

The Educational Psychologist's role in supporting children with special needs in
mainstream schools

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on three different research studies that were originally conducted as part of the Doctorate Programme in Educational Psychology in the University of Manchester.

The topics investigated are 'Support for children with dyslexia', 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused' and 'The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention. In the first one, the main method of collecting data was a postal questionnaire survey while in the second one semi structured interviews. The third one was a literature review in which the main research strategy was computerized searches of key educational databases such as the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and PsycInfo.

Alongside an updated background for each of the studies, there is a critical reflection on the ways in which the above studies have contributed to theory and knowledge in Educational Psychology and impacted on my professional practice and skills as a researcher.

In addition, the role of the educational psychologist in supporting children with special educational needs related to dyslexia, sexual abuse and social isolation is considered throughout the thesis.

Finally, implications for practice and suggestions for further research are discussed.

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SECTION 1- INTRODUCTION

Educational Psychologists' (EP) job fundamentally involves using psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings (Fallon et al, 2010). Although the change of the political and financial context of Local Educational Authorities over time has often involved expansion of EP responsibilities and closer working with other services (such as social care, mental health, youth offending teams), advice about interventions has always been at the heart of EPs' work. This thesis is exploring such interventions and support for children who have dyslexia, difficulties associated with having experienced sexual abuse and difficulties deriving from social isolation.

This section gives an updated account of the background, context and rationale for each one of the three assignments separately followed by an account of the research training I received as part of this course.

1.1 First assignment- 'Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school'

At the time of planning my first assignment (2004-2005), the Dyslexia Friendly Initiative, aiming to help schools create dyslexia friendly learning environments, had been implemented by several authorities and schools with encouraging feedback (BDA, 2005). In contrast, reports from the DfES (Department for Education and Skills, National Literacy Strategy, 2003) that the National Literacy Strategy has not delivered the expected results in literacy made the teaching of literacy an area that attracted attention and gained research interest.

In this national context and at a time when the LEA in which I was working had funds for research and development, the dissemination of the Dyslexia Friendly Initiative at a local level was perceived to be relevant and useful. Research in this particular area was envisaged to be beneficial to larger groups of children of the participating schools as the majority of the principles and strategies suggested for children with dyslexia were considered effective for all children.

Availability of additionally targeted resources for schools (previously known as Standards Funds) at a North West authority I was working gave the EPS and the Advisory Teaching Service the opportunity to train SENCOs who wanted to teach children with dyslexia and build their school's capacity for becoming a dyslexia friendly school. I considered it important to gain a broad idea about existing provision for dyslexia in mainstream schools, views about its effectiveness and their training needs, and this formed the basis of my first assignment. A review of empirical studies of the provision for dyslexia (such as Springett, 2002, Dyson and Skidmore, 1994) showed that it was a rather under researched area which increased further the interest and relevance of the current study.

Consequently, I planned and conducted a postal questionnaire survey which targeted all primary SENCOs. The survey explored SENCOs' views on teachers' training needs, existing support for children with dyslexia (specifically, specialist tuition on an individual and small group basis, in class support by teaching assistants and differentiation) and SENCOs' views on its effectiveness. Following collection and analysis of the questionnaires, differentiation emerged as an important issue. In order to investigate further their conceptualisation of, preparedness for and barriers to differentiation, I conducted four follow up semi structured interviews with SENCOs.

Since completion of this assignment in 2006, there have been further developments in provision for children with dyslexia, related to the themes in my survey. Teachers' training needs in dyslexia, the role of teaching assistants in supporting children with SEN, the need for training in specialist literacy programmes are still topics of government interest and research and statistics on achievement in literacy still indicate relatively low levels. The Department for Education website recently published low percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 in the 2010 Key Stage 2 tests:

- English 33% (40% for girls, 26% for boys)
- Reading 51% (56% for girls, 46% for boys)
- Writing 21% (26% for girls, 15% for boys)

Over the last few years, larger groups of teaching assistants have been supporting children with dyslexia and teaching specialist literacy programmes. A comprehensive study by Blatchford et al (2009) called DISS (the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff) have confirmed findings from previous empirical studies (Avramidis et al, 2000, Dyson and Skidmore, 1994, Farrell et al , 2000) identifying significant training issues. More specifically, teaching support staff who were teaching dyslexic children specialist literacy programmes for most of their time, had received no training in them at all. However, there was an overall positive view about the benefits of having teaching support staff working with special needs children. For example, teachers appreciated teaching assistants as they reduced their stress levels and allowed them more time to teach.

Blatchford et al's study (2009) revealed a new significant finding. Through observations, analysis of transcripts and national curriculum attainments, they found

a negative impact on the academic progress of some children with special needs who were supported in class by TAs for long periods of time. The hypothesis for this is that the quality of the interactions between TAs and pupils were inferior to the ones between teachers and pupils.

However, the Rose Review (2009) identified lack of appropriate training amongst teachers. One of several recommendations to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was to offer to teachers specialist training in dyslexia. That was endorsed by DCSF, and in 2009- 2010, over 10 million pounds was made available for 41,000 teachers to be trained towards a BDA accredited course. Initial Teacher Education Programmes (ITE) were also expected to offer student teachers a core knowledge and understanding of teaching pupils with SEN. ITE providers received an SEN and disabilities training toolkit from the Training and Development Agency for their primary teaching programmes. Funding was also made available to pilot the toolkit in specialised placements to inform further developments in teacher education. It also recommended that DCSF should commission short courses for teachers on selecting and teaching literacy intervention programmes in school.

Further training for teachers was also offered through the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) for dyslexia which was developed by the National Strategies for teachers in practice. The IDP is a four year programme of continuing professional development designed to increase the confidence and expertise of mainstream practitioners in meeting high incidence SEN (including dyslexia) in mainstream schools. The DCSF expected all schools to find the time to work through the IDP e learning materials. The IDP gives information about identifying dyslexia as well as

suggestions about creating a dyslexia friendly environment. Self evaluation of existing skills/knowledge is recommended as well as setting targets related to the IDP and evaluating the process (National Strategies, 2007).

In the arena of specialist literacy programmes further research by Brooks (2007), Shaywitz et al (2008), Rose (2009) and Carroll et al (2011) report findings which indicate the importance of:

- having specialist literacy programmes delivered by staff who are specifically trained in dyslexia and these programmes, as the vast majority of these are delivered by TAs who are the least qualified school members
- targeting comprehension as well as accuracy and fluency
- monitoring and evaluating impact
- selecting the right literacy interventions according to the individual's difficulties as the dyslexic group is so heterogeneous
- having clear objectives against which each child's progress is measured so that they can be rigorously monitored and evaluated
- using the programmes consistently (at least three times a week) for at least a term although long duration does not always bring better results.

My study explored schools' views on support for children with dyslexia and produced findings much in line with recent studies. SENCOs identified the need for appropriate specialist training in dyslexia for teachers and specifically in literacy programmes for other members of staff who teach children with dyslexia. Specialist literacy programmes were considered by SENCOs as vital in order for dyslexic pupils to make progress.

In addition, this study revealed high percentages of teachers who admitted that lack of knowledge and time prohibited adequate differentiation of the curriculum for children with dyslexia. It is my view that this issue needs to be explored further by researchers and government policy makers as possible reasons which contribute to low literacy achievements.

1.2 Second assignment: 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused'.

The idea of my second assignment derived from the challenges I faced when I worked for the first time with a teenage girl with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties, who had been sexually abused. As a generic Educational Psychologist in a Local Authority, most of my work had been with children with high incidence special educational needs such as learning difficulties, dyslexia, autism, dyspraxia, social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD). Moreover, opportunities to work with child victims of sexual abuse were rare, mostly in a peripheral role with CAMHS, and coupled with a somewhat limited input from initial EP training, there was much to learn from research.

Apart from the above personal and professional reasons, the importance of raising awareness in schools about child sexual abuse and the impact it can have on children has been particularly highlighted at national and local level in the last few years. Since writing this assignment in 2009, the media (via story lines in popular 'soap' programmes', NSPCC campaigns and publicity on social networking sites) have tried to inform and alert the wider public about the high prevalence of child sexual abuse as well as sexual exploitation.

There is not an agreed definition of what constitutes child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation but there is definitely overlap. Traditionally, child sexual abuse has been associated with abuse by family members and involves:

'forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images ('Working Together to Safeguard children', 2006, p. 132).

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is usually -although not exclusively- inflicted by extra familial adults with financial gains:

'..... when young people receive 'something' (eg food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affections, gifts, money) as a result of performing sexual activities... In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect physical strength and/or economic resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common... involvement being characterised in the main by the child's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and /or emotional vulnerability' (Jago and Pearce, 2008, p.4)'

Some of the reasons why such crimes against children have attracted such a plethora of research studies involve its worrying high prevalence, hidden nature and the devastating and lasting impact that it can have on children. These reasons are elaborated further below.

Firstly, the high prevalence of CSA emerged in the first large, national study conducted by Cawson et al (2000) that showed that 16% of children aged under 16 had experienced sexual abuse during childhood, 11% of it was contact abuse. Similarly, the most recent research carried out by the NSPCC in 2009, involving 2,2275 children aged 11-17 and 1,761 18-24 year olds surveyed childhood experiences and revealed that one in nine young adults (11.3%) had been sexually assaulted, either by an adult or another child or young person. Of these, 4.7% had

been raped or forced into sex by another child and 3% had suffered sexual abuse, involving physical contact at the hands of a boyfriend, girlfriend or “date”.

Secondly, although these statistics are alarming, they do not show the real extent of the problem. Several research studies (such as Jensen et al, 2005, Goldman et al, 2003) have found that often children who are being sexually abused by a family member do not disclose it easily or early on due to fears of not being believed, of being taken into care or in case of CSE because of fear of hard, intimidation and lack of choice (Barnardos, 1998).

Thirdly, the impact of CSA and CSE can be significant and is often associated with several problems affecting the person’s health (sexually transmitted diseases and urinary infections), psychological state (depression, anxiety, anger, behaviour problems, an impaired sense of self, problems with sexuality), cognitive ability (poor concentration, inattentiveness, dissociation) and academic/ interpersonal skills (social competence, aggression, less trusting, being more socially withdrawn) (Itzin, 2006).

However, it should be pointed out that not every sexually abused child will have all these symptoms and combinations of them could occur at different stages of their life depending on the duration of the abuse, the age of the child when it happened, the violence involved, the parental support, the child’s cognitive ability, and in cases in which the abuse has been disclosed, the stage the legal processes are (Webster et al, 2004).

Some of the above difficulties can become long term, affecting not only the individuals and people around these children but also the resources of services who take up their care (Wurtele, 2009). These are motivating reasons for the government to be proactive and more research needs to take place especially into the ways that these children can supported in all settings including school.

To date there have been some positive developments such as raising awareness through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum of issues (such as puberty, safe sex, HIV/AIDS, abortion) with many organisations (such as the Sex Education Forum) arguing that PSHE should be a statutory subject. Topics such as the qualities of a relationship and implications of sexual maturation have been recommended for inclusion in the curriculum and could be an extension of raising awareness and educating children about CSA and CSE (FPA, 2011).

Teachers, parents and students' attitudes also seem to be positive towards making PSHE statutory. Blake (2006) found that 90% of teachers felt that PSHE should be made statutory across all key stages and 74 % of parents thought that schools should be required to provide comprehensive sex and relationships education as part of the national curriculum. Research by Briggs (2005) with male victims of abuse on what could have protected them from abuse, revealed that they all referred to education and in particular: sexuality education about male bodies which would have deprived paedophiles of some of their capacity to abuse by stimulating curiosity.

Another positive development has been the increasing spread of school based child sexual abuse prevention programmes, devised to raise awareness and educate about sexual abuse. Topping and Baron (2009) published a review of effectiveness

of such programmes which suggested that in the reviewed studies there was evidence of children having gained knowledge about child sexual abuse but also highlighted the need for more rigorous methodologies.

Finally, other developments such as school statutory requirements about child protection procedures, key government documents such as 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (2004), and Local Authority multidisciplinary initiatives (such as a project in the North West called 'Messenger') which are intended specifically for the protection of sexually exploited children and young people are positive steps towards protecting children from abuse, raise even more the importance of researching issues around the support that is available for children who have been sexually abused and who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The current research study I conducted started as an individual case study of a Year 9 girl, who was exhibiting emotional and behaviour difficulties that were believed to have started after she was sexually abused. Due to a sad development in the child's life, I had to abandon the case and consequently, I explored several mainstream teachers' views about the role of the mainstream school in supporting children who have been sexually abused. The original data gained from the girl's teachers was still included and added to further data collected by interviewing SENCOs, SEN teachers and teaching assistants who had some experience working with sexually abused children. Finally, I gained data from three young adults who were sexually abused as children and had received counselling from Barnardos.

1.3 Third assignment: 'The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention : a literature review'.

The importance of friendships amongst children from an early age has been identified in several empirical studies (Howes, 1983, Asher and Coie, 1990). Friendships equip children with the emotional and cognitive resources for successful adaptation to their social world (Hartup and Sancilio, 1986).

In the last two decades, social changes (such as increasing numbers of working mothers and single parent families) have made friendships more important than ever as children spend longer periods of time in organised groups. Lack of friendships especially due to peer rejection (rather than unpopularity) can be detrimental on a child's development and contribute to long term mental health difficulties (Cowen et al, 1973) as well as truancy and poor academic performance (Bagwell et al, 2001)

American Social Psychologists (such as Daniels, 2003) contend that schools as social laboratories can and should expand students' levels of cross group acceptance and interaction, especially in multicultural classrooms (Thompson and Byrnes, 2011). In the UK, in the past decade there has been recognition and a growing emphasis on the social and emotional aspects of school life. To that end, a range of programmes (such as SEAL, nurture groups by Bennathan and Boxall, 2000, 'Circle time' by Mosley, 1996) to support children with their friendships have been devised and implemented. The Department for Education and Skills (2005) has endorsed a number of such programmes and initiatives, one of which was the 'Circle of Friends' intervention.

The Circle of friends (CoF) was developed in Canada by Pearpoint and Forrester in 1982 and became widely spread in the UK through the training and resources produced by Colin Newton and Derek Wilson (1999). The simple structure of the programme and the clear, cohesive way in which the guidelines for conducting the sessions were outlined by Colin and Newton in their book has proved appealing to many schools and educationalists, including myself.

Originally, I became directly involved in implementing 'Circle of Friends' for children who were referred to me own to the fact that they experienced a range of social emotional problems and had no real friends in school. These ranged from children with a social communication disorder, children with learning difficulties, language impairments and anger management difficulties.

In the course of running 'Circle of Friends' sessions myself and through the training provided to schools, two important questions were raised, which made me wish to research this further and write a literature review as my third assignment.

The first question was around whether and in what way the original model of 'Circle of Friends' (as devised by Newton and Wilson, 1999) could be adapted to fit better the personality of shy children or children who were self conscious of their isolation. A minority of primary and secondary children for which we implemented 'Circle of Friends' and their parents, made comments about feeling initially uncomfortable (especially in the beginning) about being singled out. Below I will describe the original model and two adaptations which were made for children who did not want to stand out. For the purposes of this thesis, the adaptations will be called Model 2 and Model 3.

The original model involved a whole class session and at least six (6) follow up sessions with the focus child and his/her circle. The first session, which is thought to be the most influential, is run with the whole class except the focus child. The discussions are about: aims of the session, reference to the focus child's behaviour that needs help, getting the class views on the positive attributes of the child as well as behaviours they find difficult. It then moves on to ways to help the focus child, an empathy exercise on the importance of friendships and its impact on our lives, and problem solving about ways they can provide the focus child with more opportunities for friendships and help for his/her behaviour. Then, it concludes with enrolment of volunteers.

After that, there is a session with the 'volunteers friends' and the focus child. Topics of discussion involve: the aims of the programme, the reasons why children wanted to be part of the group, the positives about the focus child as well as situations where things don't go well. Some problem solving takes place and targets are decided. The follow up sessions include a warm up exercise, sharing of good news regarding situations where the focus child did well, success towards targets, discussion about blockages towards the targets and possible solutions as well as new target setting.

Model 2 (developed by Shotton, 1998) suits better children who are self conscious of their isolation and do not want to be singled out, and throughout the intervention the focus child is not singled out.

The purpose of this model remains to help the particular child to get to know better a small group of children (the circle of friends) and to make and maintain more friendships without the volunteers knowing the real reason for initiating this. Discussions are about the importance of friendships, feelings of isolation,

times/reasons in one's life when there may be problems with friendships and what feelings that may bring up, an exercise on personal friendships/ relationships in one's life and completion of a sociometric questionnaire. The latter looks at peer acceptance e.g who plays with whom at lunch time, who they consider close friends, etc. Discussions at weekly meetings revolve around worries/problems/good things that happened in the previous week and activities aim at building self esteem, relationships or training of social skills.

Model 3 (developed by Barratt and Randall, 2004) has similar aims and content to the ones described in Model 2 and again no one is identified as in need of being helped to make friends. The difference with Model 3 is that several circles are set up in class around two or more isolated children who are not singled out. In this way, all the children in the class experience the same circle activities and the class perceptions on issues such as the importance of friendships and the reasons why certain children behave in certain ways improve at the same time.

The second question which became pertinent while I was running the circles was the effectiveness of 'Circles of Friends' including the new models. My personal impression and teachers' with whom I worked impressions (based on informal observations and children's statements) was that the targeted children improved in making friends, had maintained at least one friend medium term, and for those with behaviour difficulties some of the challenging behaviours reduced. However, there was absence of systematically collated evaluation data, mainly due to time constraints as schools which took on board this programme had to spend relatively large amounts of time running them and could not afford further time to evaluate it.

As with any programme though, it is important to measure systematically the impact against specific targets as people's impressions can be deceptive (Robson, 2011).

This became another reason why investigating the effectiveness of the programme was important. Having looked at the American literature, the scarcity of evaluation studies was noticeable. I was able to locate only a couple of published papers (Pearpoint and Forrester, 1992 and Calabrese et al, 2008) in which there was no description of the exact structure, process and content of the programme. For example, in Calabrese et al's study, there is only brief reference to students with disabilities being paired with 'buddies' who provide social inclusion opportunities.

In contrast, in the English literature, although there are not many published studies, they all involve evaluating the same version of the programme which follows the guidelines recommended by Newton and Wilson (2003). Consequently, I included in this study eight, English published and four unpublished evaluation studies which were conducted in the UK after 1998. The reason for choosing this period was because 1998 was the year of the Education Reform Act and the advent of the National Curriculum in England, which meant that the children in schools which implemented the CoF were more likely to have had similar curriculum experiences (especially regarding the social emotional aspects of learning) and resource pressures (regarding availability of staff who could become leaders of CoF).

All the evaluation findings were positive although there were methodological limitations such as small sample size, lack of follow ups and lack of controlled groups. The studies revealed improvements in terms of behaviour of the targeted child (Gus, 2000, Bowden, 2003), empathy and understanding of the circle members towards the targeted child (Whitaker et al, 1998), closer friendships between the

targeted child/ren and the members of the circle (Shotton,1998, Edward, 2001, Barrett and Randall, 2004) understanding of their own and others' feelings (Taylor and Burden, 2000), increased levels of acceptance of the isolated child (Frederickson, 2003, Edwards, 2001, McKay, 2009) and reduction in rejecting the focus child although this did not reach levels of statistical significance in Frederickson et al's study (2005). In the latter study, peer acceptance was found to be reduced medium term but there are methodological limitations, which need to be considered before doubting the medium term effectiveness of the programme.

Since the writing of my third assignment, a new evaluation study was published (James and Leyden, 2010) which examined the contribution of CoF towards achieving positive outcomes for socially isolated children in schools. It involved interviewing 25 facilitators of CoF in mainstream schools in a large Shire county and an outer London suburb. The targeted pupils from Years 2 to Year 7 had experienced difficulties in their social interaction with peers and had underlying difficulties ranging from ADHD, Asperger's and Down's Syndrome. They were identified by inviting EPs and advisory support teachers to nominate schools where the circles intervention had been used and which met the following criteria of: the circle groups had run for at least 6 weeks, the circle occurred within the last 2 years and positive outcomes were perceived and interventions were set up within the Newton and Wilson guidelines (2003). The data was analysed by using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) with the aim of gaining a greater theoretical appreciation of the psycho social processes underpinning 'Circle of Friends'. Contributing factors to these processes are explored below:

This analysis of the programme identified movement from the core psychological process which moved from a closed to a more open social system. During this movement, important factors who influenced the effectiveness of the intervention were the selection of the group members, the development of the group cohesion and the role of the facilitator. In particular, the role of the facilitator in developing and maintaining group cohesion is stressed. The facilitator needs to keep the meetings purposeful, act as an advisor, motivate the group, promote open and honest discussions and allow the group to take responsibility.

Other group processes such as feedback and self disclosure encouraged changes in the circle group's attitudes by helping them to renegotiate their views about the focus child (Newton and Wilson, 1999) or their attributions about the sources for the child's behaviour (Bierman, 2004). Certain behaviours of the group members such as watchfulness, verbal and non verbal prompts, praise, signalling problems to adults and social interventions with peers also contributed to its effectiveness. Overall, the circle members' evolving attitudes, conversations and actions influenced class perceptions of the child and increased levels of acceptance towards the focus child.

1.4) Research training undertaken

During the course of the current degree I attended several seminars and workshops some of which covered the following topics on methodology:

Library workshop: using electronic resources, Blackboard, search engines

Getting started with EndNote

Introduction to quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics- mean, mode, bar

charts.

Questionnaire design, types of questions, planning for analysis, piloting, reliability issues

Focus groups

Grounded theory

SPSS for social sciences

Writing a literature Review

Research paradigms, hypotheses and research questions

Thematic and discourse analysis

NVivo

Case study designs

I found all the above topics and sessions informative and relevant as the majority of them covered methods which I subsequently used for my three assignments.

More specifically, I used a postal questionnaire survey and some follow up semi structured interviews for my first assignment while for the second assignment, I used a fully structured interview with SENCos/Special needs teachers and teaching assistants in secondary schools while a questionnaire based interview was conducted by their Counsellor to three young adults who were sexually abused as children. In the third assignment which was a literature review, a wide library and electronic search took place.

I think that with regards to the sessions on software packages such as the SPSS and NVivo more sessions of a practical nature would have been welcomed as an opportunity to practise further, consolidate the information taught under guidance and gain the necessary confidence to use them during our research. Similarly, I think that the topic of thematic and discourse analysis is so wide and rich that it needs to be taught in several sessions and practised more on real texts.

SECTION 2 – THE THREE ASSIGNMENTS

Section two comprises three assignments which examined interventions in mainstream schools for children with dyslexia, children who have experienced sexual abuse and are socially isolated and the feedback received by the examiners.

2.1 First assignment: ‘Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school’ .

2.1.1. ABSTRACT

Support for children with dyslexia as well as other special educational needs is an important issue as it can affect schools, parents, children and LEAs significantly but in different ways (academic, social, emotional, financial, etc). However, it is a relatively under researched area.

The aim of this piece of research was to elicit SENCOs views on the forms of support they provide for children with dyslexia and their effectiveness. More specifically, I concentrated on four elements: teachers’ skills/training needs around dyslexia, the use of classroom support assistants, the implementation of specific programmes on literacy and differentiation. I also looked at teachers’ views on the kind of provision children with severe dyslexia need.

Schools’ views were elicited using postal questionnaires addressed to SENCOs and by conducting some follow up interviews with a few class teachers and SENCOs in order to clarify more some questions around differentiation.

The results revealed that SENCOs thought that schools use frequently classroom support assistants, withdrawal sessions for specific literacy programmes, and most

of their teachers differentiate for most of the time. Specific programmes for literacy were valued the most by SENCOs. Regarding differentiation, it became clear that teachers might have slightly different perceptions of what it means and looks like. The main factors influencing differentiation were perceived to be lack of time and skill.

2.1.2 Rationale of the study

Part of my role as an Educational Psychologist in a Local Educational Authority (LEA) has been to contribute to projects that the LEA undertakes aiming at building capacity in schools regarding SEN (Special Educational Needs). One such project in the North West was about promoting in schools the Dyslexia Friendly Initiative. Standards Funds gave the flexibility (alongside tight time scales!) to support financially schools in their participation in such a project. The timing of the project was particularly good as, there were reports highlighting the fact that the National Literacy Strategy had not brought the expected results in raising children's standards in literacy, which could also have an impact on children with dyslexia.

One of the first steps of the project was to look at what other LEAs had done to promote such an initiative. Looking at training needs and delivering such training seemed to be a starting for some LEAs such as Swansea. In order to gain this kind of information, I thought of conducting a survey in schools. Alongside finding out about training needs, I thought that it would be useful to gain a broad view of what schools were already offering to children with dyslexia and their views about its effectiveness. This survey is the centre of this assignment.

2.1.3 Research questions

My research questions were the following:

- What kind of support exists in mainstream schools for children with dyslexia and which ones are considered effective against progress in National Curriculum Levels and targets on the IEPs (Individual Educational Plans)?
- What are teachers' training needs in teaching children with dyslexia?
- Are teachers' views on the inclusion of children with severe dyslexia positive?

In order to explore further these questions, I carried out a postal survey to all the SENCOs. Upon the analysis of the data, a query emerged regarding SENCOs' perception of differentiation. Consequently, I decided to have some follow up interviews in order to explore the theme of differentiation further. I also took the opportunity to ask some questions around the school's support for children with dyslexia.

The additional research questions were the following:

- What is teachers' understanding of differentiation?
- Have teachers had any training that has helped them differentiate?
- What affects opportunities for differentiation?

2.1.4 Outline of the project

In June 2004, a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was posted to all secondary and primary mainstream schools in the North West LA which I work. The questionnaires were addressed to the SENCO of each school, the name of which was asked to be

provided in order to encourage SENCOs to consider carefully their answers and enable me to follow it up in case any clarifications were needed.

The questionnaire was piloted with two (2) SENCOs (1 from a primary and 1 from a secondary) and a couple of minor changes were made. Although the timing of sending the questionnaire was not very good – SATs week- the return was rather satisfactory (55%). However, I sent it again because I was keen to have the views from the majority of schools. At the end, 72 questionnaires were returned which was 62% of the sample.

During the analysis of the answers from the questionnaires, some of them regarding differentiation of work were noticeable. They derived from a SENCO in a school that I had been working with for years and they differed from my own perception about the frequency and type of differentiation that I thought occurred in that school. I decided to explore further the theme of differentiation by conducting an interview with two (2) SENCOs and two (2) teachers.

Following the analysis of the questionnaires, I produced a report of the findings, which was emailed to all the schools and SEN services in the LEA. At the same time, the planning of our first training started taking into account SENCOs' expressed views in the questionnaire.

2.1.5 Literature review

In this section, I will look at the literature on supporting children with dyslexia in schools. Although the support arrangements for dyslexia incorporate many elements, I will concentrate on teachers' skills/ training needs around dyslexia, the use of

intervention programmes for dyslexia, the use of classroom support assistants and differentiation of lessons.

In this essay, my conceptualisation of dyslexia derives from the definition formulated by a Working Party commissioned by The British Psychological Society (BPS, 1996). According to that,

'Dyslexia is evident when fluent word reading and or spelling develops incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the word level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities.'

Although the dyslexia debate regarding its definition, causes and 'cure' goes back a few decades, research into the impact of the learning environment, whole school support for children with dyslexia and its effectiveness is one that started later on.

For the first time in the early 90s, parental dissatisfaction and other financial pressures on LEAs (Local Educational Authority) led to the development of dyslexia friendly initiatives, which looked at the provision for children with dyslexia at a whole school level. Guidance on good practice was given not only at a school but also at an LEA level. One of the first LEAs, which developed a Dyslexia Friendly Policy, was Swansea (Springett, 2002 in Riddick 2006).

Swansea LEA reviewed their provision for children with dyslexia (at that point the term specific learning difficulties was in favour) and following consultation with parents/teachers, delivery of training and a conference with BDA, they developed a policy which encompassed five (5) important elements:

- Dyslexia awareness training for all teaching staff

- One specialist teacher at least in most schools to advise other teachers

- Close partnership with parents and children

- A resource bank in each school of dyslexia friendly materials

- A whole school policy for supporting dyslexic children

The British Dyslexia Association - BDA (2005) have been reviewing regularly the standards which schools have to meet in order to achieve their Quality Mark, and they involve four main strands:

- 1) Leadership and Management in the school (whole school approach)

- 2) Teaching and Learning: underpinning knowledge, assessment and identification, programmes of learning: regarding the whole class, homework and other such as marking and assessment policy

- 3) Classroom environment (curriculum and learning environment) involving access strategies

- 4) Partnership and liaison with parents, pupils, carers, governors and other concerned parties.

Although all the above areas are important in order for provision for children with dyslexia to be effective, in this essay I will only concentrate on some elements identified in the areas of 'Teaching and Learning' and the 'Classroom Environment'.

In the heart of teaching and learning is of course the teacher. Therefore, in reviewing the support that schools have in teaching children with dyslexia, I think that one

needs to ensure that teachers do have the required skills/training in this area. Wadlington (2005) summarises research findings that have concluded that general education teachers may not be adequately prepared to teach students with dyslexia, in the same way that special education teachers, also, appear to have somewhat limited knowledge. She continues that education programs are lacking in preparing teachers to teach reading in particular. Many teachers have not had instruction that leads them to develop knowledge about the structure of English language, reading development and reading difficulties.

There is also the notion that reading education, special education, and remedial reading education are often treated as three autonomous domains without integration or collaboration.

Looking at teachers' skills in teaching generally children with SEN in one UK teacher training institution study, Avramidis et al (2000) stress the need for every teacher training institution to examine carefully coherence within courses and the nature of school based work with regards to SEN. They strongly argue that prospective teachers need to have early and continuous exposure to students with special educational needs, preferably through field experiences in inclusive settings. One of the most important findings of their study was the identification of the participants' lack of confidence in meeting the IEP (Individual Educational Plan) requirements of children with special educational needs. They also found that teacher trainees' confidence lessens significantly according to the stage at which the pupils are perceived as standing in the statementing process. In this study, the interaction between skills, knowledge, experience and attitudes towards inclusion is further investigated. Inclusive attitudes in turn have been proved to create higher in

satisfactory learning environments as perceived by pupils (Monsen and Frederickson, 2004).

Avramidis et al (2000) in another study of teachers' attitudes to inclusion have found that teachers with university based professional development appeared both to hold more positive attitudes and to be more confident in meeting the IEP requirements of students with SEN. The importance of training at both pre service and post service levels in the development of teachers' support for inclusion is stressed. Teachers who had received external to the school training were found to be more confident in meeting the IEP requirements of students with SEN than those who had received school based training or no training at all. Out of the eighty one (81) primary and secondary teachers who have been asked, 69 % of the total sample reported that they needed more support in teaching classes that included children with more significant SEN. Just under fifty percent (49.38%) asked for more knowledge on how to deal with specific learning difficulties (alongside behaviour and emotional problems).

Dyson and Skidmore (1994) also report in their study of the provision for children with specific learning difficulties in twenty five (25) Scottish and ten (10) English secondary schools in that 19 % of the teachers identified lack of training in specific learning difficulties as one of the threats in their provision for children with dyslexia. Although this percentage is relatively low, one needs to keep in mind that the participating schools were identified by the LEA as schools, which had or were in the process of developing provision for children with dyslexia, which may imply that there was already some awareness and experience in the field.

Another important part of the support for children with dyslexia is the implementation of specific literacy programmes. Some initiatives have happened over the years which resulted in positive changes regarding the direct teaching of reading and spelling at the word level as well as the overall quality of literacy teaching. At an attempt to improve generally literacy attainments, in 1994, the DfES introduced the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). Although there have been improvements, reports on literacy achievement at Key Stage 1 and 2, confirm that the Strategy has not brought the expected results (National Literacy Strategy, 2003). In 2002, 7% of the children left KS2 below Level 3 in English. The reasons for this are several and complex, but they are not the focus of this essay. It is mentioned here though because the quality of literacy teaching is also bound to impact on the progress children with dyslexia.

In parallel with the advent of the National Literacy Strategy, a revived emphasis on word reading and spelling emerged again resulting in several schools following 'remedial', structured programmes in reading and spelling, implemented mainly during withdrawal sessions. Riddick (p. 2, 2006) points out that:

'If word-level difficulties in fluent and accurate word reading and spelling are central to the definition of dyslexia, dyslexia friendly practices should encompass a specific focus on helping children with special needs address such difficulties directly....'

Intervention programmes to overcome significant literacy difficulties are often part of the Wave 3 programmes introduced by the NLS and in accordance to the graduated response of the Code of Practice (2001). (NOTE: The NLS assumes 3 'Waves' of support for pupils. Wave 1 is the high quality Literacy Hour, Wave 2 small group intervention programmes for pupils who need to catch up and do not necessarily

have SEN and Wave 3 Interventions are specific targeted interventions for pupils identified as requiring SEN support}

Indeed, intervention programmes have been found to be an important part of the support that schools identify as significant in dealing with dyslexia. Dyson and Skidmore (1994) report that 85% of the participated teachers reported direct tuition (extraction) using structured teaching approaches.

The effective use of these programmes however, requires (The National Literacy Strategy, 2003) effective monitoring and evaluating of progress after a short period of time. The NLS also draws attention to the fact that 'long interventions do not necessarily produce proportionally greater benefits' and in the case of a child not achieving at least as twice the normal rate of progress through a Wave 3 intervention, an evaluation of the way forward is recommended.

Similarly, Brooks (2002) in his review of several widely known intervention programmes for literacy stresses the importance of evaluation and gives an account of important information that needs to be included in every scheme that is evaluated. Amongst others, information such as the date the evaluation occurred, the age range of the children involved, characteristics of the children, numbers of children in experimental and control groups, pre and post average standardized scores and standard deviations for every group involved, the length of the intervention are identified. He also affirms that interventions longer than one term do not necessarily produce proportionally greater benefits.

In the recent years, the role of the learning support assistants (LSAs) has become a rapidly developing and vital one in the teaching of children with dyslexia. Farrell et al

(2000) have researched the role of the LSAs, their management and training in a variety of settings including mainstream schools. In mainstream schools, the role of the LSAs seems to involve the following:

- contributing to reports for a child's IEP or Annual Review meetings
- carrying out programmes of work in the classroom under the guidance of the teacher
- carrying out detailed work on literacy or other relevant skills in a withdrawal situation, which may be planned by the class teacher or sometimes, even by the LSA her/himself. My own experience as an EP is that LSAs will often implement structured literacy programmes (such as Toe by Toe) after having received very little or no training.
- implementing IEPs that have been planned by a class teacher
- support children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) as well as the rest of the class when they need it. This support apparently has been very crucial and versatile especially during the literacy hour
- planning the work for SEN children with the class teacher.

In Farrell et al's study (2000), all the teachers and managers interviewed found LSAs important in making the inclusion of SEN children possible in their school.

In the same study, they recommend further strategies in order for their work to be more effective in schools and classrooms. These are the following: LSAs and teachers need to work cooperatively in order to a) support the learning and participation of pupils and to b) prepare the lesson plans and materials. LSAs can contribute in a useful way to the evaluation of outcomes of lessons, teachers' management strategies should provide clear guidance as to how the LSAs should

work in the classrooms and schools should have policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of the LSAs (pp 52-59).

The DfES has also recognized the importance of LSAs and has provided detailed guidelines (2002) around methods of evaluating their different roles such as partnership with teachers, subject knowledge, relationship with the child, supporting groups, individuals and the whole class. Avramidis et al, (2000) found that in one LEA, 61% of the total sample of teachers wanted classroom support assistants to be constant and well trained.

Dyson and Skidmore (1994) report that in their study, 'cooperative teaching' (ie in class support) was quoted by all the participating schools. Nonetheless, 63% of the teachers identified lack of human resources a threat to their support system for children with dyslexia. This was despite the fact that the participating schools were or already had developed whole school approaches for children with dyslexia. Teachers reported that the extra support they wanted could have been used for one to one reading, scribing, transcription services and direct tuition.

Similarly, Avramidis et al (2000) found that 69.13% of their sample reported that they needed more support in teaching classes that included pupils with more significant SEN.

Another important form of support for children with dyslexia (which is not different in some instances from other categories of SEN) is the differentiation of the curriculum. Although differentiation of work in order to match children's level of ability is in the centre of the teacher's role, I think that, among teachers or other professionals,

there may not be a comprehensive understanding or consensus as to what differentiation is when it comes to children with special educational needs.

There are not many books or articles, which define differentiation and/ or have looked into how it is applied in the U.K schools for children with SEN and especially dyslexia. I will outline here some findings starting with a definition of differentiation and different types of differentiation.

Lewis (1992) defines differentiation as the process of adjusting teaching to meet the learning needs of individual children ...and promote the pupils' success in learning (p24).

For Moore (1992) differentiation is synonymous with good teaching, and he relates it to ensuring that pupils get work, which matches their level of attainment and different background, and it achieves success .

Lewis acknowledges that although there are many ways of differentiation but identifies ten (10) main ones:

- 1) Content: choosing one reading for example programme for one child and a slightly different for another
- 2) Interests: differentiation of teaching content should reflect children's interests
- 3) Pace: a relatively popular type. It has to do with children undertaking similar activities at a different time and pace.
- 4) Level: it goes alongside the pace and it has to do with the level of difficulty of the task

- 5) Access: it has to do with the way materials are presented and when the mode of presentation (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) varies according to the child's learning style.
- 6) Response (or outcome). Each child can give an answer to a question in a different way (in writing, through a drawing/ diagram, orally, etc)
- 7) Curricular Sequence: it enables the children to dip into different parts of the topic at different times
- 8) Structure: it occurs when teaching is planned so that some children learn in chunks while others receive step-by-step curricula.
- 9) Teacher time: Teachers divide their time differently according to the children's need.
- 10) Teaching style: it has to do with the different approaches a teacher uses in the classroom (group discussion, didactic, etc).

Moore (1992) identifies another important requirement, the appropriate grouping both within the classroom and across the key stage subject department.

Thomson and Barton (1992) discuss some dilemmas about the differentiation of the curriculum. Two important elements in differentiation (the teacher must have a detailed understanding of how children learn and the children must be able to make some choice on what they learn) require the teacher to spend a lot of time in individual assessments, restructure tasks to match their level of ability and have adequate resources. In studies discussed further below (Dyson, 1992 and Avramidis and et, 2000) these two prerequisites are often obstacles to differentiation.

Dyson and Skidmore's study (1994) in thirty five (35) English and Scottish secondary schools found that differentiation of teaching materials was reported by

the vast majority of their participating teachers. This involved individualised tasks, simplified worksheets and alternative means of recording. However, there was a very good partnership between the Learning Support and Subject Teachers in helping them to achieve this.

Despite this, they still felt that differentiation was extremely difficult due to the increased amount of workload. Some of the interviewed teachers talked about differentiation of pace, methodology, instructions and resources. One teacher made a slight distinction between the 'differentiation of curriculum content which is not appropriate for pupils with dyslexia and differentiation of curriculum delivery, which is appropriate'. I think that this may be only one form of differentiation, possibly more appropriate in the case of more able children with dyslexia. When that study took place dyslexia was perceived as a difficulty experienced by children of average or above average ability experience. However, our current understanding of dyslexia means that dyslexic children's cognitive ability may vary and depending on the task and the objective, all different types of differentiation are suitable

Avramidis et al (2000) also report that 39.50% of the participated teachers required adequate curriculum resources and equipment to meet the needs of pupils with SEN.

Closing this section, and considering the support arrangements for children with dyslexia in general, I would like to stress, that although provision in schools tends and should be 'eclectic, and pragmatic' (Dyson and Skidmore, 1994), there is a need for regular evaluation, monitoring and accountability which also tend to be

some of the characteristics of highly inclusive and highly performing schools (Dyson and Farrell, 2004).

2.1. 6 Methodology

In this study, I have used two main methods to gain data: a postal questionnaire and semi structured interviews with a small number of teachers and SENCoS.

2.1.6.a Sample procedures and sample used in the study

As it was important to get information and the views of as many teachers in the LEA as possible, I decided to involve SENCoS instead of class teachers mainly for the following two reasons:

-As the overall manager of SEN (Special Educational Needs) in a school, the SENCo should have an overall view of the provision in their school for children with dyslexia and teachers' training needs and therefore, it should represent the views of the majority.

- In contrast to the class teachers, SENCoS have been allocated time to address SEN issues in their school, therefore they were more likely to have the time to fill in the questionnaire.

All (115) primary and secondary schools in the LEA were sent a questionnaire. In the follow up interviews however, only two (2) schools were chosen on the basis of good working relationships over the years and their experience and practice in SEN being very different. I interviewed one class teacher and one SENCo from each school.

2.1.6.b The use of questionnaire

The choice of a postal questionnaire was largely due to time and human resources constraints. One of the main advantages of using a questionnaire in general is the fact that, in comparison to other methods, you can get information from a lot of people relatively quickly (Gillham, 2000). Indeed, in my project there were huge time pressures to get answers a) in order to inform the next step of training and use the available funding in a short period of time b) ensure that the training to be planned would incorporate the views of the vast majority of teachers in schools.

Other advantages of using a questionnaire had to do with:

1) the fact that there was less pressure on interviewees to give an immediate response and they could complete it when it suited them. In some cases, I was asking SENCOs to look for some information in their school records and discuss some questions with other members of staff. A SENCO's daily schedule is usually quite busy with a lot of unplanned, extra jobs to take care of and little flexibility and time to spend on issues not directly related to the school. I thought that it would have been helpful to them to have enough notice and money to get cover to complete the questionnaire,

2) the relevant easy analysis of structured answers and

3) the standardisation of questions, which is to a large extent also dependent on the clarity of the questions and how they will be understood by the respondents.

Some typically occurring problems such as accuracy and completeness of answers, respondents' ability to record their answers accurately, motivation and trust towards the researcher were taken into account (Gillham, 2000). Regarding the latter, at the

time of the study, I had been working in this LEA for 7 years and lots of the schools were aware of my work and my specific interest in dyslexia either through direct work with children in their school or through LEA work (conferences, etc).

Nonetheless, some other disadvantages mentioned in the literature (Manly, 1992 and Gillham, 2000) such as social desirability in answering questions (especially in the case of named questionnaires), inherited difficulties in constructing a good questionnaire and their impact not only while collecting answers but while analysing the data, and the assumption that the respondent does have or will get the information you are asking did cause some difficulties in this study. This is discussed further in the section of Validity –Reliability.

An alternative way of having counteracted some of the limitations of using a questionnaire, especially for questions about views on the effectiveness of intervention programmes, teachers' views on provision for children with severe dyslexia, etc could have been to conduct more interviews with teachers, senior management and having direct access to school records. Through observations I could have also collected first hand evidence on questions that had to do with themes such as frequency of differentiation. Lack of human resources and time did not allow me to do this.

In the above type of questions, I assumed good knowledge of school practices and communication with all members of staff, which is not often the case due to time pressures and other issues. By asking, for instance, SENCOs questions around differentiation and progress against IEP (Individual Educational Plan) targets and NCLs (National Curriculum Levels), staff's views on the inclusion of children with severe dyslexia, I had the expectation that, had they not known the answer, they

would look for this data. This expectation was reinforced by the fact that some money was offered to enable them to get a supply teacher to cover perhaps some of their teaching commitments. However, there was no way of knowing if this had indeed happened.

Overall, for the purposes of this study, the advantages were judged to be greater than the disadvantages.

2.1.6 c Construction and piloting of the questionnaire

In the absence of a published questionnaire that explored the varied topics I was interested in, I constructed my own questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Alongside the questionnaire, I sent a covering letter (see Appendix B) in which I explained the purpose of the survey and their role. In the letter, I also defined the term dyslexia and its reference to both diagnosed and undiagnosed dyslexics. The date by which the questionnaires had to be returned was stated in bold and the SENCOs were provided with a self addressed, pre paid envelop. I attempted to motivate the SENCOs and also stress its importance by offering the opportunity to claim the equivalent of an hour supply cover to free them to fill it in.

I piloted the questionnaire with two (2) SENCOs who I knew very well and had worked closely in a number of cases/projects over they years. One was from a secondary school and the other from a primary. After giving them some time to read and fill in the questionnaire, I met with them and asked them for their honest opinion about any problems they may have encountered while completing the questionnaire. Only a couple of small changes (rewording two questions) were recommended. In retrospect, had I piloted it with more SENCOs, I may have been able to identify early

on some problems, around the issue of the diverse understanding of differentiation. In addition to this, I could have used a focus group and semi structured interviews. Due to time constraints, I was able only to do this small pilot and have an unstructured conversation with the involved SENCOs.

I gave special attention to the presentation of the questionnaire, ie looking uncluttered, having a clear structure, not being lengthy and having an alternation of different types of questions. I had a combination of Ranking, Close and Open questions.

2.1.6 d Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the degree to which a survey instrument assesses what it sets out to measure. Important factors for validity such as the wording of the questions and the definition of terms were considered and checked to some degree at the pilot stage. However, the concept of differentiation should have been defined in the covering letter. Due to the fact that it did not emerge as a problem at the pilot phase and I perceived it as a core teaching skill, I did not include it in the covering letter.

Construct validity demonstrates that a survey distinguishes between the people who do and do not have certain characteristics. In this study, this was taken into account. I believe that SENCOs would have extensive knowledge about the appropriate provision for SEN children and other relevant topics.

Stability (test re test reliability) was not possible to be checked due to time constraints for teachers and myself. Reliability refers to the high correlation between scores from one time to another (Gillham, 2000). In this study, I ensured that I had similar questions which were slightly differently worded, especially in the case of views on

effectiveness of support arrangements. Reliability was checked at the pilot stage and no problems were found.

2.1.6 e Interviews

Following the analysis of the questionnaires, some questions emerged and for this reason, I decided to conduct some interviews in order to clarify

I contacted two (2) of the SENCOs who participated in the questionnaire survey and whom I knew very well. I asked them to ask one class teacher in their school to be interviewed by me, and they arranged it for me.

I conducted an interview with two (2) SENCOs and 2 teachers. Each SENCO and teacher came from the same school.

I made sure that issues around confidentiality, confidence towards the researcher, debriefing, letting them know the findings, etc discussed (please see sections on 'Questionnaire'). Due to the fact that the interviews were follow-ups from the questionnaire survey, I did not do a pilot. The interviews were semi structured. Although the questions were more or less the same, there was some rephrasing and freedom to discuss issues that the SENCOs and teachers brought up.

During the interviews, I considered carefully issues such as listening more than talking, posing the questions in a clear but also non threatening and unbiased way, friendly body language, etc.

2.1.6 f Data analysis

I analysed the data I obtained from the questionnaires through the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Foster, 1998). I used simple, descriptive statistics-

frequencies, as in my study, I was interested in the views of the majority. All the findings are discussed under the relevant research questions and the frequencies are described in tables, bar charts, pie charts or histograms.

I handwrote the content of the interviews while the interviewees were talking to me. During discussions when it was important to keep eye contact and allow the conversation to flow naturally, I only wrote some key words, which helped me remember and record the full answers shortly after the end of the interview. In this essay, the data from the interviews is categorised and discussed in the relevant research question section.

2.1.6 g Ethical considerations

In this study, I have seriously considered ethical issues (Manly, 1992) that have to do with the participants right to confidentiality (which is even more important in the case of named questionnaires), informed consent, adequate debriefing and appropriate arrangements for the interviews, (i.e at times that were convenient to the SENCOs heavy schedule). All schools received by email a report that informed them of the findings.

Finally, I tried to adhere to the Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants (BPS, 2000) according to which the participants should have confidence in the investigators. Although I did not know all the SENCOs who replied the questionnaire, I knew quite a lot of them through EP work in different schools over the years. My participation in LEA projects/central training, hopefully will have reassured the ones who haven't worked with me before.

2.1.7 Results and discussion

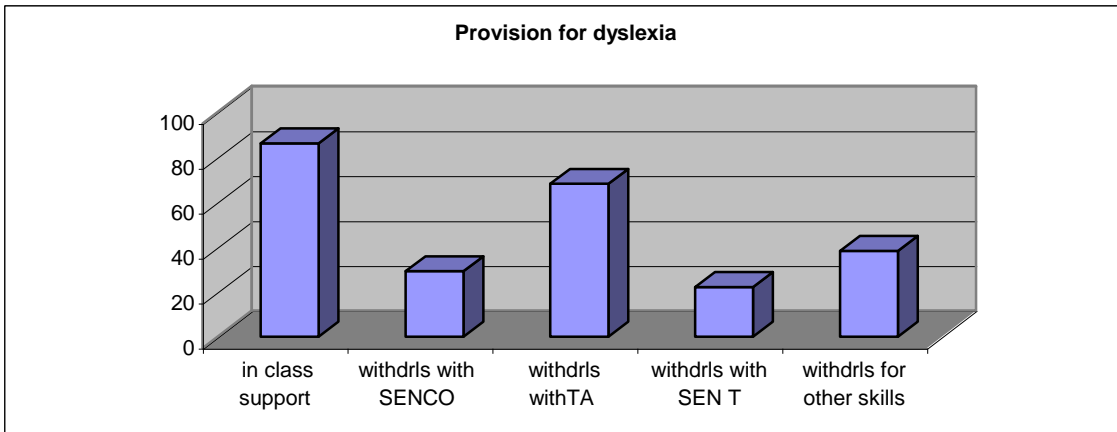
In this section I will report the findings of this study in conjunction with the literature review.

Research Question 1: *What kind of support exists in mainstream schools for children with dyslexia and which ones do SENCOs consider effective against progress in National Curriculum Levels and targets on the IEPs?*

In the questionnaire survey, SENCOs were asked to tick from a list the support arrangements their school had for pupils with dyslexia. They ticked all that applied to their school. At that stage of the questionnaire, I wanted them to concentrate on only two (2) specific elements of support; in class support and withdrawal sessions. In other questions, I explored further other forms of support such as intervention programmes and differentiation. Table 1 outlines the results:

SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA	N	%
In class support	62	86.1
Withdrawal sessions with a Teaching Assistant (TA) teaching literacy	49	68.1
Withdrawal sessions targeting lessons/skills other than literacy	28	38.9
Withdrawal sessions with the SENCO teaching literacy	21	29.2
Withdrawal sessions with an SEN teacher teaching literacy	16	22.2

Table 1: Support arrangements for children with dyslexia



SENCOs ticked all that applied. As one can see in- class support is used by the vast majority of participating schools. The next most popular form of support for children with dyslexia appears to be withdrawals with LSAs. These two forms of support were found also to be popular in the literature (Dyson and Skidmore, 1994 and Farrell, 2000). A relatively small percentage of schools are using the SENCO or an SEN teacher to withdraw children. Time and cost issues are likely to play in role in this.

SENCOs were then asked to choose the kind of arrangements that help children with dyslexia improve their literacy skills. Improvement was to be considered against literacy targets on IEPs or National Curriculum Levels. This question did not set out by no means to evaluate support arrangements. It meant only to get broad views on effectiveness of arrangements by looking at information about IEP targets or NCLs. As discussed in the methodology it is difficult to know to what extent SENCOs considered these things and if the data collected did reflect reality. Half of the SENCOs found withdrawals for literacy with LSAs more effective in comparison to other arrangements such as in class support (36.1 %) or withdrawals with the SENCO (33.3 %) or withdrawals for other than literacy skills (15.3%).

Here it appears that although in class support exists quite a lot in schools, withdrawals to look specifically at literacy skills is valued more highly. It may reflect the fact that SENCOs have identified that in dyslexia, the development of the specific (literacy) skills requires careful, direct instruction, which may be difficult to achieve only with support in the classroom. On the other hand, it may have been based on opinion rather than empirical data. Although LSAs are very useful to teachers and have an important role to play, has their effectiveness in the progress of individual children been evaluated effectively? The need for schools to evaluate carefully and monitor the kind of support arrangements that work best for different groups of special needs is vital and consists of a recommendation in Dyson and Skidmore's study and DfES relevant publications.

In a similar question where SENCOs had to choose (from a slightly different list which however, gave them the chance to provide their own view) the most important factor that in their experience contributes to progress, differentiation came very low (13.9%) alongside in class support (13.9%), while again withdrawals for specific literacy programmes came top (62.5%). For details, see Table 2 below. This finding again stresses the value that specific literacy programmes has for SENCOs, which is encouraging but it raises another question around the importance they place in differentiation, which should have also been recognized as a significant factor in a child's learning experiences and progress.

SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO PROGRESS	N	%
Withdrawals for specific programmes	45	62.5
In class support	10	13.9
Differentiation	10	13.9
Other	1	1.4
Total	66	91.7
Missing	6	8.3
Total	72	100. 0

Table 2: Support arrangements contributing to progress in dyslexia

Another interesting finding was that half of the schools were already teaching specific programmes for literacy difficulties and 50% of those thought that the children had made some progress while 43% thought that they had made a lot of progress. Overall, the view about the impact that these programmes have had on children's progress in literacy was very positive. This is in line with the current thinking in dyslexia around the importance of implementing structured, cumulative

literacy programmes in a consistent way, which tend to be delivered mainly during withdrawal sessions.

PROGRESS MADE ON SPECIFIC LITERACY PROGRAMMES	N	%
not at all	1	3.1
Little	1	3.1
Some	16	50.0
a lot	14	43.8
Total	32	100.0
Missing	2	

Table 3: Progress children made on specific literacy programmes

Research Question 2: ‘What are teachers’ training needs in teaching children with dyslexia?’

In the questionnaire survey, SENCOs were asked to rank nine topics of training that they would like to receive. There were 14 missing cases, which are not included in the percentages. Training on early identification by class teachers was chosen more frequently as the first choice by 43.1 %, SENCOs’ training in assessments was chosen second more frequently (24.1%) and training for class teachers to differentiate appropriately for children with dyslexia was chosen third more frequently (12.3%). Looking at the relatively high demand on training in early identification of dyslexia and differentiation as well as specific literacy programmes (that is discussed further down as a separate question), one could argue that teachers may not have been adequately prepared through their initial teacher or subsequent training in

these two practical issues around dyslexia that require more than just theoretical input at university.

Although in this question, a lot of SENCOs chose differentiation as the third most preferred topic of training, in another question, they stated that most of their teachers differentiate lessons most of the time. This makes me wonder if SENCOs do indeed differ in what constitutes differentiation or if there is an issue around the quality of existing differentiation that schools are not keen to openly admit. Below Table 4 displays these findings:

TRAINING TOPICS CHOSEN AS 1ST CHOICE	N	%
For class teachers to be able to identify children with dyslexia early on	25	43.1
For SENCOs to carry out assessments on reading, spelling and writing.	14	24.1
For class teachers to differentiate appropriately for children with dyslexia	7	12.3
For SENCOs on how to advise teachers and other members of staff on issues about dyslexia	6	10.3
For teaching assistants to support a child with dyslexia in class	2	3.4
For SENCOs to follow a programme for children with dyslexia	1	1.8
For SENCOs to give advice to parents on how to help their child with dyslexia at home	1	1.8
On specialist software packages on dyslexia	1	1.7

Table 4. SENCOs views on training needs

SENCOs were also asked if they thought it would be useful to receive training in a specific literacy programme such as Direct Phonics. Just over three quarters of SENCOs replied that it would be 'very useful' and under a quarter said that it would be 'useful'.

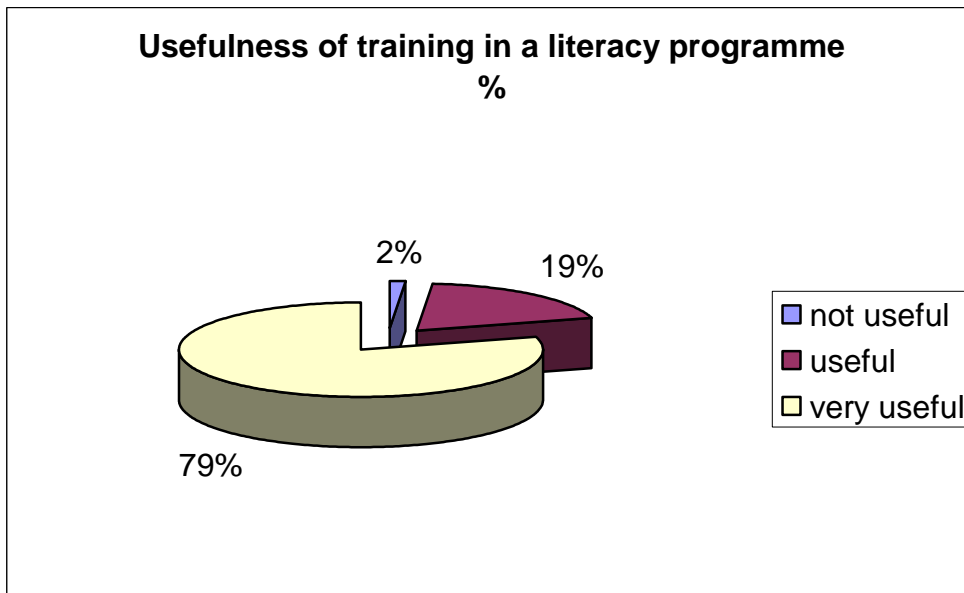


Figure 1: SENCOs views on usefulness of training in a specific literacy programme

Differentiation

Of the participating SENCOs, 63.8 % replied that the teachers in their school differentiated in most lessons for most of the time. 23.2% answered 'No' and 13% 'did not know'. Below there is a Pie Chart showing the results (Figure 2).

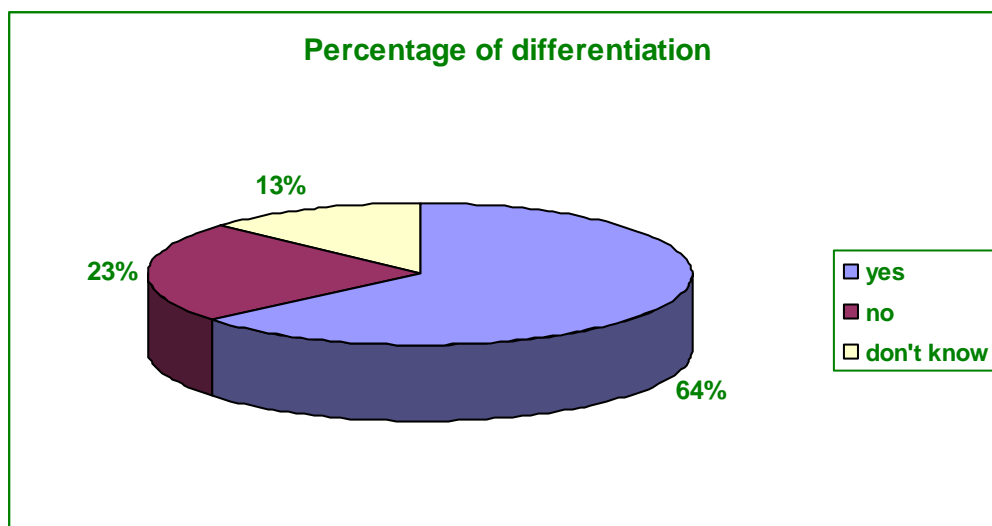


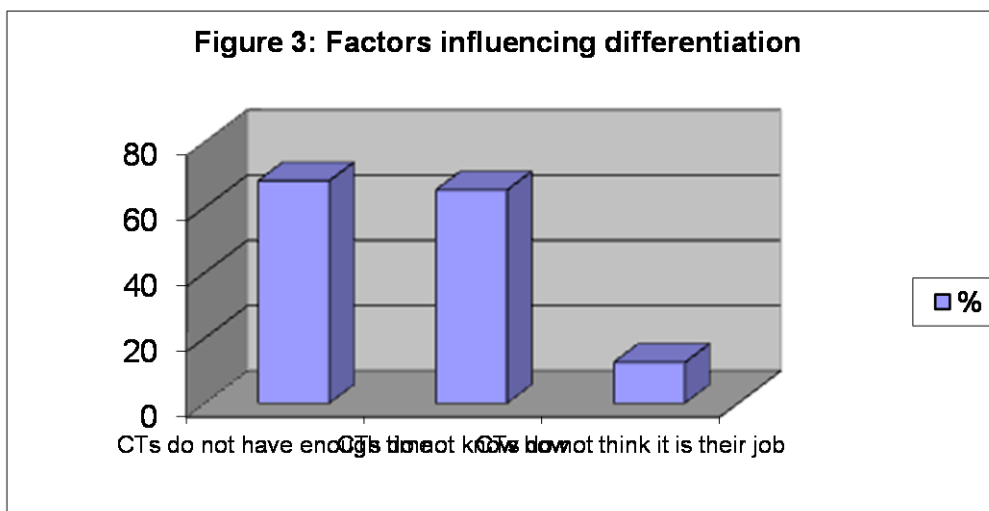
Figure 2: SENCOs' views on prevalence of differentiation in their school

SENCOs' interpretation of differentiation was an interesting finding. For example, the SENCO in one of the schools that I have been working with and in which, I thought that work was not differentiated, but children with special needs only received adult support to undertake the same task as anybody else, the SENCO replied that the majority of teachers differentiate for pupils with dyslexia in most of their lessons. This answer was the reason why I investigated further the topic of differentiation by conducting some interviews.

In the postal questionnaire, SENCOs were asked to give a rough estimate of teachers who differentiate lessons for pupils with dyslexia in most of their lessons. They reported that, on average 60 percent of their teachers differentiate in most of their lessons. This seems to be in line with the answers SENCOs gave in another question regarding differentiation working well in their school. However, one needs to keep in mind that this estimated percentage varied greatly between schools ranging from 5 to 100 percent.

Finally, SENCOs were asked to choose (out of 3) factors that affect differentiation but they were also given the chance to provide any other factors that they may regard as important. They ticked all that applied in their school (that is why the figures do not add up to 100). Lack of time (the most frequently chosen answer) is one factor/threat that teachers in other studies have reported. However, the other two factors- lack of skill and teachers not considering differentiation as their job, have not emerged in the literature that I reviewed. This may be due to the fact that, in the studies I reviewed, the participants were class teachers who may have found it difficult to admit their lack of skill or defend their view that it was not their job, while in my study, it may have been easier for another group of professionals to identify such problems.

It is still though confusing that in the current study, the SENCOs identified lack of skill as an obstacle to differentiation when at the same time in another question, they reported that most of their teachers differentiate most of the time. There is the possibility of course, that in the question about factors influencing differentiation, when lack of skill was chosen as a factor, SENCOs referred to the minority of teachers or in specific cases in which they cannot differentiate.



It is difficult to establish in this study what the causes are for these contradicting findings.17 SENCos supplied more reasons why they thought teachers could not differentiate for most of the time. Most of the factors listed below such as large class size, lack of funding, human resources, liaison with the SEN department also appear in literature. Below there is a list of them.

FACTORS INFLUENCING DIFFERENTIATION	N	%
Limited funding to support SEN pupils	2	11
Class size and TA time	6	35
CTs are not specialists, there should be access to expertise	2	11
Differentiation is often related to amount of support given or the perceived level the child is working at	1	5,8
It is difficult for the teachers to cater for different learning styles	1	5,8
Insufficient liaison with SEN Department, not taking into account IEPs	1	5,8
It' s hard to differentiate for different levels of 70 children	1	5,8
Lack of teaching resources	2	11
No pupils identified	1	5,8
Total	17	100

Table 5: Further factors influencing differentiation

The question of factors impacting on differentiation was also pursued through interviews. All four, teachers and SENCos who were interviewed gave as their first reason that affects differentiation lack of teacher time and the numerous other

demands that overload teachers. Another reason two of them mentioned was lack of in class support. This is something that was also noted in the questionnaires by six SENCOs. This stresses again the contribution and importance of learning support assistance and the growing expectation that they should/could contribute to the differentiation of lessons, which was in the past an important part of the teacher's job. This is not free from problems either. I have found that this can sometimes become a difficult issue as LSAs are in some ways expected or are left to do essentially what is the teacher's job without having the expertise or being paid to do so. However, the larger number of children with special needs in class and the fact that most of the times the LSAs know some SEN children better than the teacher, allows this to happen so often.

Research Question 3: 'Are teachers' views on the inclusion of children with severe dyslexia positive'?

SENCOs gave their opinion about the most suitable placement for children with severe dyslexia. Over two quarters chose the mainstream option where pupils have access both to high levels of in class support and individual instruction for their literacy needs. However, one quarter of SENCOs thought mainstream with withdrawals for literacy skills delivered by a trained member of staff would be appropriate for children with severe dyslexia. This finding is in line with Avramidis's study which stresses the importance of training/practice/attitudes and performance in teaching children with SEN. Only 5.6 % chose resourced mainstream and fortunately, none of the participating SENCOs chose special school, which is very positive regarding inclusive practices.

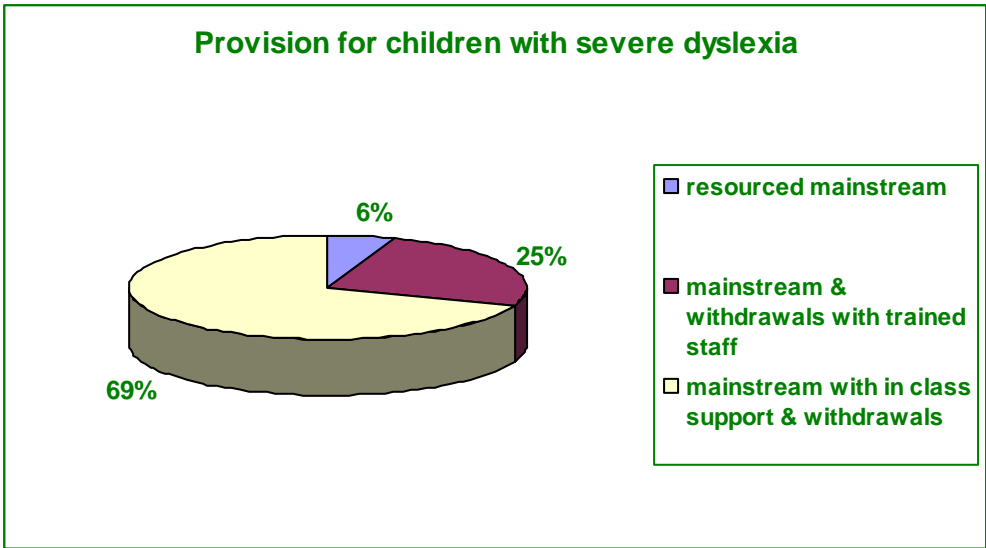


Figure 4: SENCOs’ choice of provision for severe dyslexia

SENCOs were also asked if their view on the most suitable placement for children with severe dyslexia matched their school's. A high percentage, 69.4% replied 'Yes', 4.2 % replied 'No', while a relative high percentage, almost a quarter did not know what the school's view was. Although these are only SENCOs views, on the whole, this finding is encouraging regarding the inclusive ethos in schools regarding severe dyslexia. Some factors that may have contributed to the SENCOs not knowing their school’s view on this matter, could have been, the size of the school (especially at secondary level), low prevalence of dyslexia in their school, time and other restraints on the SENCO that may have resulted on poor liaison with members of staff or the specific nature of the question that may have never risen in school.

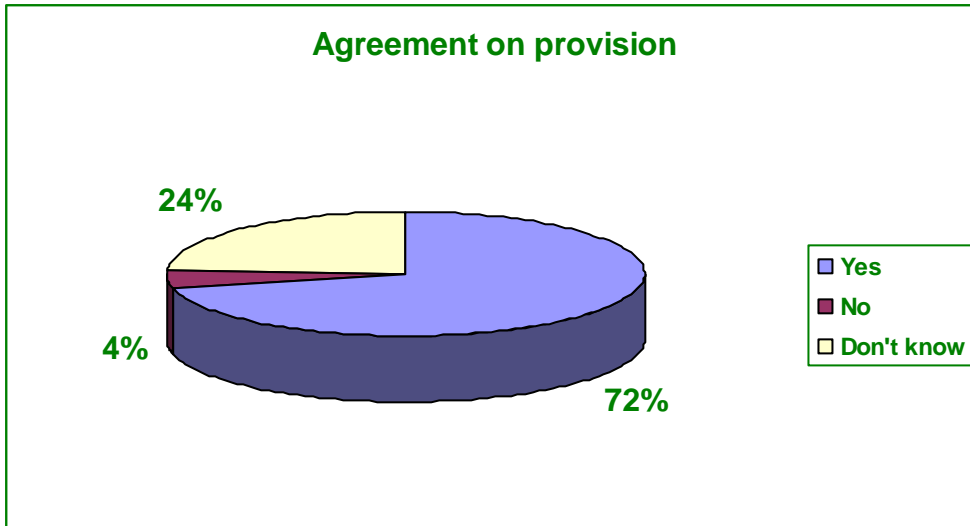


Figure 5: Agreement on provision for severe dyslexics

Where SENCOs replied that their school might have a different view from them, they were asked what that might be. Only 3 (40%) SENCOs replied that teachers in their school would prefer severe dyslexics to be taught in a mainstream school where they would be withdrawn for literacy instruction by trained members of staff.

Research Question 4: 'What is teachers' understanding of differentiation'?

This question was posed in the interviews I carried out with the 2 SENCOs and teachers. Before this question, I found out that all people interviewed had taught children with dyslexia and other children with SEN. They were teaching in schools with similar population size (about 200 pupils). Below I outline the 4 definitions they gave me:

School A- SENCO: 'Giving children strategies to access the curriculum at their levels. You could have the same objective but at a lower level. Differentiation can involve different pace, amount of work, method. It depends on the child'.

School A- Class teacher: 'Differentiating the objectives that I have set for groups with similar needs. You can differentiate by presentation, content, method, by offering support and challenging the more able'.

School B: SENCo- 'Grouping children differently and giving them different worksheets according to age and needs'.

School B: Class teacher –'Checking how they are doing, prompting them, expecting less amount of work. There is differentiation by outcome, support and content'.

All of the above definitions show some knowledge and understanding of what differentiation is. However, none of them seems to identify its full diversity and complexity as defined by Lewis (1992). The fact that differentiation can have (11) different forms but there is no agreement/discussion about its full potential could lead to different perceptions amongst professionals, where each one person could have only a part of the true. This could explain in some ways why SENCos reported high percentages of prevalence of differentiation in school. Some teachers may differentiate some times to some extent but the real question to me is about the frequency, kind and extent to which differentiation happens and if all these match the specific child's needs.

Research Question 5: 'Have teachers had any training that has helped them differentiate for children with dyslexia?'

This question was asked during interviews and consisted of two parts a) training during their initial training and b) subsequent training.

- In their university/college training: 3 of the 4 teachers/SENCos who became teachers between 10-15 years ago, reported that they had no input in their initial

training that helped them differentiate for any SEN. However, a New Qualified Teacher (NQT) reported that, on her course, there was a lot of emphasis on differentiation and how to present work.

-After they started teaching: Subsequently, all of the teachers/SENCOs reported some form of training/input on SEN but not specifically on differentiation. This included: National Literacy Strategy training and courses on literacy, courses on dyslexia/SEN where the topic of differentiation was addressed, through liaison with Special Needs Services and a few courses.

All the interviewees expressed an interest in receiving more training in differentiating for children with dyslexia.

Alongside this question, I also asked SENCOs/teachers if they discuss with colleagues issues around differentiation. The answers on the whole were positive but varied, from a single 'yes' to not addressing the question directly - ie -'standards of children's work being brought up at staff meetings' but also being specific- 'sharing resources with other teachers and discussing differentiation in IEP meetings'.

Summary of findings

1. Almost half of the participating SENCOs would welcome training for teachers to identify children with dyslexia early on. The next most popular training topic was for SENCOs to carry out assessments on reading, spelling and writing and third one for teachers to differentiate appropriately for children with dyslexia. This may indicate lack of efficient, SEN specific training either during initial teacher training or subsequently.

2. Intervention programmes for literacy were viewed very favourably by the vast majority. Although in class support was also reported to be happening in a lot of schools and to be working well, the majority of SENCOs viewed intervention programmes for literacy the most important factor that contributes to children's progress. As already discussed, the criteria of evaluating effectiveness were rather loose in this study. However, this finding seems to be in line with the current emphasis at DfES level on the importance of structured programmes in literacy such as phonics. The importance SENCOs placed on programmes was also confirmed by the fact that 80% of them replied that training in a specific literacy programme would be very useful or useful.
3. 64% of SENCOs replied that teachers in their school differentiate in most lessons for most of the time but then, 70% chose lack of time and 68% lack of knowledge in differentiation as 2 factors that influence differentiation. At first glance, these results could appear contradicting but it is difficult to gauge from this study, if the SENCOs were referring in some way to the small percentage of teachers who do not differentiate or to the times when even (efficient) teachers cannot differentiate. It is difficult to establish in this study exactly what the reasons were for this contradiction.
4. A small percentage of SENCOs replied that teachers did not think that differentiation was their job. Additional factors influencing differentiation were class size, funding issues (LSA time), lack of teaching resources, etc.
5. There were positive views on the inclusion of the children with severe dyslexia but yet again human resources and appropriate training were considered important forms of an effective, inclusive practice.

6. Almost 70% of SENCOs thought that their school would agree with their view on placements while a relatively high percentage of 24% did not know what their school view was. In some cases, this may indicate the need for better communication and discussion between the SENCO of the school.
7. 86% of schools are using in class support for children with dyslexia and 68% withdraw children with LSA for literacy. 71% of SENCOs reported that in class support works well in their school. However, only 14% thought that (in class support) contributes to a child's progress as opposed to withdrawals for literacy programmes that came top (63%) in their perception for its effectiveness. This may stress the need for better evaluation, monitoring of effectiveness of what works well for which groups of SEN children. Differentiation was also chosen by only 14% as contributing to a child's progress. Again this appears to be again another area that schools need to consider together and perhaps re evaluate its effectiveness and value in promoting the learning for children with dyslexia. On the other hand, it is optimistic and in line with government and research findings, that SENCOs have recognized the value of structured literacy programmes
8. The interviewed teachers who qualified 10-15 years ago had received no training in differentiation through their initial training in contrast to a NQT. Subsequently, all of them had received some training in SEN but not specifically in dyslexia or in differentiation. They all welcomed further training in differentiation, which again rises the question about the effectiveness of teacher training in preparing teachers to differentiate appropriately and how prepared teachers are to openly admit about lack of skill in their existing practice.

2.1.8 Critique of the project and suggestions for future research

One complication present in this study from the onset had to do with the different audiences and purposes it tried to serve. The original and most important purpose of the survey was the completion of the first stage of the Dyslexia Friendly Initiative in the LEA. Unfortunately, to a large extent, the time scales and aims had already been set when I decided to use this survey for further research and my doctorate assignment.

Similarly, the construction of the questionnaire was originally determined to serve the purposes of the LEA project. For instance, the questions regarding SENCOs' views about provision for severe dyslexia and on the effectiveness of some of their support arrangements were originally planned to give the author a broad /rough view on what was going on in the schools of our LEA and the extent to which the ground was prepared for the Dyslexia Friendly Initiative rather than carry out an in depth analysis or proper evaluation of those arrangements. As literature clearly warns (ie Robson, 1993) some important considerations in research have to do with clear aims, clarity as to who the audience of the research is, appropriate planning, time scales, etc.

Furthermore, I think that, I tried to explore too many themes in this study. Support arrangements for children with dyslexia cover such a wide area. Although I tried to concentrate only on 4 of them, each one could have easily become a separate study/essay on its own. To a large extent it was too optimistic on my behalf to think that I could explore all these issues within a limited time scale and with limited human resources. A more realistic evaluation of what was possible should have taken place. For this topic to be researched efficiently a number of researchers will need to be involved, and use a variety of methods such as survey and interviews

with teachers, senior managers, LSAs and children as well as observations and analysis of records/data related to children's IEPs, assessments, etc.

Nonetheless, some of the methodology problems I encountered during this study, to some extent one could say reflect some of the difficulties associated with 'real life' educational research. Difficulties with teacher and EP time definitely contributed to several decisions that compromised to some extent the methodology.

Concluding, it may be difficult to generalise the findings of this study due to the fact that the sample was not representative. It was a small -scale research, which took place only in one authority in the North West although the participating schools covered a wide range. Some of my findings however, such as types of provision for dyslexia, threats to differentiation are also reported in other studies such as Dyson and Skidmore (1994) which is encouraging.

Furthermore, this study brought up issues around the conceptualisation and implementation of differentiation in mainstream schools and the need for evaluation of support systems used in mainstream schools for children with dyslexia, which, in my opinion would be worth researching further. These two topics should also be pursued further and reconsidered in the schools of this LEA with the help of Special Needs Services. Discussions between myself, colleagues and our Advisory Teachers Team have already taken place and the possibility of training in these areas is being considered. Training for SENCos and LSAs on Direct Phonics, and other themes around identification of dyslexia and other practical ideas has also taken place twice and it will be repeated again next year.

APPENDIX A
(DYSLEXIA QUESTIONNAIRE)

Education & Culture

QUESTIONNAIRE ON DYSLEXIA TO BE COMPLETED BY SENCOs

For the purposes of this questionnaire, I define dyslexia according to the working party of the British Psychological Society: '*Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities*'.

When I refer to children with dyslexia, I refer to **any child** who experiences the difficulties described above, i.e not only those children who have been given a formal diagnosis.

Name of school you work for: _____

Please, tick the box that describes your school:

Primary

Secondary

A) TRAINING

PLEASE READ ALL THE CHOICES BEFORE YOU RANK (NOT RATE) THE STATEMENTS BELOW ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 9 (NB this means that every statement has to have a different number depending on the priority you give it- 1 indicates that is of the highest priority for you and 9 that it is of the lowest)

- 1) I would like training:
- a. for SENCOs to carry out assessments on reading, spelling and writing
 - b. for class teachers to be able to identify children with dyslexia early on
 - c. for SENCOs to follow a programme for children with dyslexia
 - d. for class teachers to differentiate appropriately for children with dyslexia
 - e. for teaching assistants on how to support a child with dyslexia in class
 - g. for SENCOs on how to advise teachers and other members of staff on issues about dyslexia
 - h. on specialist software packages on dyslexia
 - i. for SENCOs to give advice to parents on how to help their child with dyslexia at home
 - j. other, please specify.....

2) What kind of assessments do you usually undertake for children who you may think have dyslexia:

Educational Psychology Service

Centre for Professional Development, Rosary Road, Fitton Hill, Oldham OL8 2QE

Telephone 0161 911 3204 Fax 0161 911 3211

Executive Director of Education & Cultural Services Chris Berry



3) Which one of the following statements do you agree with for children with severe dyslexia
Please, read all the statements and tick **ONLY ONE** box:

- a. They should be taught in a mainstream school with a specialist unit (for dyslexia) attached to it
- b. They should be taught in a mainstream school with opportunities for withdrawal lessons targeting their literacy skills. Only teachers with appropriate training should be teaching them at the withdrawal lessons
- c. They should be taught in a mainstream school where they have access both to high levels of in class support and individual instruction for their literacy needs
- d. They should be taught in a special school
- e. other, please specify.....

4) Does the statement that you ticked above represent your school's view? If the answer is Yes, please go to Question 6.

Yes No I don't know

5) If the answer is NO, which one of the above statements do you think represents your school's view?
Just write the corresponding letter.

B) PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA IN YOUR SCHOOL

6) What is available in your school for a pupil with dyslexia? Please, tick all the boxes that are relevant to your situation.

- a. in class support
- b. withdrawal sessions with the SENCO teaching literacy
- c. withdrawal sessions with a support assistant teaching literacy
- d. withdrawal sessions with an SEN teacher teaching literacy
- e. withdrawal sessions targeting lessons/skills other than literacy
- f. other, please specify.....

7) Which ones of the above, in your experience, have helped pupils with dyslexia improve their literacy skills (with regards to literacy targets on their IEP or National Curriculum Levels). Write the corresponding letters.

8) To the best of your knowledge, do the majority of the teachers in your school differentiate lessons for pupils with dyslexia in most of their lessons?

Yes No I don't know

9) What factors influence the amount of differentiation that takes place? Please, tick all that apply:

- a. teachers do not have enough time
- b. teachers do not know how
- c. teachers believe that it should not be the class teacher's job
- d. other, please specify.....

10) Give a rough estimate of a percentage of teachers who differentiate lessons for pupils with dyslexia in most of their lessons (ie 10%).

11) Which of the following works well in your school with regards to a pupil's (with dyslexia) progress in literacy (you can think of progress in terms of literacy targets on the child's IEP or NC attainments). Please, tick all that apply.

- a. in class support in English and other lessons
- b. withdrawal sessions in which the SENCO teaches literacy
- c. withdrawal sessions in which a teaching assistant teaches literacy
- d. withdrawal sessions in which an SEN teacher teaches targeting literacy
- e. withdrawal sessions targeting lessons/skills other than literacy
- f. differentiation of lessons
- g. other, please specify

12) Which one of the above, do you think in your teaching experience, contributes to (a dyslexic) child's progress in literacy?

a. working at a withdrawal basis on a specific programme (such as 'Beat dyslexia' or 'Direct Phonics') with an adult with appropriate training

b. working at a withdrawal basis on literacy skills with an adult who may not have necessarily any specific training

c. in class support in as many lessons as possible

d. differentiation of lessons

f. other, please specify.....

13) Which one of the above do you rate as the most important? Please, **choose only one.**

14) In your school, are children with marked and persistent literacy difficulties taught specific programmes such as 'Beat Dyslexia', 'Direct Phonics', etc? If the answer is NO, please go to question 16.

YES

NO

15) If YES, how much do you think, it has contributed to the child's progress in literacy?

A lot

some

little

not at all

16) How useful do you think it would be to receive training and apply a programme such as 'Direct Phonics' or 'Beat Dyslexia'?

very useful

useful

not useful

Thank you very much for your time.!

APPENDIX B

(COVER LETTER FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE)

Dear SENCO,

The Educational Psychology Service (Virginia Maka) in collaboration with the Cognition and Communication Specialist Teaching Team (Rowan Braidley) have undertaken a project aiming to help schools to become dyslexia friendly and therefore, improve the provision in mainstream schools for pupils with dyslexia.

It was decided to carry out a survey with SENCOS to find out:

- 1) the current provision made available to children with dyslexia

- 2) what training SENCOS think that schools need to undertake in order to better meet the needs of children with dyslexia

- 3) what else the LEA could do in order to help schools meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia more effectively

By completing and sending us this questionnaire, you will help us to:

gain an overview of the range of skills and resources available for children with dyslexia, and how effective they have been

plan and deliver training that is tailored to the needs of staff

consider ways in which the LEA might improve the provision for dyslexia

This survey will also incorporate research for a Doctorate Degree being undertaken at the University of Manchester by Virginia Maka.

All individual replies will be treated with confidentiality and will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher without your permission.

I would kindly encourage you to answer all the questions as honestly as possible and consult with members of your staff in your school for any of the questions that may require information you do not have.

Your time is valuable and your school can be paid 1 hour supply cover (at a rate of £32.98) to release you to complete this questionnaire. In order to have this money, please email Joan Lee at ecs.joan.lee@.....gov.uk **details of your Finance Budget Code you want this money credited to.** For further enquiries, you can ring her on 0161 911 3235.

I would be most grateful if you could post the questionnaire completed by the **19th May at the latest.** Please, find enclosed a self addressed envelope.

Many thanks for your time and participation.

Virginia Maka

**The University of Manchester DEdPsy
First Examiner's Report**

Virginia Maka: Assignment 1

Title: Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school

As you say yourself in the final 'critique' section, the assignment arose from an LEA initiative to gauge Senco views about their training needs in the area of dyslexia. It proved quite difficult, therefore, to introduce the kind of analytical approach required on the DEdPsy course. Nevertheless, some interesting data emerged particularly in relation to confusions as to what constitutes 'differentiation'. The assignment is presented systematically. As a first assignment it is a 'pass', bearing in mind that the work was undertaken quite some time ago (i.e. prior to your 'year out').

Formative comments

Title page: OK

Abstract: Clear. You should quantify 'a few'.

Introduction: You provide a clear outline and rationale.

Literature review: Well focused though narrowly referenced.

Methodology: You provide a good explanation for the use of questionnaires on the grounds of practicality. Somewhere in the introduction you've mentioned response rate and repeated mailing but I can't see the info here. I like the fact that you piloted the questionnaire first. There is less explanation as to how the 4 interviews were presented and results analysed.

Results and discussion: Descriptive data is presented systematically. There is useful commentary as to the interpretation of the data.

Critique of the project: This brief section is the strongest part of your assignment. You mention the limitations of trying to address different audiences and purposes. It might have been good to include as an appendix the report you wrote for the LA. You rightly critique the research as trying to explore too many themes. For example, you mention the confusions as to the conceptualisation of differentiation - this area could have become the main focus.

Rea Reason, 11.2.07

Virginia Maka

Second Examiner's Report

1st Year assignment :

Summative Comments

Overall, I agree with the comments made by the first marker. This project is okay for a first assignment and further development is needed for successive assignments. Further comments are included below to help you think about the logical structure and argument that runs through the assignment:

From a personal point of view, I found this an interesting project and it reminded me of meetings that I had with the BDA and reps from various LAs (including Oldham) in devising and setting up the DF initiative and formulating the new criteria: You are quite right to contrast the new criteria with the original work done in Swansea. You could have looked at other DFES guidelines for school review and development – the DF criteria follow the same structure.

The RQs were clearly set out and early on in the report and this helped to focus the reader's attention as to what you intended to do. It is interesting that you had a two phase project with different RQs for the second phase – I understand why this was done from an EP perspective, but from an academic perspective it might have been better to remain focused on the original questions.

It would have helped if some more thought could have been given to 'remediation' versus 'inclusion' – in reading through the lit review these concepts seemed to be a bit confused. E.g. Brooks reviews remediation or intervention programmes but DF is more about whole school inclusive practices. Your RQs seem to link more to inclusion issues rather than interventions and this might have structured your questions to teachers differently or allowed you to explore alternative methodologies.

Your data analysis is at the descriptive level and this limits the amount of critical thinking that you can do in the discussion.

A good book to have a look at to help with the technical aspects of writing reports is Sternberg, R.J. (2000) *Guide to Publishing in Psychology Journals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garry Squires 16 March 2007

2.2 Second assignment: 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused'.

2.2.1 ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a devastating event in a child's life that is likely to affect his/her development, emotions, behaviour and cognition (Browne and Finklehor, 1986). In many instances the impact can be long term (Swanston et al, 2003). School life is inevitably influenced in different ways for every child. Although CSA has been researched heavily by other domains (social care, health, justice) not much research is available in education, especially with regards to the role of the school in supporting children who have been sexually abused.

The aim of this study is to look at ways in which secondary schools might help children who have been sexually abused. I was interested in the usefulness of: child protection procedures, PSHE (Personal Social and Health Education) lessons, pastoral systems and relationship between the child and the teacher.

I sought the views of SENCOs (Special Needs Coordinators), SEN teachers and support assistants through semi structured interviews. Some informal discussions with a psychiatric nurse, a paediatric nurse, a consultant psychiatrist, one school improvement officer for PSHE and a Barnardos consultant shed some light in to their own experiences whilst working with schools and sexually abused children. Finally, through a specifically designed questionnaire, I elicited the views of three young people (who had been sexually abused as children) on the role of the school in child sexual abuse.

The findings of the questionnaire and the interviews show that there is definitely a role related to disclosure, support through the pastoral system, PSHE lessons, the school counsellor and other support services. The views of the young adults involved highlight the importance of counselling through independent services such as Barnardos and the need for awareness raising in schools. Barriers involving teachers' perceptions of CSA being a highly specialised area and lack of training in teaching Sex and Relationships Education in PSHE have also emerged.

2.2.2 Introduction- Rationale of the study

Educational Psychologists (EPs) work a lot with children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The idea of the current study derived from my work with three children with SEEB who were sexually abused. A lot of issues/questions were raised during this work which was difficult to answer and attempts to look into existing empirical studies indicated that is a relatively under researched area.

The current study started as a case study but due to an unfortunate development in the child's life it had to be changed to an exploratory one. I was able to use the data I had collected from the teachers of my original case study and also gained more teachers who also had some experience form working with sexually abused children.

2.2.3 Research question

The research question that I have explored in this study is: 'In what way/s can a secondary school support children who have been sexually abused?'

As this question covers many aspects of schooling, I restricted my research to the child protection procedures, the role of the PSHE, pastoral systems which are interlinked with the characteristics of the teachers in the pastoral role, and issues of training in the arena of child protection and PSHE teaching.

2.2.4 Outline of the project

The idea for this project was first born in April 2006 during my involvement with a Year 9 girl who had serious behaviour problems and had experienced sexual abuse. I decided to use this case as a case study. Information was collated from people in her family, the school she attended, and some professionals from CAMHS (Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services). However, at the end of the school year due to unforeseen circumstances, I had to abandon the case study and convert it into an exploratory study.

During the autumn and spring term of the academic year 2006-7, I collected data from three schools (two mainstream and one special) through interviewing the

SENCOs (Special Needs Coordinators), TAs (Teaching Assistants), SEN (Special Educational Needs) teachers and one Head of Year. In the summer term of 2007, through some discussions I had with a Barnardos Consultant (who offered our LEA training in child prostitution), I was put in touch with a Barnardos Counsellor. This Counsellor was counselling three young adults who were sexually abused as children during their secondary years.

In June 2007, I emailed this counsellor a debriefing of my study and asked her if she could get consent from her clients for participating in this study. A list of questions was also sent to her (via email). At the end of June, I received the consent, and the group's answers were faxed to me at the end of July 2007. In August 2007, I interrupted my doctoral study due to maternity leave. I resumed my studies in September 2008.

2.2.5 Literature Review

In this section, I look at topics such as definition of child sexual abuse, prevalence, the effects of abuse in children, empirical evidence regarding ways in which schools can support sexually abused children involving legislation around Child Protection Procedures, the role of the PSHE, pastoral systems and the counsellor in schools.

2.2.5 a Definition of child sexual abuse

There are considerable differences of opinion on the definition of child sexual abuse (CSA). As a debate on the definition is beyond the scope of this essay, I will make brief reference to some issues before stating my conceptualisation of CSA. Most studies agree that sexual acts occurring against the child's wishes are abusive, but problems arise in deciding when a child is competent to give 'informed consent' with full understanding of the meaning and implications of consent (Cawson, et al, 2000). This is particularly important when there is an age gap between the participants, which can affect the power relationship between them.

For the purposes of this essay, I refer to sexual abuse as 'forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images. This definition is used in the latest report 'Working Together to Safeguard children', 2006, p. 132).

2.2.5 b Prevalence of child sexual abuse

There are difficulties in measuring CSA for several reasons (Cawson et al, 2000 funded by the NSPCC). To start with, many cases are never reported but also in retrospective studies, CSA can be underestimated due to the fact that events in early childhood can be forgotten. There are also ethical and practical problems in obtaining data from children about abuse they may have experienced in a general population survey which involves 'cold calling' and can offer only limited post-interview support, especially when they may still be living with their abusers Cawson et al's research was the first rigorous and comprehensive report in a large random probability sample of 2, 869 young people aged 18-24. The response rate was high (69%). In this study, almost three-quarters (72%) of sexually abused children did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time, 27% told someone later and around a third (31%) still had not told anyone about their experience(s) by early adulthood.

Some more facts from Cawson et al's research (2000, p85-86)) show that in total, 16% of children aged under 16 experienced sexual abuse during childhood. 11% of this was contact abuse and 6% was non-contact. 1% of children aged under 16 experienced sexual abuse by a parent or carer, and a further 3% by another relative during childhood whilst 11% of children aged under 16 experienced sexual abuse during childhood by people known but unrelated to them. The majority of children who experienced sexual abuse had more than one sexually abusive experience; only indecent exposure was likely to be a single incident. On the 28th August 2008, the NSPCC website published the following facts from the telephone calls they had received from children in the Year 2005/6. According to

this just under twelve thousand callers (11,995 children), which consisted of 8% of all callers) calling ChildLine spoke about sexual abuse in their call. About half of them (54%) said that someone in their family was responsible for the abuse, 32% said that the person responsible for the abuse was known to them but was not someone in their family, 6% said that the person responsible for the abuse was a stranger and 9% did not disclose who was responsible for the abuse or said that they did not know who was responsible. Similarly, rape statistics obtained in July 2006 by Walker et al, indicated that one third (36%) of all rapes recorded by the police are committed against children under 16 years of age. Moreover, for the children who experienced sexual abuse in the family, the most common perpetrator was a brother or stepbrother (38% of penetrative/oral acts).

Of those children who called ChildLine about sexual abuse: 29% of the abuse was categorised as sexual touching, 9% of the abuse was categorised as sexual harassment, 4% of the abuse was categorised as indecency, 2% of the abuse was categorised as organised abuse and 63% of the abuse was categorised as rape. Statistics from all research have shown that it happens more to females and the abuser tends to be someone known to the child.

The above statistics from the NSPCC are alarming and thought provoking of how such a relatively large number of children deal with their trauma in school. All professionals in education have a duty of care towards children and it is imperative that we are all at least aware of such high prevalence of CSA and we find ways of supporting these children.

2.2.5 c The impact of sexual abuse on children

Alongside the high prevalence of CSA, I think that it is important for educators to be aware of the impact of child sexual abuse as it can affect most areas of a child's development which in turn can impede the school's ability of fulfilling their role and objectives for these children. There has been a plethora of research regarding the impact that sexual abuse has on children short and long term. Wurtele (2009) summarises key, rigorous studies which have used control samples and describes

the main difficulties that these children experience during their childhood and beyond.

These difficulties include mainly health problems (such as sexually transmitted diseases and urinary infections) psychological ones (depression, anxiety, anger, behaviour problems, an impaired sense of self, problems with sexuality), cognitive (poor concentration, inattentiveness, dissociation) academic problems at school, and interpersonal difficulties related to social competence, aggression, less trusting, being more socially withdrawn. Not every sexually abused child will have all these symptoms and a combination of them could occur at different stages of their life depending on the duration of the abuse, the age of the child when it happened, the violence involved, the parental support, the child's cognitive ability and if the abuse has been disclosed and at which stage the legal processes are (Webster et al, 2004).

Wurtele (2009) also stresses the significant financial cost of rape and sexual abuse of children by giving an estimated cost (of 23 billion dollars annually) for the USA Health Services involving mainly medical expenses.

2.2.5 d Should school have a role to play in child sexual abuse in the first place?

In the last decade, school's role has changed dramatically and it has aimed at helping a child develop holistically. The legislation, the pastoral systems and the introduction of resources and initiatives (such as SEAL and the Sex and Relationships Education) reflect this. Even if this was not the case though, can a child learn effectively when she has or is being abused? I think that school is in an advantageous position to help. The vast majority of children are in some kind of an educational setting and no other profession has contact with them on a daily basis for most part of a year. In addition to that, part of the teacher's role is to observe children's behaviour and respond to their needs. This gives them an opportunity to notice first changes in a child's academic or social behaviour. In that respect and due to their skills, teachers could be well placed to identify signs of abuse and play a part on their journey to recovery.

At the same time though, considering the pressures of the National Curriculum and training limitations, can teachers develop yet another specialist role in child sexual abuse or are there other ways in which they can help? This question will be explored in this section.

2.2.5 e Legislation regarding school's role in children's welfare.

Legislation has played a vital role in the recognition of the fact that schools alongside other LA organisations have an important role to play in child protection issues including therefore child sexual abuse. First of all, LAs have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 by creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children and young people, identifying where there are concerns about possible abuse or neglect and following the LA child protection procedures. The forming of the LSCBs and the publication of reports such as 'Working together to safeguard children (2006) clarify the role of the LAs and the schools in any cases or suspicions of child abuse. Once a teacher has suspicions of sexual abuse has been disclosed to him, a referral to the school's Designated Teacher ought to take place. Consequently, s/he will discuss the case and refer to a social worker, attend multi disciplinary meetings, and in some cases liaise also with other professionals such as CAMHS workers. Where a child is already the subject of an inter-agency child protection plan, the school should be involved in the preparation of the plan. The school's role and responsibilities in contributing to actions intending to safeguard the child, and promote his or her welfare, should be clearly identified by the authority's Children's Services the school belongs to.

Especially in cases of sexually abused children with special needs, school can give valuable information as to how relevant professionals need to speak to the child, her/his level of understanding and ability to articulate his experiences and thoughts. The school will also be well placed to give a view on the impact of treatment or intervention on the child's care or behaviour. The guidance is clear though that staff in schools (and FE institutions) should not themselves investigate possible abuse or neglect.

There is little research in evaluating the effectiveness of the current Child Protection Procedures in educational settings, especially from the children's and teachers' point of view. An interesting comment from a teacher I interviewed was critical of the current system with regards to the fact that once a case is passed onto the Designated teacher, the person who the child had trusted most and disclosed to has little involvement and saying in what happens. One potential danger is that the relationship of the teacher with the child can be affected or even damaged.

The only study I was able to locate regarding an evaluation of the current child protection procedure looked specifically at the frustrations of the working relationship between designated teachers and social workers. It was conducted by Baginsky (2007) and involved the designated teachers of 43 schools and the social workers attached to the schools. The main findings were that:

- Following contact with social services, there was a poor response, lack of urgency and no follow up feedback.
- Teachers described difficulties in having a consultation with social workers, been listened to and having their views respected.
- Teachers were not sure what level of poor parenting was tolerable and should be a reason for a referral. They found referrals not being accepted in some cases of drug abuse and prostitution, and little support in cases of domestic violence, sexualised behaviours.
- Similarly, they found educational and health support services unresponsive to mental health concerns with children with child protection issues.
- On the other hand, some social workers described how they felt that teachers had a lack of understanding of significant guidance and they either under or over referred.

2.2.5 f The role of PSHE and other personal safety programmes

As already highlighted, by law schools have a duty to protect children. There are several ways in which they may attempt to do this, one of which is making them aware and teaching them about behaviours towards them that are not acceptable and ways of keeping themselves safe. This can happen in an incidental way cross curriculum and through local or national activities (such as Anti Bullying week, etc)

but also in a structured and consistent way through the PSHE. Although PSHE is not compulsory yet, schools must have a policy for Sex and Relationships Education which is inspected by Ofsted (2002). There is no set curriculum for PSHE as such as well as training nationwide on the teaching of SRE and other issues related to sexual abuse, but there are broad objectives some of which may still help a sexually abused child disclose. These objectives have to do with developing awareness about their sexuality, understanding as to why delaying the sexual activity, value and respect themselves and others, relationships. Similarly, the Sex and Relationships Education Initiative provides resources to enable schools to tackle issues regarding healthy relationships, including domestic violence, bullying and abuse.

An important factor though in the success of any teaching around sex and relationships in PSHE lessons is how the two groups (students and teachers) involved feel about it. Results from a survey (Blake, 2006) amongst educational professionals revealed that 90% of them felt that PSHE should be made statutory across all key stages and similarly also 74 per cent of parents thought that schools should be required to provide comprehensive sex and relationships education as part of the national curriculum. Another study conducted by Forrester et al (2004) in thirteen (13) secondary English schools and 4353 Year 9 students established their desire to have Sex and Relationships Education as part of the PSHE and the specific topics they identified were contraception, pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases but also feelings, dealing with pressure from a partner to have sex, peer pressure and dealing with sexual assault.

Further research (Briggs, 2005) of 198 male victims regarding what could have protected them, they all referred to education and in particular: sexuality education about male bodies which would have deprived paedophiles of some of their capacity to abuse by stimulating curiosity. They also said that boys need clear information on what constitutes reportable behaviour.

Some of the difficulties though related to the teaching of PSHE and in particular Sex and Relationships have been highlighted by Ofsted (2002 and 2005 in Martinez, 2006) and involve: under resourced lessons delivered by non specialist and/or poorly prepared teachers and poor implementation of 'Sex and relationships

Education policies while in a few extreme situations removal of the PSHE lessons from the timetable for other academic and accredited courses. Wartele 's survey with teachers (2007) also identified additional barriers related to the non -statutory status of PSHE, and insufficient funding.

Below I have isolated some important reasons why PSHE and several prevention programmes have been successful. In the literature, prevention programmes are also called personal safety programmes, victimization prevention programmes and anti victimization programmes.

They can help with disclosures

One of the greatest difficulties in child sexual abuse is disclosing it. Jensen et al (2005) reviewed research that indicated that children often delay disclosing abuse for many years whilst some never disclosed it during their childhood (Goodman et al, 2003). Jensen's own empirical study (2005) revealed that children felt it was difficult to find situations containing enough privacy and prompts that they should share their experiences. They were also worried about others' reactions and whether their disclosures would be misinterpreted. When the children did disclose they did it in situations where the theme of child sexual abuse was in some form addressed or activated. These findings indicate that disclosure becomes less difficult if children perceive that there is opportunity to talk, purpose for speaking, and a connection has been established to what they are talking about. The importance of the relationship between the student and the Form Tutor of course is of major significance (this will be explored further in 2.4.c).

I think that PSHE lessons in which sexual abuse is discussed could be the ideal forum for essential preparatory work to occur and lead to a private disclosure to the PSHE teacher or any other teacher they may be close to. But even if abuse as such is not covered as topic other PSHE topics covering keeping safe, appropriate touch, etc can reinforce the message that any kind of violence is unacceptable, let children and young people know that it is acceptable to talk about these problems, and signpost sources of help.

Similar evidence exists in victimization prevention programmes in schools which have spread widely in countries such as USA, Australia and more recently in the UK can be helpful with disclosures. Although the primary focus of such programmes is on prevention, they also incorporate objectives related to encouraging children to report past or ongoing abuse and to know that CSA is not the child's fault. After participating in personal safety programs, preschool- and school-aged children, Wurtele's review (2009) indicate a greater willingness to tell an adult about an inappropriate touching situation. Published disclosure rates immediately following the program have ranged from 0% to 11% among non abused children to a high of 54% among previously abused children (Currier & Wurtele, 1996).

Lower incidence of child sexual abuse and support for the sexually abused children

Amongst the protective factors from the impact of CSA were found (by Friedrich, 1998) to be support and acceptance by peers following abuse disclosure. Teaching occurring in PSHE and/or prevention programmes lessons about sexual abuse can increase all children's awareness and develop better empathy and acceptance towards children who have been sexually abused.

Evaluations (by Currier and Wurtele, 1996) suggest that personal safety programs can teach young children knowledge and skills thought to be useful not only in preventing but also in escaping sexual abuse. Whether these results generalize to sexually abused children has yet to be determined as there is a scarcity of research with control studies and at a long term base. Gibson and Leitenberg (2000 in Currier and Wurtele, 1996) asked 825 undergraduate women to report both their past histories of CSA and participation in school-based prevention programs during childhood. 9% of respondents who reported ever having had a prevention program also reported having been sexually abused compared to 16% of respondents who had never participated in a prevention program. This study gives some evidence that sexual abuse prevention programs can result in a reduction in sexual abuse incidence.

Fieldman and Crespi's (2002) review of relevant research concludes that school initiatives can be a 'viable treatment tool'. They can help children avoid the development of unhealthy coping mechanisms and repression of significant memories. They also found that these programmes can teach prevention skills to children, and how to cope when confronted with sexually dangerous situations. But it also helps educating teachers, families, and community leaders about offenders, which in turn can be more vigilant in protecting children and recognising signs of sexual abuse.

There is also increasing literature in the involvement of parents in such programmes which may actually reduce the prevalence of sexual abuse if teachers and parents know the tactics typically used by child sexual offenders.

Fieldman and Crespi (2002) report that 95% of youth who participated in a school-based anti victimization program when they were victimized or threatened, they perceived themselves as more efficient in keeping themselves safe and reduce harm.

Nonetheless, despite the plethora of reviews on the positive effects of prevention programmes, Topping and Barron (2009) have identified several limitations involving methodological development, evaluation measures, process evaluation, the inclusion of specific populations, longer term programmes, impact factors, specific concepts, age range and emotional outcomes. The authors acknowledge though the generic methodological difficulties in this domain.

2.2.5 g Pastoral systems and the relationship between the pupil and the teacher.

In every secondary school in England there are established pastoral systems in the heart of which they place the Form tutor. The Form Tutor usually gets to know a particular group of children in a specific year through meeting them every day for registration and usually teaching them PSHE. Teachers in general but particularly the Form Tutor has the opportunity to talk to his/her form more than other teachers do

(often to sort out disciplinary, attendance and other issues) and in this way, they get to know pretty well what is going on in a child's life and notice any possible changes in behaviour, attendance, etc which could be indicative of abuse (Milner and Blyth, 1988). Similarly, they get important information from other teachers and staff in school (eg a child not wanting to change at PE, go swimming, have medicals, etc).

Teachers are often figures of trust for children as they have usually shown ability to be neutral and objective. Statistics indicate that a large amount of children disclose to teachers (Milner and Blyth, 1988) more than other people. Other useful qualities and skills that teachers have involve good observation, listening skills, an analytical/critical approach in making sense of behaviours and knowledge of child development. With regards to the listening skills, it is interesting that in a study on what sexually abused children wanted from a post abuse service (Potter et al, 2002), the main finding was that children wanted to be listened to and talk on an individual basis about the effect that the abuse had on their life. They hardly referred to therapy as such. This is definitely something that a form tutor can and does provide perhaps not as much as necessary due to other teaching responsibilities. However, lack of training in sexual abuse can make teachers feel unsure, out of their depth, overreact or underestimate a disclosure, be in denial or feel very angry about abuse.

2.2.5 h The role of the school counsellor

In the last few years there is an increasing number of secondary schools who employ counsellors mainly on a part time basis. With some specialist training, I believe that the counsellor is in a good position to recognise signs of sexual abuse, help the child in the disclosing process and be part of her therapeutic journey. He/she has crucial skills such as reflective listening, effective communication, empathy, a client centred approach (Rogers, 1951) but is also in a position to promise confidentiality which is important for some sexually abused victims. All these are vital in any therapeutic relationship and even more so in a counselling situation with a sexually abused child.

Sharing information, which is a prerequisite in the child protection process constitutes a challenge in the role of the counsellor in two ways. Baginsky (2007) revealed that in her study although most of the counsellors were clear about procedures related to child protection, they had no regular contact with the designated teacher to discuss any issues that may arise. Designated teachers also expressed concerns about the school's accountability should the counsellor choose not to refer on, even if it was at the student's request. That can be a significant problem for the counsellor's relationship with the child if assurances of confidentiality had been given, which is usually the case.

2.2.5 i Problems with specialist therapeutic services such as CAMHS

If one argues that the school is not equipped to deal with children who have been sexually abused, then who can help these children? What services exist and what do they offer ? These questions were addressed in a survey that the NSPCC commissioned a group of researchers to explore (Allnock et al, 2009). The executive summary has been published but the full study report will be published in Autumn 09. This study uncovers serious shortfalls in specialist provisions for sexually abused children. The views of about 165 service managers, service commissioners and 10 sexually abused young adults were elicited and the key findings were the following (p4):

- The overall level of specialist provision is low.
- There is a significant gap between the estimated need for services and service availability.
- Specialist services are not only too few but they are often offered too late when a young person is already showing symptoms of mental health or behavioural problems.
- There were few services available for young people who have been raped or seriously sexually assaulted. There is a gap between services for sexually abused children who are referred via the child protection route, and adult services for rape and sexual violence.

- Services are less accessible for some groups of young people such as those in rural areas, from ethnic minorities, and those who have disabilities or learning difficulties.
- There is a lack of information on the need for services and on what services and interventions are effective.

Some of the issues raised in this study were also highlighted by some CAMHS professionals I spoke to. By reporting these findings, I am not implying that it is only schools that can deal with sexually abused children. However, we have to deal with a reality that has little capacity and they can only perhaps deal currently with a minority who may have developed mental health problems.

2.2.6 Methodology

2.2.6 a Sample procedures and sample used in the study

My original piece of research was a case study of a sexually abused teenage girl with serious SEBD with whom I was working as an EP in a North West LEA. I had already gathered some information (mainly through interviews) from her family, school and CAMHS practitioners involved in her case when there was an unfortunate development that forced me to abandon this as a case study. However, I changed the study, the sample and the research method in a way that would allow me to use the data collected from the interviews.

I added to my original sample of the three teachers and one TA, one more SENCo, one special school teacher and two teachers in senior posts in mainstream schools. As interviewing sexually abused children is smitten with many ethical difficulties, I tried to find professionals who were working with such groups and would be willing to help me find such groups. Through discussions with a Barnardos trainer who was delivering some training in our authority for children who have been involved in prostitution, I was put in touch with a Barnardos Counsellor who had been working for

a while with a small group of three young adults who had been sexually abused as children.

It has to be stressed that the characteristics of this sample may not be representative of sexually abused children in mainstream schools due to the fact that they needed therapy for some time after the abuse which they sought in the voluntary (private) sector. Moreover, their views/experiences about the help they got or could get in school may have been affected by some memory lapses which sometimes functions as a defense mechanism to eliminate unwanted memories (Feldman-Summers and Pope, 1994).

2.2.6 b The use of interviews

My main method to collect data was semi structured interviews. I decided to use semi structured interviews with SENCOs and SEN teachers as opposed to questionnaires as this study was mainly exploratory and also because interviews are considered to be a more appropriate method when people's views are sought (Silverman, 2006). In addition, I welcomed the opportunity to have a more personal interaction as to how teachers really felt about their role and the school's role, but also pursue further any issues that may emerge in the process. The same method was originally intended for the young adults who had been sexually abused. However, due to the sensitive topic and time pressures, the Counsellor gave to the group the questions (I had prepared for her to use in the interview) on paper and they chose to reply in writing.

The sets of questions were different for the teaching staff and the group of young adults. A different procedure was followed with the two groups. Prior to the interviews, I had the chance to explain in person to the teachers the nature and purpose of research, their right to decline participation at whichever point and promise then confidentiality. However, with the young adults, the preliminary work happened through their Counsellor, the emails I sent her about my research and giving her reassurances about confidentiality and anonymity.

2.2.6 c Construction and piloting of interview questions

In the absence of similar research, I constructed the questions that I thought that could best answer my research question. The vast majority of the teaching staff were asked (nine) questions which had to do with: their wish to know if a child they have been working with had been sexually abused, their wish for training on SA, things that the school or themselves have done/could do to support a sexually abused child, their view on how Support Services could help in CSA. The first two questions were included in order to find out their view as to if they feel they should have a role to play in the first place in supporting in school children who have been sexually abused.

I piloted all the questions with one SENCo that I had a close working relationship and I could count on his honesty regarding clarity and appropriateness of the questions. Consequently, I did not change any of the questions. Ideally, if I had more time and a larger group of participants, I would have piloted them with at least four people.

Regarding the group of young adults who had been sexually abused, they were all given the same questions that mainly had to do with what they found helpful in school following their sexual abuse and what ideally they would have liked to happen. Unfortunately, due to time pressures of the person who was conducting research on my behalf and the small number of participants, I did not ask her to pilot the interview questions. However, I invited her to make any suggestions about changes that she considered appropriate but I did not receive any.

2.2.6 d Validity - Reliability of the study

Validity refers to the extent that the research truly measures what it was intended to measure through the instrument/s used. Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others (Kirk and Miller, 1986)). Due to the fact that I could not find similar studies, it was difficult to make such a comparison. Cohen (2007) warns about face validity in interviews which is whether the questions asked 'look' as if they are measuring what

they claim to measure. I tried to address this by having researched this area a lot and by piloting the questions first.

One way of increasing the validity of a research study may involve showing the research subjects excerpts of one's interpretation of their interviews. The idea behind this is that research subjects are in a position to corroborate or disapprove of the researcher's interpretations (respondent validation) (Silverman, 2006). In this study, time and work constraints did not allow it.

Practical ways in which I tried to increase validity in the interviews were:

- making open ended questions and avoid any leading ones
- not seeking answers that supported pre conceived perceptions
- clarifying what the respondent was saying rather than guessing what s/he meant
- making sure that questions were understood properly
- establish good rapport so that the participant was more likely to give honest replies or ask questions/clarifications if not sure. It must be noted that as the interview is a such a lively, direct and personal interaction, there is always the fear that the respondents may give answers which will show themselves in a 'good light'. However, in this case, I tend to think that my existing relationship with the majority of the teachers would not have allowed that, as over the years we had the chance to share a lot of our views on issues that involve the welfare of children. In addition, my status was not such to make them need to come across as having the 'right answers'.

Reliability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production (Silverman, p. 282). It deals with the question of whether or not some future researchers could repeat the project and come up with the same results.

In Silverman (2006) some suggested ways of achieving better reliability which I considered in this study are:

- training of the interviewer (I had previous experience in interviewing through a different degree I undertook)
- to the extent that is possible to have fixed choice answers (due to the exploratory nature of this study, this was not really desirable)
- transparent coding of answers (in Section I describe the principles used from thematic analysis)

Other factors that I took into consideration and are deemed important for a successful interview (Cohen, 2007) involved:

- active, empathetic listening but referring to statements made before and allowing to expand a bit longer at points that they were important to them but at the same time
- keep to the point and the matter in hand
- offer information to the respondents on things that they may become interested in the process of the interview.

Finally, triangulation is often suggested for the production of a more comprehensive representation of the object of a study. In this case, it was not possible due to the nature (short scale) of this research and the significant difficulties related to the sensitive topic (ie having access and interviewing sexually abused children who the interviewees had worked with) and time constraints. The only alternative I could come up with was to compare teachers' views/experiences of how they can help a child who has been sexually abused to the views and experiences of a small sample of sexually abused children. There are however, some limitations though attached to the sample and this approach described in the Section of ' Critique of the Project'.

2.2.6 e Data Analysis

When I interviewed the school staff, the content of their answers was handwritten while the interviewees were talking to me. On some occasions, where clarifications were necessary or it was important to keep eye contact or participate in the conversation, I paused the verbatim writing of the answers and recorded several key words. Effectively, this helped me so that straight after the end of the interview I

could recall and record the answers fully. There are disadvantages however, in this approach. As Silverman (2006) argues depending on one's memory is risky but also, it is difficult to note matters such as pauses, overlaps, inbreaths etc which can often provide further information. He perceives the most reliable method to be tape recording. Apart from the time constraints involved in transcribing tapes, I decided against this option because I sensed that some teachers were already feeling uneasy about this particular topic. Thus, I did not want the recording of their interviews to be an inhibiting factor to their giving me their honest opinions.

For the second group of participants (the young adults who were sexually abused as children), a list of written questions were given to them which they replied in writing and therefore, what I received at the end were completed questionnaires. In order to analyse the data I had, I used -in a flexible way that suited my way of particular set of data- some techniques from thematic analysis which is an analytic method that searches for themes or patterns (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Once I had all the data (from the teachers and young adults), I number coded each participant's answers so that, if need be, I could go back at a later stage. Then, I wrote down all the answers by using the questions themselves as headings. After familiarising myself as much as possible with all the available data, some wider themes emerged (eg issues around the training, support from external services such as CAMHS, etc) and the data was presented according to these themes. Whilst reading the data I made notes and colour coded re occurring important themes.

2.2.6 f Ethical considerations

In this study, I made every effort to adhere to the BPS guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (2004).

With regards to the interviews with the SENCos, SEN teachers and teaching assistants, I made sure that I interviewed them at a place and time of their convenience. They were all people I had been working with as an Educational Psychologist for several years and there was a good working relationship. In

addition, in the past, I had given them a questionnaire and had conducted with some of them another interview as part of another doctoral study. Therefore, I believe that there was confidence and trust regarding the way the interviews were conducted, and other issues such as confidentiality and anonymity, being debriefed, feeling comfortable during the interview and feeling free to give their honest opinion.

The same relationship could not be established with the young adults who had been sexually abused due to the fact that I did not meet them. However, for ethical reasons related to possible threats to their psychological well being, I did not pursue to meet the group and conduct the interviews myself. Instead their Counsellor who knew them best took the lead role. I think that some trust in my professionalism was established through the discussions and debriefing I gave the Barnardos Consultant about my doctoral study.

2.2.7 Results and discussion

In this section I outline and discuss the findings of my research by making where appropriate references to other empirical studies.

First of all, I felt that it was important to know about the experience the sample had as teachers in general but also their experience with sexually abused children. The vast majority of the participants had taught children for at least ten years and had all taught sexually abused children. I was rather surprised to hear that they had all worked with at least one child who had been sexually abused and at least 1 who they suspected had been abused while two interviewees had worked with two abused children, one with three and another one with four.

The number of sexually abused children which this group of teachers had taught was rather high considering the small number of teachers involved although the interviewees referred to sexually abused children they had taught during all their teaching years. In a way, this is in line with the high prevalence numbers national surveys (such as Cawson et al, 2002) and statistics from ChildLine report (16% and 8% correspondingly).

In this study, I also wanted to see if the teachers believed that the school had a role to play to begin with. I tried to address this in a non direct way by asking them questions having to do with their wish to know if a pupil of theirs was sexually abused, if they would like training in CSA and if they would prioritise it.

2.2.7 a Teachers' views on whether school has a role in CSA

First of all, I asked the teachers if they wanted to know if a pupil of theirs has been sexually abused. Half of the participants (4) answered that they would like to know. The reasons they gave varied: 'it helps to understand where they are coming from' because of the impact it can have, it helps you in your relationship with the child, they need someone to trust' One SEN teacher answered that she needed to know only as an SEN teacher and not as a class teacher, as the person who knows needs to be appropriately trained so that they don't talk about it in an inappropriate manner.

Another teacher said that it was particularly important for a male teacher so that any allegations were not made. This particular teacher had a sexually abused pupil who displayed sexualised behaviours). Unfortunately, research indicates that some of the female sexually abused girls, exhibit sexualised behaviours (Baginsky, 2007) which makes them vulnerable while a minority turns into prostitution. It seems reasonable that male teachers would want to know about CSA so that they are prepared if such behaviours occur. However, this raises an issue as it conflicts with the child's right for confidentiality and the current system whereby only the Designated Teacher and/or the one they disclose to are allowed to know about a child's abuse.

Another potential difficulty (in case a teacher is aware of a child's sexual abuse) identified by the Barnardos Counsellor is that some teachers tend to have stereotype notions of how a SA child should behave and if the child behaves differently, there is a problem. Appropriate training is identified as essential.

Two interviewees who had more specific knowledge about CSA stressed that they only need to know if no one else in school knows and in case a child has: a) an emotional disturbance or problems, b) is vulnerable and d) needs support from them. However, one of the male teachers stressed that he would like to be told only if false

accusations for sexual harassment against him were made. One teacher who was also the designated teacher and provided training in school on CP commented that it would not be fair on the child that a teacher (other than the CP teacher) knows about their abuse. There is definitely an issue here around who needs to know about the abuse and for what reason. Unfortunately, I could not find any research that looked specifically into this issue in the school context.

The group of young adults did not want just any teacher to know. Two of them wanted a specific teacher they were close to, to know and one commented that 'she wouldn't mind the teachers to know provided they were there for her'. One of the participants disclosed her abuse for the first time to a teacher but a later response implies that the subsequent 'emotional' help did not meet her expectations. Another participant wrote that she would have liked her teacher to know (although for unknown reasons, none in her school knew). What prevails here overall is how well regarded is the teacher figure and the importance of the existing relationship between the child and the teachers for the disclosure to occur but also the consequent support they can offer. The Barnardos Consultant verified that too. From the teacher's point of view, knowledge about the abuse was considered important for their relationship with the child and the quality of teaching they can provide, two important factors for any learning to happen.

2.2.7 b Existing knowledge about the effects of CSA and views on training

Only two (of 8) teachers replied that they were aware of the signs of CSA, one of which was the Designated teacher and had led training in her school in Child Protection issues. All the participating teachers had received some kind of training in the past on CP procedures. This raises the issue of the efficiency of training. Current regulations (DFES, 2004) have identified the need for refresher training every three years for teachers and two years for designated people.

With regards to teachers wanting to receive training and prioritise it, they all stated that they would like more training, one of them talked specifically about his wish to know the signs of CSA, another teacher said that she would like to know more about

a mentoring role with an abused child, another teacher said that he would like to know the basics and only if he went for a management post within an LSU (Learning Support Unit), he would like more knowledge in the subject. The same teacher commented on the fact that he would like to pass the information onto a specialist because 'he does not like half jobs and teachers cant deal with something that has destroyed a child's life'. Knowing this person through a case of CSA, I thought that he was particularly devoted to SEN children, but possibly underestimated his skills and positive effect he had on that girl. Another issue this teacher raised involved teacher's lack of skill in dealing with their emotions that this trauma brings up.

Similarly, a teacher in a Pupil Referral Unit shared that although she would like to know more, she did not think that it was her job as a teacher to deal with that'. Considering the pressures that teachers are under these days with regards to delivering the national curriculum, the inclusion agenda and other ones, it was very encouraging to find out that they gave a positive answer to more training in CSA. Only two participants drew the line as to what they should/could do or know as teachers which is a valid point too. The need for further teacher training on child protection issues early on at the initial teacher training and the production of appropriate materials are discussed in a study conducted by Baginsky and Mcpherson (2005).

2.2.7 c How individual teachers can help sexually abused children with their work and behaviour

The majority of teachers talked about a combination of the ways described below:

- extend deadlines but maintain standards and expectations,
- (form tutors)can monitor : how these children are doing, be more supportive, allow them to go to the LSU and get learning mentors to help them,
- assess the individual child's needs and structure assessments accordingly
- differentiate work and their support plan accordingly,
- give them more 'leeway',
- just deal with individual behaviours,

- develop a package that makes these children feel comfortable in the LSU which needs to have a positive no judgemental environment,
- build confidence and let the child know that they can come to you,
- chat to them and build a relationship,
- make them feel safe,
- have a mentoring role,
- be proactive, liaise with family and offer family support

Two of the teachers did not say about their own practice but talked about the role of CAMHS and the counsellor. One reason for this may be that they were severe cases that have been working with. There is also the possibility that they just did not see any role for themselves which would contradict other responses these particular teachers had given at other points of the interview.

The group of the young adults mentioned similar qualities such 'teachers should be more understanding with kids, help them with advice as to where to go and get support (group and one to one) give them extra tutoring and be available for them to talk about their abuse'. They also mentioned having a counsellor to talk, raise awareness and talk about sexual abuse.

2.2.7 d What can the interviewees' schools do to support sexually abused children?

Next I was interested in the specific systems in place in the schools where the interviewees taught.

Three teachers talked about the role of the Designated teacher who will pass the case on (although they did not specify to whom). Another teacher talked about encouraging parents to visit school more and give them adequate information. A SENCo talked about disseminating information to other teachers as he would do with any child with behaviour problems. A teacher at the PRU talked about PSHE lessons on sexual health, which helped a particular (sexually abused) girl in realising that a class mate of hers was feeling uncomfortable with some (sexualised) behaviours of hers. Two teachers referred to PSHE lessons but had reservations about the teachers' unwillingness and lack of training to teach about sexual abuse in

particular. Although the government through SRE has given more importance to PSHE and increasingly more personal safety programmes are implemented, this is not reflected in the practice of the participating three schools or even in the teachers' views as a way of dealing with CSA. It may be that problems identified by Ofsted (2002 and 2005) related to time pressures, lack of skill/training and resources as well as substitution of PSHE lessons by other more academic subjects may well be to blame in these schools too.

One of them also talked about the role of their counsellor but the need for 'a seamless structured system where the child moves up stages'. With reference to a specific girl he was working with, he felt that the mainstream school was not right for her. The relationship with the teacher and keeping the normality was also mentioned by one teacher. One teacher talked about having a senior management member who will deal better with the support that needs to be in place and have more professional procedures.

Another teacher mentioned the Head of Year (which in her school acted as a Form Tutor). However, keeping in mind the specific girl she was working with who had additional behaviour problems, she felt that she was better off in a kind of special school for SA children where the teachers are more aware of their difficulties, learning is not a priority or have bigger LSUs and more support staff so that they can do well in mainstream classes.

One of the young adults mentioned awareness raising about sexual abuse and lessons about it which they could be through PSHE although this was not mentioned in her answer. Unfortunately, in two of these respondents' case, their school did not know about it and I suppose this may have been the reason why they did not write much about it. For the youth that did write about raising awareness, it may well have been that her school did not really offer much because there was no much awareness about it at all. One respondent could not remember if there were any relevant lessons/tutorials the year before her abuse but she was certain that there was nothing in the year she was abused.

2.2.7 e Support the LSU can offer

I included this question because the vast majority of the participating teachers were teaching children with behaviour problems and other SEN and their students were spending time in the LSU. Most of the teachers made reference to the general qualities of their LSU involving the relationships that are built there, the fact that the children are given more time, they have access to nicer or differentiated activities, staff listen to them more, they are more patient with them, and they liaise with other agencies, the counsellor and the learning mentors. One re occurring quality that this particular group of teacher regard as important in their work with this group of children 'is listening' and being more patient although it is implied that these qualities may not be found in the mainstream classes.

2.2.7 f The role of support services

In this question, I did not mention specific support services on purpose as I wanted to see which ones the teachers perceived as important or had experience working with. It was interesting to hear five teachers talking about the EP and a possible role of his/her offering counselling to the child on a regular basis, advising on SEN processes and options, or liaising with CAMHS and sharing with school important information that they need to know. CAMHS was also considered (by four teachers) as an option for counselling or generally for advice. However, a telephone discussion I had with a paediatric nurse, a psychiatric nurse and a consultant psychiatrist in the area of Greater Manchester raised issues around the lack of availability in counselling in their services, the fact that a lot of these referrals are inappropriate as difficult behaviours following an abuse are expected and should not always be equated with mental health problems.

Social Services were mentioned by 3 teachers to give generally advice and talk about court procedures. At that point a criticism was made about Social Services' lack of continuity and absenteeism. The counsellor was mentioned again once while two teachers made reference to having mentors supporting these children. An expert on CSA to comment on the package available for a sexually abused child was

considered a good option for one teacher. None of the interviewees mentioned voluntary services such as Barnardos or NSPCC.

In stark contrast, all three respondents wrote about Barnardos, one of them the NSPCC, one the Child Line and another one the YPAS (Young Persons Advisory Service Liverpool) and her doctor. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to know if they started counselling while in school or later on and if the absence of any support in school was partially the reason for that. Another possibility could have been that they refused that support possibly because of the nature of their needs and circumstances being considered greater than what they school could deal with.

2.2.7 g Summary of findings and conclusion

Below I outline the most important findings of this study:

- On the whole, the interviewed teachers could see a role for the school in child sexual abuse. They identified ways in which individual teachers could help children and they were around building a positive, trusting relationship in which reflective listening, warmth and patience are central, differentiating of work and academic demands, allowing them time in the LSU and gradually reintegrating them into the mainstream classes. However, although all this could and was happening in an LSU and special school, it was stressed that this may not be feasible in mainstream classes.
- At the same time, there was also the belief that, this is an area that requires expertise and teachers may not want and/or be able to deal (in the way that other professionals can) with the stress that this relationship may bring. Services such as CAMHS, the EPS and the School Counsellors were identified as sources for counselling and advice on specific cases. Nonetheless, discussions with CAMHS professionals revealed that a lot of the referrals they receive are inappropriate as some these children's difficulties are expected and do not always equate with mental health problems. Scarcity of resources was also identified as a great problem.

- The participated young adults who had suffered sexual abuse agreed with the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the child in CSA, the need the child has to feel listened to and understood. Unfortunately, I had little data on this as only one of them had allowed her school to know but unfortunately, did not feel emotionally supported. Two of them would have liked their school to have been involved provided they were helpful.
- All the young adults identified very helpful services such as Barnardos, NSPCC , ChildLine and YPAS.
- The importance of SRE in PSHE was mentioned very little by both the teachers and the young adults although the later group recognised the importance of raising awareness in schools about child sexual abuse.
- Although all teachers has received some basic training in Child Protection, they all welcomed more in CP as well as specifically in CSA issues related to the signs and effects it has on a child and what a teacher can do to help.
- Some conflicting views emerged from both groups around the issue of who in school and what he should know about a child's sexual abuse. This may be the result of lack of training and discussions in these matters. Some critical but valid comments were also made about the role of the Designated Person and Social Services. The lack of research in evaluating this process is rather disappointing.
- All the participating teachers had taught at least one sexually abused child whilst some had taught two or three. One of the participating abused young adults had chosen to disclose to her teacher for the fist time. This information reinforces the existing literature the high prevalence of sexual abuse and the importance of the teacher's role in the disclosing process.

Teachers' views on around the role of the school were encouraging about the way forward in CSA. In contrast some of the negative experiences about the school

system two of the abused adults revealed are sad and disappointing. Nonetheless, the reader needs to be aware that that both samples may be atypical and represent the mainstream teachers' views or children who have been sexually abused. The next section discusses methodology limitations further.

2.2.8 Critique of the project and suggestions for further research.

2.2.8 a Critique of the project

On the whole, I think that a possible positive element of this project could be that it looked at an under researched area and hopefully gave a taste of what some teachers think about the role of the school in sexual abuse but also other issues and challenges involving other services too. A better insight may have been gained by the participation of a (small) group of children who unfortunately has been directly affected by it. Gaining access to such a group can be a rather challenging task for several practical and obvious ethical reasons.

Child sexual abuse is an area that, through several initiatives, legislation and unfortunately some tragic developments in a minority of abused children is attracting more attention and hopefully, the interest of more educationalists, professionals and researchers, which could bring a change.

There are however, several limitations in the methodology which were largely due to time pressures, overloaded diaries, my disruption of the doctoral programme while I was in the middle of this essay and finally the sensitive and emotive nature of this topic.

First of all, the sample of teachers and young adults who had been abused was rather small and an opportunity one through my EP work .Despite the fact that I knew the former group pretty well and this must have helped to some extent with the reliability of their answers, except of one, they were all teaching special needs children. This must have made them more sensitive to the issues raised in this study and their views/experiences may not be representative of mainstream teachers with no or little experience with vulnerable groups of children. Ideally, a larger number of teachers of different subjects and schools across the authority would have given a

wider and more realistic picture of teachers' views on the subject and existing practice.

Similarly, a larger sample of young people as well as students who have been abused would have given us a better insight into their experiences and views on the role of the school. It needs to be noted though that, the fact that this group had been receiving counselling from Barnardos may indicate that their needs were more complex from the norm for a variety of unknown reasons. Indeed through some of their answers this comes through. For example, two of the three young adults had significant attendance problems having resulted in one case to miss her GCSE while two of the young adults were distressed and cried a lot .

Moreover, there were many gaps in this group's answers which, had I not gone on maternity leave straight after I received the young adults' answers, I would have tried to fill in through their counsellor. A) Some answers were incomplete (eg they answered 'yes' or 'no' but not 'why'). B) Another 2 answers indicated that they had misunderstood the question (eg in reply to 'Do you think school can do something to help in the prevention of sexual abuse?'), 2 of them answered 'One to one with NSPCC or your nearest Barnardos' and 'Have a person who is experienced in a quiet room'). I think that they confused this question with a previous one about the role of the school with sexually abused children. C) The children's writing and quality of answers (poor syntax/grammar, spelling errors) made me wonder whether they had some form of special needs or this was a result of the impact of the abuse and missed schooling. For instance, one of the participants wrote about his serious attendance problems. Also some other personal details regarding their circumstances would have shed some light as to how typical or not a sample they might have been. Some failed attempts to speak to the counsellor on the phone led me assume possible excessive work pressures at that moment to which I did not wish to add. In addition, 2 days after I received the questionnaires I went on maternity leave which also restricted my time to pursuit this further.

Furthermore, the fact that some time had lapsed between this questionnaire and the time they were in school, may have caused some memory lapses which is also documented as a difficulty in other empirical studies.

Regarding the recording and analysis of the interviews, although I chose to handwrite the replies for good reasons, upon writing the answers and analysing them, a problem emerged which may not have occurred had I transcribed them. Inevitably, I lost some data because some information was not clear enough and I did not want to make assumptions. Luckily, this happened only on three occasions. There is of course the possibility that, even if I had recorded the answers, some of them could have still not been clear because of the way the participant expressed themselves. In relation to this issue, if time had allowed it, I should have written for each participant a summary of their responses, sent it to them and contact them personally for further clarifications.

Finally, regarding the questions/themes chosen, in retrospect, I think that I could have pursued further questioning around their deeper fears/reservations about teaching children who have been sexually abuse and/or teaching sexual abuse in PSHE lessons. Somehow the fact that with some teachers I sensed a certain level of uneasiness when I first asked to participate in this study prevented me from doing so. In addition, as it was meant to be an exploratory study, I wanted to get an idea on their experiences/views perhaps in a rather a lot of issues which meant compromising a deeper analysis.

2.2.8 b Suggestions for further research

In this study several issues and questions have been explored but could be investigated deeper. Some suggestions for further research are listed below:

- 1) Qualitative research involving several case studies of students who have experienced sexual abuse and they are at a similar stage in the legal process following disclosure. A number of teachers, non educational professionals (social workers, psychiatrists, etc) alongside the children themselves and their family could be interviewed regarding the role of the school and its internal

systems (including the pastoral, counsellor, PSHE or any other) and in liaising with other professionals. An evaluation of what they have found effective and in what way exactly it has helped them would be interesting.

- 2) A qualitative study involving a comparison of several cases of sexually abused children with similar demographic details, family situation, overall ability, severity of abuse, support from other services) but opposite experiences in school with regards to the support/help available in order to examine in what way different factors in school impacted on the child's welfare.
- 3) A combination of quantitative and qualitative research involving questionnaires with follow up interviews looking into teachers' perceptions of the role of the school, if there should be one to begin with, what it should entail, drawing their attention to possible similarities with the school's role with SEN children, analyse possible fears/reservations/obstacles, etc. The sample ideally would be representative.
- 4) A combination of qualitative and quantitative research involving questionnaires and follow up interviews which will explore existing practice in Sex and Relationship Education lessons looking in particular at CSA topics required skills and training and possible obstacles.

Assignment 2 action research projects (8000 to 10 000 words)

Student: Virginia Maka

Assignment 2

Title Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused

Summary comment

First marker's comments

Introduction slightly bitty and a little short. For example you could have added one or two key references in section 1.1 about the prevalence and consequence of CSA and on the school's role in supporting children. This might have provided a more direct ink to the RQ. The literature review is excellent – in particular the discussing of the roles schools can play in supporting children who have been abused. Perhaps it could have ended with a summary of the key points. The methodology is fine – but perhaps you could have said a little more about the transition from the first idea to the second. On reflection do you think thematic analysis was the best approach? What other approaches to qualitative analysis might you have used? I like the critique and reflection. You have been honest about the study's shortcomings and offer interesting suggestions as to how future research could build on this project. Perhaps you might have added more about the EPs potential and possible contribution this difficult area.

Second marker's comments

This exploratory study picks up from a single case study and leads onto involving more people that might have a view about Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and how it might be dealt with by schools. It has clearly been a worthwhile study and the RQs are addressed. The literature is used to create a space for the research to take place and this is dealt with critically and with appropriate reflection.

You talked about thematic analysis being used but I was not clear how you went about this. What steps did you take to ensure accuracy of coding for instance? Given that the questionnaires were structured around the expected content, it could be that content analysis was more appropriate and your discussion seemed grouped around the questions that you asked, rather than looking for emergent themes.

The study comes across as one that attempted to rescue a topic after the initial study failed (for reasons outside of your control) rather than one that is carefully designed to address the RQs. However, you do make reasonable use out of the data that was obtained.

Doctoral Criteria	Insufficient evidence Working towards Achieved	Assessment evidence	Improvement suggestions
Capacity to pursue research and scholarship	Achieved	Throughout the project there must be evidence that you have accessed the literature, planned and carried out an investigation and have been able to make	A little more detail on the way that the data was analyzed is needed

		<p>sense of information that you have collected.</p> <p>We will be looking for the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall approach • Clear and logical story line • Evidence of a critical approach to concepts and methodology • Evidence of analytical thinking <p>The standard expected is that it must be suitable for publication in a journal. Some students decide to write specifically for a journal and then try to get the article published – this is catered for in our assignment guidelines.</p>	
Produce an original contribution and substantial addition to knowledge	Achieved	This might be evident in the way that the research is conducted (e.g. using a new approach to investigate a problem); in the production of new understandings or knowledge; or in the application of the project’s findings to professional practice.	You talked about a lack of evidence is educational settings and this study adds further some insights
Demonstrate the relevance of the research to professional EP practice	Working towards	<p>In the discussion or conclusion sections you address the ‘So what?’ question: How does the research inform EP practice and develop or support the work that EPs do? What are the implications for Services or for service users?</p> <p>Reflective personal evaluation is included. A final section is added to the assignment that relates what you have done to your own learning and development as a psychologist.</p>	There is a superficial mentioning of how the EP might be used to provide counseling (as a request from teachers) yet this is not fully explored in section 4.6. For instance is the EP best placed to do this or would a voluntary counseling service be able to deliver a more consistent service to the potentially large numbers of children involved? Alternatively, could EPs be involved in ‘capacity building’ within schools?
Communicate clearly, accurately and according to the conventions for presentation of academic work.	Achieved	<p>The material is organised logically and coherently so that it tells a story.</p> <p>There are well defined sections to the report including:</p> <p>Abstract Introduction Literature review Methodology Results/discussion/conclusion (these may be</p>	Some of the presentation could have benefited from careful proof reading before submission e.g. ensuring consistency of acronyms used (e.g. CSA or SA); accuracy of terminology (e.g. SENCo and children’s special educational needs); pagination with headings not appearing on the

		<p>separate sections or written as one – it depends on the type of study and which approach most effectively communicates what you have done.</p> <p>References</p> <p>The abstract is a brief statement (single spaced and no more than 250 words) of the area, why it is important and specific issues addressed. There is an outline of the methodology, summary of key findings and a reference to the implications of the study (e.g. on policy, practice or theory)</p> <p>The findings are presented clearly and in a way that is appropriate for the type of data collected (i.e. quantitative or qualitative or mixed methodologies).</p> <p>The presentation matches academic requirements and the references are in an accepted and consistent format (e.g. APA 5th)</p>	<p>last line and new sections always starting on a new page; checking or explaining more fully why percentages might not add up to a consistent value (p 7).</p> <p>Thematic analysis (or content analysis) needs to be mentioned in the abstract.</p>
Rationale is justified	Achieved	<p>The introduction to the assignment should justify why this research project was being undertaken. This could be a theoretical rationale for undertaking the work or it could be related to local policy and practice.</p>	
Demonstrate rigorous and critical thinking in regard to the literature and theory	Achieved	<p>The material is presented accurately without bias</p> <p>There is evidence of critique throughout the assignment with a critical approach taken when considering concepts, methodology and the impact of studies that have been done previously.</p> <p>There should be evidence that you have thought critically about the work that you have undertaken and how this relates to the previous literature.</p>	
Demonstrate how the topic of the research is related to a wider field of knowledge and research	Working towards	<p>Introduction section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well justified focus supported by key references • Clearly stated issue to be investigated and/or research questions <p>Literature review section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical context/previous research justify present study • Up-to-date references relevant to the study 	<p>The discussion section needs to link the findings from your work back to the literature</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of how a study/reference contradicts or complements other work in the field <p>Results/discussion/conclusion section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of how findings support, contradict or build on previous work 	
Demonstrate an understanding of the design and conduct of empirical research.	Achieved	<p>In the Methodology section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on the interrelationship between concepts, research questions, data collection methods • Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of chosen methodology • The projects must conform to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society. • Explicit account of procedure • Consideration of data analysis procedures <p>In the Results/discussion/conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between data collection and analysis of findings are clear and explicit • Consideration of how findings support, contradict or build on previous work • Evaluation/critique of study • Discussion of implications, e.g. for the project, professional practice, further research, deeper understanding of theory, methodology 	The ethics section needed more discussion around the issues related to informed consent; dealing with emotionally difficult material; anonymity and how to deal with new disclosures etc

Any further recommendations for reading or skills training

Try to read some texts exploring content analysis and thematic analysis

Recommendation Pass

First examiner Peter Farrell

Second examiner Dr Garry Squires

Date 21 August 2009

2.3 Third Assignment: The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention: a literature review'.

2.3.1 Abstract

In the last two decades, several approaches/interventions such as nurture groups, (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996) circle time (Mosley, 1996), Webster Stratton (2001), etc have been implemented in primary and secondary schools in order to help children with social, emotional and behaviour needs. 'Circle of Friends' has been one of them and has been promoted as an example of good practice by DfEE in a circular on social inclusion (Frederickson et al, 2003). The approach originated in Canada by Pearpoint and Forest (1992) and it was an attempt to promote social inclusion of pupils with disabilities into mainstream settings. It can work well in parallel with other curriculum resources such as the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) which were introduced by the previous government in 2005.

In this research paper, I am exploring the effectiveness of the 'Circle of Friends' approach by reviewing twelve (12) empirical studies conducted in the UK from 1998 to 2009. The majority of them are adaptations of the approach as described in Newton and Wilson (1999), with primary and secondary aged pupils. However, three (3) of them are evaluations of the original model. Despite some methodological weaknesses, there is some evidence of positive effects in the areas of behaviour, social skills, acceptance by the class and increase of friendships. In a few cases, the gains have also proved to be long term. It needs to be noted that, despite the popularity of this intervention, the number of published evaluations in the last 11 years, has been rather small, especially involving the adaptations.

An important role for the EP is identified in training, running the circles, planning/ conducting evaluations and helping schools to identify which model is more suitable for the identified children. Ideas for future research and further development of the intervention are also explored.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS ESSAY

ABA	Applied Behaviour Analysis
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
CoF	Circle of Friends
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CT	Class teacher
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
HT	Head teacher
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
LD	Learning Difficulties
LEA	Local Educational Authority
MCI	My Class Inventory
SEAL	Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEBD	Social Emotional Behaviour Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Needs Coordinator
TA	Teaching Assistant

2.3.2 Introduction

2.3.2 a What is the 'Circle of Friends' intervention?

Newton et al (1996) refer to the 'Circle of Friends' as a support network and a way of helping a child at risk of social exclusion (because of special needs or a crisis in their life) build more relationships around him/her. It takes into account factors that influence behaviour such as a) the child's social and friendship skills, b) feelings and thoughts, c) framework or rules and management practices implemented by adults and d) other children's perceptions and interpretations of the focused child's behaviour (Frederickson et al, 2005). Gus (2000) finds this intervention particularly useful for specific disorders (such as autism) through which the peers learn about the child's condition and understand the child's behaviour better.

Frederickson et al (2005) make reference to two processes that play an important role in this intervention; empathy attrition and attribution retraining. Empathy is induced through the 'friendship exercise' helping children feel what it is like not to have friends in school, and attribution retraining is about making a link between and justifying the focus pupil's unwanted behaviours and specific inherent difficulties (such as autism or other syndromes/disorders) which are beyond their control, or just merely the effect that the lack of friends have on him/her.

Gus (2000) also discusses the usefulness of allowing other children expressing their negative feelings about the child's behaviour when the child is not present.

Over time some adaptations in the way CoF is delivered have been developed mainly so that the child in need of such an intervention is not singled out and there is more of a community spirit whilst implementing the programme. These adaptations are discussed in section 1.d. but there are only three (3) such studies published.

2.3.2 b Essential prerequisites for the project

In order for the project to run with the best chances of success, commitment from the class teacher and senior management that the sessions will run weekly and other discussions on the topic of friendships may occur in parallel in class (Newton et al, 1996) is vital. It is also important that a) the sessions do not occur during break or

lunch times, before or after school and b) the whole class or form group gets involved so that they can help the focus child and/or the circle when needed.

In addition to this, the support of the focused child/ren and other children involved and their parents needs to be established. Sharp (2001) draws attention to the fact that staff also need to put in some time to ensure that they support the volunteers in case they take on board too much and become too involved with the problems of their peers.

2.3.2 c Aims of the intervention

Newton and Wilson (1999) list the aims of the intervention as: 'improvement of the level of acceptance and inclusion of one or more individuals, increase of the attempts of a young person's peer group to intervene positively in that person's life, creation of more opportunities for making friends in or outside of the actual circle, help other children to understand focused individual/s' feelings and behaviours, giving the individual/s a wider range of choices and more sense of control over their behaviour in a range of situations and a support team to actively work with vulnerable or challenging member/s of the school community'.

2.3.2 d What does the traditional 'Circle of Friends' intervention involve?

Overall, the intervention comprises a whole class session and at least six (6) follow up sessions with the focus child and his/her circle. It is recommended that the first whole class session is run by an unfamiliar member of staff so that it raises the profile of the intervention and it increases interest.

The first session which is thought to be the most influential is run with the whole class except the focus child and the content includes: aims of the session and information about the programme, reference to the focus child's behaviour that needs help, acknowledgement that it is unusual to discuss someone's behaviour behind their back but assurances that the child knows about it and agrees to it, establishing confidentiality, getting the class views on the positive attributes of the child as well as behaviours they find difficult are discussed, invitation to think of ways to help the focus child, an exercise about the different kinds of friendships and their impact on our lives aiming to induce empathy, problem solving about ways they can

provide the child with more opportunities for friendships but also with his/her behaviour and enrolment of volunteers. Several methods can be used for selection of the volunteers. It could be at random from the ones that have said yes or after consultation with an adult who knows that group well. It is recommended by the authors that not only 'well behaved' children (as perceived by adults) are only included. Some 'difficult' or 'passive' children can also prove helpful and/or able to benefit from this experience.

At the first session of the 'Circle of Friends' where the volunteers and the focus child get together, the aims are reminded so that the focus child also listens to them. Children are asked why they wanted to be part of the group, the positives about the focus child as well as situations where things don't go well for that child are listed again, problem solving takes place and some targets are decided. Finally, the group decides what they will be called.

The follow up sessions include a warm up exercise, sharing of good news regarding situations where the focus child did well, success towards targets, discussion about blockages towards the targets and possible solutions as well as new target setting.

Over time two more adaptations have been developed. Barratt and Randall (2004, p 5) refer to them as Model 2 and Model 3, which I will also keep in this essay.

According to Model 2, the focus child is not singled out throughout the intervention including the first whole class session. Shotton (1998) is the first one to make this adaptation whilst working with an isolated, self conscious teenage girl.

In this model, the purpose of the circle of friends is still helping a particular child to get to know a small group of children (the circle of friends) better, make and maintain more friendships without the volunteers knowing the real reason for initiating this. This seems to be a better approach for pupils who are very self aware and over sensitive about their social isolation and would not want to be singled out. Setting up the circle involves a similar to the traditional model routine but all discussions are about the importance of friendships, feelings of isolation, times/reasons in one's life when there may be problems with friendships and what feelings that may bring up, an exercise on personal friendships/ relationships in one's life and completion of a

sociometric questionnaire. The latter looks at peer acceptance, eg who plays with whom at lunch time, who they consider close friends, etc. Discussions at weekly meetings revolve around worries/problems/good things that happened in previous week and activities aim at building self esteem, relationships or training of social skills.

Model 3 was developed by Barratt and Randall (2004) and it involves setting up several circles in class around two or more isolated children who are not singled out throughout the intervention. In this way, all the children in the class experience the same circle activities and the class perceptions improve at the same time.

2.3.3 Aims of the literature review and methodology

This research paper aims to review published evaluation studies of the effectiveness of the traditional model of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention and two adaptations of it, named Model 2 and Model 3.

2.3.3 a Rationale

As part of my EP work, I have assessed children who had problems with friendships and have recommended the CoF. Consequently, several of the schools have implemented it. In most of them, there was some direct involvement by myself, eg delivering the first whole class and first circle session, but mainly my work was around training members of staff on how to deliver the sessions, what to be mindful about and how evaluate the programme. Evaluation feedback has been positive overall although, due to time restrictions, the evaluations have tended to be rather informal and based on people's perceptions rather than on systematically collected data.

Schools are under enormous pressure to implement additional programmes for several areas of the curriculum and a diversity of SEN, with an effect on school's resources. Empirical evidence of the effectiveness of a programme is now more relevant than ever. For these reasons, the author of this research paper decided to review published evaluation studies of the efficacy of the CoF.

2.3.3 b Research strategy

Keywords specific to the research questions were:

Circle of friends, development of friendships, evaluation of circle of friends, peer relationships.

Computerized searches of the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) were then done for the period from 1998 to 2009. The Google search engine was also used. An electronic search of the Journal of Educational Psychology in Practice also supplemented more articles. The studies selected for inclusion also had all of their own cited references some of which were included in this review. A manual

search in doctoral assignments at the Department of Education, University of Manchester meant the inclusion of another four (4) empirical studies.

2.3.3 c Criteria for Inclusion

Studies were included if they met most of the following criteria:

1. took place in the UK.
2. participants were mainly primary or secondary aged children. There is only study which involved pre school children
3. they described either the traditional model or an adaptation of it
4. included children with autism or behaviour or emotional difficulties (manifested in withdrawal or isolation)
5. described an evaluation methodology with the exception of one study
6. there was no requirement for included studies to have long term follow ups, because to have done so would have reduced the number of studies in the review significantly.

In this review, I have included evaluation studies that have used these three models. Unfortunately, there is only one evaluation of Model 3 and two of Model 2. Total candidate studies numbered 12. In my description of these studies, I have mainly included the results that are related to my research questions. Below are the research questions I am attempting to address in this essay.

1. What do empirical studies show about the effectiveness of CoF on identified emotional/behaviour difficulties of focus child/ren ?
2. What do empirical studies show about the effectiveness of CoF on the increase of friendships between the focus child and other pupils in the class?
3. What do empirical studies show about the effectiveness of CoF on other classmates' acceptance towards the focus child?
4. Were any of the above gains sustained medium or long term?

2.3.4 Brief description of the reviewed studies

In the next section, I will summarise the main findings of the twelve (12) evaluation studies of: the original model, Model 2 and Model 3. The findings included here are mainly the ones related to the research questions. In some studies, there is information missing regarding the sample, aims of study, statistical data, etc which, obviously I could not include.

1) Study by Frederickson and Turner (2003)

Participants: 20 primary aged children (6 -12 years) with SEBD (Social Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties) at Stage 3 of the previous Code of Practice, from different schools in one English county. There were 19 boys and 1 girl. EPs had assessed and referred the children to this intervention. There were two (2) Phases in this intervention with two comparison groups (10 children in each group) at each phase. All participants were well matched on age.

Duration of programme: 6 weeks

Follow up: none

Aims of study and methodology

The aims are not explicitly described in the article. In Phase 1, there were 2 groups of ten (10) pupils each assigned randomly. Group 1 received the intervention programme by a graduate psychology student while Group 2 served as a waiting list comparison group. A teaching assistant spent 20- 30 minutes each week with the focus child (in the comparison group) in a small group reading a story about friendship. In Phase 2 of the study, 9 out of the 10 pupils from the comparison list received the circle of friends intervention (one pupil had moved on in another area). The intervention again lasted for 6 weeks and the sessions were run by the class teacher.

There were pre, post and between groups measures and analyses to compare any changes on the scores of group 1 compared to group 2. The following evaluation measures were used:

- A sociometric rating scale (Asher and Dodge, 1986) provides information about other children's perception of the focus child, based on how much they play. Children have to circle the number from one to five that best describes how much they like playing with every other child in their class.
- The self perception profile for children (Harter, 1985) assessed the children's perceptions in scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance and behaviour conduct.
- A global self worth scale assessed the extent to which the children liked themselves as people.
- The teacher's rating scale of children's actual behaviour (Harter, 1985) provided information about the same five domains as had been assessed by the self perception profile for children.
- Short form of 'My Class Inventory' (Frazer et al, 1982) to assess pupils' and teachers' perceptions of their learning environment (ie class cohesiveness, pupils' difficulty with work, the extent of tension in class, etc).

Results

A significant positive impact on social acceptance of the focus children in their peer groups was found in both intervention phases. There was increased willingness of other children in the class to play with focus child. However, no significant impact on the focus children's perceptions of their social acceptance or behaviour conduct was found. The between group analysis demonstrated no effects of the intervention on teachers' ratings of targeted pupil's behaviour but there was an increase in global self esteem during the intervention.

2) Study by Frederickson et al. (2005)

Participants: Fourteen (14) (11 boys, 3 girls) primary aged children (6.8 years to 11.3 years) in different mainstream schools in one English county chosen by local EPs because of peer relationship problems (ethnic origin of the group is also given). Identified SEN were social and emotional difficulties (SEBD) for 6 children, learning difficulties (LD) for 7 children and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) for one child. Seven of these children had a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Duration of programme: 6 weeks

Follow up: a term after the end of the meetings but only with seven (7) of the original focus children (4 boys and 3 girls). Primary SEN were LD (4) SEBD (2) and ASD (1).

Aims of study and methodology

The aims of the study were reported to be the following: the whole class meeting will bring the largest improvement in social inclusion, further improvements in social inclusion will be observed during the meetings with volunteers through the volunteers' ratings and positive changes in social inclusion would be associated with subsequent improvements in behaviour, including peer rated assessment of behaviour (p22). Data was collected at 4 points in time (2-3 weeks before whole class meeting, 3-5 days after the whole class meeting, within a week of the last weekly meetings and one term after the last circle meeting). Seven (7) participants were followed up at Time 4, an average of 18 weeks after the last circle meeting. The reason for following up only 7 was staff difficulties. Two Assistant EPs worked in pairs, one running the meetings and the other collecting data.

- The LITOP Questionnaire from the Social Inclusion Survey (SIS) by Frederickson and Graham (1999) was used. It assesses how well (or not), a pupil is accepted as a playmate by other children in class. An index of acceptance and rejection was worked out for each child in the class.
- The 'Guess Who' peer assessment questionnaire by Coie and Dodge (1988) was adapted to use unlimited nominations and scores. Children were asked to nominate classmates who fitted several behaviour descriptors such as: cooperates, disrupts, starts fights, etc. Validity tests on these measures carried out in previous studies were considered.

Results

Comparisons showed a significant effect on social acceptance following the whole class session. There was evidence, however, that over the period of the 6 weekly circle meetings gradually acceptance scores decreased slightly and rejection scores

increased (but never reached baseline). However, there was some indication that circle membership was associated with reduced rejection. The significant decrease in rejection scores found in Time 1 and 2 for the whole class was only maintained at Time 3 for those children in the circle. There was no evidence that positive changes in social acceptance were associated with improvements in behaviour.

At the follow up phase- 18 weeks after the last circle meeting, in comparison to Phase 1 rejection indices increased but never reached the level it was pre intervention. Acceptance indices however, did decrease after the intervention was over and fell below where it was pre intervention. Children selected by their teachers to be in the circle were more accepting and less rejecting of the focus child than other children in the class. The whole class meeting appeared to have a greater impact on the children who would be selected for the circle, their average acceptance of the focus child improved slightly more than other children in the class and their rejection fell considerably more. However, there was little evidence of any further impact of the six weeks of circle meetings. Over the 18 week follow up period a full return to baseline was apparent given by the other children in the class. The acceptance ratings given by the children in the circle appeared to be returning towards the baseline. The rejection ratings from members of the circle were still lower than the baseline level.

An analysis of individual cases is also made by the authors. An exception occurs in the case of a child with ASD whereby the circle of friends gets to hear about his inherent difficulties and this is possibly the reason why his acceptance and rejection scores improve during the six weeks of small group meetings. At follow up his rejection score had risen only slightly but still lower than the other focus children's .

3) Study by Bowden, 2003 (doctoral essay)

Participants: 8 boys from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3 with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties in different schools in the Liverpool area. Their withdrawal or aggressive behaviours were affecting their friendships and this was the reason why they were referred to the EPS. EP Assessments happened before the intervention to determine appropriateness of the intervention.

Duration: 6 sessions at least, although the number is not specified for every case apart from the fact that they happened during 2001-2002 and the duration varied in every case

Follow up: 6-18 months after the circles had been carried out

Aims of study and methodology

The aims of this study was to evaluate the short term and long term effectiveness of CoF in relation to focus children's self esteem, behaviour, attitude to school and friendships.

The evaluation process involved:

- interviews with key staff, parents and pupils
- completion by each focus pupil a B/G Steem (Maines and Robinson, 1988) and Self Image Profile (Butler, 2001) after the intervention. Data was also gathered from the schools and the EPS although the study does not specify exactly what that data included.
- consultation with staff and parents

Results

All focus pupils said that they had made friends in the short term but only half of the children felt that they had friends in the long term. Seven (7) of the eight (8) boys said that the intervention had helped them having more friends and having an improved behaviour, Interviews with staff showed that all targeted pupils had improved relationships short term. All staff believed that there were short term positive effects including improved self esteem and relationships between targeted pupil and teachers only four (4) considered them long term.

Staff reported about the volunteers that it helped them understand better the focus child's problems and they became more understanding about how friendships or the lack of them can affect children. The parents of five pupils who had SEBD prior to the intervention reported that this had improved. Five parents believed that self

esteem had improved long term. Seven of the parents believed that the intervention resulted in more friendships and five of them thought that the effect was long term.

On the whole, it appears that pupils and parents were more positive about the long term duration of friendships.

Responses regarding the positive effects the intervention has on Key stage 3 pupils were less convincing possibly because the situation was too contrived and friendships are difficult to be manipulated at this stage. Also, in one case, the pupil was depressed and received psychiatric help which means that any changes are likely to take a long time to happen.

4) Study by Edwards, 2001 (doctoral essay)

Participants: one boy of 9 years of age with Prader– Willi syndrome in a mainstream school in the North West, some behaviour difficulties (in following instructions) and difficulty in relating with his peers- he had no friends and was quite egocentric. Prader Willi Syndrome is an inherited condition which is usually accompanied by hypotonia, short stature, poor balance, learning and behaviour difficulties of variable severity.

Prior to the EPS involvement, another SEN service was involved. He was previously permanently excluded due to aggressive behaviours towards his peers.

Duration: 11 weeks

Follow up: After the 11th week, the author met with the group once a month to review progress (it is not clear for how long)

Aims of the study and methodology

Aims of the study are implied to be the social inclusion and improved behaviour of the focus child.

Methods used were:

- the Boxall profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) and the Friendship Circles (Newton and Wilson, 1999) which were completed by the focus child prior to the intervention and in the 12th week.
- semi structured interview with each member of the circle and focus child, class teacher, the teaching assistant and the parents after the 6th meeting.

Results

All the volunteers reported that focus child's behaviour had changed (p. 24, 'less tantrums, not so moody, does things more happily', etc) and that he had more friends. They all wanted to continue to meet in the circle to carry on helping focus child. His class teacher also commented on him being less 'egocentric', much happier and more relaxed' and that he has made more friendships. The teacher felt that the members of the circle had also matured. Volunteers made comments about themselves of the kind 'to be more confident in helping others, made me more sensible, it helped me help others, etc. Similarly, the Special Needs Assistant reported that his behaviour has changed ie he does not lose his temper as easily, he responds well to what the volunteers suggest, he does not seek attention as he used to and he is more included in the group. His parents agreed that he had made closer friendships inside and outside of school and that he became more 'giving'. They also identified less tantrums, him being happier and more relaxed. Parents also reported an improvement in other parents' behaviour and perceptions towards the targeted child and his parents.

5) Study by Mackay M.,2009 (doctoral essay)

Participants: 1 boy (age not specified) with a statement for atypical mild autism and associated behaviour difficulties in a primary, mainstream school in the North West of England. In the mainstream school, he attended a social stories group. Previously, he had accessed the Early Bird Programme and attended a special school for children with severe learning difficulties

Duration: 6 weeks

Follow up: 2 weeks

Aims and methodology

Aims of the study were to assess the impact of CoF on peer acceptance of focus child, changes in all group members, staff's perceptions of the involvement in the CoF for the focus child, focus child's view on whether attending the group changed other children's behaviour.

- a sociogram was given pre and post intervention
- semi structured interviews with each member of the group were conducted 2 weeks after the end of the programme.

Results

Members of the circle made comments about having improved in the way they were behaving more specifically controlling their anger, not shouting out, more friendly towards targeted child and tolerant towards other children, volunteers wanted to mix more with other children they did not before, improved peer acceptance towards targeted child, improved behaviour from targeted child (not shouting out) were noticed only by some, not all of the volunteers

6) Study by Kalyva and Avramidis (2005)

Participants 5 boys with a diagnosis of ASD aged between 3 years 10 months to 4 years 7 months - three in the intervention and two in the control group. They all attended the same nursery. At the time of the investigation all the ASD children underwent ABA (Applied Behaviour Analysis) at home by a trained therapist who also supported them in school for periods ranging from 5 months to 1 year. All ASD children were of average IQ and had developed sufficient language skills to be in a mainstream setting. The 25 peers were normally developing and were 15 girls and 5 boys.

Duration of intervention: 30 minutes on a weekly basis at a nursery setting for 3 months (12 sessions) with one teacher leading each one of the 5 groups and 5 peers of each child with ASD.

Follow up: 3 months and 5 months

Aims of the study and methodology

The aim of the study was to test if the CoF can improve the communication skills (ie ability to respond to peers' attempts to interact and initiate contact with peers) of ASD children in the preschool setting.

All children had some general circle time and after that, the CoF sessions took place. The control children, however, carried on with their programme after the end of the general circle time. The CoF sessions involved singing nursery rhymes, playing with toys, etc.

The evaluation methodology was mainly observation. An observation schedule was completed by two people, which recorded the number of responses and initiation attempts both successful and unsuccessful with all participating children with ASD during baseline, post intervention and 2 months follow up. All data was recorded live and collected at three (3) different points over a period of 5 months, through observations in class during circle time. Observations lasted for 3 hours for every child (1 hour at each phase). The observation schedule was devised so that it included specific targeted behaviours that described accepting or refusing interaction initiated by another child or initiation of interaction from the focus child. There was an independent psychologist observer and the interrater agreement was 93.4%.

Results

The number of successful responses in the intervention group was higher than the control both after 3 months and 5 months. The number of unsuccessful responses of the intervention group was lower than those of the control group were lower after 3 and 5 months. The number of successful initiations of the intervention group was higher after 3 and 5 months while the number of unsuccessful initiations was lower after 3 and 5 months. Although the changes were not statistically significant, they are still important as any small changes in autistic children's social skills can make a difference to them and their family in every day life. Moreover, social interactions is one of their most persistent, long term and constitutional difficulty in autistic children.

7) Study by Rooney, 2008 (doctoral essay)

Participants: 25 members of school staff (the majority were SENCos but also: Deputy Head, CT, TAs, SENATS, Learning Mentors, etc) in one local authority in the North West

Aims of study and methodology

This study, amongst other aims (eg prevalence of CoF, criteria for choosing this intervention, etc) which are not the focus of this review, attempted to investigate the outcomes of the CoF for the participants of the circle.

A structured postal questionnaire was sent to 114 schools of the LA and 36 support staff, but there was a poor response rate (about 17%).

Follow up: none

Results

Respondents said that their evaluation tools were vastly formal reviews of focus children's IEPs, focus child's views and observation although a big number wrote 'none' or did not reply. 50% of participants replied that the focus child's quality of friendships, social skills, self esteem and group work skills improved. A similar percentage reported improved behaviour as well as other improvements in communication skills and decreased anxiety.

8) Study by Whitaker et al (1998).

Participants

Six children (gender not specified) in Years 3 to 10 in mainstream schools with a diagnosis of autism and a Statement of Special Educational Needs and one in a special school for children with moderate learning difficulties.

Duration: it varied up to 17 meetings run by the author, school members and members of an ASD outreach team.

Follow up: none

Aims of study and methodology

Aims of setting the circles are described by the authors as to enhance more successful and mutually reinforcing interactions amongst autistic children and their peers, these interactions to continue outside the circle, peers will offer acceptance and emotional support to targeted pupils and address specific problems by eliciting their peers' help.

The evaluation methods were:

- interviews with parents/members of the school staff responsible for the circle and circle members
- a questionnaire to the members of the circle.
- The evaluation data was collected at a different time for each circle.

Results

Higher levels of peer contact, improved social integration and behaviour, less anxiety and demand for adult support, were reported by the circle leaders. Some specific behaviours such as fighting, hand chewing and some obsessions were reported to have improved.

Parents also gave positive reports about more sociable and outgoing personality of the focus children and a shift towards playing with peers of the same age.

9) Study by Gus (2000)

This study is quite unique in that only one session takes place with the whole class and there are no follow up sessions or volunteers as such. The content and structure of the whole class session however, follow the original model. There is an emphasis on autism and the behaviours exhibited by the focus child as a result of autism.

Participants: 1 boy with a diagnosis of autism in Year 10 in a mainstream school experiencing social exclusion during break times. He was statemented and

supported by a TA all times except break times. In his early years, he attended a unit for high functioning autistic children. He transferred during middle school.

Duration : only one session with the whole class but the focus child absent led by the boy's form tutor in the presence of the author

Follow up : 23 weeks

Aims of the study and methodology:

This intervention intended to challenge the stereotypic ideas of a class about autism and help them change their attitudes towards their autistic peer.

Methods were:

- a questionnaire for the form group a week after the session and
- then a different one 23 weeks after the initial session. The first questionnaire asked mainly two questions; if the students had learnt anything about autism and how they could help the focus child. The second one which was completed by only 13 students of the form group had questions around changes of their attitude towards the focus child since they heard about his difficulties, changes in their actions, if the focus child had acted differently and in what way. Adam's tutor and TA commented on Adam's general well being.

Results

In response to the first questionnaire, nine of the pupils commented that they did not know about autism and they can now be more sensitive and patient. Other students also commented how aware they became about autism and how useful that was. A lot of them suggested that they would be more patient, talk to him, involve him more, make him more welcome, help him in class, point things out to him if he says inappropriate things (p 464).

In the second questionnaire, nine (9) out of thirteen (13) students felt that their attitudes towards the focus child had changed a little. 3 said that it had changed and one said that it had not changed. Their changed attitude included things they had described in the first questionnaire. However, the class felt that the focus child's

behaviour had not changed as a result. His TA and form tutor said that he continued to be happier in school. However, we don't have any specific descriptions of what 'happier' meant in practice.

In this section, I will review evaluation studies of Model 2. I have found only two (2) published evaluation studies of Model 2. According to Model 2, the focus child is not singled out at any point including the first whole class session. The purpose of the circle of friends is still helping a particular child to get to know a small group of children better, make and maintain more friendships without the volunteers knowing the real reason for initiating this.

10) Study by Barrett and Randall (2004)- Model 2

Participants: 1 rejected boy rejected by his peers in a year 3/4 class of a large mainstream school

Duration of programme : 6 weeks

Follow up : none

Aims of study and methodology

One of the aims of the study is reported to be an increase of social acceptance of the isolated child. There were other aims not related to the aims of this review though.

The evaluation methods were:

- a sociometric questionnaire (Frederickson et al, 1991) regarding how children liked to play with each member of the class, was given pre and post intervention.
- staff, pupil and parent evaluation questionnaires were distributed at the end of the programme
- a whole class discussion took place to get views of the class members who have not been involved in the circle.

Results

The authors admit that the project had limited impact on the focus child's relationships with other children (especially outside the circle). Staff confirmed that the effect on peer relationships was limited.

The focus child said that he would remain friends with only the boys. Staff felt though that the effects were generally not sustained. Peer acceptance ratings by whole class towards the focus child did not increase but ratings by circle members increased whilst in one case it became lower. Other circle members said that they would stay friends with all the others in the group but the study has not followed up to check if that was indeed the case. Pupils out of the circle noticed that circle members were more friendly to each other.

11) Study by Shotton (1998)

Participants: a 13 year old girl who was isolated in a mainstream school and on the verge of becoming a school refuser and another 5 children who were part of the circle of friends.

Duration: 6 weeks

Follow up: none

Aims of study and methodology

The aim appears to be the girl's social inclusion.

No formal evaluation was conducted as such. Some brief references to reports from the teacher, the circle's group members and the focus child's mother are made in the article.

Results

All group members reported that they were feeling much less isolated in school as they had got to know each other better (p 24). One of the rejected children and another one with friendship difficulties who had been bullied reported feeling happier. The focus child was observed by the author and the co leader to be more talkative. This was transferred in the classroom when she would ask other children to work

with her. The girl's mother noticed more confidence in her daughter and an improved attitude towards school.

12) Study by Barrett and Randall (2004)- Model 3

Participants: 3 children from a 5/6 class in a mainstream school with a community resource centre attached to it. Three circles were established around each of the three children rejected by their peers. The targeted children were not identified publicly, nor were they aware that the circles had been created around them. The focus children described as 'difficult' in an already 'difficult class'.

Circle time had been attempted previously with no success. These children were referred to the school EP.

Duration: 6 (six) weeks with the same member of school staff. The three (3) circles were by the Deputy Head, the class teacher and the community education worker. The EP for the school and an EPiT consulted with the staff to plan, review and evaluate the circles.

Follow up: 4 months

Aims of the study and methodology

The aims of the study, amongst other ones, were to test the hypotheses that the isolated children would gain more friends and have more positive interactions with peers and social skills would improve.

Each pupil in class completed 'My Class Inventory' by Fraser et al (1982), which measures perceptions of both actual and preferred class cohesion scores. The results of the MCI were presented to the whole class at the initial stage, when the importance of friendships and the purpose of the circles were discussed in small groups.

All the children completed a social skills questionnaire (Northumberland County Council Pupil Questionnaire, 2000) prior to the start of the intervention.

At the mid-point review, interviews with children and teachers were carried out. At the end of the intervention, the MCI and social skills questionnaires were completed by the children, further discussion was held with the class and interviews were conducted with pairs of individual pupils. This involved the recording of friendships using circles diagrams (Newton and Wilson, 1999).

Results

Two (2) of the three (3) focus children recorded an increase of friends and playing more with children outside the circle. There were strong indications that one targeted child perceived his social skills to have improved to a large degree. All the three children reported that they were more aware of other children with whom they could engage, but the intervention was not successful in affecting the peer relationships of the most isolated child on the short term. Reasons for this may be that a systemic approach to improving the general class climate needs to be in place before the most entrenched problems are dealt with.

This model enabled friendship issues to be addressed in a whole-class context, as several circles included all children in the class.

2.3.5 Summary of findings and discussion

In this section, I am summarising the findings under the headings of the research questions and I am providing a critical review about the methodologies used and other elements of the evaluations.

2.3.5 a Methodological weaknesses

No piece of research is perfect and some methodological weaknesses were also identified in these evaluations too. More specifically, the small size of samples which of course makes generalization impossible was a common one. Five (5) evaluations were just single cases (Shotton, 1998, McKay, 2009 Barrett and Randall, 2004, Gus, 2000, Edwards, 2001). The largest sample (20) was used by Frederickson and Turner (2003) while the second large (14) was again by Frederickson et al (2005).

With the exception of Gus's (2000) and Bowden's (2003) studies, the rest of the evaluations lack long term follow up.

Moreover, in four of the twelve studies, there is either no or incomplete pre intervention data (Edwards, 2001, Shotton, 1998, Whitaker, 2008, Gus, 2000), which makes objective and systematic comparison of data difficult.

Lack of consideration of the programme integrity, as the way it was delivered and the materials used could have had an impact on its effectiveness. The leaders of the programme varied from TAs, EPs, HTs, CTs to EPiTs. Although Newton and Wilson (1999) describe in great detail the structure for the sessions, the exact content (especially after the second circle session) and the way the discussions are managed are dependent of the leader. The skill of the leader in guiding the discussion, the kind of 'homework' children are given and the way issues raised by the children are dealt with can also play an important role in the effectiveness of the intervention. Questionnaires or interviews could have included relevant questions which address the skill of the leader, their confidence, what they found difficult while running the sessions, etc. Perhaps some sampled video taping of what was said in sessions, and/or discussions with somebody else involved with the specific project and of knowledge of CoF could give some information about that but also provide some quality assurance. This information can be analysed when considering the impact of the programme and ways of improving it.

Robson (1993) emphasises the complexity of an evaluation, which often means that a combination of: qualitative and quantitative data is necessary. In the current type of evaluation, a combination of interviews, rating scales and observations (by independent people) would probably have provided a more comprehensive view of the effectiveness of the intervention. Choosing the appropriate group/s of participants is equally important. For example, in Frederickson et al' s (2005), evaluation data is gained only from peers while parental views are included only in five (5) studies (Bowden, 2003, Edwards, 2001, Shotton,1998, Whitaker et al, 1998, Barrett and Randal - Model 2, 2004).

Reliability of measures is another important factor in research. For example, in one study (Rooney, 2008) data was gathered from school members whose views about the effectiveness of CoF were elicited through a postal questionnaire. Their answers were dependent on impressions/views rather than objective and systematically collected data. The study did not report the time that had lapsed between the end of the circle of friends and completion of the questionnaire, which could have affected their answers significantly.

Consideration and analysis of the severity of the focus children's needs/difficulties and the impact that these can have on the effectiveness of the programme would have also been informative. In some evaluations, the focus children were either statemented or at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice which may have reduced the effectiveness of the intervention due to well established challenging behaviours and negative reputations of these children. Only in Bowden's (2003) and Barrett and Randall's studies (2004) there is some reference to this as a possible factor for not having the expected impact on boys with significant emotional behaviour problems.

Finally, overall, there is limited reference and analysis of the impact that the whole school ethos and systems are likely to have had on the success of the intervention.

2.3.5 b What do empirical studies show about the effectiveness of CoF on the identified emotional and/or behaviour difficulties of focus child/ren?

Behaviour is often contextual and dependent on many factors which need to be taken into account when one attempts to change it. When a short lived intervention such as the CoF is attempted in a school and other prerequisites such as a positive, nurturing, collaborative school ethos and behaviour management, appropriate support for teachers and pupils, etc are not in place, improving difficult behaviours can be a challenging task. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the findings in the evaluations are not very positive.

More specifically, three (3) of the twelve (12) studies, two (2) of which had the largest samples as well as pre, post intervention measures and control groups found that

the focus child's behaviour did not change while other three (3) highlight some positive changes.

The studies, which report no changes in the behaviour of the targeted children were conducted by Frederickson et al, Frederickson and Turner and Gus. However, the following weaknesses of these studies need to be highlighted. In Frederickson and Turner's study (2003), although there is a control group, use of pre and post intervention measures, parental or peer views on the targeted children's behaviour were not elicited. Had the latter occurred, an improvement in the focus children's behaviour, which may have gone unnoticed in the classroom could have been identified at a smaller scale, especially when an increase in global self esteem was found. This could have led gradually to a behaviour improvement due to the link between self esteem and behaviour. Furthermore, the lack of follow up both in further work in CoF but also in the evaluation process does not allow the exploration of any possible medium or long term changes in behaviour. As discussed before in this paper, change takes time to occur (Robson, 2002) and this is even more so when emotional and behaviour needs are involved in a complex context such as school.

In the next evaluation study of Frederickson et al (2005) peers' views this time (but not teachers' or parents') indicated again no change in the focus children's behaviour. In addition, seven (7) of the focus children had a Statement of Special Needs which indicates a high level of need and a possible long duration of difficulties which can make it difficult for a short intervention to bring change.

Finally, although Gus (2000)'s Year 10 autistic child with a statement and associated behaviour difficulties did not change his behaviour towards his peers (based on peers' views), his CT and TA found him happier in school. The fact that the intervention took place so late in his school career may explain to some extent why one session of CoF had limited impact on his behaviour.

In two (2) of the other studies (by Bowden and Edwards) who had a much smaller sample some positive changes in behaviour were identified. Bowden's (2003) evaluation ensured that the views of all important people in the children's life (key staff, parents, peers and focused pupils) were included. Reports from most of the

parents, staff and the focused children indicated an improvement in behaviour and self esteem but some bias from school staff as the evaluations were carried out by the author who already had a professional relationship with them is possible (Clarke and Dawson, 1999). Moreover, as with every interview and questionnaire, it is difficult to know to what extent the answers were based on objective data such as observations, etc. In the questionnaire Bowden used, the question around behaviour was rather general (Did behaviour improve? If so how?) Perhaps a rating scale referring to specific difficult behaviours could have been given. Also, there was no pre intervention data from all the subjects involved which makes the comparison of 'hard statistical data' regarding the improvement difficult.

Edward's (2001) single case study of a 9 year old boy with behaviour difficulties as part of Prader Willi Syndrome showed positive changes in his behaviour based on views of the main people (at home and in school) in the boy's life. There was pre and post intervention rating scales administered by the EP (Boxall Profile and B/G Steem) and interviews with the main people in his life at school and at home.

Finally, in Rooney's (2008) survey, a large percentage of school staff noticed improvement in the children's behaviour but there are some difficulties around the reliability and validity of the replies.

2.3.5 c What do empirical studies show about the effectiveness of CoF on the increase of friendships between the focus child and other pupils in the class?

The development of a friendship although it occurs naturally for most children, it can be a complex process as usually the following three components are important: mutual preference, mutual enjoyment, and the ability to engage in skilful interaction (Howes, 1983, p. 1042). One could claim that the first two components are not present in this kind of intervention (especially at the beginning) and they have to be engineered somehow. Regarding the ability to engage, that is often a difficulty in the focus children usually due to their underlying social, emotional or behaviour problems. Therefore, the expectation about an increase in friendships as such within these short time scales may be a high and difficult one to start with.

As Kalyva and Avramidis (2005) stress, despite its name, the CoF is an approach partly aiming to help children's social skills which may in turn help them make friends later. Therefore, although on some occasions, the evaluation may not show an increase of friendships as such, the seed may have been planted for it to develop at a later stage.

Despite all this, in most of the evaluations there were some good news regarding friendships, especially short to medium term. In Kalyva and Avramidis' s evaluation of five (5) pre school ASD children they found some encouraging outcomes regarding these children's communication skills, which they believe could lead to friendships. They found that the number of successful (communication) responses and initiations in the intervention group was higher than the control short and medium term while the number of unsuccessful responses and initiations of the intervention group was lower than those of the control group were lower. Although the changes were not statistically significant, they were important for ASD children as they can lead to more opportunities for the formation of relationships.

Bowden's study (2003) also had some encouraging findings: all eight (8) focus children said that they had made friends short term and half of them (4) long term. All staff found that focus pupils had improved relationships short term but only 4 considered the changes to be long term. Pupils and parents though found that new friendships were long term. A weakness of this study is that not all the participants filled in all pre intervention measures, making, therefore, a comprehensive comparison with post intervention data difficult. The interviewees' answers may also have been less positive had the evaluator not run the circle sessions too. However, it is reassuring that the parents and the focus children answers were more positive rather than the teachers-

Edward's evaluation (2001) of a 9 year old boy also shows more or closer friendships according to the peers, parents, TA and CT. Rooney's (2008) study also reports positive staff perceptions about friendships but there are weaknesses in the reliability of the measures used in this study.

Although Barrett and Randall's evaluation (2004) of Model 2 found limited impact on the focus child's friendships, the results of the evaluation of Model 3, were more

optimistic in that two of the three targeted children extended their relationships. The third and most isolated one was not as successful but this could be due to the severity of his problems. Upon comparing the models, one could tentatively conclude that the reason for better results in Model 3 had to do with involving more children, and in this way, encouraging more problem solving and developing closer links between them.

Shotton (1998) who evaluated Model 2, although there are methodological weaknesses regarding lack of pre and post intervention measures and lack of formal follow up, she reports less feelings of isolation, more confidence and talking between the circle members. One might say that this could lead to more or real friendships. Indeed, the author reports that, a year after the end of the intervention, the circles carried on and the pupils met in school. A similar finding regarding the continuation of the meetings a year after the end of the intervention is also reported in Whitaker et al.'s study (1998).

2.3.5d What do empirical studies show about the effectiveness of CoF on other classmates' acceptance towards the focus child?

Acceptance of other classmates towards focus children, especially those having underlying conditions such as ASD, has proved an area of success of the CoF. All reviewed studies of the traditional model showed to a greater or lesser degree that, straight after the whole class session acceptance towards the focus child increased. The main psychological processes underlying this are empathy attrition and attribution retraining. The 'friendship exercise' helping children feel what it is like not to have friends in school and therefore empathise with the isolated or neglected peers of theirs, and attribution retraining involving making a link between focus pupil's unwanted behaviours and specific inherent difficulties (such as autism or other syndromes/disorders) which are beyond their control or just the effect that the lack of friends have on him/her have proved to be effective.

Acceptance of the focus child was particularly high after the whole class meeting in cases where the focus child had ASD (Gus, 2000, McKay, 2009) or other disorders such as Prader- Willi (Edwards, 2001), where the peers knew nothing about the focus child's condition before, and better understanding of the condition had quite an

impact on them. However, this impact seems to lessen as time goes on and the focus child's behaviour has not changed as a result. In Gus's study (2000), 23 weeks after the intervention the majority of peers said that their attitudes towards the child had changed just a little which is still relatively good considering how atypical the intervention was consisting only of one session.

Similarly, Frederickson et al's (2005) study has found that only in the case of the ASD candidate, acceptance and rejection scores improved during the six (6) weeks small group meetings. This was attributed to the different (positive) reaction peers had because of the ASD diagnosis.

2.3.5 e Were any of the above gains sustained medium or long term?

Out of the twelve (12) evaluation studies reviewed in this paper, only four (4) (Kalyva and Avramidis, 2005, Edwards, 2001, Gus, 2000, Frederickson et al, 2005) had a medium to long term follow up ranging from 6 weeks to 18 months. Two more studies by Whitaker et al (1998) and Shotton (1998) reported very positive but informal feedback over a year after the intervention.

Medium term gains were found in:

1) Kalyva and Avramidis' (2005) study with ASD pre school children where the number of successful responses and initiations was higher than the control medium term while the number of unsuccessful responses of the intervention group was significantly lower than those of the control group were lower. This is a positive finding as social interaction is a major difficulty in ASD children and any improvement is important for these children's life. In addition, the methodology in this study was one of the strongest as it involved a control group, structured observations of specific social behaviours by two people (one of which was a psychologist) and inter rating agreement was high.

2) Barrett and Randall's evaluation study of Model 2 (2004) which found that, short term, peer acceptance ratings increased by circle members.

3) In Frederickson et al 's (2005) medium term follow up (involving 11 children with SEBD, LD and ASD), we have some mixed findings. Four (4) months after the intervention was over, rejection indices increased but never reached pre intervention level. Unfortunately, that was not the case with acceptance indices of whole class, they were below pre intervention. However, members of the circle were more accepting and less rejecting in comparison. There is a positive exception with a child with ASD whereby his rejection score had risen only slightly but still lower than the other focus children's. One possible reason for this may be the fact that his peers were informed about the ASD difficulties and as a result of that, they were able to justify his behaviour.

With regards to long term effectiveness, of particular interest is Bowden' s evaluation (2003) involving 8 boys with SEBD. Six to eighteen months (6- 18) months after the circles had been carried out, 5 of the 8 parents, reported that friendships lasted and self esteem had improved long term. Results with Key Stage 3 pupils were less positive. The author attributes this to the severity of the needs the focus children experienced and the fact that some behaviours have been established over long periods of time.

Finally, Gus's study (2000) showed that 23 months after the intervention for an ASD child, TA and form tutor said that he continued to be happier at school (although the focus child's behaviour was reported by peers to be unchanged).

Creating a general school ethos where it is regarded 'cool to care' (Sharp, 2001, p21) and both staff and children are supportive and friendly towards each other, is definitely a worthwhile task for schools to undertake if they want to develop children's social and emotional well being. Although no intervention, including the Circle of Friends, can achieve this in isolation, the current review has shown evidence of areas in which the CoF has proved effective. More specifically; despite some methodological weaknesses, positive changes have been identified in the reviewed studies, eg in the improvement of the communication skills of preschool ASD children, the development of medium and long term friendships especially in isolated or ASD children and peers and the development of awareness, empathy and acceptance towards children with conditions such as ASD . On the other hand, only

limited or no changes were found in the behaviour of some older children with ASD and SEBD, which, to some extent, it is expected due to the severity and long term duration of the problem.

Change is difficult to occur in complex contexts and complex SEN difficulties, and it is the opinion of the author, that interventions that can bring even small improvements and plant the seed for further developments in a school are worthwhile considering and implementing.

2.3.6 Conclusions

2.3.6 a Recommendations for further development of the intervention

Although the original model of CoF is developing, the following recommendations could improve effectiveness. For example, a stronger emphasis from the start on building evaluation into the programme and provision of recommendations about reliable measures conducted pre and post intervention and the possible use as control groups, observations etc. will be important for accountability and cost effectiveness reasons.

Training for school staff in areas such as : the impact of friendships in one's life, the importance of knowing the focus child/ren and the class they are in well, thorough familiarization with the intervention, and ability to run groups in a child friendly and non directive way is also crucial.

There may also be a need to have some criteria related to school's general ethos/systems in place, etc in order for the intervention to have the major impact possible. In Frederickson and Turner (2003), there is reference to Elliott and Busse's (1991) suggestion that generalisation can be facilitated better if there is appropriate teaching across people and settings that the child comes across every day.

Parental involvement throughout the programme needs to increase. It is important to get parents views about focus children's out of school experience with friendships, what could work better, feedback about the child's response to the intervention, etc

as it is likely to inform better not only the running of the circles but also the evaluation process.

Finally, Frederickson et al (2005) point out the need for parallel with the CoF programmes to train children's problem solving skills and social behaviour, so that the impact is greater and more lasting.

2.3.6 b Recommendations for future research

In this section, I will list some recommendations for future research :

- More evaluations of Model 2 and Model 3.
- Larger scale studies as well as ones which will involve more girls.
- More focused children of pre- school and secondary age. There is only one published study (Kalyva and Avramidis, 2005) involving pre school children and four involving secondary pupils. Bowden's study (2003) is the only one which raises the question of using CoF at secondary level when the students' difficulties have become severe and their perception of having 'engineered' friendships is negative. Perhaps these issues need further exploration as it may be that this specific approach is not as effective with older children.
- Research design with pre and post intervention measures including all the important groups of people involved in the study, use of interviews/rating scales, etc as well as observations in school of the focus children interactions (rather than mainly using questionnaires and interviews) with the other children which could give a more objective view of the situation
- Comparison with other social skills/friendship building programmes
- Examination of existing school factors such as ethos, other systems in place aiming to encourage friendship, etc, which may also have an impact on the effectiveness of the CoF.
- Consideration of programme integrity issues regarding how the circles are run and managed, content of the sessions and leaders skills and experience.

2.3.6 c Implications for EP practice

Striving to keep in touch with new interventions as well as research especially through the links with training courses, etc gives the EPs the advantage of getting to know really well interventions such as CoF and disseminate it to their colleagues and several schools they work with. In addition to that, assessments of the child and knowledge of the context may make it easier for EPs to express views on which specific model may have a better impact on a child, his class and the school. For instance, for schools which want to develop or are in the process of, a whole school approach regarding facilitating friendships, Model 3 may be more appropriate. For ASD children or others who would enjoy and benefit from the individual attention, the traditional model may be more appropriate. For self conscious, socially isolated teenagers perhaps Model 2 and 3 may a safer and more appropriate option.

CoF has proved successful with distinct SEN groups such as autism and Prader Willi (McKay, 2009, Edwards, 2001, Gus, 2000) where, finding out more about the conditions of targeted children had a positive impact on peers. EPs' knowledge and experience in working with several groups of SEN is usually wide and rich and EPs can facilitate the sessions or help schools prepare the session where these conditions are discussed.

Because of their background, EPs can get involved with evaluations of CoF in their schools as well as train school members to run it. As Robson (1993) suggests "when evaluating social programmes it may be useful to ask "what works best for whom under what circumstances" (p. 55) but also why (Frederickson et al, 1991) with regards to psychological processes facilitating or prohibiting change.

Regarding the evaluation, discussions/views on methodologies and measures (such as self esteem, sociometric scales, interviews, etc) can be facilitated by EPs as especially such measures are often part of their regular work.

Bowden's (2003) and Barrett and Randall's (2004) research raise the issue of the negative impact that the severity and long duration of difficulties of the focus children

may have on the effectiveness of the CoF. Through their regular contact with schools, EPs are in a position to advise schools about early intervention. Finally, EPs should be upfront with schools about some of the limitations of CoF, and depending on the case, other options may need to be sought altogether.

Research Paper 3 LITERATURE REVIEW
Student: Virginia Maka
Title The Impact of the Circle of Friends Intervention: A Literature Review
Summary comment
First Marker's comments

This is a well structured and informative literature review on the impact of CoF interventions. The introduction provides a concise overview of the CoF approach and the three models. The approach seems entirely UK based and not used or adapted in other countries. Is this correct? If so, I am surprised that you did not question why it has not been used in other countries. I presume the UK nature of the approach also explains why you did not look for (or find) overseas research. Perhaps you could have been more explicit about this. You provide a concise overview of the methodology you adopted to select publications for the review. However 4 of the studies were based on research undertaken by doctoral students. Hence there is little published research on the effectiveness of CoF. Again I think you might have commented on the lack of available published research. The strength of this research paper lies in the depth of you description and analysis of the selected studies and in the subsequent discussion. The quality of this aspect of the reassess paper matches work that has been carried out in EPPI reviews. You have provided detailed accounts of each of the studies – and the discussion brings the findings together in such a way so as to inform the research questions. The final sections provide helpful and constructive implications for research and the work of EPs.

Second Markers comments

Your approach to exploring the literature is very clearly set out with each of the main studies summarized. This is a well written assignment. I agree with the comments made by the first marker and his suggestion for improvements.

The only extension to your learning that I could think of was to consider the weight of evidence that each study provides – this could be contrasted with other considerations such as the richness of the case study approach. There are some articles on Blackboard that address these issues.

Doctoral Criteria	Insufficient evidence Working towards Achieved	Assessment evidence	Improvement suggestions
Capacity to pursue research and scholarship	A	Throughout the project there must be evidence that you have accessed the literature, planned and carried out an investigation and have been able to make sense of information that you have collected.	
		We will be looking for the following	

		<p>characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall approach • Clear and logical story line • Evidence of a critical approach to concepts and methodology • Evidence of analytical thinking <p>The standard expected is that it must be suitable for publication in a journal. Some students decide to write specifically for a journal and then try to get the article published – this is catered for in our assignment guidelines.</p>	
Produce an original contribution and substantial addition to knowledge		This might be evident in the way that the research is conducted (e.g. using a new approach to investigate a problem); in the production of new understandings or knowledge; or in the application of the project’s findings to professional practice.	
Demonstrate the relevance of the research to professional EP practice	A	<p>In the discussion or conclusion sections you address the ‘So what?’ question: How does the research inform EP practice and develop or support the work that EPs do? What are the implications for Services or for service users?</p> <p>Reflective personal evaluation is included. A final section is added to the assignment that relates what you have done to your own learning and development as a psychologist.</p>	
Communicate clearly, accurately and according to the conventions for presentation of academic work.	A	<p>The material is organized logically and coherently so that it tells a story.</p> <p>There are well defined sections to the report including:</p> <p>Abstract Introduction Literature review Methodology Results/discussion/conclusion (these may be separate sections or written as one – it depends on the type of study and which approach most effectively communicates what you have done. References</p> <p>The abstract is a brief statement (single spaced</p>	

		<p>and no more than 250 words) of the area, why it is important and specific issues addressed. There is an outline of the methodology, summary of key findings and a reference to the implications of the study (e.g. on policy, practice or theory)</p> <p>The findings are presented clearly and in a way that is appropriate for the type of data collected (i.e. quantitative or qualitative or mixed methodologies).</p> <p>The presentation matches academic requirements and the references are in an accepted and consistent format (e.g. APA 5th)</p>	
Rationale is justified	A	The introduction to the assignment should justify why this research project was being undertaken. This could be a theoretical rationale for undertaking the work or it could be related to local policy and practice.	
Demonstrate rigorous and critical thinking in regard to the literature and theory	A	<p>The material is presented accurately without bias</p> <p>There is evidence of critique throughout the assignment with a critical approach taken when considering concepts, methodology and the impact of studies that have been done previously.</p> <p>There should be evidence that you have thought critically about the work that you have undertaken and how this relates to the previous literature.</p>	
Demonstrate how the topic of the research is related to a wider field of knowledge and research	A	<p>Introduction section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well justified focus supported by key references Clearly stated issue to be investigated and/or research questions <p>Literature review section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical context/previous research justify present study Up-to-date references relevant to the study Consideration of how a study/reference contradicts or complements other work in the field <p>Results/discussion/conclusion section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of how findings support, contradict or build on previous work 	

Demonstrate an understanding of the design and conduct of empirical research.	A	<p>In the Methodology section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on the interrelationship between concepts, research questions, data collection methods • Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of chosen methodology • The projects must conform to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society. • Explicit account of procedure • Consideration of data analysis procedures <p>In the Results/discussion/conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between data collection and analysis of findings are clear and explicit • Consideration of how findings support, contradict or build on previous work • Evaluation/critique of study • Discussion of implications, e.g. for the project, professional practice, further research, deeper understanding of theory, methodology 	

Any further recommendations for reading or skills training

RECOMMENDATION:

(First Examiner to make recommendation, Second Examiner to contact First Examiner if they do not agree, or sign below to confirm the recommendation. Second Examiner to return the work and feedback sheets to First Examiner.)

A. Pass	Please mark with an X
(i) With no corrections	X
(ii) Subject to corrections being made to the satisfaction of the first Examiner (work to be achievable within one week for full-time students and two weeks for part-time students).	
B. Refer for Major Revisions	Please mark with an X
Permitting submission of a revised research paper to be seen by both Examiners (work to be achievable within one month for full-time students and two months	

for part-time students).	
C. Deferred pending viva	Please mark with an X
The research paper needs exploration of some issue that cannot be ascertained from the text alone.	
D. Fail	Please mark with an X
Not permitting resubmission.	

Signed First Examiner:	Peter Farrell	Date:	13 th August 2010
Signed Second Examiner:	Garry Squires	Date:	19 th August 2010

	Yes/No
Do you wish the School Office to send the Research Paper to the External Examiner?	
Reason for sending to External Examiner	Please mark with an X
The First and Second Examiners cannot agree a mark	
The Research Paper is a resubmission (previously failed)	
Part of the sample	

FIRST EXAMINER PLEASE ENSURE: The original copy of the Examiners' reports and one copy of the Research Paper is sent to Christine Chadwick, School Office Room B3.8. This will be sent out to the student and a copy of the feedback kept on student file.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S RECOMMENDATION:

SECTION 3 – A REFLECTIVE CRITIQUE OF THE IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH STUDIES

3. 1 How the research papers contribute to theory and knowledge in their field

3.1.1 First assignment- ‘Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school’

Many published empirical studies (Brooks, 2007, Dyson and Skidmore, 1994, Farrell et al, 2000, Blatchford et al, 2009) in the provision for children with dyslexia have focused on the evaluation of literacy programmes and the role of teaching support staff and teachers’ training needs. Following the advent of the national curriculum, there is scarcity of research into quality first teaching, which assumes appropriate differentiation of the curriculum for all children, and my first assignment partly tried to address this by seeking teachers’ views and confidence on differentiating.

Teachers’ training needs in differentiating the curriculum for all children have emerged strongly in my study. This has definitely helped myself and hopefully, other colleagues in the EPS and the Advisory Teaching Service of our LEA to become aware and include in our training (on creating dyslexia friendly schools) discussions around differentiation. I hope that in the near future, more EPs and Advisory teachers or other educationalists will be inspired to pursue research into differentiation.

Another important finding which again helped in the development of our training courses at Local Level was the positive feedback about specialist literacy programmes and the wish for further training in them.

3.1.2 Second assignment: 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused'.

There is a plethora of research on child sexual abuse especially studies with adult survivors of sexual abuse, which concentrate on its social, emotional and psychological impact, and the efficiency of therapies. However, there are no such studies in which survivors give their views on the role of school and what kind of support they would have liked to have received whilst they were in school.

Similarly, although there are studies (Sex education Forum, 2010) on views of the role of PSHE and sex education, there is scarcity on how educationalists feel about the school's role specifically in supporting sexually abused children and ways in which it can be achieved. I think that this small scale study for the first time gained an insight into these two areas but also researched the views of (a small number of) the most relevant people – survivors of child sexual abuse.

More specifically, my research findings revealed that, teachers in a LSU and special school setting in particular could see a role for a special school or the learning support unit in supporting a child who has been sexually abused. The identified ways in which individual teachers could help children were: building a positive, trusting relationship in which reflective listening, warmth and patience are central, differentiating of work and academic demands, allowing them time in the LSU and gradually reintegrating them into the mainstream classes. However, one Special Needs teacher stressed that this may not be feasible in mainstream classes.

CSA was identified as an area that requires expertise and teachers may not want and/or be able to deal (in the way that other professionals can) with the stress that

this relationship may bring. Services such as CAMHS, the EPS and the School Counsellors were identified as sources for counselling and advice on specific cases. The young adults however, identified very helpful services such as Barnardos, NSPCC , ChildLine and YPAS. The young adults though on the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the child in CSA, and the need the child has to feel listened to and understood.

The importance of SRE in PSHE was mentioned very little by both the teachers and the young adults although the later group recognised the importance of raising awareness in schools about child sexual abuse.

Similarly, although all teachers had received some basic training in Child Protection (CP), they all welcomed more in training CP as well as specifically in CSA issues related to the signs and effects it has on a child and what a teacher can do to help.

Some critical comments were also made about the role of the Designated Person and Social Care Services not meeting the needs of children.

Through case work and liaison meetings with teachers, SENCos and Senior Management in schools, the relatively high prevalence of CSA and CSE has been emphasised and members of staff have become more aware of the accompanying signs of stress in a child who is being or has been abused.

Finally, the knowledge I have acquired through this piece of research has raised my confidence to participate in local initiatives in the prevention of child sexual exploitation and hopefully, soon become involved in the forthcoming central training in raising awareness in schools for sexual exploitation.

3.1.3 Third study: 'The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention : a literature review'.

'Circle of Friends' has been a fairly popular programme nationally. Through my ongoing involvement with the programme and this comprehensive review, I think that I raised its status at the authority for which I was working. Having collated evidence base and up to date information on new adaptations of the original model and the effectiveness of all the models, I was in a better position to reassure the schools which wanted to take it on board about its efficacy and also advise making some changes to the original model according to the personality of the targeted children. In addition, the local advisory teaching team became more aware and knowledgeable about the 'Circle of Friends' and are now running training courses on it and have been able to advise more schools to try it out. A large number of schools have the 'Circle of Friends' in their repertoire of interventions for children who have a range of SEN and are socially excluded.

As a result of this work, schools also appreciate more the need for incorporating into their programme an evaluation of its effectiveness. Based on the evaluation studies I reviewed, I was able to recommend evaluation tools (such as 'The self perception profile for children' by Harter (1985) and 'My Class Inventory' by Frazer et al, (1982).

Another contribution of this review may be that at the time of writing this literature review and up to date, I have not come across a similar one, which reviews both published and unpublished (doctoral) evaluation studies. I think that all evaluations are important especially when 'the Circle of Friends' is a widespread used programme for which there are only a few published evaluation studies. All

evaluation studies that describe inclusion criteria, are informative and important provided there is a clear description of the methodology and its limitations.

3.2 Contribution to understanding and developing new and innovative research methodologies

Methodologies used in the current research studies were postal questionnaire survey, semi structured interviews, both of which are widely used and well established methods. I believe that the chosen methods were fit for purpose. For example, the use of a postal questionnaire was appropriate as one of the main reasons for that study was to gain from schools as many views as possible (in a relatively short period of time) regarding their training needs and preferences. Despite the time pressures, I managed to have four follow up interviews in order to investigate and clarify some issues that emerged regarding conceptualisation of differentiation.

Parallel use of methods such as observation of literacy lessons which would have illustrated examples of differentiation of work, and access to children's performance records, IEPs etc which would have given me a better insight in the effectiveness of specialist literacy programmes was desirable but unfortunately not feasible owing to lack of time and human resources.

For the second assignment a semi structured interview was decided to be the main method of collecting teachers' views as the topic (of the school's role for children who have been sexually abused) was rather sensitive, uncommon and not high on a school's priority list. For these reasons, I wanted to have the opportunity to discuss these issues personally and get as much information as possible as there

was the concern that teachers may not have taken the time to fill in a questionnaire on a topic (of relatively low priority for teachers).

3.3 Implications and suggestions for further research

3.3.1 First assignment- 'Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school'

Further evaluation studies on the totality of support offered in mainstream schools for children with dyslexia using a variety of qualitative methods (eg interview, observation, reading of school records/documents) would be very useful as there is still scarcity in this field.

It would also be interesting to conduct a comparative study between specialist and non specialist trained TAs to investigate in a systematic way the criteria used for selecting specialist literacy programmes and the impact that these programmes will had on the children's literacy performance based on standardised scores and national curriculum levels. Pre and post intervention literacy scores will be important. A combination of interviews and observations during teaching and analysis of the child's performance records could also be obtained.

As already argued, the way in which teachers differentiate the curriculum for dyslexic pupils (as well as other children with SEN) at primary and secondary remains under researched. I believe that it needs further attention as it is considered a core teaching skill for which however, this study has shown that teachers do not have the confidence to apply it to heterogeneous groups of children. Inclusion of children with a wide range of special educational needs in mainstream schools has meant that a diversity of learning needs exists and demands an adjustment of the

curriculum and teaching styles and techniques. I think it would be interesting to carry out a questionnaire survey and interviews with teachers to explore their conceptualisation of differentiation, examples of good practice, perceived barriers, teacher characteristics (relating to their years of experience, training, gender, subject) and observations of lessons during which the teachers considered tasks to be differentiated for children with dyslexia.

Finally, American empirical studies included in Shaywitz et al's (2008) review give ideas for further research, namely:

- specific instructional components/programmes are analysed and matched to specific types of dyslexic students. Implementation practices are also explored in parallel.
- specific instructional elements are tried in specific combinations in order to improve fluency and reading comprehension, particularly in older students. Reading comprehension in particular is a skill which in many reading evaluations at primary and secondary level is not systematically measured possibly owing to its complex nature.

3.3.2 Second assignment: 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused'.

In my second study, the interviews were conducted with a rather small group of SENCOs, SEN teachers and TAs who had experienced working with sexually abused children and were likely to be more sensitive towards children with additional needs. I think that it would be interesting to design a study with a more representative sample which would include subject teachers from a larger number of

schools and their views on the role of the teachers, the role of the Sex and Relationships Education and possible barriers to teaching the subject, by using a questionnaire and some follow up interviews.

With the use of questionnaire and semi structured follow up studies, it would also be interesting to gain the views of PSHE teachers across the country on existing practices which may be already addressing CSA issues and (their views on) barriers and the appropriateness of teaching CSA issues in school. Methods used could involve semi structured interviews with the PSHE teachers and children as well as observations of PSHE lessons.

I also regard as important that survivors of CSA get the chance to give their views about the role of school in supporting sexually abused children, provided of course, that they are at the right stage in their life , are able and willing to do so and all the other ethical considerations are adhered to. This could happen in collaboration with professionals who are already involved with them and under appropriate guidance and training, they could gain the data.

Finally, to date, with the exception of Anne Peake's pilot study (1998) designed to explore the impact of some group therapy sessions she ran with a social worker for sexually abused children I have not found any published studies on the role of the EP with sexually abused children. I think that it would be interesting to gain information about existing EP practice in prevention and support as well as views about the appropriateness of EPs working with sexually abused children and potential barriers.

In retrospect, the EPNET forum could have been used as a means of gaining such information.

3.3.3 Third study: 'The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention : a literature review'.

Since submitting the third research paper, there have not been new publications on the effectiveness of 'Circle of Friends'. One large American empirical study (by Thompson and Byrnes, 2011) which looked at social inclusiveness across racial/ethnic/gender/SEN groups found a correlation between teachers' cultural competency and children's inclusiveness in their mutual friendships. Perhaps the impact of teacher's attitudes and their efforts to encourage friendships amongst children could be investigated closely while a 'Circle of Friends' programme is implemented in a class.

Evaluations of the original model are relatively few and there is only one evaluation of Model 2 and 3. Certainly more evaluations of these two new models are needed.

Overall, all models need further evaluations which could be of larger scale, involve more girls, have pre and post intervention measures and include all the important people in the focus children's life. Methodology would include interviews and observations of behaviours. More participants of pre-school and secondary age also need to be included in this kind of research.

Another line of research would also compare the 'Circle of Friends' with other social skills/friendship building programmes and also examine school factors such as ethos, and existing support arrangements, which may also have an impact on children's friendships.

Finally, a comprehensive consideration of programme integrity issues regarding how the circles are run and managed exactly, the content of the sessions and the leaders' skills and experience will also shed more light into the effectiveness of the programme.

3.4 The impact of the research on professional practice

3.4.1 First assignment- 'Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school'

The impact of the first assignment on my professional practice has been significant and multi faceted. As a result of this survey, I planned and delivered (alongside colleagues from the EPS at which I work and local the Advisory Teaching Service) a series of seminars which were part of a 14 week training course. Being aware of SENCos' training needs and confusions that emerged over topics such as differentiation helped in the planning of the content of the course to match identified needs.

Some of the SENCos who received training on dyslexia friendly schools were inspired to pursue accredited studies which helped them build their school capacity and made our working relationship even more prolific as there was a common knowledge base.

I also organised a national conference which was opened mainly to EPs aiming at updating EPs with the latest evidence on interventions and support for children with dyslexia. Working with children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties consists of a large part of the EP workload for many EPs and I think that it is essential that EPs keep abreast with the latest evidence base knowledge.

Having researched the theme of provision for dyslexic pupils, I was in a better position to contribute to the LEA steering group on Creating Dyslexia Friendly Schools.

Having analysed a bigger range of interventions and published evaluations, I was in a better position to give evidence based advice and information to schools for specific specialised literacy programmes which they were considering. Whilst reviewing relevant empirical studies, I became more conscious of issues around specialist literacy programmes such as targeting and evaluating reading fluency and comprehension which is often underestimated as the focus tends to be on accuracy.

In my daily work with schools, it was also helpful to be aware of the possibility of teachers having different conceptualisations of differentiation such as the TA helping the child with the same work as everybody else or the CT explaining the worksheet more than h/she did with other. This helped me offer to schools more specific and elaborate advice around differentiation for children with special needs.

Discussions about differentiation of the curriculum with secondary SENCOs, identified the need for training in this particular skill. As a result of that, I prepared an INSET (in service training) which covered differentiation across the secondary curriculum and received positive evaluations.

3.4.2 Second assignment: 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused'.

Having reviewed the literature around CSA and being more aware of prevalence /, /impact issues, I made a concentrated effort to talk to teachers about the signs and impact of child sexual abuse, especially when significant, emotional, behaviour

needs and sexualised behaviours were identified. I also felt better prepared in case a child discloses abuse to me, especially with regards to the kind of questions that should be avoided (eg guessing who did this to the child, asking for specific details about the abuse and/or the abuser, Sorensen and Snow, 1991). Other techniques such as careful and reflective listening where the child takes the lead are also important as in any conversation with a child (Rogers, 1951).

In two of my secondary schools which were already dealing with sexually abused children, I provided them with a handout drawing their attention to things they needed to be sensitive about in their interactions with sexually abused children (eg avoid touch or walking behind them without them realising, avoid power/control battles, negotiate decisions, if they want to talk about the abuse, don't ask them specific questions, let them do the talking, etc).

Through this study, I became more knowledgeable of my authority's child protection procedures and liaised with key officers in the Social Care and CAMHS services. I was able to share information with some of these professionals and understand better cases of sexually abused and exploited children with whom we were both involved.

I found out more about a relatively new multi disciplinary initiative (the 'Messenger') which aims to prevent CSE and protect children who are sexually exploited.

Overall, after the completion of this study, I felt better prepared to deal with a new case of a sexually exploited young girl, and also shared some experiences with colleagues who had not worked with sexually abused children before.

There are also plans about joint training with social care staff to mainstream and special schools (for children with SEBD) on raising awareness on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

3.4.3 Third study: 'The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention: a literature review'.

Overall, my confidence raised significantly at the end of this review due to the wide knowledge base I acquired and the opportunity I had to find evidence base information about its effectiveness and the adaptations that I could make.

Since this research paper was written, I have implemented several circles of friends and changed my practice in positive ways. I continue to run the first two sessions but I plan to have at least a three hour session to train the leader of the group about the programme. I give them copies of the research papers I have collated on the effectiveness of the programme and give them a summary of the evaluation studies and their limitations. We then discuss the possibility of running the group without the child being singled out if school thinks that this will suit better the child's personality.

We had a successful outcome with a Year 8 shy girl who was the victim of relentless bullying. She was exceptionally attractive but also had moderate learning difficulties. The leading bully who had dwarfism and of average intelligence had managed to spread malicious rumours about that girl and isolate her from her friends. She was also attacked physically and verbally several times. After discussing the situation and possible solutions with the girl, her mother and the SENCO, she changed her form and in her new form and we ran two sessions on the importance of friendships in large secondary schools especially when things go wrong.

A similar approach was used for a Year 4 boy with mild Asperger's Syndrome, learning and behaviour difficulties who was very competitive and thought that he was the best in everything. This child could not see that he had no friends and how his behaviour was impacting on them. He would not have liked the attention either. Having a few sessions with the whole class and himself about the importance of friendships, how children may have different ways of understanding the world and behaving, how all children can be socially included, how to manage a child/situation that you don't like without rejecting the person, things you may have in common with children who you may not particularly like or with whom you get on, etc. led to a difference in the way the class perceived not the child we had in mind but other socially isolated children and a concentrated effort was made that all the class would mix more with each other. The child with Asperger's syndrome improved his behaviour towards other children as he perceived this as an exercise for the whole class.

In the near future, there is a plan to prepare resources for central training on the adaptations of the 'Circle of Friends' for children who do not wish to be singled out.

SECTION 4- THE IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH STUDIES ON THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE AS AN ACADEMIC AND RESEARCHER

4.1 First assignment- 'Support for children with dyslexia in the mainstream school'

During the writing of the first assignment, I believe that a number of academic skills were developed (in many cases through mistakes that were made) which also helped me in the planning and writing of the other assignments.

One of the first lessons I learnt was the importance of having only one focus. In the first assignment, I had two different foci; one involved collecting data to be used for my LEA project and the other one was for the purpose of this degree. As a result of that, too many themes were explored- possibly not at a desirable depth. Predetermined tight time scales for the LEA project also had an impact on the size of the sample and the analysis which took place. Although tight time scales and specific themes were determined to a large extent by the LEA project, these are often problems of the 'real world' research. Robson (2011) warns researchers to avoid too ambitious topics and focus on something feasible in the available time.

In this empirical study I included research questions which addressed too many and wide topics such as teachers training needs in dyslexia, the use of teaching assistants in lessons and the delivery of special programmes during withdrawal sessions and the effectiveness of specialist literacy programmes. Each one of these specific areas have been the focus of long, large scale, empirical studies which have employed several researchers and lasted for long periods of time (eg. Brooks, 2007, Rose Review, 2009, Blatchford et al, 2009).

Due to time pressures and wealth of themes, the analysis of the data gained from the questionnaire was restricted to limited descriptive statistics (frequencies) as that served mainly the purpose of the LEA project. Other descriptive statistics such as the mode could have been estimated for example in ranking questions such as the ones about the teachers and TAs' training needs in teaching children with dyslexia or types of support available for children with dyslexia and factors that influence differentiation.

In addition to that, a deeper analysis of that data could have been pursued. I could have explored for example, correlations between variables by using inferential statistics such as chi square. For example, in schools where SENCOs answered that children with severe dyslexia should not be taught in the mainstream school, it would have been interesting to find out if in these schools teachers were thought to be differentiating less. Also, the majority of SENCOs thought that it would be very useful to receive training in a specialist literacy programme. I could have explored if the same SENCOs had also rated high specialist literacy programmes and had already such programmes in operation in their school.

Using SPSS for the analysis of the data was very useful as it enabled me to process a large number of questionnaires in a short spell of time and produce descriptive statistics presented in different ways such as tables, bar charts and pie charts.

Designing my own questionnaire was also a good learning experience especially as it gave me the opportunity to understand deeper important factors such as using clear, unbiased, non jargon wording, avoiding ambiguity and double barrelled questions, making sure that even common terms are defined and knowledge is not assumed (Robson, 2011), in the way for example, that I had assumed a common

understanding of differentiation of the curriculum. Regarding clarity of wording, it became apparent in one question (9) that the way I had worded it, did not necessarily answer the question in which I was interested, eg although I was interested in the SENCOs' views about provision for children in dyslexia in their school, the way I asked the question ('What factors influence the amount of differentiation that takes place?') it may have been interpreted as an invitation for a general view on factors that influence differentiation rather than an answer about what happens in their school.

Other characteristics of the questionnaire such as allowing enough space to answer questions, keeping it as short as possible, giving clear instructions about completion, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope and a cover letter and giving them an incentive (Robson, 2011) were also seriously considered.

The importance of piloting the questionnaire with I think, at least five participants also became apparent. Although I piloted it with two SENCOs, the confusion over conceptualisation of differentiation did not emerge with such a short number of participants.

Finally, upon reflecting on a comment of one examiner, I should have described in the same way the means used to collect data as well as the way it was analysed. In the first assignment, I used a postal questionnaire survey which I discussed at length, and also conducted four follow up semi structured interviews to which I made little reference. I have now included an Appendix (1) which describes the probes I used during the interview. Due to the small number of interviewees (4) and the rather short answers I gained, the way I analysed the answers was very simple and included just a collation of the answers under the questions posed. The questions

asked were identical to the research questions added in the second phase of the project which mainly aimed to clarify conceptualisations of and barriers to differentiation.

4.2 Second assignment: 'Ways in which a secondary school can support children who have been sexually abused'.

First of all, the second assignment gave me the opportunity to gain a deeper insight and increase significantly my knowledge base in the domain of child sexual abuse in which I had limited prior knowledge and experience.

Second, I gained valuable experience in designing and conducting interviews. Due to the small sample of participants and their time pressures, I piloted the questions with one SENCO who was an experienced SENCO and whose honesty had been valued over the years. Having a long and in-depth discussion with him about the quality of the questions and the conduct of the interview helped significantly in the ones that followed. Later on, the absence of further questioning or seeking clarifications from the interviewees, reassured me further about the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. It has to be noted that piloting questions for interviews is not recommended in the way that it is for questionnaires (Robson, 2011). However, when I was writing the questions for the interviews, I considered the same guidelines for the wording of questions in the questionnaire (eg simple language, avoid jargon and double-barrelled questions, avoid leading questions).

Regarding the type of interview I conducted, in the original assignment it is described as semi-structured. However, upon further reflection I think that it borders to be fully structured with only some elements of the semi-structured eg the occasional slight

change of wording and the order for the questions not always being the same with every participant.

Third, with regards to the recording and analysis of the interviews, I have learnt about the problems that can be created if the interviews are not recorded. It has to be noted though, that I decided to handwrite the replies due to some uneasiness and sensitivity that I sensed with some participants. That may have affected the quality of answers. However, I could have pursued it with the rest of them rather than avoiding recording all of them. By not recording the interviews, I also lost the opportunity to use discourse analysis which will have given me additional information about the questions I was asking, the participants feelings by analysing cues such as the tone of their voice, pauses, body language, etc

On three occasions, there were time gaps between the end of the interview and the writing up, which meant that I lost some data because some information was not clear enough in my memory. In the future, if I find myself in a situation where a participant does not look comfortable of having the interview recorded and I am missing information, I will contact the interviewee, ask if h/she would like to provide specific clarifications on the phone or paper, and also provide a written summary of all of their responses.

Fourth, upon reflecting on one examiner's comment, I should have written more information about the consideration of ethical issues in the process of conducting this study as it dealt with very sensitive issues. More specifically, I ensured that all participants gave informed consent by offering them a detailed verbal account of the study, its aims, processes involved and how this evidence would be used. They were

also reassured about anonymity of their answers and the fact that notes from the interviews and questionnaires would be destroyed after I analysed them. It was also stressed that if, at any point during the interview process and while completing the questionnaire (in the case of young adults) they felt uncomfortable, they could stop and terminate the interview or filling in the questionnaire. These guidelines were given to the counsellor over the phone to share with the young adults. Having the counsellor acting as a researcher was advantageous as she had been counselling them for some years and she was able to ensure that they made an informed decision to take part, were at the right stage of their life and had the confidence and understanding to stop if they started feeling uncomfortable or the questions triggered unpleasant memories of any kind. All these are important factors for an abused person as they could cause re traumatisation (Fieldman and Crespi, 2002).

I was also aware of the fact that some teachers might find it difficult to discuss issues like this not only because of having dealt with that in the past as professionals but also in case they had experienced sexual abuse themselves as children. I had prepared myself mentally in case they disclosed it to me and/or wanted to talk more about it from a personal point of view. I was going to offer an opportunity to talk to me again, if they wished so, and also give them the telephone number of a counsellor and our Council Adult Mental Health Services.

Fifth, with regards to the analysis of the interviews, I think that it has more elements of content analysis rather than thematic analysis.

Content analysis is a method of investigating texts that involves a numerical description of features of a given text (Marks and Yardley, 2003) although it also

attempts to establish categories. In this study, the categories were essentially the questions posed to the interviewees some of which were closed making thematic analysis harder.

Effectively, the way I organised the data was to group together the answers from the semi structured interviews with the SENCOs and the questionnaires from the young adults under headings ('categories') which mainly reflected the questions I had asked eg the role of support services, support the LSU can offer, how individual teachers can help sexually abused children with their work and behaviour. While analysing and describing the data I had gathered, I quoted the number of participants who had expressed the same view (eg out of ten interviewees, three thought that...), which was not as vital in this study due to the small number of participants.

Finally, due to the scarcity of English published studies/literature on the role of the educational psychologist with sexually abused children, in the original assignment, I refrained from reflecting on it from a personal, professional perspective which was also pointed out by one examiner. I will attempt to compensate for that in this section.

Since writing the assignment on child sexual abuse, American School Psychologist Kristin (2010) has written a paper in which, she identifies some key skills that school psychologists (SP) have which in turn can help them have a significant training role primarily in prevention and secondary in supporting teachers or other adults in a supportive role for children who have been sexually abused. More specifically, school psychologists can contribute to :

Safety planning, which will involve what to do in case of danger, who to talk to when feeling afraid or depressed, what to do and/or where to go when danger is imminent, emergency numbers, etc.

Socialization skills training. Given their training, school psychologists hold a unique position to empower youth with socialization skills - skills that children who have experienced abuse may, in particular, lack. It may be important to focus such skill-building on appropriate ways to get individual needs met; to express feelings, particularly with regard to separating feelings from actions; to take responsibility for actions, rather than citing reactions; and/or on decision-making and problem-solving.

Problem-solving and coping skills. Another area in which school psychologists may help children who have experienced abuse is by teaching them problem solving skills, starting first from defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, choosing the best solution, making a plan and executing it, and evaluating the outcome.

Self-protection. Through their personal work with children when the situation arise but also through preventative programmes, school psychologists can help educate pupils about what constitutes abuse, as well as what they can do when they are abused or feel that they are vulnerable to abuse.

Parenting and life skills. Given the correlation between knowledge of child development and parenting skills with child maltreatment, it may be beneficial to teach older students about both child development and parenting skills. For example, such skill development may be accomplished through activities such as the popular

"baby egg" activity, in which students are asked to care for an egg as a make-believe baby for a specified amount of time.

School psychologists can provide the empathy and advocacy that is often missing in the victims' life. They also have the training to promote systems of change needed to provide support services to children who have families who have experienced abuse.

Teacher training and support for teachers who often experience anxiety in cases of abuse and neglect, and may be hesitant to make a report, especially if they are unsure of the severity of the abuse. School psychologists may be able to use their knowledge of both the school system and the mental health community to better train teachers in recognizing the so-called warning signs of abuse and neglect.

Children's use of art including clay, crafts, drawings are other ways through which sexual abuse can be detected or at least suspected, and educational psychologists are familiar with such methods. Therefore, they can inform teachers as well as other professionals working with children how to use them and be alert about such findings. For instance, children's drawings of a member of the family in distorted (usually big) figures with their private area evident and/or the child looking angry or scared should cause concern (Peake, 1985, Piffalo, 2002). Similarly, children may reenact in their play scenes which may imply or describe an activity of a sexual nature. Teachers and teaching assistants need to be alert and take the necessary steps of informing the designated teacher for child protection issues.

Finally, Anne Peake's joint work (1985) with a social worker in a Local Authority in England involving group work organised as treatment for seven teenage girls who either had experienced or were at risk of intrafamilial sexual abuse and had

behaviour problems has shown that it is possible for an EP to carry out this kind of work perhaps as part of a specialist post or a research project. The aim of the group was to help the girls externalise feelings about themselves, the abuse and the family. Overall, the evaluation of the outcome was positive.

4.3 Third study: 'The impact of the 'Circle of Friends' intervention : a literature review'.

Conducting more sophisticated research and writing a literature review about an educational programme (the 'Circle of Friends'), in which I had a lot of practical experience was particularly useful as it gave me overall the chance to understand deeper the theory underlying the specific programme and the new adaptations, the process, and most important the evidence about its effectiveness and claimed limitations.

Some specific skills which were extended in the course of writing this review and are often mentioned by scholars (such as Boote and Beile, 2005) involved extensive use of search strategies and library search skills, outlining clearly the search criteria (for inclusion and exclusion of existing studies), judging comprehensiveness, weaknesses and strengths of research methods used, identifying gaps, organising all the literature, analysing and synthesising it in a clear and cohesive manner.

Particularly useful was the comment of one of the examiners regarding the search criteria in particular, although they were described in the relevant section (involving only English studies from 1998 to 2009), the small number of published English studies and the absence of other international evaluation studies in the literature should have been mentioned and justified. Consequently, I have attempted to correct

that in the rationale, background and context section of in the general Introduction of the thesis.

Conclusion

The benefits of conducting these studies have been multi faceted not only because of the skills developed at a personal, professional and academic level but also because of the ways in which some of the participating schools developed their own knowledge and skills.

Through the first assignment on support for children with dyslexia, teachers' training needs in differentiating the curriculum and identifying the obstacles for differentiation emerged strongly and triggered further discussions as well as the impetus for training tailored to these needs. Furthermore, the importance of appropriate training in specialist literacy programmes for teaching assistants emerged as a strong case and allowed support services in the authority in which I work to meet the need. This also directed a role for my EP colleagues in advising schools around the selection and evaluation support arrangement.

With regards to the second assignment that explored ways in which children who have been sexually abused can be supported, participating SENCOs, teachers and TAs identified to respond including developing a warm relationship between the child and a trusted member of staff, increased availability to talk when the child needs, making allowances for the work they have to complete and allowing them to spend some time in more protective environments such as the LSU. The role of the PSHE curriculum was not valued as highly but the evaluation of it was important as it indicated an area that needs further developments. Staff identified a role for EPs in advising schools how to interact appropriately and confidently with these children. Further reflection on my own professional practice and relevant literature suggest a

training role for EPs to help teachers identify children who have been sexually abused but also implement prevention programmes.

Finally, the literature review on the effectiveness of the 'Circle of Friends' provided systematic evidence of its positive impact on the social inclusion of targeted children, reduction of inappropriate behaviours and enhancing empathy amongst the participating members. In all the reviewed studies the role of the EP proved important not only in advising and supporting school members who facilitated such groups but also in running and evaluating the groups. Equipped with this knowledge I trained several members of staff who implemented the 'Circle of Friends' in a few schools and achieved positive outcomes for many of the participating pupils.

APPENDIX 1

(Probes for the interviews on differentiation)

What is their understanding of differentiation?

What kind of training if any the teachers received on differentiation during their teacher training course and after they qualified.

Current training needs on differentiation

Barriers to differentiation

Do they discuss with colleagues issues (difficulties, resources) around differentiation

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