Volume 1

Pupil Voice in School Non-Attendance: Exploring the perceptions of Pupils, whose attendance is below 85%

By

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Abstract

This study focused on school non-attendance, from the perspective of young people (YP) whose families were supported by a Local authority (LA) family intervention team (FIT). Detailed case studies allowed YP to reflect on their lived experience of non-attendance and share this with the researcher.

To achieve this, the School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) was used with a semi-structured interview schedule - specially devised to allow YP and the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their non-attendance.

Further data collection with key workers (KW), using semi-structured interviews, sought to gain an insight into the context in which school non-attendance was occurring and how future research may be made more accessible to this population.

It was evident that YP value school and recognise the importance of it in achieving future aspirations. Social relationships were highly important, but influenced each YP in a different way. KW noted the importance of trust in both encouraging YP to engage in research and in maintaining relationships to work with and support YP.

It was concluded that giving YP the opportunity to explore their perceptions and understanding of non-attendance was necessary in both understanding and supporting improvement in attendance.

Dedication

To Mum, Dad and Grampa Sid,

For your unfaltering love, support and encouragement.

To Tommy,

For understanding, and for believing in me.

In Loving Memory

Of

Pamela Rosemary Ward

5th May 1924 - 28th April 2013

Your love of life and belief in the potential of all children continues to inspire me every day.

Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations Used

CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CR	Critical Realist epistemological stance
C&YP	Children and Young People
C,YP&F	Children, Young People and Families
DfE	Department for Education
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FIT	Family Intervention Team
LA	Local Authority
KW	Key Worker
PA	Persistent Absence
PCP	Personal Construct Psychology
SR	School Refusal
SRAS	School Refusal Assessment Scales
YP	Young People

Chapter 1: Introductory Chapter

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Volume one is the first in a two volume thesis completed to fulfil requirements of the doctorate in Applied Child and Educational Psychology at the University of Birmingham. Volume one consists of; a literature review and a small scale research project with a focus on school non-attendance, from the perspective of young people (YP) whose families are supported by a local authority (LA) family intervention team responding to coalition government policy 2012-15. The research project took place in the West Midlands LA in which I enjoyed a 24 month placement during the second and third year of my doctoral studies.

1.1 Rationale

From my first experience working with YP as a youth worker I valued the views of YP and recognised the importance in providing them with the opportunity and platform to express themselves. I saw first-hand the frustration young people experienced when they were not consulted or listened to. Since this time I have worked with YP in multiple roles, and most recently on placement as a trainee educational psychologist. It has long been my opinion that it is vital for services aimed at working with and supporting YP to be informed and run in a way that works for young people. In my current role I have seen an increase in LA and national government policy that recognises this fact in areas such as special educational needs (SEN), however this does not seem to have transposed into areas where YP are perceived to be in the wrong, or making choices that adults around them do not approve of, such as school non-attendance.

Working in education for over five years I feel strongly about accessibility and inclusion. YP who are not attending school obviously do not find school accessible and are in the majority of cases not included in any aspect of school life as they are viewed to have opted out.

1.2 Identity as a Researcher

My ontological views and beliefs have been shaped by the experiences I have had both through my doctorate studies as a trainee educational psychologist and in my work prior to post-graduate study. The epistemological assumptions, influenced by ontological beliefs, that informed the methodological decisions made in this project were constructed from the impact of personal experience working in the field of education, both prior to and during doctoral training. Prior to training I worked as a cover supervisor in a middle school, having the unique opportunity to work with many children and YP in a variety of contexts across the school. I have also worked for the youth service for 9 years and had the privilege of building positive relationships with YP who have experienced challenges in their education over this time and have particularly enjoyed hearing their views and perceptions of school and the education system. In any work I have carried out with or for young people, particularly the vulnerable or marginalised, I have found that it is of vital importance that they have the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas and opinions and see these being listened to and acted upon by professionals and services around them. With these assumptions and values I recognise the importance of critically reflecting on the social practices I encounter in my role as a trainee EP and as a post-graduate researcher, and endeavour to contribute to the emancipatory function social science research should serve (Robson, 2002).

1.3 Overview of Volume 1

Volume 1 is made up of a literature review, and a small scale research project. The literature review seeks to consider the published literature on school non-attendance and in doing so answer four questions; how is school non-attendance conceptualised in the literature to date? How have psychologists sought to understand the phenomenon of school non-attendance? The third question reflects the nature of the target population of the research who belong to families who have been identified by local and national government as requiring intervention

and support; Is there a connection between families and YP categorised as vulnerable and non-attendance at school? Finally, because of the studies interest in pupil voice; to what extent does the literature and research represent the pupil's perspectives and views on school non-attendance?

The review postulates that, historically, there have been many challenges in defining school non-attendance significantly affected by the heterogeneity of associated terminology. In the most recent literature, and within the LA in which the research took place, "school non-attendance" is the accepted term. School non-attendance is descriptive yet neutral and importantly does not imply wrong-doing by the pupil whom it affects, as terms such as "school refusal" are thought to (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

The literature review considers the publications to date and discusses the weighting of research that seeks to elicit the views of YP and how they conceptualise school non-attendance. Consideration is given to the finding that despite significant research into school non-attendance, there is little published from the pupil's perspective.

This small scale research project seeks to report the way non-attendance is construed by pupils who are currently attending school for less than 85% of the legal amount required (190 days). The initial participants were members of families being supported by the family intervention team (FIT) as a direct result of the government policy document "Helping Troubled Families Turn Their Lives Around" (Casey, 2012). Further participants were included later in the study who did not receive FIT support. The research methodology was conducted in two stages: first using a pre-existing measure, the "school refusal assessment scales" (SRAS) developed by Kearney and Silverman (1990) and revised and updated by Kearney (2002) and used to determine what the tool would suggest was the underlying function/s served by school non-attendance at. A semi-structured interview made up the

second phase of the research, in which techniques derived from Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) as pioneered by Kelly (1955) were utilised, specifically the techniques of triadic elicitation and laddering. The study recognises that PCP takes a social constructionist epistemology which differs from the critical realist (CR) stance of this research. PCP techniques are used as tools within the semi-structured interview schedule to elicit the participants' views. This was deemed appropriate as PCP aims to work alongside the individual in seeking to understand their construction of the world with them, rather than carrying out analysis or research on them. Through the researcher positioning themselves to carry out research "with" rather than "do to" the participant and adapting the reparatory grid (PCP technique) so that analysis is carried out with the participant rather than by the researcher alone, the study aimed to be conducive with the emancipatory function of social science research that the CR epistemology seeks to fulfil (Robson, 2002). Due to significant difficulty maintaining the engagement of participants and a high rate of drop out and withdrawal, further data collection with the FIT team KW was felt appropriate to explore how they felt research may be made more accessible to the target population.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Chapter 2

School non-attendance is the subject of interest for the study, and the area of research is refined within this field. The Department for Education (DfE) (2014) state that regular attendance is central to raising standards and attainment. The research will focus on the perspective of YP in families who are supported by the Family Intervention Team as a direct result of the government policy "Helping troubled families turn their lives around" (Casey, 2012a).

2.2 Aims and Objectives

There are multiple purposes for embarking upon a literature review as an integral contribution to a study (Ridley, 2008). This review seeks to fulfil a number of purposes and provides a comprehensive account of the following (subheadings derived from Ridley, 2008);

- Historical Background

- Definitions and Discussion of Terminology

- Theoretical Underpinnings

- Contemporary Context

- Justification for the current study

The purpose is to describe the current state of knowledge in the broad field of school non-attendance, create a synthesis of the strengths, weaknesses and biases of said knowledge, and identify any omissions (Jesson and Lacey, 2006). The literature review aims to funnel down from a broader look at the context of school non-attendance to investigate more specifically the area of school non-attendance in YP considered vulnerable due to family circumstances. The review aims to look critically at the representation of pupil voice in the available

literature. Finally, it aims to identify and justify the position that the current research will occupy within the wider context of school non-attendance literature. The literature review aims to address the questions below.

Questions to answer in the critical literature review.

1. How is school non-attendance conceptualised in the literature to date?
2. How have psychologists sought to understand the phenomenon of school non-attendance?
3. Is there a connection between families and YP categorised as vulnerable and non-attendance at school
4. To what extent does the literature and research represent the pupil's perspectives and views on school non-attendance?

2.3 Literature Search Strategy

The search terms "school non-attendance" and "school refusal" were used in prominent education and psychology databases in June 2014. These databases were as follows;

*   ERIC (Education resources information centre)
*   Psychology: A SAGE Full-Text Collection
*   MEDLINE

Due to the vast number of references generated in the first search using ERIC (260,626), inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Search

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer Reviewed	Teacher Attendance
Secondary aged pupils (11 years +)	School absence as a result of existing/pre-diagnosed medical conditions
Subject specific lesson attendance eg. Mathematics	Holiday/vacation absences
	Outside of UK/USA/Canada/Australia
	Exclusion or Suspension from school

A search using the same inclusion criteria took place in June 2015 to ensure the most current account of the research at the time of submission. This reduced the references to a more appropriate and manageable amount (186).

Additionally, a snowball approach was utilised to allow for further appropriate sources (identified through the process of reading material generated through the initial search) to be included.

2.4 A Historical Background

Attendance figures for schools have been reported as early as 1884 (when education was compulsory to 10 years of age) (Evans, 2006). Parliamentary Papers *(1884,* vol. xxiv) ascertain that government inspectors reported attendance figures and passed comment on how they felt attendance or accountability for attendance might be improved; demonstrating that the phenomenon of non-attendance has been observed for over a century with professionals

seeking to understand the contributory factors. In the late 1800s non-attendance at school was deemed to be mainly as a result of parental apathy or poverty. The contemporary research in the field of school non-attendance recognises the phenomenon as multifaceted and complex.

As of the Education Act in 1921(Part IV) it has been accepted that it is the duty of the parent to ensure their child received instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic, and the duty of the local educational authority (LEA) to enforce attendance at school. The government began preparations to make education compulsory to age 16 in 1964 and this was enforced in 1972, (Politics.co.uk, 2014).

The Department for Education (DfE) (2013) states that attendance at school is central to ensuring pupils achieve and raising standards in education. There are legal requirements and duties placed upon schools, governors and parents as a result of The Education Act 1996 (sections 434(1, 3, 4 and 6) and 458(4 and 5)) and The Education Regulations 2006 (Pupil Registration, England) (amended in 2013). Under section 444 of The Education Act (1996) parents failing to ensure their child attends can be prosecuted if a fixed penalty notice is not paid within 42 days.

In May 2014, the DfE published the Pupil Absence statistics for Autumn Term 2013, and highlighted that absence had decreased to 4.3%, which is the lowest recorded since figures began being recorded in 2006. Persistent absence or pupils who may become persistently absent also fell from 6.4% in 2012 to 4.7% in autumn term 2013. These figures however should be interpreted with some caution as it is unwise to compare data from a full school year (2012-2013) to data generated from just one term (Autumn 2013) (DfE, 2014). School attendance data is not as reliable as it could be due to the system of reporting, which excluded the final half term of the summer term from data (Taylor, 2012).

Despite national statistics indicating an improvement in attendance, the government recognise that this is not reflected in the data for pupils from families they have termed as "troubled" (Casey, 2012a). The government agenda; "Helping troubled families turn their lives around", also referred to as the "troubled families agenda" described multiple criteria that if a proportion of which were met, lead to the family being identified as "troubled". One such criterion is for a school age child within the family to have school attendance of below 85%.

The National Strategies report (2011) states that as of 2010 there was recognition that attendance should be viewed as a whole school issue. Improvement required sign up by the school leadership team and an understanding of the importance of attendance data. It states that schools should use attendance data to identify vulnerable groups and implement appropriate support. Interestingly it groups attendance and behaviour together.

DFE (2014) published guidance promoting good attendance and reduced absences. The guidance states that, by law, school must provide statutory education for a minimum of 190 days (380 sessions, two per day). Taylor (2012) states that despite attendance figures improving between 2006 and 2009, school attendance remains a government priority, with a shift to focus on pupils who are persistently absent (PA). These pupils are at significant risk of lower attainment and are more likely to find themselves not in education, employment or training (NEET) in future. Taylor (2012) recommended that government shift their public focus from the discourse of authorised and unauthorised absence to PA and improving this in schools. The most significant number of pupils falling into the category of school non-attendance is in the later years of secondary school (Taylor, 2012).

Thambirajah et al (2008) identify that published literature focuses on two key areas, psychological and psychiatric literature and literature from education research. Educational

research is considered slow and not necessarily representative of the SR that many educational services will experience.

2.5 Definitions and Discussion of Terminology

School non-attendance is a multifaceted phenomenon that is not easily defined, not least as a result of the variation in terminology and references to it in the literature. A key factor in conceptualising school non-attendance is how to define it. Archer et al (2003) investigated teacher and school staff perceptions of SR with interesting results; they found there was not a shared or clear understanding of what SR was between any of the participants.

2.5.1 How is school non-attendance conceptualised in the literature to date?

Terms that are commonly used in describing school non-attendance are;

- School refusal (SR) (Berg et al, 1969; Kearney and Silverman, 1990)

- Truancy (Hersov, 1960; Egger et al, 2003, Reid, 2006;2008;2012)

- Psychoneurotic truancy (Partridge 1939)

- Absenteeism (Carrol, 1995)

- Parental condoned absence

- Persistent Absence (PA)

- Non-attendance (Taylor, 2012)

- Extended School non-attendance (Pellegrini, 2007)

Other terms that are closely associated with school non-attendance, and that authors such as Thambirajah et al (2008) discuss alongside the above terms, are what one might consider to be medical or diagnostic terms such as;

- School phobia

- Separation anxiety

Berg et al (1969) discuss the terms "school phobia" and "school refusal" (SR). They indicate that school phobia can be seen as fitting in to one of two categories; "acute" or "chronic". A significant contribution by Berg et al (1969) was their operational definition of SR. Despite the significant passage of time since publication, this is still referenced in current research. Berg et al state that to classify non-attendance at school as SR four characteristics will be present;

- Pupils will experience significant difficulty attending school leading to long periods of absence.

- When considering or attempting attendance pupils experience significant and severe emotional distress.

- Parents will be aware of non-attendance.

- Pupils will not exhibit antisocial behavioural disorder.

Despite the popularity of this operationalised definition and its application in subsequent literature, there are significant limitations. Berg et al (1969) based their definition on study of a small sample (29 pupils), of these 23 had been hospitalised due to the emotional distress associated with non-attendance. Thambirajah et al (2008) recognise that non-attendance at school particularly when associated with emotional well-being, is not always so severe and occurs across a spectrum. Through the use of a skewed sample in developing their definition, Berg et al have potentially medicalised a phenomena that is not necessarily so.

King and Bernstein (2001) conducted a comprehensive literature review and indicated that the term 'school refusal' was widely accepted, however the term 'school phobia' was more contentious and considered a less accurate descriptor. School phobia indicates a pseudo-psychological affliction that is socially constructed rather than medically recognised in clinical manuals such as DSM and ICD. They conclude that SR is the more appropriate term.

Pellegrini (2007) critiques the definition and the term SR stating that it is a "within-child" view that is likely to be significantly influenced by factors external to the child, such as the physical environment of the school, the culture and ethos of the school, family factors and parental views of attendance. Pellegrini (2007) favours the term "extended school non-attendance" (p.64) and considers it more neutral. Similarly, Taylor (2012) recommended that government documentation used the term "non-attendance" and the term "truancy" discouraged, due to its negative connotations. Prior research of King et al (1995) reported that the term truancy should be discouraged as it does not encapsulate the inherent avoidance behaviour they observed in YP who were not attending. Additionally it was felt that the term truancy indicated a conduct disorder.

Thambirajah et al (2008) provide a succinct text aimed at professionals seeking to understand school non-attendance. They explore the multiple terms of reference used when seeking to indicate that a pupil is not attending school and recognise that there is no universally agreed definition. Thambirajah et al (2008) state that often, terminology chosen to define school non-attendance reflects the implied cause. Whilst the strength of the text is that it summaries the terminology commonly applied to the phenomenon, a limitation of this was that it does not explore the depth of the implications of terminology for YP.

The DSM V (Diagnostic Statistic Manual, 5th edition) (2013) does not refer to school non-attendance but notes it is a possible symptom of separation anxiety or specific phobia. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) ICD 10 (International classification of Diseases, 10th edition) specifically states that "school refusal" or "phobia" should not be coded under separation anxiety if arising for the first time in adolescents unless separation anxiety was first seen (at an abnormal level) during preschool age.

Reid (2012) is a prolific researcher and writer in education research and reflects on his forty years of being a "man of truancy". Reid (2012) uses the term truancy but seemingly ignoring the within-child, conduct disorder laden discourse surrounding it Reid (2012) takes interest in teachers approach to these YP, questioning why they seem less committed to supporting this population than other YP in their classrooms.

In summary, the heterogeneity of terminology used to describe the phenomena of non-attendance is apparent across the breadth and through the history of study in this area. Academics such as Berg et al (1969) have attempted to define the phenomena, however the validity of this is questionable as a result of limited samples. The most recent literature recognises the impact of some terminology and the implications it has for YP who may be labelled with it. There is significant disagreement across the field regarding appropriate terminology to apply in the contemporary context. There are numerous salient labels used to describe non-attendance but significant lack of consistency in how they are applied. Common criticisms of terminology such as SR or school phobia is that it medicalises non-attendance and promotes a within child view. More recent research, such as that of Pelligrini (2007) takes a stance more in line with the ethos of the current research favouring neutral terminology and moving away from value-laden descriptors. For this reason the current study will adopt the term non-attendance.

2.6 Theoretical Underpinnings

2.6.1 How have psychologists sought to understand the phenomenon of school non-attendance?

Psychology is a broad, complex field within which a multitude of perspectives are taken by psychologists seeking to understand human behaviour and interactions (McLeod, 2007). In

this section different approaches psychologists have taken to explain, understand and resolve school non-attendance are briefly explored.

2.6.1.1 Behavioural approach

The behavioural approach to understanding school non-attendance examines the stimuli and YP responses. Stimuli may be factors such as physical features of school, the nature of the tasks YP are presented with, or home factors. Observable responses YP demonstrate may include; complaining of feeling unwell, avoiding tasks or areas of school, lying about whereabouts or task refusal. Kearney and Silverman are leading research in this domain.

Kearney and Silverman (1990) sought to understand underlying reasons behind school non-attendance. They accept a broad view of YP who are not attending school and determine four key categories YP not attending school fall into.

1. Avoidance of the school environment due to general or specific anxiety experienced.

2. Escaping social situations experienced as aversive, often related to peer relationships. Fear of being bullied would fit into this category.

3. YP experiencing separation anxiety or wanting attention.

4. Positive reinforcement through activities engaged in, in place of attendance at school. YP referred to as truants are put into this category.

The School Refusal Assessment Scales (SRAS) developed by Kearney and Silverman (1990) include a child, teacher and parent self-report questionnaire. It was developed from clinical observations and research evidence to determine the underlying function of school non-attendance (Kearney and Silverman, 1990). They suggest that the treatment is then informed by the SRAS findings. Kearney and Silverman (1990) present evidence that supports use of the SRAS following research with 7 participants experiencing difficulties attending school.

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They aimed to use theory-driven assessment to inform treatment and evaluate the impact on attendance and YP well-being. School attendance improved (6 out of 7 pupils returned full time) as did ratings of overall distress (gathered via self-report questionnaires completed daily by participants) and the authors suggest that the positive findings support treatment informed by their assessment model. Arguably their conclusions may be considered somewhat premature considering the limited sample of only 7 (Lauchlan, 2003). The research relies heavily upon self-report measures which is a methodology criticised by Achenbach et al (1987) who state that this is unreliable when used with C&YP. On the other hand, Woolfson et al, (2008) note the importance of seeking the perspective of the YP and placing them at the centre of work carried out to support them, therefore indicating the approach of Kearney and Silverman (1990) is in keeping with more recent literature. Elliot (1999) supports the position of Kearney and Silverman (1990) stating that it is more important to try to understand the function of non-attendance than to describe the symptoms of it.

The SRAS was updated to improve the quality of the psychometrics, test-retest reliability and inter-rater reliability (Kearney, 2002). Upon investigation, Kearney et al (2005) found that there was a lack of agreement between the parent and child SRAS questionnaires and they often identified different functions of SR to one another.

Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) note that SR is "child motivated" (page 3) and advocate a multi-disciplinary team approach to resolving issues due to the level of frustration an individual professional would face. They recommend that if family dysfunction or depression is considered a factor in non-attendance then referral to a clinical psychologist is appropriate.

Reid (2006) advocates for the use of a behavioural intervention termed School-based System (SBS) and notes that a key benefit of this system is that conforms to a DfE approved "fast-track prosecution initiative"(p205) for parents of C&YP who did not attend. The system

proposes a "zero-tolerance" (p205) approach to non-attendance. The school in the case study reported a 5% increase in attendance however the school resides in a deprived area where one might assume the demographic of the catchment area will indicate above average levels of poverty; threatening parents with faster referral to the LA who will impose a fine upon them may have increased school attendance, but not necessarily identified or resolved the underlying difficulties.

Tolin et al (2009) investigated the utility of intensive daily behavioural therapy in their multiple case study design with four male YP currently not attending school. The results indicated a significant short-term increase in attendance for 3 of the 4 YP. One in particular who went from 0% daily attendance in the baseline condition and increased quickly to 100% (on 16 out of 21 days) during the treatment condition. However none of the four participants' sustained 100% attendance and of the 3 cases that follow up data could be attained for; all had opted to engage with alternative educational arrangements (therapeutic school, night school, alternative qualifications).

It is evident that the behavioural approach it still utilised in current EP practice, such as in West Sussex County Council Educational Psychology Service (EPS) who integrated SRAS into Educational Psychology practice (Gregory and Purcell, 2014).

2.6.1.2 Emotionally-Based Non-Attendance

A more medicalised approach to school non-attendance is predominantly evident in the literature regarding emotionally-based school non-attendance and terminology such as school phobia and separation anxiety is common.

Heyne et al (2011) used Berg et al's (1969) definition of SR to identify participants who were outpatients of a psychiatric clinic. Participants presenting without anxiety disorder were excluded. The study included individual treatment involving numerous talking therapies

usually with a CBT informed approach. Whilst school attendance increased, fear of school did not decrease in the post test results indicating that the medical model had not accounted for all aspects of non-attendance.

Kearney and Albano (2004) identified that the majority of their 143 participants who were not attending school had separation anxiety, a third were not previously diagnosed. This was attributed to the attention-seeking function of SR through the SRAS. They conclude that it is unwise to rely solely on diagnosis as a way to understand SR.

The medical approach has received significant criticism. Egger et al (2003) evaluated 1422 cases of school non-attendance categorising pupils as either pure anxious school refusers, pure truants or mixed school refusers. A quarter of the participants were identified as belonging to the mixed school refusal group. Interestingly, of the pupils in the pure anxious school refusers group Egger et al (2003) noted a very low rate of separation anxiety but the fear of school resulted from environmental factors. Investigation of the school setting indicated that YP fears were appropriate and adaptive avoidance behaviours due to the aversive nature of the school environment.

Similarly Pilkington and Piersel (1991) noted that a lack of research into the external contributing factors to school phobia was a key limitation of the application of the classic separation anxiety model of understanding school non-attendance. Further limitations they noted in this approach were an over-reliance on retrospective data and case-study design in methodology and an unnecessary emphasis given to family pathology with specific reference to the mother/child relationship.

2.6.1.3 Cognitive

Bruner (1957) postulates that humans use experiences to generate codes and make predictions about their environment. They learn what they can expect to remain consistent about the

world around them through doing so. Cognitive psychology was a term used by Neisser (1967) who stated that this approach to psychology referred to the internal mental state and concerned itself with the study of processes involved with thought, perception, memory and language. It is a reductionist approach that assumes complex behaviour can be explained by the cognitive processes that underlie them (McLeod, 2015). Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is used when therapists believe that by supporting a person to identify negative thoughts that inform the way they behave and changing this so that alternative ways of thinking are developed, distress can be decreased. It was developed by Ellis (1962) and Beck (1967). The BPS (2014b) state that CBT can be utilised across the four areas they deem instrumental in non-attendance at school (emotionally based, physical health, attitudinal/systemic and school based behaviour).

Hughes et al (2010) determined that YP engaging in SR demonstrate decreased use of cognitive reappraisal and increased expressive suppression than their age matched peers attending school. As recognised by the author's, research into emotional regulation (ER) and SR is in its infancy and therefore determining validity and reliability is challenging although there is some comparisons drawn to ER of YP with anxiety disorders such as Thompson (2001).

Dooby (2008) claims that CBT is the only intervention approach with an adequate evidence-base that can be considered as an intervention for pupils engaging in SR . In supporting the return to school of a pupil with separation anxiety a multi-disciplinary approach was used with the CBT counsellor providing advice and support. Dooby concludes a CBT treatment plan increases the chances a child will return to school. Tolin et al (2009) agrees, advocating for daily intensive CBT treatment in their study however they recognise the unusual nature of using CBT daily rather than weekly. Although Dooby (2008) noted that 3 CBT sessions were used in the first week of their case study. Tolin et al (2009) state that a benefit of this is that

any problems with the traditional CBT approach of setting homework can be quickly resolved as opposed to the client having to wait a week until they see the therapist again. None of the YP who had daily CBT sustained attendance in mainstream educational provision at the follow-up.

2.6.1.4 Psychodynamic

Attachment between the mother and child has been a focus of numerous studies seeking to understand the nature of school non-attendance. Hypothesis include; overprotective mothers, ineffective parenting, poor attachment relationships between parents and children and dysfunctional family interactions.

Bernstein et al (1999) investigate the nature of family relationships to school non-attendance and theorise causation between this and attendance at school. Place et al (2000) noted that almost three quarters of mothers in their sample of 17 non-attending pupils reported their children to have high levels of anxiety, however the pupils reported themselves to be much less troubled and felt they were not attending as a result of aversive social situations experienced at school. Place et al concluded that there was "over-involvement" between the mother and pupil who was not attending school (p349). This is concerning as it seems that in spite of reporting the views of the pupils, the conclusions drawn do not seem to recognise them.

Haydn (2009) investigated the impact of family group conferences in increasing school attendance, however the findings indicated that attendance decreased and school exclusions increased amongst participants who had family group conferences.

2.6.1.5 Social

Social interactions and feelings of belonging to a social group have been linked to self-esteem and well-being (Steger and Kashdan, 2009). It is understandable therefore, that psychologists

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may draw upon social psychology to understand the reasons why a young person might not attend school.

Garrison (2006) implicitly draws upon social psychology to understand the significant increase in school non-attendance observed following transition to new schools. Indicating that social interventions such as peer mentoring from older students and developing a trusting relationship with an adult to guide pupils through their first year may prevent non-attendance occurring. Whilst this may be beneficial for some pupils, it assumes that all pupils will feel supported by this approach, whereas this may not be the case. Heyne et al (2011) identify that a number of their participants suffered with social anxiety. For these pupils Garrison's suggested intervention may have an adverse effect on attendance and emotional well-being.

Place et al (2000) reported that most of the 17 pupils in their sample group reported avoidance of school due to aversive social situations. A history of experiencing bullying was hypothesised to contribute to feelings of social isolation both in school and the wider community. For these pupil's Garrison's (2006) assertion that a mentoring programme of trained older pupils and appointed adults may be supportive and decrease feelings of isolation.

2.6.1.6 Environmental/Holistic

Thambirajah et al (2008) report that professionals need to take a holistic approach to assessing the cause of non-attendance and argue that Kearney and Silverman's (1990) research did not take into account family and school factors such as attitude, culture and dynamic.

Carrol (1995) examined school non-attendance (which he termed absenteeism) in the UK and compared it with that in Sweden and Germany. He concluded that understanding the contextual factors impacting upon the phenomenon was integral to resolving the problem and

interestingly, that this may not always be the role of the educational psychologist. Carrol highlights the difference in class teacher practice in Sweden where teachers take significantly more responsibility for attendance than in the UK.

Lewis (1995), following involvement with a three year project aimed at improving attendance in London, reported that non-attendance seemed to develop as a result of inter-relationships between various push and pull factors. These factors are described in the table below;

Table 2: Push and Pull Factors in School Attendance developed from Lewis, 1995

Push Factors	Pull Factors
Characteristics of the school environment; • Physical – location of the school, layout • Social Context – peer relationships, how the school day is organised • Academic and Classroom Aspects – teaching and learning styles, how accessible the individual finds the curriculum.	Personal (ie. Relieving stress, feelings about home)
	Family dynamic and culture
	Social aspects (socialising out of school)

Reid (2008) compiles a comprehensive inventory of reasons why YP do not attend school. He categorises these reasons under three headings;

- Reasons pupils dislike school

- Experiencing difficulties at home

- Pupils with psychological difficulties

Interestingly, following a reference to Kelly (1955) the founder of personal construct psychology and recognition of Kelly's theory that to gain an understanding of a situation it was best to consult with those involved, Reid's participants are all education professionals, and not YP.

2.6.2 Summary of section 2.6

The most predominant approach to understanding non-attendance represented in the available literature is behavioural psychology. The focus is on the function of non-attendance and what is maintaining the behaviour. The most significant contribution is arguably Kearney and Silverman(1990) who developed the SRAS. Despite the behavioural approach of the SRAS the impact of the school environment, the social interactions and family relationships, are considered in terms of how they might motivate, re-enforce or decrease behaviour. Kearney and Silverman (1993) use medical language to suggest that a treatment plan is developed and informed from the outcome of the SRAS. Egger et al (2003) took a medical approach to understanding school non-attendance as have numerous other researchers. The medical approach usually investigates C&YP with a diagnosis of anxiety disorders that are associated with school and also examines the concept of school phobia. Interestingly the term school phobia is not present either in the DSM IV or the ICD 10.

Fewer researchers have examined school non-attendance from a cognitive or social psychology perspective; however CBT is frequently referred to as an approach to intervention or incorporated into support tailored to support YP to return to school.

Thambirajah et al (2008) advocate for a more holistic look at all factors that may contribute to school non-attendance. Reid (2008) attempted this through compiling a comprehensive inventory of factors that contribute to school non-attendance in YP, however the most significant criticism of this extensive piece of work is that is was carried out by adults, with adults and no YP were consulted or invited to participate and validate the theories of the adults.

2.7 Is there a connection between families and YP categorised, for any reason, as vulnerable and non-attendance at school?

A number of studies suggest that there is greater risk of persistent or extended school non-attendance when the family are experiencing difficulties, such as; parental anxiety or other affective mental health illness, parental conflict, separation or single parenting, or difficult and complex relationship between parent and child (Pellegrini, 2007). Historic literature has has often sought to understand school non-attendance through studying the family and the mother of the child to ascertain the root cause of the phenomena (Bernetein et al, 1999). In more recent literature more care and consideration is expected of researchers to be mindful of the impact of reporting findings in such a way that blame can be apportioned (BPS, 2014a, p28, Transparency and Accountability)

2.7.1 Historic Literature and how it positions the mother and family of YP who are not attending school

Hersov (1960) hypothesised that one can determine the environmental circumstances by the nature of their non-attendance at school. He hypothesised that there were two causes of persistent non-attendance (psychoneurotic syndrome or conduct disorder) and family and home circumstances had a significant impact on the phenomenon. Hersov (1960) took three groups of 50 YP; a group who showed preference to stay at home instead of attending school, a group classified as truants and a control group of attenders. There was a significant difference between the number of families falling into social class I or II in the group of YP classified as truants (8%) to those in the group who preferred to stay at home (32%). Hersov (1960) concluded that there was a significantly higher level of maternal rejection in the truant group but a higher level of maternal over-protectiveness in the group who preferred to stay at home.

Berg and McGuire (1974) claimed that their findings supported claims that YP experiencing school phobia had mother's whose parenting style encouraged their children to be excessively dependant. The study aimed to discover whether mothers of school phobic YP were over protective so it may be argued that the study was biased by its hypothesis, however the authors claim to have used objective measures (self-administered dependency questionnaire) SADQ) which would contradict this argument. The research cannot establish cause and effect and it is therefore impossible to state that an overprotective mother causes their child to become phobic of school as there is no evidence that the presentation of a child with school phobia did not lead to their mother behaving in a way that the researcher classifies as overprotective.

Bernstein and Borchardt (1996) used the Family Assessment Measure (FAM) to assess seven 'types of family' (author's terminology). 134 families attending the school refusal outpatient's clinic participated in the research. YP's who were classified as engaging in SR were of secondary school age. The findings suggest that the mothers in single parent homes scored higher in two areas of the FAM than mothers in homes with both biological parents residing. These were; role performance (family members do not agree on differing roles) and communication (insufficient communication and lack of shared understanding). A potential intimation of this research positions mother-only single parent families as being responsible for SR in YP in their care. The ethical implications of this research are not well documented in the study and little consideration seems to be given to the potential ramifications of the methodology that appears to assess family functioning.

The social consequences of methodology which potentially attributes "blame" onto mothers in single-parent homes, perhaps indicating they are not doing a good job needs careful consideration and stringent ethical controls due to the potential for further marginalising vulnerable families. Additionally the aims of the researchers are somewhat counterintuitive to

the methods and reporting as whilst the study seeks to improve school attendance through reintegration, it focuses on a supposed correlation between belonging to a single parent family and engaging in SR, regardless of whether this correlation exists. Focussing upon a variable that is unchangeable seems ineffective.

Further research suggests that single parent families are over-represented in the population of families of YP who have a diagnosis of SR. Reid (1984) reported that 46% of YP who were PA from school had committed undetected illegal acts such as vandalism and came from, what he termed, socially deprived backgrounds. More recent research is increasingly less prejudice towards single parent families (Maier and McGeorge, 2013).

Bernstein et al (1999) used FACES II (Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale, 2nd Edition) to assess families of 46 yp in an 8 week treatment programme whose attendance was below 80% and had a minimum of one diagnosis of some form of anxiety disorder. This raises ethical concerns regarding diagnosis and the fact in this case access to participation seems to be ring-fenced only for those with diagnoses rather than through identifying those with a need. The design of a single blind placebo and cognitive behavioural programme is provided to one group, whilst the other are prescribed imipramine (a tricyclic antidepressant) is not followed up with comparison data nor discussed in the results or discussion session. Throughout the programme data was collected from both YP and their parents using numerous self-report measures. The families were categorised in three ways; by type (extreme or balanced), cohesion (disengaged or connected), and adaptability (rigid or flexible). A significant relationship was reported between the FACES II reported level of disengagement in the family and the YP depression score. The authors hypothesised that there may be a reinforcing relationship between the family conflict and the symptoms of depression exhibited by the YP. Further concerns regarding the ethical implications of this study are raised through these conclusions. This paper seems to blame both YP and their

families for school non-attendance, specifically citing poor mental health such as depression and anxiety disorders as key factors. It argues, that by viewing poor mental health as a specific contributing factor in non-attendance, support and appropriate treatment may be prioritised ,which would be beneficial for YP.

2.7.2 Recent literature that comments on the family environment of YP who are not attending school

More recent literature in school non-attendance starts to recognise the necessity of examining school factors rather that attributing blame to parenting and a within-child model of formulation (Thambirajah et al, 2008). For this reason this section is somewhat limited, due to the greater availability of literature that examines family dynamics as an influential factor in YP school non-attendance.

Lyon and Cotler (2007) highlight that low-income and families from an ethnic minority are at risk of experiencing punishing interventions to improve YP attendance at school rather than preferable interventions that seek to empower. They go on to state the necessity of recognising the influential factors in promoting school attendance such as the nature of the interface between the school and the home setting. If the family are viewed negatively or blamed then interactions between them and school settings are less likely to be positive or effective therefore contributing to the maintenance of non-attendance.

Davies and Lee (2006) worked with 13 YP described as truanting and reported that contrary to previous literature they did not come from families with a history of school non-attendance and noted that school factors and relationships at school were more influential on non-attendance.

It is somewhat of a concern that despite the limited availability of contemporary literature in this area, the coalition government have published policy documents that take implicitly a

psychodynamic approach to understanding YP. The psychodynamic approach is evident in the documents by their reference to family relationships, interactions and perpetuating cycles of abuse (Casey, 2012b).

2.7.3 How has literature influenced the coalition government policy and initiatives specifically around family intervention and school attendance?

Policy seems significantly influenced by the literature that suggests home environment and family relationships are key factors in school attendance. Casey published numerous reports on behalf of Department for Communities and Local Government (DfC&LG) that identify families as "troubled families" if they meet 3 of 4 of the following criteria (Casey, 2012a);

- Involvement in crime or antisocial behaviour

- Children not attending school

- Adult who is out of work and claiming benefits

- High cost to government

Casey (2012c) prescribes 5 factors to bring about change for families who she deems as requiring government support. These are;

1. FIT worker dedicated to the family

2. Providing practical support

3. Assertive, persistent and challenging approach

4. Considering the family as a whole termed as "gathering intelligence" (page 15)

5. Working towards a common purpose and agreed action

This report, although arguably well intentioned, seems highly directive and does not advocate family or YP autonomy. Casey (2012b) makes claims about research evidence without citing this research which contributes to the oppressive nature of the approach she advocates;

"It is commonly accepted and evidenced that parents and families are the biggest single influence on children's lives…" "…the key problem for these families is that their influence is negative…" (Page 46, Casey, 2012b)

The policy documents that contribute to the FIT work utilise the DfE (2011) definition of persistent absence which is absence for 15% or more of the legally required 190 school days (Communities and Local Government, 2012). It also applies the change to categorisation of pupils who are labelled as persistently absent (PA) from 20% absence (80 % attendance) to 15% (85% attendance) that occurred as of September 2011 (Taylor 2012). Adfam (2014) noted that families identified through the troubled families programme (TFP) are often discussed in terms of the high cost they are to the government rather that the issues that are problematic to them as a family.

The National Audit Office (NAO) (2013) published a report criticising the government's failure to integrate services provided as a result of TFP with the "Families with multiple problems" (NAO, 2013) noting that better outcomes for families and more effective expenditure may have been possible should this have been the case. Communities and Local Government (2012) state that the government expenditure on so called troubled families is an estimated £9billion annually. Adfam (2014) note that despite claims by DfC&LG that families have been "turned around" there are no published figures regarding whether there have been any savings made in doing so.

In considering evaluation of the impact of the TFP, national quantitative data is required. Access to national data bases such as the National Pupil Database to analyse the specific impact of the program on attendance could be considered to achieve this (Morris, 2012).

2.7.4 Summary of Section 2.7

Historically there is a trend to look to the mother of YP who are not attending or feel unable to attend school and examine (and criticise) their parenting. The oppressive discourse surrounding this literature has since been challenged by the feminist movement. Literature that states mothers are over-protective fails to establish cause and effect nor does it take into account that the maternal behaviours classified as over-protective may have emerged as a result of the YP exhibiting concerning symptoms such as high levels of anxiety. Lyon and Cotler (2007) offer a refreshing perspective on families of YP who are not attending school. They appear to recognise and respect the emancipatory function that social science research should endeavour to fulfil and champion the rights of vulnerable families. They acknowledge the tendency for families on low-incomes to be subject to punishing interventions. They propose alternative, such as examining and improving the interface between home and school to empower families and YP. This is much more in line with the ethos of the current research project. Despite this current policy seems to blame families, described as "troubled" by Casey (2012a), for 'costing the tax-payer billions of pounds' and notes that YP with school attendance that falls below 85% of the legal required school days is an indicator that a family should be classified as "troubled" and receive the support of a family intervention worker. Policy documents do indicate strategies for working with families and improving their lives, however this is very much based on the assumption that troubled families require professional intervention and are unable to overcome their difficulties independently.

2.8 The Contemporary Context

Contemporary research in the field of school non-attendance does seem to be evolving. Whilst there is historic, peer-reviewed, published evidence to suggest that the psychodynamic approach focusing on attachment and relationships to caregivers and families underlies school non-attendance (Hersov, 1960), more contemporary literature encourages researchers to seek further insight by gathering the views of YP (Malcolm et al, 2013).

2.8.1 To what extent does the literature and research represent the pupil's perspectives and views on school non-attendance?

The views of children and YP who are not attending school are under-represented and not established as an evidence base in their own right at the current time (Thambirajah et al, 2008). That being said there is unpublished evidence to suggest that awareness of this deficit in literature evidence exists, and doctoral students are showing interest in exploration of this area (Shilvock, 2008). This is not to say there isn't literature emerging that seeks to elicit the views of children and young people, there is. The disappointment is that it is not in the volume that one might hope to find, particularly in the field of education. Based on the recent SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) the field of education has increased awareness and is required to recognise the importance of pupil voice and person centred practice.

Malcolm et al (2003) sought to elicit the views of YP as well as family members and teaching staff in their 12 month detailed study of attendance. A total of 1190 C&YP were involved, 528 of whom were secondary school age. Year 8, 9 and 10 pupils took part in face-to-face interviews and younger children had questionnaires. They determine that secondary school aged girls are more likely not to attend school than boys. Pupils rarely stated that home factors were the reason for non-attendance and were more likely to position school-based factors as the reasons for non-attendance. Malcolm et al (2003) championed seeking the

views of YPs and found that a useful method of achieving this was semi-structured interviews.

Citing Malcolm et al's (2003) research as influential in their methodological choices, Gregory and Purcell (2014) also utilised the semi-structured interview in their research to elicit the views and opinions of YP who had extended absence from school. The aim of their study was to inform the practice of EPs through the views and experiences of extended school non-attenders. Of 30 families who were contacted, 5 participated; this included 5 mothers and 3 YP. The authors recognise that a limitation of their research is that as a result of a poor response rate the data generated will not represent the target population. Interpretive phonological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the interview data and found a number of reoccurring themes that were categorised by 7 clusters; medical, social, school experience, emotional, child's voice, current and future. Gregory and Purcell (2014) conclude that there is a necessity for professionals to move beyond the medical model of analysis promoted by tools such as the SRAS and refrain from viewing school non-attendance as a within-child problem. The situations in which YPs who are not attending school find themselves are complex and without a single contributing factor that can be attributed to non-attendance. Each case is different and when working with YPs who are not attending school, sensitivity of the researcher or EP was cited as integral due to the potential emotional impact on the YP discussing non-attendance. Butler and Green (2007) discuss how adults can impose their own theories upon a situation rather than seeking to understand the situation from the point of view of the YP. Gregory and Purcell (2014) show a commitment to gaining an understanding of the point of view of their participants but have used IPA and therefore there is a possibility that their own theories may impact the analysis as they try to make sense of the participants lived experience (Frost et al, 2010).

Davies and Lee (2006) identified 13 pupils whom they termed truants and compared them to 35 of their school attending peers. Despite using the contentious term, truant, to describe the participants who were not attending school they were positive about their participants and described them as passionate and articulate. Davies and Lee (2006) report causal factors in non-attendance that they identified via the themes emerging from YP data. These include; relationships (mainly with teachers), teaching style (explanation rather than instructional) and finding alternative provision preferable to school. Males were more likely to report relationship difficulties with teachers whereas females were more likely to repost relationship difficulties with peers as contributing factors in their non-attendance.

2.8.2 Summary

The literature that genuinely championed YP voice was limited which was disappointing. The field of research dedicated to school non-attendance is dominated by adult lead research which either indicates an obvious power imbalance in favour of the researcher or draws the views and opinions of participants who are adults rather than YP. The new SEN CoP (2015) advocates for person centred practice and recognises the importance of giving weight to the perspective and opinions of YP. Malcolm et al (2003) and Gregory and Purcell (2014) utilise semi-structured interviews to good effect and both studies indicate that this is an appropriate method of data collection for work with secondary age pupils. When given the opportunity YP describe in detail their views on what contributes to their non-attendance and contrary to conclusions drawn in previous research such as that proceeding Hersov's 1960 assertion that mothers parenting capacity had a significant impact on school attendance, home factors were rarely the route of non-attendance and school-based factors were.

2.9 Conclusions

School non-attendance is conceptualised in multiple and diverse ways with little agreement shared between researchers on exact terminology. The most popular term applied is SR and this seems to have been accepted by many researchers prior to 2000. This term however is not wholly accepted and more recent publications reject this term as within-child and potentially attributing blame (Pelligrini, 2007). The fact that there is no common or universally accepted definition for school non-attendance proves as a barrier to those attempting to understand the subject. Without an appropriate or agreed upon operational definition, research is compromised and individual studies will set their own criteria causing complications for cross study comparisons (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

In seeking to understand the phenomenon of school non-attendance there are various differing approaches taken by psychologists, some of whom have seemed to sit predominantly in one field of study. Heyne et al (2011) take a medical model approach to the study of SR and indicate that a treatment plan can increase attendance. In the behavioural approach predominantly championed by Kearney and Silverman (1990;2002) the language of "treatment" is also utilised but in seeking to understand the function of non-attendance in school they do take into account environmental, social and motivational factors. From the literature available it does seem that by considering numerous theories and approaches rather than limiting understanding through being bound by a single approach a better understanding of the YP and their experience can be established (Thambirajah et al, 2008). In the most contemporary research, psychologists and researchers seem to have taken multiple perspectives in their studies that aim to understand and resolve non-attendance at school. Taking a more holistic approach to data gathering and considering all aspects of the YP life and experience in determining what is contributing to non-attendance is the most reasonable approach (Gregory and Purcell, 2014). This may be due to a historic approach of adults

leading and YP being expected to take direction. Since the changes to SEN CoP (2014) the benefits and preferable ethical practice of person centred working in professional practice.

Early research literature suggests that non-attendance can be directly linked to family dynamics and parenting. Despite the potential this research was influenced by prejudice against single parent families and the common misconceptions regarding parenting this literature remains apparent today in current policy documents with the use of terms such as "troubled families" potentially further marginalises vulnerable C,YP&F. Criminalising non-attendance by fining parents and implementing interventions that endeavour to make this process easier (Reid 2006) is unnecessarily punishing (Lyon and Cotler, 2007) especially considering findings of Egger et al (2003) who, upon investigation, found the school environment of non-attenders was aversive.

The SEN CoP enforces the statutory obligation of professionals engaging with C&YP who require additional support, to seek and listen to YP views. This is yet to be significantly evident in non-attendance literature. Gregory and Purcell (2014) and Malcolm et al (2003) make a positive contribution to this field seeking to examine the phenomena from the point of view of the YP it directly affects, however as raised by Butler and Green (2007) it is known to be the case that adults may unintentionally place their own theories upon the experience of a YP.

2.10 How has the literature review informed the current study?

In line with findings from Taylor (2012) for the current research project it seems appropriate to adopt non-attendance as the accepted terminology due to its descriptive yet neutral position.

The literature review suggests that whilst there is a high volume of research that has informed the area of school non-attendance, there is also a distinct lack of published studies that seek to gather the views of YP who are not attending school.

Additionally there are a significant number of studies that position the family environment and in particular the parenting of YP within the family as highly influential factors in non-attendance. This has been potentially influential in government policy and certainly seems evident in the "Troubled Families" documents produced by Casey (2012) for the coalition government. Poor attendance at school (below 85%) is listed amongst other factors such as substance misuse, mental illness, and criminal behaviour as criteria that if a certain number of which are met, indicate that a family is "troubled" and requires intervention. It is of interest and possible concern that non-attendance is part of these criteria as it could be viewed as an assumption that non-attendance is a within-child factor or due to the home environment. There is evidence to suggest that when given the opportunity to share their views meaningfully, YP indicate that non-attendance is more significantly influenced by school factors and not home (Malcolm et al, 2003).

To address the gaps in investigating pupil perceptions and experience evident from the literature and enhance professional understanding of the phenomena of school non-attendance, it seems necessary to elicit and champion the views of YP who are not currently attending school. Through reporting the findings and dissemination of the research to the EPS and the FIT, professional practice may be more informed and effectiveness increased. Therefore, the focus of the research will be an investigation into the underlying cause of school non-attendance from the perspective of YP who are currently attending school less than 85% of the legal school days, and whose families are supported by the FIT.

It is important that the current research project aims to fulfil the emancipatory function of social science research as there seems to be an omission of this aspect of research in the majority of the literature reviewed. Although there have been attempts to work more ethically and champion pupil voice in recent years particularly by Lyon and Cotler (2007) and Gregory and Purcell (2014) there is a significant amount of research, seemingly seated in a psychodynamic approach and possibly influenced by attachment theory, that attributes blame to parents, particularly the mother (Hersov, 1960; Berg and McGuire, 1974; Bernstein and Borchardt, 1996) and contributes to the oppression of vulnerable C&YP.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology for the research which aims to gather the views of YP who are currently experiencing difficulty attending school despite support from the family intervention team (FIT).

This chapter begins by examining the context in which the research took place. The philosophical stance of the research is then described and the methodology and methods employed are discussed. Factors affecting the study's reliability and validity are considered, and the ethical considerations made are discussed. The chapter concludes with a description of the method and the data analysis.

3.1 Context

The aim of the research project was to gather the views and examine the constructs of YP who were currently attending school less than 85% of the legally required time, and whose families were supported by the family intervention team (FIT), in the local authority (LA) the researcher spent the second and third year of doctoral training on placement. The rationale for this was twofold; firstly due to personal interest in research that facilitates the voice of YP being communicated to professional organisations and services who work to support them, and secondly, as it was felt that the EP service, may be able to provide support to the FIT in their work to increase the attendance of YP in the target population.

In the LA in which the research took place the national government calculated that 740 families should be supported by the FIT. The FIT assign KW to each family to work with them offering advice and support in the areas identified by the policy document. Increasing school attendance is a specific, measurable criteria for which evidence can be gathered and utilised by the FIT in the "payment by results" system.

Early in the first year of the placement with the LA Educational Psychology Service (EPS) the principle educational psychologist (PEP) and the senior educational psychologists met and discussed how they may seek to increase the revenue coming in to the service, since it is a traded model of service delivery, and support the other services in the LA. One of the LA services they identified as potentially forging a positive working relationship with was the FIT. Having discussed the criteria that families were identified using, they noted that the EPS may be able to offer knowledge and expertise of working with children and YP (C&YP) with a view to joint working with the FIT to increase attendance. Questions arose regarding what the EPS could offer and whether a specific, evidence based intervention might be developed, and they approached the researcher with this idea. This prompted the beginning of the research through a brief literature search and early reading. Resulting in the conclusion that prior to developing an intervention it was necessary to understand the function of, or the underlying cause, of the non-attendance.

Following disengagement or withdrawal of numerous participants (8) of the original sample;

YP supported by the FIT with attendance of 85% or below (1 participant),

Further data collection was carried out;

1. With KW from FIT (2 participants)
2. With YP from the wider secondary school population with attendance of 85% or below, but not supported by the FIT (4 participants)

3.2 Rationale

Chapter two described the history of school non-attendance research in the UK and key texts that inform this area of study. It concluded that despite some evidence in recent years of school non-attendance literature that seeks pupils views, there is yet to exist a comprehensive

understanding of the phenomena from the standpoint of the pupils. This research aimed to pursue this knowledge through working alongside YP who were not currently attending school for the legally required number of days and improve professional understanding of their views. In light of difficulties engaging YP in this research it was further deemed appropriate to examine how research might be made more accessible to YPs in order to communicate the important contribution they can make with KW. Additional data collection with secondary school age YP with attendance of 85% or below who were not supported by the FIT was later carried.

3.3 Research Aims

1. The project aims to contribute knowledge and understanding of school non-attendance to the field of educational psychology, to inform the practice of EPs and other professionals.

2. The project seeks to examine whether there is an appropriate package of work the Educational Psychology Service can offer to other services that may support them to understand what school non-attendance means for YP involved and identify positive ways forward alongside these YP, thus contributing to the Local Offer.

3. To fulfil the emancipatory function of social science research by giving a voice to vulnerable YP and highlighting the importance of listening to their voices and using what we learn from doing so, to inform work with and for this group.

3.4 Philosophical Stance

The underlying philosophy of the research informs all factors from the aims and objectives to the methods used in data collection. The researcher must consider what they seek to discover and the nature of the knowledge they wish to gain. This research does not claim to ascertain an absolute truth that can be established beyond doubt, but accepts that one cannot be certain

of anything, and to claim to be is arguably misplaced confidence (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). The philosophical underpinnings of the research impact directly upon the design and the methodological decisions that inform the nature of the data collection, and how the research questions are to be answered (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). Hughes and Sharrock (1997), state that ontological and epistemological issues are clearly connected to one another; it is therefore prudent to consider them together.

3.4.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Critical realist (CR) ontology promotes social justice and therefore lends itself to research with participants who may be considered a marginalised group due to the actions and perceptions of others: it recognises the importance of the participant's perspective and the influence of social structures that affect meaning. It is considered appropriate for research carried out by those in value-based professions (Robson, 2002). This is apt, particularly for this research, of which two key "professions" will be involved in the lives of the participants for the duration of the research; psychology, as the researcher is a trainee educational psychologist and is placed with the educational psychology team, and social care, as the participants have KW from the FIT.

House (1991) considers the use of realist ontology in education research and surmises that the way in which it conceptualises science, differing from the standard view, and conceptualises causation, may lend itself to the field of education. House (1991) postulates that looking at the scientific explanation for phenomena is insufficient and through a CR lens one can examine the processes that underlie it. This supports Robson's (2002) assertion that, a realist ontology will allow the researcher to examine the mechanisms that act in particular contexts, which in this project will likely be important to, and differing for, each participant.

Sayer (2000, p.10-11) postulates that a realist accepts two forms of knowledge, the transitive and intransitive. The intransitive has an indirect relationship to the object of study and can never be accessed; the transitive on the other hand is what can be directly affected by the researcher. The realist researcher accepts that they cannot ever access all knowledge, but that which can be accessed remains important and worthy of research.

As the research aims to employ techniques derived from personal construct psychology (PCP), one may anticipate a constructivist epistemology. Indeed, the constructivist would view the task of the researcher as to understand the multiple ways in which meaning and knowledge can be constructed and helping participants to construct reality with them (Robson, 2002). This however was not felt appropriate for the aims and objectives of the research, and a critical realist (CR) stance was adopted.

Taking an alternative approach to that expected of research that employs PCP with young people (YP) who are currently not attending school by embracing a CR epistemology was considered preferential as it upholds and promotes the emancipatory purpose of social science research. This is important for this project as it aims to give a voice to YP and encourage professionals and services that interact with them to hear their views.

Whilst the constructivist and post-positivist approaches to research have been criticised for the relative power held by the researcher, who researches relatively powerless people, emancipatory approaches such as the CR epistemological stance, focusses on using theory to develop the research approach and work alongside participants in a more equal power balanced relationship, (Robson, 2002). CR recognises that constructs are relative to social relations and take into account agency (the capacity to act in a given environment) and structure (what influences or limits choice) (Scott, 2005). CR accepts that science is not only fallible but views it as a social product and therefore mechanisms we may uncover through

scientific investigation existed and functioned prior to their discovery (Archer et al, 1998). This is appropriate for research with YP, particularly when the research is by a person so removed from the context in which the participants exist as the philosophy allows the researcher to acknowledge this and reflect on how this may impact the findings.

CR epistemology can be understood as a way of attempting to understand the boundaries between the social and natural world. It combines Bhaksar's (1978) philosophy of science, "transcendental realism", which states that an object of investigation requires real and manipuable internal mechanisms, and his philosophy of social science, "critical naturalism", which recognises humans as fundamentally different to the natural world and as a result, the researcher must adapt their strategy. Bhaksar (1998) later talks of the three domains that make up CR, the real, the actual and the empirical. The "real" domain is considered much more than what is actually experienced and encompasses the underlying mechanisms and processes that, if activated, lead to what it is that is experienced; which takes place in the "actual domain" (Sayer, 2000).

The constructivist epistemological stance most often associated with PCP recognises that the participants help the researcher to construct reality; however the CR epistemology, with its close adherence to emancipatory theory, focuses on the lived experience of participants who have or may be considered, marginalised and accepts their account of reality as their truth (Robson, 2002). CR, as with any realist ontology, assumes that knowledge of the world is imperfect, despite attempts to understand it (Sayer, 2000).

The experiences of the participants in this study, and the difficulties they may describe, are reported and not directly observed by the researcher. The CR assumption of the real domain, and the processes that take place within it, that potentially cause the difficulties for the participants allows the researcher to work with reported data, as opposed to that which is

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collected through first-hand experience. Additionally, and as a result of this, it is accepted through taking a CR stance that the data collected and subsequent analysis is not objective, due to the nature of the construction of knowledge (Madill and Shirley, 2000).

3.5 Research Questions

In line with the critical realist stance, the research questions were not fixed but continued to evolve as the research process did. The advantage of this was that the researcher could be responsive to the research process and follow up avenues of potentially useful enquiry that emerged. The following research questions were decided upon in the final stages of planning and preparation prior to the planned data collection with young people;

1.   How do individuals who are not currently meeting the government targets for attendance, construe school and school attendance?

2.   How can Personal Construct Psychology be used to support YP to consider how they construe their social world, and to what extent is this more or less effective than use of the SRAS?

With the significant challenges experienced by the researcher in recruiting participants, further research questions were constructed as further lines of enquiry developed;

3.   How do FIT KW think that engaging in research can be made more accessible to young people?

4.   What do the FIT KW perceive to be the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting young people?

3.6 Design

The research employs an overarching exploratory case study design and initially planned to use two qualitative methods. An existing questionnaire (School Refusal Assessment Scales,

or SRAS) developed by Kearney and Silverman (1993) which has been updated and revised (Kearney, 2002) and a semi-structured interview drawing upon Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) techniques developed by Kelly (1955). Due to the significant challenges experienced in engaging the target population and provoking critical reflection on the part of the researcher, two further research questions were constructed to further explore areas of interest raised by the study, which were answered using semi-structured interviews with the FIT KW.

Table 3. How the research questions meet the aims of the research and the methods of data collection employed to answer them.

Research Aim	Research Question	Data Gathering	
The project aims to contribute knowledge and understanding of this group to the field of educational psychology, to inform the practice of EPs and other professionals.	How do individuals who are not currently meeting the government targets for attendance, construe school and school attendance?	Semi Structured Interview with Young People using PCP informed techniques	Triadic Elicitation
			Laddering
	What do the FIT KW perceive to be the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting young people?	Semi Structured Interview with KW	
The project seeks to examine whether there is an appropriate package of work the	How can Personal Construct Psychology be used to support young people to consider how	Semi Structured Interview with	Triadic Elicitation

Educational Psychology Service can offer to other services that may support young people to understand school non-attendance, and support them to access education in a positive and meaningful way, that meets their needs and preferences thus contributing to the Local Offer.	they construe their social world, and to what extent is this more or less effective than use of the SRAS?	Young People using PCP informed techniques	Laddering
			Adapted Reparatory Grid
	How do FIT KW think that engaging in research can be made more accessible to young people?	Semi-structured Interview with KW	
	What do the FIT KW perceive to be the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting young people?	Semi-structured Interview with KW	

To fulfil the emancipatory function of social science research by giving a voice to vulnerable young people and highlighting the importance of listening to their voices and using what we learn from doing so, to inform work with and for this group.	How do individuals who are not currently meeting the government targets for attendance, construe school and school attendance?	Use of SRAS with YP	
		Semi Structured Interview with Young People using PCP informed techniques	Adapted Rep Grid
			Opportunity to discuss SRAS and compare to PCP interview
	What do the FIT KW perceive to be the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting young people?	Semi-structured Interview with KW	

Despite widely respected and recognised publications that discuss and inform the use of case study methodology (Yin, 1984; Thomas, 2010) some academics suggest that case study is not in fact a methodology (Gorrard, 2013). It is argued that this is due to its ill-defined boundaries making it insufficient as a means to provide a theory of how research should advance, which is considered a necessity of methodology (Harding, 1987). Yin (2009) states that case studies allow researchers to cope with distinctive situations in which in-depth study can take place. The methodology fits within the context of real life and recognises that there may be a multitude of variables, all of which may be of interest or significance to the study.

3.7 Procedure

A more detailed account of the procedure will be achieved through reference to the appendix where indicated in the following section.

Following meetings and email conversations with the head of the family intervention team, a full team meeting was held with the FIT workers (who had been informed of the purpose of the meeting and the research previously, by their Head of Service). The meeting used a "Prezi" presentation (Appendix 2) to introduce the KW, to the research and make clear the aims and objectives. KW's were given the opportunity to ask any questions and then asked if they were interested in taking part.

The KW agreed that the research would be valuable and were provided with participant and parent information leaflets to distribute to the YP they supported who belonged to the target population (Appendix 3 and 4). Following attendance at the meeting KW were able to go through the information with prospective participants and gain verbal consent from them to arrange for the researcher to attend a meeting with participants, their parents and their key worker to obtain signed informed consent (Appendix5 and 6). YP were able to choose whether they did the questionnaire at this same meeting or meet at another time to complete it

(Appendix 7). Five days were then allowed for participants to withdraw their questionnaire data if they wished, prior to it being analysed. Then the participants were invited to participate in a semi structured interview (Appendix 8). This decision was influenced by Gregory and Purcell (2014) who used semi-structured interviews with YP to elicit their views, to good effect. The target population was narrowed from all YP who are not attending school to those of secondary school age, the rationale for this decision was two-fold; first, Taylor (2012) noted the school non-attendance increased significantly in secondary school, and secondly due to the nature of the tasks (SRAS – a self-report questionnaire and a semi-structured interview drawing upon PCP) and the level of cognitive demand they present.

KW who support YP who either did not wish to engage, or gave verbal consent to meet with the researcher but then withdrew their consent prior to meeting, were invited to attend an interview with the researcher to examine their perceptions and what they felt may have made engaging with research more accessible to the YP in the target population.

As a result of having such a limited sample, data collection with pupils whose attendance was 85% or below (continuation of original inclusion criteria) from the wider secondary school population was suggested (by examiners). A member of school staff in each participating secondary school was identified to carry out the role of the KW (provide information leaflets (Appendix 16 and 17) and talk to YP and their parents, explain purpose of research and obtain verbal consent for the researcher to contact them).

3.7.1 Rationale for use of the SRAS questionnaire

The reason for using the SRAS was that it was a pre-existing, evidence based measure. It is used by professionals working with children and YP who are not attending school in their practice and the literature suggests that it is effective in informing appropriate treatment plans which support those who are experiencing difficulty in attending, to begin to attend

educational provision. As indicated in the literature review, an adapted version of the SRAS has been incorporated into practice in West Sussex EPS and this facilitated reflection regarding the advantages of utilising this tool.

3.7.2 Rational for using techniques from PCP in a semi-structured interview

The use of techniques derived from PCP was felt appropriate as their design was conducive with the ethos of the research. The nature of the elicitation techniques selected for the semi-structured interview allow for joint working between the "therapist" (researcher) and "client" (participant) to understand the participants views and understanding of their situation. It was determined that with some adaptation (described below) the techniques could be utilised within a CR epistemology to be beneficial in seeking to meet the aims of the present study and empower participants, mediating the effects of the power imbalance observed between researcher and participant in constructivist research.

The semi-structured interview procedure drew upon a number of PCP techniques;

Triadic Elicitation: Used to identify the participants constructs. Participants asked to consider their general lives Monday to Friday, to include school and aspects of school, but also the things they are doing when they are not attending school.

Laddering: To elicit higher order constructs (Butler and Green, 2007). Fransella and Dalton (1990) suggest laddering is the use of a series of "Why" questions to elicit core constructs, Butler and Green (2007) propose that this could be experienced as accusatory by C&YP. Questions such as "How come this is important to you?" were used in place of questions that used "why".

Reparatory Grid: To look at "How could we move some things to make school a better place for you?" Unfortunately reading and research on the reparatory grid technique indicated that

it relies upon the researcher analysing which constructs cluster together (Butler and Green, 2007). This was a move away from the focus on joint working between researcher and participant. To prevent this, and maintain the ethos of the research and recognise the participants as the experts on their own lives, a simplified version of the reparatory grid was constructed, which could be analysed by the participant and researcher together, using structured questions (See interview protocol, appendix8) .

3.7.3 Rationale for use of semi-structured interviews with KW

The ethos of the research and initial aims did not lead to the decision to work with KW as it felt contradictory in terms of giving YPs a voice and aiming to champion this voice and communicate it to professionals, only to give professionals the opportunity to share their views in the same research. The decision to do so was not one taken lightly, and occurred later, in light of significant difficulties experienced in engaging the target population. The CR stance accepts that research is an ever evolving process, and views the research questions as responsive to this process, therefore as the researcher became more immersed in the research process, further research questions developed. It became apparent that data collected from the target population may not be obtained at all, and if it was, could be limited. In order to meet the aims of the research data is of course required. It is the right of members of the target population not to engage, and this should be respected. To gather information regarding their views from anyone but themselves would be unreasonable and flawed. However, with the emergence of further research questions, the views of the KW were deemed useful and important in building a picture of the phenomena, and in contributing knowledge that may answer the questions.

3.8 Sample

The primary sample of young people was determined via a process of elimination and with the help of the data analyst who works for the FIT. In the LA in which the research was carried out the FIT were instructed to identify 740 families using the criteria laid out in Casey's (2012a) Families with secondary aged children were selected, of these children, those who were not attending more than 85% of the time were then included in the sample.

In the 2012-15 cohort 23 YP were identified as fitting the inclusion criteria and therefore making up the target population. Due to the ethical considerations that were made and informed the research it was not felt appropriate that the researcher had access to the names of these YP without their consent. Therefore the names of KW of the YP who were identified as on the list were provided and an email was sent to the FIT to inform them that they could inform YP of the research and whether they would like to meet with the researcher for more information and potentially to participate in the research. The reason why the total target population is such a small population was due to the time at which it was identified; as the families had received FIT support since they were identified in 2012, and the FIT operates on a payment by results basis, as YP began attending more consistently, more than the legally required 85%, they were removed from the system.

Of the 23 YP in the target population, eight were identified by KW as being interested in participating. Two KW (in contact with three of the participants) never got back in touch with the researcher and did not return a follow up phone call. Two young people's circumstances changed and were no longer interested in the research. This left three remaining participants. One of these participants cancelled the first meeting with the researcher due to a change in circumstances. Another withdrew their interest prior to signing consent. The one remaining participant signed consent, as did the family and participated in the first stage of the research

(questionnaire) however after first postponing and then cancelling the follow up date to carry out the second phase of the research (the interview) the final participant exercised their right to withdraw from the research, via their FIT keyworker.

This meant that there were no remaining participants from the 2012-15 cohort and a second meeting was held with the FIT data analyst to apply the same inclusion criteria to the phase two cohort. This cohort was made up of existing families in the project who still met criteria for support and new referrals received so far for the 2015-18 project. Due to this taking place in the very early stages of the new cohort, the exclusion criteria generated a very limited sample of only 12 YP. Fortunately two YP from this cohort expressed an interest in the project when their key worker described it to them and both YP agreed to participate in the study. Due to the small target population I questioned whether this was an indication of the success of FIT involvement on increasing attendance (and therefore was EPS support necessary). However I was informed that this was in fact due to a significant proportion of YP reaching the age of 16 years old and no longer legally required to attend.

The KW who were invited to attend were direct employees of the FIT rather than other services that the FIT also use KW from such as the youth offending team (YOT) and social services. The key worker participants were obtained using opportunity sampling. The head of service circulated an email to the team written by the researcher, informing them of the additional data collection and what would be asked of them. A copy of this email was read out in their staff briefing meeting and another copy was displayed at the main office. The whole team received a follow up email from the researcher as no KW came forward initially. Following the follow up email two KW opted in.

A further sample of YP was identified from secondary school populations in West Midlands Secondary Schools who opted in following an email invitation to participate in the research.

Inclusion criteria were sent to attendance officers at participating schools and they identified YP in the secondary school aged between 11 and 16 whose attendance was 85% or below. All participants who fitted the inclusion criteria were provided with project information (appendix 16) and asked if they were interested in proceeding. Attendance officers telephoned or met with parents of pupils who had opted in to gain verbal consent from the parent to pass contact information to the researcher.

3.9 Participants

Limited information is presented below to ensure the participants' right to anominity. Due to the small sample and the agreement to disseminate the findings to the EPS and FIT it was necessary to be very selective about the demographic information included to ensure the YP and KW were unidentifiable.

Table 4.1 Participant Information: Young People supported by FIT

	Participant 109[1]	**Participant 110**
Age		13
Sex	(Removed)	F

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[1] Participant numbers relate to order of data collection (1- YP with FIT support, 2- KW or 3 – YP without FIT support) and participant number (eg. 01, 02... 09, 10 etc). Where there are gaps in participant numbers this indicates withdrawal following written consent or disengagement following verbal consent).

Table 4.2 Participant Information: Young People not supported by FIT

	Participant 301	Participant 303	Participant 306	Participant 308
Age	15	12	15	14
Sex	M	F	M	M
Attendance	Not attending 0%	79%	84%	74%

Table 5. Participant Information: KW

	Key Worker 1	Key Worker 2
Sex	F	M
Age group	51 - 60	31-40
Years working for Service	2y 1m	6m (10years in Youth Work)
Number of Young People supporting *	5	20
Number of Young People research was discussed with	3	0**

* whose attendance is below 85%

** KW assumed this meant number of YP who then participated in research.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Stringent ethical controls were put in place that not only met with guidelines from the British Psychology Society (BPS, 2010), the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and the University of Birmingham code of practice for research but also went through the LA ethics panel and were critically reflected upon in both professional and academic supervision by the researcher. Due to the emancipatory aims of the study the ethical considerations were of vital importance to the researcher.

The details regarding how the research met the expected standards of the BPS, BERA the University of Birmingham and the LA can be found in the appendix The following additional considerations were made prior to the study due to the nature of the target population:

Participants may become anxious or distressed as a result of talking about emotive subjects such as the barriers they face in attending school or negative experiences related to school. Fortunately, due to the researcher being a trainee Educational Psychologist, it was concluded that indicators of anxiety or distress would have been picked up early and the interview ceased or paused if necessary depending on participant's preferences.

The researcher is trained in safeguarding and this was advantageous as it ensured that should it have been necessary, confidence could be had in the researcher's competency supporting a YP should disclosure be made. Should the researcher have had any concerns regarding the participants wellbeing they were prepared to signpost the participant to where they could access further support, and decided with them an appropriate way to discuss concerns for the individual's wellbeing with parents. Participants were informed of LA safeguarding procedures prior to the interview and if a disclosure was made it would have been handled in line with LA policy and procedure.

Participants needed to have the right to not answer questions that could make them feel uncomfortable. They also needed to be aware that they had the right to request the recording was stopped but be able to continue to discuss issues if they feel they needed to.

Due to the collaborative nature of elicitation techniques in personal construct psychology it is considered that this can be a helpful foundation for building rapport and the beginnings of a therapeutic relationship with a young person who should feel listened to valued and heard (Butler and Green, 2007). The ethical implications of this for a time limited research project when the researcher involvement does not extend outside of the study, clearly required careful consideration and management. The resolution to prevent a negative impact was allowing the participants to identify if there was anything that arose during the interview that they wished to follow up and the researcher was prepared for signposting to supportive websites, resources and organisations. The participants were also given the option to request that certain information was shared with their key worker by the researcher. One participant took up this offer and the other participant asked that their key worker was present for the interview.

Due to the participants belonging to a group that have been categorised as belonging to a "troubled family" based on criteria documented in government policy they did not select to receive input from the family intervention team, this was something imposed upon them. It is important that this research is not construed in the same way and participants are fully aware that it is their choice to participate and that participation is not mandatory. This is stated in literature provided to the participants and was reiterated in researcher interactions with both the participants and their parents.

A threat to upholding the stringent ethical standards the research aimed to uphold is the sampling method; this required family intervention team workers circulating flyers and

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having initial conversations with participants and their families due to the limited access that the researcher had to participants. To reduce any risk of participants feeling that participation is mandatory, the researcher explained the ethos of the research at the team meeting, prior to giving KW the literature to share with the participants.

3.11 Reliability and validity

The reliability of research refers to the extent to which the findings would be replicated in the event of the research being repeated. The validity of the research is understood to refer to the extent to which the findings correspond with the existing literature and findings of other research of the same area.

Yin (2009) states that there are three forms of validity that a case study must demonstrate;

Construct validity: How hypotheses and theories applied by the researcher are meaningful to the participant and their world view. In the current study the construct validity will be ensured through clear communication between the researcher and participant. Despite first conducting a literature review the philosophical stance that informed the methodology means that the researcher accepts that the participant will have their own theories regarding their situation, and will work alongside them to gain an understanding of this. The researcher does not intend to impose their own hypotheses about participants or the phenomena of school non-attendance upon them or their situation.

Internal validity: Extent to which findings can be supported and verified by the data. Through the procedure developed of searching for meaning alongside the participant in the YP semi-structured interviews the internal validity should be high as the participant will have the opportunity to verify their meaning and the researcher check that they understand the participant's views.

External validity: Degree to which findings can be generalised to the rest of the target population. Based upon this definition, it would be counter to the philosophy of the project to anticipate external validity of the findings, as the data gathered will be viewed as the opinions and understanding of an individual who does not represent or speak for other individuals who happen to share similar characteristics.

Peräkylä (2011) postulates that a necessity in determining validity of data collected through interview is to know whether the participant is able to share information that reflects their views and opinions outside of the interview situation or whether what is shared is as a direct result of the context in which the data was gathered. To ensure the validity of the interview data is not only representative of the participant's experience in the context of the interview they will be briefed prior to the interview on the purpose of the interview, and cued in the interview to reflect on their life experience.

In considering reliability of a case study there are two things to ensure; transparency and replication (Gibbert et al, 2008). Transparency will be ensured through the inclusion of the interview schedules found in appendix 8. Replication is more challenging and may be impeded by the exclusion of thorough demographic information regarding the participants and exclusion of the interview transcripts from the appendix. This is necessary to protect the anominity of participants and uphold the stringent ethical principles that this study aims to ensure.

Reliability is often associated with generalisability and the necessity for this in case study research is a matter of on-going debate. For findings to be deemed generalizable Rouse and Daellenbach (2002) argue that the research will be considered intrusive in many cases. Mir and Watson (2000) had stated previously that the focus should be upon the individual case and the learning that can be derived from this, not on what can be generalised to the target

population as this can distract from the importance of the current study. This study does not seek to obtain data that is generalizable to the whole target population as it recognises that each individual within the population may experience school non-attendance differently.

3.12 Data Analysis

3.12.1 Analysis of the SRAS

The SRAS, as a pre-existing measure, is analysed by adding up the scores (in points) for each answer the participant has selected, in groups of "functions of behaviour". The four functions have question numbers listed underneath them where the appropriate score (dependant on the answer selected by the participant) is recorded. The scores under each function are then totalled and an average calculated. The area with the highest score is considered the underlying function of the participant's non-attendance at school. If two functions share a similar score then there may be a mixed functionality underlying the non-attendance. Further analysis of the results of the SRAS takes place in the semi-structured interview with the participant.

2.12.2 Analysis of YP Interviews

The participant interviews draw upon PCP techniques and rely upon the participant and researcher engaging in a joint journey of discovery, upon which the participant is encouraged to explore their constructs. The analysis of the data occurs within the interview, with the participant in a joint process. The ethos of the research relies upon giving YP the opportunity to have their voices heard, to communicate to professionals and others their own understanding of their situation. To carry out any further analysis of the data without the presence of the participant would be to go against the ethos of the research. The interviews seek to allow the participant the opportunity to explore the results of the SRAS and accept or critique its findings.

2.12.3 Analysis of KW Interviews

In analysing the key worker interviews, thematic analysis will be employed. This approach can be utilised flexibly across differing epistemological stances that studies may take (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is used in the analysis of data generated through semi-structured interviews, and is aims to identify, analyse and report themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain a six stage process to follow in order to carry out a rigorous thematic analysis;

1. Researcher familiarises themselves with the data via the process of transcription.

2. Codes are generated for individual data sets (each interview)

3. Initial search for themes (themes highlight something important in the data in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

4. Themes are reviewed and clear distinction between themes is evident

    i. Phase 1 – individual thematic maps constructed

    ii. Phase 2 – Thematic map for entire data set is constructed

5. Define and name themes, this helps to identify the "story" that each theme tells.

6. Produce a report that provides a precise and logical account of the "story told by the data.

As suggested in Braun and Clarke (2006) an inductive approach will be taken to thematic analysis. This is made possible due to the addition of the research questions answered through key worker interviews taking place after the literature review. A further literature review to focus upon the professional practice of those working with vulnerable YP was purposely omitted prior to data collection to try to ensure the researcher was not biased.

Obviously there is likely to be some influence upon the researcher through the writing of the existing literature review

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The way that the research evolved, and lead to further investigation of additional research questions regarding the nature of the target populations' engagement with research, meant that there were three data sets. Data collected via direct work with YP in the target population: those supported by the FIT and those from the general secondary school population (not supported by FIT), was gathered via SRAS, a self-report measure developed by Kearney (2002) and a semi-structured interview that drew upon PCP to jointly analyse the findings with the participant. Data that was collected via semi-structured interview with the KW from the FIT was analysed using thematic analysis, using the procedure Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest.

In the following chapter data sets will be discussed; first describing the findings from the completion of the SRAS and then the semi-structured interview with YP and second, the key worker data, using phase 6 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) procedure. Phase 6 seeks to provide an authentic report of the KW' perspectives and their views of how they promote engagement. The aim of phase 6 is to analytically discuss the most applicable findings in relation to the research questions, moving beyond a description to make links to the relevant literature cited (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Results are presented in multiple ways; extracts from the semi-structured interviews with YP are provided and the analysis that took place with the YP described.. Results from the semi-structured interviews with KW are presented using a thematic diagram, with reference to the thematic map that was constructed during the thematic analysis procedure used. The aim of the thematic map is to integrate the interactions between the main themes and subthemes with the original research aims thus providing an overview of the findings.

The findings presented seek to answer the research questions laid out in chapter 3 (Methodology). For the convenience of the reader the research questions the data seeks to answer are repeated at the beginning of the relevant section.

For the four participants who were not supported by the FIT the story board method of data presentation, as described by Thomas (2016), is utilised to prevent monotony in the presentation of findings. The original framework for presenting findings and discussion (as utilised for Participant 110) was used for each of the additional four participants to create the story boards and can be accessed in the appendix should further detail be of interest to the reader.

4.2 Description of Findings from Working with YP using SRAS and Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews with YP sought to answer the following research questions;

1. How do individuals who are not currently meeting the government targets for attendance, construe school and school attendance?

2. How can Personal Construct Psychology be used to support YP to consider how they construe their social world, and to what extent is this more or less effective than use of the SRAS?

The participants are considered individually as it is recognised that outcomes tend not to be repeated (Pawson, 2008). The meaning YP placed upon their situation is what the researcher accepts as their truth at the time the data was collected. It is apparent from the literature review that multiple perspectives can be taken on the phenomena of non-attendance, even surrounding an individual case, this is also acknowledged in the CR stance of the research (Bhaskar, 1986).

The original data set from the initial data gathering included that of two participants supported by the FIT: 109 and 110. The data set for participant 109 has been moved to the appendix and is not considered in the discussion. It remains included in the appendix (appendix 14) for the reader to access if it is of interest. The researcher values and respects the contribution of participant 109 and is grateful for their time. The data was removed from the body of the thesis as the participant's attendance had improved at the time of the interview.

4.4 Participant 110

Participant 110 is a 13 year old female, identified by her family's FIT KW as meeting the criteria for the research and encouraged to participate by the key worker. 110 is currently on role at a local secondary school and is in year 8. Although the Key worker has been working with 110 and her mother to increase her attendance it is still inconsistent, even on days she attends 110 reports being unhappy at school and not wanting to be there. FIT KW hopes that engagement in the research may allow 110 to reflect on what might help her to attend more regularly. 110 requested that work carried out in the interview was fed back to her key worker.

4.4.1 SRAS

Participant 110's results using the SRAS were conclusive as there was a clear difference between the scoring for each category. It appears from the SRAS that the most significant factor in non-attendance at the current time is to avoid aversive social interactions with peers. Additionally it seems that the school environment and the emotional impact of it is something 110 is motivated to avoid and may also contribute to non-attendance.

It appears that it is unlikely that 110 is not attending school due to experiencing positive reinforcement from activities she is engaging at times when she does not attend school.

Table 6. SRAS results for participant 110

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (2dp)	2.83	3.17	2.17	0.83
Ranking	2	1	3	4

4.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

<u>Construing of school and school attendance</u>

110 reports that the people at school are a specific reason that she finds it challenging to attend school;

"Because umm people at school are like really rough on me and umm. And I don't like it cus that leaves me with no friends like."

"…cus being with my mum isn't as stressful as people at school cus my mum umm. Is always there."

"Umm because like when I'm being bullied. Umm. They always make me frustrated"

Problematic friendships and the breakdown of a key friendship reoccurs throughout the interview and 110 recognises this as something that has had a significant impact on her attendance.

"And (named girl) she ain't my friend anymore."

110 recognises that teacher may be able to support her with friendship difficulties as they have done so in the past;

"Umm. They got me and (names friend) back friends when like we had an argument."

The nature of 110's experience of school work was also a challenge that made attendance at school more difficult. 110 reported that the work was difficult and this was as a result of missing so much. This may indicate that there is a cycle of maintenance (not attending due to friendship difficulties, leading to missing work, leading to non-attendance due to the work being challenging) occurring that perpetuates non-attendance; however this cannot be concluded as the case as it was not discussed with the participant during the interview.

"Umm just makes me feel stressed and umm. I don't really like doing work at school cus umm. Because I can never get things right and umm. I always have to scribble it out and do it again."

"Researcher: And how would being able to get on with the work help you.

110:    Cus then. I'd be able to know more things like. Umm. The teachers wouldn't bug me about getting it wrong."

110 found that activities such as PS3 (PlayStation 3) and being on the computer "made the bad things go away". Bad things were anything that made her feel stressed, mad or frustrated.

The Use of Techniques from Personal Construct Psychology

110 was unfamiliar with PCP and seemed to find the new approach slightly challenging to begin with. Due to the presentation of the participant further verbal checks were made throughout the interview to ensure that she was still comfortable and happy to continue, which she always reported that she was. 110 was in a familiar environment for the interview

and her key worker was present for part of the interview. Her mother was outside of the room where the interview was conducted and available to her if she wished for additional support however she chose to continue. In light of this if the participant answered with "don't know" on more than 3 occasions to the same question/activity, she was given the option to move on to an alternative question or activity. 110 decided on the following labels for the cards used in triadic elicitation;

- PS3

- People at school

- Teachers

- Computer

- Staying home with mum

- Being in bed all day

- The work

The triadic elicitation identified poles that were utilised in the laddering. These were;

Frustrated   -----   All the bad things go away

Hard Work   -----   Easy Work

Not stressful   -----   Making me feel stressed

Entertainment -----   Frustrated

All the bad things go away   -----   People are rough on me and the work is hard

110 was given autonomy and encouraged to make decisions regarding what was explored to ensure the activities were led by the YP and not the researcher. The poles 110 explored in the laddering were; "Hard work ---- Easy Work", "Not as stressful ----- Make me stressed" and "All the bad things go away ----- People are rough on me and the work is hard" 110 found laddering challenging and it was at times unclear whether the core construct/mechanism had been uncovered or whether 110 wished to move on. 110's core constructs elicited using these techniques were;

• Feeling Happy

• Not being Stressed and Frustrated

• Have money, a house and have kids then make their lifes more easier

The language used by the participant had been used to record the constructs/mechanisms to ensure the views of 110 are accurately communicated and the effect of the researcher's own views is limited.

Below is an example of the laddering technique used with participant 110 to elicit the core construct of 'feeling happy'.

Figure 1: Example of Laddering carried out with Participant 110
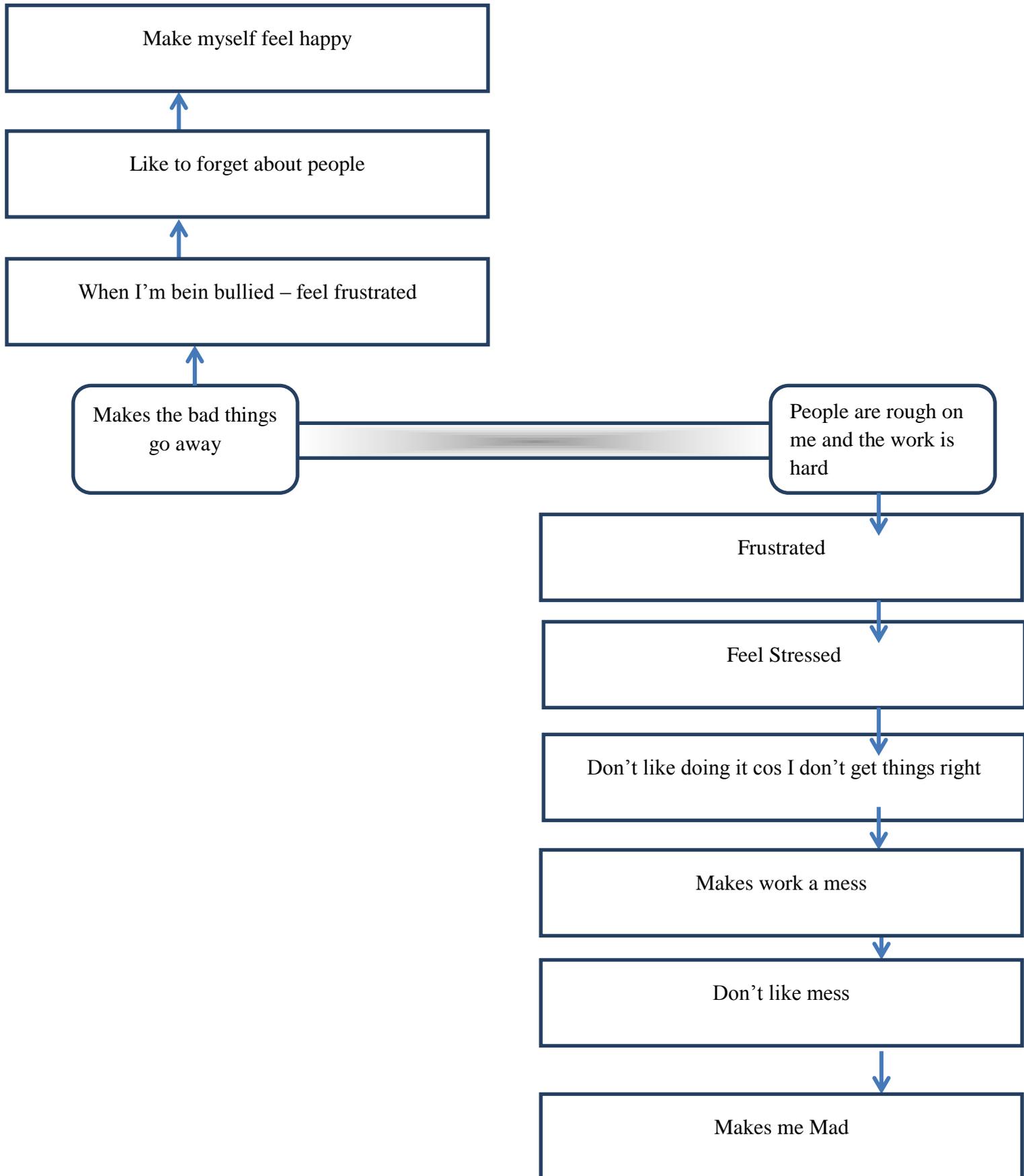
The adapted reparatory grid technique allowed the researcher and the participant to look at what changes could be made to move the challenging aspects of school so that they were more in line with the core constructs (see appendix 13 for example). To make school closer to other activities that were conducive with 110 being happy two main changes were necessary;

- ➢ For the people to be nicer.
- ➢ For teachers to help more with the work.

110 felt that if people's attitudes were changed they would be nicer and identified that some after school tutoring with teachers would help her with the work and also enable her to catch up.

4.4.3 Discussion

110 was a significantly less confident participant that the participants interviewed after her and this may have impacted on the data collected. 110's well-being was ensured by giving her verbal prompts to indicate whether she was happy to proceed to which she responded that she wished to continue the interview. The researcher had to draw upon professional skills utilised in the field of educational psychology through working with C&YP such as "wondering aloud" when the participant was struggling to verbalise her thoughts or feelings. This arguably could have impacted the results by the researcher influencing the language or answers that the participant chooses. However this impact was mediated by ensuring answers were repeated back to the participant to check understanding and 110 was given the opportunity to amend answers.

Lewis' (1995) Push and Pull interactional factors could be considered in relation to the factors described by participant 110. The push factors (school based factors) social contexts – peer relationship difficulties and academic aspects – accessibility of the curriculum and

teaching style/lesson delivery were particularly relevant to 110's experience and seem to coincide with her construing regarding school.

Davis and Lee (2006) reported that females were more likely to experience difficult peer relationships as a contributing factor to non-attendance. This was certainly a factor for Participant 110YP, however participant 303YP (female participant discussed later) recognises the importance of peer relationships in supporting her to attend more. This may be indicative of a need to recognise the importance of drawing upon multiple approaches to psychology to understand the phenomenon of school non-attendance. Considering theories from the social approach to psychology may encourage professionals to be aware of the significance of peer relationships to individual YP who they seek to support to increase school attendance.

The use of the SRAS was viewed as effective by 110 and she reported that she felt it was as useful as the PCP interview. The SRAS did identify that based on 110's answers the function of school non-attendance was avoidance of aversive social situations in school. 110 felt that this was accurate although other school factors such as the work and being behind having missed work as additional influential factors. This may have been captured in the SRAS through the category ranked as 2nd (avoidance of the school environment) however as the category of the SRAS is so broad it is not possible to know this for certain.

110 still construed school in a positive way and seemed to comprehend the value of education, recognising and linking it to her core construct regarding the importance of securing a future for her and her potential future family.

4.5 Participant 301

Participant 301 is a 15 year old male, identified by the attendance officer in the secondary school at which his is on roll as having low attendance. 301 was included in the project following referral from the SENCo as at the time that the research was discussed with school,

he was no longer attending. 301 is in year 11. He reports not feeling able to leave the house on some occasions. The participant's mother hoped that engagement in the research may support 301 to understand his emotional experience and access support to do his GCSE examinations. 301 requested that his mother was present during the times arranged for data collection, and the data was not shared with school. The semi-structured interview was split into two parts due to the participant experiencing fatigue and requesting to have a break in between data collection. Beginning the interview was difficult for 301 and he felt that this was a reflection of his mental health at the time. He said his mind felt blank at times. Additional structuring questions were provided to help him provide ideas for the triadic elicitation cards. 301 responded well to "checking back" from the researcher and confidently corrected the researcher to ensure a shared understanding of his perspective and experience.

301 was signposted to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) at the initial discussion regarding the research and his mother supported him to follow up this referral. 301 is receiving the appropriate support for his mental health and emotional well-being.

Below is a story board constructed from the data collection with 301. The findings and discussion for 301, as presented for 110, can be found in appendix 21.

4.5.1 Story board for Participant 301

Storyboard: **Participant 301**

Sex: **Male** Age: **15**

Important Quotes from Participant:
"I feel safer at home"
"...get paranoia and that, hearing things, so I don't really trust the house..."
"When I'm being at home, its just, bad. Cos. I got nothing to do and school don't send any work"
"an it kinda annoys me that the school ent sending work, cos they say they care an everythin, but they want me to go in to get the grades I get, but they won't send me any work home so I can't revise"

SRAS Results:

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (2dp)	5.5	3.30	5.00	0.50
Ranking	1	3	2	4

Participant views on SRAS: 1st ranking is correct. 2nd ranking not sure about as feel safer with family but don't want their attention. Agree that it is not to do with positive reinforcement. Prefer interview as it is easier to explain views.

LINKS to research questions:
Construing of school and school attendance: Experience of paranoia. Places to Avoid – Quad. Level of Care. Feeling of safety. Peer relationships.
Personal Construct Psychology: Initially supported to engage in triadic elicitation. Engaged well in laddering and rep grid. Elicitation of core constructs:
- Avoiding feeling lonely.
- Avoiding feeling paranoid.
- Feeling Safe.

Thoughts to consider in discussion:

- Experience of support from school.
- Understanding of own emotional experience.
- Impact of Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being.

Links to the research of others:
- ✓ Reid (2008) 3rd Heading: Pupils with psychological difficulties – 301 experiencing mental health difficulties- referred to CAMHS.
- ✓ Egger et al (2003): pupils evaluated as 'pure anxious school refusers' were significantly more likely to experience fears related to the school environment than as a result of separation anxiety. 301 = fears regarding areas of school, pupils in school and safety. Not experiencing separation anxiety.
- ✓ Kearney and Alban, (2004): importance of avoiding sole reliance on diagnosis as a way to understand school non-attendance – 301 experience outside of mental health difficulties taken into account and accepted as of significance and importance.

4.6 Participant 303

Participant 303 is a 12 year old female. She was identified by attendance officer at her secondary school as experiencing difficulty attending school. 303 had experienced a lot of change in the recent months prior to engagement in the research which included the separation of her parents. School were aware of the changes to the family's circumstances. 303 informed me that she had seen the school counsellor, who told 303 that she has school phobia. 303 understood this as meaning that sometimes she felt too worried to go to school. 303 requested that she met with me on a 1:1 basis at her home, and we did so with her mother in a separate room of the house so that 303 could access additional support if she wanted it. 303 asked that we both provided a summary of the semi-structured interview to her mother directly following completing it, and that I write her a letter summarising our work together so that she can decide later whether to share this with her school.

A storyboard (based on technique from: Thomas, 2016) was constructed from the data collection with 303.

The findings and discussion for 303, as presented for 110, can be found in appendix 22.

4.6.1 Storyboard for Participant 303

Storyboard: **Participant 303**

Sex: **Female** Age: **12**

Important Quotes from Participant:
"...if I didn't get any sleep. Then. I can't work can't concentrate"
"feeling tired so now I want to sleep cos I'm tired"
"Sunday I don't sleep well at all that's one day I never sleep"
"I don't want to feel moody but I'm moody"
"we don't learn because all the noisy people do is be bad"
"...the noisy ones are affecting our future. cos the teachers don't teach."

SRAS Results:

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (1dp)	3.0	0.7	1.0	1.3
Ranking	1st	4th	3rd	2nd

Participant views on SRAS: Results are right, it is a lot of getting away from the noise. Prefer the interview because you can talk about it more and explain what you mean better.

LINKS to research questions:
School was construed as a noisy and frustrating place, 303 referred to some of the other pupils as "bad" or "noisy" and felt that there was little that the other teachers could do about it. She also recognised some factors not related to school that contributed to low attendance including sleep difficulties and feeling moody.
PCP provided structure but 303 also expanded on activities and was able to lead the conversation. She was able to problem solve and this naturally lead into a more solution-focused style conversation at times. She preferred the interview to the SRAS.

Thoughts to consider in discussion:

- YP autonomy during semi-structured interview – solution focused style response.
- Sensory experience – sensitivity to noise
- Views of other pupils behaviour.

Links to the research of others:
- Lewis (1995) "Push Factors" include academic and classroom aspects that influence school non-attendance. The comments made by 303 regarding the teachers ability to manage the pupil behaviour in the class. And in her opinion even the Head Teacher would not be able to improve this situation indicates that this may be a key "push factor" in non-attendance.
- Thambirajah et al (2008) holistic approach = helpful and proven necessary for 303 due to combination of contributory factors (auditory sensitivity, noisy classrooms, feeling regarding teacher's classroom management and availability to support (relate to 301), emotional well being – moodiness, and difficulties sleeping)

4.7 Participant 306

Participant 306 is a 14 year old male, identified by the deputy head of the secondary school due to attendance at school being inconsistent and below 85%. 306 was experiencing a period of change at the time of the research due to moving house and marital difficulties between his parents. School had some awareness of the family circumstances and 306 said that he had shared the necessary information with is form tutor. 306's mother was keen for him to participate and also had concerns regarding his well-being and school attendance.

306 requested that the SRAS was completed over the telephone as he had not been at home at the time arranged to meet (after school hours). He requested that the semi-structured interview took place on a 1:1 basis in a quiet meeting room at school, which was arranged between the researcher and the key member of staff identified in school (Deputy Head Teacher). 306 requested that both the researcher and himself provided a summary of the semi-structured interview to his form tutors following completion, which I agreed to arrange with the Deputy Head Teacher. I explained that if the meeting was not possible I would write to him with a summary of the interview and he could share this with his form tutors himself. The Deputy Head agreed to arrange the meeting with the form tutors at their earliest convenience; however at the time of writing up the results this meeting had not been arranged.

A storyboard, based on Thomas (2016), was constructed from the data collection with 306. The findings and discussion for 306, can be found in appendix 23.

4.7.1 Story board for Participant 306

Storyboard: **Participant 306**

Sex: **Male** Age: **15**

Important Quotes from Participant:
"...a reason why I skived at some point because there might be a test"
"a positive lesson would be where the teacher allows you to talk to your friends"
"a limited amount of freedom" (is better)
"if there is no fun involved then there is no enjoyment"
"sometimes a day off school doesn't hurt anyone"
"There's lots of arguments at home""If you feel self conscious you feel much more negative about your self-image"
"A positive body image makes a positive person"

SRAS Results:

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (1dp)	3.3	0.0	1.0	1.3
Ranking	1st	4th	3rd	2nd

Participant views on SRAS: Like the questionnaire. It makes sense. Its quicker. Like the interview better because it is more optional. Had more choice. not being limited by the choices in the questionnaire. The SRAS was correct though.

LINKS to research questions:
Construing of school: Not always having the control he felt he needed (unpredictability of when tests would be etc.). Wanting flexibility, choice and for things to be voluntary. Importance of enjoyment and being able to laugh (avoidance of boredom, worry, sluggishness).
Benefits of PCP: Enjoyed the fact he could explain and give more information. Felt limited by the SRAS. PCP let him choose and talk about what was important to him.

Thoughts to consider in discussion:
- Self perception – body image.
- Peer relationships, social support, friendships.
- Avoidance of negative feelings associated with school (worried, bored, sluggish).
- Positivity and wanting to help others.

Links to the research of others:
✓ Thambirajah et al (2008) advocate for an approach that looks at all factors contributing to school attendance – this is very important for 306 as there were may factors discussed through the interview.
✓ Kearney (2002), Development of SRAS – multiple choice. 306 able to engage in this but it could not account for all factors.
✓ Lewis et al (1995) Pull factor – family dynamic – very different impact on 306 who found family dynamic (difficulties and arguments) actually encouraged him to attend, as a means of escaping the home environment.

4.8 Participant 308

Participant 308 is a 14 year old male pupil at a secondary school in the placement local authority. He was identified by his Head of House as meeting the inclusion criteria for the research. 308 met with me in his home with his mother present to discuss the research and requested that we carry out the SRAS at the same meeting. He opted to meet me at school in a private meeting room on a 1:1 basis to carry out the semi-structured interview. 308 requested that his mother was provided with a verbal summary of the semi-structured interview via telephone call, which was done. He requested that no information was shared with school.

The findings and discussion points are displayed below in a storyboard. Additional information and detail is available in Appendix 22 for the reader's interest.

4.8.1 Story board for Participant 308

Storyboard: **Participant 308**

Sex: **Male** Age: **14**

Important Quotes from Participant:
"it's just gonna feel like. Spoilt. if someone keeps stopping. When. if I'm enjoying myself and it's just gonna feel like school again"
"Well maths. it's just. maths hates me"
"Well Maths. I'm not the best at."
"The Head of Year. Like. Knows about it". "When it starts back up he can be a bit slow getting back on the train" (He does stuff about it but he could do it faster)
"there's people I don like in ere"
"the lessons need to be a bit more exciting than jus sittin"
"showin tha I don mess about.. like. Asserting my dominance" "I walked away yesterday and got in trouble for it" "You cor go back to the same place. They will just know you're there".

SRAS Results:

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (1dp)	2.8	1.7	4.0	2.0
Ranking	2nd	4th	1st	3rd

Participant views on SRAS: "It's pretty close". Its just better. It's quicker and does not take as much time. The questionnaire is just easier its multiple choice so its not using my mind as much. Its better because "my brain has just switched off for the day".

LINKS to research questions:
Construing of school: 308 recognised that subjects such as Maths were important for his future prospects, but that he found Maths difficult "I'm not the best at". There was a group of pupils by whom he felt targeted and he described them as the "annoying people". For both factors 306 indicated that teachers could be more responsive (in Maths) "let us sit together" (and managing "annoying people") Head of Year "he could do something quicker".
PCP allowed 308 to consider what would help make it easier to attend school, however he preferred the SRAS as it was quicker and required less thought.

Thoughts to consider in discussion:

- Preference for SRAS over interview
- Felt that SRAS was correct in identifying underlying cause of non-attendance but SRAS and interview data describe different factors.

Links to the research of others
- ✓ Lyon and Cotler (2007) communication between home and school setting – verbal feedback from 308's mother.
- ✓ Lewis (1995) interaction between push and pull factors (social context – peer relationships [push] and personal – feelings about home[pull])
- ✓ Place et al (2000) avoidance of school as a result of aversive social situations contributing to feelings of isolation – not the case for 308 – aversive social situation mediated by protective factor of positive social relationship.

4.9 Discussion of Findings from data collection with YP

The data collection directly with YP supported by the FIT was significantly more challenging than anticipated. The challenges anticipated were that initially engaging YP would be problematic and it may be hard to convey the ethos of the research via FIT KW. To account for these difficulties the researcher attended a FIT staff meeting and presented the research aims and ethos to them, prior to them speaking to YP about the research. What became apparent was that YP did show interest but they found it very challenging to remain involved when they were faced with meeting the researcher for the first time. This issue is explored further in the key worker data collection below.

Further data collection with YP from general secondary school population (within West Midlands Local Authorities) was also challenging. The significantly larger target population meant there were many more prospective participants, however each individual school had to be contacted separately and an adult who could carry out the KW role of obtaining verbal consent from parents and pupils for the researcher to contact them had to be identified. Many schools did not respond to the initial invitation to participate in the research. Responding schools were able to identify numerous YP who met the inclusion criteria, but obtaining verbal consent from both YP and parents was challenging. On a number of occasions (4) both pupils and parents gave verbal consent for schools to pass on contact details to the researcher to contact them, however when the researcher did so, there was no response to calls, messages or emails.

All of the participants in this research were sensible, thoughtful and reflective YP, despite the range of challenges that they experienced they were able to engage with research in a positive and meaningful way. This was conducive with Davis and Lee's (2006) report that they

participants (13 pupils) were passionate and articulate. Experience throughout the current research would agree entirely with this sentiment.

With the data collected from the five participants who participated in both aspects of the study (SRAS and semi-structured interview) and met the inclusion criteria, there are two research questions to answer. These research questions structure this discussion section.

4.9.1 How do individuals who are not currently meeting the government targets for attendance, construe school and school attendance?

Egger et al (2003) noted that rather than diagnosing phobic or anxious behaviour in YP, what was more appropriate was investigation of the school setting. They report that YP fears regarding the school were both appropriate and adaptive avoidance behaviours due to the aversive nature of the school environment. This is reminiscent of the findings from working with all of the participants who were able to describe stimuli that they experienced as particularly aversive. 110, 301, 306 and 308 all reflected that their non-attendance was sometimes connected to difficulties with peers. Participant 303 described auditory sensitivity and therefore experiencing significant discomfort in noisy environments, the noisy classrooms were therefore particularly aversive for her. The findings of the present study indicate that given the opportunity the school environment can be described in terms of its benefits and factors that make attendance challenging. It indicates that accepting what YP state as their reasons for non-attendance and engaging with them in a meaningful way can support YP to identify strategies that may support them to attend again in future.

Accepting that YP place high importance upon social activities and relationships that adults may have undervalued in their assumptions is an interesting finding from the semi structured interviews. For 110 playing on the computer and PS3 has been important escapism for her, allowing her to feel less 'frustrated' and 'mad'. Participant 301 experienced such problematic

negative emotional experience even thinking about certain peers that he could not face leaving the house at times. 306 placed significant importance upon extracurricular activities such as drama and acting as this was fun and enjoyable, and he could have a laugh with his peers, was in fact a motivating factor for him in increasing school attendance.

Reid (2008) provided a comprehensive inventory of reasons for poor school attendance. One heading under which he listed factors was "Pupils with psychological difficulties". This was certainly appropriate for 30, who recognises and discusses his experience of "feeling paranoid" and "seeing things that aren't there" as being significant barriers to his attendance at school. 303 and 306 both refer to factors such as worry and anxiety that may also be considered under the same heading. But for all three participants who refer to psychological difficulties associated with school there are also other factors that they consider barriers to attending school and therefore they cannot be neatly explained by a single reason. Egger et al (2003) identified that pupils they had evaluated as 'pure anxious school refusers' were significantly more likely to experience fears related to the school environment than as a result of separation anxiety. This finding was replicated by the participants who did discuss worries and anxiety related to school attendance, in that when explored the source of the anxiety seemed to be either organic (elements of anxiety 301 experienced such as that related to paranoia) or due to school based factors and not as a result of separation anxiety. It remains necessary to recognise the importance of avoiding sole reliance on diagnosis as a way to understand school non-attendance (Kearney and Alban, 2004), evidenced further through the semi-structured interview with 301that facilitated reflection regarding other factors (additional to mental health/ psychological difficulties) that were also of significance in making it challenging for him to attend school. Although it is important that this is alongside rather than at the cost of the potential benefits of appropriate assessment and exploration of

relevant diagnosis in supporting 301, or other YP, to understand and make sense of their experiences.

Gregory and Purcell (2014) voice the necessity for professionals to refrain from viewing non-attendance as a within-child problem and consider non-attendance as a complex phenomenon without a single contributing factor has rung true in the findings of this project. None of the five participants identify a single factor in underlying non-attendance, all discussing multiple factors that contribute to difficulties attending school. The overall list of factors mentioned by one of more of the participants is as follows:

- Not feeling safe in school (301)

- Experiencing psychological or mental health difficulties such as anxiety/worry/paranoia/low mood/unexplained moods. (110, 301, 303, 306)

- Poor quality of sleep (303, 306)

- Difficulties with peers (110, 301, 303, 306, 308)

- Lack of understanding from adults in school (110, 301, 303)

- Perception that teachers/adults do not care (301, 303, 308)

- Teaching style/Lesson Delivery (110, 306, 308)

- Classroom management (301, 308)

Thambirajah et al (2008) advocate for a holistic approach to understanding school non-attendance, and promote consideration of all contributory factors. The current research is evidence of this requirement. It is clear that school non-attendance is multi-faceted and complex in its nature due to the interactions between the contributing factors and the individual response that each young person has to their experience.

All of the participants identified that at some point, negative social relationships had been a contributing factors to low school attendance but this was not a stand-alone cause for any of

the participants. Participant 110, 306 and 308 reflected during the adapted reparatory grid technique that there was more that school staff could do to manage the impact negative social relationship had on their school attendance. Place et al (2000) reported that avoidance of school as a result of negative social situations contributes to feelings of isolation which may have been true for some of the participants (such as 110) however other participants, despite the contribution of negative social situation to their non-attendance, did not report recognising themselves as isolated (for example, 308). A protective factor for a number of pupils experiencing negative social situations, was the strength of other social relationships (301, 303, 306 and 308).

Four of the participants reflected that there was more that school staff could do regarding their experience of the school environment. The structure of the lesson and the teaching style made a significant impact on participant 303, 306 and 308. Lewis (1995) reports that Academic and Classroom aspects, such as teaching style can be a significant "push factor" in non-attendance. For participant 303 she felt that the teacher was not able to manage the behaviour of other pupils in the classroom and this negatively impacted on her ability to learn. For 306 and 308 the style of lesson delivery was not conducive with their preferred learning styles. Not being able to talk, not having a choice over the tasks and not having autonomy over whom they sat by were factors which they commented could be changed to improve their experience of school using the adapted rep. grid technique. Participant 110 identified that if the teachers were able to support her to catch up she would feel more confident about increasing her attendance. Similarly, 303 reflected that she found it difficult when she was in school that teachers did not seem to recognise that she may not know all of the answers due to the amount of time that she had not been in school, which led to her feeling that they expected too much of her.

Lyon and Cotler (2007) point out the oppressive nature of much of the literature that examines family dynamics in relation to non-attendance, reporting that YP from low-income families who are not attending state school factors rather than home factors as most influential in non-attendance. These findings are found to be true for the participants in the current study, none of whom identified specific difficulties or barriers to attendance as a result of home factors. Two participants did share information regarding relationship difficulties between family members at home (303 and 306), 306 reported that conversely to Kearney and Silverman's (1990) theory (among others) difficulties with home relationships was a reason to go to school (to "get a break") rather than not to attend. Participant 303 recognised the impact and sadness she felt regarding family difficulties, but did not view this as one of the main contributing factors for difficulty she experienced attending school. Participant 110 and 301 did not report any home factors in their difficulty attending school. This is supported in previous research such as that of Malcolm et al (2013) who also used semi-structured interviews with YP to examine the factors contributing to school non-attendance and also found that YP reported that school factors were predominantly the cause of non-attendance, not home factors. Lyon and Cotler (2007) proposed that a means of improving school attendance was promoting positive interactions and better communication between school and the families of pupils with low attendance. It was interesting that this was something also reflected by the mother of 308 upon sharing with her a summary of the semi-structured interview (at the request of 308).

4.9.2 How can Personal Construct Psychology be used to support YP to consider how they construe their social world, and to what extent is this more or less effective than use of the SRAS?

The use of PCP as a tool to elicit the views of YP was effective in creating time and space for YP to explore their perceptions and understanding of their own experiences. All five

participants recognise the value of education and the necessity of school work. Despite school work being experienced as challenging for 110, without prompting from the researcher she notes that tutoring after school with the teachers would support her to catch up on missed work and was something she would be willing to do. Although 301 felt unable to go in to school he still had intentions of completing GCSE examinations and achieving good grades to safeguard his future and also expressed frustration that more work was not made available to him by sending it home.

Lauchlan (2003) reports that YP who are not attending school may exhibit behaviour that could be termed both SR and truancy, this is reflected in the findings from some participants but may be considered particularly true for participants 306 and 308, although this is not reflected in the SRAS results for either participant. 308 talked frequently throughout the interview about the importance of having fun and not being bored, which could be understood to be reminiscent of the definition of truancy (and likely to be catagorised under 'positive reinforcement' in Kearney's (2002) SRAS). However the use of PCP and in particular the laddering technique, allowed the 308 to share his reasoning that a person who is not having fun is likely to be boring, which in turn could lead to them having fewer friends and being a 'loner', avoiding such was a core value for 308. 306 reported purposely deceiving family members by pretending to leave and then sneaking back into the house to watch television or play computer games. Superficially, this behaviour would fit many definitions of truancy, however earlier in the interview the descriptions he provides of how he felt about his body, his self image, and his concerns regarding his weight, and the views of others might be considered as more clinical factors that may be associated with definitions of SR, such as that of Berg et al, (1969). Through utilising PCP tools to elicit his views and further explore his perceptions it became apparent that there were underlying reasons behind him "sneaking back in" (to the family home) that would not have been uncovered without the

use of PCP. 306 recognises this when he states that the PCP interview gave him the opportunity to explain himself to the researcher more so than the use of the SRAS.

Participant 110, and 308 stated that they preferred the use of the SRAS to the semi-structured interview. For 110 this was due to experiencing difficulty thinking of answers for some of the PCP activities. 308 found that the SRAS suited his preferences because it was "easier, multiple choice and quicker". He felt that the interview was more challenging because he "had to use my brain// ...think through things more". On the other hand 301, 303 and 306 preferred the interview to the SRAS. 306 reported that the semi-structured interview gave him "more choice" than the SRAS, which he preferred. Hughes et al (2010) reported that pupils with poor attendance are more likely to demonstrate "expressive suppression" than their age-matched peers. Without a control group of pupils who are attending school consistently in the current study it is not possible to comment comparatively, however it is possible to draw upon the participant's comments regarding the use of PCP in the semi-structured interviews. The experience of 110 and 308 may be related to the findings of Hughes et al (2010) however this was not the experience of participants 301, 303 and 308 who all commented that the interview allowed them to explain their views and experience in more detail, which they preferred.

4.10 Semi-Structured Interviews with KW: Thematic Analysis

The semi-structured interviews with FIT KW and subsequent thematic analysis sought to answer the following research questions;

1. How do FIT KW think that engaging in research can be made more accessible to young people?

2. What do the FIT KW perceive to be the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting young people?

The final thematic map (below) indicates the main themes and the subthemes derived from the analysis of the data. Despite appearing seemingly independent of one another from the figure it is important to recognise the subtle interactions between the themes and subthemes that contribute to the story the data tells. This will become more apparent through the use of extracts from the transcribed data to illustrate the discussion of the themes and sub themes. Using the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006), the extracts were selected based on the researcher's judgement of those which provided the most vivid example and would therefore serve to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme throughout the data.

The report that meets the requirements of phase six in Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis is organised into several sections. First the two key themes identified are described followed by the six subthemes (three under each key theme) which are evidenced by extracts from the literature.

4.10.1 Report of the Themes (Phase 6)

The two key themes identified through analysis of the transcribed data from semi-structured interviews were;

- Maintaining relationships to work with and support young people
- Encouraging YP to engage

Unsurprisingly these themes are closely linked to the research questions, as the questions posed to the KW in the semi-structured interview were constructed around answering the research question. Under each key theme a further three subthemes were identified which contributed to the overarching theme. These are demonstrated below in the thematic map and discussed in further sections.

Final Thematic Map

Professional's ability to empathise with YP

Communication with YP ensures understanding

Maintaining relationships to work with and support YP

Aims

- Inform Practice of EP's and Professionals
- Contribute to the Local Offer
- Fulfil the Emancipatory function of research by giving YP a voice

Encouraging YP to engage

Whether a trusting relationship has been established

The approach the professional takes

Whether YP feels their contribution is valued or valuable

Ability of the adult to establish an initial rapport and begin to build trust.

4.10.2 Maintaining Relationships to work with and Support YP

Subtheme 1: Professional's ability to empathise with YP

The data suggests that both of the participants recognised the importance of empathy in working with and supporting young people. Despite each individual having their own ways of demonstrating empathy it was clear that empathy was core in the practice of both KW. Empathy was demonstrated by relating personal experiences to the experiences of YP and drawing comparisons, and also through recognising that whilst the KW would not have shared exactly the same experiences as the young people, they could relate to their circumstances.

Illustrative Examples:

201KW: *…But I think just giving that little bit of yep. I haven't walked in your shoes but I've experienced something similar. To help them feel that they're not alone.* (page 6, line 23-25)

201KW: *Y'know. As we meet people throughout our lives that we like and some that we don't like don't we?* (page 13, line 16-17)

201KW: *I haven't got to 53 without making many mist y'know without making any mistakes so.* (page 3, line 20-21)

201KW: *…people do not look back at the circumstances of why this child has got to this stage they're at.* (page 4, line 8-10)

202KW: *Err so generally kind of err feeling err for them just to show them that I know what they're feeling I can understand what they're going through.* (page 3, line 6-8)

202KW:	*It's you've gotta start off you've gotta understand young people you've gotta know what their thinking you've gotta know how you come across yourself with young people.* (page 15, line 2-5)

201KW:	*For me that ones a tough one because I had the same experiences as a child y'know... and I struggled greatly* (page 1, line 25 – page 2, line 1)

Subtheme 2: Whether a trusting relationship has been established

Trust was a particularly salient theme throughout the data and it became apparent there were two forms of trust. For this subtheme it was established trust within the relationship between the professional and the young person. Both KW recognised the key importance of this in working with YP and often referred to the time that it takes to develop this.

Illustrative Examples:

201 KW:	*I think trust with the majority of children that we work with. Is umm. Not there. That y'know and it takes a long time so I think that's a really big obstacle* (page 8, line 25-25, page 9 line1)

201 KW:	*It's one of the most difficult things is to get a child on board to trust you*. (page 11, line 23)

202KW:	*All them activities and the the work we've done with them built that trust.* (page 2, line 1-2)

202KW:	*Whereas in your circumstances you've got them from family intervention workers who probably don't have that relationship with them... probably don't have that y'know trust in 'em* (page 5, line 20-24)

Subtheme 3: The approach taken by professionals

Between the two KW numerous approaches were discussed and not just the approaches they had used personally. The KW both placed importance upon time and a gradual approach to getting to know YP. KW also drew on their own and past experiences to inform the approach they took in their professional interactions with YP.

Illustrative Examples:

202KW: *Er:r y'know where wh- what environment did you do it did you take it in the office. Young people already feels y'know too formal* (page 11, line 6-8)

201KW: *I've witnessed many many times umm social workers and I know they're under a stringent timescale and they've got to get things done. But it sets the family up to fail because they're bang bang bang this this this this within a certain period of time.* (page 1, line 7-10)

202KW: *but. I just sometimes I think err y'know err young people might be;e. Y'know kind of forced to do something whereas if it's voluntary. Err then it's more generally they're more interested in it…* (page 7, line 7-9)

Participant 202KW raised the interesting distinction between youth workers and FIT workers as he is new to role as a key worker and has also worked for the youth service. Interestingly whereas he noted that YP may not have the relationships they have with a youth worker, with a FIT worker (indicating the relationship was better with youth workers), 201KW compared the relationship YP have with FIT workers, as more positive, than the relationship with social workers, whom she described as having stringent timescales.

4.10.3 Encouraging YP to engage

Subtheme 4: Communication with YP to ensure understanding

A key barrier to engaging YP was identified by both KW, which was the fact that YP may find it very challenging to comprehend the purpose of research and what the point of a research project it. Additionally, the age or developmental stage of YP was also cited as a difficulty in communicating the necessary information about the research. YP potentially have more pressing engagements than a research study that is voluntary and they are possibly sceptical of.

Illustrative Examples:

202KW: *I would clearly identify who I am. Err and also tell 'em what my work is...*(page 1, line 9)

202KW: *Just about err showing who you really are what you're really there for err sho- te- showing them that err the reason I'm working with them is fo- for them to meet their needs.* (page 1, line 11-13)

201KW: *Are you going to take it and tell everybody what I've said and even through you've offered that reassurance that's not going to happen.*

202KW: *Firstly because obviously when I mean youth work is a voluntary environment the young people have come in there themselves...*

EJ: *Yeah*

202:     *...right so;o in that sense you've already got them...*

EJ: *Yeah*

202:     *...you've already got them coming to you. So whatever you generally portray and want to do they will. They will probably take part in it they will probably say yeah ok*

y'know. But whereas in your circumstances you've got them from family intervention workers who probably don't have that relationship with them… (page 5, line 12-22)

Subtheme 5: Ability of adult to establish a rapport to begin building trust

The ability to engage YP and quickly establish their trust is something both KW identify as a challenge. Both recognise that a preferable approach would be to be patient and build up the relationship steadily. Patience and consistency are deemed to be important as is doing what one says they will.

Illustrative Examples:

201 KW: *It's one of the most difficult things is to get a child on board to trust you. I I I really don't know what the golden. Answer is to it really. Persevering perseverance* (page 11, line 23-25)

202KW: *So for me to get the trust is firstly build that relationship with the young people first.* (page 3, line 8-9)

201KW: *I think it's just having that patience you've gotta step back you gotta judge whether the child's ready to speak to you. Um;m. Umm and doing it at their pace. You going rushing in I've witnessed many many times umm social workers and I know they're under a stringent timescale and they've got to get things done. But it sets the family up to fail because they're bang bang bang this this this this within a certain period of time. We do have time restrictions. Obviously. Umm but. Softly softly.* (page 1, line 5-11)

202KW: *Er;r. Y'know being truthful and honest with them as to why I'm working with them* (page 1, line 13-14)

202KW: *All them activities and the the work we've done with them built that trust and getting trust from young people is probably the the. The hardest thing err that one can do.* (page 2, line 1-3)

202KW: *When you target the leader of that so-called group. And you make friends with them and they they kind of. Err happy to work with you you get their trust. Then generally automatically the rest of the the young people in that group.* (page 2, line 8-11)

Subtheme 6: Value YP contribution

The key worker's both indicated that the participants needed to feel valued. The compensation for their time was important and some form of reward or recognition of their contribution would be beneficial. Encouraging YP to engage also required the professional to consider what they were asking of the YP. Interestingly 201KW in particular talked about the impact of YP sharing their story, and framed this as the YP giving away part of themselves.

202KW raised really interesting points about how the current project may have not communicated that the researcher valued YP's contribution by not giving them ownership, and concealing their identity due to arrangements made to ensure anominity.

Illustrative Examples:

201KW: *They just struggle to think oh I've gotta give you my life history again it must be very difficult.* (page 8, line 9-10)

202KW: *So with with with the funding that the youth services used to have. Err five years ago we could provide activities for them. So by us going out and trying to meet their needs. Err and taking them on an an taking them and getting them to experience activities that ne- that they've never done before such as*

paintballing which (stutters) and go karting and stuff like that. (page 1, line 20-25)

202KW: *say look I need to take part in this or at the end of it we'll reward you by such and such whatever the err young people wanted from that so if you give them some kind of reward after that err research err then maybe that would have helped…* (page 6, line 16-19)

202KW: *err y'know if they involved in something they want to take ownership of and they want to know they they've done something err positive…(*page 7, line 1-3)

202KW: *but then the confidentiality makes them feel like err in this subject anyway err. Why do I y'know why do I need to be. Y'know hidden away…* (Page 9, line 5-6)4.6.4

4.10.4 Discussion of Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis was considered appropriate as it was assumed that due to shared roles there was most likely some homogeneity of professional experience applicable to KW that could not be assumed of the YP who participated in the semi-structured interviews. The KW in fact had many differences due to their professional backgrounds and how long they had been in role. Despite this, evidence for both themes and subthemes can be drawn from the transcripts of both interviews. The thematic analysis of the KW data was carried out in order to answer two research questions. How do FIT KW think that engaging in research can be made more accessible to young people? And, what do the FIT KW perceive to be the most effective ways of engaging with and supporting young people?

The KW believed research would be more accessible to YP if YP had a better understanding of the concept. This required clear communication from a researcher, in a way that allowed

the parents to understand the research also. Linked to this was a further subtheme regarding building rapport with YP. Both KW agreed that YP need to feel that their contribution is valued. 202KW challenged the researchers ethical assumptions regarding anominity of YP who participate in research and questioned why, if a project was positive, the YP could not be named and allow them to take ownership of the project.

The most effective way to engage YP was understood by both KW to be different for different YP. This was conducive with the findings of Gregory and Purcell (2014) and advice from Thambirajah et al (2008). Key worker attitudes towards YP were positive and both emphasised the necessity to work with YP and try to understand their point of view (empathy) in order to forge a trusting relationship.

It would have been preferable to corroborate the findings with other KW, however the engagement with the research was limited to two KW. This is potentially a result of the time of year that the data collection took place, as it coincided with the end of the financial year and the FIT operate on a payment by results process, therefore at this time of year there are time and work pressures upon FIT workers to collate paperwork and evidence for the impact of their work.

4.11 Overall Research Project Discussion

The main challenges arising during the research were the critical reflections and judgements the researcher has had to make. Some of these, such as the decision not to offer compensation to YP who participated, may have been incorrect, should findings and reflections from KW data be accepted. Others have proved to be effective, such as submitting amendments to the ethics panel and collecting data with KW. Reflecting on the research process and the learning derived a difficulty had been mediating the dual role of trainee EP working on placement in a LA EPS and of researcher with emancipatory aspirations. Incongruence between government

policy under which it is necessary to operate as an agent of local government and the affinity with research that promotes social justice has been uncomfortable if not foretelling of an ongoing internal dissonance that will be experienced as a qualified EP.

The YP who participated were mature, reflective and provided thoughtful and considered answers to questions posed by the research. They were open to the use of PCP as a tool to reflect on their lived experience and sharde their views and perceptions. The frustration of working with YP who are not attending school consistently, described and anticipated by Kearney and Bensaheb (2006) was not experienced. Although it could be argued that professionals may describe feelings of frustration due to the initial eight, and later four YP who either lost interest, disengaged prior to meeting, or withdrew from the study. As a result of the underlying philosophy of the research frustration was unnecessary as the process could be responsive to what was observed in developing further research questions. The participation of YP in the research could be considered indicative of their vulnerability. Attrition of participants' interest was understandable when YP provided their reasons for discontinuation (which was neither required of them nor encouraged). Due to the personal nature of their reasons, and the withdrawal of their consent, this is not analysed or discussed as part of the project.

Contributing to the local offer was an important aim of the study. It seems that there could be a role for utilising PCP techniques to elicit the views of YP but further data is required prior to embedding this in practice. In terms of informing the work of professionals there is considerable learning to be derived from the study. It is apparent that providing protected time and space for YP to discuss, reflect on and share their experiences is valuable and necessary when seeking to understand their perspectives. The current study corroborates the finding that each YP's situation and experience is different (Gregory and Purcell, 2014). By promoting an approach that values and champions YP views and perspectives the concerning

practice observed by Lyon and Cotler (2007) of subjecting families experiencing poverty (or other difficult circumstances) to punishing interventions is actively discouraged.

The findings corroborate with that of Pilkington and Piersel (1999) in that YP identify factors external to the home environment as contributing to non-attendance. Pilkington and Piersel indicate that reference to family pathology is unnecessary in non-attendance research.

In informing professional practice key learning was also derived from working with KW who recognised the approach adults took to YP was very important. The codes identified through thematic analysis support the advice of Thambirajah et al (2008) who promote flexibility so as not to be bound by one approach.

There are numerous suggestions that have arisen from the findings that have the potential to decrease non-attendance, and perhaps prevent it occurring for other pupils. The participants were able to consider individual factors that have or could contribute to them attending school, such as understanding and supportive peers (301, 303 and 306) and teachers who are willing to provide after school tutoring and support for catching up on work (110). From the information that the participants shared, a sense of belonging to a group (306, 308) and having positive relationships (301, 303) emerged as highly important school factors. By building a sense of community in schools and encouraging positive peer relationships the potential for preventing non-attendance occurring may be improved. Garrison (2006) indicates that social interventions such as peer mentoring from older students and developing a trusting relationship with a key adult may prevent non-attendance. 301 did not feel that teachers could provide protection from pupils with negative intentions towards him, however 308 felt that the Head of Year in school could be supportive, and would be more so if he responded quicker when 308 was experiencing difficulty. A mentoring scheme may have a positive effect for some YP however this would need to be individualised. A less formal

techniques such as those suggested by Roffey, (2013) for improving sense of community in schools may have a more universal positive effect across the school population.

It was integral to the research that the emancipatory function of social science research was observed, and every effort was made to empower the participants providing them with as much autonomy as the semi-structured interview would allow (evidenced by the interview protocol in the appendix8). Despite these efforts there is the concern that there remained a power imbalance between researcher and participant, as the researcher asks the questions and the participants do not. To mediate the effects of this concern many strategies were put in place to address this such as checking back understanding, and building in opportunities for the YP to lead the activities and direct the researcher to areas they wished to explore.

4.12 The Limitations of Working with Vulnerable Groups

Working with young people who are considered vulnerable is important to empower and raise the profile of their lived experience as a means to accessing high quality support and interventions to meet needs (Gombert et al, 2015). The limitations of seeking to facilitate this outcome via the process of social science research are many, and experience throughout this research indicate that these limitations have significant consequences, particularly for participant recruitment and subsequent data collection. The limitations are considered here through evidence from the current study and reference to available literature on this subject.

The requirements of participants from vulnerable groups are often conflicting with the rigor and time pressures of academic research (Aldridge, 2014). An example of this is evident in the findings from semi-structured interviews with the KW who highlighted the benefits of building a relationship with YP before seeking to engage them in research. The time pressures of academic research and the necessary ethical considerations of building a relationship with YP solely for the purpose of research are barriers to achieving the necessary

balance to achieve the academic requirements and meet the needs of the vulnerable participants, as highlighted by Aldridge (2014). Gombert et al (2015) refer to building trust as one of four interrelated main themes in ethical dilemmas related to working with vulnerable young people. The note the necessity for trust to develop over time but highlights that often vulnerable YP have been let down frequently in the past and find it difficult to develop trust. Having developed a relationship with participants then having to leave at the conclusion of the research, or even in the explanation of the research to participants and informing them that the researcher will leave at the end of the project, is difficult for the researcher and often even more so for the participant (Halai, 2006). In the case of the current research, the impact of this may have been mediated by the consistent role of the KW, however this relies upon a positive relationship between individual YP and KW.

By classifying groups as vulnerable they are not necessarily protected further by research, and have effectively been stereotyped as a homogeneous group as a result of the application of specific terminology (Levine et al, 2004). This is potentially true of the current research in that by seeking to carry out research with YP who are supported by the FIT, YP feel de-individualised and stereotyped by the recognition in the research title and explanation of their belonging to a certain 'group'. Engaging vulnerable groups who may be considered 'marginalised' as a result of their behaviour or choices poses multiple challenges, a specific barrier being in power imbalance between researcher and participant, more so if the researcher is also a service professional (Smith, 2008). Smith's (2008) findings indicate that the fact the researcher works in the field of education may have been a specific barrier to engaging YP, who (by the nature of the target population) find the field of education difficult to engage with.

Chapter 5: Concluding Chapter

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5.1 Conclusion

It was evident from the literature review that the predominant approach to school non-attendance research was adult led, and reported adult perceptions. The most prevalent theoretical basis stemmed from the behavioural and the psychodynamic approaches. The behavioural model viewing school non-attendance as a response to stimuli presented. In the psychodynamic approach, mainly evident in historic literature, the family, particularly the mother's relationship with YP, is heavily criticised and positioned as a causal factor in non-attendance. Despite the emergence of literature that elicits the views of YP this was limited and only evident in more recent publications. The current study has sought to contribute to this further, championing the views of YP and sharing their perceptions. Participants' experiences differed significantly and this indicates the importance of treating YP as individuals, and giving each individual the opportunity to explore and share their views and perceptions.

The YP who participated both stated that social relationships were significant factors in their school experience and attendance; however this was experienced very differently by each participant. Both participants valued education and were aware of the necessity of school, education and qualifications to achieve their desired future. Both participants recognised there were challenges in returning to school however these challenges differed for the participants. For 109 the challenges were around how peers may respond and questions he may be asked, however despite peer relationships being a factor in non-attendance for 110, the main challenge she discussed in returning to school was the work that she had missed and having to catch up.

PCP techniques utilised in the interviews proved efficient tools in eliciting the views of YP as rich data was gathered. The YP recognised that the interview allowed them to express their views and 109 felt that it was better than the SRAS as he could provide a lot more information and the SRAS did not allow for this. 110 felt that the interview and SRAS were as good as each other at getting her views. This is interesting as 110 found that the SRAS more accurately indicated what was underlying her non-attendance whereas it was not able to do so for 109.

Challenges maintaining YP engagement in the research and high withdrawal was indicative of the research being experienced as inaccessible to YP in the target population. Further exploration of this with KW indicated that there were numerous potential explanations for this that fell under two key themes, encouraging YP to engage, and working with and supporting YP. It was considered that time to establish trust and build rapport with YP was very important. Additionally a shared theme across both of the key worker interviews was the necessity of valuing the contribution that YP make. This was identified differently by the two KW; 201 who identified YP's loss of part of themselves when sharing their story. 202 identified that provision of enjoyable activities as rewards may communicate to YP that their contribution has been valued. Furthermore 202 identified that some of the formalities of research such as confidentiality and anominity may discourage YP from engaging in research as they do not receive the recognition they deserve for doing so.

The KW indicated that the most effective ways of working with YP and providing support were dependant on three key areas; professionals' ability to empathise with the YP, the approach taken by professionals and whether or not a trusting relationship is established with YP.

5.2 Critique of Methodology

The small samples in the study, of both KW and YP limits the generalisability of the research. Although this was not something the research aimed to achieve, further data would have provided a more significant contribution to the wider body of research on school non-attendance. The methodology could account for the challenges in obtaining a larger sample in a number of ways. In utilising KW to meet with YP and discuss the research an initial barrier to their engagement may have been the relationship between key worker and YP. Furthermore the limited sample of KW is potentially indicative of them not valuing the research and therefore this may impact on the way the research was conveyed to participants. Alternatively the poor sign up from KW could be attributed to the timing of the data collection with them that took place near the end of the tax year when the KW priority was collating evidence for the payment by results system in which they work.

Building relationships with YP was identified by KW as necessary to engage with them however in the context of research this is challenging as the relationship is temporary. The context in which YP live is challenging and they often experience many demands placed upon them, thus it is understandable that engaging in research may not be a priority for YP. Arguably, the methodology failed to recognise the extent of this and could have been more effective at engaging participants if it recognised their contribution to the project through offering some form of compensation for their time such as gift vouchers. This was something that was considered and it was decided that providing compensation would be coercive and could be construed as bribery.

The design utilised, although effective had numerous limitations. The use of semi-structured interviews with YP was time consuming; this may have resulted in fatigue effects towards the end. Moreover, the use of PCP was a valuable tool for eliciting YP views and evoking

reflection, however this is potentially quite intrusive for YP. The demand on YP is high and the openness with which they approached the research was not matched by the researcher and the relationship is not maintained. In spite of feelings of discomfort it is important for the researcher to consider whether the research has done to rather than done with as intended. The protective factors mediating this are the KW involved in supporting YP who receive a brief overview of information YP felt it would be useful to share with them from the interview.

In the analysis of data the researcher was mindful of the potential to impose personal views and values. Attempts were made to ensure this with YP data as it was reported verbatim as the YP had communicated their understanding to try to ensure accurate representation of their views. Some commonality was assumed between KW as they shared their role and the focus of the interview was on aspects of this role, for this reason thematic analysis was felt appropriate. Thematic analysis is subjective and has received criticism for allowing for naïve readings that fail to recognise underlying discourse (Roulston, 2001). In an attempt to counteract these criticisms the thematic analysis was conducted according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) protocol that provides structure and more rigor than previous procedures suggested.

5.3 Reflections on Epistemological Position

CR epistemology has not only supported the research process but driven it. The recognition that research questions are unlikely to be decided and set at the beginning of a project, but rather evolve alongside the project was entirely appropriate and supportive in the current study. This allowed the researcher to be responsive and take appropriate action to ensure that despite challenges in engaging the initial target population, there was still scope to make a positive contribution to the field of school non-attendance.

Accepting the participant's reality as they communicated it through the exploration of their constructs alongside the researcher led to keen academic debate regarding the true philosophy of the research. The researcher certain that the stance taken was CR, despite interesting challenge posed regarding whether the methodology was more typical of a constructivist stance. The understanding the PCP techniques have been employed as a tool to support YP to reflect and determine their own understanding of the phenomena to share with the researcher as they choose is a necessary distinction from research that uses PCP in a purer form and constructivist approach.

5.4 Implications for Future Research

Future research can benefit from the learning derived from this study in numerous ways. The experience of the researcher and the findings should evoke critical reflection on the necessary ethical considerations required of social science research. In particular; whether YP will be compensated for their time, how the researcher approaches participants, establishes rapport, and communicates an understanding of the research and the relationship that is established between researcher and YP.

Ideally this research further promotes the necessity for truly emancipatory research that is YP lead and informed by their aims and objectives. Research for YP carried out by YP where the researcher is a facilitator has its own challenges, such as whether or not YP must remain anonymous or whether there is scope for them to use their names, however this research highlights the importance of embracing and considering these challenges rather than taking the safer option.

5.5 Concluding Comments

This research project has been a rich learning experience and endeavours to communicate both the knowledge derived from this process but also the ethos of the research to the

professionals working with YP who do not consistently attend. The study aimed to contribute to the field in numerous ways, including; informing professional practice, contributing to the local offer, and fulfilling the emancipatory function of social science research.

Both the process of data gathering and the findings of the research indicate the absolute importance of empowering YP to have a voice and both valuing and listening to what they choose to communicate. It is clear that this is absolutely vital when working with YP who are not attending school, or finding attendance at school challenging.

The project has inspired curiosity and determination to pursue true emancipatory research and engage in research alongside YP that is entirely driven by their interests and what they wish to research. It is clear that this will present significant challenges however these challenges are worthwhile challenges and evidently will be learning experiences in themselves.

References and Appendix

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Appendix

Appendix 1   Additional information regarding Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

Full informed consent was obtained in line with guidelines from the British Psychology Society (BPS, 2010), the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and the University of Birmingham code of practice for research.

Prior to completing the SRAS participants and their parents were given an information leaflets about the research and consent forms (participants – separate forms for SRAS and interview, parent consent form to cover whole research project). The researcher offered to go through the information sheet verbally with all parents to ensure full comprehension prior to signing consent.

The information leaflets contained all ethical details of the project, to include; participant's right to withdraw, confidentiality and limits of confidentiality, anonymity, note-making, data storage and informed voluntary consent.

Prior to participating in the interview participants were asked if they understood the project and were given the opportunity to ask questions. Once all questions were answered and participants signed consent form they were considered eligible to participate.

Right to Withdraw

Parent and Pupil Information and Consent Forms covered the participant's right to withdraw (British Psychological Society ethical guidelines (1.4, 2009) and BERA ethical guidelines (15, 2011). This was verbally explained at the beginning of each one-to-one session with each participant, (BPS ethical guidelines (2009,1.4) and BERA ethical guidelines (2011,15) with the Pupil Information and Consent forms used as visual support where necessary.

Participants were given the opportunity to have an opt out card which could use if they did not feel comfortable verbally requesting a break or to withdraw, both felt they did not require this. Participants were given the option not to answer individual questions but continue to participate in the research if they choose to do so.

When participants exercised their right to withdraw any data held was destroyed. No further direct contact between researcher and participant was made, however the participant's right to a debrief was communicated to KW following participant withdrawal and they made this clear to participants.

The Participants will receive a letter of thanks for participating in the research, an overview of the research findings and brief coverage of the implications of the findings.

Participants were given 5 working days from completion of the SRAS questionnaire, to withdraw it, before the scales were totalled and the functional category was identified. They could withdraw the questionnaire data at the same time as if they had requested to withdraw their data from the 1:1 interview. The participants were informed that from 10 working days

following their 1:1 interview they will no longer be able to withdraw their data as it was encoded to prevent identification.

Anonymity

The only way of identifying participants is through the participant key, of which there is only one copy, which was kept locked and secure away from any data collection or identifying documentation for the duration of the research and then destroyed.

Confidentiality

Participants are not identified by name anywhere other than the participant key. In all other recording the participants are assigned a code.

The interview took place in the participants' homes as this is what they requested. Both participants were given other more private options but both preferred their own home. The interview was recorded using a dictaphone and transcribed, however any names mentioned by the participants were omitted during the transcription. Following the transcription dictaphone recordings were erased.

Participants were advised that when they consented and participated in the questionnaire (SRAS) the participant code on the questionnaire was linked to their name and contact details on the securely held participant key. These details were used to contact participants to invite them to attend a 1:1 interview with the researcher. The interview data shared the same participant code and participants could therefore still be identified using the participant key. This was the case for 10 working days following the interview, at which point the participant key was destroyed and no link can be made between the data and individual participants.

Researcher/Participant relationship

Due to the collaborative nature of elicitation techniques in personal construct psychology it is considered that this can be a helpful foundation for building rapport and the beginnings of a therapeutic relationship with a young person who, through should feel listened to, valued and heard (Butler and Green, 2007). The ethical implications of this for a time limited research project when the researcher involvement does not extend outside of the study, clearly requires careful consideration and management. The proposed resolution to the prevent this having a negative impact is allowing the participants to identify if there is anything that arises during the interview that they wish to follow up and the researcher signposting to supportive websites, resources and organisations. The participants may also request that certain information is passed on to their key worker by the researcher and discussed for following up in their work together.

Data Storage

Data was kept and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003). The researcher carried out the information governance training, required of all staff, within the LA in which the research took place.

Any data recorded by hand (note making) used only the participant code as an identifier.

The memory stick containing the transcriptions along with any hand-written notes and Dictaphone were kept in a locked filing cabinet (along with the signed consent forms) in line with the LA Policies.

Dictaphone recordings were transcribed and then deleted. Transcriptions are kept in a secure university system and kept for ten years at which point they will be erased along with the hand written notes shredded. During the ten years only the Researcher, Course Director and Examiners have access to the data.

Risk to Participants

• Participants may become anxious or distressed as a result of talking about emotive subjects such as the barriers they face in attending school or negative experiences related to school. Due to the researcher being a trainee Educational Psychologist, indicators of anxiety or distress will be picked up early and the interview ceased or paused depending on participants preferences.

• The researcher is trained in safeguarding and the appropriate way to deal with disclosure. Should the researcher have any concerns regarding the participants wellbeing they will signpost the participant to where they can access further support, and decide with them an appropriate way to discuss with the participant's parents the researcher's concerns for the individual's wellbeing. Participants will be informed of LA safeguarding procedures prior to the interview and if a disclosure is made it will be handled in line with LA policy and procedure.

• Contact details for the researcher was on all literature provided to both participants and parents. All participants received a debrief following the interview (this is detailed in the semi structured interview crib sheet found in Appendix).

• Information for participants covered their right to withdrawal.

• Participants need to have the right to not answer questions that make them feel uncomfortable. They also need to be aware that they have the right to request the recording is stopped but to continue to discuss issues if they feel they need to.

Researcher

The researcher was considered to be at a low level of risk should participants become distressed or angry. The risk of participants becoming violent was assessed on a participant by participant basis. Participants were not placed under any pressure or duress during the research and were made aware that they were free to leave at any time. The arrangement of the interview room was thought through so that it allowed for both the participant and the researcher to exit safely, without obstacles in their way.

Appendix 2   Prezi presentation to KW in FIT regarding research context and design
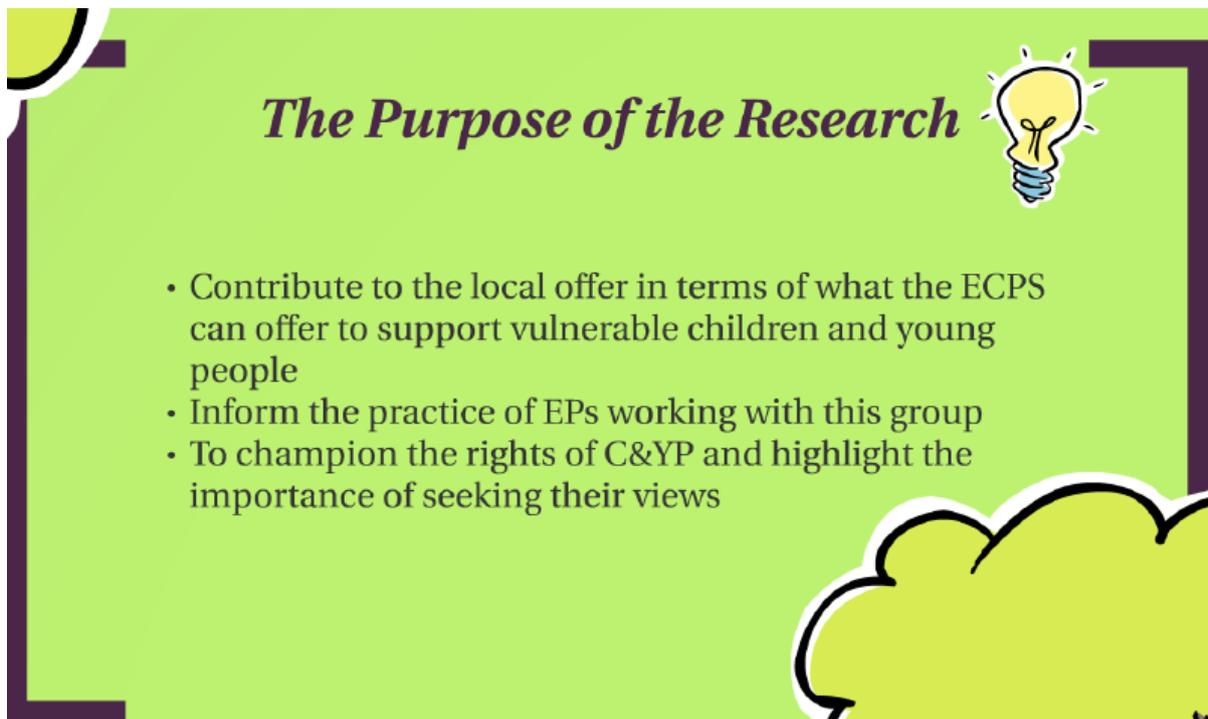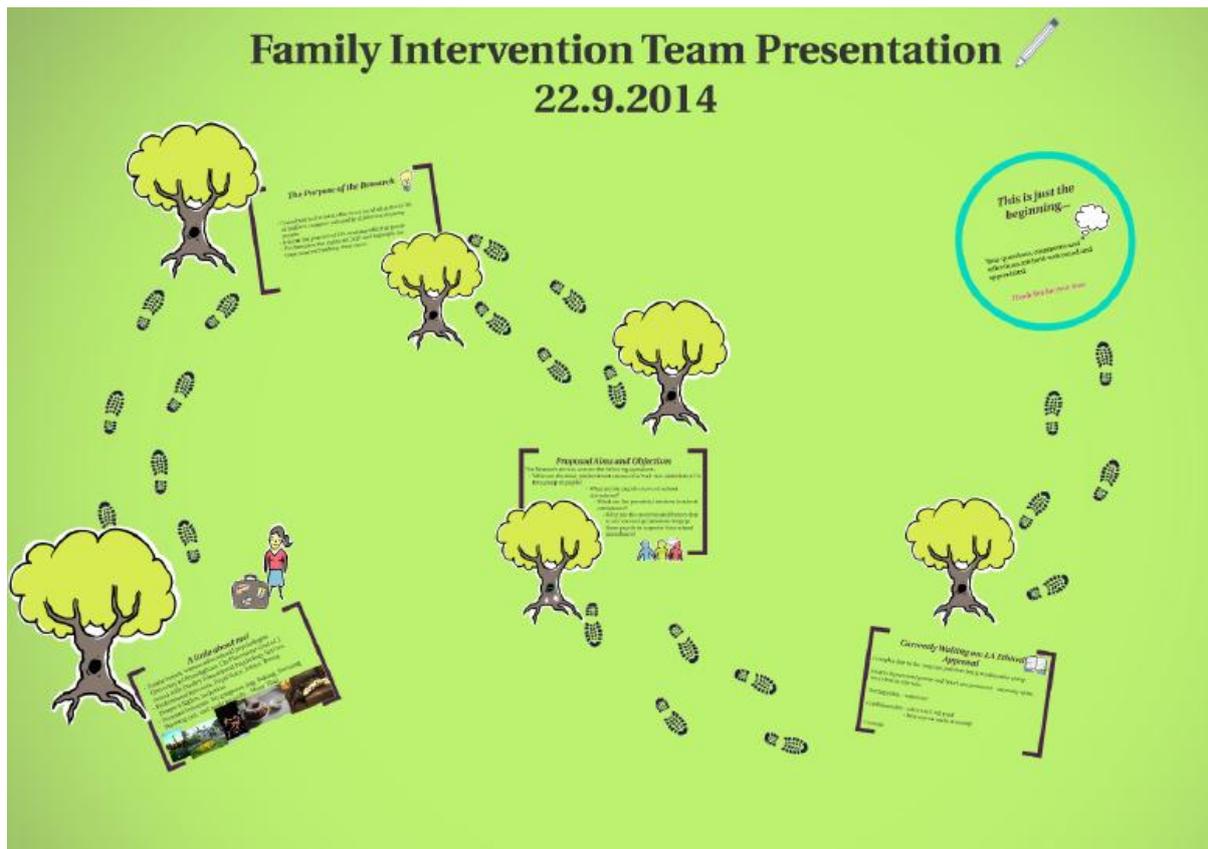
Proposed Aims and Objectives

The Research aims to answer the following questions;

- What are the most predominant causes of school non-attendance for this group of pupils?
    - What are the pupil's views on school attendance?
        - What are the perceived barriers to school attendance?
            - What are the motivational factors that could encourage/promote/engage these pupils to improve their school attendance?

Method

- 24 item questionnaire (SRAS) Kearney (2002) - Quantitative data.

- 1:1 interview - Qualitative data - using personal construct psychology
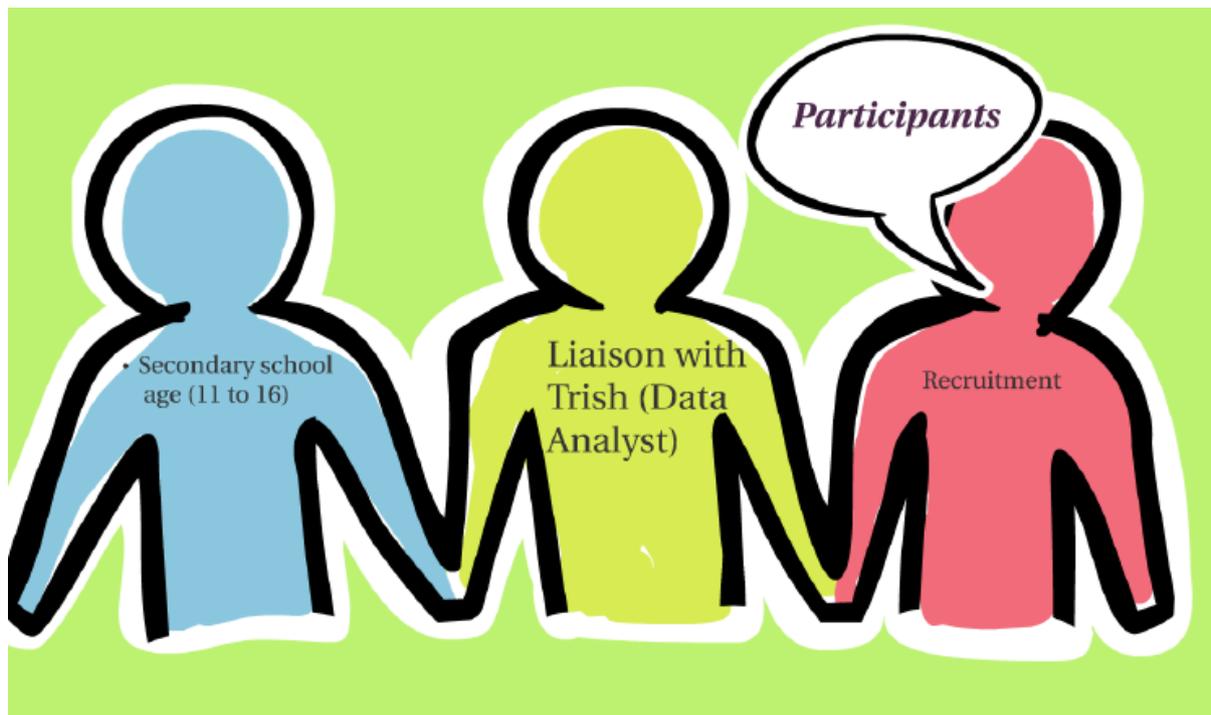
Currently Waiting on: LA Ethical Approval

Complex due to the target population being a vulnerable group

Issues of perceived power and how I am perceived - necessity to be very clear on my role.

Participation - voluntary

Confidentiality - what can I tell you?
- how can we make it useful?

Consent

Overcoming barriers...

• Careful thought and consideration will need to go into the participant information - this is ongoing.

As professionals working with this group you already have a positive relationship with prospective participants.

Participants may wish for you to accompany them or to come into the interview room with them

This is just the beginning...

Your questions, comments and reflections are both welcomed and appreciated.

Thank You for your time

Appendix 3: Parent Information for prospective YP participants from families supported by FIT

Parent Information

Young people's views on school attendance

BACK PANEL HEADING

If you are happy for your child to participate in this project, please read and sign the attached consent form and return it.

Your key worker from the Family Intervention Team will be happy to go through this information with you.

Emma James
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Phone Emma:

The project email will be checked weekly and your email address will not be saved. If you wish to get an immediate response please phone Emma on the number above. The project email address will no longer be checked after June 2015.

If you wish to contact the Project Supervisor, details are below;

Nick Bozic (Supervisor)
Professional and Academic Tutor
University of Birmingham
Email: n.m.bozic@bham.ac.uk

Refreshments will be available to participants throughout the data collection

Emma James - Post-graduate Research Project

The Project

Chancellors Court, University Birmingham

Hello and Thank You for taking your time to read this information.

My name is Emma James, I am currently studying at the University of Birmingham and on placement with Dudley Educational Psychology Service.

I am carrying out a research project as part of my studies. This project aims to reach out to young people of secondary school age and give them a voice.

This project aims to give your child the opportunity to express their views about school attendance and how schools could work better for them.

Reassurances

I will not contact your child, without your consent.

If you do not wish for your child to participate they do not have to.

If you give your consent participate and either you, or your child changes their mind, they have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

Should your child withdraw from the project they have the right to a debrief with me up to 3 working days following their decision at a time convenient to them following this there will be no further contact made directly with them, by me.

Should your child withdraw from the project they can also choose to have any data they have provided, removed up to 10 days following data collection.

They have the right to continue to participate in the research but refuse/withdraw from answering certain questions without providing an explanation.

If your child wishes to participate

The project will take roughly 20 minutes of their time to go through a questionnaire with Emma.

This questionnaire hopes to understand the reason why they are not attending school. The Questionnaire is called The School Refusal Assessment Scale and used by Educational Psychologist's in their practice.

Following this stage of the research, some participants will be invited to attend an interview with me (Emma). You shall receive further information regarding the content of the interview, and a further consent form to sign.

Following the completion of the questionnaire your child will receive a letter thanking them for their participation. Should your child be invited to an interview this letter will be accompanied by the information and consent form for the interview and you shall also be contacted with further information and a further consent form.

Should you wish to discuss any of the information or have any queries through out the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James,

Project Supervisor: Nick Bozic, Professional and Academic Supervisor, University of Birmingham.
n.m.bozic@bham.ac.uk

Appendix 4   YP Information for YP from families supported by FIT

Participant Information

Your views on school attendance

Emma James - Post-graduate Research Project

WHAT NEXT?

If you are happy to participate in this project, please read and sign the attached consent form and return it.

Your key worker from the Family Intervention Team will be happy to go through this information with you.

Refreshments will be available throughout the data collection

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BUZZ PROJECT

Emma James
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Phone Emma:

The project email will be checked weekly and your email address will not be saved. If you wish to get an immediate response please phone Emma on the number above. The project email address will no longer be checked after June 2015.

If you wish to contact the Project Supervisor, details are below;

Nick Bozic (Supervisor)
Professional and Academic Tutor
University of Birmingham
Email: n.m.bozic@bham.ac.uk

The Project

Hello!

This is me!

Hello and Thank You for taking your time to read this information.

My name is Emma James, I am currently studying at the University of Birmingham and on placement with Dudley Educational Psychology Service.

I am carrying out a research project as part of my studies. This project aims to reach out to young people of secondary school age and give them a chance to talk about things that make it difficult to go to school. It will also allow us to think about how school could be improved to make it easier for young people to go to school.

This project aims to give your child the opportunity to express their views about school attendance and how schools could work better for them.

Reassurances

- I will not contact your, without your consent.
- You do not have to take part
- If you change your mind, you have the right to withdraw from (leave) the project at any time.
- If you withdraw you have the right to a debrief with me up to 3 working days following your decision. Following this there will be no further contact made by me.
- Should you withdraw from the project you can also choose to have any data provided, removed up to 10 days following data collection.
- You have the right to continue to participate in the research but refuse to answering certain questions without providing an explanation.

If you wish to participate

The first part of the project will take roughly 20 minutes.

You will complete a questionnaire with me (Emma).

This questionnaire hopes to understand the reason why you are not attending school.

The Questionnaire is called The School Refusal Assessment Scale.

Following this stage of the research, some participants will be invited to attend an interview with me (Emma).

If you want to come to the next bit of the project you shall receive further information regarding what we will be doing, and a further consent form to sign.

Following the completion of the questionnaire you will receive a letter thanking you for taking part.

If you are invited to an interview the thank you letter will be accompanied by the information and consent form for the interview and your parents shall also be contacted with further information and a further consent form for them to sign.

To participate your parents have to agree that it is OK for you to do so.

Should you wish to discuss any of the information or have any queries through out the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James,

Trainee Educational Psychologist:

and
Academic Supervisor, University of Birmingham.
n.m.bozic@bham.ac.uk

Appendix 5   Consent form for Parents of YP (participants supported by FIT)

Parent Consent Form

I (your name)_____ , mother/father (delete as appropriate) to _____ (Child's name)
have read and understood the information regarding the research.

(Please tick appropriate boxes)

☐   I give my consent for my child to participate in the research.

☐   I do not give my consent—I do not wish for my child to participate in the research

I am aware that my child may withdraw from the research at any time. I also understand that the data my child provides will
be treated confidentially and they will not be identifiable in the writing up of the research.

Signed:	Date:

Should you wish to discuss any information provided or have any queries through out the research project please do not
hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist: 01384 814359 or via Email: BuzzProject@outlook.com *

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

*Please note this email address is monitored by project supervisors and content audited regularly. Email addresses will not
be stored and other than in reply to your email you will not be contacted using your email address, unless you specify other-
wise.

Appendix 6

Consent Form—Questionnaire

I (your name)_____ have read and understood the information regarding the research.

(Please tick the statements you agree with)

☐   I wish to take part in the research.

☐   I understand that I do not have to take part and I am doing so because it is my choice to

☐   I am aware that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

☐   I understand that the data I provide will be treated confidentially and I will not be identifiable in the writing up of the research.

Signed:	Date:

Should you wish to discuss any information provided or have any queries through out the research project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Please note this email address is monitored by project supervisors and content audited regularly. Email addresses will not be stored and other than in reply to your email you will not be contacted using your email address, unless you specify other-wise.

Consent Form—Interview

I (insert name) _____ have read an understood the information regarding the interview.

(Please tick the statements you agree with)

- [ ] I wish to take part in the interview section of the research.

- [ ] I understand that I do not have to take part and I am doing so because it is my choice to do so

- [ ] I am aware that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

- [ ] I understand that the data I provide will be treated confidentially and I will not be identifiable in the writing up of the research. The interview will be recorded on a Dictaphone then written down. The recording will be deleted.

Signed:	Date:

Should you wish to discuss any information provided or have any queries through out the research project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Please note this email address is monitored by project supervisors and content audited regularly. Email addresses will not be stored and other than in reply to your email you will not be contacted using your email address, unless you specify otherwise.

Appendix 7

SCHOOL REFUSAL ASSESSMENT SCALE-REVISED (C)

Children sometimes have different reasons for not going to school. Some children feel badly at school, some have trouble with other people, some just want to be with their family, and others like to do things more fun outside of school.

This form asks questions about why you don't want to go to school. For each question, pick one number that describes you best for the last few days. After you answer one question, go on to the next. Don't skip any questions.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just pick the number that best fits the way you feel about going to school. Circle the number.

Here is an example of how it works. Try it. Circle the number that describes you best.

Example:

How often do you like to go shopping?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Now go to the next page and begin to answer the questions.

SCHOOL REFUSAL ASSESSMENT SCALE-REVISED (C)

Name: _____

Age: _____

Date: _____

Please circle the answer that best fits the following questions:

1. How often do you have bad feelings about going to school because you are afraid of something related to school (for example, tests, school bus, teacher, fire alarm)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. How often do you stay away from school because it is hard to speak with the other kids at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. How often do you feel you would rather be with your parents than go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. When you are not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how often do you leave the house and do something fun?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. How often do you stay away from school because you will feel sad or depressed if you go?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. How often do you stay away from school because you feel embarrassed in front of other people at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. How often do you think about your parents or family when in school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. When you are not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how often do you talk to or see other people (other than your family)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. How often do you feel worse at school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) compared to how you feel at home with friends?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. How often do you stay away from school because you do not have many friends there?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

11. How much would you rather be with your family than go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

12. When you are not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how much do you enjoy doing different things (for example, being with friends, going places)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

13. How often do you have bad feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) when you think about school on Saturday and Sunday?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. How often do you stay away from certain places in school (e.g., hallways, places where certain groups of people are) where you would have to talk to someone?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. How much would you rather be taught by your parents at home than by your teacher at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

16. How often do you refuse to go to school because you want to have fun outside of school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

17. If you had less bad feelings (for example, scared, nervous, sad) about school, would it be easier for you to go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. If it were easier for you to make new friends, would it be easier for you to go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

19. Would it be easier for you to go to school if your parents went with you?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

20. Would it be easier for you to go to school if you could do more things you like to do after school hours (for example, being with friends)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

21. How much more do you have bad feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) compared to other kids your age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

22. How often do you stay away from people at school compared to other kids your age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

23. Would you like to be home with your parents more than other kids your age would?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

24. Would you rather be doing fun things outside of school more than most kids your age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Do not write below this line

---

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____
5. _____	6. _____	7. _____	8. _____
9. _____	10. _____	11. _____	12. _____
13. _____	14. _____	15. _____	16. _____
17. _____	18. _____	19. _____	20. _____
21. _____	22. _____	23. _____	24. _____

Total
Score = _____   _____   _____   _____

Mean
Score = _____   _____   _____   _____

Relative
Ranking
= _____   _____   _____   _____

Appendix 8
Revised Semi Structured Interview Schedule:

- Welcome/Introductions (to inc. health and safety – fire exits, nearest telephone, nearest responsible adult, where to access refreshments and toilets etc.
- Informed Consent discussed to include right to withdraw and procedure should the participant withdraw.
- Explanation of the purpose of the interview:-
    1. Is there an underlying "cause" for non-attendance at school or is this a case of adults theory and not the young person's own understanding of the situation?
    2. How do they construe school and school attendance?
    3. How can Personal Construct Psychology be used to support YP to consider how they construe the world, and what impact this has on how able they feel to access education?
    4. How do YP want professionals and services, to interact with and support them?
- Triadic elicitation will be used to identify the constructs that the participant has regarding attendance at school.
    - Participant lists features of their life, with a cue to include school, education etc. in this, (things they like/dislike/specific physical features/environmental factors/human factors) each feature on a separate flashcard.
    - Three cards will be selected at random and presented to the participant. The participant is asked to identify something that applies to two of the cards but not the third – This identifies the poles of the bi-polar constructs that the technique seeks to elicit and by doing so hopes to contribute knowledge and understanding to the discussion of research questions 2 and 3.
    - For example: "intimidating" --- "safe"
    - The process of selecting three cards at random is repeated until the same poles of constructs are being identified.
    - The bipolar constructs are recorded on blank pieces of paper, of portrait orientation, and then laddering is used.
- Laddering aims to elicit higher order constructs (Butler and Green, 2007).
    - Laddering begins by asking the participant to identify which is the preferred pole.
    - Fransella and Dalton (1990) then suggest that laddering is the use of a series of "Why" questions used to elicit the core constructs, however Butler and Green (2007) propose that YP may experience this as accusatory and therefore promote the use of questions such as "How come this is important to you?"
    - The poles of the construct are explored being mindful of how the "Why" questions are posed and recorded on the paper in a hierarchical fashion.

- When there is no longer a "higher importance" that can be established or a response becomes repetitive it can be considered that the "core construct" has been elicited.

The use of a Reparatory Grid following Laddering to look at "How could we move some things to make school a better place for you" was considered, however upon further reading and research it seems that a reparatory grid relies more upon the researcher analysing which constructs cluster together (Butler and Green, 2007) and a move away from the focus on joint working between researcher and participant.

To remove the necessity for the researcher to analyse the grid and to maintain the ethos of the research project which is to empower the participant and recognise them as the expert on their life, a simplified version of the reparatory grid has been considered:

- The participant takes the original flashcards in their hand so they have the features of their life (including school) that they used in the triadic elicitation.
- On a piece of paper the core constructs elicited through the laddering are written out…

Construct 1	Construct 2	Construct 3	Construct 4	Construct 5

- Under each construct the features of their life written on the flashcards are ranked.

- For example if the construct was "safe" the question posed could be "which feature of your life allows you to feel most safe?" and this feature would be put directly underneath the construct. Then the participant would be asked to consider which feature they felt next most safe in, and this would continue until all the features were ranked.
- Once the grid is complete the participant can choose which construct and ranking they would like to explore.
- The participant is asked to compare where they have ranked features of life that relate to school to where they have ranked features of life that don't relate to school – this informs the discussion about what could make the features of school rank higher so they were closer to the participants core constructs.

- Explicitly discuss with the participant whether they think that the position the features of school are ranked under their core constructs is something that has affected how able they feel to attend school.
- Establish how participants would (if at all) like things to change so that they felt more able to attend school or access education. Who would they like to help them with this? Services? Professionals? Schools staff?
- Remind the participant of the questionnaire they completed during the first meeting with the researcher (SRAS). Go through what the results indicated. Ask the participant whether they think is accurate, whether it as useful, more useful or less useful that the work we have done together today.
- Thank participant for their time
- Explain what you will do with the data and what further contact they will have from you as part of the debrief. Include the expected findings and reiterate how the findings will be used. Point out contact details on literature provided.
- Allow the participant to ask any questions, to request any further support and be prepared to signpost them to further services or support if necessary. The young person should be reminded of their right to confidentiality but have it explained that if they feel it would be helpful to them to be supported to feedback to a trusted and responsible adult (parent/key worker) about anything that arose in the interview, then it is their right to request this of the researcher.
- Act upon preferences of Participant.
- Close the Interview

Appendix 9

Information to KW

Dear *Key Worker Name*,

Many Thanks for your support of the project so far. Unfortunately it has been very difficult to engage young people in the research and those who have engaged, have withdrawn their consent at a later date. In light of this, a further research question has been constructed to explore Key Worker perceptions of the barriers young people face to engaging in research and how this process might be made more accessible.

I would like to invite you to meet with me and participate in a semi-structured interview, this should take no longer than 45 minutes of your time. I am able to come and meet you at a time and location convenient to you.

We will not discuss any individual young people in the interview and the focus will be on your experiences of working with young people in your current role. You have the right to withdraw at any time during the interview and will be entitled to a break if necessary. You will have three days following the interview to change your mind and withdraw the data before it is analysed.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or comments about the research please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Emma James

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 10

<u>Key Worker Interview: Informed consent</u>

- Study
- Research Question
- Expected Findings
- Confidentiality
- Anominity
- Data Storage
- Right to Withdraw
- Debrief
- Safeguard from emotional distress/harm
- Signpost

<u>Key Worker Interview</u>

<u>Consent Form</u>

I _____ agree to participate in a semi-structured interview with Emma James, Doctoral Research Student at the University of Birmingham.

(please tick the following statements if you agree)

☐ I am willing to participate in the research and understand that I have the choice to do so.

☐ I understand that I have the right to decline to answer a question if I wish, without giving my reasons, but continue the interview.

☐ I understand that I am able to stop and leave the interview at any time of I so wish, and I do not have to provide an explanation for doing so

☐ I understand that I have 3 working days from the date of the interview to withdraw any of my comments or all of the data I provide.

☐ I am aware that I will be given anominity by the researcher through either changing or omitting my name and any identifiable geographical or named references I use in the interview.

☐ I am aware that confidentiality is limited due to the necessity for the researcher to report the findings, however I can identify specific comments or phrases that I do not wish to be included if I wish to do so, on the day of the interview.

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix 11: Key Worker interview schedule

<u>Key Worker Interview Schedule</u>

KW will be informed that they must not discuss any personal information or details regarding the young people or families they support.

KW are reassured that they will be anonymous.

KW have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time. They can have 3 working days to change their mind after data collection prior to data analysis so that their data can be removed if they wish.

Three questions to cover;

1. What do you think has helped you to build a professional relationship with young people in the target population and encourage them to engage with you?

2. What could I have done differently that may have made it easier for young people to feel able to engage in the research?

3. What do you feel the barriers are that these young people experience to engaging in research?

Appendix 12: Extracts from transcripts for each participant

Extracts from the transcripts are provided to demonstrate transcription of data, however full data sets are not provided in agreement with participants to protect their anominity.

109YP

EJ: yea. Yep. So. What I'm going to do (shuffling of paper) is shuffle them and just at random I'm going to pass you 3 at a time so you'll end up with 3 cards and I'd like you t tell me something that links u/thut would link 2 of them but would leave the third one out. So;o. does that make. Does that make sense? Um kay.

109:   yea

EJ: so if I take 3 at random… 1…2..3… if I take 3 at random that gives you;u not getting up till 3pm. Didn't like where you were living at the time (hhh) and didn't like thinking about the future what you were gonna do. Would you be able to tell me something that 2 of/links 2 of those and leaves the other as sort of an odd one out?

109:   these two (shows EJ cards) cos like. I was staying in bed till 3. An then going outside, well, most days and like… wull it was. It was like. Kind of with a/ to distract me from thinking about school

EJ: Oka;ay so distraction from school…

109: Cos I didn't like thinkin that I was gonna do nothing

EJ: so those two were re/a distraction from school an;nd the otherside of that would be;;e

109: (pauses) I dunno

EJ: not.not a distraction? Or would it be something that makes you think about school or would it be;e

109: erm. Where im gonna be. Like. Well it kind a makes er makes me wanna go to school cos theres a lorra people round ere tha don't do much so live of benefits an thamore jus like (moody) an stuff an I didn't wanna be like that.

EJ: right. So. Um. Not wanting to… not wanting to be like the other people…or… yea…

109:   yea

EJ: will that…

109:        well I just didn't wanna end up as like one o the. Well like one of the people that live off/ that live round here just claim benefits and just do nothing

EJ: Ok. So if the work was easier there wouldn't be a mess you wouldn't have to scribble it out. What's good about that.

110:    Umm. I wouldn't be mad.

EJ: Ok. And. Why's it important not to be mad.

110:    I dunno. Dunno.

EJ: Not sure. So. If yo- if you weren't mad how and and there wasn't a mess how would you feel about it do you think.

110:    Umm I wouldn't be as frustrated. And. I'd be able to get on with the work.

EJ: Ah that's really interesting. And how would being able to get on with the work help you.

110:    Cus then. I'd be able to know more things like. Umm. The teachers wouldn't bug me about getting it wrong.

EJ: You'd be able to know more things the teachers wouldn't bug you. And how would that be important to you.

110:    Umm. Cus the teachers just. Umm the teachers I dunno.

EJ: How would being able to know more things help you.

110:    With my GCSEs.

EJ: Oh right ok definitely.

110:    And getting a good job.

EJ: Right ok. So GCSEs. Getting a good job. What. Why's getting a good job important. How.

110:    Cus I get more money.

EJ: Yeah. And how's that going to help you.

110:    Umm get houses. Umm be able to. Dunno. Umm if I have kids then make their lifes more easier. And umm instead of being on benefits.

EJ: Yeah ok. So all of these all of these al- all of these things sort of surmount to you umm having the money and the ability to have a a good having a good job will enable you to have money and then you'll have your kids will have an easier life and you'll have a house and those are the things that are really important aren't they. Brilliant thank you I think tha- that makes a lot of sense. Does that make sense to you.

110:    Yeah.

303 YP

EJ: So the 1st activity as we said is these little pieces of card and what we are going to write on them is whatever you want to write on them to do with your life Monday to Friday between school hours so what that like 9 till 3ish

303:    Err 10 to err 8.25oh right quite early to 10 to 3

EJ: Ok so and it could be on days that you have felt able to go to school or days that you have not been able to go to school or it could be on days when you have gone in for a little bit or at home so it's things that you like about school, things that you don't like, things that worry you when you are at home, things that you're doing at home or at school; anything you can think of and we are just gonna write them on these cards OK

303   Yeah

:

EJ: So what can you think of?

303:    Erm well when I'm not feeling my best, I seem to go in at 10 to 9 or half 9 on a school morning and then I go home at half 12 then so is that like half a day. Yeah about half a day or maybe a full day but not a full day

EJ: Half day when I'm not feeling my best, there we go there's one done. Is there anything you like when you're at school

303:    Yeah chatting to my friends messing about. do I have to say their names or

EJ: No that's fine there we go chatting to your friends

303:    One thing I don't like is early mornings

EJ: Okay

303:    Everyone has to do it though. When I finish school. I wanna be a vet or//

EJ: There we go

303:    Hate wearing uniform it's horrible   and I'm like why are you making me

wear it erm noisy which I don't like erm I like working sometimes it depends what the work is about I like working art yeah or . don't like performing in front of people

EJ: Okey dokey

303: I like to perform today to do that before I came I was like standing there and not speaking

EJ: Is that enough or do you want me to do anymore cards or have you enough there?

303: Err yeah

EJ: It's completely up to you, you are in charge. So what we are going to do is pick 3 cards at random that one that one and that one and then what I want you to do is think about what 2 of them are and 1 of them isn't so we've got excited to finish school and get a job chatting with friends and noisy so which 2 would you put together and which 1 would you say didn't fit. So you have put excited to finish school and get a job together with chatting with friends and on the other side you have got noisy so what puts these 2 together

306 YP

EJ   So the 1ˢᵗ activity is called triadic elicitation. You can ignore the name//

306   Very long name

EJ   //It is very theory based name. all we have to do is. we have some flash cards, I've got far too many of them. we are not gonna fill all of them. I just want you to think about your life from Monday to Friday. roughly between the hours of about 8am to 6pm. so within school

306   And at home

EJ   Yeah exactly thinking about the days that you are able to come to school and the days that you are not able to come to school and. things that come to mind. I would like you to write on your card. it can be things that you feel good about it can be things that make you feel bad. It can be specific times of day, it can be specific lessons, subjects, people. whatever comes to mind for. sort of. Monday to Friday

306   Okay so anything

EJ   Anything that's important so perhaps do a mixture between the days that you do feel able to come to school and the days that you don't feel able to come to school.
      306 writes on cards
       So we've got sluggish, bored super

306   Ooh here we go positive words

EJ   Yeah excited

306   Erm

EJ   As I say it can be specific activities, specific lessons whatever comes to mind

306   Terrible handwriting

EJ   That's alright

306   Raring to go

EJ   Raring to go to College

308YP

EJ   Yeah it can be good things bad things, it can be things that you like about being at home, likes you like about being at school, things you dislike about being at school, things you dislike about being at home. Whatever springs to mind Monday to Friday, your life. Annoying people

308   Err I really cor think of anything else

EJ   Mates

308   Yeah I think I cor remember them, I can't think of anything else

EJ   You can't think of anything else. We can go with those if you want or if there's any particular subjects or anything about school that springs to mind that you really don't like or really do like or things about home

308   Maths

EJ   Maths, you really hate maths ok

308   Yeah boring

EJ   Do you feel like that's everything that springs to mind for during the week ok, so what I'm going to do is maths, computing, sport annoying people, mates and maths, hang on a minute did I read maths twice

308   Yeah

EJ   Music is the other one, right . So turn them all face down, mix them up and all I'm going to do is give you 3 at random at a time and I want you to choose 2 that go together and leave 1 out.

308   Okay

EJ   And tell me what it is that why those 2 go together and what the other 1 isn't. You can look at all of them so you know

308   Them to go together

EJ   Oh ok. Ok so maths and annoying people go together and sport doesn't fit so what are maths and annoying people that sport is not.

308   Well there's annoying people in my maths and my maths is boring and annoying people is boring cos all they am doing is the same thing.

EJ   So boring as opposed to

308   Sport which is fun like

EJ   Boring as opposed to fun. Super. Ok

308   Them 2 go together

EJ   Ok music and sport go together , leave maths aside. What are music and sport that maths is not

308   Fun

EJ   Fun as opposed to

308   Boring

EJ   Boring so that's the same again. No problem.

308   Err oh god

EJ   Mates, computing and music

308   Them

EJ   Okay so mates and computing would go together and music would be aside so what are these that this 1 isn't

308   Because I use my computer and speak to my mates on my computer at home as well. So it's like I do it in school and at home . so it's more out of school than being in school cos I normally just do my music in school

EJ   Ok so music is just an in school thing this is

308   Out of school

201 KW

201:     A lot of children I I find are told they're useless so they act as though they're useless. They have parents don't give them any incentive incentive to achieve they're almost like little shadows in in the household. Y'know they're not seen umm definitely not listened to. And we did solution-focussed training. And it does fit in with our. Work I don't know whether you've heard of solution-focussed training so yes of course you would. And it really does help us to encourage the children to look at their positive what they have achieved. Umm people are very very quick to y'know well you've done this y'know wrong this and judge them and that is a heavy burden I believe for a child because we're all allowed mistakes y'know umm. I haven't got to 53 without making many mist y'know without making any mistakes so. It it's giving the person that opportunity to umm recognise that ok that one didn't work too well that plan of action didn't work too well but there is another route y'know. Hard to reach when they are totally totally out of the education system. Is the most difficult because I think. Unfortunately authorities do let these children down y'know the time span of getting the child from exclusion to school to another schooling is too long.

… Data Omitted due to discussing specific child…

But sometimes I think what my experience now definitely is umm people do not look back at the circumstances of why this child has got to the stage they're at. And its very contradicting with solution-focussed therapy but circumstances that have led them to their behaviour that as they umm present themselves now. Y'know when they've seen so much experienced so much they umm struggle emotionally to understand what they've gone through what they've witnessed and then how to adapt to live in the communities and what are so called whatever normal is…

EJ: Umm

201:     …person y'know within the community. I think they lose their place they feel they

don't fit into any sort of little niche any longer. Umm and they sort of wonder around in no-

man's land for a long long time

                    … Data Omitted due to discussing specific child…

Children don't cope with over umm being asked questions but they don't also cope with

        comfortable silences either do they?

EJ: Umm

201:     I think they find that very difficult as well. Should I speak shouldn't I speak? And

then all their expectations umm once they're in the educational setting. Err very difficult cus

they'll meet like-minded children who then encourage each other to do things that they

possibly wouldn't do normally y'know. You'll always meet somebody who will encourage

you to take that one step further won't you?

                    … Data Omitted due to discussing specific child…

But it's just from my part its just been a softly soflty umm. Not disguising the facts but

        putting it in a way y'know that they can understand it.

EJ: Yeah.

202 KW

202:   …if that's where they're coming from but. I just sometimes I think err y'know err young people might be;e. Y'know kind of forced to do something whereas if it's voluntary. Err then it's more generally they're more interested in it…

EJ: Yeah

202:   …err if they want to do if they're interested in that subject or in that research they will voluntarily do it…

EJ: Yeah of course

202:   …whereas y'know you might have the FIT worker come and say can you help us out doing something and they probably just say oh yeah just for the sake of saying yeah…

EJ: Yeah

202:   …and then it probably progress from there the FIT worker probably say come on do this err so that probably kind of y'know it has to be the right environment…

EJ: Of course yeah

202:   …err and the focus obviously is from from them.

EJ: Yeah. Umm just to sort of pick up of something you were saying that I found really interesting was giving the young people ownership over the project umm which sounds really positive and something I'd be really interested in doing. Umm but. I wonder whether then part of like maybe kind of leads into the third question as well but do you think maybe a barrier could have been around the confidentiality and anonymity sort of saying that their identities won't be umm. Evident in the write up

because of protecting them could that actually be seen as. Not giving not allowing their identity to be represented by the project.

202:    Yeah yeah you're right it could have a err err negative effect er;r. Some some young people don't want to be. Shown they want other people to know. Whereas this kind of research err y'know it's something. Positive…

EJ: Yeah yeah

202:    …y'know it's it's there's gonna be no comebacks to them their they ain't disclosing information which might put other people at risk they ain't saying anything which y'know which will put them themselves down…

EJ: Of course yeah

202:    …err so their images stay in tact…

EJ: Yeah

202:    …err so maybe that y'know//

EJ: maybe there needs//

202:                                   maybe they need…//

EJ: //to be a way for them to put their name on it and say look we did this//

202:   //yes look your name you were involved in this…

EJ: Right

202:    …you'll be saying you y'know. Err which I think y'know will help probably would help…

EJ: Yeah that's really interesting

202:    …but then the confidentiality makes them feel like err in this subject anyway err. Why do I y'know why do I need to be. Y'know hidden away…

EJ: Yeah of course yeah

202:    …y'know taking part in something I wanna be known…

EJ: Of course

202:    …that I took part in it. Err. Yeah you're right…

EJ: Yeah

202:    …yeah it makes sense…

EJ: That's really interesting

202:    …y'know there's things where I've done where y'know err you can't we have to hide their who they are…

EJ: Of course yeah definitely

202:    …err for their safety…

EJ: Yeah

202:    …y'know if we're doing interviews with them regarding knife crime gangs. Stuff like that young people don't wanna be known don't wanna be…

EJ: No of course not

202:     …shown. So that kind of information. But in this in this this this research which is.
         It's just seeing how they feel…

EJ: Yeah

202:     …getting their ideas across y'know. Y'know revealing what they think and stuff like
         that which I think you're right maybe should say look ok then. Do you want to do you
         want your name…

EJ: Yeah ha- having the option and so giving yeah

202:     …having the option so do you want your name out there er;r y'know being in in.
         Obviously ye- your writing an article are you or you doing dire- err.

Appendix 13

Example of adapted Repertory Grid with Participant 110

The Cards from Triadic Elicitation were placed on the page and then written down to record where they were placed.

The participant thought about what could help move the factors closer towards the desirable pole of the construct/ mechanism.

The Participant selected which factors she felt could be moved closer to the desirable pole to make it easier to consider attending school.

FEELING HAPPY.

PLAYING COMPUTER   PLAYING PS3.

STAYING AT HOME WITH MUM.

Tutoring after School.

BEING IN BED

Help me more with work.

TEACHERS

nicer

attitudes

THE WORK.

PEOPLE AT SCHOOL.

Appendix 14 Findings and Discussion for participant 109

Participant 109 is a 15 year old male in year 10 at secondary school. He expressed interest in participating in the study to his key worker who passed on his details to the researcher. It became apparent during data collection that his attendance had significantly improved since the period of non-attendance, however as his family were still supported by the FIT and he wished to participate it was felt appropriate to continue.

SRAS

The SRAS was scored according to Kearney's (2002) recommendations to determine whether it identified an underlying function of school non-attendance. Participant 109 scored similarly across all proposed categories.

SRAS results for Participant 109

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (2dp)	3.67	3.50	3.50	3.17
Ranking	1st	2nd	2nd	4th

Semi-Structured Interview

<u>Construing of school and school attendance</u>

It became apparent that for 109, school non-attendance was no longer something he was experiencing as he felt that he had come through this period of his life and was now attending

school more consistently. School was experienced as a challenging place to be at the time when he was not attending for numerous reasons;

- Disliked hanging around at school as it was boring

- Was not getting up out of bed until 3pm

- Not feeling able to relate to the other pupils

Attendance at school was something that 109 felt that he needed to be distracted from. Prior to non-attendance 109 described how he had been obsessed with winning and being the best, and felt that this may have been partly due to his age and partly due to his attitude. A very important hobby to 109 is skateboarding which he refers to as "skating" in the transcript. Skating helped 109 to feel that there was no need to be the best as there is no best. There are several examples of his construing surrounding this concept in the transcript;

"It ain't about winning. it's about doing what you think you should do"

Significantly, 109 stated that the fact he had not attended and the experiences during this time are influential in him returning to school and pursuing his GCSE exams.

"If I didn't do what I did in them 2 years where I didn't go to school. I would have never went back to school."

109 viewed non-attendance as part of the reason why he was able to attend school currently, but acknowledged that attending school following a period of non-attendance was extremely challenging for him.

"Going back to school. for me. it was a struggle."

"knowing that it wour jus me who was struggling"

"It's only me who knows how hard I've worked. I. I know I've worked really hard"

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It was clear that despite significant non-attendance 109 did value school and education and recognised it as a key to achieving his aspirations;

"Everyone was always on about what they were going to do. Cos they went to school and they had a future."

A core construct for the participant was identified as having friends who can relate to each other and understand one another. Belonging to a group and sharing experiences was valued by the participant demonstrated in the quotes below.

"My friends around me they were like. Well. The biggest influence"

… "they all know how hard it was for me to go back to school and how hard I worked."

"All of my friends really. At one point or another. We were all. Like. Social outcasts"

"The skating community. The social outcasts. Then they all get together."

Participation and belonging were key. Being part of something was one of the most important concepts for 109. He describe being part of something as "the biggest thing".

The Use of Techniques from Personal Construct Psychology

PCP was not a technique that 109 was familiar with, however he was engaged and open to using it to explore the mechanisms impacting on non-attendance. Examples were used to demonstrate how triadic elicitation worked and 109 decided on his own labels for the cards, which he did following the researcher asking him to reflect on activities , likes, dislikes and aspects of his life that were important to him, that occurred during the week (Monday to Friday, 8am until 4pm);

- Not getting up until 3pm
- Going out

- Atmosphere around my friends outside of school

- Didn't like thinking about what I was going to be when I was older

- Skating

- Don't like hanging around at school

- Don't like where we lived

Triadic elicitation was used to identify the poles that were utilised in the laddering. The poles identified were;

Distraction from school	-----	Not wanting to end up like people who do nothing
Me	-----	Dull/Not having any friends
Got me back to school	-----	Being anti-social/ sitting in my room
"Chavs"	-----	"no one's chavs"

109 had autonomy over which poles were explored in the laddering and he chose "Got me back to school ---- Being Anti-social" and ""Chavs ----- No one's Chavs". Laddering can be a challenging process for YP who can find it intimidating being asked a series of "Why?" questions (Butler and Green, 2007). Mechanisms/constructs identified using this techniques were;

- A future/ Not wanting to end up doing nothing

- Having friends who can relate to each other

- Doing what you think you should do

Care has been taken to ensure that the words used are that of the participant and not changed by the researcher. An example of the laddering is included below;

Figure 1: Example of Laddering with participant 109YP

Friends who can relate to each other

Knowing it's not just me who is struggling

We can relate to each other

Having friends that understand how hard I have worked

Knowing how hard I have worked

How I met my friends/ got me going back to school

Being Anti-Social/ Sitting in my room (my nest)

Physical things such as becoming overweight and getting bed sores

Seeing others succeed but I was just in my room. Feeling irritated and angry

First time I had struggled to be the best

Obsessed with winning

Giving up on being the best

Realised that doing what you think you should do is more important

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The use of the adapted reparatory grid technique in the interview allowed 109 and the researcher to analyse where he had placed the initial labels and look at how factors lower down the grid could be changed so that they moved closer to the mechanism/construct heading the grid identified as underlying the outcome. "Being a part of something" was identified as important to 109 and this is reflected in his views regarding the skating community, however he indicated that "hanging around at school" was low down on the rep grid. What would help school to move closer to his own values was if more people were to talk to him and get involved with him. This he felt would need to come from the pupils. Interestingly 109 does not recognise this as something the school could support, rather, it had to come from the pupils within the school.

"I don't think the school could have done anything cos at the end of the day they cor stop everyone asking what I was doing while I was gone"

109 was shown the results of the SRAS which had been completed the week prior to the interview. As discussed the SRAS did not indicate a specific function that non-attendance was serving 109, although he did score in each area. 109 felt that the SRAS was not able to capture the reasons behind non-attendance through the categories it sets, although recognised that it may be useful for some YP;

"maybe a little bit but I think it was mostly just down to me. Like. not wanting to go"

"It can be if like the people that don't wanna go to school are under those 4 er specific err I dunno the word… categories, that's it"

109 felt that the activities we had done in the interview had been more useful in allowing him to share his thoughts on non-attendance and gain some understanding of why he was not

attending school. 109 reported definitely feeling that there were more categories that weren't covered by the SRAS.

Discussion of Findings from Working with 109

Interestingly the literature review indicated that a significant proportion of the research surrounding non-attendance was seated in behavioural psychology, however by seeking the views of 109 it is evident that social psychology could be utilised to understand the experience of this YP. Social psychology offers multiple theories that might be appropriate to draw upon in future work with YP who are not attending. What 109 indicated was key to him was having friends that he could relate to and whom could relate to him. He talks about the skating community and demonstrates a sense of belonging to this community. Additionally his concerns regarding where he was living and that the people around were "chavs" could be an indication of the theory of in-group and out group bias. Despite this indication it is vital to recognise that by discussing theories that could be drawn upon to support understanding of the data provided by 109 that the potential to attribute adult theory to what the YP is communicating is increased.

The participant's perceptions of the people in surrounding area were indicated by his assertion that they were on benefits and not doing anything. This was not something that appealed to 109 and he indicated that he was motivated to attend school to secure what he felt was a better future for himself.

Skateboarding gave 109 a sense of community that he felt was lacking prior to becoming involved in the skating community and this 109 indicates is key in supporting him to attend school. Peer support and equally, understanding, is identified by 109 as the most important aspect of returning to school and increasing attendance.

109 felt that he was able to explore more from the interview that utilised PCP techniques than the SRAS. When asked about the categories of the SRAS 109 did not feel that any one category represented him and the reasons behind him not attending school were more down to him "not wanting to go". The benefit of the interview was that he was able to explore the non-attendance in more detail, without this opportunity and in different circumstances if this statement had been all he had offered he may have been termed a "truant" based on the use of this term by Reid (2006) amongst others, dating back to Hersov (1960). Paying such attention to the views of YP will be invaluable to services who endeavour to support YP who are not attending school.

Appendix 15a

Phase 2: Initial codes

Trust	Empathy
Time/Patience	Sharing own experience

Terms of engagement: voluntary or enforced?

YP sense of belonging

Impact of past experiences on YP

YP experience of trauma and abuse

Motivation

Parenting

YP age and stage of development

Initial Codes

What do YP gain from engaging?

Professional experiences of KW

Establishing YP understanding of purpose

YP sense of loss when sharing their story

Ways to gain and build trust and experiences of this

Personal Experiences of KW

KW judging and gauging situation

Environment in which YP is in

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Appendix 15b

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Trust

Empathy

Time/Patience

Sharing own experience

Establishing and building relationships

Terms of engagement: voluntary or enforced?

Factors to consider regarding YP

YP sense of belonging

Impact of past experiences on YP

YP experience of trauma and abuse

Motivation

Parenting

YP age and stage of development

Initial Codes

What do YP gain from engaging?

YP Experience

Establishing YP understanding of purpose

Professional experiences of KW

Key worker experience

YP sense of loss when sharing their story

Ways to gain and build trust and experiences of this

Personal Experiences of KW

KW judging and gauging situation

Environment in which YP is in

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Phase 4: Reviewing the themes i) Key Themes

Trust

Working with YP

Empathy

Personal Experiences of KW

Sharing own experience

Parenting

Professional experiences of KW

Environment in which YP is in

YP sense of belonging

Impact of past experiences on YP

YP experience of trauma and abuse

YP sense of loss when sharing their story

KW judging and gauging situation

Engaging YP

Ways to gain and build trust and experiences of this

What do YP gain from engaging?

Motivation

Initial Codes

Establishing YP understanding of purpose

Terms of engagement: voluntary or enforced?

YP age and stage of development

Time/Patience

Appendix 15d

Phase 4: Reviewing the themes ii) Key Themes and sub themes

Empathy

Impact of past experiences on YP

Personal Experiences of KW

YP experience of trauma and abuse

Professional's ability to empathise with YP

KW judging and gauging situation

Establishing YP understanding of purpose

Motivation

YP age and stage of development

Communication with Young People to ensure Understanding

Extent to which the relationship has been established and the professional is trusted by YP

Working with YP

Themes

Engaging YP

Trust

Parents views

The approach the Professional takes

Importance of valuing the Contribution of YP

Ability of adult to establish rapport and earn trust

What do YP gain from engaging?

YP sense of loss when sharing their story

Professional experiences of KW

Sharing own experience

Environment in which YP is in

Ways to gain and build trust and experiences of this

Terms of engagement: voluntary or enforced?

YP sense of belonging

Time/Patience

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WHAT NEXT?

If you are happy to participate in this project, please read and sign the attached consent form and return it.

Your parent or carer or social worker will need to sign consent for you to participate also. They will have been given information about the project too.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RESEARCH PROJECT

Emma James
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham
Dudley Educational Psychology Service
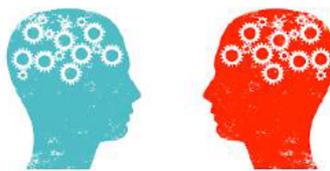
Participant Information

RESEARCH PROJECT

Your views on school attendance

Emma James - Post-graduate Research Project

The Project

Hello and Thank You for taking your time to read this information.

My name is Emma James, I am currently studying at the University of Birmingham finishing my course. I also work for Dudley Educational Psychology Service.

I am carrying out a research project as part of my studies. This project aims to reach out to young people of secondary school age and give them a chance to talk about things that make it difficult to go to school. It will also allow us to think about how school could be improved to make it easier for young people to go to school.

This project aims to give you the opportunity to express your views about school attendance and how schools could work better for their pupils.

Reassurances

- I will not contact you, without your consent.
- You do not have to take part.
- If you change your mind, you have the right to withdraw from (leave) the project at any time.
- If you withdraw you have the right to a debrief with me up to 3 working days following your decision. Following this there will be no further contact made by me.
- Should you withdraw from the project you can also choose to have any data provided, removed up to 5 days following data collection.
- You have the right to continue to participate in the research but refuse to answering certain questions without providing an explanation.

If you wish to participate

The first part of the project will take roughly 20 minutes.

You will complete a questionnaire with me (Emma).

This questionnaire hopes to understand the reason why you finding it hard to go to school.

The Questionnaire is called The School Refusal Assessment Scale.

Following the questionnaire is an interview. We can do this on the same day or a different day—you can decide.

The interview usually takes between 45 and 75 minutes.

Following taking part in the project you will receive a letter thanking you for taking part.

Should you wish to discuss any of the information or have any queries through out the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James,

Trainee Educational Psychologist: 01384 814359

Project Supervisor: Nick Bozic, Professional and Academic Supervisor, University of Birmingham. n.m.bozic@bham.ac.uk

Appendix 17: Parent/Carer Leaflet for Young People not supported by FIT

Parent/Carer Information

Dear Parents,

Hello and Thank You for taking your time to read this information. My name is Emma James, I am currently completing my doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at the University of Birmingham. I work for Dudley Educational Psychology Service. As part of the university course I am carrying out research about school non-attendance. This project aims to reach out to young people of secondary school age and give them a voice. These young people will have been identified by school as having school attendance of below 85%. This project aims to give your child the opportunity to express their views about school attendance and what would help them to attend.

Should you wish to discuss any of the below information or have any queries through out the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

Project Supervisor: Nick Bozic, Professional and Academic Supervisor, University of Birmingham. n.m.bozic@bham.ac.uk

- No contact will be made by me, with your child, without your consent. If you do not wish for your child to participate there is no obligation upon you or them to do so.

- If you give your consent for your child to participate and either you, or your child changes their mind, they have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

- Should your child withdraw from the project they have the right to a debrief with me up to 3 working days following their decision at a time convenient to them following this there will be no further contact made directly with them, by me. Should your child withdraw from the project they can also choose to have any data they have provided up until the point of withdrawal removed up to 5 days following data collection.

- Your child will have the right to continue to participate in the research but refuse/withdraw from answering certain questions without providing an explanation.

The project will take roughly 20 minutes of their time in the first instance to go through a questionnaire with Emma. This questionnaire seeks to understand the underlying reason behind why they are not attending school by identifying which of four broad categories is most applicable to their individual situation. The Questionnaire is called The School Refusal Assessment Scale and used by Educational Psychologist's in their practice. Following this stage of the research, participants will be invited to attend an interview with me (Emma). The interview uses some activities to allow your child to think about what is important to them and how they feel about school. We also look at the questionnaire results together and your child will have the opportunity to think about whether or not it was accurate or useful. The interview takes 45minutes to an hour. Your child may wish to identify an adult that they wish for me to feedback to following the interview, however they may wish for any information they share to remain confidential until the point of writing up the results (at which point they will have been anonomised). Please be aware that if they choose to request the information is kept confidential, it will be necessary for me as a researcher to respect this.

If a child or young person participating in the project discloses any information to indicate serious concerns regarding either their own or another person's well-being safeguarding procedures will be followed, and you will be informed of the concerns.

Following their participation your child will receive a letter thanking them for their time. Should you wish to discuss any aspects of the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the above details and I will be happy to meet with you or speak to you on the telephone.

If you are happy for your child to participate in this project, please read and sign the attached consent form and return it.

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Appendix 18: School information leaflet for secondary schools. To recruit participants

not supported by FIT

Dear School Staff,

Hello and Thank You for taking your time to read this information. My name is Emma James, I am currently completing my doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at the University of Birmingham. I work for XXXX Educational Psychology Service. As part of the university course I am carrying out research about school non-attendance. This project aims to reach out to young people of secondary school age and give them a voice. These young people will have been identified by school as having school attendance of below 85%.

Should you wish to discuss any of the below information or have any queries through out the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist: 01XXX XXXXXX

- I have capacity to work with four children altogether. The children who best fit the inclusion criteria will be selected to participate. If there are more than four children who wish to participate and all fit the inclusion criteria the names of those participating with be chosen at random.
- Should school feel that there are further pupils that will benefit from participation in the project, they may choose to utilise Educational Psychology Service credits for this work.
- School identify pupils with attendance of below 85% and contact parents/guardians to inform them of the project. They also discuss or request that parent/guardian discuss the project with the pupil. If verbal consent has been gained from both the parent and the pupil, a meeting can be arranged between Emma James, the pupil and their parent/guardian.
- Should the pupil withdraw from the project they have the right to a debrief with me (Emma James) up to 3 working days following their decision at a time convenient to them following this there will be no further contact made directly with them, by me. Should the pupil withdraw from the project they can also choose to have any data they have provided up until the point of withdrawal removed up to 5 days following data collection.
- Pupils will have the right to continue to participate in the research but refuse/withdraw from answering certain questions without providing an explanation.
- Pupils have the right to confidentiality. They will be encouraged to identify a trusted member of staff in school to whom any useful information identified through the interview (that may aid them increasing their attendance) can be fed back to, however participants have the right to engage in the project and refuse the opportunity for information to be fed back to school. Once written up the data they provide will be anonymous to protect the identity of the pupil.

The project has two parts. A questionnaire and an interview using activities to help the pupils think about school, attendance, what is important to them, and how they could improve their

attendance. The questionnaire will take roughly 20 minutes of their time. This questionnaire seeks to understand the underlying reason behind why pupils are not attending school by identifying which of four broad categories is most applicable to their individual situation. The Questionnaire is called The School Refusal Assessment Scale and used by Educational Psychologist's in their practice.

If a child or young person participating in the project discloses any information to indicate serious concerns regarding either their own or another person's well-being safeguarding procedures will be followed, and parents will be informed of the concerns.

Following their participation pupils will receive a letter thanking them for their time. Should you wish to discuss any aspects of the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the above details and I will be happy to speak to you.

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Project Supervisor: Nick Bozic, Professional and Academic Supervisor, University of Birmingham

Appendix 19: Consent form for parents/carers of YP participants. (Families not supported by FIT)

Parent/Carer Consent Form

I (your name)_____ , mother/father/carer/social worker (delete as appropriate) to _____
(Child's name) have read and understood the information regarding the research.

(Please tick appropriate boxes)

☐   I give my consent for my child to participate in the research.

☐   I do not give my consent—I do not wish for my child to participate in the research

I am aware that my child may withdraw from the research at any time. I also understand that the data my child provides will be treated sensitively and they will not be identifiable in the writing up of the research.

Signed:	Date:

Should you wish to discuss any information provided or have any queries through out the research project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Appendix 20: Consent forms for YP not supported by FIT

Consent Form—Questionnaire

I (your name)_____ have read and understood the information regarding the research.

(Please tick the statements you agree with)

☐ I wish to take part in the research.

☐ I understand that I do not have to take part and I am doing so because it is my choice to

☐ I am aware that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

☐ I understand that the data I provide will be treated confidentially and I will not be identifiable in the writing up of the research.

Signed:	Date:

Should you wish to discuss any information provided or have any queries through out the research project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Please note this email address is monitored by project supervisors and content audited regularly. Email addresses will not be stored and other than in reply to your email you will not be contacted using your email address, unless you specify otherwise.

Consent Form—Interview

I (insert name) _____ have read an understood the information regarding the interview.

(Please tick the statements you agree with)

☐ I wish to take part in the interview section of the research.

☐ I understand that I do not have to take part and I am doing so because it is my choice to do so

☐ I am aware that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

☐ I understand that the data I provide will be treated confidentially and I will not be identifiable in the writing up of the research. The interview will be recorded on a Dictaphone then written down. The recording will be deleted.

Signed:	Date:

Should you wish to discuss any information provided or have any queries through out the research project please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below;

Emma James, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time

Please note this email address is monitored by project supervisors and content audited regularly. Email addresses will not be stored and other than in reply to your email you will not be contacted using your email address, unless you specify otherwise.

Appendix 21:Findings for Participant 301

SRAS

Participant 301's results using the SRAS were conclusive and indicated that two main causes of his difficulty attending school was as a result of avoiding aspects of the school environment due to the emotional impact (anxiety) it had on him, and preferring to stay in the home environment and having the attention of a caregiver.

Table 7 SRAS results for participant 301

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (2dp)	5.5	3.30	5.00	0.50
Ranking	1	3	2	4

4.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

<u>Construing of school and school attendance</u>

301 reports that he feels safer at home than when he is out. He also talks about experiencing paranoia which contributes to him finding it difficult to go out.

"I feel safer at home"

"sometimes safe can be boring"

"I still feel paranoid at home, like, sometimes I think theres someone in the house when there isn't"

"get paranoia and that, hearing things, so I don't really trust the house..."

There are places in school that 301 tries to avoid;

"The Quad, I try and steer clear from"

"I donn go near the Quad"

Being at home is not what 301 wants, but at the current time it is preferable to being at school;

"When I'm being at home, its just, bad. Cos. I got nothing to do and school don't send any work"

"Basically staying in the house nearly all day every day, as opposed to at least getting some school work done is boring, and I'm doin nothin worthwhile really, so I don't really enjoy it".

301 felt that school work was important and felt frustrated by the lack of support he perceived from school staff;

"an it kinda annoys me that the school ent sending work, cos they say they care an everythin, but they want me to go in to get the grades I get, but they won't send me any work home so I can't revise"

"They don't actually allow me to help myself"

"Its just like they don't really. Seem to care. Whether they say they do or they don't. I don't feel they do"

"It annoys me a bit cos it feels like I'm being lied to"

"they only care cos it looks bad on them if I don't achieve well".

<u>The Use of Techniques from Personal Construct Psychology</u>

301 was familiar with meeting with professionals and presented confidently in interactions with the researcher. He had no previous experience of PCP and accepted the new approach. 301 was in a familiar environment for the interview and his mother was present for the duration of the interview. The interview was conducted in two parts at the request of the participant due to fatigue.

301 required support initially to include what to put on the flash cards for triadic elicitation. The researcher responded to this by providing structured questions. His mother was also present during the interview and asked him some questions also. 301 decided on the following labels for the cards used in triadic elicitation;

- Benji (dog)

- The Quad

- Feeling Safe at home

- Boring being at home

- (Name of another YP) (best friend)

- (Name of another YP) (a good mate round the corner)

- My Room

- Being in bed all day

- Good Acquaintances

 The triadic elicitation identified poles that were utilised in the laddering. These were;

Quiet   -----   Enjoying myself properly

Trust	-----	Not Trusting
Enjoy being with	-----	Avoiding
Safe	-----	Nervous
Good Relationships	-----	Bad Relationships

301 was engaged in the process and was able to decide which poles to explore further independently. He decided upon the following poles; "Trust ---- Not trusting" and "Enjoy being with----- Avoiding". Core constructs for use in the adapted reparatory grid technique, elicited using laddering, were;

- Feeling Safe
- Avoid Feeling Paranoid
- Avoid Feeling Lonely

Participant 301's own language has been used to ensure the researcher does not impact or influence the participant's intended meaning.

To carry out the adapted reparatory grid technique 301 chose to examine further two of the three core constructs he had identified (Feeling Safe, and Avoiding Feeling Paranoid). The key changes in his life that 301 indicated would have to change, to make attending school more conducive with his core constructs were that people he disliked would have to leave school, and only his friends remain. He also identified that being busy and engaging in enjoyable activities more regularly would help him to avoid feeling paranoid.

Appendix 22: Findings for Participant 303

SRAS

Participant 303's results using the SRAS were conclusive and indicated that one main cause was underlying her difficulties attending school. The results showed that avoiding aspects of the school environment due to the emotional impact it had was the most likely function of avoiding school.

Table 8. SRAS results for participant 303

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (1dp)	3.0	0.7	1.0	1.3
Ranking	1	4	3	2

 Semi-Structured Interviews

Construing of school and school attendance

303 reports that there are some specific reasons that she finds it difficult to attend school;

Not sleeping well:

"Like say the day before. if I didn't get any sleep. Then. I can't work can't concentrate I get moody at. Like. my parents if I don't get much sleep"

"not sleeping well sometimes sleeping well feeling tired so now I want to sleep cos I'm tired and I've done stuff but when I don't do stuff and sit in bed all day"

"like on a weekend I don't sleep at all like sometimes school days I sleep well it's just weekends Sunday I don't sleep well at all that's one day I never sleep say I go to bed at 9 I wouldn't go to bed till 4"

Feeling Moody:

"When I'm moody I don't want to feel moody but I'm moody but for some reason I'm moody so that's negative"

"I used to like doing activities but I don't like doing activities anymore for some reason I don't know."

The teachers focussing on noisy pupils:

"the teachers always focus on the noise, sometimes I'm like, sitting there, with my hand up like. hello I'm over here trying to ask for help. and then the teachers are just. Like. helping other people"

"we don't learn because all the noisy people do is be bad"

"the teachers focusing on the noisy ones like today when I was at school we was in science I think it was science and one of the all the naughty kids has been and I was just sitting there just like this and saying why am I here"

"...the noisy ones are affecting our future. cos the teachers don't teach. and so. well I don't know how people are gonna sort that out cos they will never listen"

<u>The Use of Techniques from Personal Construct Psychology</u>

303 had met with other professionals regarding school attendance and was being supported by a school counsellor to work towards increasing school attendance. Therefore she was used to talking about her difficulties in attending school and had some ideas about why she

experienced difficulty that she had discussed with other adults. She presented as comfortable and confident in her interactions with the researcher. She had not previously experienced PCP but was interested in the activities and engaged well with the process.

303 had lots of ideas when participating in the first activity (triadic elicitation) and was given the freedom to come provide as many ideas as she wished to record on the cards. She decided on the following;

- Not sleeping well

- Teachers focussing on the noisy ones

- Noisy

- Negative/Sad inside

- Don't like performing in front of people

- Feeling like teachers are saying "No that's wrong" even when I haven't been there for a long time

- Half Days when I'm not feeling my best

- Feeling Moody

- Waking up early in the morning

- Hate wearing the Uniform

- Working

- Excited to finish school and get a job, ie. Vet

- Activities like cooking and tennis

- Chatting with friends

The triadic elicitation identified poles that were utilised in the laddering. These were;

People not laughing   -----   People watching me or laughing at what I say

Teachers focused on the noisy ones   -----   Teachers focus on
and forget about us   everyone and learning

Positive   -----   Negative

Things you just have to get on with   -----   Things more difficult

Not sleeping well   -----   sleeping well

Learning new things   -----   Not being able to concentrate

303 was able to decide which poles to explore further independently. She decided upon the

following poles; "Things you just have to get on with ---- Things more difficult" and

"Positive----- Negative"; Teachers focussed on the noisy ones & forget about us -----

Teachers focus on everyone and learning"; "People Watching me or laughing at what I say ---

-- People not laughing". Core constructs elicited using laddering for use with adapted

reparatory grid were;

- One life – live it whilst you can

- Everyone having a good future

- Having a good life

Participant 303's own words and phrases are kept as the descriptors for the core constructs

elicited to ensure the participant's voice is communicated through the research.

For the adapted reparatory grid technique 303 chose to examine one of the core constructs

that she felt could sum up all three that she had identified (Having a good life). There were

several key changes school could make to support 303 to feel able to increase her attendance.

These were as follows:

➢ Teachers that made the lessons calmer and less noisy, 303 felt they might achieve this

through offering rewards if noisy pupils refrained from being noisy.

- Knowing she was not the only pupil who struggled with the level of noise in the classroom.

- Teachers helping her in class when she felt that she needed help, rather thatn the teachers focussing their attention on the pupils who were noisy.

- Ignoring people who said negative things.

- Teachers being understanding towards her when she got answers wrong or did not understand

- Sleeping better, by spending less time on her phone in the evenings and engaging in calming activities.

Appendix 23: Findings for Participant 306

SRAS

Participant 306 completed the SRAS via telephone conversation at his request. The results were conclusive and indicated that one main cause was underlying his difficulties attending school. The results showed that avoiding the school environment due to the presence of aversive stimuli was the most likely function of avoiding school.

Table 9. SRAS results for participant 306

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (1dp)	3.3	0.0	1.0	1.3
Ranking	1	4	3	2

Semi-Structured Interviews

Construing of school and school attendance

306 reports that he experienced specific reasons to stay at home and specific reasons why he would come into attend school;

Disliking the unpredictability of the school environment:

"...a reason why I skived at some point because there might be a test"

"I was kind of fond of skiving"

"I pretended to leave the house. My brother was in the house too. But he didn't know. So I have this way. Or pretending to leave."

"time goes slower when you're at home"

"it was really bad of me, but it was easier" (talking about "skiving")

"I had quite a bad situation, so I used to stay at home"

"I got kegged at a park"

"I used to not go to school, cos I was worried about being at school"

Going into school to avoid difficulties at home:

"There's lots of arguments at home"

 "There's loads of arguments every night"

"Now I come to school for an escape"

Feelings about himself and his appearence:

"If you feel self conscious you feel much more negative about your self-image"

"A positive body image makes a positive person"

"I'm very self conscious about myself"

 "Being positive is helpful"

"You need friends"

"I want to be a doctor. I want to help people. Its important to help people".

Having some freedom and control over his time in school:

"a positive lesson would be where the teacher allows you to talk to your friends"

"a limited amount of freedom" (is better)

"then you have a choice over what you want to do. Its voluntary"

"if there is no fun involved then there is no enjoyment"

"I learn things better when I'm having fun. Laughing.... I focus more."

"I try to make everyone happy. Feel better."

"I want to make people look happy, cos. I don't want them to feel how I felt"

"Going to college. I want to go there. So I will come in, because. On Monday it's college."

"If you don't have respect. You're just going to feel a bit crap really"

"problem is with me is that when I over-think things. I get very selective about what I do"

"If you're forced to something and you don;t want to, but you have to, then you get very self conscious"

"If you don't wanna do something then you don't have to"

<u>The Use of Techniques from Personal Construct Psychology</u>

306 had not previously experienced PCP but was enthusiastic about the activities and engaged with the process without difficulty. 308 was enthusiastic and on a couple of occasions was distracted by expanding on points he had made and engaging the researcher in other conversations. He re-focussed himself on occasions and on others allowed the researcher to steer back to the semi-structured interview schedule. He decided on the following words/phrases for the cards;

- Surprise Tests

- Biology

- Grateful

- Raring to go to college on Monday

- Excited

- English

- Astonished

- Acting

- Sluggish

- Stressed

- Worried

- Maths

The triadic elicitation identified poles that were utilised in the laddering. These were;

As it happens   -----   Planned

Worried about what is going to happen   -----   Knowing what is going to happen

Feelings about something   -----   Emotions

Something I want to do   -----   Something I have to do

Negative   -----   Positive

306 decided which poles we would explore further as follows; "Something I want to do ---- Something I have to do" and "Positive----- Negative"; The core constructs elicited using laddering were;

- Hurting someone will hurt you

- People will respect you

- Having people there for you when you pass away

- Having a positive body image helps you to be a positive person

For the adapted reparatory grid technique 306 opted to investigate the following core constructs: Hurting someone will hurt you; Having a positive body image helps you to be a positive person. 306 reflected on the rep grid and determined that factors that would support increased attendance were as follows:

- ➢ Doing something you enjoy.

- ➢ Having something to look forward to

- Feeling excited
- Keeping things that cause negative feelings (stressed, worried, sluggish, bored) to a minimum.
- Being Grateful
- Thinking about College
- Making Lessons Interesting and exciting
- Having choice

Appendix 24: Findings for Participant 308

SRAS

Participant 308's results using the SRAS indicated that one main cause was underlying difficulties attending school. The results showed that attention or separation anxiety was the most likely function of avoiding school.

Table 10. SRAS results for participant 308

Function of SR	Avoidance of Environment	Aversive social situations	Attention or Separation Anxiety	Positive Reinforcement
Score (1dp)	2.8	1.7	4.0	2.0
Ranking	2	4	1	3

Semi-Structured Interviews

<u>Construing of school and school attendance</u>

308 reports that he finds specific aspects of attending school difficult:

"there's people I don like in ere"

"a few lessons I don like"

"constantly bein told to shudup" (by teachers)

"if I ad people to talk to...like. in the lesson"

"then I'm not bored and I could actually focus"

"hen I get bored I get tired. I end up sticking me ed ont he desk and end up falling asleep"

"I carr av fun which makes me not wanna come"

"the lessons need to be a bit more exciting than jus sittin there but i know that its what they've gotta do"

"I'd actually do the work cos we could elp each other out, cos. We're both not the best"

"The Head of Year. Like. Knows about it". "When it starts back up he can be a bit slow getting back on the train" (He does stuff about it but he could do it faster)

Preferring to have fun:

"its my 'ome an i'm supposed to have fun"

"if you don't have stuff you enjoy you're just go be there like wurram I doin with my life"

"you're not a boring person, you can 'av more friends"

"so you aye a loner. So you don get bored"

"Why would you do something you don't like".

Advantages of being in school:

"I get an education... so I get a job"

Not enjoying being in school, and certain subjects in school:

"it's just gonna feel like. Spoilt. if someone keeps stopping. When. if I'm enjoying myself. and it's just gonna feel like school again"

"Well maths. it's just maths hates me"

"Maths can annoy me at times and so can the people"

Difficulties with particular group of pupils in school who annoy him:

"I don't like annoying people"

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"...annoying people is boring cos all they am doing is the same thing."

"Well there's annoying people in my maths"

The Use of Techniques from Personal Construct Psychology

308 presented as comfortable in his interactions with the researcher. He had no previous experience of PCP but was happy to engage in the activities.

308 provided the following words/phrases for flashcards during triadic elicitation:

- Mates

- Annoying People

- Sport

- Music

- Maths

- Computing

The triadic elicitation identified the following poles;

Out of School ----- In School

Like ----- Dislike

Boring ----- Fun

Annoying Me ----- Enjoy

Hates Me ----- Helpful (not out to get me)

308 decided the poles to explore further; "Like ---- Dislike" and "Out of School----- School";
The further exploration of these poles was via laddering, to elicit core constructs identified
the following;

- So you are not a loner

- What you need to survive

- So you don't end up dying /   Avoiding Death

308 chose to examine two of the core constructs using the adapted reparatory grid technique
(Not being a loner, and what you need to survive). This identified the changes that 308 felt, if
made, could support an improvement in school attendance. These were as follows;

- ➢ Annoying people who target him stayed out of his way, and did not talk to him
- ➢ When there were difficulties with people targeting him the Head of Year could react faster.
- ➢ Asserting his dominance over people targeting him
- ➢ Walking away from annoying people and ignoring them
- ➢ Allowing people to talk during lessons to prevent boredom and enable him to focus more
- ➢ Allow pupil to sit with friends in Maths so they can help each other out by explaining and showing each other.