for local education authorities* (2007), updated in 2019, produced guidelines for the role of the local authority with regards to home-educated children and young people. These guidelines recommended that the local authorities provide written information detailing their role and responsibility to home-educated children and their parents. Most notably, it made explicit that local authorities have a duty to identify any child or young person not receiving a 'suitable' education. The law thus explicitly stated that it is the duty of the local authority to ensure the safety and adequate education of all children without granting them the authority to enter the property of a home-education child and question the education received. This led to home-educated children being in a precarious position in the eyes of the state: local authorities bear responsibility but lack the legislation to undertake their duty (DfES, 2007). This complex position ultimately gave rise to the Badman Review (2009), following a number of high-profile cases involving the death and abuse of children missing from school education (Webb, 2011). Despite this and other reviews, however, local authorities still have no supporting legislation to allow them to monitor education within the home.

2.14 The *Badman Review* (2009) and recent reviews

Though its recommendations never became legislation, the Badman Review (2009) remains an important document in the history of home education and is thus still worthy of note in this study. Independently commissioned by the then Labour Government and entitled 'Report to the Secretary of State on the Review of Elective Home Education in England' published by Graham Badman (Badman, 2009), the document has since come to be known as the 'Badman Review.' The review placed emphasis on child protection following high profile child abuse cases which appeared in the media, such as those of Eunice Spry and Khyra Ishaq (Taylor et al., 2011).

One of the most contentious recommendations of the twenty-eight made in the review, was that there should be compulsory national registration of those home-educating. This, alongside many other recommendations contained in the report, were met with ‘scepticism and condemnation by many home-educating parents and Education Otherwise’ (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 4). In order to address some of the claims and consider the recommendations devised by Badman (2009), Taylor et al. (2011) interviewed home-educating parents with children with special educational needs about their response to the report. Although some parents in the study were reported to not object to compulsory registration and could acknowledge some benefits, most generally felt they would be subjected to ‘unnecessary surveillance by this form of government intervention’ (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 13).

Home education has continued to be an area of concern for the successive government, with the most recent consideration filed in a report entitled: Strengthening Home Education (House of Commons Education Committee, 2021). This report emphasised that home education policy remains unsatisfactory with regard to what and how education is being delivered within the home: ‘As it currently stands, the Committee is of the view that the status quo does not allow the Government to say with confidence that a suitable education is being provided to every child in the country’ (p. 3). It also stated that there were still no accurate figures relating to how many children were being home-educated: ‘It is simply not good enough that we are only able to make a best guess at the number of children receiving EHE’ (p. 3). To this end, the report recommended, among other things, that a statutory register of those home-educating should be implemented. To date, however, this has not taken place.

2.15 A consideration of home education as positioned to school education

In order to explore the position of home education within the context of mainstream state school education, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978) can offer a useful psychological theory with which to consider how it is viewed within society in general, including its portrayal in the UK media (Charles-Wagner, 2015). Social Identity Theory expounds the theory that individuals gain part of their self concept from being a member of a social group (Tajfel, 1978) as well as the emotional worth and value that is associated with being attached to that group. If we consider that the vast majority of the childhood population of 5-16 years are part of the ‘in-group’ of being within a school, the largest and most

dominant social group of education, this positions home education—an alternative form of education—within the ‘out-group’ or ‘minimal group’ according to Tajfel’s (1978) theory.

Even within the ‘out-group’ of home education, however, there can be further classification into sub-group identities. There are, for instance, those home educators who make a positive choice to home educate on the basis of their own philosophical beliefs (Morton, 2010) and those who do so owing to the feeling that they have no other option but to withdraw their child from the school system (Parson & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016; Davies, 2015).

Those who become home-educated because they are forced into that position due to a lack of other options (Morton, 2010) initially find themselves without any educational group with which to align themselves, since they are not home educators who have made a conscious and positive choice. The ‘last resort’ group of home educators are thus not only excluded by the social group of school but also exist in a marginalised group within society (Burke, 2007) as well as from the positive choice group of home educators. In order to establish some form of educational identity, the ‘no-option’ families therefore tend to adopt the ‘cognitive categorisation’ of home educators as a means to partake in a shared educational identity (Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2015). By doing this, children and their families reject an otherwise low status of excluded from school social identity, and are thus able to both improve their status and gain some sort of power over their situation (Burke, 2007; Lees, 2011).

Pattison (2015) considers the Foucauldian paradigm of ‘heterotopia’ as a means of regarding home education as presenting other opportunities and alternatives for those who seek out and transgress the dominance of a school education. In doing so, Pattison (2015) argues that home educators as a social group can gain power and control despite their ‘low status’ position in comparison to the ‘high’ status social group of school. Indeed, as the home education community has grown in numbers (Badman, 2009; DfE, 2019) and their ‘out-group’ status has been attacked by media and government bodies (Charles-Warner, 2015), the community has, in response, developed a sense of homeogeneity as a social group identity. In order to raise their status, the ‘out-group’ home educators have demonstrated ‘collective action’ (Tajfel et al., 1979), exemplified for instance in the community’s strong response to the recommendations for greater oversight by Badman (2009) (Webb, 2011; Nelson, 2013; Rothermel, 2011). To this end, Social Identity Theory can help to explore how home education is positioned in relation to school education.

Part 5: Research relating to Home Education

2.16 Reasons parents choose to home educate

There are many varied reasons why parents choose to bypass the standard route of educating their children in a school in favour of educating them at home in the manner of their choice. Although home educators are often conceived of as one homogenous group, it has been argued that there are a multitude of reasons for undertaking the decision to home educate, which is individual to every set of parents (Meighan, 1984; Rothermel, 2002; Thomas & Pattison, 2007). Indeed, Webb (2011) goes as far as to insist that there is no such reality as 'Home Educators' or the 'home education community' (p. 37); rather, he sees parents operating as individuals who have chosen a different form of education in light of their own individual opinions. One primary reason why a significant proportion of the home education community chooses to educate their children at home is they feel passionately that the state cannot provide their children with an education they deem appropriate (Smith & Nelson, 2015). These parents seek out home education as a positive and deliberate choice (Webb, 2011). Some home educators seek to validate their choice by subsequently conducting research on the topic as a result of their own experiences in home education (Fortune-Wood, 2005; Rothermel, 2011; Charles-Warner, 2015). As this is the body of work that dominates home education literature (Ryan, 2019), it may appear that this group represents all home educators, especially given that research from those not directly linked to or participating in home education is fairly recent (Bowers, 2017; Ryan, 2019; Daniels, 2013; Jones, 2013).

Morton (2010) also suggests that there is no one uniform group of home educators; they are, in fact, a fragmented group. After interviewing 19 families about their reasons for choosing to home educate, she identified several different types of home educators. First, she defines the home-educating community using three constructs: 'natural', 'social,' and 'last resort' (p. 47). She then differentiates the constructs of 'natural' and 'social', regarding families that adopt home education for 'natural' reasons as those who reject a conformist lifestyle and the social structures imposed by the state. This construct often characterises families as positioning themselves against authority and the state-imposed lifestyle typified by school systems. In contrast, Morton (2010) conceives of the choice to home educate by those in the 'social' construct as characterised by parents who choose to educate their children privately. Parents in this group are those who are seen as being concerned about their children receiving the right social and moral messages, who feel

that the only way to guarantee their children are instructed according to their chosen values is to assume the responsibility for education themselves.

The third group is classified as those who chose to home educate as 'a last resort.' In every case, the pupil had special educational needs. For this classification, Morton (2010) interviewed eight families who had a child with special educational needs. Each of these families felt that owing to bullying at school, experiencing significant emotional turmoil, mental health problems, self-harm, etc., they had no other option but to withdraw their child from the school environment. Initially, this was done in order to give their child a break from the situation in school, however, a return to school was rare. Instead, parents found themselves in the position of taking on the responsibility of being their child's educator by default rather than through a conscious choice for the long term.

Morton's study was useful in highlighting the considerable differences in the reasons why parents opt for home education. This is not to say it is without its limitations, however: the study only considers very small samples and there is limited information regarding what constitutes special educational needs, for example. Furthermore, it is difficult to establish what special educational needs were identified prior to home education and whether these arose as a result of difficulties in school or constituted a predated difficulty altogether. To provide a broader picture, Kunzman and Gaither (2013) consulted an 'entire universe' (351 works) of literature regarding the home education community. Their study looked at research from the United States, Europe, and Australasia to consider various aspects of the topic and found that the three most common reasons for choosing to home educate were: concern about the school environment, a desire to provide moral or religious instruction at other schools, and dissatisfaction with academic instruction. It is clear therefore that the reasons for parents seeking to home educate can be diverse, for which reason some scholars have questioned whether there is any value in classifying reasons or motivations that may change and develop over time (Lees, 2011; Rothermel, 2002, 2011).

Voluntary home education organisations have also added valuable information to the topic. In October 2015, the organisation 'Ed Yourself' (2015) undertook an online survey on the subject of home education and special educational needs. Having gained 169 responses from parents, including detail of their reasons for home education, the survey reported that 68.2% of parents did so due to their child's unhappiness; 48.6% due to their child feeling too much anxiety; 37.8 because their child was not making progress; and 14.9% due to the child being excluded. Of those respondents, 47% did not have a

statement or EHCP and 10% were previously in a special school setting. 74% had been in mainstream school settings. Out of the complete cohort of respondents, only 8.6% of children had never been to school. What this indicated was that the vast majority of respondents had started their education within the school system but that parents had removed them owing to dissatisfaction of one sort or another.

Bowers (2017) postulates that home education research is very limited and has inherent issues related to the diversity of population samples, participant identification, and low response rates. Studies also fail to provide information pertinent to demographic variables, such as economic status, ethnic origin, etc. (Bowers, 2017). Moreover, most studies are of a qualitative nature. For these reasons, Kunzman and Gaither (2013) assert that research into home education should adopt more quantitative approaches in order to collect information on demographic features, allow for controls and random sampling, etc. so as to facilitate meaningful comparisons with mainstream school research. The difficulty with this approach is that it would still encounter the inherent difficulties of identifying the home education population and low response rates.

2.17 Concerns regarding home education

Although there have been ongoing concerns regarding home education in the media (Webb, 2011) and from government sources (Children's Commissioner, 2019), including in government reviews (Badman, 2009; Casey, 2016; Wood, 2016), for the purposes of this study there are two main areas of concern that feature in the public perception (Webb, 2011) and research (Bowers, 2017): the safeguarding and socialisation (or lack of it) of those children who are home-educated.

Socialisation

There is a general perception that home-educated children have fewer opportunities to engage in socialisation with their peers (Hurlbutt, 2011; Nelson, 2013) compared to those children who are school-based, as they do not gain the same social experiences (Romanowski, 2006). This has led to concerns that home-educated children are less socially developed than their school attending peers (Bowers, 2017; Medlin, 2000, 2013; Badman, 2009). These concerns nevertheless appear to be unfounded (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Medlin, 2013). Home-educated children have been found to perform

comparably to those educated in a school for a range of skills associated with interaction, including cooperation, empathy, assertiveness, and self-control. As Medlin's (2013) review of the research concludes, 'An alarmist view of home-schooling, therefore, is not supported by empirical research' (p. 1), with the socialisation of home-educated children postulated to be at least equal to school educated children. How this is often measured, however, is through parent questionnaires, a method which can lead to obvious bias, particularly given the small sample size and the additional bias of self-selecting parents being the primary respondents. Carvalho and Skipper (2019) interviewed three young people between the ages of eleven and fourteen alongside their parents. Here, the participants cited a number of social experiences which promoted social skills and encouraged social interaction. Nelson (2013) also postulated that home education fostered more 'socially aware and adept' (p. 215) children and young people, given their freedom to explore individual interests and to develop relationships with a variety of people of all ages. Carvalho and Skipper (2018) also noted, however, that home education's social activities and groups were aimed mainly at younger aged children, with very limited opportunities on offer for teenage young people. This concurs with the findings of Nelson (2013), who also reported a lack of peer interaction as a disadvantage of being home-educated.

Bowers' study (2017) aimed to provide an exploration of home-educated young adults' experiences with a focus on their socialisation. According to Bowers (2017), terminology around socialisation, social development, and social interaction is often used interchangeably, thereby making it unclear as to what exactly is being discussed. To this end he distinguishes between socialisation as being the 'accumulated knowledge of society' and social development as being how individuals develop 'social and emotional skills across the lifespan' (p. 20). Within the study, Bowers (2017) identified four young people who he interviewed as a group using semi-structured interviews. The participants shared their views that outside the home education community the general public assumed that school provided, the 'natural or ideal social experience' (p. 79), something which the participants of Nelson's research (2013) termed as 'ignorance' (p. 214). Furthermore, Nelson (2013) argued that a stereotype of unsocialised home-educated children has been created. According to Bowers' (2017) study, the main opportunity for home-educated children to make friendships is by socialising with other home-educated groups of children. Bowers (2017) also recognised, however, that the social development of children and young people who are home-educated can be a challenge. Loneliness of children who had newly become home educated, for example, was cited by participants in the study. A further finding of interest was that although there was awareness that the

general public had concerns about home education and the lack of socialisation, there was not the recognition that home education could offer a social environment which was 'restorative to the emotional and mental health consequences of a difficult school experience' (Bowers, 2017, p. 83).

Bowers' (2017) research offers a direct insight into the voices of home-educated young people, something that is rare in home education research (Nelson, 2013; Ryan, 2019). It is, however, an extremely small sample of only four young people interviewed, and who were interviewed as a whole group rather than as individuals. They were also friends prior to the interview, which has implications for potential bias in the research: the participants may, for instance, have influenced each other and one voice may have dominated the rest. The researcher had also spoken to all four at a festival prior to the interview that was conducted for research purposes, which could suggest contamination of subject material as well as a bias in that they were self-selected participants from a known group. Nevertheless, the study offers some useful insight into an otherwise neglected area of young people's views regarding their home education and the impact on their socialisation and social development.

Safeguarding

High profile cases of home-educated children being abused and murdered in their homes have been circulated in the media over the last decade or so, something which has engendered a public perception of home education as unsafe (Badman, 2009; Webb, 2011; Rothermel, 2010, Charles-Warner, 2015). One of the most prominent of these cases was that of Victoria Climbié (Webb, 2011) who died of abuse and neglect at home at the hands of her relatives. This desperately sad case engaged the public partly because she was described in the media as being home-educated, with a suggestion that such children were invisible to other adults and professionals—including teachers—and were therefore unsafe. The result of these concerns was a major review of home education in the UK that culminated in the Badman Review (2009) and led to the subsequent Children, Schools and Families Bill (2009). As discussed above, a contentious recommendation of the Badman Review (2009) was that the state should have a greater power and oversight of home-educated children by legislating that parents register their home educational status with their local authority. The response to this among the home-educating community was that Badman's (2009) review was 'unjust and insufficient for the large scale changes that would alter the elective home education

context quite considerably' (Nelson, 2013, p. 38). Ultimately the review's (Badman, 2009) recommendations were not included in any legislation although governmental concern continues (DfE, 2019).

A few years after the Badman (2009) review, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children published a report based on several serious case reviews entitled; NSPCC review into Home Education "Learning from Case Reviews" (Charles-Warner, 2015) which cited that home-educated children were afforded no oversight nor legislation in regard to what their education consisted of. It also discussed the associated safeguarding risk of being home-educated with the report (NSPCC, 2014) arguing that tighter controls were needed to ensure the safety of children in their homes. In response to the assertions made in this report, Charles-Warner (2015) undertook a survey of serious case reviews from 132 local authorities in England to establish whether the NSPCC's earlier reported concerns were factually based. The author compared the serious case reviews in the 0- to 4-year old range, school educated children from 5 to 16 years, and the equivalent home-educated children. The findings suggested that home-educated children were disproportionately scrutinised, being twice as likely to be referred to social services than school educated children. Despite double the referral rate, Charles-Warner (2015) cited the fact that home-educated children were less likely to have a child protection plan in place than their school based peers, asserting that home-educated children were not at increased risk of abuse, and were, in fact lower than their school attending peers. There are some issues that have been raised with regard to the data used by Charles-Warner (2015), however. It is not clear, for instance, whether certain serious case reviews were selected from the entire sample and if so, how these were chosen and the rationale for the choice. Although the author postulates that home-educated children were less likely to have a child protection plan, the reasons for this are not explored. For example, it is assumed that they did not get a plan because they did not need one, but there is no discussion around this. Furthermore, the author's position as the Trustee of Education Otherwise, a home education group, indicates a bias stemming from a vested interest in the topic, something which has been highlighted as a concern in home education research generally (Bowers, 2017).

Indeed, Webb (2011) offers a somewhat unique position in that he is a home educator himself but acknowledges that greater legislation is required to prevent the potential for the abuse and neglect of those children who are home-educated. In particular, he questions the 'adequacy of laws which cover home education, that children can just drop out of sight' (p. 93). In comparison to some other countries, the United Kingdom occupies

a highly unique position in that there are no legal requirements placed upon parents to demonstrate how and what they are doing to educate their child and what progress they are making (DfE, 1996). For as long as this position remains, it could be postulated that safeguarding will persist as an issue for home-educated children in the eyes of the general public.

2.18 Home education and children with special educational needs

A recent briefing paper, Foster and Danceshi (2019) set out the current situation regarding home education in England. The report states that parents with children who have special educational needs have the right to educate their children at home, but emphasises that the 'education provided is efficient, full-time and suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any SEN they may have' (p. 3), a reiteration of the information contained in the 1996 Education Act. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014) highlights the importance of the local authority working in partnership with the parents of children who have special educational needs, which equally applies to those who home educate (Code of Practice, 2014). Although local authorities do not have a duty to assess every home-educated child to see whether they demonstrate special educational needs, the Code of Practice (2014) stresses that where there is an established need or where the parents have brought the child's needs to the attention of the local authority, it is expected that the authority take the required action to address those needs (Code of Practice, 2014).

Studies have regularly pointed to parents choosing to home educate as a result of their child's special educational needs (Hopwood et al., 2007; Morton, 2010; Rothermel, 2004; Webb, 1990; Parson & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016). The difficulty with these studies is that, once again, they are often based on very small sample sizes. The participants are also self-selected and may therefore not be representative of the majority of the home-educating community who have children with special educational needs. In order to redress these issues, Arora (2006) sought to gather information from a wider selection of the community via a local authority, in particular from those parents who would not usually volunteer their views. In order to do so, families from the local authority list of home educators were contacted with a request to complete a verbal questionnaire. These questionnaires covered a total of 65 children who appeared on the list between 1998-2001, the results from which indicated that there were three main reasons parents had for educating their children with special educational needs at home: the child's needs were not being met in school, bullying was taking place in school or that the child refused

to go to school. From those who were listed on the local authority home education list, parents who had educated their child at home for at least eighteen months were then invited to take part in interviews: 12 families agreed, which totalled 17 children. These interviews yielded information regarding the child's experiences and parental dissatisfaction with the school. Out of the 17 children, eight had recognised special educational needs, with the school's inability to address these needs clearly expressed as an issue by the interviewees. None of the children had a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs' (now called an Education Health and Care Plan), the statutory documentation of the child's special educational needs and the provision required to meet those needs. Nevertheless, the types of special educational needs ranged from two children or young people with Asperger's syndrome (autism spectrum disorder), two with myalgia encephalomyelitis (ME) also known as chronic fatigue syndrome, one child who was partially sighted, one who was defined as a 'slow' learner, one child with a long history of non-attendance, and one child with epilepsy and learning difficulties.

A particular issue with Arora's study (2006) lies in what is defined as a 'special educational need.' From the examples listed above, for instance, it is debateable whether ME should be defined as a special educational need or a medical need. The same could be said of non-attendance, which in itself is difficult to define as a special educational need but which could be accompanied by other difficulties (such as depression), although this is not defined further. Another limitation of the study, which Arora (2006) acknowledges, is that the results come from only one local authority. Furthermore, although the participants were taken from the local authority's home-educating list, there are many more families who were never registered on the list at all. Indeed, it is suggested that up to 50% of families are never registered on any local authority list (Hopwood et al., 2007; Badman, 2009). Ultimately, this means that the study represents only a small proportion of the home-educating families albeit a larger and possibly more representative sample than previous studies.

Arora's (2006) study also notes that the reason parents of children with special educational needs made the decision to home educate was not due to a special need per se. Rather, it was due to the school's inability to meet that need, which resulted in high dissatisfaction among parents. This raises the question of whether the child's special educational need was exacerbated by the school's inability to address it. This possibility also became evident in interviews which recorded how parents had struggled for a long time to 'make school work' (Arora, 2006, p. 59) as it was a highly emotional and stressful time for children, young people, and their families. The responses to both the

questionnaires and the interviews revealed specific concerns relating to their child's special needs not being met, bullying, non-attendance, and dissatisfaction in their experiences with school—all of which resulted in parents undertaking home education for their child with special educational needs.

Recognising that Arora's (2006) study had opened up a much-neglected area of research into home education, Parson and Lewis (2010) continued this same line of inquiry. In order to access the home-educating community for pupils with special educational needs, they set up an online survey to which participants from their earlier studies were invited. They also sought the help of an England-based home-educating organisation which emailed their members to encourage a larger uptake of 26 parents with at least one child who had special needs, completed the survey. The majority of the survey respondents identified the most relevant reason for their choice to home educate as dissatisfaction with the school (a majority were at mainstream school at the time). This dissatisfaction occurred in the form of disappointment, bad experiences with formal education or the school failing to fully accommodate their child's needs. Two thirds cited push factors from the school as their reason for choosing to home educate.

The above findings concur with those of Arora's study. The respondents to each study, however, were very different. Although Parson and Lewis (2010) maintained that this was a 'hard to reach' group, they utilised prior research to access it; though this is not a difficulty in itself, these parents were evidently those who were already proactive in seeking out organisations and thus who wanted their voice to be heard. The study did therefore not contain a controlled group of participants. A further point is that half the children were identified as having autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The special educational needs for this group thus lacked range, which could skew the results towards the particular difficulties faced by children with autism spectrum disorder.

Further evidence of the growing awareness that children with special educational needs were being educated at home was raised in the case study approach adopted by Reilly et al. (2002). This study explored the views of six sets of parents who chose to home educate their children with special educational needs in Western Australia. In these cases, there was often more than one child in the family with a recognised need. In their inquiry into the reasons behind the choice to home educate, the authors' findings were focused around three main areas: the negative socialisation encountered in school (such as teasing, bullying, rejection, and segregation); insufficient academic progress in school; and the failure of the school to understand either their child's academic and social

capabilities or the nature of their child's disability. In line with other studies, these findings concur that it was schools' failures to understand and meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs that prompted parents to withdraw their children (in addition to issues around bullying, lack of academic progress, and difficulties with socialisation). Given the nature of the Reilly et al. (2002) study, which relied on cases, more information was provided about the children. There was also detail regarding their special educational needs, something which was limited in other studies (Morton, 2010; Parson & Lewis, 2010). This information included specific details such as neurological delay, epilepsy, dyspraxia, and Down's Syndrome. Detail about how these conditions were defined as special educational needs rather than medical needs, however, was absent in the same way as in Arora (2006), as was how much the medical and special educational needs overlapped. This makes it difficult to fully establish the presiding factor that led to the decision to home educate.

The three studies carry similarities in terms of the dissatisfaction parents felt about a range of issues linked to their child's special educational needs and the school's lack of understanding in meeting those needs. A further study by Burke (2007) highlighted what this can mean for parents and families who come from low socio-economic backgrounds in particular. After interviewing 17 families from one London borough, she found that parents were not home-educating for ideological reasons nor dissatisfaction with the school (unlike findings from previous research such as Rothermel, 2002; Thomas, 1998; Fortune-Wood, 2005), but in fact, in keeping with the results from research in the United States (Apple, 2000), their reasons for pursuing home education were primarily owing to religious beliefs. Burke's (2007) study also concurred with previous research (Morton, 2010; Parson & Lewis, 2010) in demonstrating that a number of families felt that they had no option but to home educate, citing a negative school experience. These families included five that had children with special educational needs which ranged from autism, physical disabilities, and a further child with dyslexia. This nevertheless did not appear to be the dominant feature of their choice to home educate. Burke's (2007) study goes further in considering how some families in the London borough she studied come mainly from ethnic minority backgrounds with very low incomes. Owing to the difficulties they experienced with the school, Burke (2007) considered that the families involved in the study, 'have been marginalised or excluded from mainstream schools' (p. ix). According to her, the families could be perceived as vulnerable, pushed out of mainstream education into home education through a lack of choice (echoing the findings of Parson & Lewis, 2010). Families such as these do not have the same resources and finances to fall back on as those who have chosen to home educate as a positive choice, for which reason

they are, in Burke's words 'doubly excluded both from schools and the world of home education' (p. 1) owing to their lack of understanding about what home education entails or an awareness of their full responsibilities when undertaking it.

Burke (2007) also records that families sometimes believe that home education consists of individual tuition in the home or that removing the child forces the school or local authority into action. Using a Foucauldian (1991) concept, Burke (2007) describes how opting out of a system that appears to be failing their child allows the parents to regain a degree of control (p. 25), postulating that home education thus affords families from low socio-economic, black or ethnic minority backgrounds some level of power over their otherwise seemingly powerless position. This offers a possible new insight into the reasons for choosing home education: rather than accepting their status as 'other' (Foucault, 1991; Pattison, 2015; Lees, 2014) in a system within which their children are also deemed to be 'other,' parents are looking for a way to transgress the boundary (Burke, 2007). It is here that the psychological theory of social identity theory also offers possibilities for interpretation: in becoming part of the 'out-group' (Tajfel, 1978) of home education, families at least have a social identity with which to align themselves in place of simply being excluded.

2.19 The voice of the home-educated child

Although there are few studies that have sought to gain the views of children and young people who are themselves home-educated, this area is one that has generated significant interest in the last decade. There have been several studies conducted by educational psychologists and educationalists that have added to the research base in this area (Bowers, 2017; Daniels, 2017; Jones, 2013; Ryan, 2019), often in combination with the views of other stake holders, such as parents and school staff. Indeed, the reason for the growth in research that attempts to understand home education from the child or young person's perspective is not wholly unexpected given that the educational psychology profession considers it an important aspect of their role (Todd, 2012; Harding & Atkinson, 2009).

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) considered the views of children (and their parents) as central to the new Education Health and Care Needs assessment and plan development, thereby making it a statutory requirement of the process. It has been noted (Noble, 2003) that the attempt to gain children's views has not

always been a priority, and indeed children with special educational needs have often been ignored as part of the process (Norwich et al., 2006; Rose & Shevlin, 2005), or the acknowledgement of the importance of their participation has been slower to be recognised (Franklin & Sloper, 2009) or even, arguably, only a tokenistic gesture (Rose, 2005). The emphasis in the Code of Practice (2014), however, alongside calls to ensure their views are heard and their voice is represented effectively (Gray, 2004), has ignited a new sense of importance. As Fox (2015) suggests, educational psychologists can help children to develop autonomy and their own unique voice. Fox (2015) also adds that there is a value in aiding children with special educational needs to assert their voice by 'supporting forums and meetings where children with SEN are empowered and given a voice' (p. 394).

Educational psychologists have also reflected on how their practice needs to develop in order to ensure that there is effective recognition of children's voices as part of their work (Hobbs et al., 2000). Indeed, there remain difficulties in gaining children's views and a notable lack of research regarding how to record the voice of the child effectively (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). As the conclusion to Newton's (2016) research stated, educational psychologists considered it a 'vital part of their practice' (p. 93) but highlighted that 'communicating young people's views sensitively and accurately was a significant challenge to their work' (p. 103). Collecting the views of those children and young people with special educational needs who are home-educated poses further complexities. Firstly, the assumptions around home education generally represent a barrier for educational psychologists in gaining the home-educated child's voice which according to Bowers (2017) can hinder, 'the voice of the child and the family being understood' (p. 108). Concerns have also been raised about children being able to give their views independent from their parents—or indeed their teachers—as having an audience can impede children being forthcoming in giving their views (Hardy & Atkinson, 2009). This is something that Daniels' (2017) study into the views of children with autism spectrum disorder who are home-educated also demonstrated. Out of the eight children interviewed, it was noted that parental anxiety hindered the process with six children sat directly next to or in the same room as their mother compared to only two who gave theirs without their parent present. The practical difficulty of gaining a home-educated child's view, autonomous from their parent, is therefore evident in the research.

Jones (2013) gives a voice to home-educated children from the perspective of an educational psychologist. This study points out that home education research focuses mainly on the adult home-educating perspective, and therefore aimed to develop an

understanding of home education through a child's eyes (Jones, 2013). Having surveyed children and young people aged 7-18 years, the study concluded that their experiences with, and their perceptions of, home education appeared to be influential in the development of their sense of self and identity; that flexible learning contexts encouraged engagement; that a balance between external regulation and self-determined regulation suggests the learning context is important in cultivating engagement; and that controlling learning can lead to lower achievement. The limitations to this study were that it was small scale, with only two children having previously attended a school (while the rest had never done so). Their experience was thus not uniform. Only one child was described as having a special educational need, which was defined as autism spectrum disorder. This child was a flexi-schooler, meaning he was home-educated for part of the time and in school for the remainder. There were, however, no further details regarding the child and the differences he may have expressed about the two environments. Further to this, another child moved into home education after he was described as not fitting in at school. Again, further information about the child's circumstances could have yielded interesting information. Regardless, the conclusion that Jones (2013) reached about how a controlling learning context such as school is likely to stifle learning and produce lower achievement, offers useful insight into the current state of educational reform and its move towards more traditional methods of teaching and learning. The study was therefore able to provide valuable information as a result of interviewing home-educated young people directly via a unique method of photovoice; what it ultimately demonstrated, therefore, was that, with ingenuity, the voices of home-educated children can be heard.

Part 6: The Educational Psychologist (EP)

2.20 The role of the educational psychologist

The role of the educational psychologist has been much debated over the decades. Within the profession itself, attempts have been made to clarify the role and reflect on its distinctive contribution (Woods & Farrell, 2006; Gilham, 1978; Burden, 1999) as a means to 'reconstruct itself' (Stobie et al., 2002, p. 243). Research has sought to address stakeholders' views as well as how the profession is perceived by others (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Woods & Farrell, 2006). A study by Ashton and Roberts (2006), for example, highlighted a mismatch between educational psychologists' views of their role and that of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo). The latter valued the traditional role of the educational psychologist, which involved casework and the

conducting of individual assessments to produce a report for the statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs.

As a whole, the profession has attempted to move away from a view of the child as the 'problem'—a standpoint often termed the 'within child' model (Burden, 1978)—to one which considers all aspects of the child, such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (1974) which locates the 'problem' in the systems, relationships, and environments within which the child exists, rather than 'within' the child itself. In doing so, the profession has sought to diversify into working at a systems level and within a wider community (Bevington, 2013) as well as working with families (McGuiggan, 2017). It has also considered how the role of educational psychologist has altered with changes in government priorities and legislation and how it can adapt to such changes (Fallon et al., 2010; Stobie, 2002; Squires et al., 2007; Lee & Woods, 2017; Rumble & Thomas, 2017).

When the recommendations from the Warnock Report (1978) were cemented in the 1981 Education Act, it became a statutory requirement for all children who may have special educational needs to undergo a full assessment by an educational psychologist employed by the local authority to identify and provide recommendations for suitable provision for those needs (DfE, 2014). This statutory role of completing the assessment of the child or young person alongside the written psychological advice for the Education Health and Care Plan (DfE, 2014) is now dominant in educational psychologists' work (Birch et al., 2015), though this has not always been welcomed by the profession given that it can take them away from preventative and therapeutic services to schools (Crane, 2016). Arnold & Leadbetter (2013) concede that this has 'resulted in EPs often adjudicating about allocation of scarce resources, providing lengthy assessments and thus leaving little time for more preventative, intervention-based work' (p. 698).

Although the wider role of the educational psychologist in contributing to children's general wellbeing has not always been acknowledged, government documentation has identified the value of the profession:

Educational psychologists have important roles in improving opportunities of all children and young people, both in terms of local authority statutory responsibilities and more universal early interventions and preventative support.' (DfE, 2011, p. 3)

There have also been many considerations about the diversification of the role to encompass all aspects of a child's wellbeing, including moving towards a community (Stringer et al., 2006; Bevington, 2013) or family focus (McGuiggan, 2017), although this has not been without its difficulties.

2.21 Educational psychologists' work with families and the community

There is a growing body of research which supports the value of including parents in their child's education (Cox, 2005; Deforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Given that educational psychologists are also central to home education and children's lives, their involvement with parents and families is useful to explore and yet there is surprisingly little research on this aspect of the profession's role (McGuiggan, 2017). McGuiggan's qualitative study, 'Stepping over the Boundary,' centred around semi-structured interviews with nine educational psychologists from four local authorities in the Midlands region regarding their work with families. Using thematic analysis, four main themes emerged: pre-school, school based, educational psychology role and context, though McGuiggan (2017) also noted variance among the participants regarding the perceptions of educational psychologists working with families, how they involve families, and how they conceptualise their role. The study also found a number of constraints on the educational psychology role that have led to it becoming generally school focused, arguing that, in order to secure the best outcomes for children and their families, the role of educational psychologist would need to be extended beyond that of merely the school environment to the wider community. Indeed, the research highlighted the implications of this for the delivery of services and, particularly pertinent to home-educated children, the impact of commissioning structures such as trading to further limit the educational psychology role. McGuiggan (2017) concludes that the profession should reflect on the ethical position that it holds as a result of new ways of working, and whether it is meeting the needs of all the children and families in the local area (not just those receiving a school-based education), something which is relevant to the current study. Islam (2013) too identifies some vulnerable groups that do not currently receive a service from educational psychologists since they have no commissioners in a traded context. As McGuiggan's reflections on the educational psychology role in the current context indicate, thinking beyond the school system will require effort on the part of commissioners and managers.

One educational psychologist, Bevington (2013), conducted a study specifically about home-school relations and the role of the community educational psychologist, an area of

research which was garnering significant interest at the time (Stringer et al., 2006). Bevington's study found that although all participants, school staff, and parents acknowledged that the parent-school relationship was important, there remained a need to develop staff awareness and understanding about how to foster this. Bevington (2013) also postulated that a new role for the profession may be one which was based within the community, and which could therefore develop links and relationships between parents and schools. This mismatch between the acknowledgment of the benefits of cultivating positive home school relationships and the actual practices of what happens in schools to foster this, was also expressed by Hornby and Lafaele (2011), who argue that there is a gap between the rhetoric of government policy and the reality in practice. Indeed, as Bevington's (2013) study indicated, where there are not always strong links between school and home, the educational psychology profession is in a suitable position to facilitate this by supporting school staff training and development through working with parents. The primary difficulty with this study is its concept of a community educational psychologist which is predicated on the interest of a small number of educational psychologists to diversify the profession (Stringer et al., 2006; MacKay, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006). Despite this anomaly, Bevington's (2013) study nevertheless highlighted important aspects in strengthening the home-school relationship for the benefit of children and families and posited several potential roles for educational psychologists in achieving this.

2.22 Educational psychologists and home education

There is limited research which is directly related to educational psychologists working with home-educated children and their families. Arora's (2003) review of the literature is possibly the earliest discussion of the subject, and one which considered the research on home education and cited a number of concerns that it raised—that it was, for instance, undertaken with participants from recognised home-educating organisations such as Education Otherwise. This renders the research somewhat biased on the basis that those who respond to the request to participate are those who are actively and positively 'electing' to home educate and are therefore, in the words of Arora (2003), most likely to be 'highly motivated and better educated' (p. 105). Furthermore, home educators themselves often undertake research on the subject which again poses the concerns of self-selection and of not being entirely representative of the whole community. The author suggests that educational psychologists should be concerned about home-educated

children because they should have rights and access to support which are equal to their school attending peers.

Arora (2003) also considered whether there was a role for educational psychologists and what the profession could offer home-educated children and families generally. This is particularly important for its acknowledgement of home education as a legitimate form of education that is on the increase owing to the dissatisfaction of parents with their child's education in school. Arora (2003) also identified that children with special educational needs are increasingly becoming home-educated. To this end, she feels that the profession should have a variety of roles with home-educated children and families, including becoming more involved in early intervention to prevent parents withdrawing their child from school, since children with special educational needs gain little, if any, support once they are home-educated, even when in possession of a statement of need. Arora (2003) also feels that the profession should support the debate about home education, in particular 'Why EPs tend to continue to see schools as the almost exclusive focus of their professional endeavours' (p. 111). At this time, some 19 years ago, Arora speculated that schools dominated educational psychologists' work; years later this has again been identified as a barrier to working with home-educated children (Bowers, 2017) and families in general (Bevington, 2013; McGuiggan, 2017). This is despite, as Arora (2003) states, the fact that home-educating parents also pay taxes.

Following Arora's (2003) review of the literature surrounding home education and the role of the educational psychologist, the author completed direct research of children with special education needs who are home-educated, attempting to rectify the inherent bias of self-selection found within earlier home education research. To do this, Arora (2006) contacted families on the local authority home-educating list directly in order to reach those that would not ordinarily respond. Her research reflects that there is a growing group of children and parents who are rejecting the school system, either because their needs or disability are not being met or because of general unhappiness about school, including issues with bullying. Although the author was herself an educational psychologist, the recommendations make no mention of the role of educational psychologist in ensuring home educated children were supported but related the concern to local authority services in general.

Further perspectives regarding home education may be drawn from Bowers' (2017) qualitative study. Here, both home-educating parents and young people were interviewed about their views. The aim of the study was to use the data gathered to inform

professionals, including educational psychologists, and to give a relevant background to home education and the aspects that should be considered if working with home-educated families and children. The findings of the study indicated that the themes of freedom and authenticity dominated both the parents' and the young people's interviews: it was felt by both groups that home education offered freedom in terms of the social experiences the children were able to participate in, freedom regarding how and what was learned and freedom with regards to the individual and their needs. The theme of authenticity related to young people being able to have an opportunity to develop authentic personal expression as home-educated persons, something which included aspects of being a learner for which they were able to take a degree of responsibility. Bowers (2017) positions these themes as being at odds with a school-based education: it was felt, for example, that there was a lack of authenticity with regards to personal development in a school education environment. The concept of freedom was also conceptualised as being absent from a school owing to its many systemic features.

Other pertinent features of the study indicate that the voices of parents and school educated children who have faced difficulty in the school environment and became home educated are often completely overlooked. One example given by participants in the study featured school being a place of harm. The example given was of school staff being in a position of power but exercising this power in an emotionally cold and un-nurturing way (Bowers, 2017, p. 106). Educational psychologists were not interviewed in this study, but its findings were seen as relevant to the profession. Indeed, Bowers (2017) recognised that the profession generally has limited involvement with home-educated children and young people, and that when it does this is usually through statutory assessment process (p. 3). According to Bowers (2017) 'EPs are a service for all children, particularly those who are experiencing non-traditional educational paths as home-educated children' (p. 3) but they also recognise that home education is different to a school education and as such requires further reflection from those in the profession. Bowers (2017) also speculates that the profession may have underlying assumptions of home education that 'constitute a barrier to the voice of the child and the family being understood' (p. 108).

Bowers' (2017) study was nevertheless based on a very small sample size of a mere four parents and four young people who were identified through a home education website from which a randomised sample was taken of the respondents who replied by email. Given that the participants were part of an online home-educating community and had responded to a call of interest, it could be postulated that these would be parents for whom home education was a positive choice rather than one of 'last resort' (Morton,

2010), although there is little quantitative information to clarify this. A further issue was that of using an existing contacts from the home-educating community which was noted and acknowledged by the author themselves. This could have led to bias in that the researcher may already have been aware of their views.

Ryan's (2019) study into post-16 elective home education transitions and the role of the educational psychologist was based in non-traded local authorities in Wales. This study included an exploration of post-16 transitions from the perspectives of three young people, their 'facilitators' (parents), 31 educational psychologists, and 11 trainees, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Its findings supported Arora's (2003) assertions that the profession could offer a number of roles to home-educating families, citing in particular the need for support for the integration of home-educated young people into education in a school or college—for instance, by assessing young people's need to find post-16 education or employment that is appropriate and bespoke to them and ensuring that their and their parents' voices are heard in all planning related to the transition. Although the study suggests a variety of roles that educational psychologists may undertake, these suggestions are somewhat speculative in that it is unclear whether the participant educational psychologists and trainees are speaking from a position of experience with home-educated children and families. Indeed, the author acknowledged that the educational psychology participants had little experience in supporting young people who were electively home-educated through the transition at post-16, although they suggested it could nevertheless be a valuable role (Ryan, 2019).

Ryan's (2019) study also noted important benefits to negotiating the post-16 transition from the young people's perspective. One of these was the choice to continue to be home-educated as an option that afforded a person-centred approach as well as an optimal learning experience. This option was one which, according to Ryan, provided the home-educated young people with a sense of control over their learning in the knowledge that it could develop according to their own requirements, concurring with Bowers' (2017) findings that authenticity and freedom were important elements in the decision to undertake home education. According to Ryan (2019), highlighting young people's voices is therefore a valuable contribution that the input of an educational psychologist could facilitate, a finding which is also supported in research conducted by educational psychologists themselves (Jones, 2013; Bowers, 2017).

Many studies have thus posited potential roles that educational psychologists could undertake to offer support to home-educated children, but also acknowledge that there are significant barriers to this happening.

2.23 The impact of ‘trading’ on the role of the educational psychologist

Most recently, the role of the local authority educational psychology service has been impacted by the move towards achieving a greater degree of financial independence from the local authority by selling their services through a ‘traded’ model of service delivery. It has been noted (Farrell et al., 2006; Stobie, 2002) that the role of the educational psychologist has consistently been linked to the socio-political climate in which services operate. The 2008/9 economic crisis was one such significant event which led to widespread spending cuts in the public sector that impacted the provision of public services in local authorities (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). Using principles from New Public Management (Gunter et al., 2016), most educational psychology services in England found themselves in the new position of having to ‘trade’ their services with their commissioners, the primary of these being schools.

The impact of trading on the functions and roles of the educational psychologist has been explored in various pieces of research (Winward, 2015; Lee & Woods, 2017; Islam, 2013). Both Islam (2013) and Lee and Woods (2017) explored how and whether the role of the educational psychologist has changed in the context of trading their service. Lee and Woods (2017) asked two services and five commissioning schools about the influence of trading on the services they received from the educational psychologist, the findings of which suggested that the role had expanded to take account of the full range of skills and expertise the profession could offer. This was partly due to a lack of other services available via the local authority for which educational psychologists were able to fill the gaps. Furthermore, educational psychologists were seen as effective in managing the dilemmas that occur when services are traded: one such dilemma which was highlighted by Winward’s (2015) study was that of schools and educational psychologists holding differing opinions regarding the best course of action for a child or young person they were involved with (Winward, 2015).

Further ethical dilemmas were highlighted by Lee and Wood’s (2017) study, which demonstrated that there was limited access to educational psychology support for children

within non-commissioning settings. Although not directly stated in the work, this pertains to home-educated children as one such group which exists within a non-commissioning setting. As the study demonstrated, access to services depends on whether there is a commissioner to buy those services; in the case of home education, it appears there is not. The finding that there is significant proportion of children with no access to services as a result of the trading model (Lee & Woods, 2017) is one which is also supported by the work of Hardy et al., (2020), which terms those without commissioners the 'unsponsored' (p. 184). Though Lee and Woods (2017) suggest that the study demonstrates promise to those 'unsponsored,' suggesting that, as trading develops, the 'ethical sensitivity of services also develops' (p. 8), the study offers little in the way of evidence for this statement. Indeed, the only evidence posited by the study was a link to an individual educational psychologist who explained they had ten hours available for work with 'vulnerable' children, presumably those who were 'unsponsored' without commissioners. Neither the 'vulnerable' nor the ten hours are defined in the study, however, so it remains unclear as to who would receive individual support and how this would be decided upon.

The ethical considerations of traded educational psychology services were also considered by Islam (2013). In its summary of the research findings, the study suggests that service delivery models must be founded on ethical principles in order for standards to remain high for service users. These ethical considerations need to include those who cannot access the services because, without commissioners, they are currently invisible. This was identified by the study as an area in need of further research.

While changes in services and the roles of educational psychologists have been explored in the new era of trading (Lee and Woods, 2017; Winward, 2015; Islam, 2013) (and it has been noted that there are serious ethical implications to this model, particularly for non-commissioning groups of children (Islam, 2013; Lee and Woods, 2017), such as the home-educated), there is currently no resolution to this ethical and indeed, *moral* dilemma, despite consideration by the governing bodies of the profession (BPS, 2018; AEP, 2011).

Part 7: Rationale for this Research

2.24 Context of my professional role

The current research project is a result of my professional interest as an educational psychologist, in children who are educated at home. Home education challenges conventional notions of education as being positioned within a school institution. Indeed, as a former teacher and current educational psychologist, my own construct of education comes from my training and experiences of working predominantly in schools, nurseries and colleges. When, in 2006, I began working as an educational psychologist for a local authority with a geographical area of schools, I would occasionally receive an enquiry from a parent who was educating their child at home—enquiries which would most often relate to whether their child could access a school education in the future and the necessary steps required to do this. Apart from such enquiries, however, I had no experience with home education and no training in the subject as either as a teacher or an educational psychologist.

Over recent years, particularly after the Badman Review (2009) and the child deaths of Kyra Ishaq and Victoria Climbié (Webb, 2011), home education has featured regularly in the media. Indeed, home education came to public attention not because there was concern about the quality and type of education being received in the home, but rather out of growing concern for the need for protection against the supposed potential risk of abuse or neglect to children being educated in the home, out of the view of a school. Given the absence of both legislation on home education, any legal requirement for parents to register the home education of a child or for the local authority to keep a register of home-educated children (Badman, 2009; Monk, 2009), there was concern that children were invisible to professionals and thus left vulnerable as a result (Badman, 2009).

This is something in my role I was very aware of. In my capacity as an educational psychologist, I have, in recent years, experienced a significant increase in the number and frequency of contacts with children who are educated at home. This is, in part, due to the fact that my role has now changed in that I am employed in a freelance capacity, and as such am given individual cases by commissioners—such as the local authority or a solicitor—rather than a patch of schools. A high proportion of these cases are children who transitioned to home education after their removal from school by a parent, following

concerns about the child from either the parent or the school. Out of dissatisfaction with home education or the child having (potentially unidentified) special educational needs, either the parents or another professional subsequently requested an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment in the hope that it would bring about some type of change in the situation. Sometimes, the purpose of my involvement was to facilitate the transition of a child back to school education. At other times, my purpose was unclear beyond the fact that there was dissatisfaction with the status quo and with home education. The experiences I had of the reasons why parents chose to home educate led me to reflect on and further consider the role of educational psychology in these cases.

As my contact with children who were home-educated grew more regular, my interest deepened. Initially, I had very little knowledge and understanding of what home education consisted of, what was involved in educating a child at home, and what legislation applied to the education of a child outside of a school setting. In my interactions with home-educated children and families, I met parents who had had no prior contact with an educational psychologist and who were struggling—not only with home education, but with meeting their child’s special educational and disability needs. The opportunity to meet an educational psychologist was generally met with interest and relief, since it meant that something was being done to help their child. Parents were keen to discuss matters of pedagogy, their children’s specific needs, and possible ways to move forwards. Sometimes this move was aimed towards school education, but not always. On the basis of these experiences, I noted that, while very limited in its breadth, the educational psychologist role could be very valuable to children and young people as well as to parents educating their children at home.

2.25 Socio-political context

The rationale for this study is to broaden the research in the area of home education as a generally under-researched area (Arora, 2003, 2006), particularly among educational psychologists themselves (Arora, 2006; Bowers, 2017; Ryan, 2019). Home-educated children with special educational needs have also received limited focus in research (Parson & Lewis, 2010; Reilly et al., 2002; Kendall & Taylor, 2016), a further impetus to broaden the research base. Furthermore, although research has considered the views and experiences of both parents and children that are home-educated (Jones, 2013; Ryan, 2019; Bowers, 2017), there is no research to date that has considered educational psychologists’ experiences and views of home-educated children. The current study

therefore aims to both add to the body of general research and to contribute to specific professional development and knowledge in the subject.

An additional impetus for this study is that there appears to be a growing number of children becoming home-educated, with Government sources (House of Commons, Strengthening Home Education, 21-22) indicating that there could be as many as 75,000 home-educated children, an increase of 38% on the previous year. To this end, it may be assumed that home educated children will become an increasingly familiar clientele for educational psychologists and as such it is vital to understand the motivations and circumstances of those children and families who are becoming home-educated.

While some minority groups in society, such as children who are removed from their parents and placed into the local authority's care (generally referred to as 'looked after children'), are afforded specific services within the local authority, including oversight from Virtual School Headteachers and staff to ensure their educational outcomes are satisfactory, no such body exists for home-educated children. This, in addition to the fact that they are also 'unsponsored' (Hardy et al., 2020) and have no commissioners (Islam, 2013) thus potentially makes them a large community of vulnerable children and young people. Though the rationale for the current study is multifold, it is therefore ultimately to shine a light, not only on home-educated children who have special educational needs and the reasons for the growing numbers of home-educated children, but also how the educational psychology profession can respond and consider its current and future role with regard to this group. Arora's (2003) suggestions that there could be a range of roles that the educational psychologist could offer in supporting home-educating children is an area worthy of further focus.

To fully consider this, it was essential to gain in-depth views from educational psychologists themselves. These insider accounts would enable an exploration of direct experiences, understanding, and thoughts and feelings on the topic. For this reason, it was decided to conduct qualitative research, a choice that would foreground personal insight into the experiences and perceptions of the participants themselves as, 'people are a valuable source of information about themselves and much can be learned from direct, extended conversations with individuals whose thoughts and opinions are critical for understanding a topic' (Vaughan et al., 1996, p. 17).

The methodological decisions made in relation to the above are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Part 1: Research Method and Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical basis and assumptions, relevant epistemological and ontological positions, and methodology for the current study. It offers information on participant selection and methods for data collection, considers the appropriateness of the selected analytical method for data analysis (thematic analysis or TA), and details how this method was applied. Finally, the chapter reviews the ethical implications of this research and how the research design addressed issues of reliability, validity, and generalisation.

3.1 Purpose of the research

This research aims to contribute to current knowledge and understanding of the issues faced by Educational Psychologists (EPs) involved with home-educated children and young people, in particular those with special educational needs and disability. It also aims to establish whether the profession can learn from and respond to the reported experiences and views of other EPs. Although this is an under-researched area in educational psychology (Arora 2003, 2006; Bowers, 2017; Jones, 2013; Ryan, 2019), it is of increasing concern to the general public and government officials owing to the growing number of children and young people who are no longer accessing education within a school environment (Children's Commissioner, 2019; Nye & Thomson, 2018). Of this number, children and young people with special educational needs and disability are of special concern as there is currently little reporting on whether their needs are being both fully recognised and appropriately met. There is even less research in this area of home-educated children and young people being conducted by EPs themselves (Arora, 2006). As such, this research considers what experiences EPs have of this group of children and their families, their views about the home education being offered, and whether student needs are being adequately met outside the traditional educational establishment of the school.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

How research is conducted is strongly influenced by the paradigm or belief system adopted by the researcher (Hennick et al., 2011). It is therefore of paramount importance

that the decisions made are based on considerations of some key philosophical perspectives. Methodology and method are fundamentally different and should therefore be clearly defined (Willig, 2001): where methodology is the philosophy that forms the basis of the research, method, by contrast, refers to the techniques and practical applications used to collect and analyse the data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). When deciding to use a particular research methodology, researchers base their decisions (either implicitly or explicitly) on assumptions about the social world in which they are located (Cohen et al., 2011).

Philosophical considerations about research methodology are innately interlinked with the practice of research. It is therefore important for the researcher to consider the underlying assumptions of a research design (Pawson, 1991). Indeed, all research has at its basis underlying assumptions that impact the applied methodology and its direction (Scott & Usher, 1999). It is for this reason that a research methodology is needed to outline the decisions and choices made regarding the research methods. Methodology can therefore be defined as the 'broad philosophical and theoretical justification for a particular method used in research' (Gray, 2009, p. 578). Within research, adopted paradigms lead to certain philosophical assumptions and values that influence the ontology, epistemology, and methodology of the research question (Cohen et al., 2011).

Epistemology refers to a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge which seeks answers to questions about how or what we can know. Ontology is often discussed alongside epistemology as an area of study concerned with the assumptions, we make about the nature of being, existence or reality (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). It is thus necessary to consider the epistemological and ontological assumptions implicit in the research. The main features of key epistemological and ontological paradigms will be discussed in order to illustrate how the philosophical viewpoint of the current study was decided upon.

Often cited as the 'scientific approach' (Hennick et al., 2011), positivism is the epistemological position which implies that there is a straightforward relationship between the world and our perception of it (Willig, 2013). Suggestive of a vigorous investigative approach, positivism aims to test hypotheses in order to find scientific explanations (Blaikie, 1993). A positivist position in research claims that each researcher will view 'reality' equally, asserting that facts and values are separable entities—hence claiming that positivist research is value-free (Robson, 2011, p. 21). As such, a positivist paradigm is frequently associated with quantitative methods. It has been, however, been questioned

whether this type of research is appropriate within the realms of a social science (Willig, 2013, Braun & Clarke, 2013).

An interpretivist or constructivist epistemological approach is simplistically and arguably at the other end of the paradigm spectrum to the objective ontological position of a positivist stance. Accordingly, it is largely associated with qualitative research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In this approach, meaning is understood as something that is created through actions: individuals are actively engaged in constructing the meaning of their social world. Rather than viewing the world as a static entity, knowledge and learning are thus drawn from social situations that are fluid and dynamic (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 17).

The epistemological position of this current research is framed within an interpretivist paradigm and is therefore underpinned by a constructivist philosophy. Its focus is on the discovery and interpretation of the experience of individual EPs regarding home-educated pupils with special educational needs. An interpretivist paradigm espouses the notion that reality is constructed by the participants within the research process. Within this process, the role of the researcher is to gain an understanding of the 'complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it' (Schwandt 1994, p. 118).

In the interpretivist paradigm, a social constructionist philosophy takes a critical stance towards the assumed ways in which both we and the world are understood (Burr, 2003). It challenges our understandings of both of these by considering how each are formed through social processes that include linguistic interactions. In this context, understanding is not fixed; instead, it is part of language as well as the cultural and historical context within which it resides (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). As a result, there are multiple meanings that are equally valid. These meanings are fluid and shaped by our interactions with other people and the environment within which we operate (Bryman, 2004). The current study intends to use the experiences and views of EPs gained through a semi-structured interview process to gather information about children and young people who are home-educated and have special educational needs and/or disability. It aims to do this without regard for preconceived theories in order that a full and diverse picture may emerge. A social constructionist approach, which sees meaning as an evolving process shaped by context (i.e., society's construct for home education, special educational needs, disability, and education in general), benefits such research as it allows participants to discuss their views and experiences as they perceive them.

Research conducted within a social constructionist framework examines how the construction of social reality is embedded within specific cultural and historical conditions. It also considers the implications this has for human experience and social practice (Willig, 2013). This is a *relativist* stance, wherein ‘reality’ depends upon the ways we have come to know it (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). By contrast, a *realist* stance holds that the external world exists independent of the observer and their representation of it (Searle, 1995). The two spectra of realism and relativism are neither simplistic nor binary oppositions. It has been argued that most types of qualitative research that seeks to uncover individual meaning and experiences from data assumes that a reality exists independent from the observer—one that can be elicited from the language of participants (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). Critical realism is a position that seeks to bridge the two spectra of relativism and realism, being mindful of the notion that there are multiple constructed realities while at the same time accepting that some authentic reality exists in order to add to the topic area being researched (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997).

The ontological position within this research is that of critical realism. This envisages that knowledge about the subject matter might be beneficial to the educational psychology profession in understanding and developing the subject area of home education among children or young people with special educational needs and/or disability. It accepts that some ‘reality’ exists in regard to the research, the findings of which can be shared within the field of educational psychology for professional development (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997). It is also acknowledged, however, that realities can change and differ across time and context (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is for which reason that it potentially offers multiple constructed realities rather than the discovery of ‘a single truth’ (Lyons & Coyle, 2016), the ontological position espoused by realism that would allow fellow EPs to share in the knowledge.

The current study considers meaning as dependent on many factors, including the social and cultural influences that preside over the subject of home education and special needs. Depending on these and other factors, meaning is constructed by the individuals (EPs) who work within the given systems. This study intends to disseminate the findings to the wider professional body of EPs in order to add to their knowledge base, as well as to develop EP awareness of home education and issues for students with special educational needs who are home-educated.

Part 2: Research Design

3.3 Research questions

This study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What experiences do EPs have working with home-educated children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disability?
2. What views do EPs have about home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability?
3. What perceptions do EPs have about the barriers and benefits to working effectively with home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability?
4. What do EPs feel their role should be in working with home-educated children with special educational needs and/or disability?

3.4 Qualitative approaches

Qualitative research is not limited to the data and techniques entailed in the process but is also concerned with the application of qualitative techniques within a qualitative paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2013). While quantitative research uses numbers as data in its attempt to test out a hypothesis, qualitative research uses 'words as data' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 3), aiming instead to describe and possibly to explain (but never to predict, as does the positivist position (Willig, 2013)) events and experiences. A qualitative approach therefore allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomena to provide a rich and dynamic set of data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). As such, the current small-scale study explores how a range of EPs perceive and construct their experiences in alignment with a qualitative-based research design.

A qualitative methodological framework that did not restrict the exploration of participant perceptions yet allowed for the full exploration of EP experiences was considered the most suitable framework for a number of reasons. Firstly, an empirical or positivist design would not be adaptable to the interpretivist epistemological stance taken by the researcher. In this study, there is no intention to test a hypothesis, to gather information or to determine how many EPs thought a certain way about home education; rather, this research seeks to elicit meaning and knowledge of the constructs around home education

and children and young people with special educational needs and disability, while allowing for the possible multiple constructs they may hold. A quantitative approach to research is characterised by a deductive reasoning process where the intention is to begin by theorising on a topic or subject. This is refined into a hypothesis that is then tested, leading to either a rejection or confirmation of the hypothesis (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). This 'top down' approach, which starts from a general theoretical level (Lyons & Coyle, 2016), contrasts with qualitative research that aims to 'go beyond what presents itself, to reveal dimensions of a phenomenon which are concealed or hidden, whilst at the same time taking care not to impose meaning' (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2013, p. 9). Such an approach is useful for generating new information on a little-known area, which is pertinent to the aims set out in this work.

The current study intends to gain insight into individual experiences and constructs of experiences rather than seeking to find a 'truth,' as arguably quantitative research or a positivist study would assert (Bryman, 2008). Indeed, the aim of this study is to find out how individuals interpret their social world. It is therefore participant led, allowing participants to impart meaning through their experience (Willig, 2006). Since research of a qualitative nature can offer a rich, detailed description of an experience analysed from an individual's perspective (Cohen et al., 2011), and as this study seeks to explore experiences to gain meaning and insight from individual perspectives on an area that is little researched (Arora, 2003, 2006), a qualitative study is most appropriate. Moreover, qualitative research benefits from a small number of participants who represent the population under study (Willig, 2013). This enables detailed analysis of the meaning constructed by individual educational psychologists whilst also allowing for generalisations that can add value to existing knowledge of the research area.

Several qualitative methods were considered for analysing EP views on the experiences of home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and disability. Discourse analysis was one viable option, as one which would focus on the language use and discourse of participant, enabling consideration of the constructs that encompassed both. Indeed, this could have yielded information pertinent to the research questions regarding the experiences and views of EPs. When comparing discourse analysis with constructionist thematic analysis, the eventual chosen method for the current research study, Braun and Clarke (2019) observe very little difference between both analytic approaches. In constructionist thematic analysis, there is a recommended analytic procedure that includes the identification of codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013); in discourse analysis, by contrast, the analytic process may be more fluid, as underlying

systems of meaning are identified without a given procedure. In particular, where thematic analysis recognises the constructive nature of language, discourse analysis focuses on micro-analyses of meaning in language and discourse. This latter method could limit the interpretation of some of the experiences revealed by the participants, given the risk of the overall meaning being missed owing to the focus on minute aspects of the discourse. One further reason why discourse analysis was considered but ultimately discounted was also that it is mostly used to analyse unsolicited and naturally occurring conversations (Willig, 2008); this would have been inappropriate here where specific questions to elicit relevant information about the views and experiences of participants were being posed.

A further qualitative approach under consideration was that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA seeks to examine, in detail, lived experience on case-by-case basis. It is particularly useful for topics that are complex, ambiguous, and emotion laden (Smith & Osbourn, 2015), and would therefore fit, to some extent, with the aims of the research questions regarding the views and experiences of EPs. It would not, however, ensure exploration of a wide range of views, since IPA seeks an idiographic focus. As such, the individual lived experiences of EPs would merely be reflected in the data as opposed to offering broader insight into the subject matter in the same way thematic analysis could potentially allow. A further disadvantage of IPA is that the researcher codes data from the first data item; thematic analysis, by contrast, codes across the entire data set. This focuses meaning across all participants and data. For IPA, the focus falls on the individual participant and what was revealed in their individual data. IPA was thus discounted for these reasons.

Grounded theory was also considered to be a potentially suitable method, particularly the version of grounded theory that is closely linked to social construction. In this version, which Braun and Clarke (2019) term grounded theory lite, the researcher constructs meaning through the data (Charmaz, 1990). This would meet many of the aims of the current study in that it would be carried out using a similar technique—e.g., in-depth analysis of interviews through the creation of codes from data—but it nevertheless remains close to the data (Smith et al., 1999). It is argued that Grounded theory has an inbuilt theoretical framework and retains its own epistemological and ontological assumptions (Charmaz & Henwood, 2017). It also advocates for particular research questions that would not meet the flexible approach to this study. Moreover, some types of grounded theory, such as that referred to as ‘full grounded theory’ (Braun & Clarke, 2019) are focused on the generation of new theories (Bryman, 2008). As the current study

seeks to build upon previous limited research in the area rather than generate theory, this method was also ultimately discounted.

3.3 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was chosen as the most suitable analytical method for the data because it facilitates analysis of a range and variety of EP experiences and views. It also allows for the creation of themes that could reveal both expected and unexpected information. Additionally, it does not specify a particular method of data collection, but instead offers the flexibility of combination with any desired method, theoretical position or epistemological or ontological framework (Braun & Clarke, 2013). There remains some debate about whether TA, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), merits its own methodological status—Boyatzis (1998), for instance, does not consider it a specific method, but instead a tool or skill that can be used with different qualitative methods. Holloway and Todres (2003) similarly consider thematising meaning a general skill held by qualitative researchers, rather than a specific method in its own right. Willig (2013), however, states that while the research method is ‘poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged,’ it should nevertheless be seen as a qualitative method in its own right.

TA became the subject of further debate after its proponents, Braun and Clarke (2013), postulated that their qualitative method had been ‘mis conceptualised’ as one homogenous analytic approach (Liamputtong et al., 2019, p. 843). They took the view that TA should be seen as an ‘umbrella’ term comprised of varying approaches that are then used to identify patterns across qualitative data sets (Liamputtang et al., 2019). As such, Braun & Clarke, (2019) identify three distinct ‘schools’ of TA, each of which are distinct in terms of their philosophical, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings. Coding reliability, the first school of thought, is considered the variant of TA that is most linked to a positivist stance, given its use of qualitative data collection, analysis techniques of coding, and the creation of themes conceptualised as domain summaries (Boyatzis, 1998). Agreement regarding what constitutes a code for the data is calculated by a series of different coders who reach a shared ‘consensus’ to ensure correct analysis of the data (Liamputtang, 2019). This form of TA is considered by the authors (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Terry & Hayfield, 2020) as only partially qualitative in that it claims to produce potentially reliable and replicable results from these processes. Given the epistemological stance of the current research, however, it was felt that coding reliability was not appropriate: one unified, ‘correct’ response was neither sought nor desired for this under-researched area,

where the researcher wanted to consider a wide range of views constructed by EPs on the subject matter.

A second 'school' of TA was described as codebook TA (Terry & Hayfield, 2020), which was derived from a coding reliability position that includes using a tool—such as a framework, template or matrices—to analyse data and derive codes (Ritchie et al., 2013). A codebook consists of a conclusive list of codes, each of which is assigned a label, a definition, instructions on how to identify the code/theme (the two terms are used interchangeably without clarification), details about any exclusions, and examples (Willig & Stainton-Rodgers, 2017). The codebook is then used by independent coders to code the data. An inter-rater reliability number score is given to show the level of agreement between the coders, which assists with analyses of large amounts of data by bringing benefits in terms of saving time. This method is nevertheless similar to quantitative analysis, as it gives a figure for coder reliability. This means that some (if not all) themes or codes are pre-determined ahead of the full data analysis, something which was felt to restrict the rich and flexible approach to data analysis that is fundamental to qualitative research (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Codebook TA can also be constrained by the use of a codebook or other framework, since it seeks to define the parameters of the data from the outset rather than being flexible and open to the data set through a full immersion as is the aim of this study.

The third 'school' of TA is that of reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2018; Terry et al., 2018). This 'school' is conceptualised as a fully qualitative approach, with data collection and analysis underpinned by a qualitative philosophy or paradigm (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Coding is considered an organic and flexible approach that is not fixed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In this process, the aim of coding and the development of themes is not to accurately summarise data, but rather to give a 'coherent and compelling interpretation of the data' (Liamputtong, 2019, p. 888). The researcher is a storyteller who brings their own recognised social and cultural influences to the interpretation of the data. This approach met the objectives of the research, the philosophical and epistemological stance of the researcher, and aim of the study, for which reason it was therefore chosen as an appropriate method by which to collect and analyse the data.

Owing to limited prior research in this area (Arora 2003, 2006), the current study does not have a strong theoretical basis. For this reason, a theoretical or deductive approach to TA was discarded, given that it would not be suitable to explore the topic in relation to a body

of theory that was not available. In contrast, an inductive approach to TA could offer a rich thematic analysis of the entire data set via a 'bottom up' approach to identifying meaning without importing preconceived ideas. As the topic is an under-researched area, this would ensure the themes would be strongly linked to the data set.

Although the questions posed to participants were designed to elicit information relevant to the research questions (RQs), it was acknowledged that, in some instances, the data collected may bear little relationship to the RQs underlying this study. New information could therefore be elicited in the inductive analysis within the process of coding the data. This meant that coding would be data driven rather than attached to a pre-existing coding frame or research preconceptions, thereby allowing for exploratory ideas to emerge

A further decision regarding reflexive TA was necessary at the level at which meaning is identified—that is to say, at either semantic or latent level. At a semantic level of analysis, exploration of the meaning in the data set would unfold at an explicit, surface level; at a latent level of meaning, deeper and implicit meanings could be identified (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Liamputtong, 2019). Indeed, latent level of meaning would fit particularly well within a social constructionist approach, as it would allow for exploration of the data in relation to the constructs that participants brought to it. It was therefore decided that both the semantic and latent levels of analysis would bring something useful to the understanding of EP experiences. In addition to considering meaning at the surface level of what EPs reported, it would also be useful in considering the latent underlying meaning in the data in relation to the sociocultural and political climate or educational changes—for instance, the introduction of the Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), the marketisation of education and the academisation of schools (Lee & Woods, 2017).

3.4 Interviews

The method eventually selected for data collection was interviews. Prior to this, consideration had been given to other methods that could elicit the aims of the research questions, for instance the potential employment of a focus group comprised of EPs which may have delivered information that responded to some of the RQs. The researcher does not work in a single local authority, however. Moreover, the criteria for participant inclusion was that EPs had to have had experience of working with at least one home-educated child or young person with special educational needs or disability. This meant that participants could come from any part of the UK. Bringing EPs together geographically at

a particular date and time would therefore be logistically very difficult to do. A methodological benefit of a focus group would nevertheless be that it could empower a group of EPs to respond to the topic as a professional body. This would serve the aims of the current study in that it would gain the perspectives and viewpoints of EPs. Focus groups would further ensure attention on the topic area, which could potentially yield extensive amounts of data as a result. Similarly, they would allow a more naturalistic setting, thus reducing the artificial nature of an interview (Wilkinson, 1999).

There are, however, drawbacks to such groups. The primary of these is that although a focus group would answer the research question aimed at gaining the perspectives and views of EPs, the group setting may not allow for participants to relate their experiences with home-educated children in detail. It was, however, very important that the experiences of EPs were elicited in order to answer the research question. Since focus groups may not provide or allow for an in-depth follow up of views or experiences—something that could lead to findings that yield a superficial overview of the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013)—they were thus discounted.

Qualitative surveys were also considered as a method of data collection. These surveys consist of a number of open-ended questions about a topic that the participant is required responds to via written or typed responses (Braun & Clarke, 2013). There are generally three types of qualitative survey: a hard copy, an email survey, and an online survey. Indeed, the qualitative survey offers limitless questions and responses—a highly positive quality—although consideration therefore needed to be given as to how much information participants could be expected to write on an email survey. In some instances, qualitative email surveys run the risk of being completed too briefly and therefore of not providing data of a rich and detailed nature, although follow-up questions could be utilised if required. Online surveys would be a quick tool to gain data that would be easy to distribute while also offering a high level of anonymity, and yet there would neither be the opportunity to follow up on any points raised nor the possibility of gaining the breadth of information and detail that would be beneficial (Frith & Gleeson, 2008). As the issue of home-educated children with special educational needs and disability is currently under researched (Arora, 2003, 2006), the current study required a data collection method that could offer the detailed, in-depth consideration necessary to serve the research questions. Since qualitative surveys could not be guaranteed to offer this, they were discounted for this reason.

The interview has been defined as a ‘professional conversation’ (Kvale, 2012, p14) in which the intention was to gain information about respondent experiences and perceptions of the chosen topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The type of interview was important to this research, as it had to fulfil the aims of the study: a structured interview, for instance, would have been too constraining given the researcher’s aim of finding out new and perhaps unexpected views and experiences from EPs. The researcher was therefore keen to allow for variants and divergence in discussions rather than maintain strict adherence to questions and answers.

Table 1 below (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2013) considers the strengths and limitations of the semi-structured interview in light of the aims of current research study.

Table 1: Strengths and Limitations of Semi-structured Interviews

Strengths	Limitations
Rich and detailed data: the individual experiences and views of EPs can be elicited through the interview process in close alignment with the RQs, while also allowing participants to transgress.	Small sample size: individual interviews are lengthy and time consuming, which means the sample size would be relatively small.
Flexibility: the interview allows for further clarification, a change in direction and follow up on unplanned views or experiences that EPs may relate.	Lack of breadth: a smaller sample size would likely fail to provide a wide range of viewpoints and experiences from across the EP profession.
Accessibility: interviews with individual EPs mean that data could be collected from a range of EPs. EPs did not have to be in a single setting or geographical location.	Lack of empowerment: EPs have less control over the data produced from an interview once it has been transcribed and analysed.

<p>Researcher control: the researcher can adapt the interview schedule and questions to EP responses as the interview is happening, as well as throughout the data collection process.</p>	<p>Time and commitment: EPs would individually have to give up time for the interview process, which could be time consuming.</p>
<p>Other strengths: consideration can be given to other non-verbal aspects of the interview, such as participant body language or interactions between interviewer and interviewee.</p>	

Semi-structured interviews were ultimately chosen as the method of data collection as this was appropriate for the epistemological stance of the current study. Interviewees would be able to explore and reflect on their experiences as EPs as well as give their own views to direct the interview into areas they felt were relevant. A more structured interview would limit these options. Open-ended questioning techniques and an interview schedule setting out a series of questions with prompts would ensure the aims of the research were met by allowing both researcher and participant to be able to move away from the interview schedule if it was felt that other unexpected or important issues were emerging in the interview. Semi-structured interviews, in particular, allow for such flexibility, being considered effective at eliciting a narrative of respondent beliefs, perceptions or accounts of a particular subject area (Kvale, 2012). The semi-structured interview was also felt to fit the interpretivist and social constructionist perspectives of this study, as it would allow for the multiple constructs that participants could bring to the topic of home education and children and young people with special educational needs and disability.

3.5 Interview schedule

Prior to conducting the interviews, an interview schedule (Appendix 7) was prepared as a guide (Patton, 2002). This schedule listed questions in a flexible sequence and with an adaptable word order (Braun & Clarke, 2013). At the start of the interview schedule, participants were asked what the term home education meant as it was evident that this occasionally needed clarification, a refinement which resulted from the pilot study (detailed later). The schedule also enquired into the work situation (such as within a local authority, etc.) of participants (i.e., 'tell me about your work as an EP'). This question not

only acquired information relevant to the research, but also established the initial rapport that is vital to interactive data collection (Reinharz, 1993). Reference was made to Spradley's (1979) guide to the four different types of interview questions; examples of each type of question posed in the schedule are given below:

- 1) Descriptive questions: Can you tell me about a case where you worked with a home-educated child or young person who had special educational needs and disability?
- 2) Structural questions: Can you tell me about the barriers to this work?
- 3) Contrast questions: Did you work with home-educated children prior to the 2014 Code of Practice?
- 4) Evaluative questions: How did you feel about this?

Once the interview schedule was prepared (Appendix 7), consideration was also given to how to conduct a successful interview:

A qualitative interviewer is a human being, with a distinctive personal style, who uses their social skills, and flexibly draws on (and in some cases, disregards) guidance on good interview practice to conduct an interview that is appropriate to the needs and demands of the research question and methodological approach, the context of the interview and the individual participant. (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 80)

It was therefore acknowledged that qualities specific to the interviewer are brought to bear in the interview.

In order to ensure that the study adhered to the principles of producing a quality interview, Kvale's (1996) ten-point criteria for being a successful interviewer were employed in the design. Aspects relating to the structure, clarity, sensitivity, and openness of the interviewing process were also reflected upon, along with ways to steer the interview to ensure elicitation of the right type of information. It was important for the interviewer to take a critical stance towards aspects of the interview process in terms of following up on any inconsistent points made by the interviewee, remembering, and interpreting what was said or meant and being knowledgeable about the topic area and process. Two additional criteria were also employed: first, ensuring the presence of a balance in the interview, so that the interviewer did not dominate, and participants were allowed to say what was important to them; second, remaining sensitive to ethics—specifically that the interviewee

was made aware of the aims of the research and that their responses would be treated as confidential (Bryman, 2012).

Part 3: Research Implementation

3.6 Sampling

A purposeful sampling technique was employed to identify study participants. Purposeful sampling enables the selection of potential participants according to shared knowledge or experience that meets the criteria of the phenomena under examination (Willig, 2013). The selected group thus becomes homogeneous, comprised of participants with similar experiences and knowledge; relevant data can then be used to form a generalised understanding of the phenomena (Willig, 2013). Given that this study investigated the experiences and views of EPs in the field of home-educated students who have special educational needs and disability, a purposeful sampling technique was appropriate: EPs had to have experience working with the targeted group. A representative sampling technique would not have been valid because this is based upon a particular group with a shared experience.

3.7 Participants

In order to attain sufficient data for this study, there were two inclusion criteria:

- 1) Experience working with at least one home-educated young person with SEND
- 2) Professional EP experience prior to the implementation of the 2014 Code of Practice.

Participants were sought by posting an invitation on EPNet, a forum for educational psychologists from around the United Kingdom. The post (see Appendix 2) contained brief details about the subject matter of the research project and the inclusion criteria for participants. The first criterion ensured from the outset that EPs who responded to the post were those who had the required experience of working with at least one child or young person who was home-educated and had special educational needs. The second referenced the fact that the landscape of education has changed significantly since this date, not only in terms of how schools are managed, but also how EPs work. This criterion

ensured that the EPs who responded would be able to compare how they worked prior to and after the Code of Practice (DfE, 2014). This would give a long-term view that was not restricted to current practice. It was also felt that the comparison would allow for a broader range of views and experiences when considering the reasons behind home education as a choice for parents.

Once participants responded to the EPNet post, they received a follow-up email (see Appendix 3) with more details about the study in the form of an information sheet detailing the required participants, commitment requirements, and where further enquires could be made.

There is no universal consensus regarding the minimum or maximum numbers of participants needed for thematic analysis, however, Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend that for a small-scale study such as this, six to ten interviews should be conducted. From the response to the post on EPNet, nine participants were identified as meeting the relevant inclusion criteria. The table below provides further details regarding the participants.

Table 2: Information on Participants

Participant Number	Years Since Qualification	Employment Status: Independent (ind.) or Local Authority (LA)	Works in a partly or wholly Traded Service	Type of Work Undertaken with HE (e.g. EHC advice, consultation, initial assessment, etc.)
1	8	ind.		EHC advice
2	11	LA 4	yes	EHC advice, consultation
3	23	LA 1	yes	EHC advice
4	35	LA 2	yes	EHC advice, assessment

5	15	ind.		EHC advice
6	12	LA 3	yes	EHC advice
7	15	ind.		EHC advice
8	15	ind.		EHC advice, consultation
9	18	ind.		EHC advice

Communication with participants occurred by email prior to the date of interview as both a reminder and a prompt to reflect on at least one case of a home-educated child or young person with special educational needs with whom they had worked and could therefore discuss in the forthcoming interview. In order not to influence the direction of the interview, no further clarification or justification was given. All participants chose their home as the location for their interview. Given the need to travel large distances to interviews involving unfamiliar settings and people, a risk assessment was completed as part of Cardiff University's requirements regarding health and safety procedures (see Appendix 9).

3.8 Data collection

3.8.1 Pilot Interview: Learning and Methodological Refinements

In qualitative research, it is considered neither necessary nor expected to complete a formal pilot study (Braun & Clarke, 2013) given that such studies align with a positivist paradigm (Bryman, 2012). As a result, there is limited instruction on how to undertake a pilot study within a qualitative research project (Malmqvist et al., 2019). TA research mostly regards the pilot study an extraneous part of the process; instead, it recommends continual refinement of the interview schedule and process as it unfolds, so as to ensure that interviews address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Within qualitative research, the interpretivist epistemological stance anticipates a process of refining and

accepting the continually evolving nature of data collection (Charmaz, 2008). Whilst not strictly in keeping with the reflexive TA process, a small pilot study was employed within the current study to enable refinement of the interview schedule such that the resulting data would be relevant to the research questions. This pilot study highlighted any potential difficulties and challenges that the researcher might face during the research proper (Willig, 2013). Indeed, following the study, a number of refinements were made. These included:

- Inclusion of a definition for home education at the start of the interview to ensure participant comprehension and consistent use of the terminology.
- Email contact a few days ahead of the interview prompting participants to think of relevant case(s) of home-educated children with special educational needs that they would like to discuss.
- Inclusion of a specific question at the start of the interview to establish the nature and setting for participant work, clarifying whether this had changed since the introduction of the 2014 Code of Practice.
- An inquiry at the end of the interview asking whether the participant had any further cases they would like to discuss. This included inquiring whether the participant would be willing to respond to further questions on the findings following transcription and in consideration of a shared meaning.
- The assurance of ample time for participants to expand or clarify points before moving on to the next question. This could include the use of prompts, such as 'is there anything else you would like to say about that?' or 'can you tell me a bit more about that?'

As refinements to the interview schedule were considered minor, the pilot study was utilised as part of data collection. In accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2013) suggestions, refinements were also made throughout the data collection process.

3.9 Interview procedure

Semi-structured interviews took between approximately 45-90 minutes to complete. All participants chose to be interviewed at their home. At the start of the interview, participants were given the 'Information for Participants' sheet (see Appendix 5) so they could read the ethical considerations. Participants were given time to raise any questions

regarding the interview and were reminded that they could still withdraw from the study should they wish to.

Prior to the interview, the need to establish a positive rapport and to build trust with participants was considered alongside Kvale's (1996) criteria for the quality interviewer. In particular, the interviewer focused on being an active and alert listener as well as non-judgmental regarding points raised by participants. The role of the researcher was one of both interviewer and fellow EP; as the latter, the researcher had a professional relationship with participants, having worked with the same professional code of ethics and guidelines (BPS, 2018a and HCPC). The interview therefore adhered to the norms of conduct within a professional relationship.

A digital recording device, a pen, and a notebook were used to make field notes. As the result of the pilot study, an initial discussion was held about the terminology used in the interview, in particular to establish a consensus around a working definition of the term 'home education.' Upon ensuring that the participants were comfortable with the process, procedure and issues related to taking part in the research, the interview schedule—including the prompts and probes for further clarification or detail—was followed. The schedule was not strictly adhered to as the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for flexibility on the part of interviewer and participant. As such, the interview allowed participants to discuss matters important to them and enabled the interviewer to ensure the range of responses met the aims of the research questions. Some participants were eager to talk about their experiences, which meant only minimal prompting from the schedule was required. Even in these instances, however, the schedule remained useful as it allowed the interviewer to ensure that there were no gaps in the areas covered. All interviews were fully recorded via a digital recorder. Occasional field notes were made as a means to remember an interesting point made by the participant that was worth revisiting later in the interview.

Part 4: Data Analysis

3.10 Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-stage guide was used to analyse the data set using reflexive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Terry & Hayfield, 2020). Where in quantitative research it is essential to wait until all the data are collected before starting

the analysis (Bryman, 2008), this is not the case with a qualitative methodology. A thorough recursive process involving reading, detailing impressions or 'noticings,' and coding each interview as it was completed, proved beneficial. This enabled reflective thinking and future refinements to take place, both of which are part of the reflective TA process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). This process advanced as follows:

Stage 1: Transcription

The first step involved transcription of the interviews. Prior to transcription, each audio recording had been listened to in order to reflect on the content and consider whether the interview had elicited information pertaining to the research questions. This additional opportunity to listen also presented an opportunity to identify the need for any changes that could benefit future interviews. Once the researcher was familiar with the interviews, they were transcribed by the researcher or a professional transcriber. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Following transcription, the researcher listened to the interviews again, checking against the original transcript. This enabled refinement of the process of data collection as well as allowing the researcher to become fully conversant with the data, which is essential to reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) suggest that immersion is the first step in data analysis. This involves reading and rereading the transcripts in order to become 'intimately familiar' (Braun & Clarke, 2013) with the content of the data. At this point, it is also useful to write down any preliminary thoughts (or 'noticings,' in Braun and Clarke's terms) in a notebook, an exercise which involved giving detailed first impressions of what was read. These 'noticings' provided a useful reference point for future 'noticings' from other interview transcriptions and thus served as a constant source for refinement, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013) (see Appendix 9 for an example of initial noticings).

Stage 2: Coding patterns (pre-theme)

The second step entailed the generation of initial codes from the data set. Boyatzis (1998) defines an initial code as a segment or element of the raw data that can be arranged into meaningful groups with regards to the phenomenon. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) suggest the researcher work systematically through the entire data set, giving equal attention to data items in order to identify any interesting points and emerging patterns. This approach was utilised to code the transcript in sequence, paying attention to the

whole data set so nothing was missed. Items considered of interest were noted in addition to items that resembled a code in another transcript (see Appendix 11 for example of a coded transcript).

Stage 3: Sorting

The third step sorted through lists of codes. After coding the entire data set (for example, of participant interview after coding see Appendix 11), there was a large number of codes to work with. Codes from the transcripts were therefore handwritten onto paper so that they could subsequently be cut up into individual codes from each interview. Different coloured pens were used to indicate various participant interviews which enabled the researcher to see whether other participants had mentioned something similar. The next step was to sort the codes, now in the form of slips of paper, by grouping them together into potential themes. The individual slips of paper made it easy to group codes together into broad visual patterns (see Appendix 12 for photographs of this process).

Stage 4: Initial thematic analysis

The fourth step involved a great deal of reviewing and refining potential themes. At this point, several patterns relating to 'school education is better than home education' were noted. A decision was therefore taken to review the data and codes again with this pattern in mind. The data set and codes also revealed patterns relating to parents, EP roles, and a lack of inclusion. These patterns were refined and revised under further consideration of the research questions. It was important to reflect on what the data revealed regarding EP experiences and views on home-educated children with special educational needs and whether the themes were telling a convincing and compelling story about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).

Stage 5: Main and sub-theme hierarchy

The fifth step considered each theme in relation to the story of the data. The overarching themes of '*School as utopia*', '*Fear of the unknown*' and '*What happened to inclusion*' were established from the data. At this point, a thematic map was created to detail overarching themes, themes and subthemes (see Appendix 8).

The thematic map enabled consideration of similar or overlapping themes in addition to the content of main or overarching themes and any subthemes which emerged from them. 'Miscellaneous' codes that did not particularly fit any theme were also collated, as it was important to not discard any of the data. Here, Patton's (1999) dual criteria for judging the internal and external homogeneity of categories were used: data within themes were considered to check for cohesive meaning, while external homogeneity was used to check whether themes were distinct and not too similar to each other. To conclude this stage, it was also useful to consider Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) suggestion that the themes should tell a story gathered from the overall data (See appendix 13 for thematic charts).

Stage 6: Review and final analysis

The sixth and final step required a detailed written analysis of the themes in relation to the research question. In qualitative research, the writing up process involves bringing together ideas, generating ideas and thinking about the data collected (Howitt & Cramer, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Braun and Clarke (2013) consider this a 'creative style of writing' (p. 297). This process therefore took several attempts or drafts to ensure that ideas were appropriately formulated, and that the analysis provided a coherent story about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Part 5: Trustworthiness and Generalisation

3.11 Ensuring quality

In quantitative research, traditional criteria for rigour include the terms validity, reliability, generalisability, and objectivity (Pope et al, 2007). These same criteria have, however, also been deemed inappropriate for qualitative research based on an interpretive and naturalistic framework which uses distinct methods to illustrate a phenomena (Liamputtong, 2013; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research is concerned with meaning in context. This means the interpretation of data is not easily transferable to criteria designed for quantitative research, leading to debate (Willig, 2013) about its appropriateness. On one side of this debate, it has been postulated that if the same criteria are rigorously applied to qualitative data, results reliable enough that other researchers could repeat and achieve the same results and interpretations should be generated (Silverman, 2013). This is suggestive of the single 'truth' associated with a positivist epistemological stance. It has also been further suggested that although different terminology is required for qualitative research, the same principles of qualitative research should be applied (Pope et al, 2007).

This study, along with qualitative research more generally, disputes the existence of a single 'truth.' Since part of its aim is to elicit the many possible constructions of meaning that people may bring to a particular phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 2013), there is thus, arguably an incompatibility between the criteria of rigour, derived from a positivist stance, and that of qualitative research. Indeed, these criteria may be judged as a set of inappropriate standards by which to assess the quality of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). There is, however, a consensus about the need for qualitative research to be taken as seriously as its quantitative counterpart in the research field (Nowell et al., 2017). There has also been much debate about the need for qualitative research to be explicit in its presentation of what comprises the research, including details on what has been undertaken and why, alongside clear descriptions of the methods and analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006; Attride-Stride, 2001).

Qualitative researchers have discussed how their research could be evaluated (Henwood & Pigeon, 1992), and yet there remains little agreement among researchers as to a standard criterion or 'gold standard' approach (Liamputtong, 2019). One way for researchers to persuade both themselves and their readers that the findings of qualitative research are of value is through trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a framework

comprised of four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There has also been movement towards more generic criteria that could be applied flexibly across all different aspects of qualitative research (Yardley, 2000, 2008). It has, however, also been argued (Madill et al., 2000; Reicher, 2000) that there should be evaluation criteria to suit each particular method rather than a broad and general set of criteria—indeed, owing to the diversity of approaches within this research, some have developed a set of criteria with a specific method in mind. Henwood and Pigeon (1992), for example, developed criteria for successful research using Grounded Theory, to which Elliott et al. (1999) responded by developing criteria to meet their phenomenological hermeneutic tradition. This is simply because qualitative research takes many different guises and forms; according to Willig (2013), in order to evaluate a study's contribution to knowledge, there must be an understanding of the epistemological basis for the research method used in the study.

The trustworthiness criteria developed by Nowell et al. (2017) establishes trust throughout the stages of thematic analysis. This set of criteria was developed in response to the growing popularity of thematic analysis and was initially considered a suitable way to ensure a credible study. In particular, it aimed to ensure TA is conducted in a rigorous and methodical manner such that the results from research might have the same level of perceived quality as other methodologies. The authors (Nowell et al., 2017) argued that there was little to guide researchers in how to conduct a rigorous TA other than Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013), including no clear agreement as to how researchers could apply the method; trustworthiness was therefore one way researchers could persuade themselves and their readers that their findings were of value (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Nowell et al. (2017) refined the concept of trustworthiness by including concepts such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

After some consideration, however, this set of criteria was ultimately rejected on the grounds that some of the criteria for good research were felt to emulate those of a positivist research stance. These criteria thus felt constrained and did not meet the epistemological aims of the current research. One particularly pertinent example of this was the suggested researcher triangulation at most stages of the data collection and analysis, including when generating initial codes and searching for themes; this was felt to be inappropriate as it could influence or significantly alter the original ideas of the researcher—something considered fundamental to the process of qualitative research and TA. The use of coding frames or codebooks was also suggested, something which would not have met the aims of reflexive TA, in which the imposition of any kind of framework on

to the data is felt to constrain and restrict the analysis in a manner too closely aligned to a positivist stance (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To this end, the current research considered criteria that would ensure quality that was oriented towards a specific methodology, such as Braun and Clarke’s 15-point checklist for good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). It offered criteria with a generalised approach for all qualitative research, such as Yardley’s (2000, 2008) principles. The reason for using both sets of criteria was that Yardley’s (2000, 2008) principles are considered one of the most ‘open ended flexible quality’ (yet also neutral and successful) set of criteria (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and were thus suitable for supplementing the more specific reflexive TA criteria to ensure quality at both the specific and general level of qualitative research. Yardley’s (2000) generic criteria for successful qualitative research were also felt to be important as they considered the research in a holistic manner. The chart below (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2013) indicates how both sets of criteria were met in the current research, where consideration was given to sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency, coherence and their importance and impact to the study as a whole.

Table 3: Fifteen-Point Checklist for Good Thematic Analysis

Process	No.	Criteria	Actions Taken to Meet Criteria
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Transcription	1	Data are transcribed to an appropriate level of detail; transcripts checked against tapes for 'accuracy.'	Audio recordings were listened to once, then listened to again while transcribing them personally. A professional transcriber was used for some of the interviews. Once transcribed, the audio was listened to again as the transcripts were read to check for any errors or missed content. Any additional anomalies, such as words that were difficult to hear or questions about meaning, were listened to again. The data were transcribed to an appropriate level of detail.
Coding	2	Each data item given equal attention in the data process.	Transcription involved reading each complete extract and noting down what was said/conveyed at each point.
Themes	3	Themes are not generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach); rather, the coding process is thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive.	Comments were then translated into codes, which were later arranged into themes by writing them out by hand and cutting them into strips. Code strips were collated together in a visual form. This ensured consideration of whole data sets rather than just certain points that appeared 'vivid' to the researcher.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme are collated for each data set.	

	5	Themes are checked against each other and the original data set.	The researcher continually referred back to the original data set (i.e., transcribed interviews) to ensure that themes were coherent and fitted the original data sets.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive.	Themes were continuously checked through references back to original data sets.
Analysis	7	Data are analysed (interpreted, made sense of) rather than merely paraphrased and described.	Data analysis involved continuously checking data sets, codes and themes to ensure they matched each other. Choosing quotations to illustrate each theme and its analytic claim ensured the data sets matched the analysis. When discrepancies were found, changes were made to ensure themes and analysis reflected the data.
	8	Analysis and data match each other; extracts illustrate the analytic claims.	
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and the topic.	
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.	
Overall	11	Enough time is allocated to complete all stages of the analysis adequately without rushing a stage.	Allocated study time was planned out. The analysis stage was given a substantial amount of time.

Written report	12	The assumptions about (and specific approach to) reflexive thematic analysis are clearly explicated.	The methodology chapter explains the process of data analysis in detail. Explanation is supported with examples in the findings section and the appendices. Braun & Clarke (2006) recommend reading other research that uses TA, which was done prior, during and after the analysis of this research.
	13	There is a good fit between what the researcher claims to do and what is actually done—i.e., the described method and reported analysis are consistent.	Analysis was done while writing the majority of the methodology chapter and writing down notes from each step to ensure that each step was captured, recorded and later explained.
	14	Language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.	The ontology and epistemology for the study are clearly explained and discussed in the methodology chapter to ensure that it underpinned every aspect of the research.

	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just ‘emerge.’	During the transcription as well as analysis, Braun & Clarke’s (2006, 2013) paper was referred to continuously to ensure the guidelines were followed. Upon completion of the analysis, the transcripts were read again. The researcher was actively involved in the research process as opposed to waiting for themes to emerge.
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3.12 Reflexivity

In qualitative research, reflexivity is an important aspect of the research design and process. Personal reflexivity encourages the researcher to understand how their position in the research process may be implicated in the interpretation of the data (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2018). As an EP interviewing other EPs, this researcher recognises that they have brought their own experience and perceptions to the subject area; in turn, this may have shaped the research. While consideration was especially given to the role of a researcher before the initial phases of the research, it was also important to continue to consider it throughout the process. This was accomplished by making notes to highlight aspects that the researcher wished to consider further. Notes were then reviewed throughout the process, with amendments made in light of reflections.

3.13 Ethical considerations

To ensure this study complied with the ethical requirements necessary, the researcher considered and followed both the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2014, 2018), the regulating body of the educational psychology profession (the Health and Care Professional Council or HCPC), and the requirements of Cardiff University’s Ethics Committee. The table below highlights the ethical considerations that

emerged in the current study, alongside the actions that were taken by the researcher in order to ensure the research met with the necessary ethical standards.

Table 4: Overview of Ethical Issues and Responses

Ethical Issues	Actions Taken by Researcher
Informed consent	<p>All participants were given a detailed information sheet outlining the title, purpose and aim of the study when they responded to the initial post on EPNNet asking for volunteers and expressions of interest. The sheet further listed inclusion criteria, time commitment, choice of location and other details (see Appendix 5).</p> <p>Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time up until the point of data transcription and anonymisation.</p> <p>Upon confirmation of participation, participants completed and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix 4). The consent form provided details on the right to withdraw from the study up until the point of data transcription, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality and anonymity relating to collected data, and how data would be handled. Additional details included contact details for the supervisor at Cardiff University, further information or queries.</p>

<p>Confidentiality & Anonymity</p>	<p>To ensure anonymity, participants were ascribed a number for all purposes and no names were recorded during the interview process. Recorded data were transcribed anonymously within four weeks of recording, either by myself or a professional transcriber. All identifying features were removed from the interview recording before it was sent to the transcriber. Upon completion, all interviews were password protected by both the researcher and the transcriber.</p> <p>Participants were made aware that in addition to anonymisation, all other identifying or personal details revealed in the interview (such as place of work, pupils, etc.) would be removed from any quotations used.</p> <p>Participants were informed that findings from research may be shared with the University or in future research journals, but all personal or identifiable details would be excluded. This principle has been strictly adhered to.</p>
<p>Data management</p>	<p>Data were managed in accordance with data legislation, i.e., The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018).</p> <p>All electronic recorded files were password protected.</p> <p>A locked cabinet was used to store the recording device.</p> <p>All electronic files were deleted once transcription and analysis were completed.</p> <p>When transporting recorded data from the location of the interview, the recording device was held in the possession of the researcher at all times.</p>
<p>Potential risk</p>	<p>As the researcher was not based at the Cardiff University site, a risk assessment was undertaken to ensure risks to both researcher and participants were considered. An action plan to address the potential risks was in place (see Appendix 9).</p>

Debrief	Following participation, all participants received a debriefing letter and given the opportunity to read the completed research (see Appendix 6).
Privacy	All interviews were completed in participant homes as their choice of venue. This ensured a sense of privacy for participants.

3.14 Myself as a Researcher-practitioner and my epistemological and ontological stance

Within the current research, the role of the researcher is that of an EP interviewing other EPs from an interpretive social constructionist perspective. This would lead and shape the course of the interview process as well as the experiences and views gained through questioning. In order to consider the underlying assumptions and preconceptions brought (subconsciously) by the researcher to the research questions and to the broader topic in general, it was important that self-reflection was undertaken (Willig, 2013). The key points reflected on were as follows:

- What have my personal experiences with children and young people who are home-educated and have special educational needs and disability been? How might these experiences influence my preconceptions about the findings?
- Why am I interested in carrying out this particular research project? What knowledge do I hope to gain and for what purpose?
- What is my relationship to the participants and how might this influence the findings?
- How might my personal experiences influence the analysis and what can be done to ensure the quality of the research?

As both a local authority and self-employed independent EP, I have undertaken work with numerous home-educated young people and children who have special educational needs and/or disability. Over the past few years, I have been involved with an increasing number of parents who decided to home educate their children with special educational needs and disability. Some of my work has been around updating their needs to inform an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with a view to the children returning to school.

The majority of the work, however, was that which stemmed from parents being referred to an EHCP as a means to access support they otherwise felt was missing. This meant that the EHCP process was identifying their needs for the first time. From the perspective of an EP, this felt unacceptable for both the children and parents—I wondered whether EPs might have been involved in early intervention work to improve the situation between the families and the school as well as the outcomes for the child. I also wondered why this particular course of action was being taken so regularly. What had happened in education in terms of government legislation and political developments? Had this adversely impacted some children with special educational needs and disability?

Whilst working as an EP with home-educated children and families, I gained insight into the views of parents on alternative ways of educating children. Sometimes, parents had ideological concerns about education in school; most, however, had taken the decision to home educate because they could not find another way to resolve an issue with the school. My experiences therefore led me to consider whether home education is sometimes a decision taken when parents feel there is no other option because the school system, as it is, is not appropriate for their child. I was also mindful that my work with children and their families was often a single piece of work which was not always satisfactory. This insight would influence my position as a researcher, as I am aware of the difficulties parents face in accessing support, which, even when successfully accessed, is often short term and limited. This led me to devise research questions that gathered information about the experiences and views of other EPs through a semi-structured interview. In posing flexible questions about the kinds of work that EPs are involved in (as well as its benefits and limitations), I hoped to gain other information further to my perspective.

My experiences of working with home-educated families also led me to consider my own knowledge and training as an EP. I received no training in home education during my training course, where the focus was solely on school education. The purpose of education and its alternative forms were not explored either. As a practising EP, I gained neither any professional development on home education nor any opportunities to consider education as a general concept divorced from school. Education was therefore conflated with school (Lees, 2014). It was for this reason that I felt that further exploration and debate within the profession was required; given that EPs continue to receive similar training and development opportunities, I was aware that the EPs I interviewed may have differing levels of experience and may also have viewed school as the dominant option for education. This is something that both interested me and led me to consider whether

school should be the only education option EPs should consider appropriate—and therefore whether training courses should consider a more diverse range of educational settings as well as opportunities for further professional development in the subject.

Prior to and during the research, the subject of home education was regularly featured in the media. Much of this media attention fell on the safety and wellbeing of children being educated at home, with adverse outcomes including the possibility of abuse and death: the cases of home-educated children Victoria Climbié and Kyra Ishaq, both of whom died from abuse and neglect by family members, carried a high profile in the media (Webb, 2011). The negative consequences of educating a child at home, which emerge from the lack of visibility to services, are therefore prominent in the media. I was aware that this could have impacted my own thoughts as well as those of my fellow EPs.

Even as an EP interviewing fellow EPs, I was aware that the opinions I had formed regarding the research area could be very different from those of the individuals I interviewed. I could therefore expect to encounter a diverse range of views that may not necessarily concur with my own. This led me to select semi-structured interviews coupled with thematic analysis as my preferred method of data collection; together these would enable the collection and elicitation of viewpoints which differed from my own so that my personal viewpoint did not dominate my research. In following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) guidance on conducting effective research, in addition to being reflective (Willig, 2013), I felt that sufficient consideration had been given to the researcher's role within the current study to ensure my own awareness of the underlying assumptions that I could bring to the role of researcher/interviewer, along with how they could impact me and my decisions in the process.

The following chapter, Chapter Four, will explore the findings from the data drawn from interviews using a social constructionist position.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the themes identified through the process of reflexive thematic analysis as detailed in Chapter Three (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). The data corpus for this analysis was the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews conducted with educational psychologist participants with experience of working with home-educated children with special educational needs. The data were examined using a social constructionist approach (Burr, 2003) to reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2013).

The findings relevant to the research questions will be illustrated by the discussion and the analysis of the themes with links to the relevant literature presented in Chapter Two. The three primary overarching themes, as well as the connecting main and subthemes which this the reflexive thematic analysis identified, are each considered individually. These themes are evidenced and illustrated with corresponding thematic diagrams, direct quotations from the interviews, and a description of the themes in which an analytic discussion reflects on both the possible semantic and latent meaning of the data.

Owing to the inductive nature of thematic analysis, this chapter is organised in relation to the themes identified rather than the research questions posed.

4.2 Themes identified

Three overarching themes were identified:

- 1) School as Utopia
- 2) Fear of the Unknown
- 3) What has happened to Inclusion?

Figure 3: Thematic Map

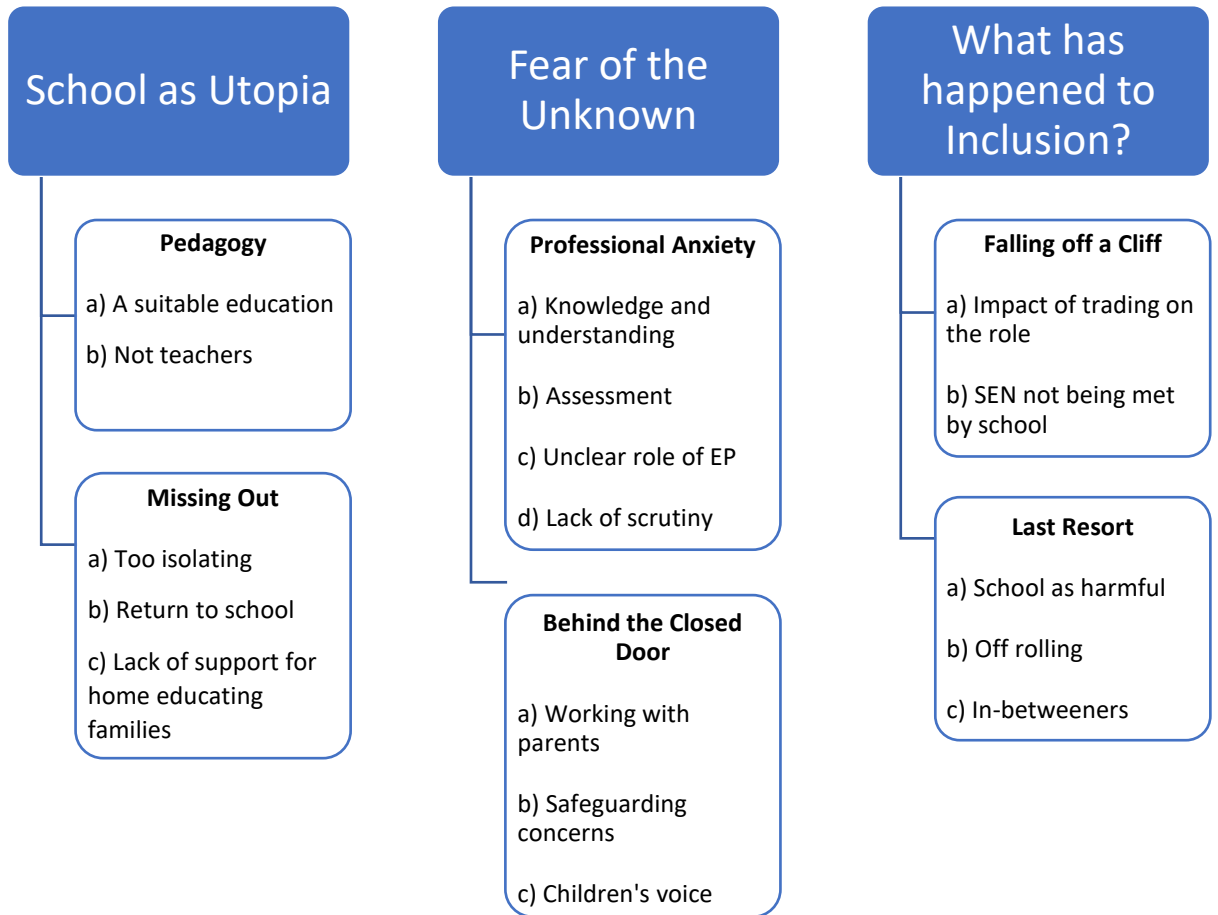
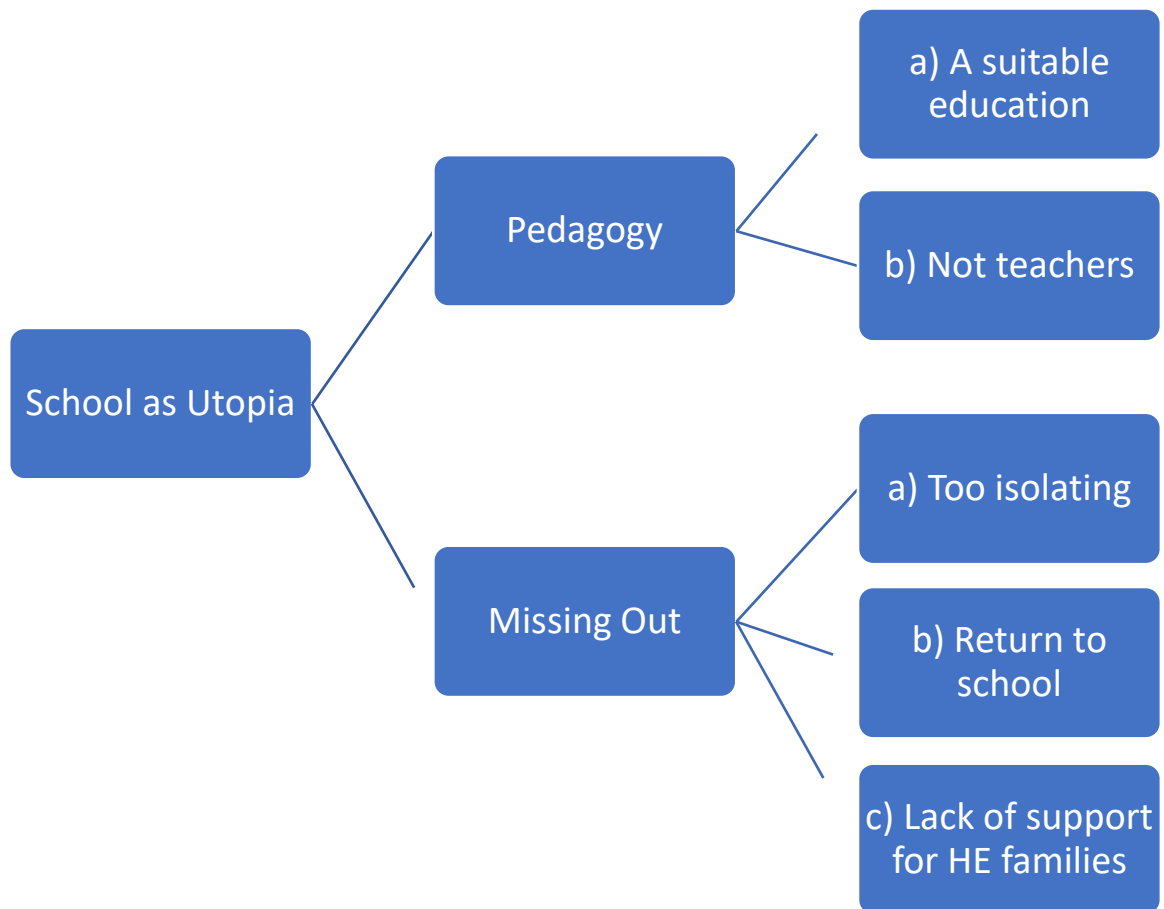


Figure 4: School as Utopia



Theme 1: School as Utopia

The overarching theme of '*School as Utopia*' encompasses a number of issues that the educational psychologist participants of this study raised regarding a home-based education in comparison to an education within a school environment.

The choice of the word 'Utopia' was selected as school was often constructed as the better choice for the education of the child within these discourses. 'Utopia,' defined as, 'an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect' according to the Oxford Reference Dictionary, was selected as the theme title as it echoed and contrasted that of Pattison (2015) who considered the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia to explore the relationship between school and other forms of education, primarily of home

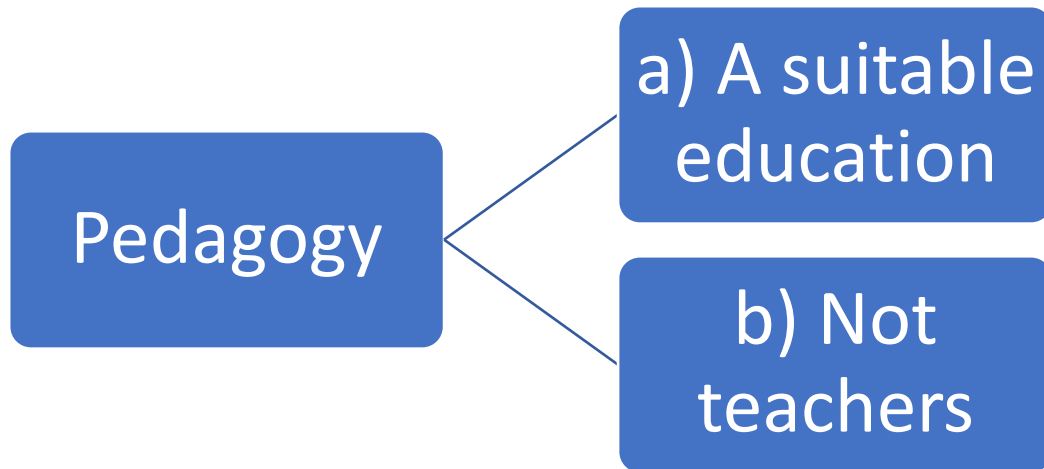
education. By considering it within the paradigm of heterotopia, Pattison (2015) positions home educators as having other possibilities and opportunities; as those who seek alternatives to the convention of a school-based education. This definition was also chosen as, although it was acknowledged by participants that there were significant issues with a school education, some of which had led parents to initially choose home education, there was nevertheless the view among some participants that a return to school was the ideal scenario for the home-educated child they were involved with, seemingly presenting a conflict of viewpoints.

Moreover, the criticisms of the quality of education received within a home-based education that the participants offered also led to the construct of school education as a 'utopia' by comparison. The idea of 'School as Utopia' therefore recalls a somewhat ambiguous position: educational psychologists are keen that children return to school—which is felt to be in their best interest and therefore the ideal scenario—and yet the construct of school that they encourage is 'fundamentally unreal' (Pattison, 2015) and is one which ultimately both parents and children have rejected.

These findings concur with previous research which has demonstrated that school is positioned as the 'norm' as the dominant discourse of education in current society (Lees, 2014; Pattison, 2015). Indeed, in the current study, participants generally presented a view of home education as 'other' or as conceptually subordinate (Pattison, 2015), through a discourse which was dominated by the conception of school as the only valid educational option for children.

4.3 Pedagogy

Figure 5: Pedagogy



Within the overarching theme of ‘*School as Utopia*,’ participants were concerned about the nature of the education taking place within the home, how this was delivered and by whom. These concerns formed the basis of the main theme of pedagogy. Pedagogy is defined as, ‘the study of teaching methods, including the aims of education and the ways in which such goals may be achieved’ (Britannica.com). This is a definition which Davies (2015) considers to have developed over time, originally being concerned with children learning from everyday situations by modelling (Davies, 2003) in a form of education closer in nature to that of an informal or autonomous education (Thomas, 1998). As such, where the title of the theme encapsulated all aspects of the participants’ views and experiences related to the education children received in the home, ‘*Pedagogy*’ encompassed the subtheme, ‘*A suitable education*,’ which details what is being presented as education within the home and draws on the differences between traditional (those synonymous with a school education) and autonomous (those linked to home education) forms of education (Webb, 2011; Davies, 2015). Participants reported their concerns regarding how the educational day was organised and what was being taught, among other issues. A further sub theme, ‘*Not teachers*,’ pertains to the views and experiences of participants regarding the quality of instruction in the home specifically in relation to who is providing and delivering it.

'Pedagogy' as a theme title was chosen as it pertains to all aspects of a child's and young person's development, education and the processes of teaching and learning. The theme therefore captures all aspects of education in its broadest sense—including the nature of the education provided in the home—all of which were explored by the participants within the interviews.

Participant 3 describes the home education of a child with special educational needs who she was working with.

In the meantime, there are gaps in those kids' education and to me there's always been the worry the longer the gap or more fragmented gaps there is then when they come back it's very difficult for them to get into the routines of the full day.
(Participant 3, Lines 32-34)

Here, the participant conceptualises the education received within the home as 'gaps' during which the child is not attending a school. This implies that home education is not a type of education in its own right, but rather a 'gap' in mainstream school education, reducing home education to an inferior form of education, or indeed not an education at all. The view expressed by the participant here is that when the child does return to school, their overall level of education will have declined as a result of being home-educated. Indeed, the participant uses the word 'gap' three times in a relatively short sentence, which only emphasises this view. Their construction of home education as an alternative or 'other' lower status education concurs with the findings of the research from supporters of home education (Lees, 2014; Pattison, 2015). These findings have illustrated how the concept of the school environment is synonymous with education in that it occupies the dominant discourse in society; in comparison, therefore, home education is designated to a construct of 'other'. A social constructionist perspective is also pertinent to the participants' views as they are influenced by the school being the dominant construct within the UK society. A home education holds limited value in the UK society and culturally it is not an embedded or a particularly valid form of education and therefore the participants' views parallel that view.

Participant 3 elaborates on her thoughts regarding home education, summarising the view of her educational psychology colleagues views in the following quotation:

I think again for me, and I think for some colleagues the agony is, what is it that children are accessing and as what is the monitoring of their progress?' (P3, L44-45)

Here the participant uses emotive language to describe the concerns of both she and her colleagues. Her choice of the word 'agony' in this context suggests that there is a shared view between she and her colleagues that home education is highly detrimental to children's education generally. This view is then reinforced by considering 'what' education they receive and how it is 'monitored.' Here use of a discourse associated with school culture, such as 'accessing,' 'monitoring,' and 'progress,' when discussing the education of a child at home implies that the same processes should take place in the home, thereby privileging a school-based education. The comment from Participant 3 also suggests that what happens in terms of education for the child within the home is not as clearly defined as that within a school-based education.

a) A suitable education

The subtheme, '*A suitable education*,' encapsulates the participants' experiences and views that a home education should be comprised of the elements found in a school-based education. Throughout the cohort of participants there was a persistent general interest about what was being taught, how it was being taught, and the learning outcomes for children who are home-educated. Participant 4, for instance, noted that she was comforted by the fact that, for the most part of the week, the home-educated children with whom she had worked were following a familiar a school-associated routine that included a timetable of subjects:

It felt quite structured, they had timetables, I was quite surprised about that, I had never seen that. I said is that kept to, and she said at least four days of the week. (P4, L51-52)

Indeed, Participant 4 said that she was 'quite surprised' that there was some form of timetable or curriculum being followed by the home-educating parent. That she added that she had 'never seen' this before implies that is not usual, in her opinion or expectation, to find traditional school elements in home education; indeed, this appeared to reassure her of the quality of education being received on the grounds that some semblance of school like education was being followed.

The participant recalled asking the parent whether the timetable was adhered to, indicative of a suspicion as to whether such a structured routine was actually operational in place. Participant 4 explained, however, that after further investigation it became clear that the curriculum was not equivalent to that found in a school:

There is a timetable, but it was almost like twenty minutes type thing, twenty minutes chemistry but everything scientific was called chemistry. (P4, L52-53)

The participant expressed some disappointment that the curriculum, although adapted for a child who had a special interest in chemistry, was restricted in terms of the education he was receiving. The notion of the timetable was adhered to, but it was not a timetable which would be equivalent to one found in a school, as it was limited as the parent had twenty-minute blocks of time on the same topic. It was therefore implied by Participant 4 that the timetable adopted by the home-educating parent was both superficial and not of equal value to that found in a school, which would have encompassed a wide range of subjects beyond chemistry.

The expression of this sentiment demonstrates the participant's view that traditional aspects of education, such as a timetable, should be prioritised. It also shows how a school-based construct of education is potentially imposed upon home education by participants-

The breath and content of the home education curriculum was also of note to Participant 2, who asserted that the home education she had observed could be characterised as 'death by worksheets':

Essentially, you're just presenting a worksheet to them. I've not seen anything that I've thought wow that's creative, that's resourceful like I'm inspired by that, that I'm amazed by that, whereas I go into school quite often and I see things that I'm inspired by and think wow that's ingenious. (P2, L167-169)

Here Participant 2 emphasises the differences between the content of what is being taught within the school compared to what she had seen in the home. In her view, school is a learning environment which is not only able to offer superior learning opportunities but also ones which exceed her expectations in terms of the creativity and resourcefulness. The adjective 'ingenious' is used to highlight the participant's view of the significant differences between education received at home and at a school. In her view, the school was offering a higher standard of education and a more creative learning environment.

The lack of a formal curriculum within the home environment was also expressed as a source of concern by other participants:

Erm I felt that it was [pause] planned around nurture and very much about "let's just do something", so it will be like "let's go and kick a ball about." (P9, L196-197)

That was what their timetable looked like. (P9, L200)

Here Participant 9 highlights that her experience of home education did not consist of the expected conventions which govern a school-based education. Making the point that it did not follow the same structure as a school day since it appeared to be focused on an alternative, 'nurture' based education, this initially appears to be a positive aspect of the curriculum since it presumably focuses on the meeting of the child's emotional needs. This is further clarified, however, by her description of the content of what happens: 'just do something' and 'kick a ball about' suggesting the curriculum is very limited and lacking substance.

Although home education that places the child and their needs central to the learning process is often referred to as 'informal' or 'autonomous' education (Thomas, 2013; Webb, 2011), participants noted that the parents they encountered often appeared to struggle with what to do and how to do it.

In the experience of Participant 7, home education appeared to lack anything she perceived as necessary to an effective education—this included items such as furniture, equipment and resources that would otherwise be taken for granted in a school educational setting:

P: And she looked a bit panicked, and I and I said, has he got a table or a desk or anything he can?

I: Hmm.

P: There wasn't one.

I: No table?

P: No table, no desk. Has he got anything he can lean on? No. Erm have we got any paper? Has he got his crayons he uses? And no to all of that. (P7, L161-171)

Here Participant 7 illustrates the lack of educational resources she observed by repeating the conversation she had with the parent. This conversation clearly presents the participant's construct of an effective education as one that should include standard school-based furniture, such as a desk and a chair as well as basic equipment like pens, crayons, and paper which, as the participant emphasizes, were also unavailable to her. This could be interpreted as evidence of how the construct of a school education and related paraphernalia is privileged in the educational psychologist's thinking and is thereby imposed on a home-based education. It also exemplifies how the parent was unprepared for educating within the home which was perceived as an inappropriate educational environment for the child.

Indeed, there were limited examples from the data that home education could offer the opportunity to devise an education within the home that could offer a viable alternative for

the child without the rigidity and restrictions of a school curriculum. Participant 3 nevertheless explores this possibility in relation to an experience she had:

The parent knows their child better than anybody does, and they probably feel that actually they can give them as much education or as little as they think their child needs at that time, so they don't have to fit in to how schools are run so the kinda of demands of curriculum and things. And they would worry about them being you know sort of well... actually differentiated well as a parent I know my child can do so that's the kind of positive bit, but I see more of a negative because I just think, and again the demands on the parents' home and school are two different things but you're bringing into one arena aren't you it's a bit ... Of ... and then getting your child to do things. As a parent myself I would struggle with that. (P3, L114- 121)

Participant 3 offers opinions regarding how the parent educating at home may adapt to meet their child's needs and is not required to adhere to a rigid curriculum or worry whether their child's needs will be catered for through differentiation, indicating that this is a clear positive aspect of home education. There is also the acknowledgement that because the parent knows their child they can adapt the education accordingly, without the need for the child to 'fit in with how schools are run' corresponding to the demands of the curriculum. This indicates an understanding from the participant that a home education can be appropriate at times. Indeed, Bowers (2017) postulates that educational psychologists should consider the benefit of home education as a genuine educational option for some children and be reflective with regards to their own position to it as part of their professional practice, as the excerpt from Participant 3 also highlights.

Halfway through the excerpt, however, Participant 3 quickly changes her stance to consider instead the negative aspects of education within the home. Here, she hypothesises what it would be like to be a home-educating parent herself, which, because she views home and school as two separate entities, would become problematic in her opinion: the issue for the participant here is not one of curriculum but rather around the motivation and management of their child. Despite initial acknowledgement of the positive aspects of educating a child at home, in this participant's view the world of learning is clearly framed within the educational setting of the school in a way that it is not in the

home. Once the participant internalises what the experience of home-educating would be like for her personally, this changes her view.

The following quotation from Participant 8 offers an example of how, for some educational psychologists, education is ultimately viewed as synonymous with school:

Um, I think the mum was providing quite a good curriculum for him, and she genuinely was 'cause she'd made one of her rooms into a school room. He has a desk, he had posters of dinosaurs and numbers, and he wasn't, you know, he wasn't age appropriate in terms of his education by any means, and he could tell me what he's been learning recently. So she was using the internet a lot, she had a couple of, um, [unclear 0:03:56] programmes on her laptop I remember. (P8, L 94-99)

Here, the common indicators of a school-based education, such as curriculum, a room resembling a school with a desk and posters on the wall, are referenced as indicators of a 'good' educational experience. Participant 8 perceives this as a suitable education because, although adapted for the particular child, it had the hallmarks of school. This parent is therefore given credit for achieving a school-like experience within the home.

b) Not teachers

The subtheme '*Not teachers*' was identified on the basis of multiple participants' comments that parents or carers were not able to offer the same standard of education as qualified teachers. In particular, participants were concerned about 'what' was being taught, 'how' it was being taught, as well as the credentials of the adult delivering the learning.

You know they both have professional jobs but they're not teachers and I don't think..... they've said before they are winging it. (P5, L103-105)

Mum, who does the majority of the teaching, has no idea how to teach literacy, so he hasn't got that basic skill. (P5 L107-108)

Here, the participant contrasts the verb 'winging it' to the word 'teachers' as a means to suggest that parents do not have the skills and understanding that a teacher would. What this implies is that parents are making it up as they go along rather than preparing and planning what their child is learning as a trained teacher would do, thereby indicating that teachers are highly valued in their educational knowledge and skills.

Participant 5 also explains that the mother did not have the necessary skills to teach her child to read. This is something which would have impacted her role as the educational psychologist in terms of the advice she offered and the interventions she suggested, as the participant considers:

Although I can see where he might be dyslexic, I couldn't say hand on heart he's had appropriate teaching opportunities. (P5, L84-85).

This educational psychologist considered the home education they observed as being insufficient because the parents were not qualified and trained teachers. This echoes the concerns voiced by the NASUWT in Badman (2009: 4.7) regarding the lack of qualified teachers in the home and draws on the debate regarding traditional versus autonomous methods of teaching and learning (Rothermel, 2002). Indeed, there have been debates as to whether reading must be taught directly through traditional methods or whether children may automatically gain reading skills through an autonomous method (Thomas & Pattison, 2007; Webb, 2011). Some research has also highlighted that home-educated children and young people do better with regards to achievement than their school-based counterparts (Rothermel, 2002,) although it is acknowledged that these studies were based on very small sample sizes and undertaken by those with a vested interest as home educators themselves (Webb, 2011). A USA study corroborated these findings by demonstrating that whether the state law required parents to hold a teaching certificate or not was irrelevant to the successful academic achievement of the home-educated children (Ray, 2017).

In the excerpt above, the role of the educational psychologist is expressed as being compromised since the potential advice and support they could offer is, in Participant 5's view, complicated by the fact the child had not accessed trained and qualified teaching.

Some participants espoused stronger opinions and viewpoints regarding the teaching and learning that home-educated children experienced.

The home environment, the lack of supervision, the lack of ability to ensure he was receiving any form of education whatsoever and it was patently clear to me that it was just playing on mum's phone and watching videos; that was his education. (P7, L 228-230)

Later Participant 7 continues,

He should have had input from specialist teachers, my experience is, you know, this is a little boy who he-he-he would have benefited from but I don't know how parents were... how mum was responding to-to these possibilities. (P7, L676-678)

In both excerpts, Participant 7 offers a juxtaposition of the reality of the home education the child was receiving— 'the lack of supervision, the lack of ability'—and the preferred situation of being taught by 'specialist teachers.'

In the second excerpt, this juxtaposition is foregrounded by positioning 'specialist teacher' against 'mum,' thereby contrasting the two, seemingly, pole positions. By using 'specialist' rather than simply teacher, the participant raises the status of teachers further still and in doing so positions 'mum' in a subordinate position.

The hierarchical view of educators was also shared by another participant:

a parent without a teaching qualification isn't going to know about the process of learning, you can't Google it. At the end of the day you're, you're being taught by a parent aren't you, you're not being taught by a specialist qualified person. (P8, L264-266)

The construct that most home-educating parents are not qualified, experienced teachers is, in the view of the participants, a considerable drawback to them being able to adequately educate their own child within the home. The comments above suggest that educational psychologists value teaching as a profession and feel that in order to educate in the home adults should hold the same level of skills and knowledge as qualified teachers.

Indeed, the extracts highlight the power imbalance between a parent educator who is perceived as having no skills and little experience and that of a highly skilled and qualified teacher. Although previous research highlights that educational psychologists should work closely with parents to ensure the best education for children (Wolfendale, 1983, 1999; Wolfendale & Topping, 1996; Wolfendale & Bastiani, 2000), there is limited evidence to demonstrate how educational psychologists may involve parents and families (McGuigan, 2017). Moreover, when working with parents, professionals are often positioned as the problem solver, (Bozic, 2013) thereby creating a power imbalance (McQueen & Hobbs, 2014). As the excerpts indicate, in the home education scenario, participants see parent educators not simply as parents but also as educators, something which creates a relationship which is both complex and unusual for them. Within this study, the unique dynamic of a parent educator is professionally perplexing.

Meighan (1981) has explored the parent as an educator and the difficulties this appears to pose for the teaching profession. This also demonstrated the huge philosophical divide between a home and school-based education from participants' perspectives. In this study, there was an acknowledgement that some parents were aware of their shortcomings with regards to not being qualified and experienced teachers which was compensated by their employing teachers and tutors.

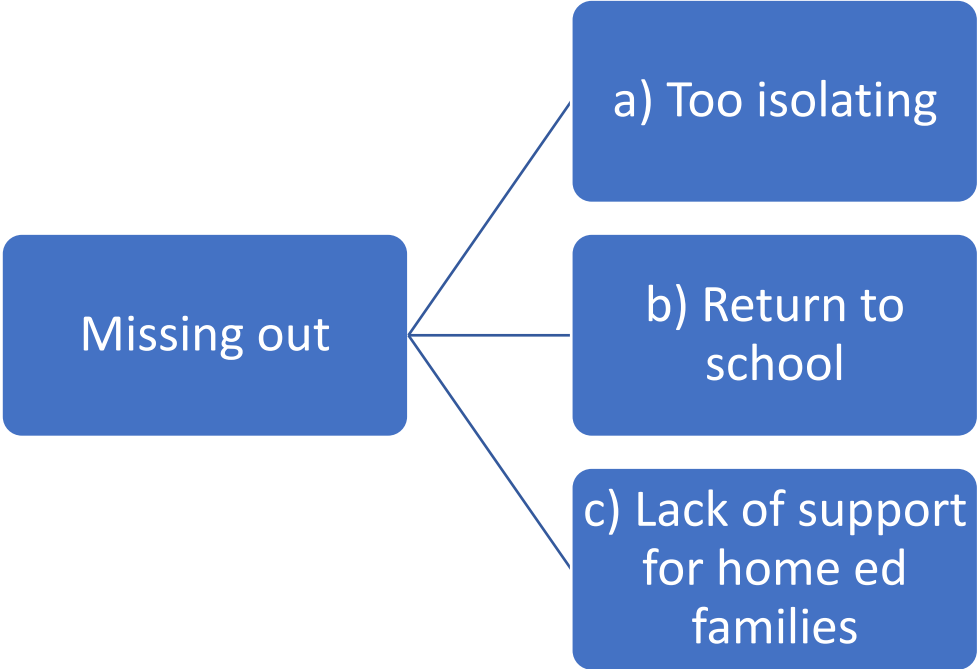
In some of the cases the parents had employed someone to do it and in one particular case it was someone from the same school who acted as home tutor.....So that, I will say, that was the most comfortable one that we had. (P4, L70-76)

The optimal experience of home education for Participant 4 was thus where parents employed a qualified teacher—in this case, someone from the school the child originally

went to. The participant describes this example using the adjective ‘comfortable,’ which expresses their more positive view of the home education of this particular child as a result of trained teacher input.

The data in the main theme, ‘*Pedagogy*,’ illustrate that it is important for educational psychologists that the conventions of school education—such as the curriculum and having trained teachers—are maintained within home education in order for it to be judged an appropriate and successful form of education. It is evident that alternative approaches to education, such as the home education participants experienced, pose a challenge to educational psychologists, a finding that supports the work of Bowers (2017). The views of educational psychologists in the current study are evidently much more closely aligned to school education as has been demonstrated in previous studies, (Bowers, 2017; McGuiggan, 2017; Islam, 2013).

4.4 Missing out



The further subtheme of ‘*Missing Out*’ was extrapolated from the data. Still under the overarching theme of ‘*School as Utopia*,’ the theme of ‘*Missing Out*’ encapsulates the view expressed among the participants that children who are home-educated, and therefore

not accessing all the facets of a school education, are '*Missing out*' on a perceived richer and wider-ranging educational experience. This is generally in relation to '*Missing out*' on social interactions with peers and friends, wider social experiences and thus their own social development. As is consistent with previous research, participants present a stereotypical notion that home-educated children have limited social experiences which in turn leads to poorly developed social skills (Bowers, 2017; Medlin, 2000). This is nevertheless often inaccurate and not borne out in the research (Badman 2009; Thomas, 1998; Rothermel 2003; Webb, 2011): children from home-educated environments are frequently reported to have better relationships with parents and other adults and higher quality friendships (Medlin, 2013).

The subtheme, '*Too isolating*,' considers home-educated children's social experiences and the perception among participants that they do not gain the wide-ranging social experiences they would have accessed in school setting. '*Return to school*' as a subtheme considers participants' experiences and perceptions that a return to a school-based education would ultimately be better for the child because home-educated children are missing out on these social and other experiences.

The final subtheme, '*Lack of support for home educating parents*,' looks at the support available for the families of home-educated students in their endeavours to be home educators. Indeed, what this study finds is that it appears that both parents and their children are '*Missing out*' due to both a lack of knowledge and understanding about what home education entails and a lack of support for them in their undertaking. The main focus of '*Missing out*' is therefore to capture the participants' views and experiences of home education by comparing to it to the preferred option of a school based education.

a) Too isolating

Although children's friendships may have, predictably, been a concern among participants (Bowers, 2017) there was only one participant who explicitly postulated that home education caused children to miss out on friendships:

but are they happy being away from their friends, there are so many things that at those meeting that were discussed that are beyond the actual home issue, their access to the community that kind of stuff? (P4, L65-67)

Participant 4 details their concerns about home education leading to children being away from friends. Here, she questions the home-educated child's access to the community, suggesting that being home-educated naturally leads to a form of social isolation in which children are without friendships and access to a community. This comment assumes that friendships and community are the intrinsic domains of the school and thus by not attending school it is almost inevitable that home-educated children will suffer a lack of these. The notion that children are missing out on social experiences is elaborated further by Participant 8.

Some kids don't know what they're missing though, do they? Is, is it a naïve experience really being home educated? You're missing out on team games, you're missing out on, um, assemblies, musical events, plays. (P8, L165-168)

In this extract, the home-educated child is positioned as being unaware of all the social experiences on offer in school. The participant's choice of the adjective 'naïve' to describe the home-educating experience suggests that it offers very little in comparison to the worldly, sophisticated environment of a school educational experience. Through the use of this adjective, Participant 8 hints at their strong opinion about children missing out without positing any direct criticism of home education and thereby maintaining a professional tone.

Participant 8 goes on to substantiate their argument that home-educated children miss out by citing a number of social experiences which are positioned as solely within the domain of a school education:

You're missing out on school trips, school dinners, not that they're great, there's a whole, um, bonding of the citizen that you're missing out on if you're home educated. (P8, L175-176)

Indeed, as Participant 8 offers further examples of what the home-educated child is missing out on, she widens her argument to include a broader social aspiration: 'bonding of the citizen.' This striking lexical choice is grounded in discourse around societal and political aims of education pertaining to the social function of schools to produce not only socially appropriate citizens but also ones that are functioning members of the community and wider society (Biesta, 2009; Neuman & Guterman, 2017; Norwich, 2010), which is reminiscent of discussions of this topic in educational philosophy (Dewey, 1916; Illich, 1971). This view aligns school education to that which is beneficial for society and its citizens, and in doing so proposes that home education is not able to do this. This echoes criticisms of home education as segregational (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000).

The isolation of home-educated children from general society was also of concern to other participants:

I think it was the social isolation that came with it for both young women that was the biggest concern. (P1, L130-131)

Here, Participant 1 states that because the two young women are home-educated, they are therefore socially isolated from peers and general society. The participant continues to emphasize how detrimental she feels this is to the young people themselves:

and I think that the biggest concern is the social isolation and what do they do with them, and the impact on their family as well. (P1, L147-148)

Here, Participant 1 repeats her views regarding social isolation being the foremost difficulty for the young women at home, while also acknowledging the effect on the family. Participant 3 broadens the concerns:

actually by keeping away from the outside world actually to me is more a detriment. (P3, L124)

In this excerpt, Participant 3 extends the area of concern from one of isolation to a purposeful lack of engagement with society generally. This echoes the sentiment present in all the quotes from the participants which posit the construct that because home education means relinquishing being part of a school, what is implied as a result is thus an alienation from wider society. This construct depicts home education as a narrow social experience; by contrast, what is assumed of a school-based education is that it is able to offer a rich social life and is therefore a contributor to society in general. By formulating the contrast in this way, home education is represented as a restrictive and socially limited way of living for the children. Though Participant 8 recognises that a restricted social experience is a stereotypical criticism of home education, she nevertheless echoes the concerns of other participants that children are missing out socially, a point she makes emphatically by the choice of the word 'obviously.'

but he was obviously missing out on...I think this may be a stereotypical criticism possibly of home education, that you don't get the socialisation. (P8, L103-105)

Despite recognising the intrinsic bias in the construct of the social isolation associated with home-educated children, she nevertheless feels it is a justified criticism pertinent to the case she was working with.

Participants' views in the current data are focused on the notion of a lack of social experiences and interactions as problematic for home-educated children. This is not wholly unexpected given that educational psychologists consider that a central goal of education is 'to enable active social participation and responsible social contributions' (Warnock & Norwich, 2010, p. 77). Indeed, the expression of this view is indicative of the fact that participants accept the 'multidimensionality of educational purpose' (Biesta, 2013a, p. 134), as their professional assessments consider not only the individual's education but also their place within society as a citizen. This echoes the educational models produced by Biesta (2009) and Neuman and Guterman (2017) that education has several functions and purposes.

Bowers (2017) acknowledges that the social development of home-educated children presents a challenge for educational psychologists who consider social development a primary part of a school's function. Indeed, research indicates that friendships are often neglected by schools and teachers in favour of academic concerns (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016), while home-educated children have been found to fare well with regard to high quality friendships (Medlin, 2000, 2013) and social development at least as advanced as their school peer counterparts (Nelson, 2013; Carvalho & Skipper, 2019). There is also the recognition that the concerns regarding home-educated pupils' socialisation are generally unfounded (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013).

The findings of the current study indicate that educational psychologists conceive of home-educated children and young people as being limited in their social experiences and social interactions. The reasons why this view is widely held has been postulated—by educational psychologist researchers themselves—as being a result of the limited contact of educational psychologists with home-educating communities (Bowers, 2017; Jones, 2013; Ryan, 2019). A greater awareness of the benefits of alternative forms of education would therefore deepen their knowledge and understanding of alternative forms of education it is postulated (Bowers, 2017).

Finally, Participant 6 considers social isolation as presenting the possibility of something more sinister: that of being invisible to the rest of society:

the whole family is socially isolated maybe where you don't know what's happening with that child. (P6, L124-125)

This comment echoes the concerns voiced by the government and in general public rhetoric (NSPCC, 2014; Charles-Warner, 2015) that resulted in the publication of The Badman Review (2009) of home education. These concerns were specifically that children who are home-educated are at risk of abuse and neglect by their carers because they are not in school and therefore invisible to society.

This trifold concern regarding isolation, not being part of society, and the safety of children within the home all form the basis of the main theme of '*Missing out.*' In response to it

being '*Too isolating*,' most participants expressed a desire for children to be returned to school as soon as possible as school was conceived as the better option.

b) Return to school

The second sub theme, '*Return to School*,' captures interviewees' view that it is preferable for home-educated children to return to a school-based education. There was one participant involved with a home-educated child who was going through the statutory Education Health and Care process with the sole intention of enabling the child to go back into school. This had been initiated by the home education team in the local authority service she worked in.

Erm so suggesting EHC process to get them back into education into a special school, so in this case the actual home education team had suggested the EHC and this placement at special. (P2, L107-109)

Here it appears that getting the educational psychologist involved through an assessment for the Education Health and Care process was a means of re-enabling access to school for the young person. For other participants, however, the route back to school was not so clearly defined; there was, nevertheless, an assumption that a return to school should be the plan for the future and therefore a function of the educational psychologist's role. This concurs with previous research (Ryan, 2019; Bowers, 2017) that suggests that a valuable role of educational psychologists is to facilitate a return to a school education.

and I guess the plan ... that was in the back of people's minds was, "at some point he'll return to school" ... but after two years, it kinda felt like that probably isn't gonna happen. Erm [pause] and I'm trying to think now how, that came to me as a statutory assessment. (P9, L113-116)

Participant 9's involvement with the young person who was home-educated was also as a result of a request for an Education Health and Care Plan. According to the participant, it appeared that the young person was in theory home-educated, albeit with the assumption

that he would 'return to school' at some point—hence the educational psychologist's involvement. As such, the status of being home-educated is reduced to that of being in a state of limbo before the assumed return to school.

Later in the interview, the participant elaborated on what was currently happening for the boy in his home-educated status:

I met the man who came, who f- was going from school to do sort of stuff at home but it, I found it interesting as well that there's a, there often seems to be a very vague plan so on the one hand, it's kind of "we were hoping to get him back in school" but they hadn't, in two years, seem to have moved on from kind of like build some Lego together to build a relationship. (P9, L165-169)

The participant presents the plan to return to school as also being the intention of the school, which implies that the time he has spent at home being educated by his parent is of little value. Indeed, there is some frustration on behalf of the participant that he has been at home for a long time and still not managed to get back to school. As well as the implications of missing out on a school education, this excerpt also equates the education received at home to that of toddler type—for instance, by the example of them building LEGO® together—thereby diminishing the value of home education and the type of experiences gained in the home.

In this particular example, the relationship between that of school education and home education is complicated still further by the cross-over created by staff from school occasionally visiting the boy. Nevertheless, the educational psychologist's efforts appear to have been focused on trying to solve why the facilitation to a return to school had not happened, a valued role of the educational psychologist as noted by Ryan (2019).

I haven't had any school referrals for home-educated pupils, they've tended to come from local authority work but that has been erm (.) only in the interim before they go back into a school. (P1, L24-26)

I think it would have been exceptionally useful, I think it would have prevented the time for them being out of school. (P1, L107-108)

Participant 1's comment opens with, 'I haven't had any school referrals for home-educated pupils.' This is interesting as it appears to suggest that there should be school referrals for home-educated pupils. There is also reference to the fact that referrals for the involvement of an educational psychologist are managed and controlled by the school, indicative of the extent to which the school dominates the process of referral—indeed, the participant assumes that work with home-educated pupils will come from school rather than home-educated families themselves. This demonstrates how school is systematically at the centre of educational psychologists' work, presenting a power imbalance in that schools are constructed as having control.

This concurs with previous research that has raised concerns that educational psychology practice is too closely aligned with the involvement of schools (Arora, 2003; Bevington, 2013; McGuiggan, 2017). It also parallels the concerns regarding the narrowing of involvement of educational psychologists within the wider community and family realm given that schools have become the primary commissioner of educational psychology services as a traded service (Lee & Woods, 2017; Islam, 2013; Winward, 2015). These concerns voice the objection that those groups in society with no commissioners, such as home-educated children cited as the 'unsponsored child' (Hardy et al, 2020), will not gain vital support services—such as those of educational psychologists. The moral and ethical considerations of this have been raised by the British Psychological Society (2013) and the Association of Educational Psychologists (2011) as well as by educational psychologists themselves (Islam, 2013; Lee & Woods, 2017).

Furthermore, Participant 1, in response to a question from the interviewer about whether there was a role for educational psychologists in this case, suggests in lines 107-108 that her role would have been 'exceptionally useful' in preventing the young person from becoming home-educated given her help could have resolved all issues at an earlier opportunity. This is something which Arora (2003) also suggested. Together, these comments indicate that home education is possibly experienced by all—parents and children included—as something to be endured before the child can return to school.

Another participant expresses her delight that the parent changed their mind about home education and decided instead that her child should go back to a school setting:

The great news is mum was concerned that he did need to be back in a setting, we accepted that and wanted that as a way forward. (P7, L215-216)

This quote indicates that the participant, in her role as an educational psychologist, regards a return to school as a positive way forward, thereby invalidating the current status of home education. Here it is assumed that a return to school is in the best interests of the child, for which reason the participant conveys her joy that the parent realises and shares this view, something which corresponds with the studies from Arora (2006) and Bowers (2017) that suggest that most parents do not make a positive choice to home educate but would prefer a school education which for some reason has not been possible. This therefore constructs home education according to what Morton (2010) terms the 'last resort,' where parents seemingly want a school education but have been forced into home education for various reasons.

Home education is thus again constructed as a less valuable form of education which echoes the construct of the overarching theme of '*School as Utopia*.' It also reinforces the notion that for a great many parents home education is not a positive and deliberate choice, but rather one that has been imposed upon them after being left with no other option (Morton, 2010). Parents with children with special educational needs, in particular, are often left with no other choice but to withdraw their child from school (Parson & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016).

There was one participant who was an exception: Participant 2 saw the value of home education on the condition that it was properly supported:

there's no reason why parents aren't able to do it if they're supported well, I think in a lot of cases parents aren't, maybe aren't supported well enough to do it. (P2, L331-332)

What this quotation demonstrates is that Participant 2 acknowledges that parents could be in a position to be educators within their home but that they are being failed by a system that does not offer the support for them to do so. This leads us into the final subtheme in *'Missing Out,'* that of *'Lack of support for home educating families.'* This sub-theme addresses the point that both parents and children are missing out due to a lack of support for their choice to educate at home.

c) Lack of support for home-educating families

Several participants shared the view that home-educating families were not receiving the necessary help in their endeavour to home educate, as the following quotations from Participants 9 and 7 illustrate:

it's really important because the children that are home educated, erm ... they can be ... overlooked, like they don't have a lot of support from other services. (P9, L388-390)

And he felt like he'd gone through a gap and that he was missing access to services by the time I got to him. (P7, L130)

She said no, nobody no and no services at that point. (P7, L236)

Both of these participants raise concerns that children with special needs and their families had not been able to access any support services prior to the involvement of an educational psychologist—indeed, it appeared that the educational psychologist service was the only service to come into contact with them whatsoever. Participant 7 frames this lack of access to services as having 'gone through a gap,' where the needs of home-educated children with special educational needs are not being addressed because being home-educated means they are not able to access the support and services they need.

This position was also reinforced by Participant 8:

you don't get your...an Annual Review of your statement if you're at home-educating. (P8, L36-37)

Participant 8 highlights that even those children who hold an Education Health and Care Plan (previously called a Statement of Special Educational Needs) because of their special educational needs, do not get support from professional services, such as those based within the local authority and health services for instance, the Speech and Language Therapy Services, that the statutory status of their needs should afford. Jones and Swain (2001) highlighted that there were barriers in children participating in annual reviews, but these home-educated families do not receive what they should as part of basic statutory requirements. This undervalues the status of a home-educated child with special educational needs by neglecting the annual statutory review of the child's needs, as is outlined in the Code of Practice 2014. Because these children's needs are not being statutorily reviewed, what is implied is that they and their education are not as important because they are not within a school setting.

we don't have resources to send, um, a reviewing officer off... not that there was many children. (P8, L41-42)

Here, Participant 8 recounts the reason a Special Educational Needs Officer gave for not conducting the Annual Review of the child's needs: despite the local authority not having many home-educated children with an Education Health and Care Plan, the home-educated child did not get a review because of limited financial resourcing. This local authority attitude towards the statutory review process of a home-educated child with special educational needs demonstrates to the educational psychologist in question that a home-educated child with special educational needs and disability is regarded as less important as one that is in school. This concurs with research on the area that home-educated children's needs are often neglected by local authorities, despite the fact more support is required for these families (Badman, 2009; Parson & Lewis, 2010).

Support for children in a more general sense is also a matter that Participant 8 examines:

So I do think there is a role for qualified people to support parents with resources, with expertise, possibly with teaching, don't you? (P8, L270-271)

The quality of the support required by home-educated families is highlighted in the words 'qualified' and 'expertise' which emphasise what is currently absent from home education. These words also foreground the importance of home educators being appropriately supported in order for them to be able to fulfil their role effectively. The participant adds that this support should also include teachers.

The lack of further general support for the family was also highlighted by Participant 7:

I-I would have thought early help. I thought they were a classic Early Help family. (P7, L554)

Here, the participant indicates that the home-educated family were not in receipt of support from the Local Authority Early Help service, the function of which is to support families who are experiencing difficulties at the level prior to Social Care involvement.

Participant 5, however, offered a unique position among educational psychologists:

said they've employed me for consultations they've said they don't know what they're doing, you know, they're intelligent people, you know they both [.....] professional jobs. (P5, L103-105)

This particular home-educated family employed the help of an independent educational psychologist on a privately commissioned basis. Within this extract there is the subtle implication that even parents with seemingly positive attributes such as 'intelligence and professional jobs' still require the support of someone within the educational field—in other words, that education is not a job for parents, even if educated themselves. As such, this participant indicates that there are opportunities to diversify in a commissioned landscape, something which Winward (2015) also identifies, but only for those that can afford to pay for a service.

Another unique view regarding support for home-educated families was offered by Participant 6:

there's like a network of other parents that home educate and they come together to offer each other mutual support around curriculum but also socially, I didn't know that existed but that sounded a good thing. (P6, L103-105)

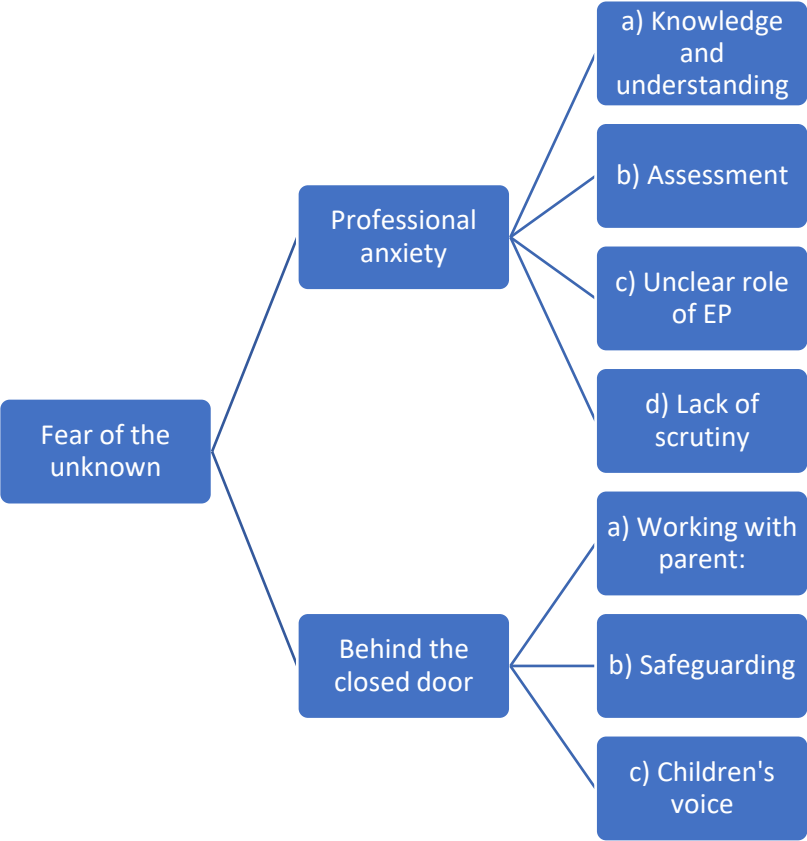
Here, the participant offers an example of how home-educated parents had come together to offer one another support in terms of both learning and social experiences; what this highlights is the significance of the home-educating community as one place that parents can gain support, something that confirms the findings of Bowers (2017).

'Lack of support for home educating families' highlights that the fact that home-educated children with special needs, including those with an Education Health and Care Plan are not able to access the support from educational psychologists that would be available children in a school settings. It also demonstrates that families receive little or no support for their needs from the local authority; indeed, the only example of a family gaining support was one that commissioned and funded an educational psychologist privately. This foregrounds the ethical and moral aspects of the issue, especially in regard to home educators who cannot afford to do this. Unlike schools, the average home-educated child has no commissioner, thus termed the 'unsponsored' child (Hardy et al., 2020, p. 184), and therefore no access to educational psychology services. Though this is something that has been raised by the profession itself (Arora, 2003; Lee & Woods, 2017; Islam, 2013), it has yet to be resolved. The final example cited by Participant 6 is an illustration of how home-educating families offer support to each other, presenting some possibilities for support from non-traditional sources. This is a finding which concurs with those of Ryan (2019) and Bowers (2017).

The overarching theme, *'School as Utopia,'* conveys the participants' views and experiences of the education offered to home-educated children. To this end, the majority of participants reflected on how and why, in their view, education received in the home is inadequate on the grounds that it does not comply with the conventional norms of a formal school education (such as the use of a curriculum and qualified teachers). In addition, a

school-based education was repeatedly framed as a generally superior education for its ability to offer opportunities for socialisation, something participants felt to be lacking in home education which concurs with the assertions by Lees (2015) and Pattison (2014). School has become conflated with education and is the dominant structure for education in society with alternatives being relegated to inferior. The participants also expressed views that a return to school was ultimately the best outcome for those who were home-educated, given the professional support that home education caused them to miss out on. The majority of families that the participants had encountered were not those for whom home education has been a positive choice, but instead occupied Morton's (2010) 'last resort' group: they were home-educating owing to disaffection with the school system.

Figure 6: Fear of the Unknown



Theme 2: Fear of the Unknown

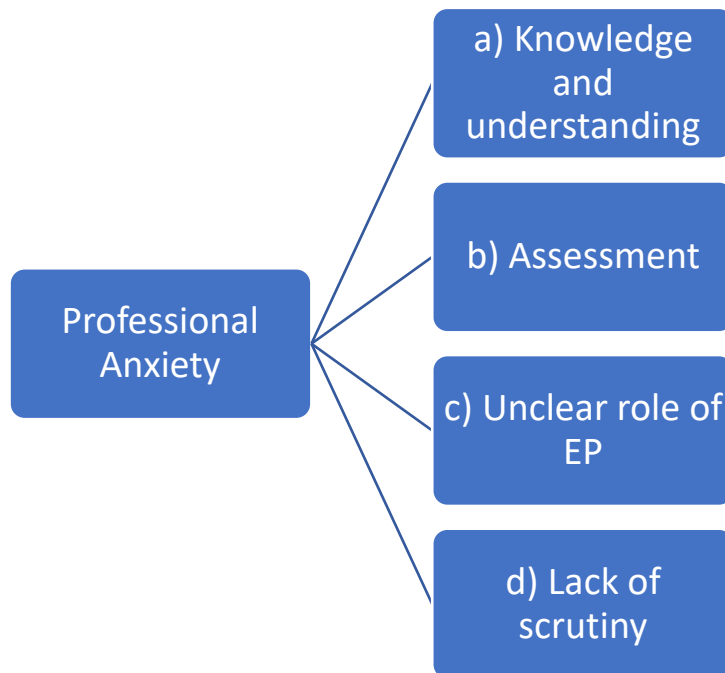
The next overarching theme is '*Fear of the Unknown*.' This was formulated on the basis that numerous participants articulated a great deal of concern about home education as an educational choice for children and young people. The environment of the home as an educational setting is not one frequently experienced by educational psychologists (Arora, 2003; Jones, 2013; Ryan, 2019; Bowers, 2017) and indeed it engendered a general sense of unease. It could therefore be postulated that home education is not the natural environment of educational psychologists, who are far more familiar with schools (as the main commissioners of their service) and who have largely been trained within a local authority setting (McGuiggan, 2017; Islam, 2013; Bowers, 2017; Ryan, 2019). In this sense, the '*Fear of the Unknown*' is something that educational psychologists experience when working in the unfamiliar domain of home education.

The first main theme within '*Fear of the Unknown*,' '*Professional Anxiety*' explores participants' views and experiences of their role as educational psychologists within this unfamiliar setting and educational paradigm. The sense of unease that was exemplified in the interviews appeared to arise out of their inexperience, something which is exemplified in the subtheme, '*Understanding and knowledge*,' which discusses home education as a legitimate choice for parents. '*Assessment*' and how that is undertaken in the unfamiliar domain of the home also posed some difficulties for participants. '*Unclear role for educational psychologists*' forms a further subtheme and considers how educational psychologists work within the home and with home-educating families. The final subtheme, '*Lack of scrutiny*,' addresses the concerns raised by participants regarding the lack of scrutiny into what occurs in home education. Each of these subthemes will be discussed individually under the main theme '*Professional Anxiety*.'

A further main theme entitled '*Behind the closed door*,' explores the participants' fears about the home environment, in particular their constructs regarding home education as a potentially unsafe place for children in reference to reports in the media (Webb, 2011) (despite evidence being inconclusive (Badman, 2009; Charles-Warner, 2015)). This theme comprises of the subthemes, '*Working with parents*,' which explores the relationship of parents with the educational psychologist; '*Safeguarding concerns*,' which

highlights concerns about the welfare of home-educated children in their homes; and 'Children's voices,' which considers the importance and equally the difficulty of gaining home-educated children's views.

Figure 7: Professional Anxiety



4.5 Professional Anxiety

The main theme of '*Professional Anxiety*' encompasses the participants' views regarding their experience with home education and their roles as educational psychologists. The theme title captures the various aspects of this involvement that causes educational psychologists to lack professional confidence and to question their role when working within the space.

The subtheme, '*Knowledge and understanding*' is explored in relation to this topic owing to the limited understanding which exists among professionals working with home-educated families (Jennens, 2011). The subtheme '*Assessment*' considers how educational psychologists conceptualise an assessment within the home, as well as highlighting how the statutory assessment process dominates their work, as is reflected in

previous literature (Arnold & Leadbetter, 2013). Given that the role lacks clarity for participants, this is explored further in the subtheme, '*Unclear role of the EP,*' before the final subtheme, '*Lack of scrutiny,*' delves into what participants feel about the choice to home educate without an overseeing organisation or local authority involvement.

a) Knowledge and understanding

The participants selected for this research fulfilled the prerequisite inclusion criteria of having already gained experience of working with home-educated children with special educational. Despite this, the participants demonstrated variability in their experiences, as well as in their knowledge and understanding of home educators and home education.

When posed with the question of whether they, as educational psychologists, had received any training on their initial course or continued professional development while in post, the majority of respondents responded in the negative to both questions. There were a couple of exceptions with regards to continued professional development while in post, however. Here, for instance, Participant 2 describes how they had shared information and knowledge with colleagues:

it's definitely been discussed erm... we have quite a lot of supervision sort of sessions that I think erm I'm not sure who has raised it but we have certainly had conversations in the last six months about the numbers of children who are home educated that are coming out of the system. (P2, L282-285)

Participant 4 also commented on the value of a collegiate approach when working in an unfamiliar arena such as home education:

yeah that helped in that sense as a service at least in a small group and then it was like staff meeting where we reported back. It helped to feel that we were together on it because we all had experienced it, but we had not had that feeling of peer support I suppose. (P4, L141-144)

Both Participant 2 and Participant 4 describe a scenario in which there had been conversations between educational psychology colleagues that had resulted in small group or service discussion around home education and the role of the educational psychologist within it. This appears to have been in the form of informal discussions, as is indicated by phrases such as 'sort of sessions' and 'like staff meeting' to describe the continued professional development. According to Participant 4, these conversations as a service were helpful in avoiding any sense that they were working in isolation, implying the work of an educational psychologist within the home environment, outside the familiar security of a school based framework, may be quite lonely.

Both participants referenced professional inexperience in working with home-educated children but placed value on being able to discuss this as part of a group of colleagues in the context of a staff meeting. These shared discussions indicate that all the staff were in a similar position insofar as home education was a new experience for them.

It was also evident from the data that the educational psychologists interviewed had never received any formal training with regard to home education. This is a view expressed by Participant 9:

I'm just thinking, it's something that I don't think was covered well in training because it's such a small area of work. (P9, L500-501)

There were some participants who demonstrated some knowledge about home education, though this was very limited. In this excerpt, Participant 3 demonstrates awareness that there is a person in the local authority who holds responsibility for home education:

There's one main person and that's person that you contact. Em. But you'd have to contact them they don't contact you. (P3, L109-110)

Another participant took the opportunity to ask the researcher directly about aspects of home education they were unclear about, evidencing both their lack of knowledge on the subject but also a willingness to learn more:

Yes is there lots of legislation in home education and do you know like, I mean, I'm interested in kind of relation to local authorities. (P3, L176-177)

There was, however, a distinct lack of knowledge and understanding of home education, with no participant citing any information received on their training courses or indeed any further education on the subject beyond informal discussions with colleagues or the service. Although there exists a paucity of research on the educational psychologists' knowledge and understanding of home education, the current finding is consistent with those of Jennens (2011), a social worker who highlighted that professionals in health, social care and Connexions (a post-16 careers advice group) working with home-educated families demonstrated an extensive lack of knowledge and misunderstanding about the subject.

While there has been a demand from within the educational psychology profession to diversify from the role from one which is predominately school based to a more holistic approach (McGuiggan, 2017; MacKay, 2006,) this has focused primarily on areas such as family work (McGuiggan, 2017) and general community based psychology (Bevington, 2013; Stringer et al., 2006). Should it include home education in the future, however, this would expand educational psychologists' knowledge and understanding.

Research has also highlighted that working with children in home education could be an important addition to the educational psychology role (Bowers, 2017; Arora; 2003; Ryan, 2019), insofar as there are a growing number of vulnerable individuals. For this reason, they should receive the services of an educational psychologist—particularly as they have special educational needs. The role of the educational psychologist is further considered within the following subtheme.

b) Assessment

A further sub theme within '*Assessment*' highlights the complexities encountered by educational psychologists when working within the home environment which led to feelings of uncertainty regarding their role. Assessing a child's needs is a fundamental aspect of the educational psychologist role (Woods & Farrell, 2006) and in many of the cases cited in the data, the reason for participants' involvement was to provide psychological advice for an Education Health and Care Plan. This is a statutory assessment undertaken and later written up by the educational psychologist in a report which defines the child's special educational needs. Educational psychologists regularly undertake this assessment within schools, with the involvement of school staff, parents, and the young person being assessed. In contrast, children with special educational needs that are home-educated are assessed at home. This presented difficulties for some of the participants:

He was in an environment that was quite chaotic. I'll give you an example of my assessment..... His stepfather was on a PlayStation all the time I was there and during the time I was doing the assessment and told me all about his history of mental health needs and his experience of being in special school. (P7, L137-144)

Here the participant described the home environment as 'chaotic,' explaining how the child's carer took the opportunity to continue what he was doing while sharing information regarding his own school life and health needs. This is positioned as a negative addition to the assessment process as it does not fit the participants' construct of what an assessment of the child should be. Indeed, Participant 7 does not regard this as an opportunity to witness the child in his home environment, consider the ecological aspects of his development and reflect on how the stepparent's own needs impact the child; rather, the presence of the child's carer was seen as getting in the way of, as opposed to adding to, the assessment process. Participant 7 demonstrates how her expectations of what comprises an assessment are very different to what she encountered in the home environment, which she thus deemed an unsatisfactory experience.

Participant 2 also highlights how, in her view, the home environment presented a hindrance to the assessment process:

I mean just from my purely as a practitioner going into a home environment trying to do an assessment it's a nightmare, ha-ha, because you often end up trying to work in the living room erm (.) working around the toys and things that the child normally plays with, so you've got to work that much harder to engage and inspire and motivate. (P2, L175-178)

The participant presents aspects of the home environment—with its normal features such as toys or being in the living room—as being difficult to negotiate when part of the environment of an assessment.

Participant 2 then continues to highlight the complexities of a home-based assessment including with the parents being present to emphasise how such conditions ultimately lead to an unsatisfactory assessment.

You have to explain to the child about the process and what you're going to do but then you also have to explain to the parents that they can't help, and they can't say anything that you know, what their role in this kind of environment erm and it's such a poor piece of work then as well isn't it, because all you've got is you and a child and an assessment you haven't got any other kind of information. (P2, L180-184)

What is implied here is that the information provided by parents on the child is of lower value in comparison to the implied 'other kind of information' that would be gathered from a school-based assessment. This is something that is also echoed by Participant 9, who considered the home setting unsatisfactory for the purposes of an assessment given the lack of school-based learning activities on offer.

I think it's challenging to see a child in, only in the home setting because it can be very different in an educational setting, erm, so it can be ... and to get a sense of, like if they're not doing learning related activities and haven't for a long time, it's hard to, to gauge how they would respond ... (P9, L281-285)

Participant 9 raises concerns that they are not able to observe the child in an educational setting, making it very difficult for them to assess the child's learning and needs.

Participant 7 also considered what she perceived to be the educational inadequacies within the home which impacted on her assessment of the child:

So for me to assess his mark making I could have got some paper out of my bag but mum was running around having heard my questions and what she gave me was the back of an A4 envelope that had delivered a bill. (P7, L175-177)

The difficulty of trying to complete an assessment is explored by Participant 7 in the excerpt above. As well as the sparsity of resources, with the back of an envelope being the only paper available within the home, the participant creates a picture of the educator as an inexperienced and unprepared parent with a lack of resources with which to educate.

Assessment within the home is thus constructed by participants as complex and at times a challenging process, given that for most the home is an unfamiliar arena. Each of the participants demonstrate 'anxiety' in that they lack the control over the assessment process and context in the manner they usually would in school. The current study indicates that the assessment process was undertaken largely as a response to an Education Health and Care needs assessment, but that assessment within a school is viewed as the optimal place for educational psychologists to undertake it. This is largely because the versatility to conduct assessments in a different way in a different environment presented a challenge to most of the participants in this study. This finding is consistent with those that have demonstrated that educational psychologists are too closely associated with schools and school-based practice (MacKay, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010) and therefore diversification brings challenge. Although it has been proposed that there should be a move within the profession to other roles (into the community for example (Bevington, 2013)), the assessment process continues to remain highly school focused.

c. Unclear role of the educational psychologist

The role of the educational psychologist working with children with special needs who are home-educated is not as clearly defined as the role of the educational psychologist working within the school setting (Arora, 2003, 2006). The current research indicates that educational psychologists have generally expressed the view that working with children with special educational needs who are home-educated is more difficult than working in a school, owing to the added uncertainty of their role:

But you probably would've had that conversation with school, or they'd be giving you evidence, routes are fairly clear aren't they, well as with home education I'm seeing a lot of secondary home education that are actually the same kind of issues, with attachment, where do you go it's a lot harder to then start involving CAMHS or local pediatricians when you've not got a school place. (P5, L127-131)

Participant 5 suggests that her role in terms of what she did and whom she could refer to would be more straightforward if the child were attending a school education. From her comment, it is evident that there are procedures in place for educational psychologists to refer to health colleagues when they have concerns about a school educated child, but in this case the child's home-educated status leaves the participant without a clear path forwards. The view expressed in this extract thereby demonstrates a distinct lack of clarity regarding her role in relation to home-educated children.

Participant 4 also conveys uncertainty regarding her role with a child who is home-educated:

that you don't know what you're doing or that you're guessing is this right is this the right approach. (P4, L140-141)

Both Participants 5 and 4 use the words 'route' and 'approach' to describe the lack of a template or working model of what to do in their respective experiences with a home-educated child. Each of their comments are indicative of an insecurity in their role when it is not school based.

Indeed, participants themselves called attention to the uncertainty in their role, questioning whether there should be a role for the educational psychologist with home-educated children, and whether what they were doing with them was appropriate. This was particularly well exemplified in the quotations from Participants 9 and 3:

in fact, in some Local Authorities, it's not considered something EPs should even be aspiring to be involved with, if a parent has chosen to home educate, for example, elected for home education then that's that and that, we don't have a role in that. (P9, L501-505)

it's kind of seen as well parents are entitled to it and if they choose that you don't really have a part to play in it really. (P3, L100-101)

Both of these participants expressed their views about whether educational psychologists should be involved in working with home-educated children at all. Indeed, as some studies have indicated (Ryan, 2019), some educational psychologists postulate that they do not see a role for themselves in the lives of home-educated children, something which constitutes an obvious barrier to their working with them. This is supported by studies which show that the model of service delivery adopted by the local authority in which the educational psychologist works, impacts and restricts the type of work they undertake (Fallon et al., 2010; Arnold & Leadbetter, 2013). Some studies have also called attention to the role being too closely affiliated to special educational needs statutory processes (Stringer et al., 2006; MacKay, 2006).

Another participant expressed the limitations of their role when working within the home:

Because all you've got is you and a child and an assessment you haven't got any other kind of information, a lot of it is just reported from parents and you just taking the parents word for that and reporting what they've said. (P2, L183-185)

This particular participant conceives of their role as being limited owing to only having the parents' viewpoints available to them within the home. What is implied here is that working with parents and families to gain information from them is not as valuable to the participant as school-derived information would be, something which corresponds with the findings of McGuiggan (2017), who located a spectrum of views within the educational psychology practice in that some placed the educational setting of the school at the centre of their role. McGuiggan (2017) also noted that although educational psychologists had the potential to apply psychology to support home-based interventions, most did not utilise this as fully as they could.

The insecurity about what the role of an educational psychologist should encompass, when and if they should work with home-educated children is reflected in the historic uncertainty about the role. In response to Gilham's *Reconstructing Psychology* (1978), which recommends a diversification from its psychoanalytic and psychometric underpinnings to include a broader range of work, this debate has centred on the type of work educational psychologists do—whether consultation, assessment, individual or strategic level work in relation to the demands of the local authority—and the structures in which they operate (Farrell et al., 2006; Fallon et al., 2010). This 'agenda for change' (MacKay, 2007, p. 9) has since resulted in the profession being in a position of instability as its 'entire foundation of practice was challenged' (MacKay, 2007, p. 9).

There has also been some focus on the role of educational psychologists working with families and the wider community, which is pertinent to the current study (McGuiggan, 2017; Bevington, 2013). Although research regarding family and community involvement has identified a range of possibilities for how educational psychologists work, it also identified barriers to the role, including the way that the educational psychology service is funded (through trading with commissioners such as schools) and those marginalised groups (such as early years) who have no one to commission, (McGuiggan, 2017). These barriers are pertinent to the current group of home educators who miss out on the support of educational psychologists owing to their lack of commissioners to buy in the service. This posing a significant ethical dilemma for the profession (Lee and Woods, 2017; Islam, 2013).

d) Lack of scrutiny

The next sub theme, '*Lack of Scrutiny*,' highlighted that the majority of the educational psychologists interviewed were concerned that there was a lack of any real scrutiny either from their own local authority, company or the government about what happens for those children and young people with special educational needs who are being educated at home. This added to their sense of professional anxiety and unease about home education. The following illustrations from a participant demonstrate their concern, specifically regarding the lack of accountability:

How are we meeting the child's needs, and I don't know who oversees. (P3, L176)

It's not high on our agenda of if a parent chooses to home educate with an Educational Health and Care Plan. There's nobody sort of saying to us can we keep a check on these children and as I say with his case, I rang the home-educating sort of manager (.) erm. (P3, L158-160)

If we had a system in place where... the home education team in local authority or wherever they did contact us to sort of say you know this is a young person and a parent who is choosing to home educate, if a parent wants to do that that's their decision and their child but then they've got additional needs and especially if they've got an educational health and care plan there is a part that we do need to play because it is funded by the local authority and we do need to make sure we are meeting the child's needs. (P3, L143-148)

These quotes demonstrate an ambiguity in the participant's position in relation to home-educated children: on the one hand she sees the value of an educational psychologist being involved with a child who has an Education Health and Care Plan and who is educated at home, highlighting the assertions by Arora (2003); conversely, however, she also seeks to place ultimate responsibility for them elsewhere, such as on the home education team or the local authority. There is thus a sense of frustration that there is no governing body which looks out for the needs of the child or the family, and a concern expressed regarding whether the child's special needs are being met whilst they are being educated at home, echoing the concerns expressed in the Badman (2009) review.

The notion of having the security of a legislative framework or someone with ultimate responsibility for home-educated children with special educational needs, appears to have been important to a number of the participants interviewed.

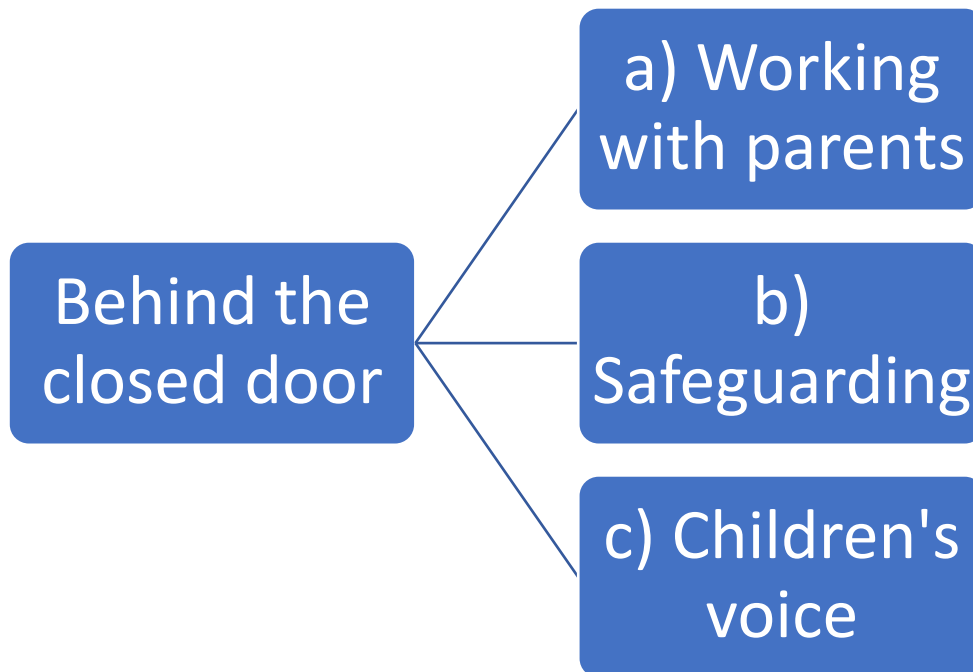
It's always felt really peripheral until recently and I'm noticing in the recent, erm, Ofsted of the local authority's SEMH provision that it seems to be becoming more of a priority that- that they're looking more carefully at the data and the provision and the monitoring of children who are home educated. (P7, L435-438)

The solution to the situation of home education being unregulated is expressed by the participant as by having accountability to Ofsted including the monitoring of data. This, the participant suggests, would bring legitimacy to home education as it would thus be required to be in line with school Ofsted inspections and monitoring processes. This would make it less 'peripheral' and thereby safer in the participant's view.

The participants in this study were similar to those in Jennen's (2011) study in that professionals demonstrated a general lack of knowledge about the legal status of home education, overestimating the power of legislation in respect to home education. Participants in this study, as in Jennen's (2011), also wrongly assumed that there was accountability within the local authority for what happens in home education. Here, their views echoed those conveyed in general public opinion and in the media (Davies, 2017; Coughlan, 2018) that there should be more scrutiny in the form of greater government involvement—for example, by setting up a mandatory register of home educators (Badman Review, 2009; DfE, 2019). Ultimately, the Badman (2009) recommendations were not legislated owing to the response from the home education community itself (Webb, 2011; Nelson, 2013), although discussions about the registration of home-educated children have nevertheless continued since (DfE, 2018/9).

In the subtheme '*Lack of Scrutiny*,' there were suggestions that because there was a lack of oversight by any governing body, children educated at home were more vulnerable. Various discourses, such as the idea of 'keeping a check' expressed by Participant 3, illustrate this. This leads to the next main theme, '*Behind the closed door*,' which considers the participants' views around children's safety within the home more fully.

Figure 8: Behind the Closed Door



4.6 Behind the closed door

Developing on from and linking back to the difficulties educational psychologists expressed in the subtheme '*Lack of scrutiny*,' a main theme that arose from the data was that of '*Behind the closed door*.' The title of this main theme was a direct quotation from Participant 6 which captures the general worry about the invisibility of children who are at home rather than in school. Indeed, the home environment was something that interviewees described with some trepidation, particularly in relation to the subtheme '*Safeguarding*,' which explores the wellbeing and safety of the young person within the home. '*Working with parents*' considers the benefits and barriers to working with a parent within their home environment, while '*Children's voice*' captures the concerns raised regarding access to children's own views when they are home-educated.

a) Working with parents

The development of the subtheme of '*Working with Parents*' was as a result of several participants exploring the nature of role in relation to working with parents of home-educated children. This aligned with the overarching theme of '*Fear of the Unknown*,' as participants were going into the home unsure of their role within the dynamic and with little information about the family situation. In addition, as previously postulated, neither the home nor working so closely with parents is the natural working environment for educational psychologists, thus presenting a challenge for some participants.

Indeed, parents are perceived by some participants as not being cooperative and thus presenting a barrier to working with the child at home:

Mum said she doesn't like strangers in the home, so (.....) there's nobody actually seeing and because she won't allow ... we can't even ... even do the Annual Review, she has refused that. (P3, L93-95)

The participant explained that she was concerned about the child being 'invisible' to the rest of the world because the mother would not allow professionals to visit the child. The participant's discourse is fragmented as the use of several commas and pauses implies, giving the impression that there is more that the participant would like to say but that she stops short of completing the phrases and therefore of sharing her opinions fully.

The construct of the parent, particularly the mother, as being uncooperative is conveyed more emphatically by Participant 8.

This child's mother, very difficult woman, she was not easy at all. (P8, L46)

Participant 8 continues to describe her working relationship with the parent:

I'd say, **** relax, I'm not...I'm just asking questions. I would try and bring her round by being human, but that investment was never, the relationship never built sufficiently enough for me to say, I think you should go to that meeting or, I think, um, I think you should at least listen to what the SEN officer has to say. She was, she was always snappy, always breaking relationships down, so you have to be open to support don't you? (P8, L287-292)

The difficulties posed for the educational psychologist by this parent emphasizes the challenges of working with parents in the home when they are not perceived as being fully cooperative. Indeed, previous research has signified that working with parents has not always been an easy feat, (Bevington, 2013), primarily because it is borne out of necessity rather than a natural occurring relationship (Read & Hughes, 2012). It has also postulated that there are a variety of reasons, such as parents own experience of education or schools that can mean it is not a straight forward relationship (Sims-Schouten, 2015) and that it takes time and effort to foster a positive relationship between the two (Watt, 2016)—something the participants in this study did not have.

Here the educational psychologist is positioned in an uncomfortable and unfamiliar role in that they feel they have no influence on the parent's decisions because they were unable to form a relationship with them. The participant cannot give advice, something they feel would be of benefit to the mother, thus leaving them without a specified role. This captures the complex power dynamic between the two, a dynamic which challenges the notion of the professional as advice-giver and parent as information-giver (McQueen and Hobbs, 2014) and thus sits uneasily with the participant.

A further example details a parent who the participant feels is hard to work with, but who is also identified as vulnerable given her own needs.

one mum was very honest about erm her own needs really to me and can be very difficult for professionals to work with, so she did electively home educate, she was trying her best I think to get this little girl into school but then struggling with her own feelings about that and keeping her at home. (P6, L30-33)

The excerpt illustrates how a parent who finds it emotionally challenging to take the child to school chooses to home educate her child owing to her own needs as a parent. In this scenario, Participant 6 shows how she is able to consider the family situation and focus on the mother's needs, reflecting on how this led to the decision to home educate. Other participants also indicated acknowledgement of how parents who home-educated were often in vulnerable positions themselves:

It is the vulnerability of the parents that's usually.... I'll be helping particularly with the children with social and emotional difficulties... is the need of those parents are we supporting them? (P4, L164-165)

In this excerpt, Participant 4 considers whether educational psychologists are properly supporting those parents whose children have posed specific difficulties when in school who have been expected to get on with it without any support when home-educated. This reference to the challenges faced by parents who are home-educating children with social and emotional needs highlights how, according to Participant 4, working with parents is considered an important part of their role, something which concurs with the findings of other research (Wolfendale; 1983, 1999; Wolfendale & Bastiani, (2000); Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003)

Participant 9 considers a parent who is open about both her own mental health needs and autism and their impact on her decision-making about choices regarding home education. The participant depicts a productive relationship with the parent which has developed to the extent that the parent has been able to be open and honest about how these needs might affect her thinking.

The challenge there, erm was Mum's own [pause] mental health needs which she talked openly about, erm so Mum, Mum said she had autism erm, and that she was aware that this sometimes affected how she saw things [laughs], erm and that was evident in that sometimes you know, she had quite a fixed view about things. (P9, L318-322)

Indeed, the participants found a range of both benefits and barriers when working with parents who were home-educating. These findings indicate that the educational psychologists were at various stages in their thinking when working with parents; indeed, although it has been argued that working with parents is a core aspect of the educational psychology role (Dunsmuir et al., 2014; Wolfendale, 1985) and that the profession is in a strong position to facilitate such involvement (Bevington, 2013), it has also been asserted that the nature of this involvement is still evolving and that there is limited evidence which demonstrates how educational psychologists might involve families (McGuiggan, 2017). This is consistent with the current findings.

As the current findings indicate, working with parents who are also home educators brings about a unique challenge for educational psychologists. How this may be navigated by the profession is a question that was posed by Meighan (1981) as an issue for the teaching profession when working with parent educators and is therefore relevant to the current findings. Rather than seeing parents as the problem, Meighan (1981) postulates that they and their endeavours to be home educators should become part of the solution in which the 'model of teaching will need to extend beyond the dominant idea of instruction' (Meighan, 1981, p. 140). This is particularly pertinent for the participants in this study as it appeared that the challenge of working with the parent as a home educator did not fit their construct of a teacher who instructs but parents who 'enable, facilitate or provide consultations' (Meighan, 1981, p. 140).

'*Working with parents*' also demonstrates that educational psychologists are reflective in their position when work with parents and can thus offer insight into the parents' own needs in relation to home education. This is particularly important if the role of the educational psychologist is to become established in home education (Bowers, 2017). Although working with parents has been proved as beneficial to all aspects of children's educational progress (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003), as highlighted by McGuiggan, (2017), this is still an area that requires continued consideration from the profession.

b) Safeguarding

'*Safeguarding*' encompassed the fears expressed by participants regarding the safety of children who are home-educated. This was conveyed within a discourse of potential abuse and neglect evident in the participants' interviews.

Participant 4 outlines their concerns about the home:

was the home environment suitable for that child to be there all day? That was always the concern, particularly those very vulnerable ones where we knew perhaps the opportunities at home weren't the best for their welfare and ... you are going to ask because once they're at school somebody is keeping an eye on them. (P4, L106-109)

Here the participant positions the concerns regarding the home as a possible place of danger against the implied security of the school, constructing them as binary opposites: in comparison to them being unseen in their own home 'all day,' the safety of the school allows for 'keeping an eye' on the child and is therefore presented as the preferred option.

The construct of children being at risk of harm or abuse because they are home-educated and thus 'invisible,' pervaded participants' views, as the following three excerpts from Participant 7 illustrate:

1. How can we actually justify saying this child's home educated and what ... what checks and balances do we have for these children. (P7, L755-756)
2. So these are the children who can really slip through the net. (P7, L795)
3. This is that...one of those scary gaps that takes you right back to Victoria Climbié, doesn't it? (P7, L803-804)

In each of these extracts, Participant 7 is concerned about the safety of the home-educated child specifically in relation to their 'invisibility,' citing the case of a young child, Victoria Climbié, who was killed at home by her relatives while waiting for a school placement (Webb, 2011) to reinforce her point .

In opening with 'how can we actually justify...' and concluding with 'takes you right back to Victoria Climbié doesn't it,' Participant 7 powerfully positions the tragic death of a home-educated child as a possibility for all home-educated children. The rhetorical question at the end of the comment is intended draw the researcher in.

Also present is a discourse of surveillance which refers to 'checks and balances', 'slip through the net' and 'scary gap,' and which not only positions home-educated children within a construct of being invisible to wider society, but also implies that home education is a dangerous activity owing to a lack of oversight from official bodies. This corresponds with much of the public perception of home education (Badman, 2009; Webb 2011; Rothermel, 2010).

Participant 6, however, offers an alternative viewpoint by reflecting on the position of home education in its cultural and social context in the United Kingdom:

culturally we expect children to be at school and to be in social contexts and we can see them, so can... see child protection services safeguarding issues being raised because you can't, that child's not visible so you don't really know what's going on behind the close door, so I can understand that but then that's the sort of western culture thing isn't it that we expect children to be at school and not with their family. (P6, L52-56)

Here Participant 6 also raises concerns that home-educated children are invisible in the home and thus that the services that protect and safeguard children are not able to do so effectively because 'you don't really know what's going on behind the closed door.' This is then mediated by the participant, however, via the reflection that this is a culturally specific construct: a child not in school is perceived as unusual and therefore potentially unsafe in Western society. This finding is consistent with media representations (Allen, 2011) and considers the invisibility of home-educated children as being problematic and therefore a matter of safeguarding.

The findings from the participants also concur with those of professional bodies such as the NSPCC (2014) as well as the government (Ofsted, 2017/18), who present home-

educated children as being 'hidden from view' (Webb, 2011, p. 93) and therefore recommend that there should be closer regulation and restriction placed upon the practice of home education (Badman, 2009; DfE, 2019). Charles-Warner (2015), however, points to a lack of academic evidence with regard to the prevalence of abuse in home-educating families that supports the claims made by local authorities, the media, and the NSPCC that children are invisible to professionals. Indeed, after studying a range of Serious Case Reviews, Charles-Warner (2015) asserts that the opposite is in fact true: home-educated children were twice as likely to be referred to social services than school attending children.

c) Children's voice

'*Children's voice*' is positioned within the main theme of '*Behind the closed door*' as it presents a further aspect of working within the home that was unsatisfactory for educational psychologists. Here, participants found it hard to gain children's views and opinions as part of the process of their assessment or involvement without the perceived possible hindrance of being at home. The gathering of a child's view with regards to their education is nevertheless a vital aspect of the process and a key principle underpinning the Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), as professionals working with children are legally required (DfE, 2014) to ensure that children are both informed about the process of an Education Health and Care assessment and supported to give their views and opinions to participate.

Several of the educational psychologists indicated their intention of gaining children's views but expressed frustration as they felt they were unable to do so given the difficulty of speaking to them individually without the presence of parents.

You know often the young people who are in these situations are always vulnerable, so actually trying to support the views of the young person because the parents, often it is the mums, have a view of what the child is thinking or feeling but it is really hard to get the views of that young person because the mum is sitting there as well so you very rarely get to spend time on your own with that child to actually have a conversation. (P2, L207-2012)

In this extract, Participant 2 explores the difficulties of gaining the child's views about their education. Though she is aware that she should, as part of her role, endeavour to find out what the child thinks about their education at home, this is difficult given the presence of the parent whilst the assessment is undertaken and the fact that the parent speaks on behalf of the child, thereby conflating the child's views with theirs.

Participant 2 elaborates on her attempts to gain the child's views:

So I suggested we could do a longer version but coming to erm the base where we work, book a room out, it would be really good if I could just work with the little girl on my own. Mum wouldn't have any of it, I kinda said you could go and get a coffee there's a nice cafe up the road, but no mum wanted to sit in and see exactly what was happening. (P2, L214-217)

What is depicted here is a situation in which the participant is unable to gain access to the child on their own, despite various suggestions to facilitate this. The setting of the home thus impedes her ability to gain the child's views. Research has highlighted that the audience can impact a child's ability to share their views (Hardy & Atkinson, 2009); this research is pertinent to this study (and home-educated children in general) since it is hard to ensure privacy in which the child can express their views for home-educated children who are based within their home in the presence of carers or parents. Indeed, as Daniels (2017) demonstrated, only two out of the eight children she interviewed were alone, with the majority (some due to parental anxiety) sitting right next to or in the same room as their mother.

Participants 8, 5, and 7 also highlighted the complexity of accessing home-educated children's views:

this child diagnosed with ADHD, ASD, what he would like, the boy, it's a child's view. What would you like *****? To have more friends, to do swimming lessons, to go to school and have lunch and school trips? (P8, L505-507)

I don't know about the girl what she thinks, I don't know how she's getting on at all. (P5, L62-63)

in his case I don't know the nitty-gritty of it 'cause I've only got mum talking to me really. (P7, L101-102)

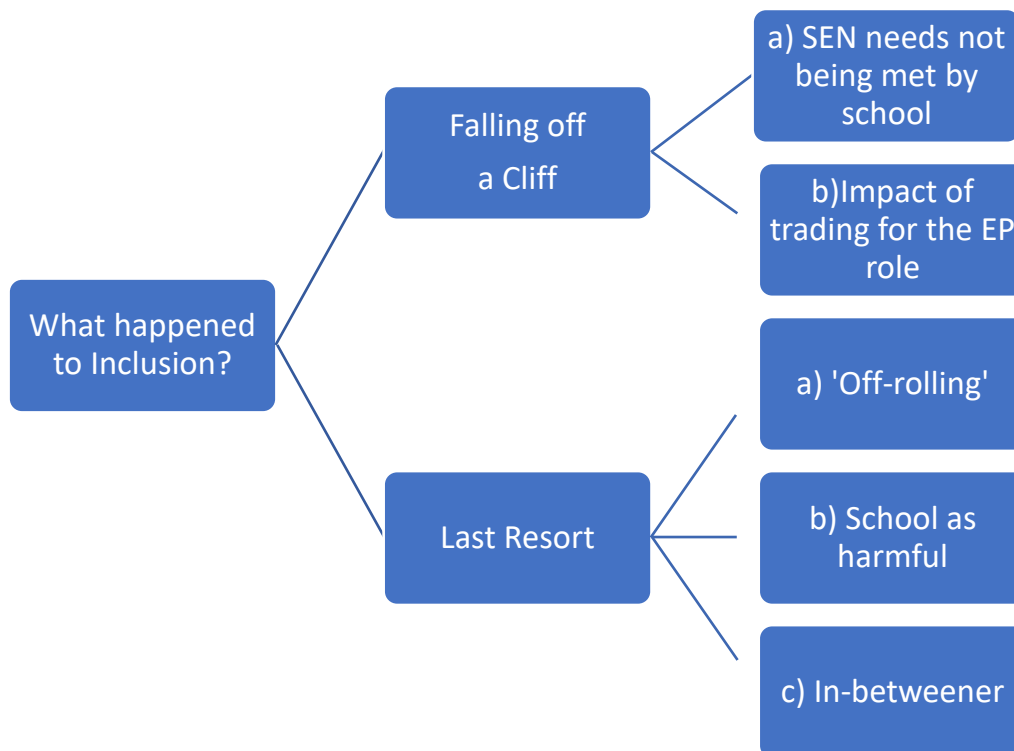
The difficulty in gaining the views of the children with whom they were working that was presented to the participants in the current study concurs with previous research that has highlighted how the practicalities of ensuring a child's voice is properly heard often constitute a significant barrier (Gray 2004). Gray (2004) suggests that 'active steps' need to be taken to ensure that a child's voice is not merely a tokenistic gesture, but that 'properly planned opportunities to say what they think, feel and want' must be made (p. 154). Indeed, some studies have found that, although one of the key principles underpinning the Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), children with special educational needs have rarely been asked for their views, which are frequently ignored or deemed tokenistic (Noble, 2003; Norwich & Kelly, 2006).

Despite the data indicating that educational psychologists make attempts to gain the child's views and express frustrations at not being able to achieve this, these findings nevertheless correspond with those of previous research which has asserted that children and young people's views are rarely gained satisfactorily (Shevlin & Rose, 2004; 2008; Noble, 2003). In response, Todd et al. (2000) highlighted that the educational psychology practice should be developed to ensure that young people are consulted: 'we need to find ways to position ourselves so we can hear children's stories' (p. 13). Indeed, the findings from this study illustrate that there remain barriers to hearing home-educated children's voices in particular, and that, as Todd et al. (2000) rightly asserted, further professional development is required to ensure collaborative involvement with children to elicit their voice. As Fox (2015) argued, the profession needs to do more to support children to develop their autonomous voice.

Indeed, there have been recent innovative attempts by educational psychologists to gain the views of home-educated children and young people (Ryan, 2019; Bowers, 2017; Jones, 2013). In particular, Jones (2013) sought to access views by using Photovoice, a research tool designed to stimulate discussion. Although this study involved only a very small sample of home-educated children, it nevertheless resulted in extensive data from

the children in relation to the three broad themes of identity and development of self; relationships with others; and experiences and perceptions of learning. This study thus demonstrated that, with creativity, children's views in the home can be accessed (Jones, 2013).

Figure 9: What Happened to Inclusion?



Overarching Theme 3: What happened to inclusion?

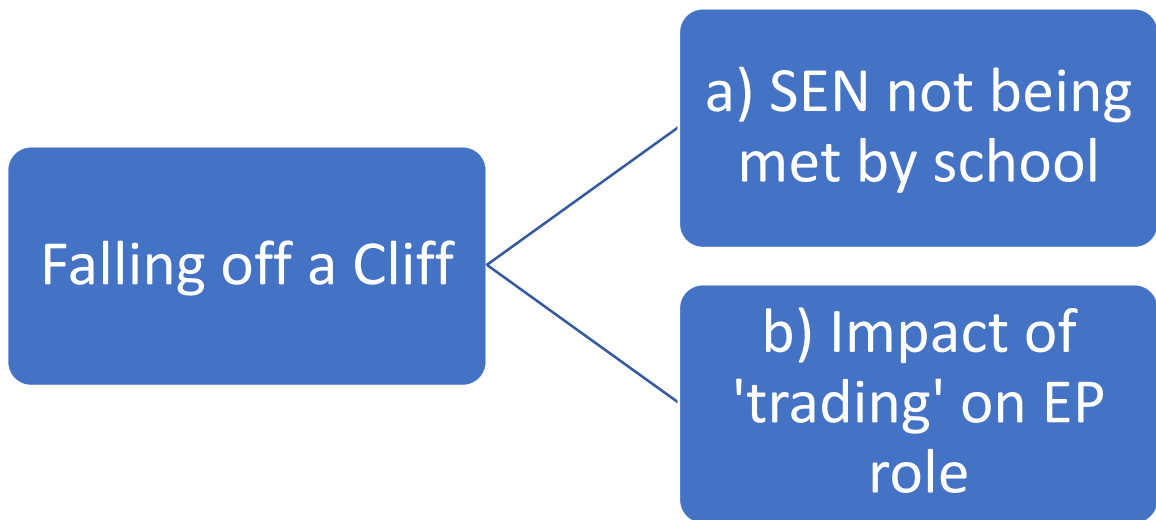
The overarching theme, '*What happened to inclusion?*' arose out of numerous references in the participants' interviews to the fact that that most of the children and young people under discussion had become home-educated as a result of a series of events or experiences which meant that families felt their child's needs could not be inclusively met by the school.

The views of participants highlighted the interplay of several factors to bring about such a situation in which mostly mainstream but also some specialist schools were unable to meet the special educational needs of the child to the extent that they were withdraw from school-based education.

Related to this, the main theme of '*Falling off a cliff*' explores how young people have become home-educated from the participants' perspective. It is organised into the subtheme, '*Special educational needs not being met by school,*' that explores participants' experiences and views of the failure of a child's school placement; and '*Impact of trading on the role of the EP,*' which explores how recent changes in the way educational psychologists are employed and work impacts the services they can provide for children and young people with needs.

The second main theme, '*Last Resort,*' conveys participants' views that children and their families had become involved with home education because there was no other solution to managing their situation within school. The subthemes of '*Off-rolling,*' '*School as harmful,*' and '*In-betweeners*' explore the participants' experiences of home education as the only choice available to children and families in this situation as well as the reasons for this.

Figure 10: *Falling off a Cliff*



4.7 Falling off a Cliff

The title for the main theme, *'Falling off a cliff,'* came directly from the words of a participant. In her interview, Participant 5 expressed alarm that there is a whole subset of children who, for reasons such as anxiety, social, emotional, and mental health difficulties etc. are generally not able to manage in the school environment as their special educational needs and/or disability needs were not being met: 'they are a bit sort of falling off a cliff aren't they' (line 131). With this statement, the participant expresses concern that there appears to be no constructive resolution to the child's circumstances and therefore that they are left to fall off the precipice of school-based education into the world of home education owing to a lack of solutions. This perspective was also representative of those of other participants who felt that home education was not a conscious or an 'elective' choice, as is it often termed, but as a 'last resort' to a seemingly insurmountable problem.

a) SEN not being met by school

'Special educational needs not being met by school' was a major area of concern for participants in this study. Most recalled that they had worked with a child with special needs whose needs had not been addressed or supported sufficiently in some cases, it appeared that although families were aware of their child's needs, the school seemed to not support those needs adequately; for others it appeared that the child's needs had not

been identified in the first place. This concurs with previous research by Morton (2010), Parson and Lewis (2010), Arora (2006), and Kendall and Taylor (2016) demonstrating that a significant factor in becoming home-educated was a child's special needs not being adequately addressed by the school.

One participant, however, offered an alternative reason for the needs of the child not being met: this was due in part to the parents' own difficulty in accepting their child had such needs. His removal from school education was thus as a result of school suggesting some educational and social difficulties. Here the participant expressed an acknowledgement of the fact that the child had special needs, but that the parents were unable to accept these needs at the current time, despite their wanting the involvement of a psychologist:

Bless him he was a sweetie, very much on the spectrum, very much on the spectrum. Did try to talk to parents about that, who were mortified and asked me not to put anything about that in the report. P5, L18-20)

As the excerpt illustrates, the participant attempts to discuss the child's needs with the parents but upon hearing that the parents were not willing or ready to accept her description of his needs, ended the discussion. Because this participant was operating in an independent capacity and continued to work with the parents in a consultation after the initial assessment, this had allowed the participant to have a longer term involvement with the home-educated child—something which local authorities participants have struggled with, given their involvement usually only covers the Education Health and Care referral. Although this participant demonstrated how the child's needs were neither being identified nor met, this was not due negligence of the school—rather, it was the parents who were struggling to come to terms with their child's needs. This was an anomaly in the theme but one which nevertheless illustrates how the child became home-educated as a result of his special education needs.

For the majority of participants, however, it was evident from the data that it was the school that had not addressed the child's needs and that in most cases there was little in

the way of support or access to additional services. This resulted in the parents becoming so disaffected with the school experience that they removed their child.

Here Participant 2 outlines how her experiences with children with special educational needs becoming home-educated were as a result of schools failing to meet their needs:

I can think of three young people at the moment who I'm involved with who have erm... whose parents have taken them out of the education system because they feel that the schools are not meeting the special educational needs. So they directly removed them from school because of that. (P2, L61-64)

In this extract, the participant offers general information regarding how the lack of school support for children is leading parents to 'turn their back' on a school education in favour of home-educating.

Participant 7 outlined a boy with complex communication, cognitive, and general developmental delay with whom she had worked, but noted little from his school in the way of support:

So this little boy seemed to have had quite a small amount of input given the level of his needs...they (school) couldn't handle him. (P7, L92-96)

As well as lacking the resources to meet the child's educational needs, the participant gestures towards a greater level of inadequacy: 'school couldn't handle him.' Further to this, it appeared that the only interventions put in place by the school to meet his needs were a reduced timetable and calls to parents to take him home:

She said not only was he on a part time timetable but even with that she was constantly getting called by the school to come. (P7, L109-110)

The parent being called into school to take her child home seemed to be the precursor to the inevitable decision to withdraw and home educate him instead:

She got absolutely fed up with the backwards and forwards, the randomness of it and the difficulties in not knowing whether she was coming or going while he was at school. At least when he was out of school and he was at home she-she could organise her -her life better. (P7, L114-117)

These excerpts demonstrate that there did not appear to be any effective communication between parent and school nor any kind of plan in place to address the needs of this particular child. The decision to home educate appeared to be taken as a resolution to the situation with school which had become untenable for the parent, and thus was a decision which served to bring about some order and structure to the parent's life rather than one which was taken for the benefit for the child.

Later on in the interview, Participant 7 discussed her strong feelings about how the child's needs were still not being met though home education:

I have not been as disturbed as I was by that one given the child's level of need and the importance that someone should be working in a specific way to address his very significant, erm, developmental delays. (P7, L623-625)

Here the participant identifies a child who she feels has significant special needs that were not met either by the school or as a home-educated child, creating an unsatisfactory situation for both parent and child. The participant's use of emotive language—such as 'disturbed'—to express the frustrations and concerns she has about this child, is echoed by Participant 4 in her use of the word 'agony' line 44:

The support offered wasn't enough and they felt that they, for the well-being of the children they would withdraw them and educate them at home. (P4, L42-43)

For me, and I think for some colleagues, the agony is what is it that those children are accessing. (P4, L44)

Both participants 7 and 4 illustrate how the child's needs which were not adequately supported while they were in school, continued to be unmet following the decision to home educate. Both participants strongly express the view that that children are now at home is no better in terms of addressing their educational needs.

The participants also explored parents' frustrations around children being left without support:

Sometimes parents can be quite angry and feel that the school has let them down in some way and the relationship between the parent and the school has broken down and they, some parents have seen it as "you could, you could meet my child's needs ... if you were willing to do so" ... (P9, L67-70)

The extract above suggests that it is the school's lack of willingness to attempt to meet the child's needs that has led to home education—in other words, it illustrates how inclusion and inclusive practice were in place within the school.

In addition to the difficulties faced by children still not having their needs met through school education, there also did not appear to be a better outcome once the move to home education had been made. No participants spoke of children whose needs were better met within the home environment than the school environment, although Participant 9 pointed to the parent making constructive attempts to do so.

some of it working on things like speech and language skills, so she was using money, I think money that came through ... erm, social care type funding sources so she could pay, I think, yeah was it Disability Living Allowance? (P9, L227-230)

Here the participant illustrates how the parent was using the money for the child to access the necessary support for his communication skills. Aside from this example, however, there were limited references to parents meeting their child's needs within the home-educated environment.

The finding in this study is thus that there is a perceived inadequacy of inclusive practices in schools due to a lack of support and understanding in addressing pupils' special educational needs. This concurs with the prior research (Arora, 2006; Morton, 2010; Parson & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016) which also noted parents felt their child's needs were not addressed. Research has also highlighted how inclusive practices in school have been impacted by competing priorities and government policies, such as schools' positions in the league tables, examination results etc. (MacBeath et al., 2006). This has been postulated as a contributing factor in the removal of children from school by parents taking the decision to home educate. Why inclusion and inclusive practices have taken a retrograde step in schools is explored to some extent by participants in the sub theme '*Impact of trading and the role of the educational psychologist.*'

b) Impact of 'trading' on the role of the educational psychologist (EP)

The sub theme of '*Impact of trading on the role of the educational psychologist*' considers participants' comments regarding how children, families, schools and the support they gain have been impacted by the educational psychology service of the local authority becoming a traded service (i.e., the service is commissioned with costs being met by the school). Prior to the development of traded services, educational psychology services were funded by the local authority and delivered to schools and other settings without direct charge to them (Islam, 2013; Lee & Woods, 2017). The opinion expressed by participants was that this new traded model has led to home-educated children, young people and families not gaining the necessary support from services such as those of educational psychologists, as is illustrated by Participant 8:

Why is our role there for children that are accessing the school system and those that are not? Cos you could argue that...could I provide her (parent) with feedback on how she is teaching English? (P8, L309-311)

Participant 8's expression of the dilemma that those children who access a school education are also able to access the educational psychology service, whilst home-educated families cannot (despite her seeing a valid role for herself in this area) mirrors the assertions made by Arora (2003) on the topic.

Indeed, some participants recalled the 'good old days' before trading, when the local authority provided a no direct cost service to schools and families which therefore facilitates opportunities to work with marginalised groups such as home educators with no commissioners. Participant 2's example illustrates how her professional practice has changed in recent years, recounting a time when she was able to work in a consultative manner with parents who were home-educating their children:

before trading erm as an EP you could go in and just offer consultations to parents, so it might have just been through a consultation meeting erm.... And sometimes you were just asked to chat to parents if they had any concerns around a young person so maybe this mum just wanted to talk to an EP just to check out if it was okay. She had lots of questions about home education. (P2, L48-52)

The consultation that the participant undertook enabled the parent to discuss her ideas around home education as well as her child's needs. This is framed by the participant as a fairly informal piece of work but one in which there was direct, constructive contact between a home-educating parent and the educational psychologist. Here the phrase 'check out,' pinpoints this as a positive informal interaction that is constructed as a collaborative engagement. It also positions the educational psychologist's role as one that is autonomous, thereby affording the participant the flexibility to work in the most appropriate way for the child and parent.

This example contrasts with the work participants now reference, which is dominated by the statutory assessment of home-educated children and young people something highlighted by the profession (Farrell et al., 2006). Arnold and Leadbetter (2013) argue that because statutory processes dominate educational psychologists' work, the profession is 'often adjudicating about allocation of scarce resources, providing lengthy assessments and this leaving little time for preventative, intervention-based work' (p. 698).

To this end, only one of the nine participants undertook work of a different nature—i.e., consultation—with home-educating families. All other participants only worked with such families to complete a psychological advice report for the Education Health and Care assessment. The consequence of this is that the role of the educational psychologist has become very restrictive, causing them to lack the freedom to make a choice about the work they do.

Participant 2 continues to explain that her role today is to complete a psychological advice, as a one-off, clearly defined piece of work that is limited to an assessment and a report on the young person. Owing to this the participant sees the need for a different type of work with the family which allows her to offer some guidance around the issue of the child's anxiety.

Because it's all traded services now and erm (.) the request had come through as an EHCP request, so the piece of work was solely around writing that report for that request and although it wasn't part of that process I was able to have a bit of a conversation and I was able to send mum a booklet about anxiety. (P2, L255-257)

She next outlines the limitations of the Educational Health and Care advice-writing role. As her work is restricted to the one-off piece, she feels very limited as to what she can offer. For this reason, the participant depicts a further short piece of work which would help the parent and child in this extract; she is unable to do this, however, owing to demands on her time, which stem from working within a traded service.

I would have loved to have gone out against to talk mum through the booklet and done a bit of work with the girl herself to try and help. (P2, L259-260)

it wasn't part of the piece of work I couldn't take another afternoon to go and do it. (P2, L264-265)

Here, Participant 2 directly contrasts the ethical and economic implications of working in the previously untraded service era, where her work was related to the 'neediest, the most

vulnerable' children and families, to that of current day where the allocation of her services is purely an issue of economics, directed towards whoever has the money to pay.

It's kind of just everything feels like it's just coming down to money now, everything just revolves around the money, the cost and who's paying how much they're paying and are they paying it. Whereas before it was about where the need is and we would work with the neediest the most vulnerable targeted young people whereas now we work with who pays. (P2, L 274-277)

Implicit in Participant 2's comment is the inequality and injustice she feels is embedded in a traded model of delivery. Indeed, her previous clients were those who were identified and thus 'targeted' as having the most need, thereby underpinning the educational psychologist's work within the construct of a social justice model. In this statement, there is the implication that some vulnerable and needy children are now lost in the new way of working which directly impacts the services educational psychologists can offer, including to the home-educated.

The constraints of a traded service on working with a child who is home-educated is echoed by Participant 9, who echoes the concern that her role is one that is restricted by time and finances.

time erm and funding seems to be a big challenge, but I definitely think they sh- there is a role. (P9, L386-387)

The participants outline a dilemma for any educational psychologist working within a traded model of service, something which has been considered in recent research (Islam, 2013; Lee and Woods, 2017): home education does not have a commissioner or commissioning body and therefore creates the phenomenon of the 'unsponsored child' (Hardy et al., 2020, p. 184).

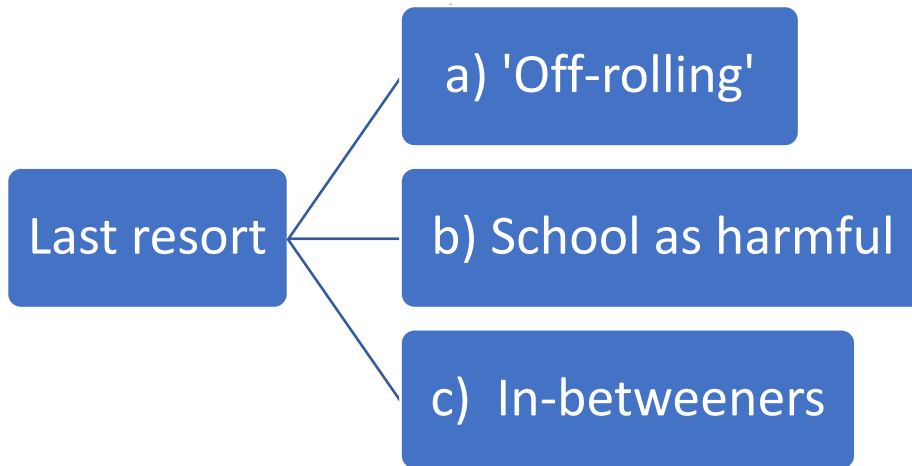
This is further explored by Participant 1:

I think it would have been exceptionally useful I think it would have prevented the time for them being out of school but if the educational psychology service had been involved from the start with erm... with the young person who had ended up in the inpatient department I think the EP would have been great contact to support with that. (P1,)

Here the participant clarifies how the role of the educational psychologist has been impacted by a trading model of service delivery in relation to young people receiving no early intervention support—this particular young person was not seen by the service prior to the incident. There had also been no educational psychology involvement while the child was an inpatient for her mental health needs and as a result, she had been home-educated for several months. This participant was only involved because the parent had requested an Education Health and Care assessment. This limits the educational psychologist's role to that of the gatekeeper of financial resources (Islam, 2013; Pinkus, 2003). Although the participant could see both a prior and future role in the case, this could not happen because the young person had no commissioner. In the case of home-educated children, there is no local authority budget allocated for them nor any service available unless parents pay themselves, hence parental applications for an Education Health and Care Plan as their only means of gaining support from a service or local authority.

These findings support those of Islam (2013), Winward, (2015) and Lee and Woods (2017) that postulate that while trading may have presented educational psychologists with further opportunities, there remain considerable questions and ethical concerns around those marginalised groups that have no commissioners and therefore no access to services. McGuiggan (2017) also asserts that trading has restricted the flexibility and autonomy of educational psychologists' work with families, which also has implications for those in the home education community. Debate from within the profession has considered the equality of such a system and asserts that the care of the child should be take priority over the desires of their commissioners (such as schools) (Woods, 2012). Although governing bodies such as the British Psychological Society and the Health Care Professional Council (see Standard 2) (BPS, 2013; HCPC, 2016) have considered and reproduced ethical guidelines that acknowledge the implicit power relationships in any traded situation, the issue of non-commissioned groups appears to be unresolved, as the current subtheme reflects.

Figure 11: Last Resort



4.8 Last Resort

A further main theme under the overarching theme of *'Falling off a Cliff'* is *'Last Resort'* which outlines the participants' experiences of parents choosing to home educate because they can see no other alternative. In keeping with the research from Arora, (2006; Parson & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016) the current study demonstrates that parents of children with special educational needs are often dissatisfied with school education and the schools' ability to meet their child's needs. As parents have limited alternatives available to them, home education is often the only choice that remains. This notion of the 'last resort' is one which Morton (2010) establishes as one of the three reasons parents choose to home educate. This is something echoes by Participant 1, who shows how parents feel when they find themselves in a situation in which school education is no longer appropriate for their child:

They (parents) didn't really know what to do or where to go, how to get things started. (P1, L87-88)

The reason that home education becomes a '*Last Resort*' is explored through the subthemes, '*Off rolling*,' '*School as Harmful*,' and '*In-betweeners*.'

a) 'Off-rolling'

A practice that was evident in participants' discussion of home-educating children is 'off rolling' (Ofsted, 2017/18). This term has come into common usage as a way of schools removing children from their roll who may otherwise negatively impact their reputation, Ofsted Inspection, school rating and data:

Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. This includes pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school roll. (Ofsted, Education Blog, 2019)

Over the course of their interviews, participants reported several examples in which the practice of schools off-rolling or unofficially excluding a pupil had been implemented, resulting in home education. Participant 4 postulates tentatively about the off-rolling of pupils:

I mainly am talking about children with social or emotional difficulties who may or may not have been excluded or who might have been asked to stay at home (.) (P4, L8-10)

Here, the participant considers that the type of pupils to which off-rolling applies—namely those with social and emotional difficulties and presumably those whose behaviour may

be a challenge to the school. She also identifies that the status of those that have been asked to stay at home is unclear in that they 'may or may not have been excluded.'

Participant 4 reflects further on the status of the child being home-educated:

they felt that those children should not be in the premises, so it is one of those exclusions that are not classed as exclusions. (P4, L30-31)

This extract indicates that school has not formally excluded the pupil (the participant describes the situation as 'not classed as exclusions') which therefore fits the description of off-rolling (Ofsted, 2017/18).

Later in the interview, Participant 4 elaborated on the situation of off-rolling—albeit without mentioning it by name—to consider the pros and cons of schools undertaking it:

and it was at one time where the number of days of exclusion were really, really high across the authority and whether it was erm ... perhaps a way of lowering the figures or a genuine feeling that that was better to ask the parents to keep the child at home rather than (.) than exclude because exclusion brings a baggage of many other issues. I never got to the bottom ... but it was very frequent, and I felt from that point of view there was the pressure on the parents, and we always have said that what if the parents work, and many parents have to stop working for that reason. (P4, L100-106)

In this excerpt, Participant 4 reflects on her position with regards to the reasons that schools 'off-roll' or informally exclude pupils. First, she acknowledges the significant strategic benefits it presents to the local authority and schools as a means to reduce exclusions and the potential risk of other 'baggage' such as Ofsted inspections etc. Subsequently, however, she also highlights the difficulties of 'off-rolling' for parents, who are often pressured into removing their child by schools, and the consequences this has for their employment.

Other participants construct the process of 'off-rolling' children by schools as one that is an example of schools coercively exerting their power upon parents to keep their children at home:

it was the other cases the secondary school and it was definitely giving mum a lot of information about oh school's really difficult you do know you can home educate if you decide to sign these papers and deregister your child. (P2, L71-73)

Here, Participant 1 demonstrates how schools can be manipulative in how they approach home education with parents, in particular by presenting it is a simple solution to an otherwise desperate situation. This notion is also reinforced by Participant 9:

other times parents are only doing it because they're desperate and they don't know what else they can do or they've been kind of steered into thinking, "this is the best thing to do for your child" but they kind of, it's not something they want to do. (P9, L439-441)

Both Participant 2 and 9 reference parents being coerced into a situation of home education which they do not particularly want, but which is presented by the school as a resolution to a problem they have with school, consistent with the findings of Baynton, (2020).

parents have felt forced into it, so ... I've worked with parents who have had their children on part time timetables that hasn't been their decision, sort of a coercive decision made by schools. (P1, L142-143)

In this comment, Participant 1 explores a slightly different form of 'off-rolling,' in which children have been put on a reduced timetable and spend most of their time at home.

The findings in this study are consistent with the findings presented in government documents (Children's Commissioner, 2019; House of Commons Library, 2020) that

schools are removing pupils from the school roll by 'off-rolling' either as a threat or alternative to exclusion, or as a result of a difficult situation in school. Although the specific reasons for off-rolling are not directly explored in this current study, it is evident from the data that one of the reasons schools undertake this is to avoid exclusion as a means to 'game the school performance system' (House of Commons Library, 2020, p. 3)—if pupils are removed from the school roll and become home-educated, for instance, league tables of results are not adversely affected. This is consistent with Nye and Thomson's (2018) findings regarding why children were absent from school.

A further finding in this study is that off-rolling appeared to happen because there were insurmountable problems between parents, the child and the school that could not be resolved—something to which Participants, 1, 2, and 9 allude. This is consistent with the research of Kendall and Taylor (2016), who found home education was an option taken by parents because schools were not willing to communicate with parents to solve the issues, and of Morton (2010), who asserts that parents found it difficult to solve problems with their individual schools and teachers. Furthermore, the current study demonstrated that educational psychologists experienced 'off-rolling' as a familiar phenomenon which concurred with educational psychology participants in the study conducted by Done et al., (2021) including individual participants having experiencing multiple cases. By 'off rolling,' schools are using exclusionary practices to condemn children with needs to segregation from their mainstream peers, indicating a move away from inclusive practice (Baynton, 2020) possibly as a result of the change in the priorities of schools in an era of marketisation (Gunter et al., 2013).

b) School as harmful

The subtheme '*School as harmful*' exemplifies the participants' experiences of meeting home-educated parents who had made the decision to take their children out of school for the child's health and/or wellbeing.

So one was a little boy who was in school but because of an awful experience in a previous school mum had home educated. (P6, L100-101)

She-she felt that it had been a nightmare in the mainstream, and he hadn't coped. (P7, L268)

These two quotations illustrate how school in its entirety had been perceived as damaging, indicative of fundamental difficulties with school as the institution of education in a generalised sense.

For other participants, there were specific concerns regarding a school-based education and its contribution to the child's mental health difficulties. Both Participant 5 and 6, for instance, describe how the anxiety of the child had become so pronounced that it had led to the child being removed from school entirely.

she felt that the daughter's experience of the school system had contributed to her anxiety significantly. (P6, L15-16)

he's really anxious anybody associating with school he's got quite fixated on school as a bad, bad place. (P5, L78-79)

School being conceived as a place of harm is a phenomenon that has been highlighted in previous research (Glover et al., 2000; Haber et al., 2009; Lees, 2013), which has pinpointed a variety of reasons for the harm. In the current study, there were some examples offered by participants of home-educated children who had been removed from the school environment due to parents' concerns about the effect of such harm on their children. Bullying at school is one such harm (Glover et al., 2000), but this was only indicated by one participant in this study. Here, the participant relates the parent's worries about bullying:

Mum was really concerned about bullying, the child was concerned about bullying, but the school didn't see bullying or recognise bullying. Really sad situation and just ended up school refusal. (P2, L80-82)

The concern from the parent and child is contrasted with the lack of concern from the school regarding the presence of bullying. The description of the situation as 'sad,' further emphasised by the result of the child refusing to go to school, forms a construct of a 'last

resort' (Morton, 2010) scenario in which the child is so unhappy that their experiences of being bullied are neither acknowledged nor rectified by the school that they become 'a school refuser'—i.e., they will no longer go to school. This results in the child being effectively home-educated as the school fails to address the issues.

In addition, the participants expressed how the academic rigours and pressures of school were also a reason for unhappiness and welfare concerns.

so parents decided to take them both out of school. Quite a high achieving area, parents feel that school was putting a lot of pressure on them especially considering it was a reception year. (P5, L34-36)

Here, the participant presents the construct of education in a school as being dominated by academic learning, creating a pressurised environment for the child. This is further qualified by the child's age as being that of a reception student—i.e., approximately five years of age. Together, this conveys a sense of an educational environment which is inappropriate given the impact its academic rigours have had on the child's wellbeing—namely, that it led to their withdrawal.

Harm can also include direct physical harm as described by Participant 8,

Eventually the mother said, I've got...I can't have you holding my child on to...on the floor until he calms down. (P8, L217-218)

Although only an isolated example of physical harm towards a child, the quotation from Participant 8 shows that the practice of restraining the child ('holding on to...on the floor') by school staff has led to the parent removing the child from school education. Harm in this example is in the form of a very concrete and real concern that their child is being hurt physically and emotionally in the school environment.

Participants in the study identified a range of experiences in which children had, from the parents' viewpoints, suffered emotional, developmental or physical harm as a result of attending school. The fear of further harm thus also contributed to the sense of home education being a last resort, actioned as a means to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their child.

c) In-betweeners

The final sub theme of '*In-betweeners*' offers discussion of a further group of home-educated children for which it has been a last resort situation, but who differ from the previous groups in that parents have made a conscious choice to home educate to some extent but with a clear view of returning to a school based education at some point. In this sub theme there is exploration of the participants' view that parents are using the guise of home education to demonstrate their unhappiness at the current school education. Rather than completely removing their child from school, they appear to hold a halfway or in-between status in which the child remains on the school roll but do not actually attend. Instead, as the following excerpt from Participant 9 indicates, they remain at home with some sort of oversight from school staff until their preferred educational choice is available.

Some of my other erm, casework has been where erm, they're on roll at a school, for example but it's felt the school can't meet their need so they're being provided with education through various services in the home, sometimes as a temporary measure. (P9, L11-14)

To this end, these are therefore, 'in-between' home and school education hence the title of the subtheme. The interview with Participant 6 offers another such example,

mum had decided to electively home educate following a breakdown of an out of authority specialist provision, and that was really about provision and there not being any and the local authority couldn't suggest anywhere else, so in the end whilst she was waiting she

thought I might as well, she was in a position so what else could she do, because they weren't in education. (P6, L110-114)

Here, the participant explores how the family have become home educators because the particular school placement had broken down. She explains that the placement was very specialised but that this did not work for the child, and that there was no other school currently available. As such, although Participant 6 started off by constructing the mother's decision to home educate as a positive choice, it quickly becomes clear that this was in fact because no other suitable school was available. Home education is therefore chosen by parents until a further placement can be found and is thus positioned as a temporary option until the preferred school education is available. The family, as described by the participant, are evidently invested in a school-based education, something which is supported implicitly by the participant describing home education as a stop gap measure.

Similarly for Participant 3, home education is an option only until the parent gains the school placement of their choice:

and then she said well I'll home educate him till the tribunal makes a decision, and then she got the place that she wanted. (P3, L85-86)

Again, home education is demoted to the status of a temporary stop gap measure until an appropriate and parent-preferred school placement is gained. This was also true of an example given by Participant 9, which explained that the parents had made the choice to wait until their child was older and could reattend the school placement of the parents' choice.

I can only recall one where it was actually a parent's choice and even that was in the short term while they were waiting for the child to be old enough to access the provision they had in mind. (P9, L16-18)

In this subtheme, the excerpts offer examples of where certain children's educational status does not quite fit into the categories of either home or school education. Here, there is a common theme of parents making a positive and decisive decision to withdraw and home educate their children until they get their choice of school. The notion of parents withdrawing their children from school for its inappropriateness or its inability to meet parental expectations to place them into home education until a suitable school is found, may be constructed as parents taking back power and control over a complex and otherwise hopeless situation. In this circumstance, Pattison's (2015) heterotopia, which uses the Foucauldian paradigm to suggest that home education can offer further possibilities beyond the construct of a school education, may be applicable. Burke's (2007) study also found parents from ethnic backgrounds and of low socioeconomic status withdrawing their children from school—either due to its failings or before they were excluded—as a means of gaining control in a situation in which they are otherwise powerless. Within the context of the current findings, parents can also be construed as gaining power over a situation in which they find their children's needs are not being met by home-educating them until they find a school education more suited to their needs. The alternative position of being '*in-betweeners*' affords them a level of power they would otherwise not have.

4.9 How the findings of this study relate to the psychological theory of social constructionism

The researcher's epistemological stance in this study is a social constructionist one (Burr, 2015). The researcher considers that the educational psychologist participants interviewed for this study do not offer a single, unified objective truth about children with special educational needs who are home educated in England. Rather, the researcher feels that participants' views and perspectives on the topic are multiple and influenced by the social, cultural and political landscape within which educational psychologists operate which concurs with a social constructionist perspective (Burr, 2015). To this end, the study highlighted that the changing models of how educational psychologists work, including becoming a service that is traded where it is now common place that schools commission and pay for the educational psychology service, played an important role in how home educated children were constructed by educational psychologists. Participants felt constrained by their role being limited to statutory assessment work arising from Education Health and Care needs assessments. Both the political changes resulting in fiscal restraints on local authority and educational psychology services plus changes in

special educational needs legislation through the SEN Code of Practice (CoP, 2014) have impacted on educational psychologists' construct of home educated children with special educational needs. Their role is depicted as being limited in what and how they can work with home educated children despite identifying a role for themselves. Home educated children are therefore constructed as being a group that is difficult for educational psychologist to reach and work with due to the social and political constraints. A school based education was presented by participants as being the preferred and arguably easier option in comparison. This was, however, due to educational psychologists working predominately in schools and being closely aligned to their practices.

How participants constructed home educated children with special needs was evident in their discourse something which is important for social constructionist thinking. The children were perceived as vulnerable due to their 'invisibility' in their own homes and emotive language was used by participants to describe their situation, 'slip through the net, scary gap', (Participant 7) and 'agony' (Participant 3). Participants' views emulated those evident in media portrayals of home educated children (Charles-Warner, 2015) where they are constructed as being at risk of abuse, neglect and danger in their home. This construct took a very Western cultural influence where children who are at home for their education are considered 'hidden' and therefore in danger which Participant 6 recognised and noted that Western cultures expected children to be in a school but nevertheless found the lack of oversight of these children a vulnerability.

A further example of how social constructionism was a useful epistemological psychological theory in exploring the experiences and views of educational psychologists was that throughout the findings the power relations between a school and a home based education were evident in the participants' interviews. An example was that the construct of school as a place of education was deemed the most suitable place for the home educated children by participants. This was particularly evident in the overarching theme, 'School as Utopia'. Despite the school education failing the children who had become home-educated through lack of inclusive practices, acknowledged by participants, it was nevertheless constructed as the dominant and most important place of education thus constructing home-education as inferior and less important in comparison. Furthermore, the parents of children with special needs who were being home educated had limited power in that schools had sometimes coerced them into home- education by 'off rolling' them indicating a clear power imbalance something which was evident too in the research by Burke (2007). The parents endeavours to home educated exemplified further power imbalance as they were unsupported by professionals including educational psychologists

and left to themselves to educate their child. Schools, however, have access to the profession as well as other services.

Participants did not give a single unified 'truth' of their views and experiences of children who have special educational needs that are home educated. Instead, the constructs of the group of home educated children were multifold as exemplified in the overarching, main and subthemes of the findings. They were constructed as receiving an inappropriate education, missing out and being socially isolated and unsafe in their homes for example. The social constructionist epistemology stance allowed the researcher to explore how home educated children were constructed by using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) and giving attention to the discourse used by participants. This revealed that there were several sociocultural and political factors that influenced the participants such as how education in schools is perceived as the dominant mode of education in society and by educational psychologists, that inclusion is not always evident in schools' management of children's needs and that schools 'off roll' children they feel may adversely affect their attendance and league table position for example. These factors plus others impacted participants' constructs of the group demonstrating how the views and experiences are not a static single truth but change depending on the political, cultural and social forces at play.

The findings which have been detailed in this study indicate that there are many wide-ranging aspects to this topic. A broad picture has been presented in this chapter in order to reflect the data corpus which has been discussed in relation to the findings of the wider literature.

The next chapter, the conclusion, will consider these findings in relation to the original research questions before considering the limitations of this study. It will also examine and highlight what the current study means for the profession of educational psychologists and those that employ them.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Part 1: Introduction

The aim of this final chapter is to present the key conclusions from the research findings in relation to each of the four research questions. The implications for practice, for policy makers and training of practitioners will also be outlined. In addition, methodological reflections and limitations will also be considered. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of future areas of research, followed by a reflective concluding comment.

5. Summary of main findings

This study aimed to explore educational psychologists' work with children with special educational needs who are home-educated. It draws on the work of Arora (2003, 2006) who postulated that there could be a role for educational psychologists with home-educated children, given the skills and attributes of educational psychologists. Further research in the area of home education undertaken by educational psychologists since Arora (2003, 2006) has sought to gain the views of home-educated children and young people (Jones, 2013) and their families (Ryan, 2018; Bowers, 2017), including those with special educational needs. There have, however, been no studies that have explored the views and experiences of educational psychologists working with the group. The current study therefore sought to further develop the research of Arora (2003, 2006) by gaining the direct experiences and views of educational psychologists working with home-educated children with special educational needs. It also considered what they felt were the barriers and facilitators to working with the group, including any future role they saw for the profession.

This research study utilised qualitative semi-structured interviews with educational psychologists who had previous experience of working with the group, in order to gain a broad range of data. Reflexive thematic analysis, using Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013), and a social construction (Burr, 2005) epistemology were the chosen methods to analyse the data from the interviews, which yielded a number of overarching, main and sub themes.

Part 2: Key findings

5.1 Research Question 1

What experiences do EPs have working with home-educated children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disability?

The current study indicated that educational psychologists primarily become involved with children with special educational needs who are home-educated through the statutory assessment process of an Education Health and Care needs assessment. This meant that their involvement was generally a 'one-off' piece of work where an assessment of the child's needs was undertaken in the home. There were a couple of exceptions to this. The majority of the statutory assessments for an Education Health and Care needs assessment were in order for children to return to a school educational setting, or to change the status quo of being home-educated given that the situation did not appear to be working for parents and/or children. For those children with an Education Health and Care Plan already in place, no annual reviews had been undertaken in the limited examples given. Children's needs were found to not be monitored through the statutory procedures, owing to a lack of available staff, for example. Arguably, this might suggest that for some local authorities this has become a very low priority.

Further experiences educational psychologist participants had when they encountered children and young people who were home educated was that they had been 'off rolled' by schools and coerced into home education. This is something which was also evident in previous research by Burke, (2007), Nye and Thomson (2018), and Done et al., (2021) and therefore concurs with the current findings. It was also a common experience for educational psychologists to encounter children and families who had received no previous support from any services, including their schools, to meet their special needs. Children had generally not been referred for further support or diagnosis, nor had any interventions been put in place within school. For most families this was the first contact with an educational psychologist or any support service.

Educational psychologists also experienced education at home as a transition—either back to school or to a different school when one became available.

It was generally the experience of educational psychologists that the trading of educational psychology services was highlighted as being a reason that their work with home-educated children was limited to statutory assessment. Due to the financial implications of doing so, they were not able to follow up or further their involvement, despite acknowledging a need for this for the child and family. This contrasts with research conducted by Winward (2015), which noted opportunities for the profession as a result of trading. There was some, albeit limited, evidence of educational psychologists' experience of supporting home-educated children prior to trading. This involvement was more of an advice-giving consultative nature where families had requested support from educational psychology services themselves and this had been agreed to by the 'patch' educational psychologist.

Educational psychologists found the experience of conducting an assessment in the home, as opposed to in school, challenging. The assessment was described as inferior to one they would conduct at school by some educational psychologists. This was felt to be because the school was the familiar domain of the psychologists, and it therefore offered a well-known structure for the assessment process. The home, in comparison, was found to be problematic in terms of how an assessment could take place practically, what could be done within the home, and who was involved in the assessment.

Educational psychologists' experience of working with parents in the home was varied. Some found it very difficult due to the competing personal needs of parents, but others felt they gained useful insight into the parents' own concerns and needs and the impact of these on their child.

None of the participants in this study has experienced any training in relation to home education on their initial training course, although some reported having had helpful discussions with colleagues about the challenges and issues they had encountered.

5.2 Research Question 2

What views do EPs have about home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability?

In this study, educational psychologists held strong views. None of the example cases discussed depicted the home education as addressing children's special educational needs more effectively than if the child had been in a school setting. This contradicts the studies by Ryan (2018), Jones (2013) and Bowers (2017) whose findings suggested that being away from school was advantageous for children with needs. It was also the case for the majority of the educational psychologists in this study, that the education offered in the home was not seen as being well adapted or appropriate to the child's needs. Most felt that what they had observed was generally unsuitable, with some not even having access to basic resources such as a pen and paper. Lack of parental training was also highlighted.

In the current study, the views of educational psychologists constructed a suitable education as one that was more traditional—that is, one which took place within a school environment with the standard school features of a daily timetable of subjects and a curriculum to be followed. To this end, home education was constructed as an inferior form of education by comparison. This concurs with the work of Lees (2014) and Pattison (2015). This constructed inferiority also contributed to the viewpoint of that home education was unsuitable and problematic for children with special needs.

The role of the parent as educator posed a difficulty for most educational psychologists. The parents' attempts were viewed against the assets a trained teacher would have, and it was evident that participants would have preferred to see education delivered by a professional. As identified by Meighan (1981), educating parents can pose a challenge to the notion of what and who constitutes a teacher, and this was apparent in the views of some educational psychologists in the current study.

For the majority of participants, home education was viewed as having developed in response to situations in which a child's special education needs had not been met by the school system. Home education was thus seen by parents as a 'last resort' to solve the problem they and their child had with the school, something which concurs with previous research conducted by Morton (2010), Parson and Lewis (2010), and Kendall and Taylor

(2016). For most pupils, home education was viewed as a temporary, pending a return to a school. Educational psychologists' viewed their role as facilitating this return, a role which has also been identified in previous research (Ryan, 2018).

Assessment was constructed as something that took place in the school environment rather than the home. It appeared difficult for participants to adapt it to this change in environment.

A further view was the unified concern that children's voices could not be elicited effectively in the home, primarily because there was often a parent present or within earshot. Being able to give autonomous voice, away from parents, was also identified as problematic in Daniels' (2017) study. Gaining children's views independently away from parents etc is also noted in previous research (Harding & Atkinson, 2009, Gray, 2004). It also contrasts to the study by Jones (2013) who gained home educated children's independent views through Photovoice.

The participants' views of the construct of home education paralleled commonly held stereotypical views evident in either the media or public opinion (Charles-Warner, 2015, Webb, 2011). The safety of children in their own home, for example, was a common concern, as was children being socially isolated. Many of the educational psychologists interviewed shared the concern that children who were home-educated were potentially at risk or unsafe in their own homes, since they were 'invisible' to those they would normally have encountered in a school setting. Concerns about this particular vulnerability echoed those views voiced in government documents (Badman, 2009, DfE, 2019). This led to some anxiety-about home education as a 'choice.'

There were some educational psychologists who viewed home education as having an adverse impact on the child's social experiences, social development and friendships, and occasionally their wider participation in society. This concurred with Ryan, (2019) and Bowers, (2017). Conversely, school was viewed by participants as an environment which would socially benefit children.

Educational psychologists generally gave the views that children and their parents were not supported in their endeavours to home educate. Indeed, there was very limited experience of a home educators gaining support, which, when it was in evidence, tended to be from other home-educating families.

Educational psychologists viewed a trading model of service delivery as presenting a restriction to their work with vulnerable children that are home-educated.

A theme that emerged from this study was that educational psychologists had the view that home-educated children with special educational needs had been let down by schools. In particular, the concept of inclusion and inclusive practice was not being upheld owing to the fragmentation of schools and local authority services. This has also been identified as a concern in other studies (Islam, 2013; Hardy et al., 2020).

There was some ambiguity in the views of participants regarding whether home educated children were of interest to the profession with one participant commented that home education 'was not high on our agenda.' Indeed, that the profession itself has undertaken limited research in the subject demonstrates it could be of little importance to it.

5.3 Research Question 3

What perceptions do EPs have about the barriers and benefits to working effectively with home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability?

The study indicated that a major barrier for educational psychologists working with home-educated children with special educational needs, was that this is not an area of education that they have had much prior involvement in. This lack of knowledge and experience generally led to professional anxiety about what their role was, something which concurs with research conducted by Jennens (2011) who found that professionals in health and social care also had limited knowledge of the group. One reason identified in the process of the study was that none of the participants had had any initial training to be educational psychologists in relation to home education. The lack of knowledge was further demonstrated as participants cited minimal continuing professional development on home education, although some participants had raised it with colleagues as a growing and important area for further development. This lack of knowledge and training compounded the lack of confidence among educational psychologists about how to work with home-educated children and families.

A further barrier to working with home educated children and families found in this study was that the profession aligns itself with a school-based education making it difficult for those children that are educated at home. This was a barrier which McGuiggan (2017) identified when educational psychologists worked with families. It was felt that educational psychologists' close alignment with schools was a deterrent to working with other groups outside the school which is also applicable to home-educated children. Having a construct of education which is limited to the domain of schools is a barrier to working with home-educated children, therefore. This is something Bowers (2017) had identified as a barrier for educational psychologists working with home-educated children and families.

An additional barrier evident from this study was that educational psychologists only tend to become involved with the group through a parental referral for an Education Health and Care needs assessment. This means that their contact is limited, with no other opportunity to work with the family or follow up any issues identified during the statutory assessment.

Home-educated children currently have no commissioner (apart from parents independently funding the services) who will request and fund services from an educational psychologist which is a major barrier for the profession. Home-educated children therefore do not gain access to the services that educational psychologists offer. This has been identified in studies such as Hardy et al., (2020), who term these children the 'unsponsored child' (p. 184). Furthermore, the traded model of service delivery which now operates in most English local authorities and private companies was seen as a significant barrier for all home-educated students, given their lack of commissioners concurring with Islam (2013). These children are instead reliant on parents to fund any support from the service, meaning that our most vulnerable children and young people are not gaining the input they need from the profession.

There is also the barrier of not knowing which children are being home educated. Having no national or local register of those parents choosing to home educate is also a barrier to the profession working with the group. Without knowing who home-educating, the reasons why, and how long they have been doing so, there is no way that educational psychologists can begin to target this group of children.

The setting of the home was also constructed as a barrier as educational psychologist were unfamiliar educational setting of the home as well as with a parent educator rather than a trained teacher. This represented a professional challenge for educational psychologists in this study. This concurs with the findings of other studies (Bowers, 2017) who also considered that parents as educators can be a difficult construct for educational psychologists to negotiate. It was also believed that the environment of the home restricted the facilitation of the child's views about home education, in particular whether it was a choice they had made and wished to continue. Daniels (2013) indicated that it was a barrier to gaining the child's views as they were often in earshot of their parents. This also concurs with previous research regarding the difficulty of gaining children's views independently of their parents (Hardy & Atkinson, 2009).

There was evidence of some educational psychologists having and valuing discussions with colleagues about the issues which were arising from children being home-educated which can be considered a benefit to working with the group.

5.4 Research Question 4

What do EPs feel their role should be in working with home-educated children with special educational needs and/or disability?

There was a variance of views about whether educational psychologists could / should have a role with home-educated pupils. Some participants suggested that there was not really a role available because parents had chosen to take their child away from the school, the main domain of the educational psychologist, which therefore placed home-educated children beyond the confines of their practice. For other participants, however, they could see a definite role in supporting education within the home in terms of giving advice about education, consulting with parents, and facilitating a child's return to school education. Some of the educational psychologists were keen that home-educated children should have the same service that children in school were afforded which echoes the views of Arora (2003).

The study indicates that for many educational psychologists their role was perceived as one of ensuring that home-educated children returned to a school-based education, perhaps through supporting schools in addressing the difficulties that had led to the need for home education.

A further role for the profession was that they could support home educated children with an Education Health and Care plan gain the statutory services in place to review their needs and progress. There were some participants who felt strongly that those home-educated children with an Education Health and Care Plan should have a yearly annual review, as stipulated in the Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). They felt they were in a position to support this, and that it would be useful for an educational psychologist to review the progress of the education of these children.

The current research study also supports Arora's (2003) postulations that educational psychologists have the skillset to apply psychology to a range of situations and contexts beyond the school. They are able to apply psychological theories of child development, attachments, and relationships, for example, to any environment and so are ideally placed to support the group.

There was an example of an independent educational psychologist working in a consultative manner with a home-educating family that was part of this study shows how the role could use their core skills to better support this group.

A further role for the profession could use their close working links with schools to find out who is potentially becoming home-educated as they have poor attendance in the same way as they ask who is at risk of exclusion, as a means to prevent children being withdrawn from school in the first place.

Part 3: Discussion

5.5 Implications for the profession

The role of the educational psychologist in working with home-educated children is not currently defined or determined. As such, this offers a unique opportunity to apply psychology to a group of educators outside the realm of the school as well as to explore work with families and children. Whether this is something they would feel open and supportive to will need to be considered by the profession itself. There were some educational psychologists in this study that could see a positive role in working with home-educated children. Local authority services, psychology companies or individuals could possibly take this further as an area of specialism in the same way that children in care are, for example. It may also be beneficial that services, companies etc consider whether they implement a working policy with regards to home education and home-educated children including a 'local offer' for home educated families.

The profession may also find it useful to revisit and reflect on inclusion and inclusive practice in schools that they support, given the large amounts of children rejecting the school system. Considering this alongside the ethical dilemmas of a traded model of service that renders some children 'unsponsored' and therefore without access to a service would also merit exploration and consideration. Although there has been some consideration of the 'unsponsored' children by the profession (Hardy et al., 2020) there has been limited regard by the professions regulatory bodies such as the AEP and the BPS. It may be useful for the profession to be a voice for home-educated children by ensuring professional bodies such as the AEP and BPS are aware of this growing group and representing it. Educational psychologists could also add their voice to governmental groups considering home education. Being an advocate for home-educated children with an Education Health and Care Plan educational psychologists know and have been involved with by liaising with colleagues in the Special Education Needs Team to ensure that they receive the annual review to which they are entitled could provide a link.

5.6 Implications for practice

In terms of practice, it will be important for educational psychology teams or individuals to reflect on how their work with school dominates their thinking and how different forms of

education—e.g., home education—may present an opportunity to explore the purpose and function of education more fully. As this study indicates that educational psychologists strongly align themselves with a school-based education, as has been shown in previous research regarding families (McGuiggan, 2017) it is important that the profession reflects on how this has been established and whether this is something that the profession needs to challenge. Currently, educational psychologists hold both limited experience of working with the home-educated and limited knowledge of the reasons and philosophy from which home education stems. This means that they come to the group with some trepidation, given their lack of understanding and awareness. By looking at education in its widest sense it could offer the profession further opportunities to work with other groups of children as well as reflecting on education in general.

There are also implications for how educational psychologists work with schools and whether they can target those children and young people at potentially becoming home-educated through systems already in place—for instance, raising awareness of the group at a school's planning meeting or monitoring such as asking the questions about vulnerable children or those at risk of exclusion. By ensuring that schools are aware that it is an area of concern through direct questioning by the educational psychologist, this could help school to consider the reasons why the child is struggling to attend or parents considering the option to home educate etc.

Educational psychologists are encountering the group mainly through the statutory assessment process which can be both an advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, it at least gives opportunity to meet and offer some psychological support to those home-educated children and parents. It also means that parents can gain a greater awareness of their child's strengths and needs from the assessment taking place. On the other hand, this work is taking place at the reactive level which early intervention or input at an earlier time may have prevented or mitigated the difficulties which arose. This has implications for some exploration of early intervention with home educated families. Furthermore, statutory assessment of children at home was a further source of concern for the educational psychologist in this study. How and what assessments are appropriate within the home environment is a possible area which requires exploration by the profession.

A further implication for practice is that educational psychologists held strong views and emotional responses to children being home-educated that could be harnessed positively. They could become an advocate for home-educated children and share what experience and views they have with colleagues and other professionals which may be beneficial to

all. Additionally, the profession and trainees could reflect on the media presentation of home educated children.

5.7 Implications for training

Considering that participants in the current study unanimously stated that they had no experience or training of alternative forms of education to a school based education in their university courses this could be an issue which is raised in the initial training of the profession. Alternative forms of education could be considered and explored within the initial training as a means to widen the school-based focus. This could include home education, including the various types of home educators and the reasons children become home educated. Additionally, consideration of education in wider and general sense would also seem to be an area that would be beneficial for those on initial educational psychology training courses. Exploration of the function and purpose of education could also be advantageous for the profession, given that children with special needs are an increasingly large group of people either rejecting or being rejected by the school system. Further exploration of what is happening for children with special needs and what is necessary for their inclusion requires consideration to understand the situation.

The current study demonstrated that educational psychologists had very limited knowledge and understanding of home education and its legal status which concurs with the study by Jennens (2011). Training courses could provide all trainee educational psychologists with a basic framework of the legal requirements of parents and local authorities on which to base their understanding and thereby likely increase their confidence when working with the group. Continued professional development could also include some basic understand of the legal status of home education in the UK so that educational psychologists are aware of this group.

5.8 Implications for policy making commissioners

For those commissioners who hold the responsibility for children with special educational needs it is necessary to consider the needs of home-educated children with special needs more robustly, so they have parity with other vulnerable groups, such as looked after children. This might be accomplished through the establishment of commissioners for

home-educated children directly, for example. It is also important to consider how the profession can have more direct involvement in the education of home-educated children, even when their input is at the statutory assessment stage—for example, as a means of identifying home-educated children with special needs. One possibility could be that home-educated families that already register voluntarily with the local authority could also be acknowledged by commissioners and signposted to the educational psychology service in order that they do not remain invisible. Families who home educate could make a self-referral to the service prior to referring for an Education Health and Care needs assessment for example.

Further exploration of how commissioners, such as local authorities, develop their systems and practice to ensure that those children with an Education Health and Care Plan are prioritised for an annual statutory review. It is essential that home educated children who hold a plan are equally assured of gaining their statutory rights to have their needs reviewed annually by a range of professionals. Local authorities could consider how these 'invisible' children could gain priority for such reviews. Moreover, can commissioners more robustly question the inclusive practices of schools with regard to the growing numbers of home-educated children with special needs.

Part 3: Reflections and limitations

5.9 Methodological reflections and limitations of the study

This study focused on the experiences and views of educational psychologists working with home-educated children with special educational needs, adopting a social constructionist paradigm whereby semi-structured interviews were completed with a diverse group of practising educational psychologists. These were then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis and the findings considered in relation to existing research.

The researcher came to the study with her own experiences and views regarding home education and children with special needs who were home-educated. This could have impacted on the study by engendering particular researcher bias. These views were not static, however, and changed over the course of the study as the researcher was exposed to the views and experiences of the participants, and as their interest in the presentation of home education by the media and government featured during the time of writing grew.

Having taken a social constructionist stance, the researcher was aware throughout that constructs are not static but constantly evolving under the influence of the changing social and cultural environment (Burr, 2003). To this end, a social constructionist epistemology felt appropriate to the current study as it enabled a similarly dynamic construct of the subject. This was reflected in a wide ranging and variety of views and experiences in the data.

A limitation of this study was that it was conducted over a long period of time as a result of the researcher's own personal circumstances. Interviews conducted recently may have yielded different findings related to the social and cultural context, for instance to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the original criteria for the inclusion of participants within this study was that they had been involved in educational psychology practice prior to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2014, this did not form part of the process of the study. This is a further limitation therefore as this did not add any information to the outcome of the study.

The participants in this study were self-selected in that they responded to an invitation to participate. This could have resulted in participation bias as respondents could have felt that they had something important to say on the subject. Although this could have been the case, all views were nevertheless useful due to the area being so limited in terms of research. A further limitation was that there was the evidence of some strongly held views by participants about the safety of children who are home-educated. This linked in with perceptions in the media and was therefore felt to be a useful discussion point in the data. The robust views of some participants were wide ranging on a number of issues, and it was nevertheless felt they provided detailed and rich data.

Like the participants, the researcher was also an educational psychologist, which had both its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, there was a common language between us in that we understood the processes and systems within which we worked, particularly in relation to education within schools. This meant that the researcher sometimes felt they understood what the participant was saying and thus that there were potentially instances in which they did not ask for clarification or further follow up questions but simply accepted the point being made, thereby progressing the interview

too quickly for deeper exploration. Over the course of the different interviews and transcription, the researcher had an opportunity to reflect and acknowledge this, and so was able to address the issue by giving future participants the space and time to expand on their points. Here, thematic analysis was highly beneficial as a methodology, as learning and reflection could happen after each interview as espoused by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). Being a fellow educational psychologist also aided the researcher with rapport on the basis of a shared understanding, regarding, for instance, the trading of the service and changes in the role for instance. This benefited the flow of the interviews as there were few interruptions to clarify meaning.

Although the participants were from a range of geographical locations, with a diversity of experience the inclusion criteria cited experience of working with at least one child with special educational needs who was home-educated. It meant that the group was not representative of educational psychologists as a whole, but rather specifically of those that had already worked with home-educated children. The study did not specify what the special needs of the child were, which was a further limitation as it would have yielded useful information. There were other useful quantitative data that would also have been useful, such as how many home-educated children the participants had come into contact with and how many Education, Health and Care Needs assessments they had conducted. Lastly, as there were only nine participants, it is not possible to generalise the findings widely.

5.10 Future Research

The current study sought to develop and expand those points raised by Arora (2003) on the role educational psychologists with home-educated children, and if or how their skill base could be utilised with the group. This has led to some interesting findings which would make suitable areas of further study. For example:

- ❖ More focus on how educational psychologists view their relationship and role with schools under a traded service.

- ❖ 'Off rolling' has been presented as a discrete theme and something which several educational psychologists had experienced which concurs with other research (Baynton, 2020, Done et al., 2021). This could be subject to further study in order to ascertain if, how

and why this happens from the viewpoints of both children and family as well as of school management.

- ❖ Home-educated children are rarely asked their views, as has been indicated in both this study and others (Jones, 2013 Bowers, 2017). While there has been some unique practice among the profession (Jones, 2013), it nevertheless remains a neglected area. The challenging nature of gaining the views of children who are home-educated could be explored further in research particularly with regard to the statutory assessment process.
- ❖ Education in general, and in particular how educational psychologists view the purpose and function of education, could be explored with a view to identifying any biases intrinsic to the profession.
- ❖ The impact of trading on non-commissioned groups such as home-educated children would be a vital to identifying whether other vulnerable groups of children and young people are also without an educational psychology service.
- ❖ An unexpected outcome was that this study was based around those children and families who had no option but to home educate. A further comparative piece of research could consider home education among those for whom it was a purposeful choice.

5.11 Concluding comments

Home education took on a new and significant focus in the United Kingdom during the writing up stage of this study owing to the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020- 2022. During the 'lockdowns' in England, when schools were closed to all apart from the most vulnerable children, families were introduced to 'homeschooling,' the commonly used term for children who stayed at home and whose parents took over the role of temporarily educating them during this time. This highlights how the subject topic impacted the role of the researcher during the process of the writing up of this study. Indeed, the researcher's views were ever evolving over the course of the research, something which continues to be true to date. The researcher came to the study initially with some questions regarding why children with special educational needs had become home educated in the first place and what their story was. As the research progressed the researcher's thoughts changed to being concerned that there appeared to be a large body of children at home due to the lack of inclusion in schools. Further concerns were that these children's needs were not

being addressed within the home either as parents could not access any supportive services. The researcher recognised that this left children vulnerable especially as with the move to traded services the families could not access any educational psychology services without funding it themselves. While the researcher acknowledges that parents who make a positive and deliberate choice to home educate can provide their children with a suitable education and education does not have to be restricted to examinations, curricula and timetables, ultimately the home education outlined in the current study does not offer a positive and suitable education for some children.

The current study indicates that home education is an issue which clearly divides the educational psychology profession and the consideration of Tajfel's (1978) and Tajfel et al's., (1979) social identity theory is useful in framing the concept of home-education. The 'minimal' group or 'out- group' of home education as opposed to the dominance of 'in-group' of school education is evidenced by educational psychology participants. Other research has postulated that the profession is too closely aligned to school based work, (McGuiggan, 2017) which has implications for working with those groups of children who are not based within a school setting.

Despite the title of the profession being 'educational' psychologist, participants nevertheless placed emphasis and value on a school-based education to such an extent that it could become a barrier to working with home-educated children, and, it could be postulated, to all other forms of alternative education. It could also be argued that the profession has positioned school education as the dominant 'in group' in relation to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), relegating all other forms of education to the lower status of the 'outgroup.' This seems an unusual stance from 'educational' psychologists and thus is something which requires more consideration.

Just as Arora (2003) could envisage a role for the profession to apply its skill base to home education, there was some evidence that educational psychologists were willing to embark on this, even in spite of professional anxiety they sometimes held in their role with the group. There was a sense through the data collection that there was genuine concern for children with special needs who were home-educated.

There were also very strongly held views which echoed those appearing in the media in relation to children at home being at risk of abuse and neglect (Charles-Warner, 2015, Webb, 2011), but equally there were also examples of the flexibility and adaptability of educational psychologists to rise to the opportunity to apply psychology to home-educated children when given the opportunity to do so

Lastly, the home-educated children with special educational needs depicted in this study presented as some of our most vulnerable young people. They are children and young people with special educational needs for whom home education was the 'last resort' option (Morton, 2010) because schools had failed to be inclusive and support their needs throughout their education. This concurs with the sentiments expressed by Riegel (2001):

Home education seems particularly unlikely to help those students that are arguably worst served by public schools, namely students who come from backgrounds marked by poverty and abuse. (p. 110-111)

Home- educated children seem to have little if no say in their education, something which has been identified in this study. This raises the possibility that the home-educated children and families who seek out home education as a 'last resort', as illustrated in this study, are the very families that are further marginalised in society by additional needs, poverty, race or class, a concept which Burke (2007) described as being 'doubly excluded' from both school and society. It is unthinkable that these 'unsponsored' (Hardy et al. 2020) children do not have access to a core service such as educational psychology to assess, identify, address, and support their needs within education. These children have been abandoned, or, as one participant in the study termed, have 'fallen off a cliff.' For a profession that regularly considers its, 'unique contribution', (Cameron, 2006; Farrell, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010), supporting the 'unsponsored child' (Hardy et al., 2020) to ensure equity of access to the most vulnerable children in our society could be part of that 'unique contribution'.

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Appendix 1: Research and Ethics Proposal

Research and Ethics Proposal

Exploring the experiences and views of educational psychologists regarding children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability who are home-educated.

Introduction and rationale for research

This is a proposed research project to consider educational psychologists' (EPs') experiences and their views of children and young people (CYP) that have special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and are being home-educated (HE) by their parents/carers. A preliminary literature review of the subject indicated little in the way of research. A notable exception was a paper published by Tiny Arora (2003) which considered whether there was a role for EPs with children who are HE. This study summarised a variety of tasks that EPs could offer and concluded that this is an area that is sadly neglected in terms of research by the profession.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007) defines home education as *'Parents' decisions to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school. This is different to home tuition provided by a local authority or education provided by a local authority other than at a school'* (DCSF, 2007). A government review by Badman (2009) indicated that there were approximately 80,000 children (an estimate as no data are kept by local authorities) being HE at that time and made a number of recommendations for local authorities in the wake of safeguarding concerns that had been raised regarding the HE of children after the death of Khyra Ishaq in Birmingham in 2008 (The Guardian, 2010). These recommendations included: changes to the support and monitoring from local authorities (LAs); reinforcement of guidance to LAs to ensure education at home is suitable to meet child's needs; and that children at School Action Plus of the Code of Practice (2001) should be considered to need the same support at home that they would have received in school. Although these measures could have empowered LAs to provide support for children with SEND who are HE, however,

very few have been put into legislation owing to the adverse reaction from the HE community itself (Lees, 2010).

Research (Kendall & Atkinson, 2010; Burke, 2007; Reilly, Chapman & O'Donoghue, 2002; Parson & Lewis, 2010; Arora, 2006) has highlighted that parents who have a child with SEND cite the main reasons for choosing to HE as arising from dissatisfaction with the school and its ability to meet their child's needs. In one local authority, the number of parents citing SEND needs not being met at school as the reason for them choosing HE had increased by 50% in the five years prior to the study (Kendall & Atkinson, 2010), indicating a growing number of parents rejecting mainstream education in preference for HE. Burke's (2007) study into families' experiences of their decisions to HE in one London borough also identified that students excluded from school can also form part of the home-educated community.

Jones (2013) sees a role for EPs in the HE of children with SEND through the growing interest in community psychology which would therefore bridge the gap in EPs' understanding of the HE community, in addition to providing further research and support to it.

Research questions

Research questions will be:

1. What experiences do EPs have working with home-educated children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disability?
2. What views do EPs have about home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability?
3. What perceptions do EPs have about the barriers and benefits to working effectively with home-educated children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability?
4. What do EPs feel their role should be in working with home-educated children with special educational needs and/or disability?

Research design and measures

The aim of the current study is to consider EPs' experiences and views of children with SEND who are HE. To fully address the research questions, an in-depth exploration of EPs' own perspectives is required. Such insider accounts would enable an exploration of the direct experiences, thoughts, understanding and feelings in relation to the topic. The decision to carry out a piece of qualitative research was based on obtaining the personal insights into the experiences from participants themselves (Lederman, 1990).

What is proposed is therefore the completion of a small-scale qualitative study that will be analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). TA will support the identification of themes and patterns of meaning from the data themselves (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The aim is to conduct a complete coding of the entire data set. This will then be followed by a search for themes, a review of the themes by producing a map of provisional themes, a search for sub themes and relationships between them, before definition and naming the themes as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013).

There will be eight-ten participants, aiming for a diversity of the EP population in terms of factors such as experience and the inclusion of EPs based in both traded and non-traded work who are prepared to volunteer for this study. Inclusion criteria will be EPs that have previously worked with CYP with SEND who are home-educated. The exclusion criteria will be EPs who have not done any work with CYP with SEND who are HE.

EPs will be approached to participate on a voluntary basis through EPNET. This is an on-line forum for educational psychologists. Once EPs respond to the post on EPNET they will then receive an email providing initial details of the research and volunteers will be asked to make contact with the researcher by email or phone.

Data collection will be through individual semi-structured interviews so that the information obtained is directly relevant to the research questions yet providing the opportunity and flexibility to follow up on any pertinent factors that emerge through the interview process. The interviews will take place at a venue of the participant's choice. Questionnaires were considered but were not considered to offer a flexible option nor allow for impromptu responses by participants. Semi-structured interviews will instead enable participants to discuss their experiences and perspectives, albeit with the benefit of a prepared interview schedule of indicative questions to offer a structure that may be adapted though which does not have to be rigidly adhered to. This will ensure participants can offer additional thoughts and viewpoints. A pilot study with two EPs will be undertaken and amended as necessary.

Questions within the semi-structured interview will aim to explore the individual EP's experience of working with CYP with SEND who are HE, what views they have about CYP with SEND receiving HE, what they see as an EP's role (future or current) in working with these families, and what the barriers and/or benefits they may bring. This will then be followed by a thematic analysis of each interview.

Interviews will be recorded using an iPhone or iPad which will be encrypted. Participants' names will not be recorded; they will be informed that data will be stored confidentially until recordings have been transcribed.

Methods of analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to analyse the semi-structured interview data. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed and analysis of the verbatim data will take place.

Thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data that is free of a particular theoretical basis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

It is hoped that from the analysis and evaluative process will emerge a set of themes which will represent commonalities across participants' accounts, but which will also accommodate variations in the data. These will provide the focus for the analytic commentary for the research paper.

Ethical considerations

The principle of informed consent

Volunteers will be sought and initial information provided on the area of research, the time commitment, and the method of data collection. Identified participants will then be given further written information about the research topic and the purpose and scope of the research. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the research up until the data are transcribed and anonymised.

An informed consent form which gives information regarding the participants' understanding of the requirements of their participation, the voluntary nature of their participation, their ability to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, their ability to ask questions and discuss any concerns with the researcher's supervisor, and their

understanding of how the issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and data handling will be addressed, will be completed and signed by each participant.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants' names will not be documented during the interview. Interviews will be assigned a number for data recording and analysis purposes. Recorded data will be transcribed for analysis within two weeks. Transcribed data will be anonymous.

Participants will be informed that data will be anonymous but may be discussed anonymously with research supervisors at the analysis stage. Participants will be informed that the findings of the research may be shared with interested parties such as the University, or published at a later date in an academic journal. The resulting data will not, however, be identifiable as theirs.

Safe and appropriate storage and handling of data

Data will be held securely in the form of a recording of the interview (stored on an encrypted device). Recorded data will be kept in a locked cupboard at the researcher's home until it has been transcribed. During transportation from the interview location to the researcher's home, the data will be in the possession of the researcher at all times. No one else will have access to the data.

Recorded data will be transcribed within two weeks. Once transcribed, data will be anonymised. Data stored on the recording device will be destroyed following transcription. Anonymous transcribed data may be kept indefinitely by the University.

Dissemination of research findings

Participants will be advised they can request a copy of the summary of the findings from the researcher. They will be advised that research findings will be produced in the form of a research report for the University of Cardiff. The findings may also be presented for publication to a journal, such as *Educational and Child Psychology*.

Estimated start date and duration of project

I aim to begin collecting data in July 2018 and to submit the research report by December 2018.

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Appendix 2 : EPnet Post

Dear EPnetters,

I am currently undertaking a Top-Up Doctorate at Cardiff University in Educational Psychology and I am looking for educational psychology volunteers, who have worked with children and young people who have special educational needs and have been home-educated. Volunteers would be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview about their experiences and views on children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability who are educated at home. It is anticipated that the interviews would take up approximately 45-90 minutes of your time and will be conducted at a venue of your choice.

If you would be interested in taking part in this research, please get in touch and I will send you further information.

Kind regards

Alison Salt

Appendix 3 : Email response to voluntary participants through EPNET

Date:

Dear Educational Psychologist,

Thank you for responding to my post for participants on EPNET. I am an independent educational psychologist and I am undertaking doctoral research in the School of Psychology at Cardiff University.

As part of my doctoral research I am carrying out a study on educational psychologists' (Eps') experiences and views of children and young people with special educational needs and disability who are educated at home. The purpose of this research is to inform the work of EPs with children who both have identified special educational needs and who are home-educated. I am writing to provide you with more detailed information in order for you to make an informed decision about whether you wish to have involvement in this study.

You will be asked to participate in individual semi-structured interview about your experiences and views of home education and children with special educational needs and disability. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw for the study at any time up until the point that the data is anonymised. You may also decline to answer any questions.

Interviews will last for up to 60 minutes, they will be recorded and stored on an encrypted device. This will be held securely until the recording is destroyed, after transcription. This will take place after two weeks of the interview. Once transcribed your views will be anonymised thus will not be identifiable within the final research paper. Up until that point you may ask for your responses to be withdrawn from the study.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information before making your decision.

If you would consider taking part in this research, or require more information, please contact me at:

salta1@cardiff.ac.uk

Or on:

0798 3551040.

Any concerns can be raised with my research supervisor:

Andrea Higgins, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, CUCHDS, 70 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT.

HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

Additionally, any complaints or concerns could be made to: Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT

Contact Number: 02920 870 360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Thank you for considering this proposal, I look forward to working with some of you on this study.

Kind regards,

Alison Salt

Educational Psychologist.

Appendix 4 : Informed Consent Form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form—Confidential data

<p><i>Please read the following statements and then tick the box next to statement to indicate that you have read, and agree, with the statement. Then please sign and date the form where indicated.</i></p>	
<p>I understand that my participation in this project will involve an individual interview session with the researcher.</p>	
<p>I understand that this will require up to 60 minutes of my time.</p>	
<p>I understand that the interviewer will ask me about my experiences of working with children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that are home-educated and my views and opinions on this.</p>	
<p>I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.</p>	
<p>I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. Also, that I could discuss any concerns with Andrea Higgins Research Supervisor.</p>	

<p>I understand that the interview will be recorded and held securely. Interview data will be transcribed after two weeks and then anonymised; recorded data will be deleted following transcription.</p> <p>Anonymous transcribed data may be kept indefinitely by the University.</p>	
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I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Alison Salt, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

Signed:

Date:

salta1@cardiff.ac.uk

For further information, queries or complaints you can contact:

Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor, School of Psychology, CUCHDS,

Cardiff University, 70 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT.

HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

Ethics Committee at The School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 70 Park Place CF10 3AT.

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

Appendix 5: Participant Information

Information for Participants

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY BEFORE PROCEEDING.

Research Study Information

I am an independent educational psychologist, and I am undertaking doctoral research in the School of Psychology at Cardiff University. As part of my doctoral research, I am carrying out a study on educational psychologists' (EPs') experiences and views of children with special needs and disabilities (SEND) who are home-educated. The purpose of this research is to gain information of EPs working with this group of CYP and consider the implications for the profession in general including any future role.

The title of the research project is:

'What are educational psychologists' experiences and views of children with special educational needs and disabilities who are home-educated. A thematic analysis.'

You will be asked about your own experiences as an EP when working with children who are home-educated who have SEND and your views and opinions on the EP role in this area.

Interview information

You are invited to take part in an individual interview session with the researcher that will last for up to 60 minutes, to explore your views on educational psychologists' work with children with SEND who are HE. This will take place at a venue of the participant's choice. Interviews will be recorded. The findings will form the basis for a research report for the University of Cardiff.

You have the right to decline to answer any questions, or to withdraw from completing the interview at any time.

How will I be protected?

Participants' names will not be recorded during the interview. Interviews will be allocated a number for data recording purposes. Recorded data will be transcribed for analysis within two weeks. Transcribed data will be anonymous and allocated a number for analysis purposes.

Data may be discussed anonymously with research supervisors at the analysis stage. Findings of the research may be shared with interested parties such as the University however the resulting data will not be identifiable.

What will happen to my data?

Data will be held securely by myself in the form of a recording of the interview and written notes of the interview made by myself. Recorded data will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home until it has been transcribed. During transportation from the interview location the data will be in the possession of the researcher at all times. No one else will have access to the data.

Following transcription data will be held in a locked cupboard at home. Recorded data will be destroyed at the end of the research project. Anonymised transcriptions may be held indefinitely by the University.

The findings will be published in a Cardiff University doctoral research publication.

How will I find out about the results?

A summary of the findings can be sought from the researcher following completion of the research paper.

Researcher: Alison Salt

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For further information, queries or complaints you can contact:

Researcher Supervisor: Andrea Higgins (Professional tutor)

Cardiff University, School of Psychology, CUCHDS, 70 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT.

HIGGINSA2@cardiff.ac.uk

Ethics Committee at The School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 70 Park Place CF10 3AT

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Appendix 6: Debrief Form

‘What are educational psychologists’ experiences and views of children with special educational needs and disabilities who are home-educated. A thematic analysis’.

Thank you very much for taking part in this study.

This study aimed to explore educational psychologists’ experiences of working with children with special educational needs and disability who are educated at home. The purpose of the research is to inform the role of EPs in their work with home-educated children who have special needs and disabilities and the profession in general.

Your participation has meant that you were interviewed by the researcher who asked you about your experiences as an EP when working with children who are home educated who have SEND, and your views and opinions on the EP role with this population.

A summary of the findings can be sought from the researcher following completion of the research paper.

Your information and responses to the interview will be held confidentially in a safe storage unit until the data is transcribed. The data will be entirely anonymous, and it will not be identifiable back to any individual. Recorded data will be transcribed within two weeks and will then be destroyed. Anonymous transcripts may be held indefinitely by the University.

If you would like further information on this research project, or are interested in the outcomes of this project, please contact the researcher.

If you have any concerns please contact Andrea Higgins, research supervisor, at the school of Psychology, Cardiff University, or the Ethics Committee at The School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 70 Park Place CF10 3AT.

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Thank you for your time.

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Appendix 7: Interview Schedule

Indicative Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews:

RQ1. What are EPs' experiences of working with children and young people (CYP) who have special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and who are home-educated (HE)?

What do you understand by the term home education?

- What else have you heard it called?
- Is there anything about the term you are unclear about?
- Is there anything about the term you would like clarifying?

Tell me a bit about your work and experience as an EP.

- How long have you been an EP?
- How are you employed? By a LA, private company etc.?
- Have you always worked in the same place?
- Do you have any areas of interests or roles of responsibility?
- Where did you train?
- How long ago?
- Did your training course cover HE?
- Have you been on any training courses related to HE since this?
- How have you kept informed about practice in this field?

Tell me about your work with CYP with SEND who are HE.

- Approximately how many cases have you been involved with?
- Has this changed over time? Increased / Decreased/ Stayed the same?
- What have been the reasons for your involvement?
- Who has tended to request the involvement of an EP?
- What kind(s) of SEND did the CYP(s) tend to have?
- Have you noticed any patterns in this regard?

- What kind of work have you tended to do with these CYP(s) and their families? Was this different to the work you would usually do with CYP in an educational setting?
- Did the CYP(s) have an EHCP or Statement?
- Did they have any additional provision that was made as part of this?
- Was there provision specified in the EHCP (or statement) that was not addressed because the CYP was HE?
- In your experience have other agencies involved with HE CYP who have SEND?
- Do you think the parents and/or CYP wanted further support from anyone?
- Do you think the parents and/or CYP they might have needed further support from any other agencies?
- Had the CYP(s) previously been in school? Why had HE been chosen for them?

RQ2. What are EPs views about children and young people with SEND who are HE?

Tell me what your thoughts are about HE in general.

- What do you think of CYP with SEND who are HE? Is it any different than CYP without SEND who are HE?
- In your experience why do you think parents / carers choose to HE?
- What was the education like for CYP with SEND who was HE? What was different in terms of both the experience and education offered in comparison to a school-based education?
- Do you think the SEND needs of HE CYPs are being met effectively through HE?
- Have you come across cases in your work with schools where parents/carers have considered a return to school? What happened?
- In your experience do HE CYP with SEND tend to go back into school? Can you tell me about a case where this has occurred?
- Do you think that sometimes parents/ carers, or maybe the CYP, want to return to school? What are the barriers to this? What supports a return to a formal education setting?

RQ3. What do EPs feel are the benefits and barriers to working with children and young people with SEND who are HE?

Tell me about any reflections you have of working with CYP with SEND who are HE.

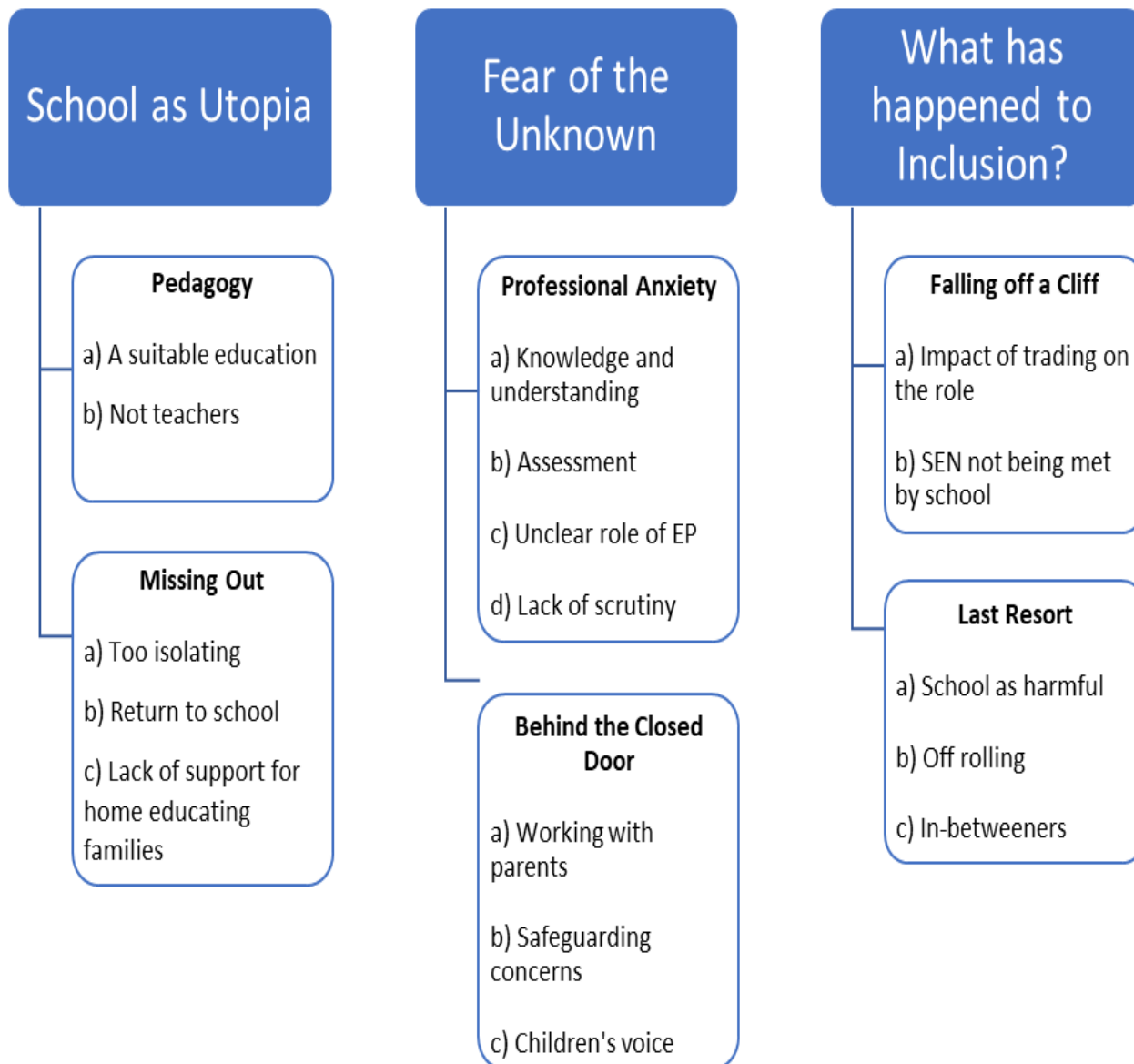
- On average, how much time does this type of work take? Is this too much time, too little or, just right?

- Would you have liked to have done more or less? What would this have been?
- What works well for when working as EP with HE CYP who have SEND?
- What are the barriers?
- Was there anything else you would have liked to have done?
- Do you feel this population of children are well served by their LAs? What is working well? Where are the gaps generally?
- Did you feel you had enough knowledge about the current legislation regarding HE and SEND? The local authority obligations?
- Did you work with any other agencies?

RQ4. What do EPs feel their role should/could be with children and young people with SEND who are HE?

- Have you any thoughts / ideas about how EPs could further support this group (CYP with SEND who are HE) in the future?
- What more do you think needs to be done?
- Are there any areas of further research that you feel are required?
- What about CYP with/without an EHCP? A specific SEND?
- Is this a subject that has been discussed between yourself and colleagues, as a service, as part of CPD?
- Would this be something you would like to be involved with in the future?

Appendix 8 : Thematic Map



Appendix 9: Risk Assessment



Risk Assessment Form

IMPORTANT: Before carrying out the assessment, please read the Guidance Notes

1. General Information

Department	PSYCH - DEdPsych	Building	CUCHDS	Room No	
Name of Assessor	Alison SALT	Date of Original Assessment	30/08/2018	Assessment No	1526395080_2173

Status of Assessor: Supervisor , Postgraduate , Undergraduate , Technician Other: _____
(Specify)

2. Brief Description of Procedure/Activity including its Location and Duration

'Exploring the experiences and views of educational psychologists regarding children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability who are home educated.

My research is about educational psychologists (EPs) experiences of working with children who are being educated at home and who have special educational needs and disabilities to find out what experiences EPs have of this group of clients. I want to see if there is more we can do as a profession of EPs to support this group of children and parents.

- I will be working with educational psychologists who have volunteered through a work-related website EPNET.
- I will not necessarily know all participants, but they will all be qualified professionals who are HCPC registered and abide by the BPS guidelines.
- I will be conducting the interviews in the EP participants place of work. This is not the university. This is not yet known but I will be able to check once volunteers have come forward but they will mainly be in local authorities or private companies in the UK.
- I will be interviewing participants during office hours. I aim to have completed all interviews by the end of September 2018.

No lone working, no out of hours workings, no use of electrical equipment.

3. Persons at Risk Are they... Notes

Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Trained <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	They are qualified and experienced educational psychologists. The researcher has received appropriate training via the DEdPsych programme. The participants are experience educational psychologists
Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	
Visitor <input type="checkbox"/>	Inexperienced <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Contractor <input type="checkbox"/>	Disabled <input type="checkbox"/>	

4. Level of Supervision

Notes

None <input type="checkbox"/> Constant <input type="checkbox"/> Periodic x <input type="checkbox"/> Training Required <input type="checkbox"/>	I have supervision by Andrea Higgins Course Director of Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. We speak on the phone and communicate via email on a periodic nature. Training records are available upon request
--	--

5. Will Protective Equipment Be Used? Please give *specific* details of PPE

Head <input type="checkbox"/> Eye <input type="checkbox"/> Ear <input type="checkbox"/> Body <input type="checkbox"/> Hand <input type="checkbox"/> Foot <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
--	-----

6. Is the Environment at Risk? Notes

Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
---	--

7. Will Waste be generated? If 'yes' please give details of disposal

Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	No
--	----

8. Hazards involved

Work Activity / Item of Equipment / Procedure / Physical Location	Hazard	Control Measures and Consequence of Failure	Likelihood (0 to 5)	Severity (0 to 5)	Level of Risk
Working off site - Travel	Getting lost/delayed	Take the train/ ensure route is clear and communicated with a supervisor so he is aware of the dates and times of journeys. Supervisor will be aware of times and locations when working off site. Will work during working hours only.	1	3	3
working with participants who are practising educational psychologists and are not on the EMS panel	Verbal /physical abuse	All participants are registered with the HCPC and BPS and as part of their code of conduct and ethics participants are aware of how they should behave and conduct themselves.	1	3	3
Working off-site	Slips, trips and falls	Researcher will follow all guidance set out by the place they are visiting	1	3	3
Working off-site	Fire	Researcher will follow all local emergency procedures of site they are visiting	1	5	5

9. Chemical Safety (COSHH Assessment)

Hazard	Control Measures	Likelihood (0 to 5)	Severity (0 to 5)	Level of Risk

Scoring Criteria for Likelihood (chance of the hazard causing a problem)

0 – Zero to extremely unlikely, 1 – Very Unlikely, 2 – Unlikely, 3 – Likely, 4 – Very Likely, 5 – Almost certain to happen

Scoring Criteria for Severity of injury (or illness) resulting from the hazard

0 – No injury, 1 – First Aid is adequate, 2 – Minor injury, 3 – "Three day" injury, 4 – Major injury, 5 – Fatality or disabling injury

10. Source(s) of information used to complete the above

MHSWR 1999

11. Further Action

Highest Level of Risk Score	Action to be taken
0 to 5 x <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No further action needed
6 to 11 <input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate additional control measures should be implemented
12 to 25 <input type="checkbox"/>	Additional control measures MUST be implemented. Work MUST NOT commence until such measures are in place. If work has already started it must STOP until adequate control measures are in place.

12. Additional Control Measures – Likelihood and Severity are the values with the additional controls in place

Work Activity / Item of Equipment / Procedure / Physical Location	Hazard and Existing Control Measures	Additional Controls needed to Reduce Risk	Likelihood (0 to 5)	Severity (0 to 5) × = =	Level of Risk

After the implementation of new control measures the procedure/activity should be re-assessed to ensure that the level of risk has been reduced as required.

13. Action in the Event of an Accident or Emergency

<p>Ring 999</p> <p>Inform supervisor</p> <p>When working off-site, all local emergency procedures will be followed.</p> <p>Any accident, incident or near-miss will be reported to the School’s safety officer.</p>

14. Arrangements for Monitoring the Effectiveness of Control

Ad-hoc visual checks and ...discussion with supervisor
--

15. Review: This assessment must be reviewed by: 1/12/18

Name of Reviewer:		Date of Review:	
Have the Control measures been effective in controlling the risk?	Yes		
Have there been any changes in the procedure or in information available which affect the estimated level of risk?	No		
What changes to the Control Measures are required?	None		

16. Signatures for printed copies:

Form completed by: Alison Salt	Date:1 September 2018
Approved by: Claudia Calder	Date: 03/09/18
Assessor:	Date:
Reviewed by:	Date:
This copy issued to: (print name and sign)	Date:

Appendix 10: Noticings example

Noticings

A.

1

Confusion regarding status of HE - are they
↳ confusion about what it actually is. aren't they!

responsibility to edu?

Reasons for home edu unclear? Whose
decision to home educate? Parents, Sch ??

Views - not sure of the best way of doing it.

not accessing a full curriculum at home?
EP concerns re not a broad & balanced curriculum
w/ arts, PE etc.

- attendance issues / HE confusion
- Sch record keeping / data / percentages more concerning to the school than the actual edu.
- vulnerable (more) at home

EP having politics w/ schs not recording HE properly.

exclusions by the back door - links to recent media coverage on the issue

educational gaps as result of back door exclusions
↳ getting wider - worry about them but lack of impetus to do anything? Or political will from L.A.S.

ambiguity about who's more in control - process system driven.

Appendix 11: Coded Interview example

- 2 Verbatim code:
3
4 ... : **Hesitation/pause 1-3 seconds**
5 [pause] : **Pause 3 seconds plus**
6
- 7 Int¹: **Right, Participant. Now, have you got any examples of working with** *no option*
8 **home educated pupils?** *elective*
- 9 R²: Yes, erm, I have, I've had a few, [laughs] a few cases of erm, children being *parental choice*
10 educated at home although I think there is a difference between erm, being *Sch can't meet needs*
11 educated at home where that's been parental choice. Some of my other erm, *with H.E.s*
12 casework has been where erm, they're on roll at a school, for example but it's *no choice*
13 felt the school **can't meet their need** so they're being provided with education *choice but not as no offer of choice*
14 through various services in the home, sometimes as a temporary measure while *no option*
15 they're ... awaiting a placement but I th- I was, in thinking about all the cases
16 that I've been involved with, **I can only recall one where it was actually a parent's**
17 **choice** and even that was in the short term while they were waiting for the child
18 to be old enough to access the provision they had in mind. *choice but not as no offer of choice*
- 19 Int: **Okay, so I mean you can tell me, you choose which ones you can do a bit**
20 **of either of those really ...**
- 21 R: Hmmm, hmmm.
- 22 Int: **So that we've got a bit of a balance but yeah, tell me about sort of, how did**
23 **you first get involved with the cases?**
- 24 R: Erm ... I think in the majority of cases, **it was a statutory assessment piece of** *only invol. through S.A.*
25 work.
- 26 Int: **Yeah.** *limited role*
- 27 R: So a referral had been made, erm and I needed to write a psychological advice
28 ...
- 29 Int: **Yeah.** *disappointed by limitations of role* *very limited invol. only S.A.*
- 30 R: So I would make contact and really **that was the extent of my involvement, was**
31 **once the piece of work was completed ...** erm, there was no further involvement,
32 erm with those young people or families. Erm, there were one or two instances
33 where I had already been involved through casework in a school that was on my
34 patch- *so involved no part of LEA work prior* *patch work*
- 35 Int: **Right.**

¹ Interviewer
² Respondent

36 R: -so the child was attending school but then erm, remained on roll but was
37 receiving an education at home because the placement broke down but again,
38 once I'd written a psychological advice and the child was either still receiving
39 education through services at home or placed in a different provision, that was
40 the end of my involvement. *limited role of EP* *off rolling?* *not meeting needs*

41 Int: So did you get erm, a sense about how the placement had broken down?
42 Did- was the parent able to tell you about that?

43 R: Erm [pause] yeah, and I think it was different in different situations so in one, in
44 one case that I can recall, it was the child's behaviour erm, that was felt to be
45 unmanageable in the school setting, erm ... so they were, it was then decided
46 that they weren't emotionally ready to be there and needed to receive education
47 in the home. *Emotional needs not met?* *lack of EP input.* *not emotionally ready - responsibility passed to parent.*

48 But in another situation, it was the child's anxiety was given as the reason they
49 were a, a sort of anxious school refuser, erm and it had gone on for a number of
50 years, erm, in that case it was, I think, around the primary to secondary
51 transition ... erm, that had gone wrong. Erm, from the parents' perspective, in
52 that case, they w- they felt that their child's mental health needs ... were the
53 issue and that until this young person had their mental health needs erm,
54 addressed in some way by a service such as CAMHS, they wouldn't be able to
55 go back to school. *Transition* *MT needs* *Long term needs not met.* *Lack of health support impacts edu*

56 Int: Right. *So limited to the as school could address or meet need schools fairly v.p.*

57 R: Erm, I'm trying to think of, in another situation ... from the parents' point of view,
58 they felt that their child's needs were so complex that a mainstream school
59 couldn't meet those needs and there wasn't a specialist provision available, so
60 they were keeping them off school until they were erm, until they'd reached
61 junior age, at which there was a placement available at that age group so they
62 decided to home educate in the meantime. *Sch can't meet needs* *not right setting provision* *Lack of provision*

63 Int: Right ... *between sch + home ed.* *'stop-gap'* *no choice* *Proval has little choice*

64 R: ... until the child was older but it was never a long term plan to home educate.
65 Erm [pause] I guess [pause] I'm trying to think of ... cases, I think in some, i-i-
66 the parental understanding of why the placement broke down has, has varied,
67 sometimes parents can be quite angry and feel that the school has let them
68 down in some way and the relationship between the parent and the school has
69 broken down and they, some parents have seen it as "you could, you could
70 meet my child's needs ... if you were willing to do so" ... *parents' not aware of options* *com + rel. broke down*

71 Int: Yeah. *role of EP supports parents* *schools not meeting needs*

72 R: In other cases, there's, the parent has been erm ... [sighs] of the viewpoint that
73 the school have done everything they can, they've been wonderful- *positive impact of school.*

74 Int: Right.
75 R: -they've done their best. As a professional, I may not agree that they have
76 explored all avenues but from the parent's point of view ...

So different p of v schools say they've done all they can.

- 77 Int: Yeah ...
- 78 R: ... it was kind of erm, "they've done everything they possibly can for my child ...
79 but there's, my child has a problem that this school cannot ... erm-
- 80 Int: Right. *sympathetic to school situation* *Parents see that schools do not have capability*
- 81 R: -do anymore for", erm, so quite mixed.
- 82 Int: Do you think, do you know how the decision or who- how a decision came
83 about to home educate? So was it the parents making the decision to
84 withdraw or was it in, in discussion with other professionals or with the
85 school? Did you get a sense of that?
- 86 R: Erm, I th- a-again, yeah and I think again it, it was different for the different
87 situations so where the, where the parent had decided to home educate, erm,
88 until the child was of a junior age, that came across to me very much as the
89 parent's choice. ?? *suggests it wasn't meant a definite choice to H.E.*
- 90 Int: Right.
- 91 R: I think the school erm, that this child could have gone to was saying, "we can
92 meet need" ... *School work but prefer not.*
- 93 Int: Okay.
- 94 R: "And we'd be happy to have this young man" but Mum felt that her child's needs
95 were too complex for mainstream and ... made a choice to erm, home educate. *Waiting for specialist provision*
96 In, in erm another case, the one I referred to where it was felt that the child's
97 behaviour was kind of, they were at risk of exclusion, erm that definitely was not
98 parental choice and it was ... erm [sighs] m- multi-agency meetings I think
99 perhaps saying to Mum, "this is best for your child". *off really* *coercive*
- 100 Int: [inaudible 00:06:38] *parent coerced.* *off really manipulate*
- 101 R: But I don't think she felt it was best for her child. Erm, in the case where the
102 young person was too anxious to go to school, that was an interesting case *well supported at primary sch.*
103 because when I got involved, it was clear this young man had had an awful lot of
104 support at primary school to support his ability to attend and engage at school. *Transition didn't work*
105 He then transferred to a mainstream secondary school and it appears that within
106 four weeks ... he didn't feel able to cope with the situation but I wasn't involved
107 until at least two years later, which I felt was yeah, a really long time ... *lack of support for YP, Prov.*
- 108 Int: Hmm.
- 109 R: ... erm, that the situation had just kind of [pause] erm, gone on really without
110 anybody querying it so, but the, he was on roll at a mainstream secondary ...
- 111 Int: Right. *Invisible - no responsibility*

no identified person to support the

112 R: ... and they sent one of their home wor- they have like a person who would go
113 out to the home to work with this young man and I guess the plan ... that was in
114 the back of people's minds was, "at some point he'll return to school" ... but after
115 two years, it kinda felt like that probably isn't gonna happen. Erm [pause] and
116 I'm trying to think now how, that came to me as a statutory assessment and I
117 can't recall who, let me think about like who and it, why that was initiated.

out of edu for long periods of time

118 Int: Hmm. *Invisible at home*

119 R: I think it may have been initiated ... probably done as a parental erm, request ...

120 Int: Hmm.

121 R: ... but maybe led by the school because I think that this young man was
122 impacting on attendance figures, would that be right? Do they hook up?

Sch. only looked about figures

123 Int: Yeah, yeah. *School attendance issue*

124 R: I think if they're on roll but not attending ... *Impact on kids COS & has data looks to public*

125 Int: Yeah.

126 R: I don't know how that's recorded.

127 Int: Hmm.

128 R: Or it was just felt like he was either gonna come to school or not gonna come to
129 school ...

130 Int: Hmm.

131 R: ... and if this wasn't, and I think also the situation at home ... erm [pause] the
132 man who, who visited, who was based at school, he had some sort of pastoral
133 role so he went out to the house and I think it was becoming obvious that this
134 young man was becoming more reclusive ...

Some school involvement

135 Int: Hmm. *socially isolated as a result*

136 R: ... so whereas he would go out and take walks in the community and things with
137 his mum, he was no longer doing that-

isolated from comm

138 Int: Yeah.

139 R: He was bec- really struggling to come out of his bedroom, erm and I think that
140 this man felt like the situation wasn't great ...

expanded isolation

141 Int: Hmm. *isolator - HE not anxiety*

142 R: ... at home so maybe that's why it was initiated, just like "we need to do
143 something about this now" but I think it was- er, it was a good two years that he
144 had not been attending school.

SA a way of moving things on... minimal role for of restricted

- 145 Int: Gosh.
- 146 R: Erm, and I found that really interesting that ... the placement broke down about
147 four weeks into Year 7 ...
- 148 Int: Yeah.
- 149 R: Erm, and I picked this young man up when he was Year 9.
- 150 Int: Yeah, gosh.
- 151 R: And Mum was desperate in that situation, erm ... and I wonder whether a factor
152 in that particular case that erm [pause] both, [sighs] I'm trying to think where-
153 hmmm, the boy wasn't born in England but it was like an EAL case ..
- 154 Int: [inaudible 00:09:37]
- 155 R: ... and I'm not sure that Mum [pause] erm, she just accepted everything that-
- 156 Int: Yeah.
- 157 R: -was, you know was told other and she didn't challenge maybe ...
- 158 Int: Hmmmm.
- 159 R: ... at the beginning, it was kind of "Oh he, he won't come to school because he's
160 anxious", erm [pause] and I don't think she ever really questioned whether more
161 could be done-
- 162 Int: Yeah.
- 163 R: -earlier on, erm-
- 164 Int: So she wasn't, it doesn't sound like she was well supported?
- 165 R: No, I mean the man, I met the man who came, who f- was going from school to
166 do sort of stuff at home but it, I found it interesting as well that there's a, there
167 often seems to be a very vague plan so on the one hand, it's kind of "we were
168 hoping to get him back in school" but they hadn't, in two years, seem to have
169 moved on from kind of like build some Lego together to build a relationship and-
- 170 Int: Yeah.
- 171 R: -for me, I was thinking, "How do you bridge that gap then? How do you, what
172 are the s- there's gonna be some steps needed in between"-
- 173 Int: Yeah, yeah.
- 174 R: -to go from ... like building a Lego model together .. erm-
- 175 Int: Yeah.

nothing done in 2 yrs.

Parents with previous experience re: kids
Parents powerless no were to turn

EAL -
Least able
Parents not able to gain support

powerless due to EAL, lack of kn, etc.

if parents do not know the system - kids are failed.

School support not effective lacks clarity + rigour

lack of ownership - neither sch nor parent what about LA? The aim was to get back to school but no rigour or plan

really interesting point. It can see the issue but not limited by funds

176 R: -to, to build a relationship if two years down the line you've still only got that far.

desperate failure of YP + by Edu. all.

177 Int: Yeah.

178 R: Erm ... and sometimes I did feel that from the school's point of view, they were providing something so that was okay.

- School relinquished responsibility as offering minimal input.

180 Int: Right.

181 R: Erm, nobody ever really questioned the quality ...

of HSE - what was happens at home

182 Int: Hmmm.

183 R: ... perhaps of "what are we providing?", this was a young man who was academically very able.

- Free education was not suitable

185 Int: Gosh.

- race on issue

186 R: But just highly anxious so he probably is a young person who could have got GCSEs, erm but for social reasons, found school a difficult place to be. Erm ...

really let down. what do we do for anxious kids

188 Int: Did you find, in terms of, did you get a sense with any of the er, young people you worked with about what home education meant for those young people at home?

191 R: Erm [pause] by "meant" do you mean ...

192 Int: What did they do?

193 R: ... sort of had aims and goals or what did they do?

given up. School priority although on roll.

the education was not around learning subjects -

194 Int: Yeah, what did they do?

195 R: Yeah, so in all of the cases, erm except the one where Mum chose to home educate, erm I felt that it was [pause] a planned around nurture and very much about "let's just do something", so it will be like "let's go and kick a ball about", for another child, I remember he was taken to Easy Tigers Indoor Play Area ...

minimal edu value.

199 Int: Hmmm.

not off roll is completely but what is it

200 R: That was what their timetable looked like, it wasn't always very full because I think uh- that at the time, children were entitled to 25 hours of education, I think if alternative arrangements were being made, I would say that you know, we were talking three or four hours a week of provision ...

large timetable so when told to stay at home

204 Int: Yeah.

this is neither school nor HSE - some kind of derivative.

205 R: Erm ... sometimes they'd be told online, things that they could do in their own time but of, kind of actual contact time with another service was- some used to get taken to Kit McGrath-

Another type of edu? Not fully off roll but no HSE either?

What's in this
On roll at sch
but told to
stay home?

208 Int: Oh right-

209 R: -to do some literacy, numeracy but generally, that was where there'd been a
210 high level of parental challenge to the local authority about what they were
211 providing 'cause it had to be paid for, erm, so I think there was never a
212 particularly clear aim about steps towards reintegration but also in terms of
213 academically, so for example, if you have a child who maybe finds a classroom
214 difficult to be because of their literacy needs, there weren't really always
215 concrete steps being put in place to develop those skills.

aim to reintegrate
only able to
get home
educ
when
parent
challenged
School
not identify
SE need

216 Int: Hmm.

217 R: Erm, I did definitely with all of them, apart from the one who chose to home
218 educate, get a sense that this was something CAMHS needed to be dealing
219 with. It was always kind of either the child's social emotional difficulties or the
220 child's anxiety, mental health issues, needed to be dealt with ...

Failure of
Mtt services

221 Int: Hmm.

222 R: Before anybody could realistically expect them to re-engage in a school, in a
223 meaningful way. But by contrast, the lady who chose to home educate her child
224 at infant age, she had ... really researched the whole topic and she was
225 connected to all sorts of local community groups where parents were home
226 educating their children, and they, she had a proper timetable for the whole
227 week ... erm, some of it academic work, erm some of it working on things like
228 speech and language skills, so she was using money, I think money that came
229 through ... erm, social care type funding sources so she could pay, I think, yeah
230 was it Disability Living Allowance?

Positive
e.g. of
HE by
choice

231 Int: Yeah, yeah.

232 R: That could be, something like that-

233 Int: Yeah.

234 R: -and I think she was using the money to pay for speech and language therapy
235 sessions.

236 Int: Hmm.

getting specific
Lit/Num
lessons HE
community

237 R: Erm ... she also, who else did she have involved? I think she had someone who
238 came into do the literacy and numeracy sessions but she used to take her child
239 to kind of playgroups and erm, er other kind of hobby type groups where all the
240 children were home educated and it was like the parents got together ...

Parents
support
each other

241 Int: Oh, right.

242 R: To coordinate what they were doing, so she had a really clear plan of ... erm ...
243 where, what she felt her child needed to learn and to develop, erm and she
244 wanted him to attend a specialist placement from junior age, so she didn't want
245 him to be behind, she wanted him to be able to kind of slot in and have age

really well planned
reason for HE

246 appropriate skills. Erm, so she, it was well coordinated but also involved a lot of
247 people outside of the home.

possible
- bring in
in chest
specialists
etc.

248 Int: Hmmm.

249 R: It wasn't all just her doing everything.

- as if this is
positive.

250 Int: Yeah.

251 R: Erm, yeah.

252 Int: **Erm, what erm, you were doing erm, an education and healthcare advice-**

253 R: Hmmm.

254 Int: **Psychological advice, just talk me through what happened.**

255 R: In terms of?

EP role?
Home visits

256 Int: **In terms of what you did, er, in your role in that really with them.**

257 R: Yeah, so er, home, home visiting really, erm, trying to think did any of them ..? I
258 think in one case, the child was going to some sort of local community centre to
259 access some educational provision so I went and observed there too. But home
260 visits, where I would ... erm, talk to parents, erm I also tried to do direct work if
261 possible with the young people to get their views or I don't, I'm trying to think did
262 I do any formal assessment? I, I may have done with the one that I said was ...
263 anxious but a s- a strong learner, I may have assessed that myself, erm, I think,
264 I'm trying to recall, I might have done, erm ... sometimes to see if there's any,
265 you know un- unrecognised needs that might be affecting.

tried
to
gain
views

check if needs?

266 Erm, I also spoke to school staff and any other professionals involved, in fact I
267 do recall going to see one young person, they were receiving education in a ...
268 old gym and it was, like boxing gym type place-

Alternative to HSE.

269 Int: Oh.

270 R: Very grim accommodation. !!

271 Int: Yeah.

272 R: Erm ... yeah that was like a kind of nurture provision that they were accessing
273 when they should have been er, at a secondary school. So just really trying to
274 collect any information or perspectives, erm ...

275 Int: **And how was that? How did it [inaudible 00:17:04]? Were there any
276 barriers or challenges to that or-**

277 R: Erm-

278 Int: **-were there benefits to doing it that way?**

- 279 R: The EAL case I definitely needed to have an interpreter.
- 280 Int: Yeah.
- 281 R: Erm, that was arranged. Erm [pause] I think it's challenging to see a child in,
282 only in the home setting because it can be very different in an educational
283 setting, erm, so it can be ... and to get a sense of, like if they're not doing
284 learning related activities and haven't for a long time, it's hard to, to gauge how
285 they would respond ...
- 286 Int: Hmmm.
- 287 R: So I think, and then you're trying to write your advice based on what they need
288 in an educational setting.
- 289 Int: Hmmm.
- 290 R: So if they've not been in one for years, that's quite hard to say what they need,
291 erm, you can, you can have a good go at thinking, "this is what I think they need,
292 based on how they're presenting now", erm ... and that therefore does tend to
293 make you steer towards the kind of social, emotional, mental health because
294 you can see for example, like the young man who was out of school for two
295 years doing Lego, he's gonna need quite a bit of support to get back into a
296 school setting, if that's where they, you know, where people want him to go. But
297 it's harder to kind of comment on the cognition and learning needs, I think
298 because sometimes ... there's not as much evidence of how they respond.
- 299 Erm, so yeah I think it can be, it can be challenging, erm, I think as well that I felt
300 a bit challenged by people's expectations, so for example, that case about you
301 know, doing the Lego and then like, "let's get him back into a mainstream
302 secondary", for me I'm thinking "there's a long way to go between current
303 situation and the aspiration and just producing an EHCP for him is not gonna ...
304 do that", but I think people kind of feel like "well, we've got the ed psych in now,
305 she's gonna write down what we need to do and then that'll, that'll be that."
- 306 Int: Yeah.
- 307 R: Erm, so I felt like maybe sometimes there weren't realistic expectations ...
- 308 Int: Hmmm.
- 309 R: Of what I could advise-
- 310 Int: Yeah.
- 311 R: It's taken sometimes many years for the situation to arise in the first place. I
312 think it was much more, in some ways much more straightforward with the child
313 where Mum chose to home educate until he was of a certain age, writing what
314 he needed was clearer because she did have educational activities, there was
315 lots of other agencies involved like the speech and language therapy service
316 that you could erm, read their reports, talks lot of talk- talk to all these different
317 agencies.

Parents who don't have power

home setting is limited

not a learning environment

Seen as v. different Sch + HE

role difficult due to HE

SENH need more obs.

assessment hard for EP

The EHCP doesn't solve prob.

EP seen as to arrive by others.

Limited role of EP from their view

When HE is successful - elements of parental

choice + other profs involved

318 The challenge there, erm was Mum's own [pause] mental health needs which
319 she talked openly about, erm so Mum, Mum said she had autism erm, and that
320 she was aware that this sometimes affected how she saw things [laughs], erm
321 and that was evident in that sometimes you know, she had quite a fixed view
322 about things.

parents
with
needs

323 Int: Hmm.

Parent
Empowered
by HE + control.

324 R: Erm, so kind of her being able to ... hand over control, I think was what, of her
325 child's education to teaching staff I think was a challenge for her ...

interest in
new g
powerless-
ness in
sch.

326 Int: Hmm.

327 R: Erm, so you could, I could write quite easily perhaps "this is what the child
328 needs"-

329 Int: Yeah.

330 R: But in that situation, I don't think the child's needs were the barrier to ...

331 Int: No.

332 R: Successful education, it was more just Mum finding it really hard ...

333 Int: Yeah.

334 R: To erm, to, to just relinquish that control.

335 Int: Hmm.

336 R: Erm ...

337 Int: [inaudible 00:20:46]

338 R: Yeah, and she was so willing to cooperate with all the agencies and services
339 and you know, very pleasant to deal with, erm ... and some of it I felt, which she
340 a-admitted herself was that she found it very hard to interpret professional
341 reports, for example ...

interest
personal
relationship

342 Int: Right.

So seeing sch
no
impossible

343 R: And that sometimes things felt like a really big deal to her that perhaps we would
344 think erm, [inaudible 00:21:12] schools can meet that need quite easily ...

345 Int: Hmm.

346 R: So erm, an example might be, erm ... if a no- a note- if a notee had written in
347 their report that "this child has a need to fidget", I wouldn't see that as a reason
348 that you couldn't access mainstream education but for Mum, each need that was
349 identified seemed to be quite a severe complex need.

Parental
problem

Parental not got a
rational new g situation

- 350 **Int:** I see, yeah.
- 351 **R:** Erm, and she had a long list of things her child had been described as having
352 which made her feel that this was erm, something that y- no school could
353 reasonably be asked to meet the needs of. *Parents focus on need and what kid can do*
- 354 **Int:** Yes, I see.
- 355 **R:** Erm, whereas using a, a, like something like dyslexia, I would see a mainstream
356 school can ...
- 357 **Int:** Yeah.
- 358 **R:** Can manage that, they should be able to.
- 359 **Int:** Yeah.
- 360 **R:** Erm, but for Mum, it just was kind of erm [pause] at the same level of like all,
361 there was no kind of discriminating between levels of severity of need, it was all
362 just every need was an additional need and- *role of EP with parental need,*
- 363 **Int:** Yeah.
- 364 **R:** -this kid had about ten different things identified.
- 365 **Int:** Yeah. *Parent view prominent not child's*
- 366 **R:** Erm, yeah. So a, an example would be something like, "This child erm ...
367 bruises easily", so Mum would feel that her child needed to either er, be
368 prevented from going on the playground at playtime or to have an adult holding
369 their hand at all times ... because they bruise easily. Erm, and it was a big
370 source of worry to her, something like that- *parents news under child's Ed.*
- 371 **Int:** Yeah.
- 372 **R:** -whereas for the professionals as, that are involved, they would be less
373 concerned ...
- 374 **Int:** Hmmm.
- 375 **R:** Erm, so that that, there were lots of challenges ...
- 376 **Int:** Yeah.
- 377 **R:** Erm, to kind of work around, to make any, it was, for me it wasn't a case of
378 whether this child needed mainstream or specialist provision, it was more just a
379 case of erm, helping Mum to ... to manage really, erm, any little blips or
380 incidents that occurred along the way. I think I've gone off on a tangent-
- 381 **Int:** No. *EP role in helping mum to manage. family work*

- 382 R: -I can't remember what the question was!
- 383 Int: **No, that's really good actually, that's really helpful. I think erm, just sort of**
- 384 **the, in terms of a future role for EPs, can you see a role for EPs, erm, with**
- 385 **children that are home educated?**
- 386 R: Erm, I, yeah whether in, whether it will materialise because time, **time erm and**
- 387 **funding seems to be a big challenge** but I definitely think they sh- there is a role,
- 388 erm and I think it, it's really important because the children that are home
- 389 educated, erm ... they can be ... overlooked, like they don't have a lot of support
- 390 from other services and I think we are in quite a good position, erm, because we
- 391 come with a kind of holistic view ...
- 392 Int: **Hmmm.**
- 393 R: Erm, to coordinate what maybe other professionals who've written reports and
- 394 things have said.
- 395 Int: **Hmmm.**
- 396 R: And I think sometimes, we can, if we had the time, like I could see like the, the
- 397 young person who'd been out of school for a couple of years with anxiety, I
- 398 could see how I **could have worked with Mum to develop a better understanding**
- 399 of ... how she could support that in terms of you know, small steps towards, I
- 400 could have done some work with the young man himself-
- 401 Int: **Yes.**
- 402 R: Erm, I could have worked with the erm, the people providing the education to
- 403 help them know how to move on from the Lego building toward- you know, to
- 404 make the steps-
- 405 Int: **Hmmm.**
- 406 R: -towards, even if he ended up doing ... **GCSEs at home.**
- 407 Int: **Hmmm, hmmm.**
- 408 R: But for me, I felt like that man, that young man was Year 9 and so erm, for him
- 409 to achieve his academic potential and I think there's a lot of well-meaning people
- 410 who are very varying and nurturing but they just don't know how to, how to move
- 411 this young man if, because he's obviously just keeping himself in his comfort
- 412 zone and "I'm only gonna play Lego" ...
- 413 Int: **Yeah.**
- 414 R: Erm, so I think there were lots of things that if I had more time to be involved,
- 415 that I could do that would be useful and probably effective ...
- 416 Int: **Hmmm.**

time +
funding
challenges
to EP
role

EP useful on
role.

lack of support for HE

Role of EP
to →
working
with
parents
p support

former role with
Sch.

achieve
educ for
child

417 R: Erm, for me I think that some of the things that needed dealing with are things
 418 that you would support on a day to day basis in the home and in the school
 419 setting, rather than waiting for two years for CAMHS because then it just
 420 definitely reinforces the idea that this is something some specialist at a distance
 421 needs to manage, rather than you know, working with – and I did find that when
 422 I was involved with anybody, like the man who went from that secondary school
 423 out to the home, we had a really good chat about these kind of things, about
 424 “well how do you get him from here to here?” and you know, “what if he?”, and
 425 now he’s only come- you know, he used to go out of the house and now he, then
 426 he stopped going out of the house, now he won’t even come out the bedroom,
 427 like “how do we manage this?”.

Interested
re diff of g
getting
back into
school.

428 Erm, we’re, and like this, that, that young boy loved reading, he, he just read
 429 every book he could get his hands on and we were talking about how do you
 430 build on that towards like English GCSE, so I think I could be really helpful, erm,
 431 in ... in supporting the family and the school and the young people themselves,
 432 erm, and I think [pause] I think for some young people who are home educated
 433 with additional needs, erm, they’re, they’re very vulnerable to not having those
 434 needs met and understood, I think there’s a high risk of ... erm ...
 435 underachieving ... erm, their potential and to even kind of positive outcomes in
 436 the future like towards independence.

Needs
not met
at HE
vulnerable

Not always a choice

437 Erm ... and I, I think sometimes parents make an educated ... choice to home
 438 educate, other times parents are only doing it because they’re desperate and
 439 they don’t know what else they can do or they’ve been kind of steered into
 440 thinking, “this is the best thing to do for your child” but they kind of, it’s not
 441 something they want to do, erm, it’s not something they feel that they’re good at.

off
rolling

Curriculum

442 Erm, for me there’s a difference between a parent whose chosen to home
 443 educate and has a full week timetable for their child, and a parent who might be
 444 working full time and trying to support ... a teenager out of school, you know,
 445 with home education at the same time so I definitely think there is a, a big role
 446 for EPs, I think we can be helpful in loads of different ways ... erm but when you,
 447 I always find, the cases I’ve been involved with, they’re so complex and
 448 entrenched that it’s not a five minute job, erm you know, you-you’d need
 449 ongoing involvement to make some sort of difference but I think of all the
 450 supporting agencies, we probably are the ones that would be best placed to
 451 make a difference ... erm, and even if we don’t get that young person back into
 452 school if, if they’re out for anxiety or behavioural reasons, at least we could
 453 ensure ... that they achieve well academically and have opportunities to develop
 454 their other skills like social interaction and independence, and I’m not sure, if we
 455 don’t do it, who else would?

Role for
EP.

456 Int: Hmmm.

457 R: Who else would do that? One thing that in all of this and all of the involvement
 458 in various cases that I’ve never had very good liaison or communication with is
 459 the Home Education Service. I ... it, I would, I think I-I knew a person’s name
 460 who was in kind of the person in charge of that service but ... just never really
 461 managed to make good connections ... with them.

HE
person
in LA

462 In, I think one way forward would be maybe to have like an E- if you’ve got a
 463 local authority service, would be to have an EP whose job it is, is it to be that link
 464 ...

EP link role

465 Int: Hmm.

EP role.

466 R: And to do like [sighs] you know, meet [sighs] once a term or something to go
467 through all the children on the list and have a bit of an update because I know
468 that there are safeguarding checks done, and I know that there are checks done
469 about ... parental capacity to deliver an education, I think they check on that but
470 what I'm not sure of is the people in that team, what are their backgrounds,
471 where do they come from? What roles have they had? How, how do they
472 check those things? Like how would you know that a child is getting an
473 adequate education?

474 Int: Hmm.

Incl of academic rigour / challenge.

475 R: Erm ... and [sighs] erm ... I feel like because it's the parent's right, that there's a
476 low level of challenge to that sometimes because as we've seen on the TV
477 programmes, you can decide that you're not having a curriculum, you're just-

478 Int: Yeah.

lack of curriculum

479 R: Your child can just explore ... erm ... through play or something, you know,
480 you're not obliged to are you?

481 Int: No.

482 R: I think it's only if there's special needs ...

483 Int: Hmm.

484 R: Erm ... but that's provided those special needs have been identified and
485 recognised, if they haven't ... erm, I'm not sure, who notices.

486 Int: Hmm.

487 R: Or who checks if the parents themselves don't have concerns.

488 Int: Hmm.

489 R: Erm, and I think it's interesting that it's an increasing trend ...

490 Int: Yeah.

491 R: ... towards it, I think people are losing faith sometimes in ... in the system really,
492 I think and I think it's, I'm not so s- convinced that there's a, a big change in the
493 trend thinking, "this is a great idea", I think there's a big change because people
494 are desperate and feel like school can't meet their child's needs so they've got
495 no other option.

496 Int: Hmm.

*No option
desperate*

497 R: But I don't, that's just my ... feeling.

498 **Int:** Lovely ~~thank~~ thank you. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about
499 that you'd just like to raise?

500 **R:** Erm [pause] yeah, only [laughs], I've talked for ages, I'm just thinking, it's
501 something that I don't think was covered well in training because it's such a
502 small area of work and in fact, in some local authorities, it's not considered
503 something EPs should even be aspiring to be involved with, if a parent's chosen
504 to home educate, for example, elected for home education then that's that and
505 that, we don't have a roll in that.

*training
lack of
not seen
as a role*

506 So I think it's something that when I have come across a piece of casework, I've
507 approached it probably in a similar way to ... what I would do erm, in any psych
508 advice, the setting are different, the contexts are different but I don't feel like it
509 was anything we ever used to cover very much, erm, on, on sort of service days
510 or on my training course or you know, it just wasn't really considered worthy of
511 the time because the c- we would be involved in very few cases, it just wasn't a
512 priority for, things like every year, you know, we'd have our updated
513 safeguarding training and our critical incident training and all these diff- and I felt
514 like actually, it's something that maybe EPs don't, don't have a lot of experience
515 of and don't know a lot about.

*Not
covered
in CPD.*

*Lack
of
experience*

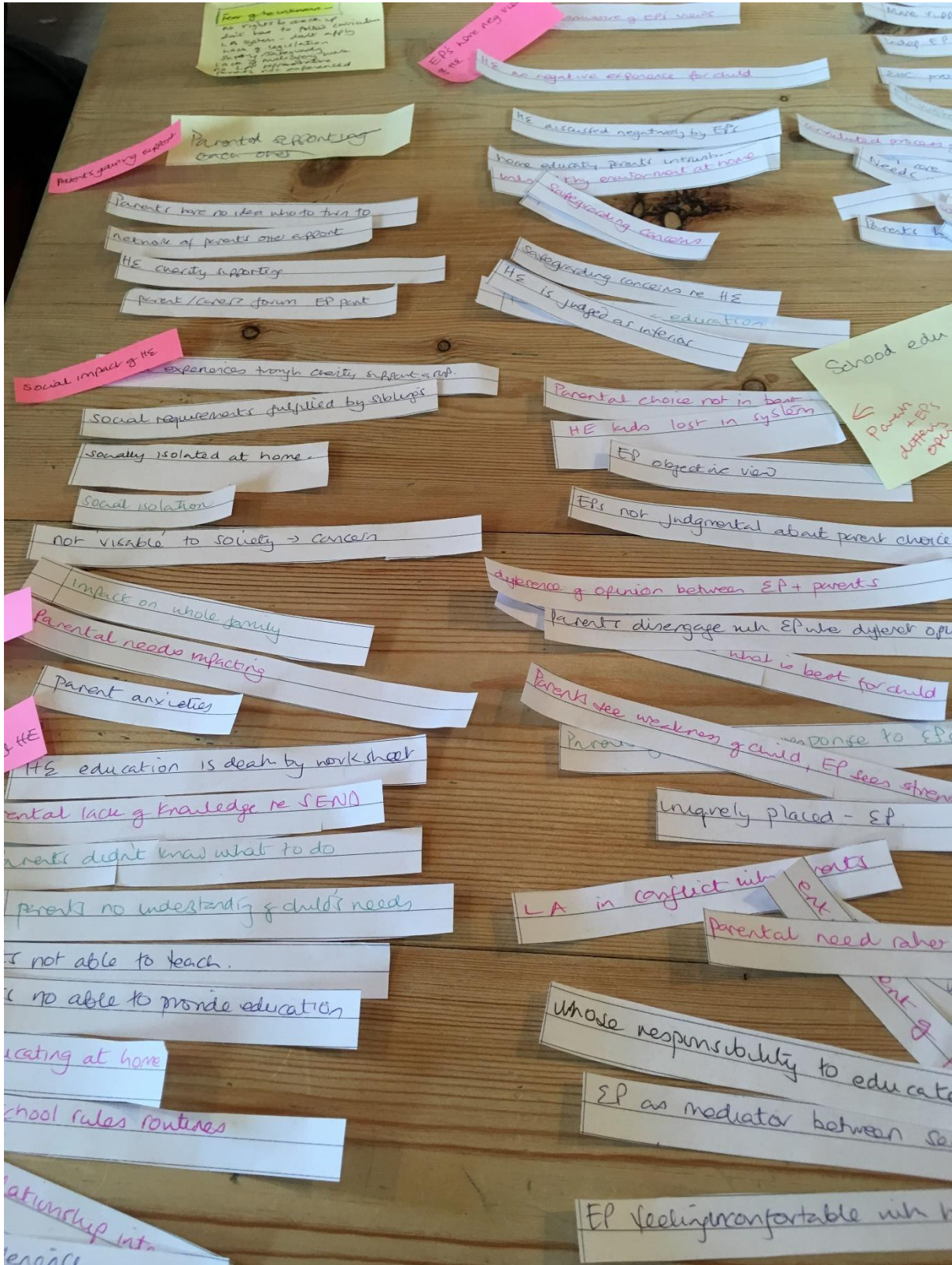
516 **Int:** Hmm.

517 **R:** Erm, so I think that's room for improvement there as well to just, especially as it
518 is a, an increasing trend, erm ... even if you only have one or two cases once in
519 a while, you still could benefit from knowing what you're doing.

520 **Int:** Okay, that's it. Thank you, thank you very much.

521 **[END]**

Appendix 12: Photos of paper codes



Appendix 13: Thematic Charts

Overarching Theme	FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN	
Theme	Subtheme	
Professional Anxiety	Knowledge and Understanding of HE	<p>‘it’s definitely been discussed erm.. we have quite a lot of supervision sort of sessions that I think erm I’m not sure who has raised it but we have certainly had conversations in the last six months about the numbers of children who are home educated that are coming out of the system erm and we’re trying to keep a list of those young people who we might have worked with who are now home educated, erm, principally because of their SEN needs not being met by schools and I think we are building up quite a list’.P2 L 283-288</p> <p>‘you don’t know what you’re doing or that you’re guessing is this right is this the right approach so that yeah that that helped in that sense as a service at least in a small group and then it was like staff meeting where we reported back it helped to feel that we were together on it because we all had experienced it but we had not had that feeling of peer support i suppose’.P4 L140-144</p> <p>‘Well there’s one main person and that’s person that you contact erm (.) but you’d have to contact them they don’t contact you do you know this child which I think, yeah, I would, I think they should do just to check that if there was anything that you’d recommend or’. P3 L 108-110</p> <p>‘there lots of legislation in home education and do you know like I mean I’m interested in kind of relation to local authorities’ P3 L 176-177</p> <p>‘ I’m just thinking, it’s something that I don’t think was covered well in training because it’s such a small area of work and in fact, in some local authorities, it’s not considered something EPs should even be aspiring to be involved with, if a parent’s chosen to home educate, for example, elected for home education then that’s that and that, we don’t have a role in that’. P9 L500-505</p>

<p>Unclear Role of the EP</p>	<p>‘But you probably would've had that conversation with school or they'd be giving you evidence, routes are fairly clear aren't they, well as home education I'm seeing a lot of secondary home education that are actually the same kind of issues, with attachment, where do you go its a lot harder to then start involving CAHMS or local pediatricians when you've not got a school place’ P5 L127-131</p> <p>‘because all you've got is you and a child and an assessment you haven't got any other kind of information, a lot of it is just reported from parents and you just taking the parents word for that and reporting what they've said’ P2 L183-185</p> <p>‘that you don't know what you're doing or that you're guessing is this right is this the right approach’ P4 Line 140-141.</p> <p>‘its kind of seen as well parents are entitled to it and if they choose that you don't really have a part to play in it really’ P3 L100-101</p>
<p>Assessment in the home</p>	<p>‘His stepfather was on a PlayStation all the time I was there and during the time I was doing the assessment and told me all about his history of mental health needs and his experience of being in special school’. P7 L142-144</p> <p>‘I mean just from my purely as a practitioner going into a home environment trying to do an assessment it's a nightmare, haha, because you often end up trying to work in the living room erm (.) working around the toys and things that the child normally plays with so you've got to work that much harder to engage and inspire and motivate, often you might have mum or nan or the dog running around and watching over so you kind of, you know, and talking at the same time so you kinda lose the pace, you lose the, you have to explain to the child about the process and what you're going to do but then you also have to explain to the parents that they can't help and they can't say anything that you know, what their role in this kind of environment erm and it's such a</p>

		<p>poor piece of work then as well isn't it, because all you've got is you and a child and an assessment you haven't got any other kind of information', P2 L 175-184</p> <p>' I think it's challenging to see a child in, only in the home setting because it can be very different in an educational setting, erm, so it can be ... and to get a sense of, like if they're not doing learning related activities and haven't for a long time, it's hard to, to gauge how they would respond ...' P9 L281-285</p>
	<p>Lack of Scrutiny</p>	<p>'it's not high on our agenda if a parent chooses to home educate with an education health and care plan there's nobody sort of saying to us can we keep a check on these children and as I say with this case I rang the home educating sort of manager' P3 L158-160.</p> <p>'definitely if we had a system in place where the home education team in local authority or wherever they did contact us to sort of say you know this is a young person and a parent who is choosing to home educate, if a parent wants to do that that's their decision and their child but then they've got additional needs and especially if they've got an education health and care plan there is a part that we do need to play because it is funded by the local authority and we do need to make sure we are meeting the child's needs' P3 L 143-148</p> <p>'No it's always felt really peripheral until recently and I'm noticing in the recent, erm, Ofsted of the local authority's SEM provision that it seems to be becoming more of a priority that-that they're looking more carefully at the data and the</p>

<p>Behind the closed door</p>		<p>provision and the monitoring of children who are home educated'. P7 L435-438</p>
	<p>Safeguarding concerns</p>	<p>'was the home environment suitable for that child to be there all day? That was always a concern, particular those very vulnerable ones where we knew perhaps the opportunities at home weren't the best for their welfare and you are going to ask because once they're at school somebody is keeping an eye on them' P4 L106-109</p> <p>'how can we actually justify saying this child's home educated and what... what checks and balances do we have for those children?' P7 L755-756</p> <p>'So these actually are the children who can really slip through the net.' P7 L797</p> <p>'This is that...one of those scary gaps that takes you right back to Victoria Climbié, doesn't it?' P7 L804-805</p> <p>'you don't know where the child is, and i think that was questioned of the schools and i think hopefully things are better but in those days was a serious concern. And so for all those children they (.) the role was to ask questions and that kind of questions at the time of the multi agencies that it was fortunately at the time where (.) erm there was a lot more progress in terms of (.) organising the multi agencies and to keeping records about what it was and an action to be recorded and then monitored at the next meeting so that was a positive move and it was nationwide so it made a difference, multi agency working in a structured work, its always existed but it was hit and miss but once it became very structured i felt it was important safeguarding because there was</p>

	<p>opportunity for people like us or social worker or even a learning mentor to ask questions and to question the decision making about what is it we can do differently for this child. P4 L110-119</p> <p>'culturally we expect children to be at school and to be in social contexts and we can see them, so can see child protection services safeguarding issues being raised because you can't, that child's not visible so you don't really know what's going on behind the close doors, so I can understand that but then that's the sort of western culture thing isn't it that we expect children to be at school and not with their family'. P6 L52-56</p>
Working with Parents	<p>'but I don't think anybody has phoned her because mum said she doesn't like strangers in the home, so ... there's nobody actually seeing and because she won't allow, we can't even, even to do the annual review she has refused that .. she'll allow a SEN worker to go but not an EP' P3 L 93-95</p> <p>'It is the vulnerability of the parents that's usually I'll be helping particularly with the children with social and emotional difficulties is the need of those parents are we supporting them' P4 Line 164-165.</p> <p>I've got great concerns about mum's ability to manage, but again when I have rang to inquire with the (.) erm home educating team they said well we have no concerns mum sends us reems and reems of stuff she is doing erm but again haven't met mum and the child I don't know whether its er (.) a healthy environment' P3 L68.</p>

	<p>'one mum was very honest about erm her own needs really to me, and can be very difficult for professionals to work with so she did electively home educate, she was trying her best I think to get this little girl into school but then struggling with her own feelings about that and keeping her at home.' P6 Line 30-33</p> <p>'this child's mother, very difficult woman, she was not easy at all,' P8 Line 46</p> <p>'And Mum was desperate in that situation, erm ... and I wonder whether a factor in that particular case that erm [pause] both, [sighs] I'm trying to think where- hmmm, the boy wasn't born in England but it was like an EAL case '. P9 L151-153</p>
Children's Voice	<p>'and I don't think she ever really questioned whether more could be done-' P9 L160-161</p> <p>'The challenge there, erm was Mum's own [pause] mental health needs which she talked openly about, erm so Mum, Mum said she had autism erm, and that she was aware that this sometimes affected how she saw things [laughs], erm and that was evident in that sometimes you know, she had quite a fixed view about things. ' P9 L318-322</p> <p>' I'd say, Gill relax, I'm not...I'm just asking questions. I would try and bring her round by being human, but that investment was never, the relationship never built sufficiently enough for me to say, I think you should go to that meeting or, I think, um, I think you should at least listen to what the SEN officer has to say. She was, she was always snappy, always breaking relationships down, so you have to be open to support don't you?' P8 L287-292</p> <p>' this child diagnosed with ADHD, ASD, what he would like, the boy, it's a child's view. What would you like Dylan? To have more friends, to do swimming lessons, to go to school and have lunch and school trips, that's interesting'. P8 L505-507</p>

'I don't know about the girl what she thinks, I don't know how she's getting on at all', P5 L62-63

'you know often the young people who are in these situations are always vulnerable, so actually trying to support the views of the young person because the parents, often it is the mums, have a view of what the child is thinking or feeling but it is really hard to get the views of that young person because the mum is sitting there as well so you very rarely get to spend time on your own with that child to actually have a conversation and even when, the most recent case, which is really challenging one, erm I suggested that the young person, his mum wasn't happy with the short assessment that was completed so I suggested we could do a longer version but coming to erm the base where we work, book a room out, it would be really good if i could just work with the little girl on my own. Mum wouldn't have any of it, I kinda said you could go and get a coffee there's a nice cafe up the road, but no mum wanted to sit in and see exactly what was happening'.P2 L207-217

'in his case I don't know the nitty-gritty of it 'cause I've only got mum talking to me really'. P7 L101-102

**Appendix : Table of supporting quotes for each theme and sub-themes SCHOOL AS UTOPIA
OVERARCHING THEME 1**

Overarching Theme	SCHOOL AS UTOPIA	
Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative Quotes
Pedagogy	A suitable education	<p>“It felt quite structured, they had timetables, I was quite surprised about, I had never seen that. I said is that kept to, and she said at least four days out of the week there is a timetable but it was almost like 20 minutes type thing, 20 minutes chemistry but everything scientific was called chemistry’ P5 L51-53</p> <p>‘Essentially you're just presenting a worksheet to them. I’ve not seen anything that I've thought wow that's creative, that's resourceful like I’m inspired by that, that I’m amazed by that, whereas I go into school quite often and i see things that I’m inspired by and think wow that's ingenious. But I’ve never met a parent who home educates their child who I’ve thought ...wow.’ P2 L167-169</p> <p>‘And she looked a bit panicked and I-and I said, Has he got a table or a desk or anything he can? There wasn’t one. No table, no desk. Has he got anything he can lean on? No. Erm, have we got any paper? Has he got his crayons that he uses? And no to all of that’. P7 L159-160</p> <p>‘So for me to assess his mark making I could have got some paper out of my bag but mum was running around having heard my-my questions and what she gave me was the back of an A4 envelope that had delivered a bill in’.P7 L175-177</p> <p>‘The parent knows their child better than anybody does and they probably feel that actually they can give them as much education or as little as they think there child needs at that time so they don't have to fit in to how schools are run, so the kinda of demands of curriculum and things, and they would worry about them being you know sort of well actually being differentiated well as a parent I know my child can do so that's kind of the positive bit, but I see more of a negative because I just think, and again the demands on the parents, home and school are two different things but you're bringing into one arena aren't you,</p>

	<p>it's that bit of (.) and then getting your child to do the things' P3 L113-119</p> <p>' Um, I think the mum was providing quite a good curriculum for him, and she genuinely was 'cause she'd made one of her rooms into a school room. He has a desk, he had posters of dinosaurs and numbers, and he wasn't, you know, he wasn't age appropriate in terms of his education by any means, and he could tell me what he's been learning recently. So she was using the internet a lot, she had a couple of, um, [unclear 0:03:56] programmes on her laptop I remember' P8 L94-99.</p> <p>"erm I felt that it was [pause] a planned around nurture and very much about "let's just do <u>something</u>", so it will be like "let's go and kick a ball about", P9 L196-197</p> <p>'That was what their timetable looked like' P9 L200</p> <p>'Erm, for me there's a difference between a parent whose chosen to home educate and has a <u>full</u> week timetable for their child, and a parent who might be working full time and trying to support ... a teenager out of school, you know,' P9 L442-444</p> <p>'the lady who chose to home educate her child at infant age, she had ... really researched the whole topic and she was connected to all sorts of local community groups where parents were home educating their children, and they, she had a proper timetable for the whole week ... erm, <u>some</u> of it academic work, erm some of it working on things like speech and language skills' P9 L223-228</p>
Not Teachers	<p>'they've said they don't know what they're doing, you know, they're intelligent people, you know they both professional jobs but they're not teachers and I don't think..... they've said before they are winging it, and I think you can to a certain extent with younger children when you've got the time, and dads science knowledge, a lot of primary teachers should we say, but mum who does the majority of the teaching has no idea how to teach literacy, so he hasn't got that basic skill'. P5 L 103=108</p>

<p>Missing out</p>		<p>'although I can see where he might be dyslexic I couldn't say hand on heart hes had appropriate teaching opportunities', P5 L84-85</p> <p>'The home environment, the lack of supervision, the lack of ability to ensure that he was receiving any form of education whatsoever and it was patently clear to me that it was just playing on mum's phone and watching videos, that was his education'. P7 L226-228</p> <p>'He should have had input from specialist teachers, my experience is, you know, this is a little boy who he-he-he would have benefited from but I don't know how parents were...how mum was responding to-to these possibilities' P7 L676-678.</p> <p>' a parent without a teaching qualification isn't going to know about the process of learning, you can Google it. At the end of the day you're, you're being taught by a parent aren't you, you're not being taught by a specialist qualified person' P8 L264-266.</p> <p>'In some of the cases the parents had employed someone to do it, and in one particular case it was someone from the same school who acted as a home tutor, I don't know if that could still happen, but it was after school hours and erm and (.) so there was a link and from our point of view we found there was someone that was in touch in terms of curriculum expectations, I could link that this is secondary where there are subject tutor to keep that young person, how can i say it, a little bit in touch with the rest of</p>
	<p>Too Isolating</p>	<p>curriculum, whatever she could offer. So that, i will say, that was the most comfortable one that we had' P4 L70-76</p> <p>'I know that there are checks done about ... parental capacity to deliver an education',P9 L469-470</p> <p>'...I think there's an ongoing role for a specialist teacher to be regularly meeting with that particular parent to say, have you covered divide and multiplication' P8 L255-256.</p> <p>'Some kids don't know what they're missing though, do they? Is, is it a naïve experience really being home</p>

		<p>educated? You're missing out on team games, you're missing out on, um, assemblies, musical events, plays' P8 L165-168</p> <p>' You're missing out on school trips, school dinners, not that they're great, there's a whole, um, bonding of the citizen that you're missing out on if you're home educated' P8 L175-176.</p> <p>'actually by keeping away from the outside world actually to me is more a detriment' P3 L124.</p> <p>' I think it was the social isolation that came with it for both young women that was the biggest concern.' P1 Line 130-131.</p> <p>'and I think that the biggest concern is the social isolation and what do they do with them, and the impact on their family as well. P1 L147-148</p> <p>'think a part time timetable erm for parents who have to work as well it's very difficult for them and the kids then end up on PlayStation or whatever else, I think some of the harshest erm consequences with that are struggling between fantasy and reality and getting the kids out full stop after that because they just don't want to go to school any more' P1 L148-151</p>
	Return to School	<p>'but are they happy being away from their friends, there are so many things that at those meeting that were discussed that are beyond the actual home issue, their access to the community that kind of stuff' . P4 L65-67.</p> <p>'the whole family is socially isolated maybe where you don't know what's happening with that child' P6 L124-125</p> <p>'but he was obviously missing out on...I think this may be a stereotypical criticism possibly of home education, that you don't get the socialisation' P8 Line 103-105</p> <p>'... so whereas he would go out and take walks in the community and things with his mum, he was no longer doing that- ' P9 L136-137</p>

(Lack of)support for HE families

'I haven't had any school referrals for home educated pupils, they've tended to come from local authority work but that has been erm (.) only in the interim before they go back into a school,' P1 L24-26.

' I think it would have been exceptionally useful, I think it would have prevented the time for them being out of school' P1 L107-108.

' Erm so suggesting EHC process to get them back into education into a special school, so in this case the actual home educated team had suggested the EHC and this placement at special' P2 L107-109.

'The great news is mum was concerned that he did need to be back in a setting, we accepted that and wanted that as a way forward'. P7 L215-216

' but actually we're all standing on the sidelines watching and nobody is saying actually this is not the right thing or we could have a little bit of this but we also need to make sure he's (.) you know.' P3 L124-126.

'and I guess the plan ... that was in the back of people's minds was, "at some point he'll return to school" ... but after two years, it kinda felt like that probably isn't gonna happen' P9 L113-115

'I met the man who came, who f- was going from school to do sort of stuff at home but it, I found it interesting as well that there's a, there often seems to be a very vague plan so on the one hand, it's kind of "we were hoping to get him back in school" but they hadn't, in two years, seem to have moved on from kind of like build some Lego together to build a relationship' P9 L165-169

		<p>'And he felt like he'd gone through a gap and that he was missing access to services by the time I got to him'. P7 L130</p> <p>'She said no, nobody no and no services at that point'. P7 L236</p> <p>'No surprisingly. I-I would have thought early help. I thought they were a classic early help family'. P7 L554</p> <p>'you don't get your...an annual review of your statement if your at home educating' P8 L36-37.</p> <p>' we don't have resources to send, um, a reviewing officer off., not that there was many children' P8 L41-42.</p> <p>'So I do think there is a role for qualified people to support parents with resources, with expertise, possibly with teaching, don't you?' P8 L270-271.</p> <p>'said they've employed me for consultations they've said they don't know what they're doing, you know, they're intelligent people, you know they both professional jobs' P5 L103-105.</p> <p>'there's no reason why parents aren't able to do it if they're supported well, I think in a lot of cases parents aren't, maybe aren't supported well enough to do it,' P2 L331-332.</p> <p>'it's <u>really</u> important because the children that are home educated, erm ... they can be ... overlooked, like they don't have a lot of support from other services' P9 L388-390</p>

		<p>'He should have had input from specialist teachers, my experience is, you know, this is a little boy who he-he-he would have benefited from but I don't know how parents were...how mum was responding to-to these possibilities. But you could have imagined him identified if this would be the ideal [<i>banging noise</i>] trajectory he...' P7 L676-679.</p>
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Overarching Theme		
Falling Off a Cliff?	SEND needs not being met by school	<p>'bless him he was a sweetie, very much on the spectrum, very much on the spectrum. Did try and talk to parents about that, who were mortified and asked me not to put anything about that in the report.' P5 L18-20</p> <p>'So this little boy seemed to have had quite a small amount of input given the level of his needs and once he came out of the school system and this is how... I'll get to that. The reason that he was home educated according to his mum was she was getting fed up because he was put on a reduced timetable because they couldn't handle him and he couldn't handle it. He was falling asleep and then getting really upset, if he was getting tired and getting upset if they let him have a little nap it was just not working. It was much...' P7 L92-100</p> <p>'So she... It wasn't until the end, towards the end of erm reception year that she pulled him out and started to home educate him because she said not only was he on a part-time timetable but even with that she was constantly getting called by the school to come.' P7 L110-112</p> <p>'So she got absolutely fed up with the backwards and forwards, the randomness of it and the</p>

difficulties in not knowing whether she was coming or going while he was in school. At least when he was out of school and he was at home she-she could organise her-her life better.' P7 L114-116

'I have not been as disturbed as I was by that one given the child's level of need and the importance that someone should be working in a specific way to address his very significant, erm, developmental delays' P7 L625-627

'the parents felt that the pressures of school were too great and then the children, the support offered wasn't enough and they felt that they for the well-being of the children they would withdraw them and educate them at home'. P4 L41-43

'I can think of three young people at the moment who I'm involved with who have erm whose parents have taken them out of the education system because they feel the schools are not meeting their special educational needs. So they directly removed them from school because of that'. P2 L61-64

Impact of Trading

'In ***** they have speech and language therapy that is delivered under Virgin Care currently. It is changing and it is going back to NHS in April but he, for the purpose of this, was under Virgin Care, erm, which seems... And I don't know whether this is relevant or not but they're very quick even with children with significant needs to, erm, close a case and then get everyone to... With-with the proviso that you can always come back to us and make a new referral'. P7 Line 85-90

'Because its all traded services now and erm (.) the request had come through as an EHCP request so the piece of work was solely around writing that report for that request and although it was part of that process I was able to have a bit of a conversation and I was able to send mum a booklet

	<p>about anxiety, I'm not sure that mums literacy skills are or understanding of the actual booklet would have been up to actually accessing it so actually I would have loved to have gone out against to talk mum through the booklet and done a bit of work with the girl herself to try and help and manage anxiety in a different way because she was managing it by totally withdrawing and she didn't have many coping strategies for practising what to do when she was feeling upset or anxious. So that would have been really useful, its not a case for CAHMS its a case for a much lower level of (.) SEMH support but because we were not, it wasn't part of the piece of work I couldn't take another afternoon to go and do it.' P2 L255-265</p> <p>' it's kind of just everything feels like it's just coming down to money now, everything just revolves around the money, the cost and whose paying, how much they're paying and are they paying it. Whereas before it was about where the need is and we would work with the neediest, the most vulnerable targeted young people whereas now we work with who pays.' P2 L 274-277</p> <p>'time erm and funding seems to be a big challenge but I definitely think they sh- there is a role', P9 L386-387</p> <p>the children that are home educated, erm ... they can be ... overlooked, like they don't have a lot of support from other services and I think we are in quite a good position, erm, because we come with a kind of holistic view ... P 9 L388-391</p> <p>if we had the time, like I could see like the, the young person who'd been out of school for a couple of years with anxiety, I could see how I could have worked with Mum to develop a better understanding of ... how she could support that in terms of you know, small steps towards, I could have done some work with the young man himself- P9 L396-400</p> <p>'the request had come through as an EHCP request so the piece of work was solely around writing that report for that request and although it was part of that process I was able to have a bit of a</p>
Last Resort	

Off rolling

conversation and I was able to send mum a booklet about anxiety, I'm not sure that mums literacy skills are or understanding of the actual booklet would have been up to actually accessing it so actually I would have loved to have gone out against to talk mum through the booklet and done a bit of work with the girl herself to try and help and manage anxiety in a different way because she was managing it by totally withdrawing and she didn't have many coping strategies for practising what to do when she was feeling upset or anxious. So that would have been really useful, its not a case for CAHMS its a case for a much lower level of (.) SEMH support but because we were not, it wasn't part of the piece of work I couldn't take another afternoon to go and do it.' P2 L255-265

'Right, so this child came through to me as an EHCP parental request'. P7 L70

'why is our role there for children that are accessing the school system and those that are not? 'Cause you could argue that, could I provide her with feedback on how she's teaching English?' P8 L309-311

' I think it would have been exceptionally useful, I think it would have prevented the time for them being out of school but if the educational psychology service had been involved from the start with erm (.) with the young person who had ended up in the inpatient department I think the EP would have been a great contact to support with that', P1 L107-110

'in the other case it was a bit of both really push and shove really in terms of erm (.) it was the other cases the secondary school and it was definitely giving mum a lot of information about oh school's

really difficult you do know you can home educate if you decide to sign these papers and deregister your child.' P2 L71-73

'and it was at one time where the number of days of exclusion were really really high across the authority and whether it was erm perhaps a way of lowering the figures or a genuine feeling that that was better to ask the parents to keep the child at home rather than (.) than exclude because exclusion brings a baggage of many other issues. I never got to the bottom but it was very frequent, and I felt from that point of view there was the pressure on the parents and we always have said that what if the parents work, and many parents have to stop working for that reason' P4 L100-106

'parents have felt forced into it, so.... I've worked with parents who have had their children on part time timetables that hasn't been their decision, sort of a coercive decision made by schools' P1 L142-143.

other times parents are only doing it because they're desperate and they don't know what else they can do or they've been kind of steered into thinking, "this is the best thing to do for your child" but they kind of, it's not something they want to do, P9 L438-441

'I mainly am talking about children with social or emotional difficulties who may or may not have been excluded or who might have been asked to stay at home (.)' P4 L8-10

'they felt that those children should not be in the premises, so it is one of those exclusions that are not classes as exclusions' P4 L30-31.

School as Harmful

she felt that the daughter's experience of the school system had contributed to her anxiety significantly' P6 Line 15-16.

'She-she felt that it had been a nightmare in the mainstream and he hadn't coped' P7 L268.

'Take them out of an environment that was...they felt was harming them' P7 L416

'So one was a little boy who was in school but because of an awful experience in a previous school mum had home educated' P6 L 100-101

'Eventually the mother said, I've got...I can't have you holding my child on to...on the floor until he calms down' P8 L217-218.

'he's really anxious anybody associating with school he's got quite fixated on school as a bad, bad place' P5 L78-79.

'so parents decided to take them both out of school. Quite a high achieving area, parents feel that school was putting a lot of pressure on them especially considering it was a reception year' P5 L34-36.

'Mum was really concerned about bullying the child was concerned about bullying, but the school didn't see bullying or recognise bullying. Really sad situation and just ended up school refusal' P2 L80-82.

		<p>'the parents felt that the pressures of school were too great and then the children, the support offered wasn't enough and they felt that they for the well-being of the children they would withdraw them and educate them at home' P4 L41-43</p>
	<p>Inbetweeners</p>	<p>'I can only recall one where it was actually a parent's choice and even that was in the short term while they were waiting for the child to be old enough to access the provision they had in mind.' P9 L16-18</p> <p>'so the provision of home education could be short term or long term' P4 L31-32</p> <p>'mum had decided to electively home educate following a breakdown of an out of authority specialist provision, and that was really about provision and there not being any and the local authority couldn't suggest anywhere else, so in the end whilst she was waiting she thought I might as well, she was in a position so what else could she do, because they weren't in education' P6 L110-114.</p> <p>' and then she said well I'll home educate him till the tribunal makes a decision, and then she got the place that she wanted' P3 L85-86.</p> <p>'Some of my other erm, casework has been where erm, they're on roll at a school, for example but it's felt the school can't meet their need so they're being provided with education through various services in the home, sometimes as a temporary measure' P9 L11-14</p> <p>the relationship with school totally broke down and she removed him at that point to home educate and now its two three years down the line' P2 138-139.</p>



