

A psychosocial approach exploring the experiences of primary school Special  
Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs)

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## **Abstract**

Since the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0-25 years (2015) (DfE, 2015) there has been a change in the national and local context that Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) work within. This exploratory research extends the current literature by taking a psychosocial approach to understand primary school SENCOs experience of their role.

A psychoanalytically informed method, Free Association Narrative Interviewing (FANI), was used to interview three participants twice. Interviews were analysed at the semantic level using thematic analysis and at the latent level using a psychoanalytically informed analysis through 'scenic understanding'. Themes from the thematic analysis highlighted the multifaceted nature of the SENCO role and the shift to a strategic focus. SENCOs continue to have lack of time for the role and are not always on Senior Leadership Teams (SLT). The importance of positive relationships with headteachers is integral. The emotional wellbeing of SENCOs and staff is recognised. Psychoanalytically informed interpretations of the findings suggest concepts such as containment, splitting, projection and groups theory were relevant to SENCOs experiences. Implications for SENCOs and Educational Psychology practice have been explored. Limitations and implications for future research are considered.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

I introduce my research by providing the rationale for writing in the first person and how this links to the ontology and psychosocial method taken. I then reflect on the background behind my interest in Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and their experience of the role. I draw upon the national context and local context SENCOs work within and how this shapes the role. Considerations will be made regarding the relevance of the research to the Educational Psychology (EP) profession. Finally, I will outline the aim and rationale of this research.

### **1.2 Writing in the First Person**

Transparency and openness of the researcher's role in the production of knowledge and interpretations is relevant to my choice of a psychosocial methodology and psychosocial ontological position. A psychosocial ontological position recognises the influence of the researcher within the process, which aligns with a psychosocial method of data collection used within this research (refer to Chapter 3). Foster and Parker (1995) argue that writing in the first person acknowledges the creative and active role of the researcher. I decided to write in the first person throughout this thesis to ensure consistency and recognise my role as a reflexive researcher in the process.

### **1.3 Personal Interest**

Psychosocial research methods are influenced by feminism and post-modernism concepts recognising the importance of the researcher's background in the production of knowledge (Woods, 1996). The research findings are based upon the

interplay between the researcher's and participant's perspectives (Woods, 1996). To recognise my role as researcher I will communicate my personal interest in the experience of primary school SENCOs. I acknowledge that my own experiences of working with SENCOs is likely to have influenced my approach to the research and interpretations of findings.

This research idea originated from my experience of working with SENCOs as an Assistant Educational Psychologist (AEP) and in my current role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). As a TEP I meet with SENCOs on a regular basis and feel it is important for me to understand their experiences to develop an effective working relationship.

I view SENCOs as central to school systems because they have a strategic position to promote inclusion and support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), work with parents, and liaise with other professionals (DfE, 2015). As a TEP I have recognised the complexity of school systems and the impact of national changes upon the SENCO role. I have experienced SENCOs needing a space to share their uncertainty around expectations placed upon them. During an interaction with one primary school SENCO they described their role as 'fighting fires' and talked about trying to 'juggle' different aspects of their role. The comments made me curious what it feels like to be a SENCO, leading to my interest in exploring the SENCO experience within the changing context. For example, the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice: 0-25 years 2015 (Department for Education [DfE] & Department for Health [DfH], 2015) (hereafter SEND COP (2015)) and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), which will be discussed further later in this chapter.

As a TEP studying at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, I am exposed to psychoanalytic concepts which I value as an alternative way of thinking to aid my work. I aim to seek understanding through a psychosocial methodology and psychoanalytically informed approach to recognise my role as researcher within the process.

#### **1.4 Historical Context**

The SENCO role is greatly influenced by the school system, as well as wider Local Authority (LA) policies and national legislation. The role has been developing since the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 1994 (DfE, 1994) (hereafter SEND COP (1994)) legitimately recognised the SENCO role in schools. Tissot (2013) identified the following aspects of the SENCO role within the SEND COP (1994):

- The day to day operation of the school's SEN policy
- Liaising with and advising fellow teachers
- Co-ordinating provision for children with SEN
- Maintaining the school's SEN register and overseeing the records on all pupils with SEN
- Liaising with parents of children with SEN
- Contributing to the in-service training to staff
- Liaising with external agencies including the educational psychology service and other support agencies, medical and social services and voluntary bodies

It was not the intention of the SEND COP (1994) that SENCOs would be solely responsible for students with SEN, though Morewood (2012) argues historically this has been the case. In the revised Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2001 (DfE, 2001) (hereafter SEND COP (2001)) the SENCO role as a strategic position to manage and train support staff was reinforced. Research since the SEND COP (2001) has found the role can be conceptualised differently depending

upon the school context, the individual SENCO themselves and the interaction between the individual and the school (Blandford, 2013; Pearson, Mitchell, & Rapti, 2015; Pearson & Ralph, 2007).

### **1.5 National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCO) and leadership**

In 2006 a recommendation was made by the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee (2006) that SENCOs be a member of schools Senior Leadership Teams (SLT). However, this was not a statutory requirement and research has found SENCOs are not always on SLT (Layton, 2005; Oldham & Radford, 2011; Tissot, 2013). Subsequently, in 2006 the government commissioned the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools to develop proposals for a nationally accredited training course for SENCOs (Griffiths & Dubsky, 2012).

Since 2009 schools must have SENCOs who are qualified teachers and if newly appointed, they must complete the NASENCO unless they have three or more years' experience of being a SENCO prior 2009. All SENCOs are expected to complete the award within three years of taking up the role (NASEN, n.d.). The NASENCO suggests SENCOs should achieve the following:

*'work with senior colleagues and governors to advise on and influence the strategic development of an inclusive ethos, policies, priorities and practices... [and] take a leadership role in promoting a whole school culture of best practice in teaching and learning in relation to pupils with SEN and/or disabilities'. (TDA, 2009, pp. 2–4)*

Oldham and Radford (2011) noted the NASENCO course focuses on leadership and management, thus recognising the shift in perception to SENCOs as leaders. It is beyond the scope and purpose of this research to provide an evaluation of the award. However, it is worth considering the higher expectations placed upon SENCOs to take part in training and uphold their standards of work (Pearson et al.,

2015). Rosen-Webb (2011, p.160) argue the move away from SENCOs holding specialist knowledge in SEN to promoting whole school inclusion has clarified but also led ‘to muddying the role of the SENCO’.

### **1.6 Current National Context and the SEND COP (2015)**

Although national documentation uses the term ‘SENCO’ research suggests alternative titles are being used within the current context (Pearson, 2008; Pearson, 2010). In 2009 NASEN commissioned research into the working lives of SENCOs (Pearson, 2008), which found a significant number of responses noted a move away from the SENCO title as they felt it did not fit with the idea of inclusion. Weddell (2004) suggested the move to titles such as Inclusion Manager indicated a shift in the expansion of the SENCO remit.

One of the most recent changes in the national context SENCOs work within is the introduction of the SEND COP (2015). Implementation of the SEND COP (2015) involves significant changes to the expectations and practices of the SENCO role (Pearson et al., 2015). The SEND COP (2015) suggests SENCOs hold responsibility for SEN policy in practice and that of a strategic leader:

*‘The SENCO has an important role to play with the headteacher and governing body, in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school. They will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team’*  
(DfE 2015 6.87).

Research suggests there are discrepancies between what the SENCO role is in practice and the ‘official’ position in government legislation (Pearson, 2010).

A key aspect of the SEND COP (2015) which has influenced the role of the SENCO is the introduction of EHCPs which replace Statements of Special Educational Needs and aims to support those aged 0-25 years old. The SEND COP

(2015) places a greater emphasis on the SENCO including parents, children and young people (CYP) in decision making, and ensures schools are accountable for a graduated approach to SEN (NASEN, 2015). SENCOs predicted the introduction of EHCPs would require having specific knowledge outside of their remit and more time working with parents (Pearson et al., 2015). SENCOs also predicted legislative changes would increase external accountability resulting in their role being data driven (Pearson et al., 2015).

Research by Boesley and Crane (2018), suggested SENCOs predictions were correct and that they are required to manage misconceptions around the EHCP process and lead the process due to lack of engagement from professionals. Curran (2019) noted that SENCOs took the lead on implementing changes, though often lacked confidence and clarity in what they should be doing. SENCOs recognised the benefits of working closely with parents and creating joint outcomes (Boesley & Crane, 2018). However, there was noted to be regional discrepancy and difficulties acquiring EHCPs for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) (Boesley & Crane, 2018). Therefore, SENCOs experience of the role is changing to manage the EHCP process alongside the strategic role recognised in the SEND COP (2015). This research aims to explore the SENCO experience within the current changing context without limiting to a specific aspect of the role.

### **1.7 Complexity of the Role**

As noted in legislation and research the role is complex covering a variety of responsibilities. Rosen-Webb (2011) found SENCOs view the role as multifaceted and noted the enabling factors and constraints influencing their experience. Although research has found some SENCOs plan to leave their role midterm due to high work load (Pearson, 2008), other research noted SENCOs have remained in the role for

more than 15 years suggesting the longevity of the role (Mackenzie, 2012). SENCOs across research express a motivation to work in SEN and many recognise the importance of working with professionals and parents (Boesley & Crane, 2018; Burton & Goodman, 2011; Pearson et al., 2015; Rosen-Webb, 2011). Time constraints impacting the effectiveness of the SENCO role is a recurring theme across the research (Rosen-Webb, 2011; Tissot, 2013). Within the 2018 SENCO workload survey 74% of SENCOs felt they did not have enough time to support children with SEN and ensure they have the provision required (Curran, Moloney, Heavey & Boddison, 2018).

SENCOs may hold additional roles which could cause difficulties allocating time dedicated to the SENCO role depending upon the priorities of the school context (Cowne, 2005; Pearson et al., 2015; Tissot, 2013). The 2018 SENCO workforce survey noted 78% of SENCOs felt other roles and tasks meant they were unable to carry out their SENCO role effectively (Curran et al., 2018). Whilst 95% of SENCOs felt they should have legally protected time to carry out the role (Curran et al., 2018).

The emotional impact of the SENCO role should not be ignored, with SENCOs expressing not feeling valued (Burton & Goodman, 2011) and benefiting from supervision to support the emotional impact of their work (Evans, 2013).

The above highlights the complexity of the SENCO role, suggesting it is important to recognise SENCOs current experience to explore their views. In my view it is important to provide SENCOs with a 'voice' as they are professionals integral to supporting and implementing national policies.

## **1.8 Local Context**

The research was carried out in a Greater London Local Authority (LA). There are approximately 8,000 pupils with SEN and of these approximately 5,900 are on SEN support and around 2,000 have an EHCP (DfE, 2018). The statistics for EHCPs within the LA suggest that primary schools have a higher number of children with EHCPs and on SEN support compared to secondary schools (DfE, 2018). Therefore, reinforcing the focus of this research exploring primary school SENCOs experience within their context.

The LA provides support for SENCOs by holding SENCO forums. The forums aim to keep SENCOs up to date regarding SEN procedures and provide training. Several schools have joined together outside of the SENCO forum to create additional SENCO networks, allowing SENCOs to support each other within smaller school networks.

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) currently has reduced capacity, potentially placing further pressure upon SENCOs as Educational Psychologists (EPs) need to prioritise statutory work. LA changes in funding allocations and EPS delivery impact the SENCO role, with many SENCOs expressing confusion regarding the expectations for the EHCP process and requesting EP support. The SENCOs within the LA have experienced change over the last few years both at a national and local level.

## **1.9 Relevance to EP Practice**

The research focus is relevant to the EP role because EPs interact with SENCOs on a regular basis to contract, plan and review the support they can provide schools. A review of the Every Child Matters Agenda, noted EPs collaboration with

key partners, such as SENCOs, supports the assessment, planning, intervention and training they provide (Farrell et al., 2006). A facilitating factor in EP work is having a good working relationship with SENCOs (Farrell et al., 2006). It is relevant for EPs to understand the experience of SENCOs to inform ways to build upon their working relationship.

The review by Farrell et al. (2006) suggested SENCOs are a key partner in supporting the implementation of EP ideas. This could be the delivery of intervention groups or day to day monitoring of strategies suggested by the EP. Understanding the SENCOs' experience could inform EPs knowledge of how SENCOs prioritise the focus of support and the type of input which could be beneficial for SENCOs and the schools they work in.

### **1.10 Rationale for the Research**

This research aims to explore primary school SENCOs experience of their role in the current context they work within. Due to national legislative changes including the introduction of the SEND COP (2015), it is a relevant focus of this research to understand the experience of primary school SENCOs within a changing context.

Primary school SENCOs are the focus of this research because that is where my idea originated from and within the context of the LA and national legislation there is a focus on early intervention. The importance of primary schools within early intervention is noted by research which has found interventions in primary school can make up for poor pre-school start and support children to make successful progress into adulthood (e.g. educational successes, wage and criminality) (Feinstein, 2004; Gross, 2008). There could be the potential for increased pressure upon primary school

SENCOs to ensure effective interventions are in place. Data regarding children with special needs in the borough suggests primary schools have a high number of EHCPs and children on SEN support compared to secondary schools. This reinforces the need for early intervention and inclusive practice.

The research used a psychosocial method providing narratives from SENCOs about their experience, with limited influence from myself as researcher. Taking a psychosocial approach recognises the interplay between the social and the individual (Hollway, 2011) and how this could influence the SENCO role. A psychosocial method and using a psychoanalytically informed analysis recognise the participant and researcher dynamic as part of the experience and how my own defences could influence the interaction. The use of a psychosocial methodology and psychoanalytically informed analysis extends the current literature and provides an alternative perspective of the SENCO experience.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Aims of the Literature Review**

The introduction of the SEND COP (2015) and the Children and families Act (2014) has influenced the SENCO working context. SENCOs have an increased role in joint working with parents and professionals during the EHCP process (Boesley & Crane, 2018). This literature review aims to understand research currently available.

My research takes a psychosocial methodological approach. I attempted to search for existing research linking psychosocial methods and psychoanalytic concepts to the experience of SENCOs. Only one research paper considered the application of psychoanalytic concepts in relation to SENCOs and met the inclusion criteria (e.g. Evans, 2013) (Appendix A). I decided to broaden my focus to include experience and perception of the SENCO role. Alternative questions were deemed relevant to the focus of this research to gain an understanding of the current research reflecting SENCOs experience and perception of their role:

1. What does the literature tell us about the SENCO role in practice and how SENCOs experience their role?
2. What does the literature tell us about the SENCO role within the school system?

The methods used will be reviewed to provide a context for this research. Implications will be considered based upon the findings of the research reviewed.

### **2.2 Databases Used and Search Terms Applied**

The literature search was conducted using EBSCO Host through the Tavistock and Portman online library catalogue. Databases selected from EBSCO Host included: 'Education Source', 'ERIC' and 'PsycInfo'. 'Education Source' was chosen

to provide research across educational contexts which was felt to be relevant to SENCOs. 'ERIC' was chosen because it provides access to education literature and research dating back to 1966, providing a wide range of educational literature. Finally, 'PsychInfo' was chosen because it is a commonly used database focusing on psychology and social sciences. It is created by a reputable American Psychological Society database providing international journals and British educational and psychological journals. It provides access to psychological and social research within the British context.

The search terms in Appendix B were applied to find relevant literature. Within the SENCO terms the title of Inclusion Manager was included reflecting the changing context SENCOs work within (Pearson, 2008). The Boolean operator "AND" was applied between the SENCO search terms and the search term 1, followed by SENCO search terms and search term 2.

To understand the experiences of SENCOs the word experience was expanded to include their perception and view of their role. The truncation symbol (\*) was used to allow for variations of words. The terms 'voice', 'perspective', 'understanding' and 'opinion' were used to reflect the voice of SENCOs in how they talk about their role.

The second search terms used alongside the SENCO terms focus on the SENCO role and position within the school system (Appendix B). These terms have been used to find research relevant to the second literature review question. The search term 'person in role' was used to reflect the SENCOs' perception of their role. To expand upon the word 'role' the terms 'job' and 'title' were used to reflect the SENCO position within a school.

Database searches covered January 2001-2019. This period was chosen to reflect the SENCO experience between the previous SEND COP (2001) and latest SEND COP (2015) and the Children and families Act (2014). It recognises the introduction of the NASENCO award in 2009.

The geography was limited to ensure relevance of context for the participants used in the current research. Limiters included 'England' and 'United Kingdom'.

### **2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were identified prior to searches being carried out. The criteria were created to ensure enough information was retrieved to answer the literature review questions. Refer to Appendix C for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The review includes both primary and secondary school SENCOs providing an overview of the SENCO context as a whole and will be used to consider why primary school SENCOs are the focus of this research.

Articles outside of England were excluded and titles of papers retrieved were reviewed. On obtaining my set of papers, I completed a screening process examining the titles and abstracts to assess relevance to the literature search questions. Where the relevance of the paper was unclear, I reviewed the paper more fully applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria again. Reasons for excluded articles can be referred to in Appendix D. Articles were most commonly excluded because SENCOs or the SENCO experience of their role was not the predominant focus of the research.

Appendix B includes the final number of papers retrieved after duplicates were removed. One article was unable to be sourced which left 17 articles in the review.

## **2.4 Method of Critical Appraisal**

To assess the 'quality' of the included studies the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) (2018) was used (Appendix E). The CASP allowed me to review the quality and robustness of the papers in relation to questions posed.

## **2.5 Research Overview**

Information regarding research design, participant information, data collection process, method of analysis and key findings were extracted from the 17 papers (Appendix F). I will first examine the methods used by the studies and then identify key themes within the research in relation to the literature review questions. Finally, I will summarise the findings and draw implications for this research.

## **2.6 Review of Methods**

To situate the current study, I first explore the range of methods used to collect data regarding SENCOs. This will support my reasons for the methodological approach I have taken.

### **2.6.1 Questionnaires**

Four studies used questionnaires to explore the SENCO role. Crowther, Dyson and Millward (2001) focused on quantitative data to understand the issues primary school SENCOs face. A statistical analysis provided information regarding the amount of time SENCOs have allocated to their role, school size and how this relates to SENCO allocated time, number of students with SEN, number of students with a statement, how Learning Support Assistants (LSA) are used (e.g. time on tasks) and qualifications SENCOs hold.

Pearson et al (2015) drew data from an open-ended question within a questionnaire taking a more qualitative approach. Thematic analysis was applied

through a deductive approach using the framework of the 2011 Coalition Government's Green paper to identify SENCOs predictions of potential changes within their working context. This approach benefits from being consistent with the research question exploring SENCOs perceptions of changes in response to legislative changes. It could be argued that by taking a deductive approach there is potential to lose data due to the narrowing of the focus on themes. The paper provides a detailed summary of steps taken ensuring reliability of coding using intercoder agreement checks and discussions. The final summary of themes was verified by another researcher.

Two papers used quantitative and qualitative questions within questionnaires (Szwed 2007a; Pearson, 2008). Szwed (2007a) used quantitative data to establish work hours and open-ended questions allowing SENCOs to provide additional examples (qualitative data). Whereas, Pearson (2008) used closed questions, likert scales and open-ended questions to explore recruitment and retention of SENCOs.

One issue using questionnaires is the low response rates. For example, Crowther et al. (2001) had a response rate of 30%. They also do not provide opportunities to explore the participants answers and clarify their perspective.

### **2.6.2 Mixed methods**

Some studies applied a mixed methods approach using questionnaires to gain contextual data, followed by semi-structured interviews, Diamond Nine grid, diary data of SENCO time or case studies.

Tissot (2013) used a semi-structured interview approach which was held face to face with SENCOs following an initial questionnaire. Participants were SENCOs undertaking the NASENCO course between January 2009 and May 2012 at the

University of Reading and the Institute of education (Tissot, 2013). They were provided an optional questionnaire (opt in participation) (Tissot, 2013). The sample was relevant as they were all SENCOs and new to the post. There is reference to the SENCO demographics (e.g. school they work in, roles, whether on SLT or not etc). The quantitative questionnaire captured demographic data and the semi-structured interviews provided a greater exploration of SENCOs views on leadership. Quantitative data appears to have been analysed appropriately. There is lack of clarity about the qualitative analysis taken for the interview transcripts.

Maier (2016) and Maier and Vickerman (2018) carried out research as part of a larger study referring to contextual data but only reports findings from the interviews. They are placed under this section as they used a mixed method, despite choosing to only report the qualitative data. Maier and Vickerman (2018) focused on findings from the semi-structured interview stage. The research explored the experience of SENCOs and LSAs. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate to understand SENCOs perspectives about why they chose the role etc. There is no reference to the questions used within the interviews and one theme is explored within the findings.

Rosen-Webb (2011) used additional data collection methods alongside the questionnaires and two semi-structured interviews, by asking participants to complete a Diamond Nine grid. The participants second interview involved ranking 12 statements, identified from their first interview, to establish their priorities and perception of the SENCO role (Rosen-Webb, 2011). There are images within the research paper to demonstrate how the Diamond Nine grids were used to explain the analysis process.

Cowne (2005, pg.63) used questionnaires to gain context followed by a focus group asking SENCOs to consider the question ‘what do SENCOs think they do and will do in the future?’ SENCOs were also asked about constant and emerging features within their role. Focus groups were carried out with SEN officers from the LA and Ofsted reports were analysed. Caution should be taken when considering the focus group data provided by Cowne (2005), as there lacks transparency how key themes were identified and there are no supporting quotes.

An alternative approach by Szwed (2007b) involved an initial questionnaire and SENCOs completing diaries of how they spend their time followed by a case study approach with three primary school SENCOs. Case studies are appropriate to investigate the role of primary schools SENCOs recognising individual contexts they work within. However, the process of data gathering and approach to analysis lacks clarity.

### **2.6.3 Qualitative approach**

Some studies took a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews without additional quantitative data. Boesley and Crane (2018) carried out telephone interviews with primary and secondary school SENCOs. An interview schedule was based on existing literature on SENCOs and EHCPs. Questions were open-ended and the interview schedule flexible. The schedule was piloted to ensure validity and clarity. All questions are relevant to the research aims. Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis was used through an inductive approach at a semantic level. Both authors familiarised themselves with the data, suggesting some cross checking of codes took place.

Burton and Goodman (2011) carried out research as part of a larger study considering perceptions SENCOs and support staff had of their roles. They used semi-structured interviews with a relevant focus to the research aims (e.g. asking SENCOs about their experiences to understand how they perceive their role). Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Themes were cross referenced across transcripts providing connections between data. A clear systematic process was identified. At times it is difficult to identify key implications for SENCOs compared to LSAs.

Curran (2019) took a phenomenological approach by exploring how SENCOs have managed the first year of SEND reforms. The study involved five phases: context setting questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with a group of SENCOs, termly semi-structured interviews, a second questionnaire and a final questionnaire to reflect on the year. The reporting of findings focused on phase three, the termly semi-structured interviews. Whilst Smith and Broomhead (2019) used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA); a qualitative research perspective to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences. Oldham & Radford (2011) used semi-structured interviews and took a grounded thematic analysis to understand the data. These studies highlight different approaches taken whilst still using a qualitative semi-structured interview technique.

The semi-structured interviews often included questions directly chosen to fit with the research question. Whereas Mackenzie (2012) took an alternative approach using narrative interviews, meaning the questions emerged directly from the respondents' discussion.

Finally, Evans (2013) used process notes from consultancy sessions with SENCOs and applied psychoanalytic concepts. Although Evans uses excerpts from consultation notes and refers to supervision, the research lacks evidence of an approach to data analysis. This means Evans could have discarded novel data as they may have not recognised their unconscious and conscious thoughts. Combining a psychoanalytic and grounded theory approach is questionable. Evans does not provide a description of participants (e.g. time as a SENCO, type of school and if they are on SLT), giving a lack of context regarding participants.

#### **2.6.4 Summary of methods used**

The studies using questionnaires provide a helpful context regarding the SENCOs time in the role, positions they hold and other contextual data. However, they do not allow for exploration of SENCOs real life accounts. The mixed methods approach combines quantitative contextual data and an exploration of SENCOs views. In some instances, studies also incorporated additional methods such as Diamond Nine grid, focus groups, case studies, IPA or grounded theory approach.

Some semi-structured interviews included questions focusing on research questions. Mackenzie (2012) took a narrative approach allowing the participants discussions to lead the interview. Evans (2013) took an alternative approach using process notes to explore the application of psychoanalytic concepts to the SENCO experience of working with children with SEMH needs.

While previous literature has explored SENCOs responsibilities, Smith and Broomhead (2019) argue it is important to continue reflecting on the SENCO role, to consider the changing landscape surrounding SEND and inclusion. This research aims to extend current literature to explore SENCOs experiences within the changing context. Although Mackenzie (2012) takes a narrative approach and Evans (2013)

applies psychoanalytic concepts, to my knowledge a psychosocial method has not previously been used to explore the experience of SENCOs. There is a gap in the literature to explore SENCOs experiences using a psychosocial method (rational discussed in 2.9.1)

## **2.7 What does the Literature Tell us About the SENCO Role in Practice and How SENCOs Experience their Role?**

I will now review the literature in relation to the above question, before summarising key points obtained from the review.

### **2.7.1 Reasons for becoming a SENCO**

To understand secondary school SENCOs sense of identity and reasons for becoming a SENCO, Rosen-Webb (2011) used exploratory semi-structured interviews to elicit the views of participants, followed by a Diamond Nine grid as a mechanism to prioritise SENCOs views. Open-ended questions focused on participants early life experiences and whether their family influenced their decision to become a SENCO (Rosen-Webb, 2011). All participants felt their families promoted and valued learning which influenced their decision to become a SENCO (Rosen-Webb, 2011). There was agreement across the SENCOs that underlying characteristics of a SENCO include: being interested in how learners learn, integrity and being optimistic (Rosen-Webb, 2011). Some SENCOs referred to optimism as ‘believing what you put in will register’ and ‘looking forward to each day and its challenges’ (Rosen-Webb, 2011, pg.164). A criticism of the research is that the researcher was a secondary school SENCO within the same LA as the participants. Although the researcher acknowledged their relationship to the participants, they do not reflect on their experience or refer to ways they have attempted to manage this potential bias.

Educational ideologies of inclusivity such as fairness, social justice and equality have been identified as values which could influence the role of a SENCO (Maher & Vickerman, 2018). Research by Maher and Vickerman (2018) identified that secondary school SENCOs sought the role to work with pupils with SEN in order to increase educational attainment and life chances of those pupils. This conception fits with the published definition of a SENCO within the SEND COP (2015) which states SENCOs are involved in ensuring interventions are in place to support children with SEN. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain these views, though the research questions are not shared within the paper. There was lack of information about the SENCOs' early lived experiences meaning it is difficult to explore how these ideologies developed and informed their approach to the SENCO role.

The research reviewed involved SENCOs in the role from 3 months to over 20 years (Mackenzie, 2012; Oldham & Radford, 2011; Pearson et al., 2015). For some SENCOs flexibility and summer holidays supported their reason to stay in the role allowing them to meet family obligations. Mackenzie (2012) found that SENCOs teaching more than 20 years retained a strong commitment to the ideology of promoting special educational needs. The continuous intellectual challenge of working in SEN was identified by SENCOs and kept their interest in the role (Mackenzie, 2012). SENCOs referred to maintaining academic interests which they used to inform their practice (Mackenzie, 2012). Generally SENCOs wanted to continue in the role and one SENCO described 'the buzz' they received from the profession (Mackenzie, 2012, p.156).

Many SENCOs saw themselves continuing in the profession for the next 5 years and only moved schools when they perceived nothing more could be achieved (Mackenzie, 2012). SENCOs also expressed an interest in taking on challenging roles

and improving difficult situations to receive appreciation (Mackenzie, 2012). All SENCOs in Mackenzie's (2012) research wanted to stay working in SEN, though they saw their role moving to a more strategic level. It is important to note the SENCOs taking part in the research carried out by Mackenzie (2012) were volunteers, potentially they may be motivated to work with SEN and remain within the profession. Whereas, Pearson (2008) found a proportion of SENCOs planned to leave their role midterm due to the challenges of a high workload, suggesting there is mixed picture of the retention of SENCOs.

### **2.7.2 Impact of the SEND COP (2015)**

Since the SEND COP (2001) the SENCO context has changed including the introduction of the NASENCO award, new national curriculum, the SEND COP (2015) and the Children and families Act (2014). The changing context SENCOs work within has required them to adapt. One study reviewed focused on the prediction of changes in the SENCO role (Pearson et al., 2015) and two focused specifically on the impact of these changes (Boesley & Crane, 2018; Curran, 2019).

Research looked at SENCOs predictions for their role regarding legislative changes. Pearson et al. (2015, p.52) drew upon data from an online open-ended questionnaire using the question 'Thinking about the role of SENCO in your school, how do you foresee it changing in the short (1-5 years) term?' SENCOs raised concerns around appropriate knowledge to engage in the EHCP process (Pearson, et al., 2015). The SENCOs' perceived their role with parents becoming more of a facilitator or advisor, empowering parents and requiring them to invest more time working directly with them (Pearson et al., 2015).

SENCOs predicted an increase in external accountability with their role becoming more data driven alongside a need to be more imaginative due to resource cuts (Pearson et al., 2015). The research method used by Pearson et al. (2015) did not explore what 'more time' might mean. It could have been beneficial to follow up with participants.

Increasing resource cuts leading to less funding for staff supporting children with SEN were also predicted (Pearson et al., 2015). With the reduction of support from LAs this could lead to schools paying for resources and therefore impacting priorities within schools (Pearson et al., 2015). Caution should be taken when considering findings provided by Pearson et al. (2015) because data was taken from an initial survey claiming to be national and it is unclear how nation-wide the 227 respondents were.

Since introduction of the SEND COP (2015), Boesley and Crane (2018) have considered the implications for the SENCO role and found there were three key themes: SENCOs perceived role in the EHCP process, procedural challenges and difficulties accessing EHCPs for children with SEMH needs. SENCOs noted they are expected to manage misconceptions of the EHCP process (Boesley & Crane, 2018), suggesting their predictions were correct and they need to have appropriate knowledge of the process (Pearson et al., 2015). SENCOs reported they were often the lead professionals in the process due to health and care professionals appearing to be disengaged (Boesley & Crane, 2018). This suggests the SEND COP (2015) has had implications for the SENCO experience, which now includes taking a lead on EHCP processes and ensuring joint working practices.

Research shows SENCOs are required to manage parents expectations and anxiety during the EHCP process due to parents lacking knowledge (Boesley & Crane, 2018). Parents often do not understand complexities of the process, timescales involved and that their child may not require a plan (Boesley & Crane, 2018). On receiving an EHCP SENCOs referred to supporting parents on what the plan means and that it is not a 'magic wand' (Boesley & Crane, 2018, p.40). The SENCO role has changed since the SEND COP (2015) to include managing parent expectations through the EHCP process.

Research by Boesley and Crane (2018) since SEND COP (2015) suggests SENCOs predictions were correct and joint working with other professionals was seen to enable SENCOs work towards outcomes for children with SEN. Taking a Person Centred Planning (PCP) approach within meetings with professionals from different services was viewed as helpful (Boesley & Crane, 2018). However, involvement from professionals varied between and within services, meaning it was often the individual professional's decision to be involved (Boesley & Crane, 2018). Despite challenges SENCOs cited examples of using PCP and multiagency working to support children with SEN, suggesting joint working is an important factor in enabling the SENCO role within the EHCP process.

Since the SEND COP (2015) SENCOs have faced procedural challenges. SENCOs working across counties in Boesley and Crane's (2018) research noted a regional disparity in the process of EHCP applications. The lack of transparency in the process and unclear feedback left many SENCOs feeling disregarded and ignored (Boesley & Crane, 2018). SENCOs found it difficult in their role knowing what to include (Boesley & Crane, 2018). Pressures from funding cuts potentially impact the SENCO role and whether they focus time on completing EHCP applications.

SENCOs also noted difficulties accessing EHCPs for children with SEMH needs (Boesley & Crane, 2018). They felt there was an over emphasis on academics and that children had to fail before receiving support (Boesley & Crane, 2018), suggesting the difficulties SENCOs may face when trying to support children's emotional wellbeing.

SENCOs had correctly predicted in Pearson et al's. (2015) research that decreased funding and visible withdrawal of services has placed pressures upon schools. SENCOs feel lack of LA funding means they are required to apply for EHCPs (Boesley & Crane, 2018). They noted a lack of feedback for rejected requests and felt the LA funding restrictions impacted the process (Boesley & Crane, 2018). Therefore, constraining the SENCO role by making them prioritise their work in relation to gaining the most resources. However, only 16 participants were involved in the research by Boesley and Crane (2018) which suggests the sample may not greatly represent the wider majority of SENCOs experiences since the impact of legislative changes.

Despite criticisms of the SENCOs' role within the EHCP process, they felt the system had potential and noted outcomes being most effective when there was joint working with parents and a PCP approach (Boesley & Crane, 2018). Findings are consistent with the SEND COP (2015) highlighting the SENCOs' role in the EHCP process to ensure joint working. Although interviews by Boesley and Crane (2018) gathered participants views via telephone, this still allowed an opportunity to clarify participant responses compared to Pearson et al's. (2015) research using an online questionnaire. The research provides a clear explanation of a thematic analysis of the data.

Curran (2019) carried out research exploring SENCOs in primary and secondary schools experience of SEND COP (2015) reforms. Curran (2019) applied the policy actor and policy work framework (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012) to understand the findings. Identified as holding a ‘narrator position’, SENCOs took lead on implementing reforms. SENCOs viewed this as an opportunity and a concern as they were uncertain what they should be doing. In some instances, SENCOs stopped working with LA as they did not feel the support was beneficial (Curran, 2019).

SENCOs in Curran’s (2019) research took on the role of ‘entrepreneur’. They brought professionals together and acted as a ‘translator’ by modelling inclusive practice (Curran, 2019). SENCOs described themselves as feeling accountable to advocate for the child and felt ‘in the middle’ of resource decisions (Curran, 2019, p. 85). SENCOs appeared to adhere rigidly to the SEND COP (2015) guidance as they lacked clarity and confidence implementing guidelines (Curran, 2019). The SENCOs lack of confidence was hindered by the isolation they felt and lack of communication with SLT to make joint decisions (Curran, 2019).

Research by Boesley and Crane (2018) and Curran (2019), focusing on implications of the SEND COP (2015), suggests SENCOs can be positioned to manage the process when they themselves lack confidence. Expectations and accountability upon SENCOs have arguably increased. There is evidence which suggests SENCOs may feel the benefits and opportunities outweigh the challenges.

### **2.7.3 Complexity of the role**

Research highlights the complexity and diversity of the SENCO role including responsibilities such as: working with parents and professionals, being involved in the new SEND COP (2015) EHCP process and supporting the

implementation of strategic processes (Boesley & Crane, 2018; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Pearson et al., 2015). Rosen-Webb (2011) found that SENCOs perceived the role as multifaceted placing an emphasis on being empathetic, ensuring positive relationships and transparency in communication.

Cowne (2005) carried out a focus group asking participants to consider constant and emerging roles in relation to their work. Constant roles included teaching, supporting Teaching Assistants (TAs) and writing Individual Education Plans (Cowne, 2005). The emerging roles suggested a widening of what SENCOs were expected to do (Cowne, 2005). Research by Crowther et al. (2001) noted SENCOs must maintain SEN registers the role expanding to include pupils such as those with medical needs or English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Maher and Vickerman (2018) reported that SENCOs placed an emphasis on forming partnerships at the internal (within school) and external (parents, professionals etc) level. SENCOs also noted managerial and administrative tasks required within the role (Maher & Vickerman, 2018). Whereas, Mackenzie (2012) found SENCOs interested in creating a whole school strategic change to support SEN children. Research into SENCOs working with students with behavioural SEMH needs found that SENCOs placed an emphasis on creating a nurturing environment and supporting children's wellbeing (Burton & Goodman, 2011). Research recognises different aspects of the SENCO role and how SENCOs may have a different emphasis or perspective in how they view their role. Lack of clarity regarding the SENCO role has been found to lead to increased stress (Rosen-Webb, 2011).

#### 2.7.4 Additional roles

Research reviewed noted additional roles SENCOs hold, reinforcing the complexity of their experience. Tissot (2013) reported across nursery, primary schools and secondary schools 35% (n= 49) of the participants had a full time classroom role with no additional time to carry out SENCO responsibilities, and around half of the participants (55%, n= 77) shared SENCO and class teaching role. Whereas, 11% (n = 15) had a full time SENCO role, including part time positions. In some cases, SENCOs held more than one additional role. In total Pearson et al. (2015) noted 86 additional responsibilities reported by SENCOs across settings from reception to post 16. Indicating SENCOs have additional roles and demands.

Cowne (2005) used a questionnaire to understand the context primary and secondary school SENCOs work within. They found that primary SENCOs (n = 75) and secondary SENCOs (n = 104) held additional roles such as coordination roles for subjects, class teacher and other roles. Primary school SENCOs with the most time dedicated to their role were expected to also teach 90% of the time and for secondary schools 80% of the time (Cowne, 2005). Primary SENCOs were also likely to hold a headteacher (n =2) role or deputy head role (n = 16) (Cowne, 2005), suggesting a greater pressure upon them to balance their time.

Szwed (2007a) used questionnaires to understand the context primary SENCOs (n = 48) work within. Data gathered suggested most SENCOs worked full time and had additional roles such as headteacher (10%, n = 5), deputy headteacher (10%, n = 5), assistant headteacher (15%, n = 7), class teacher (46%, n = 22) and subject coordinator (33%, n = 16) (Szwed, 2007a). Whilst Crowther et al (2001) found of 140 primary school SENCOs 40% held an additional role as headteacher or lead coordinator (Crowther et al., 2001). The research by Szwed (2007a) and

Crowther et al. (2001) recognises the likelihood that primary school SENCOs face additional responsibilities.

The title of SENCO across primary and secondary schools has been superseded in some cases by Inclusion Manager, reflecting the management aspect (Pearson, 2008). Research findings confirm the varied nature of the role depending upon additional responsibilities which could be influenced by the school context they work within (refer to 2.8).

### **2.7.5 Lack of time**

Lack of allocation of SENCO time was identified as a factor in impacting the work completed (Rosen-Webb, 2011). Tissot (2013) found that of SENCOs within nursery, primary and secondary contexts a third (35%, n = 49) had additional full-time teaching responsibilities. Full time SENCOs had 2 days a week allocated to the role but were only assigned half the time (Tissot, 2013).

Crowther et al. (2001) found time allocated to primary school SENCOs (n = 141) to carry out their role has decreased since 1997, whilst the number of children classed as having SEN has increased. 65% of primary school SENCOs had no time dedicated to the role. Those in schools with 100-300 students having the least time allocated to their role (Crowther et al., 2001). Almost half of the SENCOs were class teachers and 40% headteachers or a curriculum lead impacting the time dedicated to their SENCO role (Crowther et al., 2001).

Limited dedicated time means SENCOs must prioritise their work. Tissot (2013) noted prioritising can lead to the detriment of SENCOs strategic role and supporting staff and children. Three quarters (74%, n = 70) of participants said paperwork and documentation took up most of their time (Tissot, 2013). Lack of time

is a reoccurring theme existing prior to and continuing since the SEND COP (2015), despite the legislation stating SENCOs should have sufficient time and resources (Rosen-Webb, 2011; Tissot, 2013). Smith and Broomhead (2019) noted SENCOs felt time dedicated to implementing the SEND COP (2015) and SEN duties is insufficient. However, Burton and Goodman (2011) found that SENCOs who supported children with SEMH needs felt the role was 'busy' and the flexibility of how they use their time means that they can be more available for students.

### **2.7.6 Working with parents and professionals**

Across the research working with parents and other professionals was identified as important in enabling SENCOs to achieve the best outcomes for CYP (Boesley & Crane, 2018; Burton & Goodman, 2011; Pearson et al., 2015; Rosen-Webb, 2011). Cowne (2005) found that SENCOs in primary and secondary schools felt working with colleagues, outside agencies and parents is essential. Research by Szwed (2007a) supported these findings recognised primary school SENCOs felt their role was helped when they had supportive relationships with parents and liaised with colleagues.

Secondary school SENCOs within Burton and Goodman's (2011) research shared the importance of using time flexibly to develop collaborative working relationships with parents. Maher (2016) extends the research by exploring secondary school SENCOs relationships with parents and how this can influence their role. Working with parents was noted as important to gain additional information which might otherwise not be known (Maher, 2016). Parents were found to empower SENCOs to make decisions when there was a trusting relationship (Maher, 2016). Parental influence over final decisions SENCOs make is unclear and could be further explored. Research by Rosen-Webb (2011) supports the importance secondary school

SENCOs place on empathy, ensuring transparent communication and maintaining positive relationships.

Complexities of working with parents and professionals included emphasis on the SENCO as 'expert' (Smith & Broomhead, 2019, p.62). Smith and Broomhead (2019) found primary school SENCOs were held in high regard by parents and professionals meaning they can face pressure to be the expert. Most did not view themselves as experts. The idea of SENCOs as sole experts contrasted with how SENCOs see their position and with the SEND COP (2015), which recognises SEN as everyone's responsibility (Smith & Broomhead, 2019). Although working relationships can be positive with parents and professionals, there is an element that SENCOs become positioned as taking on additional pressure. This reflects the research by Boesley and Crane (2019) referred to in section 2.7.2 and the role of SENCOs within the EHCP process.

### **2.7.7 Access to training opportunities from the LA**

Two studies identified the benefits of training opportunities provided by LAs. Crowther et al. (2001) noted primary school SENCOs had access to practical training which they found beneficial. Research by Cowne (2005) found primary and secondary school SENCOs who had attended LA training felt more reflective and confident in their practice. The SENCOs felt their skills had improved and requested training on how to support teachers (Cowne, 2005), suggesting it is important for SENCOs to have access to training. It is important to note Cowne (2005) only reflects on the positives of the training suggesting there is the potential for researcher bias.

### **2.7.8 Feeling undervalued and emotional impact of the role**

Despite training opportunities and support from the LA, research by Burton and Goodman (2011) found that SENCOs did not feel valued in their role by other staff. The SENCOs' felt the complexity of their role was not appreciated and there was a reliance upon them to support children with complex needs and ensure their wellbeing (Burton & Goodman, 2011). It could be argued the SENCOs own emotional wellbeing was not considered. Recent research by Curran (2019) reinforces these findings, noting that within the context of SEND reforms SENCOs expressed feeling undervalued within the school context and by other professionals. Burton and Goodman (2011) felt the lack of recognition for the SENCO role could lead to SENCOs leaving the profession.

Evans (2013) extended the current literature and evidence base by applying a psychoanalytic perspective. Research highlighted the affective aspect of the SENCO role, with SENCOs expressing feelings of 'not being good enough' (Evans, 2013, p.291 ). The SENCOs worked with vulnerable pupils at risk of exclusion and were susceptible to feelings of isolation from pupils and staff they worked with (Evans, 2013). The researcher used psychoanalytic concepts such as countertransference and noted feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, anger, abandonment and inadequacy (Evans, 2013). Countertransference is the way an individual makes sense of their response to others, using the self as a way to understand (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The research allowed Evans to think about what was occurring between them as a researcher and the participants (Parker, 2010). Feelings the researcher noted were suggested to be the projections SENCOs experienced from working with complex children and fellow staff (Evans, 2013). The SENCOs' experienced feeling

marginalised by SLT, which reflected how the children felt being at risk of exclusion (Evans, 2013).

Providing process consultation to SENCOs was found to act as a form of containment helping them make sense of feelings projected into them (Evans, 2013). Containment is a concept from Bion (1962) which refers to an individual's capacity to be emotionally receptive and open to feeling to understand what is being communicated. Whilst projections refer to parts of the self which are feared as 'bad' are split off and located in or identified as belonging to an external object or person (Klein, 1946). Evans role as consultant enabled the SENCOs to make sense of the feelings they were finding difficult to process. As a result of the consultations the SENCOs and some of the staff they worked with gravitated to being more reflective. Evans (2013, p.298) refers to 'reflective practice' as being 'essential in schools....to help staff maintain their thinking capacity'. SENCOs may benefit from reflective consultation space supporting the emotional impact of the work and making sense of feelings they have. The research provides an alternative perspective and highlights the importance of supervision and psychological theory to support SENCOs reflective practice and emotional impact of their work.

### **2.7.9 Summary of the literature review question: what does the literature tell us about how SENCOs perceive their role and what the SENCO role involves?**

The review of existing literature suggests SENCOs motivation for the role is based on values they hold which may be influenced by family members. The reasons SENCOs remain in role include the flexibility the role provides and the intellectual challenge to ensure best outcomes for children with SEN.

The changing context SENCOs work within with the introduction of the SEND COP (2015) has led to SENCOs taking up the role of lead for both professionals and parents; whilst also managing the demands of resource cuts and challenges with the new SEND COP (2015).

The complexity of the SENCO role from previous research and current contexts, notes the expansion of the role to include a wider variety of SEN and additional roles SENCOs may hold. The impact additional roles have on SENCOs lack of time to carry out their work is recognised as a constraining factor (Mackenzie, 2012). The enabling factors included personal characteristics, working with parents and professionals, though there can be challenges with the SENCO viewed as the expert (Mackenzie, 2012). The findings suggest SENCOs value training opportunities. Despite external support they can feel undervalued in their role. The emotional impact of work they carry out should not be ignored.

Overall, this section reinforces the complex experience of the SENCO role. The studies included SENCOs across primary and secondary schools, suggesting SENCOs across settings hold some similar perceptions of constraining and enhancing factors. Smith and Broomhead (2019) argue it is important to continue to reflect on the SENCO role due to the continuous changing context. This research could expand upon research to explore the SENCO role in the current context.

## **2.8 What does the Literature Tell us About the SENCO role Within the School System?**

The introduction of this thesis (Chapter 1) presented how changes in the SENCO role have led to greater emphasis on the SENCO as a leader within schools to support inclusion. Six papers referred to the leadership position of SENCOs within schools, including the benefits and challenges of this and relationships with staff on

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or Senior Management Team (SMT) (Cowne, 2005; Curran, 2019; Oldham & Radford, 2011; Smith & Broomhead, 2019; Szwed, 2007a; Szwed, 2007b; Tissot, 2013). The papers used questionnaires to provide demographics for SENCOs roles within the school (Cowne, 2005; Szwed, 2007a). Others followed the context setting questionnaires with interviews to understand SENCOs perspectives (Curran, 2019; Oldham & Radford, 2011; Smith & Broomhead, 2019; Szwed, 2007b; Tissot, 2013).

### **2.8.1 Data regarding SENCOs leadership position**

Research solely looking at primary school SENCOs found SENCOs held additional roles such as headteacher (10%, n = 5), deputy headteacher (10%, n = 5) and assistant headteacher (15%, n = 7), with 48% (n = 23) being on SLT (Szwed, 2007a). Data gathered suggested SENCOs with additional leadership roles were more likely to be on SLT, raising the question that if they were solely SENCOs would they be placed in this position. Whilst, research into secondary school SENCOs found that only 1 out of 10 SENCOs were on SLT (Oldham & Radford, 2011).

Tissot (2013) carried out a mixed method study looking at the SENCO role as leaders across primary (84%, n = 114), secondary schools (12%, n = 17) and nursery settings (5%, n = 8). Tissot (2013) found that there was an even split between SENCOs being on the SLT (52%, n = 77) and those who were not (48%, n = 67), suggesting the variety of the SENCO experience of how they are placed within school systems. SENCOs working with younger children were found to have greater probability of being on SLT (Tissot, 2013). The sample size was small and therefore caution should be taken when considering the data. SENCOs who had between 5 and 14 years' experience were twice as likely to be on leadership than those who were

recently qualified (Tissot, 2013), suggesting experience may determine a SENCOs place on SLT.

Research carried out recently by Curran (2019) noted that 3 out of 9 SENCOs across primary and secondary schools were on SLT. Whilst Smith and Broomhead (2019) found 7 out of 15 primary school SENCOs were on SLT and 2 of the SENCOs held the additional role of deputy headteacher, which explained why they were on SLT. Current research reinforces previous research suggesting whilst some SENCOs are on SLT, this is dependent upon individual school contexts.

### **2.8.2 Importance and value of being on SLT**

Research by Oldham and Radford (2011) aimed to explore SENCOs understanding of leadership and the extent they consider leadership relevant to the role. They achieved these aims using semi-structured interviews with 10 secondary SENCOs, focusing on contextual data, understanding of leadership, and relevance to role. SENCOs found it difficult answering questions about the definition of leadership and provided similar responses to what they felt makes someone a leader (Oldham & Radford, 2011). There was a shared understanding that 'leadership' referred to SENCOs having a 'vision' (Oldham & Radford, 2011). The concept of leadership SENCOs referred to focused on a moral purpose (Oldham & Radford, 2011), which could be considered in relation to research which has identified the values of SENCOs being consistent with altruism (Rosen-Webb, 2011). Some SENCOs considered leadership in relation to their position in the school (Oldham & Radford, 2011). Having a leadership position was felt to be important by 9 out of 10 SENCOs in Oldham and Radford's research (2011), suggesting SENCOs value this status.

Tissot (2013) carried out interviews with 10 SENCOs across primary and secondary schools. Some SENCOs felt being on SLT enabled them to achieve their goals (Tissot, 2013). Others felt they did not want to be associated with SLT (Tissot, 2013). When SENCOs were on SLT they felt their potential was underutilised and there was resistance from others on SLT (Tissot, 2013). 40% (n = 19) of those that were not on SLT aspired to be on SLT (Tissot, 2013), suggesting they would like the role to have leadership status.

Recent research by Curran in 2019 (2019) suggests SENCOs not on SLT did not view this as a barrier to implementing new policy practice from the SEND COP (2015). The findings create an interesting contradiction with SENCOs taking on a lead role, yet lacking formal SLT status, which could be argued, essential for change (Curran, 2019). The findings suggested SENCOs were concerned about issues regarding seniority and status of the role in terms of how others perceive them (Curran, 2019).

### **2.8.3 Benefits and challenges of being on SLT**

The research reviewed suggested benefits of being on SLT include: taking up a leadership role, being able to carry out the SENCO role more effectively and having control over resources (Oldham & Radford, 2011). Oldham and Radford (2011) noted SENCOs felt being part of SLT was highly relevant to their role allowing them to lead a SEN team. Leading a SEN team fits with their conception of leadership involving directing others towards a vision, which they felt achievable being on SLT (Oldham & Radford, 2011).

Other research suggested by being on SLT SENCOs could give more dedicated time to carry out their role (Szwed, 2007a; Szwed, 2007b) and raise the

focus of an inclusive agenda (Smith & Broomhead, 2019). A SENCO in the research by Smith and Broomhead (2019) noted by being on SLT there was a change in attitude from colleagues about their role. They were more able to access information to support their role (Smith & Broomhead, 2019), suggesting the benefits of being on SLT.

Despite the benefits of being on SLT, there are still challenges SENCOs face when in this position. SENCOs might have a position of leadership, but research by Oldham and Radford (2011) suggested secondary school SENCOs continued to face restrictions impacting their ability to influence change. SENCOs noted a conflict of interest between the SENCO and SLT roles (Smith & Broomhead, 2019). Some SENCOs feel a disconnect between the strategic school development and promoting inclusive practice (Smith & Broomhead, 2019). Although there has been a move to include SENCOs on SLT there continues to be challenges.

#### **2.8.4 Relationship with SLT**

Across the research SENCOs noted the importance of working collaboratively with senior members of staff ensuring their views were recognised and developing a sense of trust (Oldham & Radford, 2011; Szwed, 2007a; Tissot, 2013). Research by Cowne (2005) found most primary SENCOs were managed by the headteacher. Out of 26 secondary SENCOs 19 were managed by headteachers and seven by a variety of people (Cowne, 2005). Of the 174 primary school SENCOs 23 felt well supported and 35 felt they required more support from SLT (Cowne, 2005). None of the secondary SENCOs felt satisfied with the support they received, though four felt they had a supportive relationship with management (Cowne, 2005). Research by Oldham and Radford (2011) supports the findings and suggest secondary school SENCOs

viewed headteachers as an empowering force. Only one SENCO criticised senior staff (Oldham & Radford, 2011).

Tissot (2013) found that if a SENCO was not in an authority lead role they were given administrative tasks, suggesting senior staff do not view SENCOs as providing a strategic focus and vision, which is part of their role as defined by the current SEND COP (2015). Although SENCOs may hold a place on SLT, it is arguably key stakeholders (teachers, teaching assistants and headteachers etc.) perception of the role and involvement in supporting SEN which impacts the effectiveness of the SENCO role.

### **2.8.5 Summary of the literature review question: what does the literature tell us about SENCO role within the school system?**

The literature review revealed that SENCOs position within schools and whether they are on SLT varies across contexts. Tissot (2013) found SENCOs who worked with younger children were more likely to be on SLT, it is important to note they often held additional responsibilities such as deputy headteacher which could be why they are placed on SLT.

Most research suggests SENCOs recognise the importance of being on SLT and the benefits it provides in creating a focus for inclusive practice (Smith & Broomhead, 2019; Szwed, 2007a; Szwed, 2007b; Tissot, 2013). Smith and Broomhead (2019) noted SENCOs were enabled to be more effective when on SLT, but also commented on the contradictions. Curran (2019) suggests SENCOs who were not on SLT did not perceive this to be a barrier to them carrying out their role. A trusted relationship between SLT and SENCOs is noted as important (Oldham & Radford, 2011; Szwed, 2007a; Tissot, 2013).

## **2.9 Summary of the Literature Review**

The literature review suggests SENCOs have core values and ideologies of inclusivity driving their motivation to support children with SEN. SENCOs within the research were identified as having a sense of resilience as they stayed within their role and remained motivated to ensure the best outcomes for CYP.

Research highlighted the complexity of the SENCO role in terms of responsibilities and additional roles they might hold. SENCOs across the research referred to working at a strategic level which is consistent with how the role is conceptualised within the SEND COP (2015). The introduction of the SEND COP (2015) has involved SENCOs management of parent and professionals' misconceptions in the EHCP process, whilst also facing challenges of lack of funding and increased accountability.

Factors identified as enabling the SENCO role included: retention of SENCOs including personal attributes (such as being interested in how learners learn, integrity and being optimistic), working with professionals and parents and being part of SLT. Constraining factors included difficulties being on SLT or not, national changes, lack of time and the emotional impact of the role. If the SENCO was on SLT they were likely to have more control over resources and opportunities to create strategic change. SENCOs roles on SLT was also often found to be influenced by senior members of staff.

### **2.9.1 Implications for this research**

Pearson et al. (2015) considered SENCOs predictions of their role in response to the introduction of the SEND COP (2015). Boesley and Crane (2018) and Curran (2019) looked specifically at SENCOs experience of the SEND COP 2015. Smith and Broomhead (2019) considered more generally SENCOs experiences following

legislative changes. I propose to extend the literature by using a psychosocial approach focusing on primary school SENCOs. A psychosocial methodology recognises individual's experiences by applying psychoanalytic theory to reveal unconscious and conflicting factors and attend to the transference and countertransference in research (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Joffe & Else, 2014). Transference is the notion of an individual carrying past experiences with them and this unconscious material being imposed onto other interactions (Loshak, 2003). In this research this could be considered in how past relationships of the participant or myself are replicated in the interaction. Whilst countertransference refers to an individual recognising and thinking about projections (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In research this can support my understanding of what is happening between me and the participant (Parker, 2010).

Whilst previous literature has explored SENCOs responsibilities, Smith and Broomhead (2019) argue it is important to continually reflect on the SENCO role. Primary school SENCOs were identified as relevant participants because my interest in this area originated from a Primary school SENCO referring to the notion of 'fighting fires' in their role. My experience as a TA in primary schools means I have an awareness of the context. Primary school SENCOs were selected because the current national focus in legislation is inclusive practice and early intervention, which primary schools are well placed to implement (noted in section 1.10). The research noted that primary school SENCOs often hold additional roles, which suggests an increased pressure to balance their demands to carry out the SENCO role.

A psychosocial approach is deemed appropriate because the literature to date has predominantly used methods such as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Mackenzie (2012) applied a narrative method and Evans (2013) applied

psychoanalytic concepts to provide an insight into the emotive aspect of the role.

Evans (2013) analysis lacks evidence of a clear approach taken. This research aims to use psychosocial research methods, thematic analysis and the application of psychoanalytic theory to interpret the data and extend previous knowledge to answer the following research question:

**‘What do Primary School SENCOs talk about when they are asked about their experience of being a SENCO?’**

The next chapter will discuss my ontological and epistemological position, the methodological approach and issues pertaining to validity and ethics.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter Introduction**

Chapter 2 reviewed previous literature and identified a rationale for the current study. This chapter will discuss the ontological and epistemological position taken, the methodological approach and method of analysis. Finally, I will discuss issues pertaining to validity and quality in qualitative research and ethical considerations relevant to the study.

### **3.2 Research Aims**

The research aim is to explore what primary school SENCOs discuss in relation to their experience of the role in the current context. The exploratory purpose was appropriate because I did not hold specific hypotheses about what themes or narratives would emerge. My hypothesis rested on the belief psychosocial processes related to the SENCO experience could be illuminated. It is hoped the subjective experiences of SENCOs will be made visible through the research process. Knowledge and awareness generated by the research may provide insight into SENCOs experiences since the SEND COP (2015) and the support SENCOs may find beneficial. The research findings may inform ways professionals, such as EPs, work with SENCOs.

### **3.3 Research Question**

**‘What do Primary School SENCOs talk about when they are asked about their experience of being a SENCO?’**

I feel it is important as a researcher to work with what the participants bring and to reduce the chances of limiting how I may influence their responses. Holding in

mind Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.155) I constructed the research question to be open-ended to understand the SENCOs' experiences through free association.

### **3.4 Ontology**

An individual's understanding of the world and therefore how they see the world is referred to as the paradigm of ontology (Matthews, 2003). Grix (2010) argues an individual's ontological position is implicit before starting research because it represents the person's view of how they see the world. The ontological questions I raised about the SENCO experience of their role was the starting point of developing a belief system about how knowledge can be seen, which led to my approach for this research. To understand my own ontological perspective I considered 'what is there to know?' and 'what is the nature of reality?' (Willig, 2013).

This research is based on a psychosocial ontology considering both social and psychological realities which interact impacting upon individuals, and in turn, individuals shape social and psychological realities (Hollway & Froggett, 2013). A psychosocial ontology recognises this interactive and intersubjective process is unique to each individual and their context. It also acknowledges the role of researcher within the process and interpretation of data (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). I recognise that my own experiences and constructs influence the research process and the relational experience during the interviews.

### **3.5 Epistemology**

A psychosocial ontology lends to a psychosocial epistemology which is applied in this research (Hollway & Froggett, 2013, Hollway, 2015). Psychosocial epistemology is a model allowing the researcher to notice and consider how the participants impact them and how they impact the participants to provide an insight into the participants real, lived experiences.

My training on the Tavistock and Portman Child, Community and Educational Psychology course and previous academic experiences has exposed me to psychoanalytic concepts, societal and cultural factors which impacts how I interpret what I see and experience. I am interested in an individual's lived experience and how this may be informed by psychosocial experiences through life. An individual's narrative is shaped by the interplay between influences on the individual in relation to the 'other' (relational) and 'others' (social) (Hollway & Froggett, 2013; Lorenzer, 1986, cited in Bereswill, Morgenroth & Redman, 2010 p.31). This means each SENCOs narrative is uniquely constructed, as is my world view. What I attend to as researcher and how I attend to it will be shaped by my own psychosocial experiences.

A psychosocial ontology and epistemology are congruent with a psychosocial methodological approach. It acknowledges the researcher is required to recognise their own individual background and experiences as well as those of the participant, to try and get as close to their world as possible (Hollway, 2011).

### **3.6 Qualitative Research Methods**

As identified in Chapter 2, existing research into the SENCO role at primary and secondary school level, involved questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews or semi-structured interviews on their own. One piece of research took a narrative approach to interviews (Mackenzie, 2012) and another applied psychoanalytic concepts to explore the experience of SENCOs (Evans, 2013). Research by Evans (2013) was prior to the SEND COP (2015). This research aimed to extend the literature to consider primary school SENCOs experience of their role since legislative changes in 2015.

The data I sought to answer my research question (section 3.3) was most likely to emerge from qualitative data collection and analysis. A qualitative approach to research places an emphasis on understanding ‘what it is like’ for people to experience a particular condition (in the case of this research, the role of SENCO) (Willig, 2013). It also allows in-depth insights into psychological processes to capture the lived experiences of participants (Elliot, 2011).

### **3.7 Psychosocial Methodologies**

As noted in Chapter 1 and 2 I have selected a psychosocial method to explore the experience of primary school SENCOs. Psychosocial studies have informed new methodological approaches to qualitative research and include approaches such as free association and biographical interview techniques (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

Other qualitative methods may take the narrative provided in interviews at face value and do not consider the unconscious interpretation (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) recognise psychosocial research places emphasis on the relationship between inner and outer worlds, arguing that one cannot be understood without the other. Psychological, sociological and cultural aspects are considered as interdependent and influence the relationships, feelings and actions of an individual (Clarke & Hogget, 2009).

A psychosocial research method recognises how theoretical intersubjectivity impacts production and analysis of data. There is emphasis on the ‘reflexive practitioner’ and need to sustain ‘critical self-reflection on methods and practice, to recognise emotional involvement’ (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p.7). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) critique the notion of ‘bias’ in qualitative research, arguing the researcher’s subjectivity should be used to capture and make sense of data.

Psychosocial methods allow the researcher to make use of their own biography as a reflexive tool alongside their emotional responses, which other qualitative and interview-based methods do not acknowledge.

I decided a psychosocial approach was appropriate for this research because the literature to date predominantly includes questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Taking a psychosocial methodological approach encourages participants to freely share their experiences with less direction from myself and allows exploration of the unconscious processes present in the data. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 has applied psychoanalytic concepts (e.g. Evans, 2013) but has not used a psychosocial method which this research applies to expand on current literature.

### **3.7.1 Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM)**

BNIM is one methodology I considered allowing for exploration into the 'lived experience of individuals and collectives' (Wengraf, 2008 p.1). It considers the conscious and unconscious processes (Wengraf & Chamberlayne, 2006). BNIM is relevant for psycho-dynamic and socio-dynamic approaches because it considers the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds and how they interact throughout a person's history (Wengraf, 2008). Emphasis is not placed on any theoretical approach so an interaction between the psychological understanding and sociological understanding can be considered (Wengraf, 2008).

BNIM involves 3 sub sessions (Wengraf, 2008):

1. Single question aimed at inducing narrative (SQUIN)- Singular question used at the start of the interview to allow the interviewee to freely talk about their experiences.

2. Particular incident narrative (PIN)- Using the 'cue phrases' identified in the interviewees response to the SQUIN, questions are asked to identify PIN. For example, “*Can you remember a particular [x]...how it all happened*”. During their response, notes are made of the cue-phrases in their response (Wengraf, 2008).
3. Non-narrative questions- If after analysing the data from sub session 1 and 2 there are further questions, a more semi-structured interview could be used.

Sub sessions 1 and 2 are usually carried out on the same occasion with a break in between. Sub session 3 is considered as an optional follow up interview providing the opportunity to answer further questions which do not have to be narrative in nature.

BNIM analysis is a two-track interpretation procedure identifying the biographical data (objective life events) and how the interviewee chose to tell their story in the interview (Wengraf, 2008). The data is initially looked at in chunks forming hypotheses for each track of analysis (Wengraf, 2008). The chunks of biographical data are presented to an interpretive panel to gain alternative perspectives of analysis (Wengraf, 2008). Once hypotheses are created for each data track of analysis, they are brought together to consider linking structural hypotheses which could relate the biographical data to the telling of the story data (Wengraf, 2008). This results in the researcher producing a ‘case account’. The focus during the analysis is in the sociological context in the participants narrative and how this interacts with their lived experience (Gabb, 2009).

BNIM complements a psychosocial approach focusing on the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds of an individual’s story. I have chosen not to use BNIM because it

emphasises the participants whole biographical lived experience. I am interested in the SENCOS' experiences within their role, and though previous experiences may be relevant I do not seek to gain the whole lived experience.

### **3.7.2 Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI)**

An alternative psychosocial method approach, and the one taken in this research, is FANI. This was created by Hollway and Jefferson (2000) to understand participants when their experiences and associated meaning are influenced by both their 'inner' world (psyche) and their experiences of their 'outer' world (social).

The FANI proposes four key principles enabling participants to share their 'meaning frame' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, pp. 32-34):

1. Open-ended questions
2. Elicit stories
3. Avoid 'why' questions
4. Following up respondents' ordering and phrasing

Free association approach through open-ended questions is thought to elicit a narrative characterised by emotional motivations rather than rational intentions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Asking an open-ended question is thought to elicit the participants own 'meaning frame', rather than using a closed or leading question which would not truly reflect their views (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) second principle 'elicit stories' refers to links with the psychoanalytic concept of free association. Using open-ended questions and phrases such as 'tell me about your experience of X', participants can freely share their narrative. The participants are encouraged to engage in a flow of talk whilst the researcher actively listens. Considering why participants choose to tell certain things

and not others reveals information and allows consideration of psychoanalytic principles such as splitting, projection, transference and countertransference (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) draw upon Melanie Klein's theories of psychoanalysis regarding defences against anxiety suggesting conflicts in the psyche impact on the positioning of subjects and discourses they choose to share. Participants attempts to defend against anxieties are seen by exploring inconsistencies, avoidances, change of themes and contradictions within the interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Splitting is defined by Klein (1946; Waddell, 2002) as a form of unconscious defence against anxiety. In the early stages of infancy when the infant is unable to anticipate the satisfaction of feeding, Klein (1946) suggested the infant engages in splitting to manage their frustrations by preserving the mother as 'good', from the feeling of hunger when they experience the absent mother as 'bad' (Klein, 1988; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Initially the infant sees the 'good' and 'bad' as separate, over time they can integrate both to create whole (Hinshelwood, 1995). Klein (1988) described the ability to hold both in mind as the 'depressive position'. The 'paranoid-schizoid position' is when splitting and projection occurs.

Projection is the development of splitting, involving parts of the self seen as 'bad' split off and located in or identified as belonging to another person (Klein, 1988). The FANI method describes participants and researchers as 'defended', meaning 'defended positions' may be taking up in narratives driven by unconscious motivators which affect their position and avoidance of certain discourses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This reflects the concepts of splitting and projection as defined by Klein (1988). I viewed SENCOs as potentially defended given their responsibility

within schools, the level of pressure and scrutiny schools are exposed to and potential difficulties in talking about feelings such as vulnerability or stress.

Transference refers to an individual carrying emotional histories from past interactions which are unconscious and can influence other interactions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Within the FANI method transference is understood to aid thinking how past relationships of the participant or researcher may be replicated during the interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Whereas, countertransference refers to an individual making sense of projections experienced (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In psychosocial research countertransference supports the researcher to understand the interaction occurring during the interview and allow participant's internal world to be considered (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

The third principle Hollway and Jefferson (2013) advise is the avoidance of 'Why' questions as they can elicit intellectualised responses. If questions are asked with phrases such as 'How do you feel about X', then the response is more likely to be in the form of a narrative which the participant can attach meaning to (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

The final principle refers to using the respondents' (participants) ordering and phrasing. Using active listening skills and initially noting key narration points which can be followed up in the order they were shared (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). It is important when asking follow up questions they remain open-ended and use the participants words as much as possible so that the researcher is not offering interpretations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

The FANI method used by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) involved two interviews for each participant. The first interview provided an opportunity to ask

open-ended questions to elicit the participants narrative and establish a reading. The preliminary reading was reviewed to identify contradictions, inconsistencies avoidances and change of emotional tone (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The second interview, a week later, allowed follow up questions creating greater depth of narratives and exploring initial hypotheses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The second interview's questions were based upon the contradictions, avoidances or hesitations within the first interview's (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). A second interview allows a relationship to build between the interviewer and interviewee.

The psychosocial approach assumes an interpretive perspective which provides a means of sensitizing oneself, in mind and body, to the lived and experience which may not be voiced (Hollway, 2011). Analysis can involve drawing upon psychoanalytic principles and writing pen portraits (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Alternatively, due to the complexities of psychoanalytic interpretations other researchers may choose to carry out thematic analysis (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

### **3.7.3 Rationale FANI method**

I used the FANI for this research as it provided an appropriate psychosocial method of exploring the experiences of SENCOS. The opportunity to carry out two interviews allows for the initial narrative to be explored in greater depth to understand the inconsistency and avoidances within a participant's narrative. The FANI also allows for a context to be explored and does not require a whole biographical narrative like the BNIM. The FANI has more direct theoretical links with psychoanalytic interpretations which I used within a second layer of analysis (Gabb, 2009).

### 3.8 Selection of Participants

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to select participants:

- Hold the job title of SENCO or Inclusion Manager. For the purposes of this research both role titles were accepted as the shift in role title name reflects the current working context (Chapter 1).
- Must be working in a mainstream primary school. The term 'Primary School' refers to Infant schools (children aged 5 to 7 or 8 years old) (Key Stage 1), Junior schools (children up to aged 11 or 12 years old) (Key Stage 2) and schools which run across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (combined Infant and Junior School). The original idea for the research was initiated by a SENCO in an Infant school describing their role which led to a focus to explore other individual experiences within primary contexts. Primary schools are also well placed to provide intervention (Chapter 1). Research with primary school SENCOs allows an exploration of the impact upon increased interventions on the experience of being a SENCO.
- Worked for at least one year within the role at their current school to ensure they had experience of the role and could be applicable to their understanding within their current working context.
- Can hold dual roles as teachers or deputy headteachers to ensure a breadth of participant's experiences. Information about their dual role was recorded in the participant information sheet. Holding a dual role was felt to be acceptable as the literature review identified SENCOs may hold additional roles (Chapter 2).

- Are not required to hold the NASENCO qualification. This was decided to ensure a range of participants who may have been working as a SENCO before the NASENCO was introduced.

### **3.9 Recruitment of Participants**

SENCOs working in primary schools within the LA were initially contacted via email inviting them to participate. Information emailed included: research information sheet for and consent form for participants, participant information sheet, research information sheet and consent form for headteachers (Appendix G). Headteachers provided consent to approve involvement of the school and SENCO. Email was chosen being time efficient and the predominant method I used to contact schools. To reduce the risk of over recruitment of participants emails were sent in phases. I contacted SENCOs I worked with previously and SENCOs whom I had been provided contact details from other EPs in the team. I felt it was acceptable to involve SENCOs I have a previous working relationship with because it aids reflections upon application to real life practice. As a courtesy to other teams within the LA I discussed the research with the Children Services Manager.

Recruitment resulted in three SENCOs from three mainstream primary schools being recruited. I attempted to recruit more SENCOs as I was aiming between three to six participants. Although two additional SENCOs agreed they then decided they did not have the time available. Information about the SENCOs involved in the research can be found in the Appendix H. The in-depth nature of the psychosocial interviews meant I kept the number of participants manageable to for theoretical reasons and to ensure a feasible amount of data to analyse, whilst still providing a range of perspectives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This is in line with Joffe and Elsey's (2014) narrative interview approach which has a tendency for smaller

numbers of participants. Previous research supports my sample size as Pellegrini (2010) explored the application of psychodynamic concepts in EP practice by referring to two case studies.

### **3.10 Data Collection**

As outlined in section 3.7.2 the FANI method (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) was used. Interviews were carried out on a one to one basis across two occasions. For each participant interviews were no more than two weeks apart. Example transcripts can be seen in Appendix I and J.

Participants were offered the choice for interviews to take place at the school or LA building. All participants opted for interviews to take place in their school. Participants were informed that the initial interview may take an hour, depending upon what they wanted to discuss. Participants were told the second interview could be slightly shorter as it was a follow up, though this again would depend on the length of time they spoke.

At the start of the first interview I provided the participant with a summary of the research ensuring they were reminded of what they were consenting to. I reassured participants there were no right or wrong answers and that it was a space for them to share their experience.

In the first interview, following a summary of the participant information sheet, I started with the question ‘Tell me what it’s like to be a SENCO?’ I drew upon techniques created by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and Joffe and Elsey (2014) such as encouragement, parroting (using the participant’s own words to encourage further information) and asking ‘can you tell me more about X’ until they had nothing further to say.

The principles aimed to empower my participants and facilitate exploration of personally meaningful constructs. Techniques enabled me to clarify the participants' thinking, through summarising and reflecting my understanding of what I thought they were telling me. At the end of the first interview I checked with the participant how they felt it had gone and reminded them that we had a second interview to follow up our discussions. I also wrote my scenic understanding notes from the interview (Appendix K).

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest the second interview allows an exploration of 'hypotheses' which arise from the first interview and allows the participant to express their views relating to the first interview. I transcribed looking for inconsistencies and contradictions which I could use to inform second interview questions. The questions for the second interview aimed to elicit topics which appeared to cause conflict in the first interview narrative (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

At the start of the second interview I asked participants if there was anything they had thought about from the previous interview (Appendix L). At the end I asked if they would like to comment on their experience of the process. To ensure ethical practice, I checked if there was information, they did not want me to use in the analysis and shared contact points for support in case there was anything discussed which caused them distress.

### **3.10.1 Data capture method**

Interviews were audio recorded and transferred to a password protected laptop. Hollway & Jefferson (2000) recommends that interviews are transcribed by the researcher to ensure they are immersed in the data. I transcribed the data in order

to develop an understanding of key themes. All words and sounds such as hesitations, pauses and cut off speech were recognised as important pieces of data from a psychoanalytic lens. Writing down field notes and my scenic understanding straight after the interviews allowed me to recall non-verbal cues such as changes in body language or facial expressions.

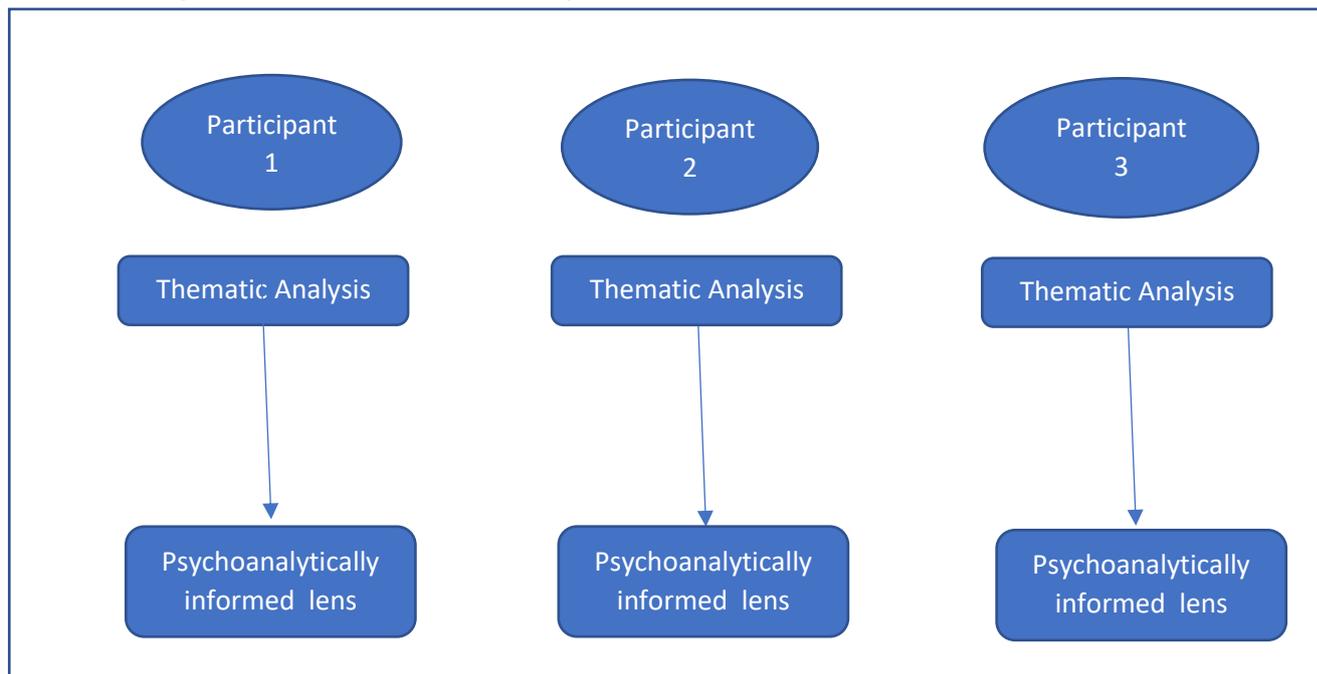
### **3.10.2 Reflexivity**

It was important I kept research and reflexive field notes throughout the interview process. These notes engaged with my own subjectivity and emotional work of the research (Elliott, Ryan, & Hollway, 2012). I made notes before and after each interview and throughout the process of analysing the data. The notes enabled a reflection on interactions within the interviews (Hollway, 2015) including my own subjective responses, what it means for the participant, and information about my own insights and blind spots (Elliot, 2011).

### **3.11 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was carried out at two levels ensuring prominent patterns could be identified and coherence with a psychosocial approach. The first level of analysis carried out was thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), aiming to provide key patterns within the data which emerged inductively. The second stage of analysis was psychoanalytically informed at the latent level to recognise the interplay between the external and internal worlds (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). It could also be considered deductive because I applied psychoanalytically informed concepts using 'scenic understanding' (Lorenzer, 1986 cited in Bereswill et al., 2010 p.31).

*Figure 1: Flowchart of data analysis*



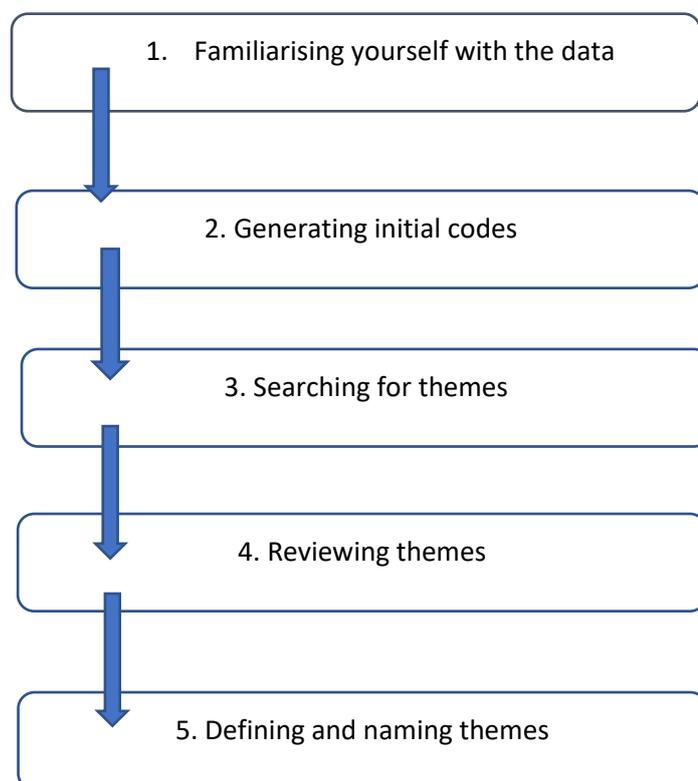
### **3.11.1 Thematic analysis**

I used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) because it is not linked to an epistemological stance, meaning it is theoretically flexible and could be used in conjunction with the psychosocial method taken. It allows participants experiences to be analysed by identifying the most prominent patterns of meaning within the data, without placing an emphasis upon the strength of frequency (Joffe, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) recognise that thematic analysis considers the role of the researcher in identifying patterns within the data, suggesting the importance of my reflective stance and use of supervision. Recognising how I may influence the codes and themes within the data reinforces a psychosocial epistemology and psychosocial ontology, acknowledging the role of researcher in relation to the production of knowledge. I took an inductive approach to code the data because it is an exploratory study aiming to develop an understanding from the content of the data. I initially looked at individual participants to understand themes within their own narratives, before

highlighting some commonalities which arose from all participants. The exploration of commonalities did not state to generalise experiences, rather highlight aspects which appeared to be prominent.

The data was analysed by following Braun and Clarke (2006) 5 phases of thematic analysis to identify key themes (Figure 2.).

*Figure 2:* Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)



In phase one I immersed myself in the data by listening to the audio recordings and reading through the transcripts. Transcribing data was important to ensure familiarity and enabled me to make notes around patterns and points of interest. It was important to consider each data set as a whole to identify patterns or inconsistencies. My field notes enabled me to notice my emotional responses which occurred during and after the interview.

In phase two codes and subsequent themes were created inductively from the data. I used MAXQDA software to support my data analysis creating codes and subsequent themes. To ensure codes were data driven I re-read the transcripts to check the codes created.

In phase three codes were grouped into themes and subthemes. Themes were identified based upon how relevant they were to the research question and frequency was not a main reason for determining a theme or subtheme. I used 'post-it' notes as an additional approach to explore how subthemes could be related to overarching themes.

Phase four enabled me to step back and reconsider the themes I had created. I took themes I had identified to supervision to discuss potential alternatives. Having a different perspective enabled me to consider alternatives and avoid restricting my analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.22) state phase 5 involves naming themes and identifying 'the "essence" of each theme to determine what aspect of the data each theme 'captures'. I have written a description for each theme to illustrate the findings and demonstrate a clear process of analysis.

Finally, I wrote the themes into a narrative to represent the data, which is presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.11.2 Psychoanalytically informed analysis**

To provide coherence across the research, a psychoanalytically informed analysis was carried out. A psychoanalytic lens recognises the interplay between external and internal worlds (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). It ensures meaningful data is not lost by allowing different parts of the text to be related to each other and the identification of

any contradictions and unusual or disjointed language. Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.69) carried out a psychosocial method and analysis when completing a case study:

- Information provided in the text
- The free associations made by the individual linking pieces of information
- Shared cultural assumptions between the interviewer and interviewee
- Application of sociological knowledge
- Application of psychoanalytic knowledge

The process described provides an idea of how narratives can create a psychosocial account. Although the FANI approach incorporates both psychological and social dimensions in the analysis, it is subject to the influence of the researcher. My analysis considered the impact of the defended subject and applied existing psychological theories to generate hypotheses based upon what was emerging from the data.

To develop psychoanalytically informed interpretation of each narrative I applied the concept of ‘scenic understanding’ informed by the work of Lorenzer (1986) (cited in Bereswill et al., 2010, p. 31; Hollway & Froggett, 2013, p. 141). The scenic approach draws parallels with the Tavistock and Portman Infant Observation method which I have experienced in my training as a TEP (Hollway & Froggett, 2013, p. 146). Both approaches encourage narrative to be written descriptively connected to the physical and emotional process (Hollway, 2011; Hollway & Froggett, 2013). The use of a scenic understanding recognises the affective qualities of an interaction and enables the researcher’s experience to be considered by others (Froggett & Hollway, 2010). I have created ‘scenic understanding’ accounts for each of the interviews and condensed these into extracts. Sharing my experiences with my supervisor, and a

psychoanalytically informed supervision group provided an opportunity to consider the meanings of my response and compare them to the experience of participants (Bereswill et al., 2010). It is important to recognise that taking this approach does bring the potential for over interpretation (Wengraf, 2001). However, this is not exclusive to psychosocial methods. Taking a psychosocial approach recognises the defended researcher and how this may impact qualitative analysis (Garfield, Reavey, & Kotecha, 2010).

### **3.12 Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Due to the nature of this study being qualitative and exploratory I am unable to claim that there is reliability, objectivity, or generalisability. To ensure the research was robust I followed Yardley's (2000; 2011) principles of validity for qualitative research:

- Sensitivity to context
- Commitment and rigour
- Transparency and coherence
- Impact and importance

#### **3.12.1 Sensitivity to context**

In the introduction (Chapter 1) I have outlined national and local context relevant to social cultural context of SENCOs to situate the research. I subsequently carried out a systematic literature review into the experience of SENCOs (Chapter 2) to critique literature currently available. I applied exclusion and inclusion criteria to ensure relevant papers were critiqued. One of the exclusion criteria was the research must have been carried out in England to ensure relevance to the context of the SENCOs I carried out my research with.

The method of free association ensured sensitivity to participant's views and their context. Using prompting, active listening and parroting techniques I encouraged participants to share their narrative in greater depth alongside pen portraits. Using open-ended questions allowed participants to share their experiences. A psychosocial method also allowed me to reflect upon my own experiences and influence as part of the interview process and analysis. I used a reflexive diary, individual supervision and group supervision to support my reflections.

### **3.12.2 Commitment and rigour**

To carry out the data collection and analysis process I took a systematic approach and recorded steps taken and decisions made in a research diary log. I referred to the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) to aid my planning of interviews and forming questions in my second interviews.

During the data collection and analysis process I sought individual and group supervision to ensure reflexivity. A psychosocial method of data collection analysis is something relatively new in EP research and I felt it could provide a different insight into the existing body of literature around SENCOs experiences. I have ensured rigour by taking clear steps for my analysis and application of psychological theory.

### **3.12.3 Transparency and coherence**

I have created coherence within my research by ensuring the methodological choices fit with the research question (refer to section 3.3). The research question aimed to be exploratory and understand perspectives of SENCOs and therefore the FANI method applied elicited the perspectives of participants (refer to section 3.7.2 and 3.7.3).

Yardley (2000) states reflexivity is important to ensure transparency and involves the researcher acknowledging their own experiences.. I kept a reflexive diary throughout the research process, which has included my thoughts and feelings before and after interviews. I have also demonstrated reflexivity by considering how I may have influenced the data collection and analysis process through my interaction with the participants. To aid my thinking I shared my field notes and scenic understanding in individual and group supervision to develop a psychoanalytic understanding of the interviews and data. Using different supervision spaces enabled me to develop a triangulation of ideas to support the validity of my data (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

#### **3.12.4 Impact and importance**

Findings in qualitative research can be considered relevant without the need for generalisability because it identifies an experience which exists in society (Willig & Rogers, 2017). The findings of this study are based upon experiences of the participants involved. I have collected information about the participants (Appendix H) to understand their context and aid interpretations.

I expected the research would provide professionals working with SENCOs, and the systems the SENCOs work within, an understanding of the SENCO experience in the current education context. An increased understanding could then be used to develop support which may be helpful. The research could inform EP practice in terms of how they can form effective working relationships with SENCOs.

#### **3.13 Ethical Considerations**

I carefully considered ethical practice in line with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) and sought formal ethical approval

from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust Research Ethics Committee (Appendix M).

Information sheets and consent forms were provided for SENCOs and headteachers of their school (Appendix G). Before interviews all participants were provided with the opportunity to discuss the research. Signed consent forms from SENCOs and headteachers and participant information sheets were collected. Participants were informed in the consent forms and verbally that they had the right to withdraw up to the point of data analysis when all information was anonymised.

I considered the power differentials between myself and the SENCOs and reassured them that what they shared would not impact upon the services they receive from the EPS. I also reiterated that my role was as a researcher in the context, not the link TEP. During the interviews I ensured ethical interviewing by using active listening to demonstrate honesty and respect (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

At the end of each interview I debriefed participants by checking how they experienced the process and what the next steps were. Participants were asked if there was anything they did not want to be included in the analysis. Following the second interview I asked if they would like to receive the findings and if so, whether this was preferable via email or to meet in person. I signposted participants to relevant resources if required (for example, LA SENCO forums or the NASEN). All SENCOs opted to be interviewed in their respective schools. I made sure I was aware of a point of contact in the school whom I could speak to if concerns arose during the interviews regarding the SENCOs safety or of those they work with.

I informed participants that all information would be anonymised, and a pseudonym used in the write up of the research, meaning they would be deidentified.

However, due to the small sample size I, the researcher, would be able to identify them as I would be handling the data. I assured participants that I would store their information securely and confidentially and informed them how their data would be used.

To ensure ethical practice and support of my own wellbeing, I used one to one research supervision and supervision groups as a reflective space. Bringing concerns and queries to supervision provided opportunities to discuss steps which needed to be taken. A participant (Parveen) in their first interview shared their experience of a medical emergency, which she felt was contributed to by the stresses of her role. During the interview and at the end I directed her to the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN), a charity which supports professionals who work with children who have special educational needs. I also checked whether there was a key staff member in school who she could speak to. I was aware she had support from the school link EP. To ensure ethical practice I sought research supervision to understand additional steps I should take. It was agreed with my research supervisor that it would be appropriate in the second interview to sensitively ask questions in a way which allowed her to share her experience if she felt she wanted to. In the second interview it was important to acknowledge Parveen's experience. Parveen shared more about their experience. I redirected her to NASEN and at the time she felt she did not require additional support. I also gained Parveen's consent to speak to the school link EP to ensure a support system continued to be in place if needed. The school link EP reassured me they were aware of the SENCOs experience and had previously supported them.

## **Chapter 4. Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction to Chapter**

This chapter includes:

- Description of themes and sub themes identified through thematic analysis and supported by anonymised extracts from participants' accounts.
- Psychoanalytic reflections in the form of excerpts from the use of scenic understanding and reflexive notes.

Appendix N provides an overview of themes, subthemes, related codes, example quotes and psychoanalytically informed reflections. Appendix O provides evidence of using MAXQDA.

Reviewing each SENCO separately recognises the individual experience. Pen portraits provide information on the SENCOS' background. I acknowledge my relationship with the SENCOS. Reflexive notes and scenic understanding acknowledge my role as researcher in the process.

### **4.2 Samantha pen portrait**

Samantha is a SENCO in a mainstream school from nursery to year 6. Prior to being a SENCO, she had always wanted to work with children with SEN. After teacher training, she worked in a mainstream school and a school for children with severe complex needs. Samantha is relatively new to the role of SENCO and has completed the NASENCO award. I have worked with Samantha in my role as TEP, something I acknowledge and reflect upon.

### **4.3 Samantha: Thematic Analysis**

The findings for Samantha identified themes and subthemes which are included in Appendix P.

### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Multifaceted nature of the SENCO role**

Samantha referred to different aspects of the SENCO role highlighting the diversity and multifaceted nature of the role.

#### ***4.3.1.1 Perception of SENCO role***

Samantha felt it was important to highlight the difference between how she sees the title ‘SENCO’ compared to the ‘Inclusion Manager’ title she was initially offered by the school. She perceived the Inclusion Manager role as having more responsibilities:

*“Urm....I felt that role has got so big that if you put it under the inclusion umbrella you're including pupil premium, you're including gifted and talented, you're including urm English as an additional language.” (S1/90-92)*

Samantha referred to the difference between the SENCO and class teachers’ roles.

She felt the headteacher did not see the SENCO remit to include work such as teaching:

*“You know when our reception teacher was out the other day I said oh I’ll do it...But actually headteacher sometimes has to remind me that while you’re doing that you’re not doing your SENCO role.” (S2/235-237)*

#### ***4.3.1.2 Demands of SENCO role***

Samantha referred to the demands she faces and the unpredictable nature of the role:

*“I can’t predict [mhmm] what’s going to happen that day. Apart from things that are set in stone [mm]. But even then they can go...wobbly wobbly.” (S1/771-773)*

Samantha felt the balance between administrative tasks and direct work could be particularly difficult and referred to prioritising and list making as a key skill to develop:

*“But I do think it’s one of those roles that urm you have to manage your (pause) workload all the time...I think of it as the iceberg where you’re the tip [yeah] and*

*there's loads to be done underneath but you've got keep your priorities going."*  
(S1/114-117)

Administrative support has been particularly helpful for Samantha:

*"I've got an admin. One of the girls from nursery comes down three afternoons a week...Which is amazing. Because I was drowning in paperwork."* (S1/506-508)

During the interviews Samantha continually referred to the notion of time pressures and accountability of her time. Samantha noted it is difficult to account for unplanned time:

*"Yeah I still don't feel I'm 100% effective with my time. But then how do you. How can you be accountable. How hard to say actually I've listened to a member of staff for 45mins...Or like you know. I've spent time with a child for twenty minutes because they were having difficulties on the playground."* (S2/679-682)

Samantha appeared to refer to a need to keep improving, which perhaps reflects wider demands upon schools to demonstrate effectiveness.

#### **4.3.1.3 Management role**

Samantha referred to concepts suggesting she carries out tasks consistent with a management role. Samantha expressed a reluctance to delegate:

*"That's probably not always a good thing because you are meant to be able to delegate and manage. So that's not my strength (smile and look away)."* (S2/404-405)

As part of her experience being a SENCO Samantha referred to the deployment of staff and needing to think about how they are used appropriately:

*"Thinking about staffing and how children are getting the benefits or to meet their needs."* (S2/139-140)

#### **4.3.1.4 Recording SEN and statutory processes**

Samantha monitors the SEN register and has difficulties when there is a lack of information available about a child:

*“So I think some of the SENCO role is the detective work. In trying to find out..[yeah]..where this child’s come from. What support they’ve had before.”*  
(S1/376-377)

Samantha noted timescales of the EHCP process and creating Early Support Plans.

There is the sense she feels lucky to have success with EHCP applications:

*“I reflect back and think actually I did five EHCPs last year...Well they’ve all gone through [mm]. So I must be doing something right.”* (S2/591-593)

#### **4.3.1.5 Inclusive practice**

Samantha’s SENCO experience includes supporting inclusive practice by assisting staff to differentiate work. She provides feedback on weekly planning ensuring dialogue with staff about the support in place:

*“Ideally I expect to be copied into that weekly planning [yeah] so that I can see its happening [mm] And then I will comment against it. Not in a patronising way.”*  
(S2/165-167)

Samantha shared it can be difficult to balance how much differentiation should be her responsibility in comparison to an experienced class teacher:

*“And how much do you think actually this is an experienced teacher that is a year leader [mm] that had children with EHCPs before [mm]... But how much do you think okay actually I will just do it.”* (S2/160-162)

#### **4.3.1.6 Strategic work: whole school and staff development**

Other aspects of Samantha’s role can be considered as strategic practice. She shared her 5-year plan to manage her own expectations for the strategic vision she holds:

*“I do have a five year plan [mmm]. For my own sanity I know I can’t do it all in the first year [mmm]. So I have a vision of where I want to get to [mm]. And some of those that I’m going to need help to get there.” (S1/479-481)*

Samantha referred to involvement in projects and support from the LA as an important factor in developing school practice:

*“...doing loads of pilot schemes. Do it, review it move on to another one. But as SENCOs if we do it review it. There is no point unless we take the good bits from it.” (S2/637-639)*

Samantha raised concerns that she would not receive information if she was not involved:

*“But if I hadn’t done the pilot scheme...because all these good projects are going. Are happening. How are they being cascaded to everybody.” (S2/646-648)*

The strategic work Samantha carries out includes staff development. Appraisals and audits identify the needs of TAs. Samantha felt proud TAs had accessed LA training and additional courses focusing on SEMH. Samantha’s role requires her to cascade training throughout the school:

*“So for me I always come back from a training [mm], take out what I think is relevant... and then it may go to a teacher inset...so we’re all...communicating...the same.” (S1/187-191)*

#### **4.3.1.7 Direct work with children and promoting pupil voice**

Samantha noted the importance of children in her role, though she spends less time with them:

*“But as far as spending time with the children I don’t think I do that as much as I did [mm]. As a SEN teacher I ran the nurture groups...But it’s something I have to now let go of [okay]. Otherwise I would have to do that all the time [yes]. Then you would just do your paperwork at home.” (S2/217-221)*

Samantha felt it was important to have some contact working with children to ensure credibility for her role. She often referred to children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and understanding their perspective:

*“Thinking on your feet. Or trying to get into the child’s head really [mm]. Which is what you are trying to do with ASD children.” (S2/435-436)*

#### **4.3.1.8 Writing reports for school governors**

Samantha feels writing governors reports is an important part of her role because it reinforces staff achievements and communicates the school focus:

*“it’s really important [mm] because it’s my opportunity to communicate what we are doing as a team.” (S1/697-698)*

Although she may not always want to complete reports due to other pressures, she feels they are important:

*“There was a point though when I was really busy and I did say to headteacher I feel like saying to them sorry can’t send you a report this time too busy [mm]. But that was my sarcasm which is horrible... But I would never not do it [mm]. Because to me its really important. It’s the way of communicating..[mm]you know what we are doing [yeah]..So I suppose in a way it’s a bit like patting yourself on the back.” (S1/727-732)*

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Working relationships at different levels**

Talking about her experience Samantha referred to forming relationships and working with a range of people, including the positives and challenges.

##### **4.3.2.1 Disappointed by lack of communication from governors**

Samantha referred to difficulties of forming relationships with governors noting she does not see her link governor regularly:

*“the chair of governors...I’m not sure if I’m allowed to say this on here...but...I don’t get to see her that often [mm]. It would be nice to see her more often...maybe like once a term would be good.” (S1/ 664-667)*

Samantha expressed disappointment at the lack of feedback or acknowledgement:

*“But yeah they don’t ever come back and say [mm] thank you for the report [mm] or it was interesting to find out about that [yeah]. So I don’t get any feedback (said faster) [okay]...It’s not like I’m losing sleep about the fact they haven’t come back to me. I’m not angry with them about it [mm]...I like the word disappointed.” (S1/692-718)*

#### **4.3.2.2 Relationships with parents**

Samantha enjoys working with parents and described being honest and non-patronising as important:

*“I am also very honest with them. I wouldn’t promise something things I can’t deliver.” (S1/ 219-220)*

Samantha has set up groups which parents can attend to share experiences. Samantha is required to be knowledgeable about the services available to sign post appropriately. On one occasion Samantha went with parents to an ASD assessment. Samantha felt the experience helped her to understand parents experience and noted the professionals were pleased to have a SENCO involved in the process:

*“So and also I think for parents who get a new diagnosis it’s quite traumatic really. I went with a parent. I’ve never done that before. ...When they are receiving their diagnosis because I was worried as to... I was wondering how it would feel for you know. I wanted to be there to support them.” (S1/232-236)*

Samantha aims to share strategies and empower parents. She often referred to a partnership with parents when trying to put plans in place.:

*“Because I think it’s their ownership as well [yeah] it’s a partnership isn’t it. It’s parent and me and we’re both for the interest of the child [yeah mm] and I think that’s the important bit.” (S1/230-232)*

Samantha predominantly referred to the positive aspects of relationships with parents, she noted there are sometimes differences in SENCO and parent priorities:

*“It’s needs must isn’t it, and this little girl is high functioning. There’s no major concerns in class [mm] and they have things in place. But maybe I needed to have that conversation [mm] with the family.” (S1/333-336)*

Samantha felt she had let parents down if she was not able to meet their needs or had not explained her role clearly:

*“So their first question to me was, what does a SENCO do? [mm] What are you going to help us with? [yeah mm] urm where can we get help? [mm]...There were loads of questions.” (S1/288-290)*

#### **4.3.2.3 Positive relationship with SLT**

A key relationship Samantha referred to in her experience is that with SLT. Samantha noted differences in the support she currently receives compared to the lack from the previous deputy headteacher. Samantha repeatedly referred to the positive relationship she has with the headteacher and his recognition of her workload:

*“headteacher is very good. He doesn’t want to make, create more work if you’re already doing something so it’s something that we look at first (cough) and then we decide is it something our school would benefit from.” (S1/173-175)*

Samantha expressed a sense of feeling valued and appreciated by the headteacher:

*“So...in effect he protects my role [mm]. Which is a huge compliment because it means he recognises the importance of it [mm]. So that point is important.” (S2/799-801)*

#### **4.3.2.4 Respect from staff and teamwork**

Samantha felt it was important to build a relationship with school staff and gain respect by not asking others to do anything she would not do:

*“I don’t know I think people respect you more [mm]. I always said to people when I started work I wouldn’t ask someone to do something I wasn’t prepared to do myself. That was like my philosophy.” (S2/380-382)*

Samantha feels it is important to be part of a team and is grateful for support she receives:

*“I always see myself as part of a team [mmm]. I don’t see any hierarchy ever [mmm]. And I never will do.” (S1524-526)*

*“I am grateful for anyone that does anything [mmm]. I do appreciate it. And ultimately it’s helping us operate as a school.” (S1/542-543)*

Samantha makes herself available for anyone at any time and finds it difficult to prioritise her work:

*“Well at the bottom it says be prepared to do anything at any time [laugh] (laugh) for anybody. I do keep thinking I need to shut my office door. Put do not disturb on it and then I would get that. I would get so much more done.” (S2/691-796)*

#### **4.3.2.5 Male and female roles in school**

Samantha felt school staff might be more likely to come to her compared to the male members on SLT, suggesting a difference in roles within school:

*“I think a lot of the time supporting the personal side of the teachers as well. I don’t know whether that’s because we have a male head [mhmm], we have a male deputy head [okay]. And so I’m probably the only female apart from the welfare [mm] officer whose out of class.” (S1/421-425)*

Samantha suggested that the male headteacher had noticed a difference in school staff seeking her support more than him:

*“headteacher does understand. He does some time say why do they always come to you. But part of it I say is because I am the female.” (S2/604-605)*

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Supporting emotional wellbeing and resilience**

Samantha referred to the experience of supporting others emotional wellbeing as well as managing her own.

#### ***4.3.3.1 Parents and children wellbeing***

To ensure emotional wellbeing of parents and children Samantha noted the importance of listening to understand their view:

*“Because I think a lot of times if there’s a difficulty it’s because people feel like they haven’t been heard.” (S2/479-480)*

Samantha encourages children to express their feelings and develop resilience:

*“It’s still taking on board how to encourage children to talk so that they don’t bottle it up. And it’s about building up their resilience.” (S2/497-498)*

#### ***4.3.3.2 Staff wellbeing***

Samantha is mindful of how staff feel and has supported staff to stay working in school by prioritising their wellbeing over other demands:

*“Those couple of staff that have struggled to stay in school. I’ve kept them in school even if it means giving up some time.” (S2/596-597)*

Samantha feels it important to prioritise the emotional wellbeing of staff because this can impact upon their teaching:

*“So you know there are staff here who need support with other [yeah] issues, confidential issues. So...yeah my time is spent. And I think that’s really important (faster speaking). Because at the end of the day those teachers have got to be able to teach. So their wellbeing [mm] is as important.” (S1/424-427)*

Samantha provides staff with strategies to support their emotional wellbeing and creates a culture of it being ‘okay to not be okay’. She talked about a wellbeing day for staff and receiving positive feedback.

#### ***4.3.3.3 Resilience and management of stress***

Samantha referred to her emotional wellbeing and resilience. The headteacher describes her as resilient, something she is proud of:

*“I mean headteacher said to me oh well he feels I am one of those people that’s got a quite lot of resilience.” (S1/474-475)*

She feels resilience is important in the role to be able to cope with the demands:

*“for me personally it means about showing I’m not under pressure [yeah]. I am under pressure all the time [mm]. But I wouldn’t want to show that.” (S2/270-271)*

Samantha was unsure if she could identify stress in herself. She talked about the expectation that her role requires her to remain calm:

*“I don’t know if that’s because I don’t know how that feels. It probably feels that very occasionally I’m not going to get on top of this.” (S2/583-584)*

Ways that Samantha manages her wellbeing includes having a positive attitude, remembering how she has coped before, creating lists and plans:

*“5 year plan because for my own stress levels you can’t. I can’t do everything you want to do.” (S1/109-110)*

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Support networks**

Samantha referred to the need of support from the LA and other SENCOs.

##### ***4.3.4.1 Support from LA***

Samantha feels support from LA services has been integral to her success. Despite challenges the LA faces Samantha appreciates the support:

*“So I wouldn’t I wouldn’t be doing this role reasonably successfully without their support.” (S1/615-616)*

*“So...and I think...as much as we moan about them [slight laugh]. They are with what they’ve got doing their best.” (S1/612-614)*

Samantha referred to the opportunity to access free training. The importance of this type of support from services can be considered within the context of funding pressures placed upon schools.

#### ***4.3.4.2 SEN support in school***

In her role as SENCO Samantha makes the best of the support she has within school. However, she refers to the transient nature of staff, suggesting there is an element that although she is part of a team she can feel alone at times:

*“SEN teacher. She’s been here a year now... I think everyone’s got to be mindful of the fact that people leave, new people start, things change.” (S1/592-594)*

#### ***4.3.4.3 Support from SENCOs***

An integral support network Samantha referred to is being able to speak with other SENCOs. The support of other SENCOs could be across different contexts (e.g. SENCO forums, NASENCO Award training and network of school SENCOs). Samantha’s experience of the first SENCO forum she attended left her feeling uncertain about becoming a SENCO. However, she feels there has been a shift to a more productive agenda:

*“the last couple of years it’s been a lot more...right this is the agenda [mm]. These are things we are going to cover...And it’s much more shared positive experiences [okay]. Otherwise you would have gone there and thought, well I’m not going to last as a SENCO for very long because it’s very negative.” (S1/607-610)*

Samantha is part of a smaller school network of SENCOs meeting regularly outside of forums. She values time to meet with other SENCOs, though the pressures of workload make it difficult to arrange:

*“We have seven schools that are our learning network [okay] (sharp breath) and we when they all come together well actually there’s a time for the SENCOs to come together here.” (S1/143-145)*

Another form of support Samantha values is the network she has developed from the NASENCO training she has completed. This suggests the training supports SENCOs development and creates a wider support network.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Knowledge transfer and reflection**

Samantha referred to gaining knowledge to support her role. She mentioned the idea of comparison and how this influences her role.

##### ***4.3.5.1 Drawing upon experience from other roles***

When talking about being a SENCO Samantha referred to her previous roles and how this has influenced and developed her skills. She felt her previous experience in a mainstream school and teaching children with complex needs has helped her within the current setting.

Samantha’s volunteer role outside of school has supported the development of her listening skills. She feels better equipped to support the emotional wellbeing of staff:

*“And I’ve learnt in my volunteer role that sometimes people aren’t ready to talk [mm]. They aren’t ready to tell you.” (S2/492-493)*

##### ***4.3.5.2 Continuous learning and reflecting***

Samantha recognises the importance of learning alongside staff:

*“Mmm...well I think I used the phrase I don’t teach someone something I learn alongside them...” (S2/410-411)*

She feels it is important to draw upon other SENCOs knowledge, particularly those more experienced than her:

*“I think every time you get together with other SENCOs or listening to what other people are doing in their schools that’s where you learn.” (S1/132-134)*

To develop within the SENCO role Samantha notes the importance of reviewing practice:

*“But your..that’s constant isn’t it [mm yeah] you reflect on what you’ve done [mm] and what you do next.”(S1/357-358)*

#### **4.3.5.3 Comparison to other schools and SENCOs**

Samantha referred to notions of comparison and talked about how other systems deploy their TAs, suggesting an element of comparison influencing her reflections on practice:

*“you know it just keeps youuuu understanding what’s going on across the borough [mm] and it’s not blinkered just to this is what’s going on at our school [yeah]. I mean ultimately that’s what it is. BUT it’s bringing in those other ideas.” (S1/139-140)*

When Samantha talked about other SENCOs, she described them as having more in place and a desire to be in the same position as them. Samantha shared that she is trying to let go of comparing herself to others as this causes her to become stressed.

#### **4.4 Pen Portrait Jackie**

Jackie is a SENCO in a mainstream infant school from nursery to Year 2. She has been a SENCO for 20 years and in her current school 3 years. She holds three additional roles, one being assistant headteacher. Jackie holds the NASENCO award. She attends SENCO forums and a smaller network of SENCOs. I have a previous working relationship with Jackie in my role as TEP, which is something I acknowledge and reflect upon.

## 4.5 Jackie: Thematic Analysis

The findings for Jackie identified themes and a related subtheme within Appendix Q.

### 4.5.1 Theme 1: Multifaceted nature of SENCO role

This theme encompasses variety and breadth of the role and perceptions of the SENCO role from Jackie's perspective.

#### 4.5.1.1 Perception of SENCO role

Jackie became a SENCO to support children with SEN. Constantly improving and reviewing practice is important to ensure children's progress:

*"I think that's just it you never stop. I think as a SENCO you always want to be improving things and you want to see things develop." (J1/546-547)*

Jackie perceived the SENCO role as wide and varied and felt SENCOs should have teaching experience:

*"So I don't think it's a role you can do early on in your teaching career." (J1/29)*

As SENCO Jackie is often the first point of contact for parents and responsible for empowering and enabling the best for children with SEN:

*"So I think it is about the ability to represent those children at the top level of the school. Urm and ensure that they get the best." (J2/56-58)*

Positive feedback and seeing the difference her work has made motivates Jackie:

*"There isn't a day I think I don't want to come to work. And that's really lovely. I can honestly say there hasn't been one day in the last 4 years when I've woken up in the morning and thought I don't want to go." (J1/633-636)*

Jackie expressed differences between the SENCO role and class teacher. Class teachers are usually timetabled to work in class. Whereas, she faces constant

interruptions which disrupt her role. Staff expect her to be available and it is difficult to communicate to staff what the role entails:

*“There will be teachers who think what on earth is she doing all the time she doesn’t have a class... how do you reflect your role to other people [mm] so they know what you do.” (J2/212-215)*

Jackie compared her experience of being a SENCO to that of health professionals and other professionals she works with:

*“But they are often working with one child at a time one after the other. Whereas we’re often working with groups of children.” (J2/166-167)*

#### **4.5.1.2 Demands of SENCO role**

Jackie felt it was important to be flexible to manage the unpredictability and constant interruptions. She is often called upon because she is not classroom based so teachers perceive her to be more available. Jackie noted the difficulties of ensuring boundaries and described hiding to avoid interruptions:

*“I went and I hid in a corner of the school (slight laugh) [yeah] and I got this job done. And urm...anyway someone came into the. I was hiding in the library I wasn’t like you know majorly hidden [laugh]. Someone came into the library and said oh did so and so find you.” (J2/338-341)*

The impact of interruptions means Jackie often works longer hours:

*“And I would say that it’s a..there are a lot of demands [mm] in terms of what you do....because actually even with my office job. Inverted commas (laughing and smile) [laughing] I spend my day going out to sort out the child that’s screaming [yeah] and consequently the office work doesn’t get done until half past three and eight o’clock or whatever time it is.” (J1/211-215)*

She described her role as ‘fighting fires’ because she is unable to complete her work and often when something is in place there is a break and she must start again.

Sometimes Jackie wanted to get the fire started for the children so they could respond to interventions:

*“And what you need is the time to actually stoke it up and really get it going [mm]. But actually something like urm...Christmas comes along takes the oxygen away from it (laughs) [yeah]. And you’re left with a smouldering [yeah] keep smouldering [mm]. And in a sense you almost, for the children [mm] you want to get the fire going.” (J2/275-279)*

#### **4.5.1.3 Frustration of where time is spent**

Jackie shared her frustration regarding paperwork and meetings which distract from direct work with children and using her skills:

*“I think from a SENCO point of view actually that is very expensive in terms of my salary and what I am being paid to do... actually administration support would be really valuable.”(J2/9-22)*

Jackie talked about the need to find a balance between direct work and meetings. She shared her frustration attending meetings which have little impact:

*“And by having all these meetings are we taking away some of the education. I think it is important having plans of support. But more and more children need more meetings (sigh/laugh)...are we just talking about what we could do if we had that time available.” (J2/169-173)*

Jackie reflected on the pace of the school year and felt there is too much to do in a short space of time. She noted periods of the year are busier than others. Jackie wondered if two-year cycles of reviewing and submitting paperwork would be more effective:

*“I think perhaps as well because they tend to all be due at the same time. Because often all of these things tend to be required to do at the end of September. So that creates quite a...mammoth [mm] really busy time [mmm] and then consequently the other things get pushed. And then it builds up this cycle.” (J1/522-526)*

#### **4.5.1.4 SENCO role as leader**

Holding a leadership position of assistant headteacher alongside her SENCO role means Jackie is on SLT. Her leadership position provides authority and credibility to influence the practice of SEN. Jackie felt a leadership role allows her experience and skills to be applied. Without this position Jackie was concerned the focus on SEN would be lost:

*“And I think having that leadership position actually gives you the credibility in lots of ways. Actually saying to staff you do have to meet the needs of these children and it is important” (J2/47-49)*

Jackie drew comparisons between a parent working with a younger teacher and wondered if parents would feel more reassured working with a senior member of staff:

*“Because perhaps sometimes when they are with a younger teacher they will feel it’s because they are inexperienced that they don’t know what they are doing and they feel their child isn’t getting the best. Whereas if a parent came to someone who was in a more senior position and they say I don’t know, then it’s about working together....” (J2/100-104)*

The findings suggest Jackie’s experience of being a SENCO is that leadership reinforces her status to direct practice and influences staff and parents’ perceptions.

#### **4.5.1.5 Whole school influence and staff training**

Jackie feels her role influences the whole school focus of SEN. Jackie referred to numerous projects and interventions she has introduced and described the challenges of the accumulative effect:

*“And its hard to know actually well what’s not worth doing anymore...What can I stop doing so that I’ve got the time to do the new things [mm]...And I’m not sure I have.” (J1/566-567)*

She felt involving teachers was important in creating ideas, highlighting a collaborative whole school approach to SEN:

*“listening and bouncing ideas off one another [yeah] and that’s important. Because other teachers will have great ideas you can use [yeah]. Or. And then disseminate” (J1/259-261)*

To ensure a whole school approach to SEN Jackie has sought support from the EPS. She noted it can be difficult to persuade parents to consider alternatives to individual work and wondered how a child’s cognitive needs could be assessed at a whole school level. This suggests Jackie would value support to develop practice within the school:

*“whole staff training. I know this is one of the things EP advocates anyway. Actually has more impact and is more effective [mm] than individual reports about children... And I think as the Educational Psychology Service adapts and changes it will be good [mm]. But the hard thing is getting parents away from that.” (J2/444-450)*

Alongside the strategic overview of influencing SEN Jackie referred to the importance of training school staff dedicating regular time to training, which she feels staff appreciate:

*“That was really appreciated by the staff because I think if you can train your staff it gives them increased confidence [mm] and they feel valued you’re putting that effort into it [mm].” (J1/235-237)*

Jackie observes staff and provides feedback. She felt gaps in staff knowledge reinforced her role as SENCO to provide support on SEN:

*“Urm so recent training I did [mm] people were like ahh that’s wonderful. And yet I’m thinking...you know I really worried about sharing that [mm] because you know I don’t want to teach granny to suck eggs (slight laugh) [laugh]. But actually [mm]...urm...you know it was not stuff they were...were familiar with.” (J1/241-244)*

Jackie noted it can be difficult providing training to TAs due to time constraints and other competing demands.

#### ***4.5.1.6 Encouraging inclusive practice***

Jackie referred to the SEND COP (2015) and how SEN is everyone's responsibility and the need for high expectations of children. Through training and providing strategies staff can develop skills to support children with SEN:

*"Its like getting them to develop their independence and taking on the role of the fact that. As the code of practice says. SEN is all our responsibility. It's not mine."*  
(J1/611-613)

Jackie described teacher's initially requesting additional adult support when they were uncertain what to do. Instead Jackie has tried to encourage them to use strategies consistently over time. One-way Jackie encourages inclusive practice is by providing teachers with resources. To create resources Jackie has worked with other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs):

*"That often appears to be the teacher's first reaction. It's not about the different strategies they can put in it's not about urm changing things for the child to do things differently. It's but I need more adult support."* (J1/37-39)

*"That can be a useful trick if you like. To give them something on a plate because actually if you've done it for them they haven't got an excuse for not doing it then."*  
(J1/605-607)

When reflecting Jackie compared her SENCO experience within her current school and previous schools. Jackie felt 'fortunate' that in her current school there is a focus on SEN, so it is easier to encourage others. In previous schools she noted the challenges:

*“I’ve had different schools where staff. Or you know even individuals within schools it can be really hard to say you need to do this and they’re not interested. AND YOU KNOW it’s what’s in the best interest of the child.” (J2/242-244)*

#### **4.5.1.7 Direct role with children**

Jackie’s role working with children is predominantly when teachers have difficulties and are unsure what to do. She described herself as acting as a calming role for children:

*“Quite often children will be brought to you because actually their behaviour is such they have to be brought to you for 5 minutes [mm] and you have to be that calming down role.” (J1/50-52)*

In her role of SENCO Jackie also has a sense of continuity knowing the child from nursery up to year two. Whereas, class teachers only work with the child for one year:

*“So for our children in year two or those children that were in the nursery this is now my fourth year of dealing with them, so I’ve got that continuity and therefore I’ve got that.” (J1/366-368)*

#### **4.5.2 Theme 2: Changes in SENCO working context and statutory processes**

As previously referred to there has been a change in the context SENCOs work within since the SEND COP (2015). Reflecting on her experience of being a SENCO Jackie noted the differences since legislative changes.

##### **4.5.2.1 Code of practice improving joint working**

Jackie felt that since the SEND COP (2015) was introduced there has been an improvement in the number of joint professionals’ and Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings:

*“I mean I would say there’s been an improvement in terms of the new code of practice getting people together more [okay]. So in terms of health and urm...other*

*outside agencies. More team around the family type meetings. I think there has been a big improvement in that over the last four years.” (J1/78-82)*

She noted the benefits of multidisciplinary working to agree on outcomes and bring together the expertise of different professionals. Although Jackie feels there is additional demands since the SEND COP (2015) she noted the benefits outweigh the workload:

*“In some ways its created more work but I think its more useful work [mm]. I think the purpose of it outweighs the additional work...If that makes sense...” (J1/1-09-111)*

#### **4.5.2.2 Demands of EHCP process and increased accountability**

Despite the positives of joint working, Jackie noted the demands of the EHCP process and increased accountability. Jackie considers if an EHCP is going to be beneficial compared to the demands of the paperwork. Occasionally Jackie has found it hard to make decisions whether an EHCP request needs to be made and has reflected in some cases whether it should have been made earlier.

Jackie feels the SEND COP (2015) has led to the SENCO being positioned as the lead professional for meetings. Jackie feels there are some double standards as health professionals might expect something from her, but they do not provide information which means she has to follow it up with them:

*“It always tends to be the...the SENCO which ends up being the lead professional [mm]. Not always, but my experience is nine out of ten times [yeah] the SENCO becomes the lead professional.” (J1/83-85)*

Over her 20 years of experience Jackie feels there has always been accountability. Since legislative changes this has increased. She feels there is greater pressure to demonstrate and evidence support is in place:

*“I mean I was first a SENCO what 20 years ago now..urm and there’s always been accountability. But now we have to seem to do more and more evidence.” (J1/76-77)*

#### **4.5.2.3 Annual reviews and criticisms of the process**

Jackie feels a ‘significant part of the job’ includes leading the statutory process of annual reviews. She draws upon a person-centred approach focusing on the strengths of the child:

*“person centred annual review and focusing on the strengths and how you’re going to build on those. It’s really good for the parents and they leave feeling really positive. And it enabled I think other professionals to contribute positively to the meeting in terms of...what can we do to improve things.” (J1/334-337)*

Jackie questioned whether annual reviews were an effective use of her time as often strategies do not need to be changed after 1 year. She feels it is a national issue which needs to be reviewed:

*“I mean it’s a national issue isn’t it, not a school issue. But actually...is it really good use of time to keep writing these new strategies every year [mmm]. Or would be better to look at things and perhaps at least on a two year cycle if not three.” (J1/509-512)*

#### **4.5.3 Theme 3: Experience, knowledge and not knowing**

Jackie referred to the amount of experience she has as a SENCO, suggesting she wanted experience and credibility to be recognised as important.

##### **4.5.3.1 Experience provides others with confidence**

Jackie feels experience is important in the SENCO role to be able to apply knowledge and share strategies with others to support their practice:

*“because you do need that experience behind you [hmm] of working with lots of children to...come up with different ideas really.” (J1/30-31)*

She feels parents are reassured by her experience and knowledge of external services:

*“So I think quite important as a SENCO you actually make links and you know what’s available outside. So you know if you cant help [yeah] you know who to signpost those people to.” (J1/302-304)*

#### **4.5.3.2 Credibility from being hands on**

Jackie feels she gains the confidence of staff is by being hands on:

*“You know actually [yeah] I’d gone in and I’d sent the learning support assistant away. And I told the child well you know if you’re not going to do what you’re told you’re going to have to stay with [mm]. So I think being willing to be involved [mhm] and not just say get on with it.” (J1/185-188)*

Continuing to teach classes and modelling strategies are other ways Jackie gains credibility from staff:

*“Like do some, you know do some teaching classes to keep your hand in. Then you get the credibility to say I do like teaching... And actually you need to be prepared to go in there and show them how it’s done.” (J2/219-223)*

#### **4.5.3.3 Sharing ideas and being open about not knowing**

Jackie tries to create a culture of it being okay to ask for help:

*“I think it’s important to have that culture of actually it’s not a failure to admit you’re stuck.” (J1/265)*

She noted the importance of working together to joint problem solve and use a trial and error approach to strategies. Jackie facilitates this by modelling her own thought processes:

*“And also the honesty of saying, do you know what I haven’t got the answer. But you can try X Y and Z. And I think a lot of the time with special educational needs it is trial and error [mmm]. You do just have to try things until you hit upon something that works for that child.” (J2/88-90)*

She thought younger staff might be afraid of appearing incompetent if they do not know something and feels her position on leadership gives her confidence to say she

does not know and model this to others. Jackie feels being honest about when she is unsure is appreciated by staff and parents:

*“Being in a leadership role gives you the confidence to say that as well. I think sometimes younger staff are frightened of saying I don’t know what to do. They don’t want to appear incompetent...” (J2/94-96)*

#### **4.5.4 Theme 4: Working relationships at different levels**

Jackie forms a range of working relationships including school staff and parents. A culture of sharing ideas, acknowledging others and providing support is important in developing these relationships.

##### **4.5.4.1 Staff dependency upon the SENCO**

Jackie noted as SENCO she is seen as the ‘problem solver’ and her ‘floating role’ (e.g. not class based) means she is viewed as available:

*“I think teachers sometimes see you as having all the answers [yeah] and actually the truth is you don’t have more of a magic wand than anyone else.” (J1/26-27)*

Jackie described interactions with staff as frustrating at times because they can be over dependent on her. Jackie noted they will come to her without having attempted to use initiative:

*“Urm I mean one of my slight bugbears is...at lunch time...You know there are times when people are off sick and I just think to myself you are all grown adults [mm] work out between yourselves how you can have an extra child or..[mhh]. But like nobody does...” (J2/362-365)*

Jackie feels staff need to take more responsibility and develop their independence. She shared it can be difficult to strike a balance of a supportive relationship by providing strategies and not creating too much work for herself. It appears Jackie is

reflecting on how she can maintain a supportive relationship with staff and them developing their own internal resources to draw upon:

*“It’s a bit like building independence up in the children [mm] isn’t it. There needs to be more of how do I facilitate staff to feel confident they know things [mm] and can do things themselves without always needing to check with me.” (J2/358-360)*

Noting the positives of what staff are doing Jackie feels builds their confidence allowing them to be more independent. She acknowledged the difficulties staff face and when things are not going well this can impact their confidence. Jackie recognised leadership needs to promote an ethos of empowerment by encouraging staff to be independent:

*“In terms of...sometimes feel they just need to be reassured (spoken quietly)....are they allowed to make that decision [mm]. So perhaps that’s something which has to come from the leadership.” (J2/392-394)*

#### **4.5.4.2 Influence of headteacher on SENCO role**

Jackie’s SENCO role is made easier because the headteacher is interested in SEN. She noted the challenges in being able to carry out the role and ensure a whole school inclusive approach when a headteacher is not invested in SEN. The SENCO role is arguably dependent upon the headteacher ethos and working relationship:

*“Urm and also a lot depends on your headteacher as well. Very fortunate in this school. The urm..the you know the head is...special needs is her passion so. So I have an easy role of it [mm]. But for some people urm...actually if your head isn’t behind special needs [hmm] and you’re on your own in the school [mm]...its really difficult to keep banging on.” (J1/135-139)*

#### **4.5.4.3 Relationships with parents**

Jackie considers the SENCO role as the daily link within school for parents.

Compared to a class teacher Jackie described her role as enabling a continuous working relationship with parents:

*“You build up that long-term relationship with the parent really because I’ve been connected with them for four years [mmm]. Whereas the current class teacher [yeah] has only been dealing with them for one year.” (J1/368-371)*

#### **4.5.4.4 Supporting anxious parents**

Jackie described some parents as needing more support than others. She noted the importance of reassuring parents and supporting those who are unnecessarily anxious about their child’s needs:

*“as a SENCO you’re often the first point of call for very anxious parents who don’t know the system often um and they need support navigating that and they need a lot of reassurance (breath) [mhm]. In terms of...are they doing the right thing.” (J1/18-21)*

Jackie sometimes feels she is supporting parents more than the children. She places an importance on the relationship with parents because she feels if parents are not confident in the SENCO or school then children can pick up on this and subsequently their learning can be impacted. Jackie referred to putting interventions in place to support children and noticed that parents can become anxious when they are stopped. To reduce parent anxiety and meet their expectations there are occasions when Jackie has put interventions back in place and subsequently seen an improvement for the child. Jackie’s overall aim is to reassure parents they are being listened to:

*“Who am I working for here. Is it the parent or is it the child...And sometimes I think that actually the best way to support the child is to support the parent and make them feel they know what they are doing.” (J1/409-411)*

Jackie supports parents providing strategies and an understanding of their child's strengths and needs. She noted parents often feel anxious because they do not have the knowledge and experience of children with SEN. Building a rapport allows Jackie to suggest strategies to implement at home:

*“But if the parent has got confidence...to do it..And if you've got that friendly approach you can just sort of say come on you need to do this. Sometimes they need to be chased up to do these things.” (J1/414-416)*

Jackie supports parents through the ASD diagnosis process by encouraging them to see the positive of ASD. She described parents as going through a grieving process and has created parent groups to develop support networks:

*“Urm so I think actually you can be in a really privileged position to see that yes it's a diagnosis of Autism [mm]. But actually with that can come positives. You know real strengths [yeah]. Its not all doom and gloom...So that's a nice part of the role to be able to support and help parents to understand that...” (J1/342-346)*

#### **4.5.4.5 Difficulties managing parent expectations**

A difficulty of the working relationship faced with parents is the dilemma of spreading time fairly. It is often the parents who are pushing for meetings that get heard the most. Jackie feels guilty about not supporting the quieter parents. Through Jackie's discussion with other SENCOs she feels this is an issue many SENCOs face:

*“It's not that they don't want the best for their child, but they haven't themselves got the confidence [mm] to come and say, you know....why haven't you done this [mm]. They're the ones who get left behind and they're the ones you feel guilty about...because you think actually...I could have done, I should have done...done more...urmm...they're the ones in a sense I lose sleep over night. Because you think...actually its not fair.” (J1/461-474)*

Jackie finds time spent making referrals to services frustrating because of parents demands. She feels it may not have an impact and often makes referrals to services to placate parents and maintain a positive relationship.

#### **4.5.5 Theme 5: Isolating role and support networks**

Despite having working relationships Jackie expressed a feeling of isolation within her role and talked about ways she manages this.

##### ***4.5.5.1 Isolating role within school***

Jackie shared her experience of being a SENCO can be isolating as she does not have a direct colleague to seek support from. Whereas, class teachers have colleagues they can turn to for support:

*“So I think one of the things is that it is actually quite an isolated role.....Whereas class teachers work together as the SENCO there is only the one of you in the school.” (J1/118-119)*

To reduce the isolation Jackie noted the importance of working closely with staff. For example, supporting a teacher when they are finding it difficult to work with a student. Jackie feels it can be an isolating role when staff do not understand what SENCOs do and staff may feel the SENCO does not understand their role:

*“And actually you need to be prepared to go in there and show them how its done. Whilst still acknowledging the fact that that it’s not easy...Otherwise I think you isolate yourself even more because then people won’t respond because they think you actually...don’t know how to do it.” (J2/222-223)*

##### ***4.5.5.2 SENCO support and sharing knowledge***

Jackie attends SENCO forums and a smaller school network seeking support from other SENCOs and feels they are invaluable to gain ideas and share experiences:

*“Network of local schools are really vital [mm] and essential because otherwise it’s a very lonely role.” (J1/132-133)*

Jackie has completed the NASENCO award which has created further opportunities to seek support from SENCOs and feel less isolated in her role:

*“So I think as a SENCO (more animated with hand gestures) is it really important to find a network [mm] of other SENCOs to work with [okay] and share experiences of [sure]..I found because I did my SENCO qualification there were 10 of us that got to know each other really well [ahh okay] through that... You’ve got someone to [yeah] email ideas to or say you know. Or its someone you know [yeah] and you just ring up and say where do I find this form [yep]. Urm what do I do about that.” (J1/126-132)*

#### **4.6 Pen Portrait Parveen**

Parveen is a SENCO at an infant school which has an attached nursery. She has been a SENCO for 11 years in total. Parveen holds seven additional roles school such as assistant headteacher and Lead for Key Stage 1. I had not met Parveen before the first interview. She shared that a few years ago she experienced a medical emergency, which led to her having time off work.

#### **4.7 Parveen: Thematic analysis**

The findings for Parveen identified themes with additional subthemes. Please refer to Appendix R.

##### **4.7.1 Theme 1: Multifaceted nature of the SENCO role**

Parveen referred to how she sees her role and the range of tasks she has. She holds additional roles, reinforcing the complexity and demands of her experience.

##### **4.7.1.1 Perception of SENCO role**

Parveen felt that key aspects of being a SENCO include working with families who have children with SEN or an EHCP, supporting pupils and teachers, and ensuring children’s learning is the focus:

*“I’m not here for me. I’m here because it’s my job and I’m here to help these children.” (P2/392)*

Parveen feels the role can vary weekly and across contexts. She views the nature of the role and achievements as dependent upon the support within the school context:

*“It’s such a wide role [yeah]. For everybody it is so different. It also depends what kind of support you’re getting from your school to do things.” (P1/652-653)*

Parveen values delivering training to staff and ensuring they have the strategies to use in their lessons.

Despite the workload and challenges Parveen experiences she continues to be passionate:

*“I suppose over all I do really love what I do [yeah] ...when you see the impact of what you’re doing [mm] and you see the children improving [yeah] and the teachers being better equipped [yeah] to cope.” (P2/736-738)*

#### **4.7.1.2 Additional roles**

Parveen holds seven additional roles including assistant headteacher. She assumed most SENCOs, like herself, would have to balance their role with a safeguarding position:

*“But I guess most SENCOs have safeguarding too.....I need another page.” (P1/694)*

Parveen noted the difficulties of juggling the roles, though currently she feels she is managing. Parveen compared her additional roles to the experience of other SENCOs and wondered if she had greater demands to complete:

*“Some of the other SENCOs don’t do all of the stuff [mm] I do [mm]...Like a lot don’t have the pupil premium [mm]. But I think that’s because I’m assistant head [mm] that I’ve got a lot more extra work to do [yeah]....But you know it. Touch wood I’m sort of managing it.” (P2/760-763)*

#### **4.7.1.3 Demands of SENCO role**

Parveen described her experience of being a SENCO as ‘very busy’ within a ‘very busy’ school. She talked about lack of time and the increased workload faced due to the multiple roles she holds. Parveen noted some tasks may take longer than expected:

*“And my provision maps have been driving me crazy the last few days. It takes hours to do those, days not even hours [mm]. And then somehow on the system they’ve just been...parts of them are missing. I don’t know if it’s a problem with the computer or what.” (P2/369-371)*

Despite Parveen feeling she is managing her workload more effectively; she continues to work longer hours and additional hours during school holidays and weekends:

*“I had to come in during the holidays to do my filing...Yeah in the half term... I came in on the Wednesday I came in. Just for a few hours you know to catch up [yeah]. Be ready for starting back (laughs).” (P2/491-496)*

Parveen manages her workload by making lists and forward planning. Parveen has found support from colleagues helpful for administration tasks:

*“And she will help me you know if I need urm...Like the zones of regulation for example she has...a big poster. So she’s made it into a small one which we’ve made ourselves to hand out to everybody [oh great] just to ease the workload a little bit [yeah] is a huge help.” (P2/486-489)*

#### **4.7.1.4 Demands of EHCP process**

Parveen described the EHCP process as ‘stressful’. She feels it is important to involve the class teacher in the process as they often have more knowledge about the child.

Parveen was initially unclear what needed to be included as evidence and found it helpful to seek advice from another SENCO. Parveen feels more EHCP requests have

been accepted and turned into a plan since including detailed paperwork evidencing the assess, plan, do, review cycle:

*“Yeah but it’s really hard doing the paperwork... Urm its getting it right. Making sure you’ve got the access, plan, do, review section in... Lots of detail there [okay]. And once you’ve got that in and I’ve got better at doing those [mm] and hopefully you get accepted a bit more than before if you get all of that in.” (P1/411-415)*

Challenges Parveen has faced include parents making an EHCP request. Parveen noted the lack of communication between the LA and herself means she has not been informed when the LA require additional information:

*“Yeah you need time and warning and prior warning [yeah] for these things. Not half an hour on the day before you want them.” (P1/379-380)*

Parveen feels that parent requests create unexpected workload as she is unable to plan for them. She recognised one of the difficulties impacting the way she works is the shortage of SEN staff which affects communication:

*“Yeah. I want to help [yeah]. Because he needs an EHC Plan [mm]. But the borough needs to get its act together as well [mm]. I know they’ve got a shortage of staff. Which makes things tougher.” (P1/352-353)*

#### **4.7.1.5 Inclusive practice**

Parveen describes the context she works within as a nurturing and inclusive school. She noted her role is to support teachers to work with children with increasingly complex needs:

*“Because sometimes they feel that they’re not urm qualified enough [mm]. To be working with some of the...some of the more complex needs of children.” (P1/42-44)*

Parveen noted that all teachers are aware of their role to support children with SEN:

*“But all teachers know they are responsible for all the children in their class and the SEN child.” (P1/599-600)*

Parveen oversees the teaching activities created for themed weeks and in lessons to ensure they are inclusive and extend the ability of high achieving students:

*“So I make sure the urm lower achievers all the SEN children have visual support [mm] for them [mm]...and also at the other end kind of helping and extending the more able [mm]. It’s making that challenge as well.” (P1/218-224)*

#### **4.7.1.6 Focus on supporting EAL students**

The school Parveen works within has a high number of children with EAL and students moving in and out of the school. Parveen noted the challenges of this when students arrive at the end of Year 2 (the final year of infant school) to be able to implement strategies and interventions to effectively support them:

*“We’ve got quite high mobility at the moment [okay]...They come and they go (stopped and sort of smile)... But those sort of children will come at the end of the year [mm okay]. Especially at the end of year two which makes it quite challenging.” (P1/232-236)*

Parveen feels it has been invaluable to have the support of other professionals.

Developing language skills is a key focus of Parveen’s work. She referred to seeking support from specialists or running projects to target language development:

*“We’re quite lucky because we’ve got an EAL consultant that works at the school ... So she sort of gives lots of tips and different things [yeah]. We’ve got a lot of resources we’ve built up over the years.” (P1/241-244)*

Parveen noted challenges of providing translators for the range of languages spoken at the school:

*“But it is a little bit challenging. But there is always ways to get round it through somebody [yeah]...Like urm if its Punjabi or Urdu we’ve got plenty of staff that speak that mm....So we’re quite well equipped with our staffing with languages [yeah].” (P2/559-562)*

#### **4.7.1.7 Early intervention and identification**

Parveen recognises the importance of early intervention and identification of children with SEN. This reinforces the expectations with the SEND COP (2015) and the role of SENCO to ensure the early identification of children who may require support.

Children with SEN are identified through assessment. It is Parveen's role to consider what interventions and projects could be appropriate:

*"I do try and do as much as I can before they move on to the junior school [yeah] and often when I hear from the EP and the Speech and Language therapists. They are usually well taken care of by the time they get there. They've done all of the early intervention here [yeah]. Which is, which is good." (P1/589-592)*

#### **4.7.1.8 Whole school projects and upskilling staff**

Parveen also enjoys training and upskilling staff. She gets excited attending training and bringing back ideas to share:

*"I went to the training and it's too exciting not to do this... Yeah it can't stop here (laughs)." (P2/161-163)*

Parveen focuses on ensuring staff are better equipped to support children with SEN. She has sought support from specialist schools, SALTs and has confidence in the staff at the school:

*"Urm supported and got the right resources [mm] and know what they're doing. We had the training from X specialist school sort of at least once a year." (P1/597-598)*

Parveen is mindful of pressures teachers face. She noted the importance of allowing them time to implement strategies.

Although Parveen enjoys training, she expressed feeling responsible for disseminating training and providing the correct information:

*“...recently had training before half term which I told you about before that we had here. She (headteacher) wasn't there for that training...So I feel like I'm a bit a bit on my own a bit.... holding all that information. And it's a lot of information to hold. So I've found that a bit stressful...urm so much to remember.” (P2/112-119)*

This suggests she may get positioned as the person responsible for training and may not receive investment from others.

Parveen takes the lead on school projects, something which she feels is important to keep her interest in being a SENCO:

*“And having these projects to work towards [yeah] has given me a bit more urm...oh what's the word....not enthusiasm but a bit more than that....a bit more excitement.” (P2/766-767)*

Parveen referred to a range of projects and noted people can initially be resistant. She placed an emphasis on ensuring that everyone, including staff and parents, are invested in the projects. Parveen attempts to gain support from others by reminding them of the benefits and acting as a driving force behind development of school practice:

*“you might get that initial we don't want to do this [yeah]. But after a while people. Everyone gets used to it and they see the impact its made. It makes a difference”. (P1/199-201)*

Parveen attempts to make projects more manageable for teachers providing templates to reduce their workload:

*“Yeah because I'm there to support them really [yeah] rather than making extra work for them....”(P1/445)*

Although Parveen enjoys taking on the role of leading projects she felt it was important for the headteacher to be a driving force. Parveen shared the headteacher has raised concerns about the number of projects running:

*“urm I think because when you are given projects...Its got to come from the highest member. So the headteacher in the school. And you’ve got to have the support from the senior leadership team. You’ve got to have the support from them to be able to roll it out so its effective [mm]. That’s the kind of support I would like.” (P2/92-95)*

#### **4.7.2 Theme 2: Assessment of children and schools**

When talking about her experience of being a SENCO Parveen referred to the pressures of measuring impact, both for children and the school. Parveen feels that noticing the benefits of projects can take time and that the long-term benefits need to be considered. She noted if the school went up to Year 6 then more progress could be seen.

##### ***4.7.2.1 Expectations and support for children***

Parveen initially noted there is pressure to get results before she reframed this as high expectations:

*“So pressure of getting results are there [okay]. Well its not pressure its high expectations. We do have high expectations.” (P1/263-264)*

There was a sense that Parveen felt accountable when children do not achieve expectations. She reinforced it was not the child’s responsibility:

*“Urm just upsetting because you want them to do better than they have done. And they haven't but it's not their fault [no]. They've done the best they possibly could because they try so hard to please.” (P1/288-290)*

Parveen is expected to provide an explanation of why children do not meet the expectations, reinforcing her accountability. She noted reasons such as the variation in children’s needs and the increasing complexity of needs:

*“Yeah my SEN came out the lowest...I’m hoping this year it might change (laughs). It depends year on year. You don’t. And it depends on the needs of the child.” (P1/271-273)*

Parveen talked about ensuring support is in place to create an exciting learning experience which enables children to achieve expectations.

#### **4.7.2.2 Quality assessment of school**

Although the school had a good review last year, they were waiting for Ofsted to assess if it could be ‘outstanding’. Parveen referred to waiting for the visit and wanting it to be done with, suggesting a sense of build up to the idea of being assessed and frustration at waiting:

*“Urm we’re always in preparation and I think you got to the point where you think just come (laughs) [yeah] [slight laugh]...and do it.” (P2/508-509)*

The school is aiming to become a flagship school. This provides additional work for Parveen to create an action plan and review practice. This responsibility reinforces the role of SENCO as a strategic position reviewing and monitoring whole school progress:

*“going to recommend us for a flagship school [wow] which is nice. We will see what happens...(laugh)...It’s a lot to do. An action plan and reviewing last years plan. Doing a new one for the following year (yeah) And then its just affirming what she sees on the learning walk and different things.” (P1/616-619)*

#### **4.7.3 Theme 3: Working relationships at different levels**

A key aspect of the SENCO role is working with parents, professionals and governors. Parveen reflected on her relationships at different levels and aspects which are supportive and challenging.

#### **4.7.3.1 Importance of being on SLT and relationships**

Parveen expressed the importance of the SENCO role being on SLT. Holding a position on SLT allows Parveen to keep SEN at the focus of decisions:

*“I think that’s very important SENCOs are part of the management team [oh okay]. Because it’s such a big role. It’s got to be given that importance [mm]. And also at meetings you can share what’s happening and it...it’s a recognised role.” (P1/659-662)*

The SLT meet regularly and Parveen is expected to update the headteacher and deputy headteacher about the work she is completing. Parveen feels a lack of communication between SLT means she is not always aware of meetings she is required to attend and misses out on information:

*“Urm...communication...It depends where you are in the pecking order. Even though I’m the Assistant Head. I don’t feel I know everything. I think a lot happens between the head and deputy that I don’t get to hear.” (P2/184-186)*

She raised issues with the distribution of workload and felt she was expected to take the lead on training and projects.

#### **4.7.3.2 Staff relationships: support and challenges**

To be able to carry out the role of SENCO Parveen acknowledges the importance of having a supportive staff network. This includes practical and emotional support:

*“So if I need to rant she’s one of the people I go and talk to. She’s our welfare lady [ohh] so lovely (laughs)...Yeah and trust that it doesn’t go any further...You need people around don’t you.” (P2/474-479)*

Parveen feels lack of time prevents opportunities to build staff relationships. Parveen reflected on her experience of the interview process and being asked open questions.

She feels in school they do not have time to ask open questions, though they are what they promote for the children:

*“Yet we’re supposed to be teaching the children and asking them lovely nice open-ended questions...But we don’t have time ourselves to do ask that sort of stuff.”*

*(P2/33-36)*

She wondered about the size of the school impacting her experience of forming relationships with staff. Parveen talked about introducing more team building and social activities:

*“Yeah because we’re four form entry. So we’ve got a lot of staff...But we do have our socials at the end of each term and things.”* *(P2/61-62)*

#### **4.7.3.3 Support from SENCOs**

Parveen attends SENCO forums as a space to express her struggles benefitting from the sharing of ideas. This suggests the SENCO support is both at the emotional level of reassurance and practical level of providing resources:

*“And they talk about. Its just about having time to have coffee and talk [yeah]. Oh I’m really struggling with this. Or you’ve got that can you send me a copy [mm]. Just sharing resources and ideas.”* *(P1/479-481)*

#### **4.7.3.4 Joint working with professionals and perceptions of roles**

As part of her experience of being a SENCO Parveen referred to working with other professionals including EP, SALT and another LA team. Parveen described the professionals she worked with as her ‘team’, suggesting she had formed positive working relationships:

*“Urm....Just supportive. You feel supported then don’t you [mm]. And also the Inclusion team are there at the local authority and EP is really really helpful and our speech and language therapist. So I’ve got a really good team at the moment. I feel quite happy.”* *(P1/509-511)*

Although the EP and SALT are often not in school at the same time Parveen reflected on the effectiveness of joint working:

*“They shared ideas about what they. What that child needed. It was a while ago now. That was last term [yeah]....And they both shared what they were doing....so they could build on be on the same of sort of way.” (P1/529-531)*

Parveen noted differences in her experience of working with the SALT and EP:

*“Yeah. But the EP only comes in and assess and they go don’t they and give strategies. Whereas the speech and language therapist they come in every week.” (P1/535-536)*

Parveen appeared to have the perception of EPs being less available due to statutory demands. She expressed frustration that the EP was unable to come in to provide support and can only work with a limited number of children due to capacity:

*“So EP is coming in tomorrow [okay] But she can only manage one child. So I said please can you observe one and assess one as well [mm]....so we will see what she says....Because our children keep getting left. Because of all the statutory EHCs [mm] she wasn’t able to come in in January...So we lost a month of her.” (P1/730-734)*

#### **4.7.3.5 Relationships with parents**

To develop effective working relationships with parents Parveen talked about making parents feel comfortable so they can share their concerns:

*“I suppose basically if the school aren’t showing a huge interest in your family and the child they’re going to want to hold back aren’t they.” (P2/239-240)*

Getting to know the whole family and making sure they are on board with school projects was something Parveen felt was important. She talked about working with families from different cultures and educational backgrounds. Within the context of Parveen’s school it seemed culture is important.

#### **4.7.3.6 Providing parents with knowledge**

Parveen often referred to her role and the school as providing parents with knowledge and strategies. She noted the cultural differences around education and how she may discuss the differences with the curriculum in England:

*“Because the way we teach maths now is so different [mm] to other countries. Especially India and Pakistan and other places. So parents appreciate that support too and then they help their children.” (P1/192-194)*

Parveen talked about the workshops she has instigated which involve teachers modelling teaching to equip parents to carry out the strategies.

*“Well we started having these workshops in school in the mornings for Tuesday and Thursdays. Parents are invited into class. They do literacy one day and maths the other.” (P2/552-555)*

Parveen appeared to place an emphasis on the role of parents to carry out work at home. Parveen noted in her role she may support teachers during parents evening to talk about children’s needs when this is not recognised by parents.

#### **4.7.3.7 Liaising with feeder junior school**

Parveen felt the need to maintain links with the local junior school to ensure smooth transitions. A benefit of this is Parveen can see how the children are progressing:

*“It’s nice because I speak to the junior school staff [ahh okay]. So you get to see how the children are doing [yeah]. And the success stories later on as well. Which is nice.” (P1/290-291)*

Parveen felt it could also be helpful for a consistency between projects in the infant school and junior school, highlighting the role of SENCO acting as a link to share information about projects:

*“And the junior school are on the same project [ahh I see]. So its going to continue which is fabulous. Because otherwise it’s a brand new system for them when they get there.” (P1/102-103)*

#### **4.7.3.8 Working with governors**

One of Parveen’s additional roles is a social governor, regularly attending governor meetings. Parveen noted that she does not often see the governors. Recently the inclusion governor attended a training day with Parveen, which she valued:

*“Particularly the governor. But our governor is involved regularly. My inclusion governor she is aware of what we are doing. And she took part in you know the training with us [oh okay]. So its nice that we do things together... But she won’t really get much more involved in anything [oh okay]. But she knows what we’re trying to do back at..back at school.” (P1/622-627)*

#### **4.7.4 Theme 4: Impact of role and relationships on SENCO wellbeing**

Parveen talked about her physical health and feels this was impacted by the demands of the role.

##### **4.7.4.1 Feeling unappreciated**

Parveen expressed feelings of being undervalued and not respected by members of SLT. Parveen feels she receives recognition if she achieves an award rather than her day to day work:

*“Yeah interested in what I’m doing and not kind of just urm...like having the award [yeah]. There’s more to life than just having that [yeah]. It’s just an award not your every day running of things.” (P2/206-208)*

Parveen feels demands placed on her by the headteacher and previous deputy headteacher required her to make them aware of what she was doing:

*“And they would do things and the headteacher would be demanding timetables from both of us...Say the governors are watching you [mm] we need your timetable [mm]. Harassing us about that.” (P2/300-302)*

Parveen feels that because of her position as assistant headteacher it was viewed she did not need support. She noted in previous schools she has felt appreciated and felt her experience in this school is different, though she continues to remain in the school.

#### **4.7.4.2 Significant impact on health**

Parveen’s experience of not feeling valued, lack of support, workload and stress is something she feels impacted upon her health. Parveen shared that a couple of years ago she experienced a medical emergency, which involved her having time off work. She felt the pressures of her role impacted her health:

*“It was the stress of this place... the stress was the amount of work and urm....and your voice not being heard.” (P2/286-293)*

At the time Parveen felt she was overwhelmed and that her relationship with the headteacher was particularly difficult. Parveen shared that she was unsure who to turn to for support and felt she did not receive support from the school governors:

*“And the chair of governors came to visit me [okay] She was the first one to come and visit me. And I told her all the things that were bothering me [yeah]. And she said I’m really sorry I don’t know how we can help you....” (P2/405-408)*

Following her medical emergency Parveen returned to work on a phased return. She noticed a continued impact on her physical and cognitive capabilities, and taking up the SENCO role:

*“it’s taken me a while I think over the years. It’s only this year I sort of feel back to....back to normal [yeah] with mentally and physically able to do things.” (P2/339-341)*

Parveen feels she is a stronger person since the event. Her experience highlights the impact of stress and not feeling valued as a SENCO. It is important to ensure support systems are in place:

*“I know. It shouldn’t have happened but it did (slight laugh/sigh)....” (P1/709)*

*“if I haven’t got my work done [mm] it doesn’t matter I can do it tomorrow [mm]... Urm just that stronger me.” (P2/332-334)*

#### **4.7.4.3 Relationship with headteacher**

Parveen felt some of her difficulties were due to her relationship with the headteacher. She noted the pairing of the headteacher and previous deputy headteacher meant she did not feel included in discussions.

Parveen wondered if the relationship has been difficult because the headteacher and herself are both Asian women. She considered if this created a form of power struggle and influenced how she felt undervalued. Parveen found it difficult to expand upon her feelings about the impact of ethnicity and culture. She felt that in previous schools she had a different experience with male Asian headteachers and headteachers from different ethnicities. Parveen appeared to be exploring differences which might be influencing her current experience:

*“And also the other thing is. Another question is Asian heads treat Asian people differently [mm]. If I had been white she wouldn’t have done this.” (P2/432-433)*

Although Parveen feels there are still difficulties communicating with the headteacher, she is now more able to express her voice:

*“urm now I don’t go home and worry. So if she says something to me I won’t go home thinking about it all the time.” (P2/329-330)*

*“Because I think urm she thinks she can get away with...well sort of bullying me basically [mmm] But she’s got better.” (P2/338-339)*

Parveen's view of the relationship with her headteacher reinforces the difficulties of the SENCO experience when there is a break down in relationships.

#### **4.8 Application of Psychoanalytically Informed Principles**

I will now review the findings by drawing upon a psychoanalytic perspective. The review of interview transcript excerpts and a scenic understanding approach will be applied to demonstrate psychoanalytic understanding. Each participant will be referred to individually to respect the individuality of their experiences and the interview experience. Findings shared represent the psychoanalytic process happening at the time of the interviews. Application of psychological concepts and relevance to EP practice will be expanded upon within the discussion.

#### **4.9 Samantha**

I now reflect on the interview experience with Samantha by referring to key aspects which emerged throughout both interviews. Psychoanalytic concepts and other relevant theory will be expanded upon within the discussion.

##### **4.9.1 Relationships and providing containment**

Typically, Samantha's role in school is to act as the source of containment for others. Containment is a concept proposed by Bion (1963) which involves the capacity to be able to hold onto a feeling without getting rid of it and think about what it is communicating. Containment includes the capacity to contain one's own feelings and the feeling of others (Bion, 1963). For example:

*“So a lot of time spent where teachers have to. You know, they need to offload [mmm]. Urm...and within school I think a lot of the time supporting the personal side of the teachers as well. I don't know whether that's because we have male heads [mhmm], we have a male deputy head [okay]. And so I'm probably the only female apart from the welfare [mm] officer whose out of class.” (S1/420-424)*

Samantha appeared to explore the notion of her role being available for others and drew comparisons to gender differences in how others may view her compared to male members on SLT.

During both interviews Samantha spoke fast as if she was providing a stream of consciousness. At times it felt as if Samantha talked without stopping suggesting she was avoiding considering the emotional aspect of the role. Although Samantha shared she does not feel stressed, my reaction to her included the following:

*'As Samantha was talking, she appeared to be animated and continued to talk, sometimes not taking much breath. On occasion she moved her arms and gestured whilst speaking. She seemed to pause at times, looked at me, but then continued. It felt overwhelming to listen to her.... upon leaving the interview I felt disorientated and unsure where to go, though I should know my route.'* (Scenic understanding)

My feeling of overwhelmed was perhaps an experience of the countertransference and Samantha projecting her feelings that she was unable to contain onto me. It could have been that I was acting as a source of containment allowing Samantha to express and explore her role. For example, she often moved between the idea of 'not being good enough' and accepting what she had been able to achieve. I also reflected the following:

*'Through supervision I was able explore why I hadn't interrupted Samantha. Perhaps I felt she needed a space to feel heard or perhaps I found it hard to take up the role of researcher. The group wondered if the emotions I experienced meant that it could be I was recognising Samantha's needs.'* (Reflexive note)

Perhaps I was unconsciously defended myself against further exploring Samantha's feelings and what she might be trying to communicate.

Samantha talked about having a supportive relationship with her headteacher:

*“I must say I am very lucky that he is so supportive. Because if he says to me oh so and so. I say oh don’t worry I’ll help. He says no you’ve got your job to do....he recognises the importance of it.” (S2/797-800)*

With the headteacher Samantha also appears to be able to seek reassurance and confidence that she is doing her work ‘right’:

*“You know he gets involved in annual reviews...When I first started doing the Education, Health Care Plans I would ask him to check through them. But not necessarily because he had done the applications before. But it’s good to have another pair of eyes.” (S1/583-585)*

These excerpts suggest the headteacher may act as a form of containment for Samantha. She can speak with him about her ideas whilst he holds in mind the demands placed upon her ensuring the structures of support are in place for her to carry out her role. This suggests the importance of the SENCO role being supported by a lead within the school whom can act as a form of containment for the anxieties and pressures SENCOs face within the different aspects of their role.

#### **4.9.2 Avoidance of worries**

Samantha appeared to promote a culture being open to express worries and the feeling of not coping:

*“But if you had a teacher who was struggling with a child and thinks I’m just going to get to the end of the day and cope with it but it spirals out of control. I look at it as a strength part way through that day the teacher says to me I’m really struggling with so and so could you give me a break this afternoon.” (S2/344-347)*

However, at the same time she referred to herself as needing to remain resilient and not show how she was feeling for the purpose of ensuring others, such as the headteacher, felt calm and contained.

*“I do get stressed, but I never show it. I don’t know if that’s because I don’t know how that feels. It probably feels that very occasionally I’m not going to get on top of this [mm]. But it never gets to the point where. Probably once I’ve said this has become impossible. Probably once. And if I said that to (headteacher), he would probably panic.” (S2/582-585)*

*‘I noticed as Samantha spoke about not showing stress, I felt a bit on edge and nervous. I wanted to explore this more with her but felt a sense of fragility about asking why she cannot show her stress. She seemed to speak faster and keep going.’ (Scenic understanding)*

When Samantha referred to times of not coping, she quickly moved on to talk about something else or the way she uses lists to manage the stress. I felt a sense of vulnerability when Samantha was talking, as if I was taking up this emotion she was finding difficult to experience. Perhaps Samantha was attempting to manage her own emotions in order to “induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild, 1983 p. 7). Again, Samantha appeared to act as a source of containment for others by avoiding her own emotions. This can be considered in relation to Bion’s model (1963) of container/contained which suggests the more resilient the container the more stresses and unprocessed feelings they can contain and think about.

#### **4.9.3 Comparison to others**

Samantha also appeared to explore her experience of being a SENCO by drawing comparisons to other SENCOs and how they are acting out the role. Whilst Samantha talked about how she sees herself in relation to other SENCOs I noticed the following:

*‘Samantha shifted in her seat and stumbled on some of her words as she talked about wanting to be in the same place as a more experienced SENCO. I felt a sense of not being ‘good enough’. It felt like Samantha was trying to make sense of the tangle of*

*emotions she might feel about having a plan, but also not achieving as much as others.’ (Scenic understanding)*

It appeared Samantha moved between what Klein refers to as the ‘paranoid-schizoid position’ and the ‘depressive position’. The ‘paranoid-schizoid position’ can be seen by Samantha ‘splitting’ off the ‘good’ and placing this all within the more experienced SENCO, whilst she is left with the ‘bad’ and wondering if she is ‘good enough’. This splitting could also reflect an underlying notion of comparison and competition. The importance of SENCO support to prevent the role being lonely, means Samantha is able to move to the ‘depressive position’ and hold ‘both’ by accepting these feelings and recognising she is still developing her role as SENCO.

#### **4.10 Jackie**

Psychoanalytically informed analysis suggested themes which emerged included Jackie acting as a form of containment for staff, splitting between her role and others and the constant pressure to achieve. I also reflect upon my response of feeling a teacher student relationship dynamic within the interviews.

##### **4.10.1 Containment, relationships and positioning**

During the interviews Jackie referred to school staff having difficulties with demonstrating initiative. It appeared staff often came to Jackie when they were not sure how to respond to a child’s behaviour:

*“We’ve got one example where a very challenging child [mm]. At the beginning of the term the poor staff just absolutely run ragged [mm]. And were finding it really difficult because it was knocking their own...knocking their own confidence.”*

*(J1/158-160)*

*“You always get but I need more adult support, I need more adult support. That often appears to be the teacher’s first reaction. It’s not about the different strategies they can put in.” (J1/36-38)*

Staff could be using Jackie as a form of containment for their own frustrations and anxieties about not knowing what to do to support a child. Their request for more adult support could reflect their unconsciousness need for another adult to take their anxiety about not knowing what to do. Jackie's calm and experienced nature means she takes the projections of staff leaving them feeling contained (Bion, 1963). Staff continue to return for support rather than being able to internalise the experience and think for themselves.

When Jackie spoke about staff seeking her support, she referred to a feeling of frustration and talked about the idea of needing to hide. I appeared to feel frustrated at this point during the interview, perhaps in the countertransference experiencing Jackie's feelings about her not having the space she needs:

*'Jackie spoke about hiding in the library with almost a slight laugh in despair. I started to feel a sense of frustration at why she could not have the space she needed and a sense of sadness for her.'* (Scenic understanding)

At points the dynamic of our interview took a student-teacher dynamic with Jackie sharing her experience.

*'Jackie interrupted the conversation and started to talk about inviting me to an annual review. I initially resisted this conversation as we were moving away from the interview. Jackie acknowledged the digression but continued to look in her diary., I then began to lose my researcher role and joined her discussions and took the opportunity. It felt as if I was a student again and perhaps, she wanted to show me how things are 'done properly'.* (Scenic understanding)

I wondered if the relational interaction playing out in the interview might be how Jackie unconsciously takes up her role teachers and why they continue to seek support from her.

Jackie also acts as a source of containment for anxious parents who are trying to make sense of how to support their child:

*“Because I think if a parent has got confidence in you...the child will know that the parent has got confidence in you. And therefore, that impacts positively on their learning and achievement. Whereas I think if there is any hint that the parent feels you’re not supporting their child enough [mm]. The child can pick up on that [mm] in a sense and then they won’t do so well.” (J1/387-391)*

Jackie described her role as building relationships with parents so that she can contain their emotions and enable them to process them so that their anxieties are not projected into the child. Jackie reflected whether her role is at times to support parents rather than the child. She also wondered if her status on senior leadership supported this containment and perhaps reflects the continued notation of experience creating a feeling of security.

#### **4.10.2 Relationships and generating ideas**

Jackie’s reference to joint work with other professionals suggests that joint multi-agency working can be effective.

*“I think it does mean you bounce ideas off one another and that can be really helpful [mm] in terms of sharing their expertise.” (J1/105-106)*

This could link to Bion’s (1961) concepts of groups and how a group can be in a ‘basic assumption’ position or ‘work position’. In the instance the multi-agency meeting Jackie is referring to appears to be on task. However, Jackie seems to suggest that the differences in how roles are perceived can position her to take up the role of organiser:

*“Urm but again I would say...that in some ways has been more of a pressure on the SENCO role because you do find health professionals won’t take the lead.” (J1/82-83)*

It could be that the meetings can also shift to ‘basic assumption’ of ‘dependency’ upon Jackie as they are uncertain about the school context (Bion, 1961). As Jackie was speaking about the dynamics, I noticed the following response:

*‘As Jackie was speaking about different professionals, I was curious about what she thought of EPs. I started to feel a bit defensive and wondered if this could reflect what happens in meetings when different professionals come together.’ (Scenic understanding)*

It is helpful to think about group processes to understand how the SENCO role may be positioned within groups and how EPs can make sense of this and their role working together.

#### **4.10.3 Comparison to other professions**

Jackie compared her role as SENCO to that of class teachers:

*“Okay, so I think the thing is that is a really busy role [mm] because all the children you’re dealing with have got additional needs so [yeah]. Whereas, in...sort of as a class teacher you’ve got some children with additional needs and some children that haven’t. Tend to sort of go along smoothly without any hiccup. All the children you deal with with special needs have all got an additional need so it tends to be really busy.” (J1/13-17)*

Her comparison appeared to split not only her role with teachers but also children with SEN. It felt there were clear divides being created within Jackie’s narrative.

Perhaps reflecting a need to compartmentalise to decrease anxiety.

She also compared her role to other professionals, particularly health professionals. It appeared Jackie was engaging in the process of splitting by labelling other professionals as one thing and SENCOs as another:

*“Because as much as the professionals have equally got a large case load of children with those special needs. Otherwise they wouldn’t be seeing them. Urm we equally*

*have a large number of children. So it just feels sometimes oh school will do it....”*  
(J1/130-133)

Jackie’s splitting of roles could have been in response to the increased accountability schools now face. Jackie noted the increased pressures placed upon her and by identifying what others are doing and the differences in her role, perhaps this creates containment about how the SENCO role is different.

#### **4.11 Parveen**

Drawing upon psychoanalytic concepts I will refer to themes which emerged for Parveen, which will subsequently be expanded upon in the discussion.

##### **4.11.1 Pressure from the wider context**

Tucker (2010) noted schools are under increasing pressure to ensure the achievement of all children. The need to manage external pressures (for example, OFSTED, exams etc) means that SENCOs may take the role of protecting the vulnerable pupils.

Parveen expressed a feeling of feeling guilty and responsibility when the children did not achieve:

*“My SEN children didn’t do very well last year. So urm...but then their starting points were really low [mm]. So they probably wouldn’t have got it any way [yeah]. But urm....they came out really quite badly.”*(P1/266-268 )

Parveen appeared to take the children’s failure as a personal failure describing them as ‘my SEN children’. At the same time Parveen seemed to project (Klein, 1946) the feelings of disappointment into the needs of the child by stating that the child’s needs impacted whether they could achieve or not. Parveen made it clear that she did not blame the children.

#### 4.11.2 Seeking containment

During the second interview Parveen openly explored her relationship with the headteacher and experience of a medical emergency. Although Parveen talked about having processed the experience she appeared to use the open space to share her feelings. At times I noticed in the experience of countertransference a feeling of anger:

*'When Parveen started to talk about her medical emergency she often looked intensely at me or paused and appeared close to tears, at one point beginning to tear up. I felt uncertain what to do, struggling to be in researcher role but leaning towards being more like myself and wanting to be alongside and support. I noticed on some level I felt a mixture of sadness and anger as Parveen talked.'* (Scenic understanding)

I wondered if I was acting as a form of containment for Parveen, taking up the anger she had perhaps previously felt and might still be holding. Parveen's narrative felt unsettling as she moved to what Klein calls the 'depressive position' and splitting the 'bad' into the headteacher. When I left the interview, I felt disorientated and overwhelmed. I wondered about the capacity of the school system to provide emotional containment (explored further in discussion). I also understood my feelings to be the experienced through the process of projective identification, as I took into myself Parveen's frustrations and experienced them as my own (Klein, 1946).

#### 4.11.3 Blurred boundaries

During the interviews with Parveen I became curious about the idea of roles and boundaries. Parveen holds multiple roles and I wondered how this influences her SENCO role as she referred to the difficulties of juggling different roles.

There appeared to blurred boundaries within the system as during the interviews with Parveen other members of staff walked in during points when Parveen was expressing the difficulties of her role:

*'As Parveen started to talk about her experience of her medical emergency I could see she was starting to have tears in her eyes... moments later a member of staff walked into the library and Parveen suddenly smiled and became 'cheery'. I felt confused and perhaps a sense of frustration that the space was being interrupted, just like it had in the last interview' (Scenic understanding)*

This was not the only occasion of interruption as towards the end of the interview we were asked to leave for a group to take place. When we moved to Parveen's office I noted the lack of privacy there as well. It appeared there was not a space for Parveen, perhaps reflecting how the blurred boundaries also led to lack of containment for her.

#### **4.12 Summary of Chapter**

I do not attempt to suggest there is a generalisation of findings, I briefly note overlapping themes highlighting aspects which appear to be pertinent to the SENCO experience.

Across the thematic analysis the multifaceted nature of the SENCO role was noted for all participants. There are key elements of the role such as strategic focus, demands of the role and the value of leadership.

The importance of working relationships at different levels is explored with an emphasis on parents and other staff. The relationship with SLT and differences in this experience highlights the varied experience depending upon their working context.

The SENCOs referred to a sense of being accountable, needing to demonstrate effectiveness and credibility for their role, perhaps reflecting wider pressures within the current context. The experience of changes in the EHCP process is recognised by all the SENCOs.

The emotional wellbeing of parents, children, staff and the SENCOs themselves is explored. There is the sense that the role can be isolating and is experienced differently depending upon the context they work within.

Psychoanalytically informed interpretations which have been introduced suggest the SENCOs act as a form of containment for others. It is also important the SENCOs experience containment. Pressures from wider society and comparisons to other professionals led the SENCOs to engage in 'splitting' to manage the emotions of the role.

Although there were some commonalities, there were still individual differences in the SENCOs' experiences. There were also differences which are reflected within the scenic understanding. Within the next chapter I will provide an overall summary in response to the research question and consider the relationship with psychological theory.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This research sought to answer the following question using a psychosocial method with three primary school SENCOs:

**‘What do Primary School SENCOs talk about when they are asked about their experience of being a SENCO?’**

A wide range of information was gathered from the interviews. This is reflected in the themes identified for each participant and the psychoanalytically informed analysis represented in the findings (refer to Chapter 4). Thematic analysis revealed the SENCOs experience of their role is complex and multifaceted with the need to form relationships at different levels. SENCOs referred to changes in their working context, pressures of assessment, emotional wellbeing and support networks. Within the themes there were individual differences in how each SENCO experiences the role within their working context. The psychoanalytically informed analysis suggested SENCOs act as a form of containment for others and may require containment themselves. Containment refers to ability to contain the emotional experience of our own feelings and the feelings of others to return it in a more palatable way, for this to be thought about (Youell, 2006). The SENCOs appeared to compare themselves to others and avoid exploring feelings of stress and vulnerability, which could be influenced from pressures of the wider school system and society.

I will now bring together the thematic analysis, psychoanalytically informed analysis and existing literature to discuss key implications of this research. I have created a model to highlight the SENCO role in relation to the key concept of containment and how this relates to the wider school system, EP and external

professionals and wider society. I will first discuss the multifaceted nature of the SENCO role and perception of the SENCO role. I will then consider findings in relation to the layers of the model I propose.

Within this research Bion's (1963) concept of containment is useful to explore the SENCO experience. I have created a model which represents the concept of containment and how this relates to the SENCO role (see Figure 3). The outer layer is the wider societal context which influences the EP role, whole school and SENCO. The next layer is the role of the EP and external professionals who can support SENCOs. This is followed by the wider school system and how this influences the SENCO role and can provide SENCOs with containment. The next layer is children, parents and school staff whom SENCOs have working relationships with and provide containment. Finally, in the centre is the SENCO to represent their containing role within the school system. Not only do SENCOs provide containment for others, but they also require containment to manage the pressures within their school context and wider societal changes. Comparisons can be made with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), which recognises how interacting environments (systems) influence a child's development. In the model I propose I consider how the systems interact and influence the SENCO role with reference implications for EP practice. I will refer to the model I propose throughout this next section to discuss the implications of my findings, links to current research and EP practice.

It is important to recognise care has been taken to consider commonalities whilst recognising the individuality of each SENCO. Generalisation of these findings should be considered with caution due to the differences in SENCO working contexts. Limitations of this research and future directions for research will be explored.

Figure 3: Model explaining the SENCO role and links to the concept of containment proposed by Bion (1962)



## **5.2 Multifaceted nature of the SENCO role and perception of the role**

The multifaceted nature of the role was found to include a variety of different aspects, reinforcing expansion of the SENCO role (Crowther et al., 2001).

Differences between the SENCOs' experience identified in this research supports previous literature which noted the role can be conceptualised differently depending upon the school context, the individual SENCO and interactions between the individual and school (Blandford, 2013; Pearson et al., 2015; Pearson & Ralph, 2007). Jackie and Parveen perceived the role as working to support children with SEN and Jackie felt her role involved empowering pupil voice. The notion of equality and justice is supported by Maher and Vickerman (2018) who found these were important concepts of being a SENCO.

Jackie's experience of the role suggests her place on SLT provides credibility for the role (Smith & Broomhead, 2019). However, Parveen suggests this is not always the case as she expressed not feeling appreciated for her day to day work. Jackie noted that class teachers may not always understand what the SENCO role entails.

Research suggests the Inclusion Manager title is used to reflect the strategic role of SENCOs (Pearson, 2008). The shift to the title of Inclusion Manager reflects the increasing importance of the role but could also suggest an increase in complexity (Evans, 2013). Jackie and Parveen held the role of Inclusion Manager but identified themselves as SENCOs. Whereas, Samantha did not associate the SENCO role and Inclusion Manager title as interchangeable suggesting individual SENCOs can see the title differently.

### **5.3 Wider society and legislative changes influencing the SENCO role**

As previously noted in the introduction (section 1.6 and 1.8), the SENCO role is influenced by national legislation and the local context they work in. The role has been developing since the SEND COP (1994) and most recent changes have included the NASENCO course and SEND COP (2015). Alongside legislative changes there has also been an increased demand for schools to evidence effectiveness in supporting children and young people's development. The SENCOs within this research talked about their role in relation to wider context changes including the need to take on a more strategic role, pressures of achievement, the EHCP process and their perception of the EP role within this wider context. Culture, identity and gender can also play a role.

#### **5.3.1 Early intervention and identification**

Parveen was the only SENCO to directly refer to concepts around early identification and intervention. She placed an emphasis on assessment, whole school projects and interventions to support children from nursery. This experience for Parveen can be considered consistent with the focus on early intervention and prevention and could explain why she is interested in continually introducing new projects to ensure early intervention.

#### **5.3.2 Emotional wellbeing of children**

Emotional wellbeing of children within education has been a focus since the 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper' (DfE and DfH, 2017). Samantha wanted to encourage the wellbeing of children to develop their resilience, suggesting she is trying to develop her SENCO role in response to recent knowledge. In the Green Paper EPs are referred to as a service which could work collaboratively with the Mental Health Teams due to the

relationship's EPs have with schools. The Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) review (DH, 2008) and the Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, 2014) also refer to EPs delivery of therapeutic interventions in schools. Arguably EPs are well placed to support SENCOs to consider how to support the emotional wellbeing of children at a strategic whole school level as well as group or individual therapeutic work.

### **5.3.3 Whole school ways of working**

The SEND COP (2015) (DfE, 2015) suggests SENCOs hold responsibility for SEN policy and practice within schools. All SENCOs placed emphasis on creating whole school change through projects and training staff. This contrasts previous research which has suggested SENCOs did not refer to the strategic nature of their role (Cole, 2007). Parveen's interest in attending training and disseminating information and Samantha's 5-year plan highlights the shift in line with the NASENCO and the SEND COP (2015) to a strategic whole school approach to SEN (Mackenzie, 2012). Jackie seeks support from the EPS and Samantha noted access to free LA projects has been beneficial to develop whole school practice. Therefore, reinforcing the interest from these SENCOs for EP support to implement strategic change (Kelly & Gray, 2000). Jackie and Parveen noted an accumulative effect of running interventions placing increased pressure on the SENCO and staff. Parveen manages this by creating resources for staff to use.

The findings support the assertion that being on SLT can provide credibility and allow a strategic vision (Oldham & Radford, 2011). Jackie and Parveen shared the importance of having the investment of other staff in whole school projects. Parveen felt the investment of the headteacher was particularly important. Despite Samantha not being on SLT she is still able to achieve her goals due to the positive

relationship with the headteacher. This is consistent with research identified in Chapter 2 which noted the importance of working collaboratively with senior staff to ensure ideas are recognised and valued (Oldham & Radford, 2011; Szwed, 2007a; Tissot, 2013).

#### **5.3.4 Inclusive practice**

Curran (2019) applied Ball et al. (2012) policy actor and policy work framework. This can be applied in relation to the findings of this research to understand how SENCOs promote inclusive practice which is a focus of legislation such as SEND COP (2015). The SENCOs took on the ‘translator’ role by modelling practice, such as Samantha checking differentiation. Whilst Jackie and Parveen took on an ‘entrepreneur’ role by creating resources and seeking support from other professionals to develop staff skills. Samantha expressed that she has difficulties knowing how much to do herself and how much class teachers should be doing. Jackie feels fortunate that staff in her school are interested in SEN compared to previous difficulties experienced. Research suggests when SENCOs have differing priorities to class teachers (Burton and Goodman, 2010), this can impact the effectiveness of the SENCO role. Therefore, it is important SENCOs are supported to create an ethos of inclusivity which staff engage with.

#### **5.3.5 Assessment of children and schools**

The demands of proving effectiveness is suggested in government publications which recognise the need to consider the cost effectiveness of interventions (DfE, 2017). The use of time and cost of time is noted by Samantha as difficult to account for when supporting teachers and students. Jackie noted this can also place demands on her role as interruptions prevent her from being able to work effectively.

The SEND COP (2015) places an emphasis on the assess, plan, do, review processes. Within the wider education context there is arguably a pressure on the assessment of children, with Key Stage 2 results used to hold schools and teachers accountable for the progress and attainment of pupils (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2017). Parveen referred to expectations placed upon children with complex needs to achieve outcomes. Parveen felt responsible when children ‘failed’ and referred to the need to ensure correct support is in place. Parveen also referred to Ofsted and waiting for assessments, suggesting the wider pressures schools are under.

### **5.3.6 Pressure of wider contexts, comparisons and blurred boundaries**

Tucker (2015) argues anxiety within school systems arises from deep-rooted fears about future life-chances and survival, in a competitive social environment. This is especially the case when there is a reliance on children’s’ performance within the educational system. These anxieties generate a continued ‘need to do better’ which dominates schools and reflected in the narrative of the SENCOs within this research. Drawing on systems psychodynamics literature (Eloquin, 2016; Rice, 1965) it could be understood the school boundary is semi-permeable and therefore the stresses of the wider society seep into the system. This is represented by Parveen’s feelings of guilt for children not meeting expected outcomes:

*“My SEN children didn’t do very well last year. So urm...but then their starting points were really low [mm]. So they probably wouldn’t have got it any way [yeah].*

*But urm....they came out really quite badly.”(P1/266-268)*

Pressures to achieve suggest that schools are holding the wider societal and government anxiety about education (Tucker, 2015) within an increased accountability of practice. In turn headteachers (Tucker, 2015) and in this research

SENCOs, are tasked with containing the anxieties of wider systems. This can lead to projection of anxieties into children (e.g. suggesting their needs are the reason for not achieving) or a comparison with other SENCOs or professionals, as demonstrated in this research.

The pressure of wider contexts and within school systems results in blurred boundaries for SENCOs experience of their role. For example, Parveen's interview was interrupted and Jackie has previously hidden to have space from staff. Jacques (1955) identified individuals in groups can unconsciously create 'social defences', to avoid painful conflicts whilst also creating obstacles to an organisation functioning. Defences identified by Klein, such as denial and splitting can manifest themselves in organisational life as avoidance and selective blindness. Perhaps other staff within the school are using these defences and splitting off their anxieties and projecting them into the SENCOs as they are unable to cope with stress they face. This leads to constant interruptions Jackie faces and lack of containment for Parveen, impacting their role.

### **5.3.7 Changes in working context and demands of EHCP and statutory process**

As part of the SENCO role there is the responsibility of statutory processes such as EHCPs within the SEND COP (2015), annual reviews and monitoring SEN registers. Samantha recognised the challenges of maintaining a SEN register when there is a lack of information about a child. Samantha and Parveen expressed difficulties with the EHCP process and uncertainty of what paperwork to include. Since including detailed assess, plan, do, review paperwork Parveen feels more requests have been accepted. This is supported by Boesley and Crane (2018) who found that SENCOs asked about the SEND COP (2015) felt there was lack of

transparency in the process and unclear feedback about paperwork to include. A demand of the EHCP process is the lack of communication between the LA and SENCO, particularly when parental requests are made. Curran (2019) also noted that SENCOs lacked confidence in implementing the SEND COP (2015) due to a lack of guidance, suggesting they required containment from professionals or the SLT to be able to manage potential anxieties around implementing a new policy. The findings of this research, Boesley and Crane (2018) and Curran (2019) suggest SENCOs require continued support from the LA regarding EHCP processes.

The SEND COP (2015) places emphasis on joint professional working to ensure outcomes for CYP during the EHCP process. Boesley and Crane (2018) found that joint working enabled SENCOs to create outcomes with professionals to support children with SEN. Jackie noted the SEND COP (2015) has increased the number of meetings she has attended and feels they have been effective at forming outcomes. Research by Boesley and Crane (2018) noted the disparity between the amount of input from professionals and how the SENCO is positioned. Jackie's experience supports this finding as she can often be tasked with acting as the lead professional. Boesley and Crane (2018) also noted that SENCOs were required to manage parents' expectations and anxiety during the EHCP process, supporting earlier points made in the discussion regarding SENCOs in this research providing containment for parents through emotional support and by providing knowledge and reassurance.

Other challenges of the SEND COP (2015) noted by Jackie and Parveen include paperwork demands and not knowing what to include. Prior to the implementation of the SEND COP (2015) SENCOs predicted that legislative changes would increase external accountability (Pearson et al., 2015). Jackie's experience suggests this is the case:

*“I mean I was first a SENCO what 20 years ago now...urm and there’s always been accountability. But now we have to seem to do more and more evidence.” (J1/ 76-77)*

Despite challenges of the SEND COP (2015) there is the sense that the positives outweigh the challenges (Boesley & Crane, 2018). The focus on a PCP approach, which Jackie uses in Annual Reviews, has enabled a positive focus to support children with SEN. Jackie has received positive feedback from parents by taking a PCP approach. Research suggests when EPs use a PCP approach this can benefit staff and students to support inclusive practice and could be a future direction of EP work in schools (Hughes, Maclean & Stringer, 2019).

#### **5.4 EP and external professionals**

Within this research two of the SENCOs referred to the role of the EP and other external professionals. EPs and other professionals act as a form of containment for SENCOs and support them to consider a whole school strategic approach. However, Increased statutory work impacts EPs supporting SENCOs and Jackie feels in meetings SENCOs can be positioned by external professionals to take a lead role.

##### **5.4.1 Working relationships with external professionals**

Parveen noted external relationships with different professionals and her perceptions of their roles. The support Parveen receives is important and highlights joint working and support for SENCOs to reduce feelings of isolation (Evans, 2013). Parveen’s perception of the EP role is that they come in, ‘assess’ and go compared to SALT which come in every week. The pressures of statutory EHCPs also has an impact on EPs being able to work with SENCOs. Parveen’s perception reflects previous research suggesting the EP role may be seen as a “gatekeeper” for special educational resources and providing ‘expert’ assessments (Fallon, Woods & Rooney,

2010; Miller & Frederickson, 2006). This contradicts the views of Jackie who refers to seeking strategic support from the EPS.

#### **5.4.2 Joint professional working and generating ideas**

Parveen and Samantha referred to the benefits of joint working with professionals. Bion's (1961) concepts of groups can be considered in relation to 'basic assumption' and 'working group'. The multi-agency meeting Jackie is referring to appears to be on task. Jackie seems to suggest that the differences in how roles are perceived can position her to take up the role of organiser:

*“Urm but again I would say...that in some ways has been more of a pressure on the SENCO role because you do find health professionals won't take the lead.”(J1/82-83)*

It could be that the meetings can also shift to 'basic assumption' of 'dependency' upon SENCOs as professionals may be uncertain about the school context (Bion, 1961). It is helpful to think about group processes so that EPs can understand how the SENCO role may be positioned within groups.

#### **5.5 Wider school systems influence on SENCO role**

The SENCOs referred to their role in relation to the school systems they work within and the pressures which can impact their role. Factors such as additional roles, demands of the role, frustration where time is spent, management role and leadership and relationship with SLT were considered important. All the SENCOs in this research referred to their role taking a more strategic position. Individual contexts of school systems led to Samantha and Parveen referring to school governors. Parveen also noted the influence of EAL within the school system and wider society within her SENCO working context.

### **5.5.1 Additional roles**

Research suggests primary school SENCOs may hold additional roles such as co-ordinator of subjects, deputy headteacher or headteacher (Cowne, 2005; Szwed, 2007a). Parveen expressed the challenges of juggling seven different roles. Whilst Jackie felt her additional role as assistant headteacher provided her with credibility. The SENCO workforce survey which found 78% of SENCOs felt other roles meant they were unable to carry out their SENCO role effectively (Curran et al., 2018). Therefore, the school context the SENCOs work within could influence the number of additional roles they hold and how effectively they can carry out their role.

### **5.5.2 Demands of the role**

The demands of the role in this research included lack of time. Jackie and Parveen work longer hours to manage workloads and Jackie expressed frustration carrying out administration tasks. Lack of time is a recurring theme across the research (Rosen-Webb, 2011; Tissot, 2013). The SENCO workload survey found 74% of SENCOs felt they did not have enough time to ensure they provide provision SEN children require (Curran et al., 2018). Legally protected time for the role was desired by 95% of SENCOs (Curran et al., 2018). SEND COP (2015) (DfE, 2015) recognises SENCOs require 'sufficient time' to carry out the role. It can be argued difficult to define how much time would be 'sufficient', especially as the individual SENCO context and number of additional roles they hold varies. It could be that pressures of the wider school system to be time effective and manage different roles influences the SENCO role and how effective they feel they can be. Whereas, if SLT in schools ensured protected time for SENCOs this could help them to feel more effective with managing the multifaceted nature of the role.

Parveen and Samantha manage demands by making lists and prioritising. They value support from colleagues, suggesting administration support for SENCOs could be a helpful resource. Despite the challenges Parveen enjoys being a SENCO, suggesting she is referring to a 'buzz' associated with the role noted by Mackenzie (2012 p.156).

### **5.5.3 Frustration where time spent**

Jackie referred to the SENCO experience as frustrating when balancing direct work with meetings which she feels have little impact. She noted at certain points in the year there are greater pressures. For example, in September having a new intake of students and writing pupil premium reports. This suggests SENCOs experience demands day to day which interrupt their role (Pearson, 2008), but also at different points in the school year. It could be helpful for EPs to be aware of the pressure points so that they can understand when SENCOs may require further support.

### **5.5.4 Management role and leadership**

Another aspect of the SENCO role included management and being on SLT. Research by Oldham and Radford (2011) suggested SENCOs felt being on SLT provided them with credibility, this view was shared by Jackie who felt her position on SLT enabled her to lead staff to support inclusive practice and reassure parents. Jackie and Parveen, in the role the longest, were on SLT whilst Samantha was not. This supports Tissot's (2013) findings that SENCOs were more likely to be in leadership positions when they had been in the role for 5-14 years. Research carried out recently by Curran (2019) suggests SENCOs who were not on SLT did not view this as a barrier to implementing new policy practice from the SEND COP (2015). Samantha supports this finding as she feels her positive relationship with the headteacher still enables her to carry out her role.

### **5.5.5 SENCO role and relationship with SLT**

It is important to consider the form of containment SENCOs experience to manage the emotional aspect of their role and the demands they face as described in the previous section. It was noted in this research that the SENCOs talked about important factors impacting their role included their relationship with SLT.

Evans (2013) research suggested it is important SLT in schools continue to place SENCOs at the centre of the school. In this research positive relationships with SLT staff, particularly the headteacher, were identified as important. Constructive relationships with senior staff has previously been found to ensure the SENCO voice is heard and a sense of collaborative working (Oldham & Radford, 2011; Szwed, 2007a; Tissot, 2013). When senior leaders have a poor understanding of the SENCO role it creates challenges for SENCOs and leads to increased workload (Mackenzie, 2009). Samantha feels her headteacher respects the SENCO role and recognises the demands she faces. Parveen refers to difficulties of working relationships with senior staff and feels she is not always included. Consequently, support and understanding from senior leadership is important to enable SENCOs to carry out their role.

During the interviews I provided a form of containment as I often found myself taking on the frustrations of the SENCOs (Klein, 1946). This research reinforces the need to support the emotional wellbeing of SENCOs through support such as supervision as outlined by Evans (2013).

### **5.5.6 Writing governors reports and relationships with governors**

Samantha and Parveen talked about working with governors. Parveen noted governors might attend training but do not have any direct involvement. This was echoed by Samantha who expressed disappointment at the lack of feedback and input from governors regarding the governors reports she creates. This was not mentioned

by the other two SENCOs, suggesting for Samantha that this type of work is important to her. It could be helpful in future to explore how to support the working relationships with governors.

### **5.5.7 Focusing on supporting EAL students**

The individual experience of SENCOs and the multifaceted nature of their role can be seen within Parveen's context working with EAL, not noted by the other SENCOs and reflecting the expanding role (Crowther et al., 2001). Parveen aims to ensure equality and respect of cultures by finding translators for parents and learning about the family.

## **5.6 Working relationships at different levels and emotional wellbeing: parents, children, staff and SENCOs**

A key concept identified in the findings was the role of SENCOs in forming relationships with others and providing containment. All the SENCOs in this research recognised and placed importance on forming relationships with SLT, parents and staff. This is reflective of research by Maher and Vickerman (2018) suggesting a central part of the SENCO role is forming relationships at the internal (within school) and external (parents and professionals) level.

### **5.6.1 Direct work with children**

The findings from this research and previous (e.g. Mackenzie, 2012) suggest SENCOs are shifting into a strategic position in line with the SEND COP (2015) and NASENCO award:

*'...work with senior colleagues and governors to advise on and influence the strategic development of an inclusive ethos, policies, priorities and practices... [and] take a leadership role in promoting a whole school culture...'* (TDA, 2009, pp. 2–4)

The shift to the SENCOs working more strategically has led to less time working directly with children. However, Samantha felt it was still important to have contact with children and understand their perspective to promote pupil voice. Whilst Jackie feels teachers seek her input to help calm children. Research by Burton and Goodman (2011) refers to SENCOs supporting children with SEMH by creating providing a nurturing environment to support their emotional wellbeing. Therefore, SENCOs continue to provide direct containment for children, though at times they may be providing containment from a distance by supporting those around the child (e.g. the parent or staff).

### **5.6.2 Relationships with parents and supporting their emotional wellbeing**

Consistent with research by Rosen-Webb (2011) the SENCOs talked about forming relationships with parents which are built on being honest, open and transparent. The SENCOs appeared to take on different roles when working with parents, such as: supporting anxious parents, supporting through the diagnosis process and providing strategies and knowledge. Therefore, the role can be considered in relation to Reed's (2001) concept of person 'in role' and how the SENCOs in this research took up different roles when working with parents.

Samantha expressed the importance of listening to parents to ensure they feel valued. Samantha referred to supporting parents through the diagnosis process. A psychoanalytically informed perspective suggests the SENCOs provide parents with containment, allowing them to process the 'mourning' of the 'idealised child' (Hugger, 2009).

Jackie placed an emphasis on supporting anxious parents and felt her work might be more focused on parents than the children. She feels that if parents are not

confident in the SENCO or school then children can pick up on this and subsequently their learning can be impacted.

*“Because I think if a parent has got confidence in you...the child will know that the parent has got confidence in you. And therefore, that impacts positively on their learning and achievement. Whereas I think if there is any hint that the parent feels you’re not supporting their child enough [mm]. The child can pick up on that [mm] in a sense and then they won’t do so well.” (J1/387-391)*

This can be considered in relation to psychoanalytic concepts such as projection defined by Klein (1946). Where parental anxieties are projected into their child meaning the child then takes on their worries and anxieties. Therefore, Jackie in her SENCO role can be considered as containing the emotions of the parents by putting interventions in place for them to feel reassured about the support their child is receiving.

Another way SENCOs talked about supporting parents is by providing them with knowledge and strategies which they can use. Male (1996) suggests knowledge and skills are needed to carry out the SENCO role effectively. Jackie noted parents can often feel anxious because they do not have the knowledge or experience of children with SEN. Therefore, providing knowledge and strategies can help parents to feel less anxious. Parveen often referred to her role and the school as providing parents with knowledge and strategies. She noted the cultural differences around education and how she may discuss the differences with the curriculum in England. Jackie placed an importance on experience, which she feels provides credibility in her role and gives parents reassurance. Jackie and Samantha have created parent groups to provide parents with a support network to develop parent’s confidence. The SENCO role in providing strategies and knowledge could be considered a way of them supporting parents to manage the challenges and unknown.

Although the SENCOs predominantly spoke about the positives of forming relationships with parents, they also recognised some challenges. Challenges identified in parent relationships included parents not understanding the role. Curran (2019, p.85) noted within the current context SENCOs can be placed ‘in the middle’ of resource decisions, which Jackie and Samantha found challenging leading Jackie to have a sense of guilt.

### **5.6.3 Relationships with staff and supporting their emotional wellbeing**

Each SENCO talked about their relationships with staff differently, suggesting an influence of their individual contexts. Samantha wanted to ensure a sense of teamwork and have respect from staff. She noted staff may seek her for emotional support compared to the male SLT and she makes sure she is available for others. Jackie felt staff were over dependent upon her and do not use their initiative, suggesting within her working context she is required to support and empower staff to become more confident. Whereas, Parveen expressed difficulties forming staff relationships due to time constraints, though she valued the practical and emotional support.

Research suggests teaching is ranked consistently as a high stress profession (Naghieh, Montgomery, Bonell, Thompson & Aber, 2015). Between 2014-2015 in the UK teachers were identified as having the highest rates of occupational stress (HSE, 2016). Samantha ensures she prioritises staff wellbeing as she noted their wellbeing influences their teaching:

*“Because at the end of the day those teachers have got to be able to teach. So their wellbeing [mm] is as important.” (S1/424-427)*

Samantha openly takes on the role of providing emotional support and shared her volunteer experience helps her to listen to staff, enabling them to make sense of

their emotions. A psychoanalytically informed perspective suggests Samantha acts as a form of containment for staff by enabling them to process and make sense of their emotions and ultimately support them to be effective in their role (Bion, 1963).

Without Samantha's support staff could find it difficult to make sense of how they are feeling and their responses to the children they work with. Subsequently teaching staff may not develop skills in being reflective in their practice (Evans, 2013). This is supported by Evans (2013) research which suggests SENCOs are key figures who are susceptible to the feelings of children and staff they work with. Therefore, the SENCO is a key figure in containing these emotions for others within the school system.

Another way the SENCOs talked about supporting staff included providing knowledge and creating a safe culture to use a 'trial and error' approach. Jackie tries to model a culture of 'not knowing' as acceptable, which reflects the concepts of being secure within a containing figure to manage the unknown (Bion, 1963). Youell (2006) suggests children with special needs become a 'magnet for projections from teachers, support workers and peers.' Jackie acts as a form of containment for both parents and teachers who have anxieties about not knowing how to support a child with SEN. Jackie feels her role on SLT provides her with credibility for staff to feel confident to also express when they do not know how to do something.

Overall, there was the notion that SENCOs require positive working relationships with staff to be effective in their role (Burton & Goodman, 2010) and that they are the point of contact for practical and emotional support.

### **5.7 Demands SENCOs face and need for containment**

Evans (2013) noted the powerful projections SENCOs are exposed to and the support they require to process and make sense of them. As visualised in the model I have

proposed (Figure 3), the SENCO almost acts as the ‘brain’ centre within the school system, taking in the emotions of others and processing them to pass them back in a more manageable way. I therefore consider the SENCO role integral to supporting the school system and subsequently children within the school.

### **5.7.1 SENCO emotional wellbeing and avoidance of worries**

The SENCOs own emotional wellbeing and how to manage this was a theme for Samantha and Parveen. Samantha recognised the importance of being resilient and needing to cope. Research suggests SENCOs are more likely to experience extreme emotions (positive and negative) than class teachers (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Mackenzie, 2012). Managing emotions, hiding emotions, and experiencing hostility from pupils and colleagues are thought to impact the wellbeing of SENCOs (Mackenzie, 2012; Evans, 2013). Evans (2013, p.291) noted that SENCOs are responsible for the most vulnerable children in schools and are often recipients of powerful emotions from staff and children, leaving them feeling ‘not good enough’.

As noted in the findings although Samantha talked about creating a culture of it being ‘okay to not be okay’ she described herself as resilient and not being stressed.

*“I do get stressed, but I never show it. I don’t know if that’s because I don’t know how that feels. It probably feels that very occasionally I’m not going to get on top of this.” (S2/582-585)*

Perhaps she acted as a source of containment for others by avoiding her own emotions. This can be considered in relation to Bion’s model (1963) of container/contained which suggests the more resilient the container the more stresses and unprocessed feelings they can contain and think about.

The SENCOs expressed feeling uncomfortable with the idea of open questions and freely talking about their experience. It appeared there was a need to

‘do things right’ suggesting perhaps an avoidance from expressing themselves openly or due to them being interviewed. For example, Samantha described herself as waffling and wanted to ensure I had what I needed. During the second interview when provided with questions based on the first interview this appeared to reassure them. Parveen noted the experience of open questions does not happen within the school context due to time constraints:

*“It’s probably because we’re not used to that...Nope don’t have time at all. You don’t have time to actually ask someone how their holiday was. I mean you might say I hope you had a lovely holiday and it’s just a yes or no question. Not to have lovely nice open-ended questions...Yet we’re supposed to be teaching the children and asking them lovely nice open-ended questions.” (P2/25-34)*

Parveen’s reflections suggest the wider school context and time pressures mean the organisation is potentially avoiding providing a space for reflection. This is supported by Evans (2013) findings which noted SENCOs are often in ‘survival mode’ and do not have time to think and reflect and process their daily experiences. Salzberger-Wittenberg (1983) (as cited in Evans, 2013, pp.299-300) suggests that to manage the emotional experience we need to work hard to not be overwhelmed and should be interested in what feelings are evoked in us. The capacity to stop and think is important and something which SENCOs in the research expressed they may not have time to do or perhaps avoid. Evans (2013) argues SENCOs require access to reflective consultation to provide the reflective thinking time.

Samantha commented she had not thought about the first interview:

*“Do you know what I didn’t. Which I don’t know whether that’s a good thing [slight laugh].. We have had a lot of staff sickness over the last two weeks [okay] So I can’t say I went away thinking oh I didn’t say this I didn’t say that.” (S2/5-11)*

This highlights time pressures SENCOs continually refer to. Drawing upon Klein's (1946) concept of the 'paranoid schizoid' state, it could be understood that they were projecting the 'bad' into the lack of time available to them. Use of a psychosocial method in this research allowed a space for the unconscious experiences of the SENCOs to be elicited without the constraints they face within their role. The use of psychoanalytically informed analysis is supported by Evans (2013) research. Evans (2013) use of psychoanalytically informed consultancy allowed Evans to be aware of countertransference responses to contain the SENCOs anxiety and their staff, enabling them to be aware of the unconscious processes they experienced. This highlights the importance of emotional support and recognition to promote SENCO wellbeing. External supervision could support SENCOs to process their emotions and difficulties within schools (Evans, 2013; Mackenzie, 2012).

### **5.7.2 Isolated role and support networks**

All SENCOS noted the importance of networks for support and sharing strategies. Evans (2013) suggests forums can counter feelings of isolation and support SENCOs to feel more confident in their role, which could be due to opportunities to share practice (Wedell, 2012). This is relevant for the experience of Jackie who feels isolated and confirms the importance of having support from other SENCOs:

*“So I think one of the things is that it is actually quite an isolated role.....Whereas class teachers work together as the SENCO there is only the one of you in the school.” (J1/118-119)*

Evans (2013) supports Jackie's feelings of isolation by recognising the issue of belonging being central to the complex SENCO role. Research by Burton and Goodman (2011) found SENCOs working with children with SEMH needs did not feel valued by other staff, suggesting the importance of positive relationships and

containment of SENCOs to avoid feelings of isolation. Lewis and Ogilvie (2003) noted SENCOs utilised forms of support outside of SENCO forums. In this research Parveen referred to seeking support from her colleagues and Samantha valued the support of the LA including training and whole school project support.

The SENCOs within this research used words such as ‘love’ when describing their role:

*“There isn’t a day I think I don’t want to come to work. And that’s really lovely. I can honestly say there hasn’t been one day in the last 4 years when I’ve woken up in the morning and thought I don’t want to go.” (J1/633-636)*

They also referred to words such as ‘lost’ when describing not having the EP time:

*“So EP is coming in tomorrow [okay] But she can only manage one child. So I said please can you observe one and assess one as well [mm] ....so we will see what she says....Because our children keep getting left. Because of all the statutory EHCs [mm] she wasn’t able to come in in January...So we lost a month of her.” (P1/730-734)*

The SENCOs use of emotive and descriptive words highlights the emotional experience of their role. The notion of loss which Parveen refers to suggests that the impact of the wider society on the EP role means that the EP relationship with SENCOs can weaken. This could also be argued to be seen by EP recruitment and capacity difficulties which means there may not be a consistent link EP for schools. This could arguably have implications for how contained a SENCO may feel if they do not experience a consistent relationship with a link EP.

As argued by Evans (2013), for SENCOs to contain and support children (and others) they first need to experience feeling contained and supported. Therefore,

internal and external support networks are important in order to provide SENCOs with a sense of containment and mitigate potential feelings of isolation. Evans (2013)

### **5.8 Implications for EP Practice**

Implications from the findings for EP practice can be considered in terms of supporting SENCOs to carry out their responsibilities ensuring a strategic approach to inclusion, manage the new SEND COP (2015) context and support SENCO emotional wellbeing. The use of a psychoanalytically informed perspective when working with SENCOs can also help EPs to recognise unconscious processes happening in their interactions with SENCOs and make sense of the countertransference. Based on the findings of this research, the model proposed can be used by EPs and other professionals to understand the SENCO role in providing containment for others and how the EP role and other external professionals can provide containment for SENCOs to manage the emotional experience, wider school system and wider societal context which influences their role.

SENCOs in this research placed an emphasis on working strategically through implementation of whole school projects and staff training. EPs are well placed to continue to support SENCOs to assess, plan and review the SEN of children and improve the quality of school provision through evidence-based practice (Fox, 2003).

SENCOs within this research referred to the benefits and challenges of the new SEND COP (2015). The research could therefore inform the work of LA and how EPs engage and support joint outcomes meetings. The use of a PCP approach was noted in research as aiding multi-agency working (Boesley & Crane, 2018). EPs could support schools to use PCP practice to ensure positive outcomes for CYP (Hughes et al., 2019).

This research and previous research recognise the complexity of the SENCO role and demands they face suggesting they could benefit from external support to discuss their work (Evans, 2013). It is important for EPs to consider organisational structures SENCOs work within and how wider society and school anxieties can influence SENCOs work.

Peer supervision is one approach which can be useful supporting staff wellbeing (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Many helping professions have access to peer supervision (Hawkins, Shohet, Ryde & Wilmot, 2012) but it does not appear to be a common resource for SENCOs (Burton and Goodman, 2011). As professionals with experience in supervision (Callicot & Leadbetter, 2013), and the training of school staff (Farrell et al., 2006), EPs are well placed to assist with the development of this practice. EPs could apply psychoanalytically informed concepts, referred to in this research, through work discussion groups to support SENCOs to make sense of their emotional responses to the work (Jackson, 2008). Evans (2013) notes that psychoanalytic skills needed for effective consultation require personal resilience, understanding of group processes, of projections and interpersonal relationships. Emil Jackson's (2008) paper 'The development of work discussion groups in educational settings' could be a resource for EPs to refer to. EPs themselves would also require continued supervision to maintain their capacity to reflect and think about the projections they experience from the SENCOs (Evans, 2013).

### **5.9 Strengths and Limitations**

The use of the FANI method allowed an exploration of the SENCOs' experience by considering the individual psychological perspectives. A strength of the current study is the use of a scenic understanding approach to support reflexivity.

Using a scenic understanding (refer to example in Appendix K) approach and countertransference has helped me to make sense of data gathered from interviews. I have prioritised the participant data, though I have referred to my own response to the interviews and impact of my own experiences on the interviews. The use of scenic understanding approach to support a psychoanalytically informed analysis is evidence of value added to the current research base. Though Evans (2013) refers to process consultancy notes there is no direct evidence of this. Taking a scenic understanding approach encourages the narrative to be written descriptively connected to the physical and emotional process (Hollway, 2011; Hollway & Froggett, 2013). Therefore, the approach recognises the affective qualities of an interaction and enables the researcher's experience to be considered by others as additional findings to support key concepts identified (Froggett & Hollway, 2010).

In addition, incorporating findings from the thematic analysis and the key concept of containment identified in the psychoanalytically informed analysis, has allowed me to create a model reflective of key findings across both levels of analysis. I feel this extends the current literature base as it provides a clear way for EPs and others who view the model to understand the SENCO role from a more direct level of what they do and the unconscious role of containment they provide and require.

Study of the unconscious raises' considerations in relation to feedback and ethics. Unconscious reflections require sensitivity in feeding back findings to participants. I have offered to provide feedback to participants upon completion. It is important to ensure findings are presented in a manner that is helpful to participants and does not undermine them. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) recognise the importance of compassion in research of this nature. It is important to remember that

we can all be defended and experience anxieties in many different aspects of our roles.

A limitation of this study could be that psychosocial methods and psychoanalytically informed analysis within EP research is still in its infancy. There is no 'gold standard' for the methodology. All qualitative research has some risk that participants may share the narrative they think wants to be heard. All participants expressed feeling uncomfortable with the open interview approach. I attempted to relieve anxiety by explaining I wanted to hear their experience. My previous relationship with two of the SENCOs could have helped to reassure them or acted as a barrier to my interpretations and how much they felt they could share with me. I acknowledge that our previous relationships might have influenced the interviews. This is recognised in my reflexive notes and scenic understanding. In the real-world relationships with SENCOs and EPs evolve over time and I feel it relevant to include them. Further research could explore the relationship between EPs and SENCOs by using a psychoanalytically informed approach to understand the dynamics at play and how this may influence an EPs work.

Although I do not aim for this research to be generalisable, a limitation could be that there were only three SENCOs involved. Though previous research applying psychoanalytic concepts has included two case studies (Pellegrini, 2010). Additional SENCOs were sought but time constraints meant they could not be involved. This is interesting to consider regarding the psychoanalytic reflection of time as a defence.

The analysis involved a thematic analysis and psychoanalytically informed analysis. Future explorations could consider the male and female roles in schools and

the role of ethnicity, raised by Parveen, in relationships and the unconscious implications for the SENCO role could also be explored.

### 5.10 Reflections

Taking a psychosocial approach and applying psychoanalytically informed concepts has allowed me to explore SENCO experiences which fits with my EP training. The approach is consistent with the EP role which considers the interrelatedness between individuals and social worlds to hypotheses and inform interventions when working with CYP, families and schools.

I found thematic analysis difficult due to the breadth of information gathered. I experienced tension condensing themes, whilst ensuring I captured the essence of what each individual SENCO was trying to communicate.

As a researcher I have experienced psychoanalytically informed supervision enabling me to consider the relational nature of the interviews, which I valued and supported my analysis. I was aware I wanted to provide the SENCOs with a space to share their experiences. In supervision I explored this to gain an alternative perspective:

*‘The reason why I may not have wanted to interrupt the SENCOs is because I wanted to allow them the space to express themselves. In supervision it is difficult to talk about whether I value my views compared to these experienced SENCOs and if this is in part why I may stay quiet. I knew two of the SENCOs and wondered if for them I allowed more space as I felt more comfortable or perhaps had a relationship with them to build upon. I’m left wondering if I created the space because the SENCOs needed it based on how they interacted or if it was my own difficulties with taking up authority as a researcher.’ (Reflexive note)*

Participants were asked to reflect on their interview experience. Jackie found it helpful reflecting on her practice. Parveen expressed she was not used to the open

questions asked. The comments they provided suggests the space allowed for reflection which SENCOs may not always access. As a researcher it was interesting to hear the SENCOs talk about the complexity of their role and consider my own role as researcher trying to make sense and capture the complexity of what they were sharing. Whilst writing my thesis I often found it difficult to manage the complexity of the work. It could be that the countertransference experience with the SENCOs was playing out in my role as researcher.

### **5.11 Future Research**

Smith and Broomhead (2019) argue it is important to continue to reflect on the SENCO role, particularly within the changing context. Future research could be undertaken with SENCOs who work in secondary schools exploring their experiences within the different school systems.

This study used a psychosocial approach to explore primary school SENCOs experience of their role. It contributes to the growing field of psychoanalytically informed EP literature, covering a diverse range of areas including: critical incidents in schools (Greenway, 2005); family-school consultation (Pellegrini, 2010); organisational change (Clarke, 2014); teacher supervision (Hulusi and Maggs, 2015) and work with school leadership teams (Eloquin, 2016). Future research could build upon literature available and explore a psychoanalytic perspective to understand how SENCOs and EPs interact with each other. SENCOs are a link contact for EPs within schools (Farrell et al., 2006), so it is important to continue to develop and understand how to improve working relationships ultimately supporting CYP.

## 5.12 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the primary school SENCOs experience of their role in their current working context. The insight gained from this research can inform EP practice in terms of how relationships are formed with SENCOs, support them to act out their role and use of psychoanalytic concepts in their work.

Three primary school SENCOs from a greater London LA were recruited. Participants were interviewed twice using the FANI method. This provided participants a space to freely speak about their SENCO experience by sharing what was most relevant to them. The psychosocial ontology and epistemology allowed me to consider participants in context and account for my role as researcher. Psychosocial supervision supported my data collection and analysis.

The first stage of analysis involved a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The analysis involved inductive coding from which key themes emerged such as: multifaceted nature of the role, changes in working context and demands of the EHCP process, assessment of children and schools, knowledge and experience, emotional wellbeing, isolated role and support networks. The next stage involved a psychoanalytically informed analysis and the use of scenic understandings identified concepts defined by Klein and Bion such as: containment, splitting, projection and groups theory. The discussion made sense of themes from the thematic analysis, psychoanalytically informed analysis related to unconscious defences against anxiety and current literature. The reflexive nature and application of scenic understanding is a strength of this research because it allowed me to consider the rich data acquired.

This research reinforces previous findings highlighting the complexity and multifaceted nature of the SENCO role, with a shift to a more strategic focus. It

suggests despite challenges the SEND COP (2015) has provided opportunities for SENCOs to take up a strategic role. SENCOs continue to face time demands which impact the effectiveness of their role. They continue to develop working relationships at different levels and the importance of a positive relationship with headteachers is integral. The emotional wellbeing of SENCOs and staff was noted, and SENCOs may seek support from SENCO networks. The psychoanalytically informed interpretation of the findings suggest containment and pressures from wider systems can influence unconscious experiences of SENCOs, who appear to act as a form of containment for others in the school system. The SENCO role can be isolating for SENCOs who do not have other teachers or SENCO support networks. SENCOs continue to provide containment for children, parents, teachers and the school system. If SENCOs are isolated in a school system without support this can impact upon their role. However, if they have a supportive and containing school system (e.g. positive relationship with SLT), SENCO support, EP support and external professionals they are supported to carry out their role effectively.

Implications for practice include supporting SENCOs to carry out strategic work, the recognition of the impact of school systems (e.g. if a SENCO is on SLT and their relationship with SLT) and support for the emotional wellbeing of SENCOs and school staff. This is supported by the work of Evans (2013) which recognises the importance of consultancy for SENCOs using a psychoanalytically informed approach to allow them to develop their reflective skills and process the emotional experience of the role. The psychoanalytically informed approach used within this research could be applied in EP practice to enrich thinking and reflexive skills. Recommendations for future research include carrying out similar research with secondary school SENCOs to extend the current literature. Research could also

explore the support in place for SENCOs and the use of an approach such as work discussion groups, providing containment for SENCOs to process complexities of their role and ultimately support parents, teachers and CYP.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Attempted search for psychosocial and psychoanalytic concepts in relation to the SENCO experience

<input type="checkbox"/>	S5	S1 AND S2	Limiters - Published Date: 20010101-20131231	<a href="#">View Results (2)</a>	<a href="#">View Details</a>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	S4	S1 AND S2	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (2)</a>	<a href="#">View Details</a>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	S3	psychoanalytic OR psychoanalysis OR psychosocial	Limiters - Published Date: 20010101-20191231	<a href="#">View Results (178,774)</a>	<a href="#">View Details</a>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	S2	psychoanalytic OR psychoanalysis OR psychosocial	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (320,109)</a>	<a href="#">View Details</a>	<a href="#">Edit</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	S1	SENCO OR Special Educational Needs Coordinator OR Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator OR Inclusion Manager	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	<a href="#">View Results (555)</a>	<a href="#">View Details</a>	<a href="#">Edit</a>

**Refine Results**

Current Search

**Boolean/Phrase:**  
S1 AND S2

**Limiters**  
Published Date:  
20010101-20131231

Limit To

Linked Full Text

References Available

Peer Reviewed

2013 Publication Date 2013

Search Results: 1 - 2 of 2

Date Newest ▾ Page Options ▾ [Share](#) ▾

Note: Exact duplicates removed from the results.

1. **Editorial.**

By: Bailey, Teresa; Stratton, Kate. Journal of Child Psychotherapy, Dec2013, Vol. 39 Issue 3, p267-268, 2p; DOI: 10.1080/0075417X.2013.846574, Database: Education Source

An introduction is presented in which the editor discusses topics in the issue, such as research in **psychoanalytic** theory, writing grant applications for a U.S. National Institute of Health resea...

**Subjects:** Special education teachers; National Institutes of Health (U.S.); Psychoanalysis

[HTML Full Text](#) [PDF Full Text \(67KB\)](#)

2. **From exclusion to inclusion; Supporting Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators to keep children in mainstream education: A qualitative psychoanalytic research project.**

Francis, Annalee. Journal of Child Psychotherapy, Vol 39(3), Dec 2013, pp 298-302. Publisher: Taylor & Francis. 1 Journal Article. Database: PsycINFO

### Appendix B. Search terms applied

Search terms applied for literature review and number of papers retrieved from databases.

	<b>SENCO</b>	<b>SENCO terms + Search Terms (1)</b>	<b>SENCO + Search Terms (2)</b>
<b>Database</b>	SENCO OR Special Educational Needs Coordinator OR Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator OR Inclusion Manager	Voice OR Perspective OR Experience* OR View OR Opinion OR Understanding	School OR System OR Role OR Person in role OR Position OR Title OR Job
<b>Education Source</b>	196	70	172
<b>ERIC</b>	55	33	86
<b>PsycINFO</b>	108	52	93
<b>Number of records after duplicates removed and Inclusion/exclusion criteria applied</b>	18	8	16
<b>Number of records once duplicates across searches and those unable to be sourced were removed</b>	17		

### Appendix C. Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
Published in the English Language	Studies not published in the English Language	Time constraints do not allow for articles to be translated
Journal articles	Editorials, book reviews, unpublished work, literature reviews	Journal articles will provide published work relevant to the literature review questions
Published in English Language and in the United Kingdom	Published outside of UK	Differences in policies and legislation across different countries and differences in education systems.
Published 2001- 2017	Research published before 2001	To reflect legislation changes (e.g. Children and Families Act (2014), SEND Code of practice: 0 to 25 (2015) and NASENCO training (2009)
Literature with includes SENCOs. The SENCOs can be from different school settings (e.g. primary, secondary, specialist provision)	Literature which does not include SENCOs. Literature where the focus is on how others perceive the SENCO role.	This review aims to explore the SENCOs perceptions of their role and their place within the school system. The review will look at SENCOs who work across different school settings to understand whether there is a setting (e.g. primary schools) which is lacking research.
Literature on the SENCO role within school e.g. their place on senior leadership teams and how this links to their experience of the role	Literature which does not refer to SENCOs perceptions about their role in relation to their position in the school	To understand the SENCO role it is also important to consider the systems they work within and how this may influence their role (e.g. if they are on SLT within schools)

### Appendix D. Articles excluded

*Articles excluded based on inclusion and exclusion criteria for SENCO search based on titles and abstracts*

Reference:	Reason for exclusion:
Abbott, L. (2007). Northern Ireland Special Educational Needs Coordinators Creating Inclusive Environments: An Epic Struggle. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 22(4), 391-407.	Carried out in Northern Ireland which is a different context to the focus of the present study, which is carried out in England.
Abbott, L., McConkey, R., & Dobbins, M. (2011). Key Players in Inclusion: Are We Meeting the Professional Needs of Learning Support Assistants for Pupils with Complex Needs?. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 26(2), 215-231.	Focus is more on the training LSAs require and SENCOs perspective on this.
Barnes, P. (2008). Multi-Agency Working: What Are the Perspectives of SENCOs and Parents regarding Its Development and Implementation?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 35(4), 230-240.	Focuses on SENCO and parents perspectives of multiagency working, not on the SENCO role.
Bedford, J., Goddard, G., Obadan, F., & Mowat, P. (2006). How Gaining Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status Impacts on the Teaching Assistant's Role in English Schools. <i>Management In Education</i> , 20(1), 6-10.	Focus on HLTA role
Brown, J. & Doveston, M. (2014). Short sprint or an endurance test: the perceived impact of the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination. <i>Teacher Development</i> , 18(4), 495–510	Focus is on the National SENCO Award and the effectiveness of the award, rather than the SENCO role in practice.
Curran, H., Mortimore, T., & Riddell, R. (2017). Special Educational Needs and Disabilities reforms 2014: SENCOs' perspectives of the first six months. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 44(1), 46–64	Focus is on the SEND COP implementations rather than the SENCO experience of the changes.
Cole, B. A. (2005). Mission impossible? Special educational needs, inclusion and the re-conceptualization of the role of the SENCO in England and Wales. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 20(3), 287–307	Predominantly a review. Limited reference to the survey carried out and no clear method taken.
Davies, J. D., & Lee, J. (2001). Learning from Experience or Just Meeting Standards? The Future of Continuing Professional Development Provision for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators. <i>Journal Of In-Service Education</i> , 27(2), 261-74.	Focus is on SENCO CPD rather than the experience of their role in practice.
Devecchi, C., & Rouse, M. (2010). An Exploration of the Features of Effective Collaboration between Teachers and Teaching Assistants in Secondary Schools. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 25(2), 91-99.	About staff relationships not the SENCO role.
Dimitriadis, C., & Georgeson, J. (2018). Provision for Mathematically Able Children in Primary Schools: A Review of Practice Five Years after England Dropped the Gifted and Talented Initiative. <i>Educational Review</i> , 70(3), 358-380.	Focuses on provision for children and implications for the SENCO role rather than the SENCOs experience of their role.
Done, E. J., Murphy, M., & Knowler, H. (2015). Mandatory Accreditation for Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators: Biopolitics, Neoliberal Managerialism and the Deleuzo-Guattarian "War Machine". <i>Journal Of Education Policy</i> , 30(1), 86-100.	Not about SENCO experience.
Done, E., Murphy, M., & Bedford, C. (2016). Change Management and the SENCO Role: Developing Key Performance Indicators of Inclusivity. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 31(1), 13-26.	Focus is on how SEN designated pupils are supported through universal provision and whether classrooms are set up appropriately.
Done, L., Murphy, M., & Watt, M. (2016). Change Management and the SENCO Role: Developing Key Performance Indicators in the Strategic Development of Inclusivity. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 31(4), 281-295.	Focus is on performance indicators and how the measure SEND targets. Although this is part of the SENCO role it does not focus on SENCO s experiences of their role or leadership.

Emam, M. M., & Farrell, P. (2009). Tensions Experienced by Teachers and Their Views of Support for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Mainstream Schools. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 24(4), 407-422.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Frankl, C. (2005). Managing Individual Education Plans: reducing the load of the special educational needs coordinator. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(2), 77-82	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Gerschel, L. (2005). The special educational needs coordinator's role in managing teaching assistants: the Greenwich perspective. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(2), 69-76	Not specifically focusing on SENCO experience of their role.
Glazzard, J. (2013). Resourced Provision: The Impact of Inclusive Practices on a Mainstream Primary School. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 28(3), 92-96.	About the resource provision rather than the SENCO experience of their role.
Golder, G., Norwich, B., & Bayliss, P. (2005). Preparing Teachers to Teach Pupils with Special Educational Needs in More Inclusive Schools: Evaluating a PGCE Development. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 32(2), 92-99.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Goodwin, J. (2011). The SENCO survival guide, by Sylvia Edwards. <i>Emotional &amp; Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 16(4), 442-444. doi:10.1080/13632752.2011.616362	A book review.
Gray, C. (2009). A Qualitatively Different Experience: Mainstreaming Pupils with a Visual Impairment in Northern Ireland. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 24(2), 169-182.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Griffiths, D., & Dubsky, R. (2012). Evaluating the Impact of the New National Award for SENCos: Transforming Landscapes or Gardening in a Gale?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 39(4), 164-172.	Aim of the research is to evaluate National Award for SENCos.
Howe, J., & Ball, H. (2017). An Exploratory Study of Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators' Knowledge and Experience of Working with Children Who Have Sustained a Brain Injury. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 32(1), 85-100.	Focuses on SENCO knowledge of brain injury and the impact this has on a child accessing education rather than their experience of being a SENCO.
Humphrey, N., & Symes, W. (2013). Inclusive Education for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Secondary Mainstream Schools: Teacher Attitudes, Experience and Knowledge. <i>17(1)</i> , 32-46.	About ASC pupils. Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Kaehne, A., & Beyer, S. (2009). Transition Partnerships: The Views of Education Professionals and Staff in Support Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 36(2), 112-119.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Kearns, H. (2005). Exploring the Experiential Learning of Special Educational Needs Coordinators. <i>Journal Of In-Service Education</i> , 31(1), 131-150.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lauchlan, F., & Greig, S. (2015). Educational Inclusion in England: Origins, Perspectives and Current Directions. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 30(1), 69-82.	Debate about inclusion. Not SENCO role.
Lewis, A., & Ogilvie, M. (2003). Support, Knowledge and Identity: Reported Gains from Involvement in a Special Email Group--the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 30(1), 44-50.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lingard, T. (2001). Does the Code of Practice Help Secondary School SENCos To Improve Learning?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 28(4), 187-90.	Focuses on SENC perspective of Code of Practice.
Liasidou, A., & Svensson, C. (2014). Educating Leaders for Social Justice: The Case of Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators. <i>International Journal Of Inclusive Education</i> , 18(8), 783-797.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lingard, T. (2005). Literacy Acceleration and the Key Stage 3 English Strategy - Comparing Two Approaches for Secondary-Age Pupils with Literacy Difficulties. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 32(2), 67-77.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Mackenzie, S. (2007). A Review of Recent Developments in the Role of the SENCo in the UK. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 34(4), 212-21	Review of previous research.

Maher, A. (2013). Statements of Special Educational Needs and Mainstream Secondary Physical Education in North-West England. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 40(3), 130-136.	About SENCO/LSA view of statements not their role.
Maher, A. (2016). Consultation, Negotiation and Compromise: The Relationship between SENCOs, Parents and Pupils with SEN. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 31(1), 4-12.	Focuses on the role of parents and SENCOs liaising with parents.
Maher, A. J. (2017). "We've Got a Few Who Don't Go to PE": Learning Support Assistant and Special Educational Needs Coordinator Views on Inclusion in Physical Education in England. <i>European Physical Education Review</i> , 23(2), 257-270.	The focus is on SENCOs and Learning Support Assistant's views on inclusion in Physical Education. It does not consider the SENCOs experience of their role.
Maher, A. J. (2018). "Disable Them All": SENCO and LSA Conceptualisations of Inclusion in Physical Education. <i>Sport, Education And Society</i> , 23(2), 149-161.	The focus is on SENCOs and Learning Support Assistant's views on inclusion in Physical Education. It does not consider the SENCOs experience of their role.
Maher, A., & Macbeth, J. (2014). Physical Education, Resources and Training: The Perspective of Special Educational Needs Coordinators Working in Secondary Schools in North-West England. 20(1), 90-103.	About SENCO perspective on PE not their role.
Moran, A. (2007). Embracing Inclusive Teacher Education. <i>European Journal Of Teacher Education</i> , 30(2), 119-134.	Not about SENCO role
Morewood, G. D. (2012). Is the "Inclusive SENCO" Still a Possibility? A Personal Perspective. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 73-76.	Commentary rather than a piece of research.
Moyse, R., & Porter, J. (2015). The Experience of the Hidden Curriculum for Autistic Girls at Mainstream Primary Schools. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 30(2), 187-201.	About ASC girls, not SENCOs.
Nye, E., Gardner, F., Hansford, L., Edwards, V., Hayes, R., & Ford, T. (2016). Classroom Behaviour Management Strategies in Response to Problematic Behaviours of Primary School Children with Special Educational Needs: Views of Special Educational Needs Coordinators. <i>Emotional &amp; Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 21(1), 43-60.	Focuses on SENCO view of behaviour management strategies not their experiences of the role.
Pavey, B. (2005). A survey of transition-to-adulthood education for young people with developmental disabilities in the UK. <i>British Journal Of Developmental Disabilities</i> , 51 part 2(101), 117-128.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Pawley, H., & Tennant, G. (2008). Student Perceptions of Their IEP Targets. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 23(4), 183-186.	About IEPs
Pearson, S. (2011). Narrowing the Gap between 'Intention and Reality': The Case of Special Educational Needs Governors in English Schools. <i>Educational Management Administration &amp; Leadership</i> , 39(6), 695-711	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Ramsay, J., Cowell, N., & Gersch, I. (2018). How School Staff Understand the Relationship between Problem Behaviours and Language Difficulties. <i>Educational Psychology In Practice</i> , 34(1), 1-25.	Focus is on children behaviours and language difficulties and how this is understood by school staff. It does not focus on the SENCO experience of their role.
Robertson, C. (2012). Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-Ordination in a Changing Policy Landscape: Making Sense of Policy from a SENCO's Perspective. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 77-83.	Reflections on SENCO role and legislative changes rather than a piece of research.
Scott, F., Baron-Cohen, S., Bolton, P., & Brayne, C. (2002). Brief report: prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in children aged 5-11 years in Cambridgeshire, UK. <i>Autism: The International Journal Of Research &amp; Practice</i> , 6(3), 231-237.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Smith, J. (2015). Gendered Trends in Student Teachers' Professional Aspirations. <i>Educational Management Administration &amp; Leadership</i> , 43(6), 861-882.	Not about SENCO role
Tilstone, C. (2008). Personal Reflections on 35 Years of "BJSE". <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 35(4), 195-201.	Not relevant
Wedell, K. (2012). SENCOs Supporting Each Other: The SENCO Forum. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 67-72.	About the SENCO foru.

Wedell, K., Stevens, C., & Waller, T. (2002). Points from the SENCo-Forum: What Is 'Additional and Different' about IEPs?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 29(4),	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
White, G. S. (2010). Balancing Acts in the Half-Way Houses: The Role of Resourced Provisions in Mainstream Schools. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 37(4), 175-179.	About resource provisions.
Woods, K., Stothard, J., Lydon, J., & Reason, R. (2013). Developing Policy and Practice for Dyslexia across a Local Authority: A Case Study of Educational Psychology Practice at Organisational Level. <i>Educational Psychology In Practice</i> , 29(2), 180-196.	About Dyslexia not SENCO role.
Woolhouse, C. (2015). Teachers Performing Gender and Belonging: A Case Study of How SENCOs Narrate Inclusion Identities. <i>Gender And Education</i> , 27(2), 131-147.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

*Articles excluded based on inclusion and exclusion criteria for SENCO search and search term 1 (experience etc) based on titles and abstracts*

<b>Reference:</b>	<b>Reason for exclusion:</b>
Abbott, L. (2007). Northern Ireland Special Educational Needs Coordinators creating inclusive environments: an epic struggle. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 22(4), 391–407.	Based on Northern Ireland, different context to SENCOs in this research.
Abbott, L., McConkey, R., & Dobbins, M. (2011). Key Players in Inclusion: Are We Meeting the Professional Needs of Learning Support Assistants for Pupils with Complex Needs?. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 26(2), 215-231.	Focus is more on the training LSAs require and SENCOs perspective on this.
Agaliotis, I., & Kalyva, E. (2011). A survey of Greek general and special education teachers' perceptions regarding the role of the special needs coordinator: Implications for educational policy on inclusion and teacher education. <i>Teaching &amp; Teacher Education</i> , 27(3), 543–551	Bases in Greece.
Ashton, R., & Roberts, E. (2006). What Is Valuable and Unique about the Educational Psychologist? <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22(2)	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Barnes, P. (2008). Multi-Agency Working: What Are the Perspectives of SENCOs and Parents regarding Its Development and Implementation?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 35(4), 230-240. Focuses on SENCO and parents perspectives of multiagency working, not on the SENCO role.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Barrow, G., Biddulph, M., & Lodge, C. (2004). Reviews and Update. <i>Pastoral Care in Education</i> , 22(4), 49–53	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Bines, H. (2001). A longer road to inclusion. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 16(2), 92	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Billington, S. (2012). Review of Tackling exclusions: Supporting disaffected students. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 28(2), 218–219	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Blaker, G. (2002). From staff room to innovation strategy room -- can it be done? <i>Education Review</i> , 16(1), 95–99	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Bray, A. (2009). Review of Learning from behaviour: How to understand and help “challenging” children in school. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 25(2), 189	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Byers, R. (2008). Editorial. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 35(4), 192–193	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

Davies, J. D., & Lee, J. (2001). Learning from Experience or Just Meeting Standards? The Future of Continuing Professional Development Provision for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators. <i>Journal Of In-Service Education</i> , 27(2), 261-74.	Focus is on SENCO CPD rather than the experience of their role
Dimitriadis, C., & Georgeson, J. (2018). Provision for Mathematically Able Children in Primary Schools: A Review of Practice Five Years after England Dropped the Gifted and Talented Initiative. <i>Educational Review</i> , 70(3), 358-380.	Focuses on provision for children and implications for the SENCO role rather than the SENCOs experience of their role.
Dockrell, J. E., & Lindsay, G. (2007). Identifying the educational and social needs of children with specific speech and language difficulties on entry to secondary school. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i> , 24(4), 101–115.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Emam, M. M., & Farrell, P. (2009). Tensions Experienced by Teachers and Their Views of Support for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Mainstream Schools. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 24(4), 407-422.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Fisher, H. (2012). Progressing towards a model of intrinsic inclusion in a mainstream primary school: a SENCo's experience. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 16(12), 1273–1293.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Fitzgerald, J., & Radford, J. (2017). The SENCO Role in Post-Primary Schools in Ireland: Victims or Agents of Change? <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 32(3), 452–466.	Based in Ireland, not relevant context.
Francis, P. (2006). Review of Language and communication difficulties. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22(2), 178.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Freeman L, Miller A. Norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and dynamic assessment: What exactly is the point? <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> . 2001;17(1):3-16	
Gaile, J. (2009). Review of Supporting speech, language and communication needs: Working with students aged 11 to 19. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 24(2), 224–226.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Gerschel, L. (2005). The special educational needs coordinator's role in managing teaching assistants: the Greenwich perspective. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(2), 69–76.	Not focussing on SENCO experience of their role.
Glazzard, J. (2014). The standards agenda: reflections of a special educational needs co-ordinator. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 29(1), 39–53.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Gray, C. (2009). A Qualitatively Different Experience: Mainstreaming Pupils with a Visual Impairment in Northern Ireland. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 24(2), 169-182.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Green, D. (2006). Review of Contextualising inclusive education: Evaluating old and new international perspectives. <i>Disability &amp; Society</i> , 21(4), 377–379	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Harbinson, H., & Alexander, J. (2009). Asperger syndrome and the English curriculum: Addressing the challenges. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 24(1), 11–18	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Hallett, G., & Hallett, F. (2012). Editorial. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 39(4), 162–163.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

Hawking, L. (2012). Review of Street Wise: A programme for educating young people about citizenship, rights, responsibilities and the law. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 28(1), 111–112	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Howe, J., & Ball, H. (2017). An Exploratory Study of Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators' Knowledge and Experience of Working with Children Who Have Sustained a Brain Injury. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 32(1), 85-100.	Focuses on SENCO knowledge of brain injury and the impact this has on a child accessing education rather than their experience of being a SENCO.
Hugh Kearns. (2005). Exploring the Experiential Learning of Special Educational Needs Coordinators. <i>Journal of In-Service Education</i> , 31(1), 131–150.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Humphrey, N., & Symes, W. (2013). Inclusive Education for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Secondary Mainstream Schools: Teacher Attitudes, Experience and Knowledge. <i>17(1)</i> , 32-46.	About ASC pupils.
Kaehne, A., & Beyer, S. (2009). Transition partnerships: the views of education professionals and staff in support services for young people with learning disabilities. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 36(2), 112–119	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Kearns, H. (2005). Exploring the Experiential Learning of Special Educational Needs Coordinators. <i>Journal of In-Service Education</i> , 31(1), 131–150	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
KEARNEY, A., MENTIS, M., & HOLLEY-BOEN, W. (2017). Informal, Non-formal, and Formal Networking: Ensuring Autonomy and Flexibility for Special Needs Coordinators. <i>New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work</i> , 14(2), 114–135	Based in New Zealand.
Kingston, D. (2004). Starting with inclusion: The East Sussex inclusion strategy and training for early years and childcare. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i> , 21(2), 80–95	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lauchlan, F., & Greig, S. (2015). Educational Inclusion in England: Origins, Perspectives and Current Directions. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 30(1), 69-82.	Debate about inclusion. Not SENCO role.
Liasidou, A., & Svensson, C. (2014). Educating leaders for social justice: the case of special educational needs co-ordinators. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 18(8), 783–797	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lindqvist, G. & Nilholm, C. (2013). Making schools inclusive? Educational leaders' views on how to work with children in need of special support. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 17(1), 95–110	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lindqvist, G., & Nilholm, C. (2014). Promoting inclusion? 'Inclusive' and effective head teachers' descriptions of their work. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 29(1), 74–90	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lindqvist, G., Nilholm, C., Almqvist, L., & Wetso, G.-M. (2011). Different agendas? The views of different occupational groups on special needs education. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 26(2), 143–157	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lingard, T. (2001). Does the Code of Practice help secondary school SENCOs to improve learning? <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 28(4), 187	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

Lingard, T. (2005). Literacy Acceleration and the Key Stage 3 English Strategy – comparing two approaches for secondary-age pupils with literacy difficulties. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 32(2), 67–7	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lingard, T. (2005). Literacy Acceleration and the Key Stage 3 English Strategy - Comparing Two Approaches for Secondary-Age Pupils with Literacy Difficulties. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 32(2), 67-77.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Mackenzie, S. (2007). A Review of Recent Developments in the Role of the SENCo in the UK. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 34(4), 212-21	Review of previous research.
Mackenzie, S. (2013). Achievers, confidence-builders, advocates, relationship-developers and system-changers: what ‘making a difference’ means to those who work with children with special educational needs – a typology of rewards. <i>Teachers &amp; Teaching</i> , 19(4), 433–448.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Maher, A. (2013). Statements of Special Educational Needs and Mainstream Secondary Physical Education in North-West England. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 40(3), 130-136.	About SENCO/LSA view of statements not their role.
Maher, A. (2016). Consultation, Negotiation and Compromise: The Relationship between SENCOs, Parents and Pupils with SEN. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 31(1), 4-12.	Focuses on the role of parents and SENCOs liaising with parents.
Maher, A. J. (2017). "We've Got a Few Who Don't Go to PE": Learning Support Assistant and Special Educational Needs Coordinator Views on Inclusion in Physical Education in England. <i>European Physical Education Review</i> , 23(2), 257-270.	The focus is on SENCOs and Learning Support Assistant's views on inclusion in Physical Education. It does not consider the SENCOs experience of their role.
Maher, A. J. (2018). "Disable Them All": SENCO and LSA Conceptualisations of Inclusion in Physical Education. <i>Sport, Education And Society</i> , 23(2), 149-161.	The focus is on SENCOs and Learning Support Assistant's views on inclusion in Physical Education. It does not consider the SENCOs experience of their role.
Maher, A., & Macbeth, J. (2014). Physical education, resources and training: The perspective of special educational needs coordinators working in secondary schools in North-West England. <i>European Physical Education Review</i> , 20(1), 90–103	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Martin, J. (2006). Review of Ready to learn: How to help your pre-schooler succeed. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22(1), 90–91	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Moran, A. (2007). Embracing Inclusive Teacher Education. <i>European Journal Of Teacher Education</i> , 30(2), 119-134.	Not about SENCO role
Morewood, G. D. (2012). Is the "Inclusive SENCo" Still a Possibility? A Personal Perspective. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 73-76.	Commentary rather than a piece of research.
Moyse, R., & Porter, J. (2015). The Experience of the Hidden Curriculum for Autistic Girls at Mainstream Primary Schools. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 30(2), 187-201.	About ASC girls, not SENCOs.

Nilholm, C., Almqvist, L., Goransson, K., & Lindqvist, G. (2013). What Is the Problem? - Explanations of School Difficulties by Eight Occupational Groups. <i>International Journal of Special Education</i> , 28(1), 161–171	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Nye, E., Gardner, F., Hansford, L., Edwards, V., Hayes, R., & Ford, T. (2016). Classroom Behaviour Management Strategies in Response to Problematic Behaviours of Primary School Children with Special Educational Needs: Views of Special Educational Needs Coordinators. <i>Emotional &amp; Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 21(1), 43-60.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Paradice, R. (2001). An investigation into the social construction of dyslexia. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 17(3), 213–225	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Pawley, H., & Tennant, G. (2008). Student Perceptions of Their IEP Targets. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 23(4), 183-186. About IEPs	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Pearson, S., Scott, P., & Sugden, D. (2011). Applying metaphors for learning to continuing professional development (CPD), in the context of a course for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). <i>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</i> , 11(1), 42–54	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Peter Stammers. (2005). Editorial. <i>Journal of In-Service Education</i> , 31(1), 5–8	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Poon-McBrayer, K. F. (2012). Implementing the SENCO system in Hong Kong: an initial investigation. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 39(2), 94–101	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Ramsay, J., Cowell, N., & Gersch, I. (2018). How School Staff Understand the Relationship between Problem Behaviours and Language Difficulties. <i>Educational Psychology In Practice</i> , 34(1), 1-25.	Focus is on children behaviours and language difficulties and how this is understood by school staff. It does not focus on the SENCO experience of their role.
Reid, H., & Soan, S. (2019). Providing support to senior managers in schools via “clinical” supervision: a purposeful, restorative professional and personal developmental space. <i>Professional Development in Education</i> , 45(1), 59–72	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Robertson, C. (2012). Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-Ordination in a Changing Policy Landscape: Making Sense of Policy from a SENCO's Perspective. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 77-83.	Reflections on SENCO role and legislative changes rather than a piece of research.
Sanagi, T. (2009). Teachers’ attitudes towards the roles of special educational needs coordinators (SENCO) in mainstream schools: Views of colleague teachers at primary and secondary schools in Greater Manchester. <i>Japanese Journal of Special Education</i> , 46(6), 503–514.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Sibanda, P. P. (2008). Review of Supporting inclusive practice. <i>Emotional &amp; Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 13(1), 73	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Smith, J. (2015). Gendered Trends in Student Teachers' Professional Aspirations. <i>Educational Management Administration &amp; Leadership</i> , 43(6), 861-882.	Not about SENCO role
Snell, C. (2014). Review of Not just talking: Identifying non-verbal communication difficulties: A life-changing approach. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> , 30(1), 132–133	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Tanaka, M., Komaki, A., Takiyoshi, M., & Watanabe, T. (2011). Internal coordination by a special educational needs coordinator in an elementary school. <i>Japanese Journal of Special Education</i> , 49(1), 21–29	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

Tennant, G. (2007). IEPs in mainstream secondary schools: an agenda for research. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 22(4), 204–208	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wearmouth, J., Smith, A. P., & Soler, J. (2004). Computer conferencing with access to a ‘guest expert’ in the professional development of special educational needs coordinators. <i>British Journal of Educational Technology</i> , 35(1), 81–93	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell K. Points from the SENCo- Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> . 2013;40(4):197	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2013). Points from the SENCo- Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 40(3), 146	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2013). Points from the SENCo-Forum: Looking at learning through the student’s eyes. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 40(1), 50	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2012). Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 39(2), 102	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2008). Seeing each other’s points of view – SENCOs and parents. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 35(1), 57–58	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K., Stevens, C., & Waller, T. (2005). Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 32(3), 165	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2005). Dilemmas in the quest for inclusion. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 32(1), 3–11	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
White, S., & Spencer, S. (2018). A school-commissioned model of speech and language therapy. <i>Child Language Teaching &amp; Therapy</i> , 34(2), 141–153	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Whitfield, S. (2013). Review of AD/HD success! Solutions for boosting self-esteem: The diary method for ages 7–17. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 29(3), 330–331	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Woods, K., James, A., & Hipkiss, A. (2018). Best practice in access arrangements made for England’s General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs): where are we 10 years on? <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(3), 236–255	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

*Articles excluded based on inclusion and exclusion criteria for SENCO search and search term 2 (Role) based on titles and abstracts*

<b>Reference:</b>	<b>Reason for exclusion:</b>
Abbott, L. (2007). Northern Ireland Special Educational Needs Coordinators Creating Inclusive Environments: An Epic Struggle. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 22(4), 391-407.	Carried out in Northern Ireland which is a different context to the focus of the present study, which is carried out in England.
Abbott, L., McConkey, R., & Dobbins, M. (2011). Key Players in Inclusion: Are We Meeting the Professional Needs of Learning Support Assistants for Pupils with Complex Needs?. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 26(2), 215-231.	Focus is more on the training LSAs require and SENCOs perspective on this.
Agaliotis, I., & Kalyva, E. (2011). A survey of Greek general and special education teachers’ perceptions regarding the role of the special needs coordinator: Implications for educational policy on inclusion and teacher education. <i>Teaching &amp; Teacher Education</i> , 27(3), 543–551	Based in Greece.

Ashdown, R., Singh, C., Daniels, P., & Crispin, B. (2004). REVIEWS. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 19(4), 197–199.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Ashton, R., & Roberts, E. (2006). What Is Valuable and Unique about the Educational Psychologist? <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22(2)	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Bedford, J., Goddard, G., Obadan, F., & Mowat, P. (2006). How Gaining Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status Impacts on the Teaching Assistant's Role in English Schools. <i>Management in Education</i> , 20(1), 6–10.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Brown, J., & Doveston, M. (2014). Short sprint or an endurance test: the perceived impact of the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination. <i>Teacher Development</i> , 18(4), 495–510	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Byers, R. (2008). Editorial. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 35(4), 192–193	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Carnaby, S. S. C.-36@ukc. ac. u., Lewis, P., Di Martin, P., Naylor, J., & Stewart, D. (2003). Participation in transition review meetings: a case study of young people with learning disabilities leaving a special school. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 30(4), 187–193.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Cowne, E. (2005). EDITORIAL. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(2), 50–52	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Cross, J. (2008). Review of Coordinating special education needs: A guide for the early years. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 23(4), 213–214	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Dimitriadis, C., & Georgeson, J. (2018). Provision for Mathematically Able Children in Primary Schools: A Review of Practice Five Years after England Dropped the Gifted and Talented Initiative. <i>Educational Review</i> , 70(3), 358-380.	Focuses on provision for children and implications for the SENCO role rather than the SENCOs experience of their role.
Done, E., Murphy, M., & Bedford, C. (2016). Change Management and the SENCo Role: Developing Key Performance Indicators of Inclusivity. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 31(1), 13-26.	Focus is on how SEN designated pupils are supported through universal provision and whether classrooms are set up appropriately.
Done, L., Murphy, M., & Watt, M. (2016). Change Management and the SENCo Role: Developing Key Performance Indicators in the Strategic Development of Inclusivity. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 31(4), 281-295.	Focus is on performance indicators and how the measure SEND targets. Although this is part of the SENCO role it does not focus on SENCOs experiences of their role or leadership.
Ellis, S. S. ac. u., & Tod, J. (2005). Including SENCOs in behaviour improvement: an exploration of the Behaviour and Attendance strands of the National Strategies. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(2), 83–89.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Emam, M. M., & Farrell, P. (2009). Tensions Experienced by Teachers and Their Views of Support for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Mainstream Schools. <i>European Journal Of Special Needs Education</i> , 24(4), 407-422.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Fitzgerald, J., & Radford, J. (2017). The SENCO role in post-primary schools in Ireland: victims or agents of change? <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 32(3), 452–466	Based in Ireland.

Gerschel, L. (2005). The special educational needs coordinator's role in managing teaching assistants: the Greenwich perspective. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(2), 69–76.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Griffiths, D., & Dubsky, R. (2012). Evaluating the Impact of the New National Award for SENCOs: Transforming Landscapes or Gardening in a Gale?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 39(4), 164-172.	Aim of the research is to evaluate National Award for SENCOs.
Harvey, W. (2006). Review of Guidelines for a speech and language friendly school. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> , 22(1), 126–128	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Hawking, L. (2012). Review of Street Wise: A programme for educating young people about citizenship, rights, responsibilities and the law. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 28(1), 111–112	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Hugh Kearns1. (2005). Exploring the Experiential Learning of Special Educational Needs Coordinators. <i>Journal of In-Service Education</i> , 31(1),	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
KEARNEY, A., MENTIS, M., & HOLLEY-BOEN, W. (2017). Informal, Non-formal, and Formal Networking: Ensuring Autonomy and Flexibility for Special Needs Coordinators. <i>New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work</i> , 14(2), 114–135	Not about SENCO experience of their role and based in New Zealand.
Lauchlan, F., & Greig, S. (2015). Educational Inclusion in England: Origins, Perspectives and Current Directions. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 30(1), 69-82.	Debate about inclusion. Not SENCO role.
Lewis, A., & Neill, S. (2001). Portable computers for teachers and support services working with pupils with special educational needs: an evaluation of the 1999 United Kingdom Department for Education and Employment scheme. <i>British Journal of Educational Technology</i> , 32(3), 301–315	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Liasidou, A., & Svensson, C. (2014). Educating leaders for social justice: the case of special educational needs co-ordinators. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 18(8), 783–797.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lindqvist, G., Nilholm, C., Almqvist, L., & Wetso, G.-M. (2011). Different agendas? The views of different occupational groups on special needs education. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 26(2), 143–157	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lindqvist, G. (2013). SENCOs: vanguards or in vain? <i>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</i> , 13(3), 198–207	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lindqvist, G. gln@du. s., & Nilholm, C. (2013). Making schools inclusive? Educational leaders' views on how to work with children in need of special support. <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 17(1), 95–110	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Lown, J., Fox, G., Gersch, I., Morris, S., & Stoker, R. (2001). Reconstructing educational psychology practice. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 16(3), 135.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Mackenzie, S. (2013). Achievers, confidence-builders, advocates, relationship-developers and system-changers: what 'making a difference' means to those who work with children with special educational needs – a typology of rewards. <i>Teachers &amp; Teaching</i> , 19(4), 433–448	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

Mackenzie, S. (2007). A Review of Recent Developments in the Role of the SENCo in the UK. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 34(4), 212-21	Review of previous research.
Maher, A. J, & Vickerman, P. (2018). Ideology influencing action: special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistant role conceptualisations and experiences of special needs education in England. <i>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</i> , 18(1), 15–24.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Maher, A. (2013). Statements of Special Educational Needs and Mainstream Secondary Physical Education in North-West England. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 40(3), 130-136.	About SENCO/LSA view of statements not their role.
Maher, A., & Macbeth, J. (2014). Physical Education, Resources and Training: The Perspective of Special Educational Needs Coordinators Working in Secondary Schools in North-West England. 20(1), 90-103.	About SENCO perspective on PE not their role.
Martin, J. (2006). Review of Ready to learn: How to help your pre-schooler succeed. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22(1), 90–91.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
MELANIE NIND1. (2003). Enhancing the Communication Learning Environment of an Early Years Unit through Action Research. <i>Educational Action Research</i> , 11(3), 347–364.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Moran, A. (2007). Embracing inclusive teacher education. <i>European Journal of Teacher Education</i> , 30(2), 119–134.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Morewood, G. D. (2012). Is the "Inclusive SENCo" Still a Possibility? A Personal Perspective. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 73-76.	Commentary rather than a piece of research.
Pawley, H., & Tennant, G. (2008). Student Perceptions of Their IEP Targets. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 23(4), 183-186.	About IEPs
Poon-McBrayer, K. F. (2012). Implementing the SENCo system in Hong Kong: an initial investigation. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 39(2), 94–101	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Peter Stammers. (2005). Editorial. <i>Journal of In-Service Education</i> , 31(1), 5–8.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Ralph, S., & Bell, S. (2013). Editorial. <i>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</i> , 13(3), 173–174	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Ramsay, J., Cowell, N., & Gersch, I. (2018). How School Staff Understand the Relationship between Problem Behaviours and Language Difficulties. <i>Educational Psychology In Practice</i> , 34(1), 1-25.	Focus is on children behaviours and language difficulties and how this is understood by school staff. It does not focus on the SENCO experience of their role.
Rayner, S. (2006). Review of Key issues in special education. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 21(3), 351–353	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Rees, A. (2006). Review of Dyslexia? Assessing and reporting The Patoss guide. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22(1), 85–86.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Robertson, C. (2012). Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-Ordination in a Changing Policy Landscape: Making Sense of Policy from a SENCo's Perspective. <i>Support For Learning</i> , 27(2), 77-83.	Reflections on SENCO role and legislative changes rather than a piece of research.

Smith, J. (2015). Gendered Trends in Student Teachers' Professional Aspirations. <i>Educational Management Administration &amp; Leadership</i> , 43(6), 861-882.	Not about SENCO role
St John, P. (2010). Review of Working memory and learning: A practical guide for teachers. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> , 26(2), 199–200	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Taylor, M. M. J. T. ac. u. (2005). The development of the special educational needs coordinator role in a higher education setting. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 20(1), 22–27	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Tilstone, C. (2008). Personal Reflections on 35 Years of "BJSE". <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 35(4), 195-201.	Not relevant
Wearmouth, J., Smith, A. P., & Soler, J. (2004). Computer conferencing with access to a 'guest expert' in the professional development of special educational needs coordinators. <i>British Journal of Educational Technology</i> , 35(1), 81–93	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Webb, R., & Vulliamy, G. (2002). The social work dimension of the primary teacher's role. <i>Research Papers in Education</i> , 17(2), 165–184.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell K 1. Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> . 2016;43(4):448-450	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2014). Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 41(2), 212–214.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2013). Points from the SENCo- Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 40(3), 146.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. 1. (2013). Points from the SENCo- Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 40(4), 197.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. . (2012). Points from the SENCo-Forum Points from the SENCo-Forum: Defining special educational needs and disabilities in 2013? <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 39(3), 156	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2012). Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 39(2), 102	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2011). Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 38(4), 209	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
WEDELL, K. (2012). SENCOs supporting each other: the SENCO Forum. <i>Support for Learning</i> , 27(2), 67–72	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2006). Points from the SENCo-Forum. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 33(4), 220	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

Wedell, K. (2005). Points from the SENCo-Forum Support staff roles and volunteers. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 32(1), 49.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K. (2016). Points from the SENCo-Forum: Seeking inclusion within the SEND Code's guidance. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 43(3), 307–310	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wedell, K., Stevens, C., & Waller, T. (2002). Points from the SENCo-Forum: What Is 'Additional and Different' about IEPs?. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 29(4),	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
White, G. S. (2010). Balancing Acts in the Half-Way Houses: The Role of Resourced Provisions in Mainstream Schools. <i>British Journal Of Special Education</i> , 37(4), 175-179.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Wolfendale, S. (2005). Review of Supporting inclusion in the early years. <i>British Journal of Educational Psychology</i> , 75(1), 146.	Not about SENCO experience of their role.
Woods, K., James, A., & Hipkiss, A. (2018). Best practice in access arrangements made for England's General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs): where are we 10 years on? <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(3), 236–255	Not about SENCO experience of their role.

### Appendix E. Example of review using CASP tool

CASP Questions	Title: Boesley and Crane (2018) 'Forget the Health and Care and just call them Education Plans': SENCOs' perspectives on Education, Health and Care plans
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. Aims are clearly stated as part of a rationale for the research. There were 2 aims: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To understand SENCOs' perspectives of the EHC process by identifying areas of strength, current challenges, future outlook and potential improvements</li> <li>2. To investigate SENCOs' views on working with parents and other professionals, including their success and multiagency working and family led planning</li> </ol> Exploring both primary and secondary school SENCOs.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative approach allows an understanding of SENCOs perspectives on EHC plans.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. Telephone interviews allows for perhaps a more accessible way to speak to SENCOs across England. The analysis (Thematic Analysis) is appropriate for the data collected.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. There is an explanation of how participants were recruited (via online forums) and the participant criteria (based in England and SENCOs had to have completed an EHC application/experience of transfer from statement to EHCP. Detail is provided regarding participant school they work in and experience in years.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. An interview schedule was based on existing literature on SENCOs and EHC plans. Questions were open-ended and the interview schedule was flexible. The schedule was piloted to ensure validity and clarity. SENCOs were questioned on the process of accessing an EHC plan, their experiences of working with parents and other professionals through the process and any training they attended on EHC plans. All the questions are relevant to the research aims.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	There is no reference to the researchers relationship with participants.
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	There is reference to ethical approval obtained from UCL. There is no mention of ethical considerations taken (e.g. confidentiality etc).
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. Braun and Clarke Thematic Analysis was used. An essentialist framework was used by taking an inductive approach. Both authors familiarised themselves with the data, suggesting some cross checking of codes took place. The analysis was at a semantic level.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. 3 key themes were identified and explored with the support of quotes. A figure was used to identify themes and sub themes. There are clear implications for research and future practice in relation to the Code of practice.
How valuable is the research?	The research provides key findings into the SENCO experience within the current context (e.g. EHC plans). There are clear conclusions made in relation to SENCOs perceptions of EHC plans and their role within the process.

### Appendix F. Table review of papers included in literature review

Overview of studies included in the literature review				
Study	Design	Participants	Data collection method/process of analysis	Findings
<p>Boesley and Crane (2018) 'Forget the Health and Care and just call them Education plans': SENCOs' perspectives on Education, Health and Care Plans</p> <p>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</p>	<p>Qualitative Semi-structured interviews via telephone. Inductive Thematic Analysis</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand SENCOs perspectives on the EHC process – strength, current challenges, future outlook and potential improvements</li> <li>Investigate SENCOs views on working with parents and other professionals including their success with multiagency working and family led planning</li> </ul>	<p>Participants identified through SENCO forums online.</p> <p>SENCOs had to have completed an EHC application/experience of transfer from statement to EHCP</p> <p>Participant info:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 Females, 1 Male</li> <li>12 mainstream primary, 4 mainstream secondary</li> <li>Teaching experience 4-25 years</li> <li>SENCO experience 2-12 years</li> <li>13 had more than 4 years experience</li> <li>From 10 different counties in England</li> </ul>	<p>Semi-structured interviews via telephone. Open-ended questions exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process of accessing EHCP</li> <li>Experiences of working with parents/professionals through EHCP process</li> <li>Training and EHCPs</li> </ul> <p>Thematic Analysis inductive approach</p>	<p>Three key themes identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived role of the SENCO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing misconceptions and disengaged health and care services</li> <li>Managing parent expectations</li> </ul> </li> <li>Procedural challenges and changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional disparity</li> <li>Lack of transparency EHC plan process</li> <li>Decreased funding for SEN</li> <li>An evolving process for implementing EHCPs</li> <li>EHC plan system has potential</li> </ul> </li> <li>Difficulties in accessing EHC Plans for children with SEMH needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An over emphasis on academic progress</li> <li>Difficulties validating SEMH</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>PCP and joint working seen as an effective process and leading to greater outcomes.</p>
<p>Burton and Goodman (2011) Perspectives of SENCOs and support staff in England on</p>	<p>Qualitative Part of a larger study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purposive sampling</li> <li>Merseyside and West Midlands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured interviews</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p>	<p>SENCO and support staff perceptions of their role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling unappreciated</li> </ul>

<p>their roles, relationships and capacity to support inclusive practice for students with behaviours, emotional and social difficulties Pastoral Care in Education</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews Aim to consider support staff and SENCOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of their role</li> <li>• Relationships with BESD students</li> <li>• Relationships with parents</li> <li>• How they facilitate inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools based on number SEN children and free school meals</li> <li>• 4 SENCOs</li> <li>• 8 support staff</li> <li>• 4 secondary schools – 3 schools, 1 academy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Themes identified by reading through and cross reference- no mention of a specific analysis process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not treated with the same respect as other teachers</li> <li>• Lack of support</li> <li>• Flexibility with time allowed them to be more available for students</li> <li>• Importance of creating nurturing environment</li> <li>• Commitment to providing educational provision and ensuring young people’s wellbeing</li> <li>• Working with parents led to best outcomes</li> <li>• Understanding that behaviour is a form of communication</li> </ul>
<p>Cowne (2005) What do special educational needs coordinators think they do?  Support for Learning 20(2), 61-68</p>	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What institutional features aid or constrain the development of SEN coordination?</li> <li>• What personal competencies and knowledge enhance the SENCO role?</li> <li>• What are the constant and emerging roles of the SENCO?</li> <li>• What do LEAs do to support the SENCO role and SEN coordination?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants from the SENCO training offered to LEAs through the SEN Joint Training Initiative (SENJIT).</li> <li>• 15 LEAs took part in the course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 1- contextual data:</li> <li>• First Primary cohort- 75</li> <li>• Second Primary cohort- 104</li> <li>• First Secondary cohort- 15</li> <li>• Second Secondary cohort- 11</li> <li>• Baseline questionnaire given to all course members on the first day of the course to find out basic info about the school context.</li> <li>• Some were not SENCOs but hoping to become a SENCO in the future</li> <li>• 205 SENCOs responded</li> <li>• 66 SENCOs chosen to complete follow up questionnaire as they had completed both of the course modules- was this random?</li> <li>• Second questionnaire about organisational features which enhanced or constrained the</li> </ul>	<p>Data from baseline questionnaires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary school SENCOs – 9 had no official time for SENCO role. Those with the most hours for the role were expected to support teaching 90% of the time</li> <li>• Secondary school SENCOs- least hours= no teaching, most hours= tech up to 80% of time</li> <li>• 59 had additional roles e.g. 2 primary headteachers, 16 primary deputy heads and 19 other coordination roles, 1 class teachers, 13 other roles</li> <li>• Management- 23 primary SENCOs felt supported by HTs but 35 felt more support needed from SMT. None of the Secondary SENCOs were satisfied with the level of management support.</li> <li>• Enhancing features- supportive staff, management and systems</li> <li>• Constraining features- Lack of time, staffing problems, lack of physical space, 7 said no constraints</li> </ul> <p>Impact of training:</p>

			<p>role and any changes since the first module.</p> <p>Stage 2- Impact of the training course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of the second questionnaire asked about SENCO competence and confidence</li> </ul> <p>Stage 3- Core tasks and roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus groups run in 4 participating LEAs with 20 SENCOs? Question- What do SENCOs think they do, and will do in the future?</li> </ul> <p>Stage 4- LEA support for SENCOs' development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers from same 4 LEAs were interviewed</li> <li>14 LEA Ofsted reports were examined for evidence of training outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28/60 said the course had increased their confidence</li> <li>Course helped to clarify the SENCO role, raise awareness and become more reflective</li> <li>Over 1/3 mentioned an improvement in skills</li> <li>Request for further support with assessing reason for learning difficulties and strategies for teachers to use</li> </ul> <p>SENCO views:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary SENCOs felt it was important to maintain a teaching role for group work or as a support teacher</li> <li>All felt essential to support colleagues, work with parents and liaise with outside agencies</li> <li>Support for differentiation</li> <li>Some saw prevention of exclusion as part of their role</li> <li>Secondary SENCO role widening due to range of agencies e.g. youth service, colleges etc</li> <li>Role becoming increasingly managerial and a need to be 'a master of many trades' (pp.67)</li> </ul> <p>LEA Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 LEAs ran conference days, short courses and longer modules.</li> <li>4 LEAs ran regular cluster group meetings</li> <li>Info provided through newsletter or messenger services</li> <li>Funding provided for projects e.g. to prevent exclusion</li> </ul> <p>Ofsted data: Lack of consistency= difficult to analyse</p>
<p>Crowther, D., Dyson, A., &amp; Millward, A. (2001). Supporting pupils with special educational needs:</p>	<p>Quantitative Postal questionnaire building upon previous questionnaire data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>141 SENCOs from 3 LAs in North East England</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Postal questionnaire</li> <li>Quantitative statistical analysis</li> </ul>	<p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65% no time dedicated to carry out the role</li> <li>17.7% have half a day or less</li> </ul>

<p>issues and dilemmas for special needs coordinators in English primary schools. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i>, 16(2), 85</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not made clear how SENCOs identified.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.4% more than half a week to carry out the role</li> <li>• SENCOs working in schools with 100-300 students had the highest% of not having time to carry out their role</li> <li>• Almost half were class teachers and 40% headteachers/curriculum lead = impacted their time for SENCO role</li> <li>• Getting used to new code= less tie for role</li> </ul> <p>Maintaining SEN register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of children identified as having SEN</li> <li>• SENCO role has extended to include pupils with medical needs, EAL etc- previous not included in the role = increased demands</li> </ul> <p>Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code noted SENCO role to manage TAs- difficult due to varied nature of TA role</li> </ul> <p>Training/qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all SENCOs accessed training days</li> <li>• Typically, practical courses</li> <li>• Undermining of SENCO role due to more practical courses, rather than noting strategic role</li> </ul>
<p>Curran, H. (2019). "The SEND Code of Practice has given me clout": a phenomenological study illustrating how SENCOs managed the introduction of the SEND reforms. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i>, 46(1), 76–93</p>	<p>Research design The study took a phenomenological approach, over the first year of SEND reform. 5 phases within the research design.</p> <p>The article focuses on reporting phase 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sampling method was specialist group sampling, with the aim of creating a representative sample.</li> <li>• The group consisted of SENCOs, in post, working within maintained primary (n =5) and secondary</li> </ul>	<p>The research design consisted of five phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1: a context-setting questionnaire, which gathered initial views regarding the SENCOs' understanding of the reforms and their views</li> <li>• Phase 2: semi-structured interviews with a group of</li> </ul>	<p>Narrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCOs taking a lead in implementing COP 2015- saw this as a concern and an opportunity</li> <li>• Only 3 out of 9 on SLT- did not feel it was a barrier</li> <li>• New curriculum and COP 2015 at the same= tension about what to prioritise</li> <li>• Decisions often made in isolation</li> <li>• Felt undervalued and lonely within school and by other professionals</li> </ul>

		<p>schools (n =4) in England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All SENCOs had completed the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination.</li> <li>All, bar one, had been in the post for one year at the start of the study. One participant had been an assistant SENCO and had</li> <li>Just under half of the participants held additional teaching responsibilities</li> <li>Three SENCOs from the sample were part of the SLT</li> </ul>	<p>SENCOs, which explored the questionnaire responses further</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 3: termly semi-structured interviews with the SENCOs from phase 2. Interviews focused on the SENCOs' narration of the SEND reforms for the first academic year of implementation.</li> <li>Phase 4: a second questionnaire, focused on the SENCOs' perceptions of the first six months of the reforms</li> <li>Phase 5: a final questionnaire to a broad group of SENCOs, reflecting on the first year of the reforms</li> <li>Phases 4 and 5 involved a broader group of SENCOs, in terms of both experience and geography, than phases 1, 2 and 3.</li> </ul> <p>This article reports on phase 3.</p> <p>Policy actor and policy work (Ball et al., 2012) applied to findings</p>	<p>Entrepreneur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking how to work with others to create whole school change</li> <li>Engaging staff by using language of change and person-centred approach</li> <li>Impact upon SENCO wellbeing taking on this work</li> </ul> <p>Enthusiast/translator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modelling inclusive practice</li> <li>SENCO role has expanded due to reduced resources</li> </ul> <p>Translator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountable to advocate for child</li> <li>In middle between people regarding provision decisions</li> </ul> <p>Receiver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhered rigidly to guidance b/c lack of clarity</li> </ul> <p>Critic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some stopped working with LA as felt not helpful</li> <li>Others in school took up this role</li> </ul> <p>Outsider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A – LA took up this role</li> </ul>
<p>Evans (2013) From exclusion to inclusion: supporting Special Educational Needs Coordinators to keep children in mainstream education: a</p>	<p>Qualitative psychoanalytic research carried out in England</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Primary School SENCOs</li> <li>SENCOs had worked with the consultant (also a SENCO) for a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of process notes from consultancy sessions with 3 SENCOs- drawing upon concepts of containment, projection, transference and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SENCOs expressed feelings of not being 'good enough' and experienced projections from pupils they worked with = increased vulnerability</li> <li>SENCO role includes an affective aspect.</li> </ul>

<p>qualitative psychoanalytic research project</p> <p>Journal of Child Psychotherapy</p>		<p>year – not a random sample?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not say the area of the country SENCOS worked in</li> <li>• Lack of clarity about the process around recruitment</li> </ul>	<p>countertransference as well as process consultancy approach</p> <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted version of grounded theory which incorporated psychoanalytic concepts to carry out data analysis- critique because grounded theory approach is theory free. Whereas psychotherapy research approaches with a theory. Researcher argues parallels because psychoanalytic psychotherapists try to keep an open mind to create new ideas like grounded theory</li> <li>• Midgley 2006- argues process notes can be analysed through grounded theory in a systematic way</li> <li>• Process notes coded until categories emerged.</li> <li>• Lack of transparency about data and analysis. Novel data could have been discarded from conscious/unconscious thoughts. Refers to supervision but not explicitly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCOS could benefit from support in the form of consultations</li> <li>• SENCOS worked with children at risk of exclusion and felt they were also marginalised by senior management</li> <li>• SENCOS became more reflective from consultation experience. Leading to more effective and thoughtful practice.</li> <li>• Issues with belonging</li> <li>• Emphasis on support and containment SENCOS require due to the emotional containment they provide others</li> </ul> <p>Negative countertransference responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Uncertainty</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Abandonment</li> <li>• Inadequacy</li> </ul> <p>Positive countertransference responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence</li> <li>• Less anxious</li> <li>• Affirmation of consultant role</li> </ul>
<p>Mackenzie (2012) I can't imagine doing anything else: why do teachers of children with SEN remain in the profession? Resilience, rewards and realism over time.</p>	<p>Qualitative, narrative enquirer approach.</p>	<p>Opportunity sample from adverts placed in an SEN magazine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19 teachers (included because they were SENCOS or</li> </ul>	<p>Semi-structured interviews which took a narrative approach (e.g. asked one question and the rest was based on what the participants said). Lack of clarity about interviews conducted e.g. how many, how long.</p> <p>Grounded Theory</p>	<p>Themes identified included: The intellectual challenge of working with children with SEN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining other academic interests kept them interested in their role</li> <li>• Combining work and keeping up to date with academic work</li> </ul> <p>Unique rewards:</p>

		<p>previously SENCos)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 primary</li> <li>• 5 Secondary</li> <li>• 1 Male</li> </ul> <p>Length of time in role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 teaching for 15 years</li> <li>• 5 for 16-19 years</li> <li>• 8 more than 20 years</li> </ul>	<p>Transcripts coded by author using NVivo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite some regrets, did not want to do anything else</li> <li>• Reference to the ‘buzz’</li> </ul> <p>Situated factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A focus on whole school change</li> </ul>
<p>Maher, A. (2016). Consultation, negotiation and compromise: the relationship between SENCos, parents and pupils with SEN. <i>Support for Learning</i>, 31(1), 4-12.</p>	<p>Primary data used in this article was gathered as part of a much larger research project. While Stage One of the research used online surveys, the semi-structured individual interviews conducted with SENCos are the focus of this article</p>	<p>Purposive sampling of those who agreed, in the online surveys, to being interviewed.</p> <p>The criteria for recruitment were that SENCos had to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have completed the online survey;</li> <li>• be currently working in a mainstream secondary school in England;</li> <li>• have experience working with parents and pupils with SEN.</li> </ul> <p>A total of 12 SENCos were interviewed</p>	<p>Coded using NVIVO to identify reoccurring themes.</p> <p>Coding used the research objectives and key issues that emerged from the review of literature to guide..</p>	<p>The power and influence of parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use term consultation, but power over provision allocation resides with SENCos- due to knowledge they have</li> <li>• More research needed to understand influences of parents wishes on SENCO decisions</li> </ul> <p>Parents empowering SENCos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trusting relationship between parents and SENCos provides SENCos with freedom.</li> <li>• Importance of having trusting relationships</li> </ul> <p>A rationale for consulting parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ask them questions</li> <li>• To involve them in the process and ensure collaborative decision making</li> <li>• Parents voicing disapproval of school practice</li> </ul> <p>Consulting pupils with SEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower pupils by involving them in the decision making process</li> <li>• Unclear how much pupil views influences decisions</li> </ul> <p>If SENCos want to continue to influence the development and allocation of SEN provision and</p>

				resources, they need to ensure parents trust their judgement through an open, honest, supportive and co-operative relationship
<p>Maher and Vickerman (2018) Ideology influencing action: special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistant role conceptualisations and experiences of special educational needs in England</p>	<p>Qualitative. Semi-structured interviews exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why they chose their occupation</li> <li>• How they conceptualise their role</li> <li>• The decisions they make when endeavouring (or not) to cultivate an inclusive culture in schools</li> </ul> <p>Primary data were gathered as part of a broader research project. Stage One of the research used online surveys, the semi-structured individual interviews conducted with SENCOs and LSAs during Stage Two are the focus of this paper.</p>	<p>Purpose sampling. All of those who agreed, in the online surveys, to participate in Stage Two of the research were contacted via email for interview.</p> <p>The criteria for recruitment were that the SENCOs and LSAs had to: (i) have completed the online survey; (ii) be currently working in a mainstream secondary school in England; and (iii) have experience working with pupils with SEND.</p> <p>Twelve SENCOs and 12 LSAs were interviewed for between 30 and 120 minutes (does not state if primary or secondary school).</p>	<p>SENCOs and LSAs were interviewed for between 30 and 120 minutes (depending upon their availability and extent they answered questions)</p> <p>NVIVO was used to store and code transcripts. Coding involved the systematic analysis of (textual) data and the giving of labels to sections of the text that were of theoretical significance and of salience to the educational practices and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs.</p>	<p>Key themes which emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme 1 – Experiences, Ideologies and role conceptualisations</li> <li>• Theme 2 – Training and qualifications</li> <li>• Theme 3- Conceptualisations of inclusion and the (inclusive culture) of schools</li> <li>• Theme 4- SEN resources and information</li> </ul> <p>This paper focuses on theme 1 and suggests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCOs sought the role to work with pupils with SEN in order to increase the educational attainment and life chances of those pupils</li> <li>• SENCOs referred to educational ideology underpinned by inclusive concepts such as fairness, social justice and equality</li> <li>• Diversity of the role</li> <li>• SENCOs perceive their role to encompass managerial, administrative and external and internal (to school) partnership dimensions</li> </ul>
<p>Oldham and Radford (2011) Secondary SENCO leadership a universal or specialist role?</p>	<p>Qualitative research into SENCOs understanding of leadership and the extent they consider leadership relevant to their role. Secondary</p>	<p>2 Local Authorities (LA) 10 SENCOS (5 from each LA) Mainstream Secondary schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Semi-structured interviews. 3 sets of questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual data</li> <li>• Their concept of leadership</li> <li>• Their views on the relevance of leadership to the SENC role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCOs struggled to answer the question about their understanding of leadership and gave similar answer to questions about what makes someone a leader</li> <li>• 9 out of 10 said leadership was fundamental in role</li> <li>• Feeling heard by senior staff is important</li> </ul>

	SENCOs chosen due to gap in the literature		Grounded thematic analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCOs shared a common understanding of leadership e.g. having a vision</li> <li>• 1 SENCO mentioned moral purpose in relation to leadership</li> <li>• Team working</li> <li>• Pressure and influence of senior staff e.g. Headteacher</li> <li>• Half expressed inability to influence whole school approach</li> </ul> <p>If SENCO is on Senior Leadership Team (SLT) they become a lead. If they are not, they become specialist support.</p>
<p>Pearson (2008)</p> <p>Deafened by silence or by the sound of footsteps? An investigation of the recruitment induction and retention of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in England</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 pools of gathering participants. 336 randomly selected</li> <li>• SENCOs from LA- 35.6% return rate</li> <li>• NASEN- 61.3% return rate</li> <li>• Primary (including nurseries) 136</li> <li>• Secondary 110</li> </ul> <p>Mean level of experience of SENCOs 7 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postal questionnaire based on existing literature using closed questions, likert scales, open-ended questions</li> </ul> <p>SPSS and data analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indications that SENCOs are willing to invest research into their profession as many gave their contact number</li> <li>• Some long standing SENCOs</li> <li>• All had a line manager despite the suggestions SENCOs could be part of SLT</li> <li>• Suggestion term SENCO has been superseded by Inclusion Manager or SENCOs are line managed by the Inclusion Manager</li> <li>• High proportion planned to leave the post in medium term</li> <li>• High workload</li> <li>• Many felt negative aspects outweighed by the positive</li> <li>• Difficulties with recruitment</li> <li>• Suggests in medium term a high level of turnover b/c of job related factors and a career stepping stone</li> <li>• Limitation-self report questionnaire- could have been helpful to have interview?</li> </ul>
<p>Pearson, Mitchell &amp; Rapti (2015) ‘I will be “fighting” even more for pupils with SEN’: SENCOs’ role predictions in the changing English Policy context</p>	<p>Qualitative (questionnaire)</p> <p>Exploratory research into SENCOs perceptions of the role</p>	<p>Purposeful sampling. 227 SENCOs on NASEN Database (national)</p> <p>Reception, primary, middle school, secondary, post 16</p>	<p>Online questionnaire. Data drawn from one open-ended question.</p> <p>Thematic analysis – Themes based upon the Green Paper.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View that EHCPs will require knowledge and skills beyond the SENCOs current capacity</li> <li>• View that SENCOs will make increasing use of professional networks and knowledge sharing within and between schools.</li> <li>• Prediction of a greater partnership with parent</li> </ul>

		<p>Period of service ranged from 8 weeks to 24 years. Average 4.8 years 86 additional responsibilities e.g. Teacher, EAL etc</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCO to become a facilitator role – in terms of supporting and empowering parents – giving them the opportunity to take a more informed role</li> <li>• Reduction in resources and support from LA likely to have a negative impact</li> </ul>
<p>Rosen-webb (2011) Nobody tells you how to be a SENCO</p>	<p>Mixed method approach</p>	<p>9 SENCOs from 9 secondary schools in England (8 mainstream, 1 specialist setting)</p>	<p>First semi-structured interview involved open-ended questions.</p> <p>Participants were asked to complete a Diamond 9 activity. Coding and analysis from the first interview created questions and the repertory Diamond 9 grids</p> <p>Second interview- participant feedback and validation of terms.</p>	<p>Themes identified</p> <p>Identity and values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All felt their own families had promoted and valued learning</li> <li>• No set training route</li> <li>• Diamond activity – interest in how learners learn</li> </ul> <p>Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constraints of the school curriculum = difficulty for children with SEN</li> <li>• Lack of time, funding and resources</li> <li>• Concerns about impact of national level changes</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Optimism and integrity</li> </ul> <p>Values and role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route to becoming a SENCO ranged from planned to accidental</li> <li>• Learning viewed as self-initiated</li> <li>• Referred to child centred and person centred approaches</li> </ul> <p>Multifaceted role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Working with boundaries and challenges</li> <li>• Maintaining positive relationships</li> <li>• Transparency in communication]</li> <li>• Lack of clarity about role = increased stress</li> </ul>

<p>Smith, M. D., &amp; Broomhead, K. E. (2019). Time, expertise and status: barriers faced by mainstream primary school SENCOs in the pursuit of providing effective provision for children with SEND. Support for Learning, 34(1), 54–70.</p>	<p>Qualitative IPA</p>	<p>15 SENCOs primary schools in North West England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 SENCOs in role for more than 15yrs</li> <li>• 1 SENCO in role 9mths</li> <li>• 9 SENCOs full time</li> <li>• Remaining six worked part time</li> </ul>	<p>IPA</p> <p>Interviews focused on participants’ perceptions and experiences of their position as SENCO, as well as their relationships with parents and mainstream colleagues in relation to supporting the education and wellbeing of children with SEND</p> <p>Analysis included 5 stage IPA</p>	<p>Overarching theme = complexity of the role</p> <p>Sub themes:</p> <p>Lack of time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some had debate with SMT to ensure time for SENCO role</li> <li>• Time dedicated to SEND duties was insufficient – SEND COP says should have sufficient time</li> <li>• Interesting that the two SENCOs who had been allocated the largest periods of time for their SEND duties (3 days and 2.5 days per week) had also held the position as SENCO for the longest amounts of time; a considerably lengthy 17 years and 23 years respectively</li> <li>• Pressures of time when also class teacher</li> <li>• Additional roles alongside SENCO</li> </ul> <p>Complexities around SENCO as expert</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and mainstream colleagues held them in high regard for SEND related issues, which consequently resulted in participants experiencing pressure in relation to how they were deemed to be experts. Yet many SENCOs did not perceive themselves to be experts, indeed quite the opposite was reported</li> <li>• Those in role longer appeared more confident</li> <li>• Assumption from staff that the responsibility for children with SEND was that solely of the SENCO but the participants highlighted the need for a whole-school approach to inclusion. The idea of ‘SENCO as sole expert’, deemed to be solely responsible for all SEND-related issues, contrasted with how SENCOs themselves actually viewed their position.</li> <li>• Parents view SENCOs as experts as they lack understanding of funding etc</li> </ul>
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				<p>SENCO as part of SMT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 out of 15 on SMT- 2 deputy heads so this is reason they were on SMT</li> <li>• Benefits of being on SMT to raise inclusive agenda</li> <li>• Position on SMT can be a conflict to the role- strategic vs inclusive</li> </ul>
<p>Szwed (2007a) Reconsidering the Role of the Primary Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator: Policy, Practice and Future Priorities.</p>	<p>Mixed methods questionnaire looking at SENCO role in primary school. The role cannot be generalised as SENCOs work in complex contexts with different management structures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Primary Schools</li> <li>• Sent to 8 schools involved in the initial teacher training programme</li> <li>• 42 SENCOs from Metropolitan LA's</li> <li>• 6 SENCOs from Shire LA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire</li> <li>• First part quantitative- provide context/comparison of role title, work hours etc</li> </ul> <p>Second part qualitative- respondents asked to provide examples</p>	<p>Quantitative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 81% Full Time; 16% SENCO for group of schools; 14% Part time</li> <li>• 10% Also Head Teacher; 10% Deputy; 15% Assistant HT; 48% on Senior Leadership Team; 33% subject coordinator; 46% class teacher; 5% no other role</li> </ul> <p>Qualitative:</p> <p>Difficulties with the role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% said lack of time</li> <li>• Accessing resources and support services</li> <li>• Paperwork and bureaucratic hoops</li> <li>• Felt SEN children seen only as their responsibility</li> </ul> <p>Helpful factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time for the role</li> <li>• Supportive staff team</li> <li>• Supportive Head Teacher</li> <li>• Membership of SLT</li> <li>• Supportive parents</li> </ul> <p>Helpful strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaising with colleagues</li> <li>• Working with TA's</li> <li>• Sharing the load</li> <li>• Maintaining records</li> <li>• Professional development</li> </ul>

				<p>Inclusion policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 42% completed this section</li> <li>• 10% whole school policy to be developed</li> <li>• Many = responsible for writing and maintain an action plan</li> <li>• Importance of being on SLT</li> <li>• Importance of advocating for children with SEN</li> </ul>
<p>Szwed (2007b) Remodelling Policy and Practice: The Challenge for Staff Working with Children with Special Educational Needs</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear how SENCOs were identified. Refers to previous research and that this paper is an extension with a focus on the interviews. States 4 primary schools were chosen from those that completed the questionnaire to provide spread of context</li> <li>• Case study 1- SENCO at a primary school and Assistant Headteacher</li> <li>• Case Study 2- SENCO and Class Teacher at a Primary school</li> <li>• Case Study 3- SENCO and Headteacher at Infant school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Diary- each SENCO asked to record weekly activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the SENCO cannot be generalised because of the wide variety of contexts and diversity of the role</li> <li>• SENCOs who reported the fewest difficulties tended to be non-class based and on SMT</li> <li>• The role is varied in how it is defined and carried out</li> <li>• Differences between those on SMT and not</li> <li>• Those constrained to the Code’s prescription of coordinating level felt frustrated and less able to carry out their work</li> <li>• No direct correlation between number of children with SEN and time allocated to role</li> <li>• SENCOs with over 50% of their time allocated to the role reported fewest difficulties</li> <li>• To be successful certain criteria need to be in place</li> <li>• Need a style of leadership which takes a whole school approach</li> </ul>
<p>Tissot (2013) The role of SENCO as leaders</p>	<p>Empirical study. Mixed method</p>	<p>SENCOs new to the role and undertaking SENCO award at Reading University or Institute of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5% Nursery</li> </ul>	<p>Time 1 – Optional questionnaire at introduction Time 2 – Questionnaire completed at end of course</p>	<p>Quantitative data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of the role varied</li> <li>• SENCOs working with younger children had a greater chance of being on SLT</li> <li>• No relationship between type of school and SENCO role</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 81% Primary</li> <li>• 12% Secondary</li> <li>• Relatively even split if on Senior Leadership Team or not.</li> </ul>	<p>Questionnaire mainly closed questions = quantitative data</p> <p>Follow up semi-structured interviews with 10 SENCOs</p>	<p>Qualitative data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some felt it was powerful to be on SLT. Others felt it defined them as something they did not want to be associated with and resisted being a leader.</li> <li>• Those without an authority lead role commented on the type of work they were given e.g. paperwork</li> <li>• More than half not on SLT aspired to be.</li> <li>• Only those on SLT had control over resources</li> </ul> <p>Lack of time</p>
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## **Appendix G. Research information sheet, participant information sheet and consent forms**

### **Participant information sheet**

The Tavistock and Portman   
NHS Foundation Trust

### **Information about the research**

**Draft Project Title** “Fighting Fires” What Primary School Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have to say about their role; a psychosocial approach.

#### **Invitation**

You are being asked to take part in a piece of doctoral research exploring primary school SENCOs experiences of being a SENCO. This piece of research will be conducted by Abigail Plender, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), and will be supervised by Dale Bartle, Educational Psychologist, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. This piece of research has been approved by the Tavistock Research and Ethics Committee (TREC).

#### **Project Description**

The research will explore the experiences of primary school SENCOs in the context of their work. It is hoped the findings will provide readers with an understanding of the experience of primary school SENCOs and their place in the school system to allow professionals an opportunity to reflect on their work with SENCOs.

#### **What will happen**

Participants will be asked to take part in 2 interviews which will involve questions about their experience of being a SENCO. The first interview will include questions about participant’s thoughts and feelings of their role within the school system and their interactions with parents and other professionals. The second interview will provide an opportunity to reflect on the first and continue to explore the SENCOs experience of their role. Each interview will last for approximately 1 hour.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed so that all participant identifying details are anonymised. As the intended sample size will be small, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will be identifiable by the researcher, Abigail Plender. However, all information that could be used to identify participants, such as their name and the name of their school, will be changed to maintain confidentiality.

**Location**

The participants will be offered the choice for interviews to be held at the school they work in or in the Local Authority office. Interviews will be arranged at a time suitable for the participant and researcher.

**Confidentiality**

If you choose to volunteer to take part in the research your name and contact details, such as your contact telephone number and email address, will be requested so that the researcher can contact you. This information will not be linked to the interview and will be destroyed after the interview has taken place, unless participants express their interest to have a summary of findings shared with them upon the completion of the research. In this instance email addresses will be kept in a password protected document separate to the other research data files, in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy, and will be destroyed after sharing of the summary of findings.

Interviews will be audio recorded and all recordings will be stored on password protected computer devices. All other confidential information will be stored securely in a locked cabinet. All identifying details of the participants will be anonymised and once the recordings are transcribed the audio files will be securely destroyed along with other confidential information.

Upon completion of the doctoral research a printed copy of the thesis will be shared with the researcher's training institution, The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust as well as the Local Authority, including the Educational Psychology Service. The research may also be considered for publication. Participants can ask for a summary of the research findings. In the thesis all participant information that could be used to identify participants, such as their name and the name of their school, will be changed to maintain confidentiality.

**Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time during the research up to the point of transcription and analysis of the interview data where identifying information will have been anonymised. Should you choose to withdraw you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Confidentiality will not be maintained if there is a disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others. Confidentiality of information provided by participants is subject to

legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions).

**For further information**

The researcher, Abigail Plender will be pleased to answer any questions:

[aplender@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:aplender@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

If there are any concerns about the conduct of the researcher or any other aspects of the research project please contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance: [academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

**Participant consent form****Consent to Participate**

**Draft Project title:** “Fighting Fires” What Primary School Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have to say about their role; a psychosocial approach.

This piece of research will be conducted by Abigail Plender, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), and will be supervised by Dale Bartle, Educational Psychologist, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. This piece of research has been approved by the Tavistock Research and Ethics Committee (TREC).

- I have read the information leaflet relating to the above research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep.
- The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information.
- I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me (i.e. audio recording of interviews).
- I understand that my rights to anonymity and confidentiality will be respected.

I freely and fully consent to participate in the two interviews for this research which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw up to the point of data transcription without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant’s Signature

.....

Date: .....

Researcher’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher’s Signature

.....

Date: .....

**Participant information sheet**

The Tavistock and Portman   
NHS Foundation Trust

**Participant information**

I have read the research information sheet and understand how my participant information will be used during the research. I understand the information will be stored confidentially and destroyed after the interviews have taken place unless I express an interest to have a summary of findings upon completion of the research.

**Participant details**

Name:	
Email address:	
Contact number:	
Type of Primary School I work in:	
Time in SENCO role:	
Time of SENCO role in this school:	
Hold the NANSENCO award (Yes/No):	
Additional roles in the school:	

I would like a summary of the research findings upon completion of the research (Please circle your response): **YES/NO**

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Date: .....

### **Information about the research for Headteachers**

Dear Headteacher,

This letter contains an offer for your school to be part of a piece of doctoral research exploring primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) experiences of being a SENCO. This piece of research will be conducted by Abigail Plender, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) on placement in the borough, and will be supervised by Dale Bartle, Educational Psychologist, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. This piece of research has been approved by the Tavistock Research and Ethics Committee (TREC).

**Draft Project Title** “Fighting Fires” What Primary School Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have to say about their role; a psychosocial approach.

#### **Project Description**

The research will explore the experiences of primary school SENCOs in the context of their work. It is hoped the findings will provide readers with an understanding of the experience of primary school SENCOs and their place in the school system, to allow professionals an opportunity to reflect on their work with SENCOs.

#### **What will happen**

Participants will be asked to take part in 2 interviews which will involve questions about their experience of being a SENCO. The first interview will include questions about participant’s thoughts and feelings of their role within the school system and their interactions with parents and other professionals. The second interview will provide an opportunity to reflect on the first and continue to explore how they experience their role. Each interview will last for approximately 1 hour.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed so that all participant identifying details are anonymised. As the intended sample size will be small, complete anonymity will not be possible as participants will be identifiable by the researcher, Abigail Plender. However, all information that could be used to identify participants, such as their name and the name of their school, will be changed to maintain confidentiality.

**Location**

The participants will be offered the choice for interviews to be held at the school they work in or in the Local Authority office. Interviews will be arranged at a time suitable for the participant and researcher.

**Confidentiality**

All identifying details of the participants will be anonymised and once the recordings are transcribed the audio files will be securely destroyed along with other confidential information.

Upon completion of the doctoral research a printed copy of the thesis will be shared with the researcher's training institution, The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust as well as the Local Authority, including the Educational Psychology Service. The research may also be considered for publication. A summary of the research findings will be made available if requested. In the thesis all participant information that could be used to identify participants, such as their name and the name of their school, will be changed to maintain confidentiality.

**For further information**

The researcher, Abigail Plender will be pleased to answer any questions:

[aplender@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:aplender@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

If there are any concerns about the conduct of the researcher or any other aspects of the research project please contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance: [academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

**Headteacher consent form**

The Tavistock and Portman   
NHS Foundation Trust

**Consent form for Headteachers**

**Draft Project title:** “Fighting Fires” What Primary School Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have to say about their role; a psychosocial approach.

This piece of research will be conducted by Abigail Plender, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), and will be supervised by Dale Bartle, Educational Psychologist, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. This piece of research has been approved by the Tavistock Research and Ethics Committee (TREC).

- I have read the information leaflet relating to the above research and have been given a copy to keep.
- The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information.
- I understand what is being proposed and the procedures involved have been explained to me.

I freely and fully consent for the school SENCO to take part in the two interviews for this research which has been fully explained to me.

I would like a summary of the research findings upon completion of the research (Please circle your response): **YES/NO**

School Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Headteacher’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Headteacher’s Signature

.....

Date: .....

Researcher’s Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher’s Signature

.....

Date: .....

### Appendix H. Table of participant information

	<b>SENCO 1</b>	<b>SENCO 2</b>	<b>SENCO 3</b>
<b>Type of school</b>	Mainstream state school through school. Nursery – Yr 6	Mainstream Infant school with nursery	Mainstream Infant school with nursery
<b>Length of time in SENCO role</b>	2 years	20 years	11 years
<b>Length of time in SENCO role in current school</b>	2 years	3 years	9 years
<b>Additional roles in the school</b>	1 non SLT role	3 roles including deputy headteacher	7 roles including assistant headteacher
<b>Member of Senior Leadership Team (YES/NO)</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Hold the NANSENCO Award (YES/NO)</b>	Yes	Yes	No

**Appendix I. Example of raw transcript for interview 1 - Samantha  
Samantha interview 1**

I: I just really appreciate your time really

S: no it's fine

I: As I know it's difficult to find time

S: it's nice to stop

I: I was going to say it might (both laughing) even be a chance for you to have a drink for a bit

S: (laughing)

I: urm did you have any questions from the information sheet?

S: No no it's fine

I: Is it all

S: Yeah absolutely fine

I: so today was really urm I know that we've arranged a second one. So today was just for you to urm to really just talk about your experience of being a SENCO. It's a slightly different of how you we're used to in terms of the research you were talking about. Urm they might have asked you a few more questions [urm]. Whereas mine today, and I'm getting used to it as well, is literally just to hear from you really. Samantha, tell me what it's like to be a SENCO

S: Yeah

I: So we'll just role with it

S: Okay

I: And we will see what comes out and we'll just kind of

S: Okay

I: Yeah just kind of explore. There's

S: That's fine

I: There's no right or wrong it's

S: No no. I mean I suppose for me um. X was always. I don't think you met X [no] urm urm I've been at H, this is my sixth year now [mhmm] came as an SEN teacher (yeah) does it matter if I go back over

I: No it's..

S: So I went into teaching late. I always wanted to work with children with special needs so I started sort of like voluntary work while my children were at school in the private sector with other things. Then I realised it was actually really teaching I wanted to go into so (quick breath) I hadn't done a degree (Mmm) so I did a distant learning degree (Mmm) while I was working while my children were young (yeah) um so I was doing voluntary work as well just to see if it, to see if I was right for them you know (Mmm) occasion and if it was right for me. And then I started supporting special needs. And then I did some other voluntary work at a special needs school, but I was also working with, (pause) I did preschool portage (ahh) before I went into urm into the actual school place (breath) (okay) umm so that was supporting families before school. So that was really nice and it fitted in with school hours with my children etc etc. So it was a really good experience. And then I did a year as a LSA at a mainstream school in X. And all that time I was trying to get my qualification. I carried on. I went with portage while I was doing my qualification as they allowed me time out to do my school experience. Because you had to have six week and eight week blocks at school to get your teaching experience. Urm and then yeah and then I went toooo WL for three years which is where I had done my final placement urm and then a job came up at X, so special needs school. That was where I would have probably wanted to go to start with. But i've never regretted having that mainstream experience (Mmm) because its brought me to where I am now urm (pause) I think now you can do your PGCE and then go into special school (Mmm) but THEN they used to encourage you to get mainstream experience first (sharp breath) So that was that's been a building block really into where, otherwise it would have been hard for me to come back into mainstream I think (intake breath) So I did 5 years severe complex special needs (yeah) and then the job for SEN teacher came up here. (Breath) So I worked alongside X as the Inclusion manager for 3 years (Mmm) so my SEN teacher role was very much supporting the SEN children. (Mmhm) Children with low ability (breath) any specific needs, supporting the teachers. But also supporting the inclusion manager. And then Robyn retired (breath) and I was asked. I think they advertised for inclusion (oh yeah) and I don't think think there was anyone suitable. So I was asked if I would ACT. So I said I'd act as the SENCo not the inclusion manager ( m laugh) I sort of see the role slightly differentlyyyy

I: Okay, can you tell me a bit more?

S: Well we're a two form entry gone to a three form. And I see the SENCo role primarily being responsible for all those children on the SEN register. Urm we also do a watch register here as well. So they're not children with specific diagnoses but children that we need to monitor, that teachers have got concerns about (spoke faster) so that list is probably quite big. I mean we're probably around about. If in total around 100 so that means around a fifth of our, were 540 -at the moment. Ur so it's just under a 5th that we've either got an SEN on the register or teachers have some sort of concern. It might be behaviour or the learning you know some emotional social concern. Urm....I felt that role has got so big that if you put it under the inclusion umbrella you're including pupil premium, you're including gifted and

talented, you're including urm English as an additional language. (Breath) And in order to do the role properly I just felt that would be huuuge. Urm (breath) so I must admit I was sort of. That was my opportunity to say okay oh right okay, let's look at the job description (yeah) let's look at what the inclusion manager and lets look at the SENCO role. Urm because if you're going to do a job you want to do it properly. And if you're almost spread too thin. I don't think you can do anything properly. So I still have able and talented under my remit. But pupil premium is not under my remit and English as an additional language we have a coordinator at school (okay) Sooo urm although some of the staff sort of crosses over. So that that. So I did that for a term and then (pause) I think, I can't remember how I actually ended up becoming permanent, but it was almost like you know an arm twist (motioned twisting ) (okay, slight laugh) it was sort of like you're doing okay you know [um]. It was all that sort of positive you're doing okay. You're doing well we would love you to carry on. So that's where it went from there [okay]. So I just ended up doing the role permanently. So I've now been doing it. So that was the summer term and then I've done another year. So this is like. At Christmas this year it will be 2 years as either (mouth noise) acting or actual [mmm] If that's what you like to call it.

So yeah the role has sort of evolved. I have sort of put a 5 year plan because for my own stress levels you cant. I cant do everything you want to do [mm]. You have a picture of where you would like it to be and I thought this has to be a 5 year plan (hand movement stretching forward and short sigh). It can't be a were going to do everything. I look back now and we're 2 years and I still feel like I've got a long way to go (me feeling a need to reassure). But I do think it's one of those roles that urm you have to manage your (pause) workload all the time. And there's that constant priority. I think of it as the iceberg where you're the tip [yeah] (desire of agreement same terminology) and there's loads to be done underneath but you've got keep your priorities going [hmm] So you've got to look at. And also trying to give everyone something that that's effective. There's no good giving someone that little bit that's not going to be any good (me taking it personally)

So urm yeah. I think that's how I try to manage it. I go. I'm fortunate headteacher is supportive that I go on lots of training. I always attend the SENCO forums. Anything that's been offered like the Inclusion commitment [mm] we've just done that for 2 years [oh yeah] So all of that is massively beneficial. I think for this role you need a network because that is your way of learning from the others. That's how I learnt. When I first started although I worked alongside X. I still felt I needed those colleagues. I had those colleagues at uni and they supported me [ yeah] urm and the other thing was doing my SENCO award I did that. I started doing that before X left. So I suppose in a way I started working towards the SENCO role even though I was ACTING (Hand quotation marks) [laugh]. But it helped urm when X was still here. Then I did the summer term ACTING whilst doing my award. Urm but I got a tremendous amount of support from that. Although none of the SENCOs are from this borough because I did it at X [okay] urm you just LEARN. I think every time you get together with other SENCOs or listening to what other people are doing in their schools that's where you learn. Part of it stresses me out because I think oh my goodness they've got this (spoke faster). This in place that in place that in place (fast and lots of hand gestures) [laugh] and we haven't. Part of it, just helps, think yeah okay we're okay in that area I think we're managing that but maybe we need to add this [yeah] you know it just keeps youuu understanding what's going on across the borough [mm] and it's not blinkered just to this is what's going on at our

school [yeah. I mean ultimately that's what it is. BUT it's bringing in those other ideas [mm. mm]

(Swallow noise from drinking her cup of tea) So that's been tremendously helpful. We also did a little forum for the learning network. We have seven schools that are our learning network [okay] (sharp breath) and we when they all come together well actually there's a time for the SENCO's to come together here. And then we brought the meeting to two o'clock so it wasn't just after school because we always had loads to discuss. But it always needs **SOMEBODY** to initiate it. It's normally it's normally here [oh okay]. We've been to X, we've been to X, we've been to X (listing as counting on fingers). So urm yeah. I mean I'm hoping to keep that going [mm]. But I think with SENCOs you can get so... inundated with what's happening that those little important bits get pushed aside [mm] (breath). So I mean I do always say yes to anything that is offered especially if it's free. Any free training for anyone (both slight laugh). Urm what else have we done. We've done the inclusion commitment, we've done the urr transition project as well for the year 6 to year 7 (breath) and that was another project across the borough. Because I think if you can get (spoke that fast) your school on board [mm] with what's working if they're putting in some sort of policy [mm] [me wanting to step in] and the support for something as major as transition it helps us have a framework for it because it's that opportunity to discuss what's you know [mm] what's a really good framework [yep] and then put it in to trial as a pilot and then review it and then see if you're going to take it up [yeah]. You know if it's beneficial for future years [sure]. So for example the transition what was was bringing all the year 4, 5, 6 parents bringing them all together and the borough supporting them with that having a meeting and encouraging them to visit the schools early [yeah okay]. So it's all little things like that bringing it all together urmm.

So that worked really well. And I've just got involved in the mental health [yep mhmm]. So that was before Christmas. There was 6 training days offered. So it was quite a lot altogether [okay] [wanting to ask more but resisting] Well it started before Christmas and then went into the spring term [oh yeah] Yeah urm. But it has been hugely beneficial. Again you benefit from there's twenty schools involved and we've now got six meetings this term, this year of like half days where we've brought together what we, how we've taken it back. What we've learnt and taken into school [sure] So that's even more useful because you can go on loads of training and not have the time to input any of it [yeah]. But its almost like... the first thing we talked about was the vulnerable pupil audit and the way we do it at schools is there a better way of doing it...you know..is.. Headteacher is very good. He doesn't want to make, create more work if you're already doing something so it's something that we look at first (cough) and then we decide is it something our school would benefit from. Is it something that we haven't got, we haven't already got in place. Is there a different way of doing what we've got, a more effective way [yeah]. So it's all that reviewing and then we take it to senior management team [okay] and then we trialled it and then I had a meeting yesterday, so took it back and said right this is what we're doing, this is what the feedback was urm [mm].

So yeah all of that. Then yesterday you come away with more to do [yeah] (laugh) That's the only thing I think half a days training and then you've got..we're talking about urm..doing like reflective, how we can do reflection across school zones of regulation. What I think they're trying to look at is some of the schools being..you know having some consistent practices that...ones that once they are know, they are known practices that are going to work.

Because you could spend your time doing all these things that they're asking you to do, but you've got to make sure that first that it's going to be relevant to your school [ yeah]. So for me I always come back from a training [mm], take out what I think is relevant, speak to headteacher first and then it maybe go down the SMT route (breath) [mm] and then it may go to a teacher inset [yeah] mm and then it may go to..If we do it at a teacher inset then I try to alongside it a t a support staff inset [yeah] so we're all..communicating..the same.. yeah try...(laugh) [yeah]

So I suppose that's where we're at but there's still. I feel like that five year plan is..a you.. know, I'm into like year two, there's a long way to go [mm]. And most of it for me is how we bring all the information together [mm]. I'm not the most technical of people and I have a vision of how we can bring all this..to try and totally be electronic. Which is what everyone is trying to be. Obviously bearing in mind the confidentiality side [sure] urm particularly we the GPPpR..[oh the GDPR] Yeah that's it (pointing at me) Yeah (smile) [laugh]. That's always at the forefront of your mind as you're thinking of what you could put in place [yeah]. So urm...yeah..

There's loads. That..I really would (fast speaking) like it that we have some...Schools have brought into profiles where you would set up a profile for a child and then you would add to it as you go along. I feel like I'm very paper based so I go to meetings [mm] I take minutes. Most of the important time for me is that relationship with the parent [yeah] and where possible pupil voice. Ummm and then come away from that meeting with a list of actions [mm] action plans and try to work my through them. But I will always type up the minutes and have an action plan [yeah] and then my worry is getting through that action plan [mm]. Because that same day you might meet with another parent [mm], have another set of minutes with another lot of action plans [mm]. But there's a lot of parent contact.

I: (probably butted in and stopped flow) Yeah can you tell me a bit about what that's like with parents? Or how that might feel with some of these relationships or experiences? (getting quieter at the end)

S: Yeah I mean well normally it often could be that the parents are maybe finding things difficult [mm] so they may not be in a good place themselves [mm]. It may be that..which is hard in one way. But then equally you've got parents that are in denial. That you also..So I think for me it's giving them time [mm] and building up a rapport. I am also very honest with them. I wouldn't promise something that's I cant deliver [felt like at me]. And also if I do promise something I do deliver it to my..you know to my, as best I can. Ummm so...Yeah I mean I enjoy [yeah] the parent contact (fast speaking) because tou...I mean I'm hoping. I don't think I've ever had anything really really negative parent feedback [mm]. I've always been really fortunate that we've built up a rapport and they come back..[yeah]. We do. I've set up like a parent chat and cuppa group for my ASD and ADHD parents. And that's about twice a term. And for me the success of that was them coming back the next time [yeah]. Them not feeling it's just a one off it's lip service and we just go away and we come back. So we've got another one this Friday [mm] and you know if I see them around the school I send them an email, I send them a reminder. And then I also ask them if there is anything they want to discuss. Because I think it's their ownership as well [yeah] it's a partnership isn't it. It's parent and me and we're both for the interest of the child [yeah mm] and I think that's the

important bit. So and also I think for parents who get a new diagnosis it's quite traumatic really. I went with a parent. I've never done that before. I went with a parent to X for them (breath). When they are receiving their diagnosis because I was worried as to...English was difficult. And also I was wondering how it would feel for you know. I wanted to be there to support them.

I: Yeah how did you feel in that process?

S: I felt..this is your diagnosis, here's a wadge of paper. I mean they were nice enough but their capacity was huge. I mean they had a 20 minute window to give a diagnosis, deliver a pack of information. Which...in their defence they had translated it..because the family were X...so there was some real personal touch to it. And then we had a little bit of time with the speech and language therapist and then you're sent off and discharged and it's like right it's over to the school we've recommended X centre. Sooo...you know for some parents it like you know we. Most of them will come back and see me. Or if I know they've gone for an appointment I will follow it up for them because I think they do need that support to sort of follow it through [mm]. So YEAH, I thought, I thought it was quite urm a difficult thing for parents definitely...but...then they had an understanding of what it must be like for a parent but at the end of the day they've got to get through so many parents [yeah]. And I think they feel. Actually they said to me when I went in. I explained who I was and I asked if it was okay if was there because mum had given me permission to support her. And they said oh I wish more SENCOs went [yeah] because they LIKE to see that contact [mm]. But I suppose it's not easy to do that all the time. So Yeah so it was another experience I suppose...In the same way that I've been to the ADHD centre tried to encourage a parent along there. Unfortunately the day it was arranged the parent wasn't well so I still went on behalf [mm] of the parent and that was an experience of what is what is on offer for the parents, which was fantastic. There was a 1:1 person prepared to speak to the parent, so instead they were talking to me about strategies I could pass on [mm]. So yeah I will..I didn't. It it, I think if you haven't experienced how can you promote it if that makes sense [no I see]. So all of those things are good to experience. So I would say parents are a major part.

I: Mmm it sounds like that's really coming out about that [yeah yeah]

S: If I think of an example yesterday. An hour and a half with parents in the morning. Ur their twins started in June in reception. One of them had a diagnosis, very low level autism with urm high functioning. So for us in school no major concerns..because if a teachers got a concern they will give me a concern form or they will come and talk to me or email me [mm] urm and I so. I did. I reflected on it afterwards thinking maybe I should have been more on it, on it. That's not quite the right word. With it. [what do you] (started to speak faster) because that family experiences they've gone from reception to year one. They've had seven weeks. They've had a parent meeting. Parent meeting was fine child is high functioning. You know there's a few..[mm]...urm..when I say obvious autism difficulties. But strategies are already in place in class, visuals support now and next board [yeah] emotion fans. All that sort of things that teachers automatically do. But I felt afterwards that maybe we've never shared that with the parents that that's what you know there for them [mm]. So they initiated the meeting. Which always then worries me because I think I probably should have initiated it with them..Dya see? (looking at me perhaps for reassurance?)

I: The thing that..how did

S: I feel like I've let them down a bit. Whether after the meeting. So basically their first question to me was. I said to them you know. It's really lovely to meet you. The last time I met the mum was when the girls visited and we played duplo on the floor [mm]. So we talked about that journey. They're a family that have come from X urm they'd experienced the X setting [oh yeah], private education, private assessment all of that. And then here we are (laugh). And so they. So their first question to me was, what does a SENCO do? [mm] What are you going to help us with? [yeah mm] urm where can we get help? [mm] I just I had. There were loads of questions

I: Lots of questions

S: Literally loads of questions. And I said. I said you know I hope you don't mind I'm writing all the questions down. I covered the teacher to come out of the class but I only had a window of about 25 minutes so I felt [yeah] that we should talk about the academic side first and behaviour in class, social emotional. All that type of thing first. Then we came back to the questions. And then as I was typing it up last night. I mean there was so many questions. So then from that the action plan was a communication book set up (breath) which happened yesterday, because I wanted to make sure that at least one of those actions happened straight away [yeah sure] and that was a quick fix. What I call a quick fix. Urm and the parents felt happy that..if the little girl went home and something happened at school. Although she's high functioning she can explain it's happened she can't put the meaning behind it [ye sure]. Urm..and she's quite right. Why would we expect her to do. So we probably should have put something like that in place. Urm..the other thing was to introduce them to the ASD ADHD [mm] centre at X. Urm and I have a pack, like a pack that I can copy. But I also said to the parents that I've got the cup chat and share on Friday so they could come they were welcome to that. I said I didn't send you an initial invitation because I was seeing you today and I thought it would be nicer to explain what the groups about. Urm so we talked about and I said I'd get the pack ready for that [urm]. And I've actually got someone from the ASD centre coming on Friday. So that will be nice. The third thing was that they wanted to know about what private music lessons was and about private music. They wanted any ideas for activities to do at home in the bad weather [mmm]. They wanted urm...

I: Lots of things

S: There were about seven or eight.

I: Yeah it feels like there was lots

S: Oh and they wanted a developmental chart that they could assess their children against it [mm. Inaudible]. Yeah so it was quite rigid yeah.

I: And how did it feel to have all of those questions, all of those things?

S: First of all I felt like I had let them down. That was my initial thought. And then I thought no there are loads of things you can put in place for these families and then I felt we have got things in place already. We haven't let them down. However, I was really honest with them [mm] and at the end of the meeting I said how I felt. I said [yeah]. Urm I'm really glad that they initiated this meeting. I said I'm sorry it should have happened earlier. However, I know you had the parent meeting. And then this has come from the parent meeting [yeah]. But maybe I should have explained my role earlier. I don't know...[in audible]. It's needs must isn't it, and this little girl is high functioning. There's no major concerns in class [mm] and they have things in place. But maybe I needed to have that conversation [mm] with the family. So NOWW. The other thing from that is an early support plan [okay]. Because they want urm...I said that's absolutely fine we can do that way we have regular targets. I said because we would have done regular targets individualised learning planing. But I said we can do it in more detail to give you stepping stones [mm] to help you (breath). What I tried to explain to them is that we just need to take one thing at a time [yeah]. Urm so yeah I do feel that they are going to be on my case (quiet sigh/laugh as moving head down).

I: On your case

S: Yeah.[Yeah]. So like the minutes, sometimes I will share them with the parents sometimes I won't [ yeah]. It depends if it's appropriate. I think for these parents I probably I'll share them [mm] because I've set them out in the fact they way they asked me the questions which is fine. And the information and then I feel they've got it all...[yeah]. But also there's going to be an action plan so I'm..accountable..as far as I'm concerned in terms of the action plan [mhmm]. Sooo...yeah...

I: A mixture of things there

S: So that's an example of just one thing that happened yesterday morning [mm]. Then afterwards I thought that's probably about three or four days work. Because an early support plan is massive [yeah]. To do that and then to review it...Sooo. But then equally I felt like maybe I should have given them time earlier...Sooo...But your..that's constant isn't it [mm yeah] you reflect on what you've done [mm] and what you do next [yeah]. So I'm not gonna sort of beat myself up [mm] about not having done it [yeah]. I'm just going to get on with it now. And I think that's where you resilience has to come in [mm] Urm otherwise you just worry about what you're not doing and not what you are doing [mm]. So I think that's the way...[mm].Thats my coping strategy I think [yeah]. My coping strategy (spoke faster) is prioritise. My coping strategy is obviously if a parent approaches me, contacts me I will do it ASAP. Or I will contact them back to them as quickly I can. Urm...and just be honest with them.

I: Yeah honest seems to be a thing you've mentioned a few [Yeah definitively] times

S: I like to be transparent [mm]. So Urm...yeah...[yeah]..so even if they. So I don't meet all parents that come. So if headteacher is showing a parent round. Unless the school rings up and says right I've got a child coming that's got an EHCP [mm]. Headteacher's very good. He'll get me on board with [okay] Urm...you know the parent. And I'll meet them at the initial bit and introduce myself. But if a child comes to us and sometimes they don't tell us

they have a need [yeah] Orr we had one arrive that we didn't even know he had an EHCP [mm]. Urm..there..because otherwise you'd have that conversation with the previous school (spoke fast) [yeah]. So I think some of the SENCO role is the detective work. In trying to find out..[yeah]..where this child's come from. What support they've had before. Because it doesn't all automatically (breath). It's no good assuming the child automatically comes with a box of information [yeah]. Because they don't. So Urm. And some of it is still unknown. I've got another family that didn't understand. This is another example of unknown. Two children. The parent didn't come to parents evening so we always follow that up [okay]. Urm English is not a first a language [mm]. So we've tried the childminder route. English is still not easy [mm]. The older child speaks reasonable English [okay]. But he clearly has some needs, which is what we are trying to find out about [okay]. Urm...previous school. He was only in X for a couple of months. And the younger one wasn't in there at all. They have no info. I've spoken to them they have no. They could tell me what dates he was where and they could tell me he'd come. They didn't know where he was before [mm]. He was just given to them by the borough (slight laugh). So it was vey little known. So you can spend a lot of time. So the emails to this parent were bouncing back [mm]. We never see this parent because she works half seven to half five [mmm]. Urm. So the way we've got round it's. Urm we've tried the childminder route. I've written her a letter. But I've written the letter in both boys bags, with questions understanding she'd need support with an interpreter. And then hallelujah yesterday morning there was an X in the playground [okay]. That must have come up and spoken to headteacher [right]. Because I had communicated all of this to headteacher he knew I was trying to speak to this parent. So he then got a child to come and get me. Then I spoke to the Uncle. The Uncle confirmed that we're definitely meeting with Mum on Tuesday. We tried to fit round mum [mm] so we offerred her 7:30-8:30 in the morning or 5-6 in the evening saying school shuts at six (all spoken fast). If she had come to the parents evening we were open until eight. But she, but she. I thought well at least it's less disruption for her day [mm] because she's a single parent [mmm]. So she needs to be working at that time. So she's coming five till six on Tuesday (slight laugh whilst talking) and we're meeting he here with the two teachers and either uncle or auntie are going to be the interpreter. So we've just got to keep everything [yeah] crossed that that happens [okay]. So what I did. I sent a list of questions [mmm] and asked uncle if he would help me [yep]. I said because we have very little information from previous schools [mm] could you [hmhm] perhaps spend some time telling me what the children like, what they don't like. If they're having any difficulties. If they would like that support. All that information you would get [sure] on a profile. So that's just another example [yeah]. But you think how much time you spent trying to get that one meeting. Because I'd met both the teachers cos they were concerned. We'd even tried to speak to another person that knew the child [mm] and then met with the childminder [mm]. Then yeah...

I: So lots of time speaking to different people [ yeah]. You mentioned working with headteacher quite closely as well.

S: Yeah that's very important. I think you've got to have a good rapport with the staff as well because you know it is about checking in on the staff [mmm] making sure that they're okay [yeah] you know. Knowing which classes have got the challenging children in [hmm]. You know where they could have difficult days. You know, allowing the teachers to offload [mm]. So a lot of time spent where teachers have to. You know, they need to offload [mmm].

Urm...and within school I think a lot of the time supporting the personal side of the teachers as well. I don't know whether that's because we have male head [mhmm], we have a male deputy head [okay]. And so I'm probably the only female apart from the welfare [mm] officer whose out of class [mm]. So you know there are staff here who need support with other [yeah] issues, confidential issues. So..yeah my time is spent. And I think that's really important (faster speaking). Because at the end of the day those teachers have got to be able to teach. So their wellbeing [mm] is as important [mm]. And that's what we tried to put across on the WOW day (lifted up yellow lanyard to show) its not jus about the children [mm] its about you know. It's like they know how we're feeling [mm] because that will come across in our teaching [yeah] however much we role play you know. So..urm yeah...Am I speaking relevant or am I just speaking..(laugh)

I: No, no X it's

S: I feel like I'm speaking, speaking, speaking

I: No no

S: (laughing) Obviously I know all the families are confidential

I: No no and that's fine

S: I've probably given too much information in some of them. But I know you're not going to. Because you'd be able to work out. I don't know. You probably wouldn't be able to work out would you.

I: No from what you've said you wouldn't be able to work out [no, no]. (In audible). If that's fine for you

S: I don't mind you quoting examples. I just don't want it to be...obvious as to who it is [mm yeah] Because I've said to you about the family from India with twin girls. You could probably work out who that is. Not you personally but you could find out...who that is..

I: I can discuss that with my supervisor as well in terms of

S: Yeah yeah, but for me to talk about my role it's hard without giving examples [mm]. I think most people would give examples. Because you do. I have timetables of what I do because I feel accountable for my time. Urm..

I: You've mentioned time a few..

S: Yeah and so..Like sometimes you look back at the end of the day and think what have I done today. So I start with a list. I prioritise that list, you know. Like today nine o'clock speech and language, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock maths, 12o 'clock hug. So you know things that are definitely [yeah] happening. And then I have a list of all the things like ringing X borough for this. Whatever. All things. What happens is that list then gets longer [mm] because then people come to you. Even when I walk round in the morning [mm] and just get urm things

stuff resources ready or whatever (spoke fast) [yeah]. People talk to you [yeah] oh by the way [yeah] So I think with that the job can become huge.

I: How does that feel people coming to you with lists or this idea of it getting huge? You've talked about having plans and there's yeah...how does that...feel?

S: I suppose it doesn't worry me. I mean headteacher said to me oh well he feels I am one of those people that's got a quite lot of resilience [yeah]. I think you have to. You're mindful of how other people are feeling as well [yeah]. Urmm sometimes I will be quite honest you do think oh my goodness [mm] I'm never going to get through this. I think more recently there's. People have said oh we should be doing this and we should be doing that. And then that's when that's hard [mm]. I sort of. I was saying to someone but I do have a five year plan [mmm]. For my own sanity I know I can't do it all in the first year [mmm]. So I have a vision of where I want to get to [mm]. And some of those that I'm going to need help to get there [mmm]. You know I don't have the IT expertise or know what packages to use [yeah] to get to where we want to get to [mmm]. However, I am taking on board what everyone else is doing [mm] picking up suggestions [yeah]. So yeah...you can't worry can you (gesture of hands in the air) [yeah]..There's only so. My theory there are only so many hours in the day [that's true] and that's it you know. And I can't really do anymore than I do [mm]. I'm not saying I can't be more effective. I think you can always be more effective [mm]. I probably talk too much. But for me that's an important [yeah]. Maybe not talk to much. Maybe LISTEN too much I'd like to think [mm]. I'd like to think the listening is bigger than the talking [yeah]. So maybe call it supporting [mm]. As supposed to putting stuff on paper. But I think that's a really important part of the role.

I: Yeah you've mentioned that and kind of supporting parents [definitely] and staff. That seems to be...

S: Massive...Yeah because you could go in your door and put a do not disturb sign. But I'm adamant unless there's a member of staff in with me that I don't want people to knock on the door then you know it's an open door policy [mm]. People should feel that whether it's a child coming in or an adult coming in should feel that they can come in and talk. You know sometimes the children will pop in [yeah]. I feel like I haven't talked about the children as much. But they are a huge. They are the main part [mm]. So if a parent said something to you in a parent meeting you would make sure you touch base. Or you're on board with what's going on for that child you know [yeah]. So some of mine is delegation [mm]. I can't possibly keep in touch with you know five hundred and sixty children [sure]. So..I suppose you have to...you have to take on board that you're going to have to delegate. Which doesn't always sit comfortably with me [mm]. Because I don't like asking people to do stuff that I can do myself. I just haven't got the time to do it [mmm]. But they do reckon. I've got an admin. One of the girls from nursery comes down three afternoons a week [okay] when she can [yeah]. Which is amazing. Because I was drowning in paperwork. I do say to headteacher I'm drowning in paperwork [yeah]. Urm and he understands that [umm]. And so...I think he is very mindful of my workload as well. But yeah I have a support staff come down..And they will [mmm]...Organise me (both laughing) So I've got [yeah] a whack of filing (gesturing a pile) [yeah] a whack of shredding (gesturing a pile) [yeha]. And I've got to think I can do that or I can make a phone call or meet a parent [yeah sure]. So I have to sort of say right im

leaving that for them to do [mm]. It's HARD cos I don't really like...I feel like it's my work I should be doing it...

I: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

S: What the supporting role?

I: Yeah or what you mean by urm you feel you should be doing it or..

S: Well I feel like I do because its like asking someone to do your washing up isn't it [laughing]. Its all part of the. It's all part of the role. I don't see myself as. I see. I see. I always see myself as part of a team [mmm]. I don't see any hierarchy ever [mmm]. And I never will do [mm]. I always feel, like with the children. We learn alongside the children, we learn alongside each other. That's how I feel. Urm...so you know. If someone said to me (speaking faster) oh you're at the photocopier can you get that for me. Of course I would. Or if I walked into a classroom and there's someone having a difficulty I'll help. If I go into the welfare and theres a child there that's crying [mmm] and the welfare lady is dealing with another child. Of course I'm going to help that child. You know. So it is hard to say to other people [yeah]. Like I shot out of here at half 11 to get to this training yesterday, and this parent I met with in the morning had a pile like this (gesturing) [mm okay] to be photocopied. And I wanted it to go back to them because I had the originals. So I had to ask someone to do that for me because I couldn't possibly do it [mm]. Urm and it was time consuming [yeah]. So...yeah that's hard. That's a hard part of the job [yeah]. But that could be me as a person a character not. Some people are quite good at saying right do that for me, do that for me [mm]. That's where youre..]. Mmm. But I have to do it [mm] because otherwise I would you know. And I think as long as you're grateful and people know that they're helping you out and that they know you would do the same [mm]. And hopefully they...I hope they like working with me [mm]... (mouth turn). I always say with me, not for me [yeah]. But I hope they do [mm]. Because I am mindful of their wellbeing as well. I am grateful for anyone that does anything [mmm]. I do appreciate it. And ultimately it's helping us operate as a school [mm]. So you've got to have the bigger picture in mind as well [yeah sure sure]...So I'm not very good at saying no [okay]. So sometimes you have to walk away and say that is not my job (hand gesture push away). People come to me and say oh we haven't got this, we haven't got that. I have to sometimes think well actually either refer to someone else..that's hard as well.

I: Yeah It's a hard thing to..

S: Yeah...but that could be character not role [urm]

I: It's interesting when you say character not role

S: As in character not role what I should be doing...you know what I am doing..

I: Yeah do you want to tell me any more about that. I guess role and ...

S: Yeah I guess I should be able to delegate without worrying about it [mm]. But I think for the school theres thirty plus TAs and four HLTAs you know [mm]. And now got X as

pastoral care. And I can't support all of them [mm]. We're fortunate that we've got the deputy head on board now. Whereas the last few years has been a bit tricky. Urm and I. We sort of try and support them together. Like the other week with the TAs. Because I've always done the TA meetings and the TA trainings. The other week I thought okay. So I said to X right urm. He wanted to do some audit with them which I have done in the past [mm]. Which I have done in the past so I felt it would be wrong for me to do it again [mm]. Urm and it needed to come from him as a new person. So I said okay. Fantastic you take the TA meeting and I will go and do the role of [mm] couple of the HLTAs so that they can join you [yeah sure] so I can release them. And that was fine. And in a way because I wasn't there [yeah] it was nothing to do with me. I did ask him how it went [mm]. Urm and he has feedback some of the audits that have come through [yeah]. Because obviously we need to then see if there is anything we can do together to support [sure] to what's come out of the audit [yeah]. So but yeah. I have to be mindful that there are other people. You know, were a TEAM [yeah] not just me.

I: Sounds like team work and working together

S: Yeah and that's where I think the head is really strong at knowing you know...there's he knows..he does urm...appreciate and respect and understand the workloads definitely so...you know. I'm lucky [mmm]. Because you could have someone that just constantly you know pushes stuff your way...[mm]. But even when I was training. When I was doing that urm acting role. He said to me I will be alongside you. So there were things. You know he gets involved in annual reviews. He gets involved if. When I first started doing the Education Health Care plans I would ask him to check through them. But not necessarily because he had done the applications before. But its good to have another pair of eyes. Because when X was here I felt we could work together on things like that. But as soon as I lost X we didn't have an SEN teacher on board. So it was a bit like a one man band to start with [yeah. How was that?]. It didn't feel so much like that because headteacher was there. Urm and I had a TA that had been in the department for a long time that was really strong. And unfortunately she left. Fortunately for her she went into teaching. Which is what she should have done because she's amazing [yeah]. Urm but then you just felt like oh [yeha]. Its almost like losing your right arm. And then Y come in as an SEN teacher. She's been here a year now. Therefore she you know. But I think you take. I think everyone's got to be mindful of the fact that people leave, new people start, things change [mmm]. Although it feels uncomfortable for a while [mm]. It's the same as with our children when they have to experience transition and change you know [mm]. You move on don't you...[yeah]. And make the best of the support when you've got the support you really appreciate it [yeah]. So urm...yeah...

I: Yeah

S: So know I am lucky. I am lucky. I'm not going to whinge. Occasionally I do, but everyone does [yeah]. Because you have to. But I think that's why when you have the forums and stuff. When I first went to SENCO forums they were a bit of a winging session. Because everybody would be. Well there's no EPs, there's no this, there's no that [mm], no the other. Whereas, I think the last couple of years. Because I used to go along with X [okay yeah]. the last couple of years its be a lot more...right this is the agenda [mm]. These are things we are going to cover...And its much more shared positive experiences [okay]. Otherwise you would have

gone there and thought, well I'm not going to last as a SENCO for very long because its very negative. So it has definitely been turned round from a whining session [yeah]. to a right, you know have you heard you can get help from here. Have you heard you can do this [mm]. So all of that is really [mm] beneficial [okay]. So...and I think the borough as much as we moan about them [slight laugh]. They are with what they've got doing their best to support us [mm] and they've done one project after another and they have taken it through to the end [mm. mmm]. So I wouldn't I wouldn't being doing this role reasonably successfully without their support [hmm]. And without all the free stuff we've had. they've been in and trained and you know [mm]..Because otherwise you've equally got the staff saying well you know we haven't had any training on this (spoken faster). But they don't, because they've had it you know [mm]. So when you look back over at what they've had. I always say that to them. When you do your appraisals take on board what you've been doing [mmm]. And we've done some urm..which makes me feel really proud. Some of the TAs have taken on distant learning courses and that came through the borough. And they're free to us [okay] but the TAs are being asked to do that in their own time [okay]. Then initially we set up support groups. But everyone seemed to take it on board and go with it [mm]. There were a few complaints like oh I didn't realise it was going to be so much work [mm]. But if they don't see it through there is a cost. But now we have about. I think we've got about fourteen that have their urm mental health understanding [mm] children's mental health and wellbeing level two [mm mm]. And then we have about that have got their counselling skills [okay]. So all of those things I said to them they're all personal [mm]. Yes you're helping out the school [mm] but you're helping our children. But also for you. And some of them have said to me its actually been really nice to go back to studying [mmm]. And actually the reading has been really interesting. And myself and Y have done them as well. So that they could ask us or they wanted support with any. Or if they said I'm really struggling with this question (spoke faster) I've typed all my questions up so either I can talk it through with them or say right this is how I interpreted it. Have a look and see what you think [mm]. So that's been going on as well [okay] over the last year I think. So its nice when they take that on board [yeah] because that's their own time [yeah]. I didn't feel like I had to do lots of persuading they just got on with...

I: Yeah so you didn't have to do a lot of persuading. You talked about feeling proud as well.

S: Yeah, no. I feel proud that they've taken it on. I wanted them to have their certificates in assembly because I wanted urm...them. I wanted children to see grown ups do learning in the same way. And the learning we were doing was to help ourselves but to help them. But headteacher said it was all too much to give out certificates in assembly. But that's ideally what I want (spoke faster). What I did was we had a TA meeting and I wrote down everyone and I asked him to come to the meeting and to personally congratulate [mhmm]. Because urm my other role is obviously feeding this all back to the governors (eyebrow raise). I haven't even mentioned the governors [slight laugh]. So..

I: There's lots

S: I know. So I have to do a report every half termly.[okay]. Urm...and I just have format for it. I have a anything that's happening personnel. All the urm training that's going on [mm]. All the successes. I always hope the successes. Then any challenges [ye[]]. Because I think

they need to be aware of that [mm]. Then every so often I will give them up to date data. I might pick. Like next time I will give them how many are on the SEN register [hmm], how many are EAL like percentage wise. Which classes have got [mm]. Like all that type of information. Cos I've gathered that anyway. One of the times I took daily reading folders [okay] and looked at..the progress children had made by having daily reading (spoke faster). Because it was our school focus [yeah]. So that sort of information I try and put in some sort of factual assessment as well as all the soft [yeah] sort of data of what's going well [sure]. You know how many children have got EHCPs all that sort of stuff [mm]...I have got a link governor [mm]. She's the chair of governors...I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say this on here...but...I don't get to see her that often [mm]. It would be nice to see her more often [yeah okay]....I am due to see her in the next couple of weeks. But a regular, maybe like once a term would be good [mm. mm]. Because I. The thing I feel with about the governors reports is that I write them [mm]. I spend a lot of time on them maybe too much..I don't get any feedback[mhmm].. And when I say I don't. I did last time [okay] Because I specifically asked. No I got feedback in an email specifically asked for their help with the WOW day [yeah]...In the past we'd had them say that they didn't know about focus day [mm] and that they would have come along [mm]. So I made sure [mm] that as soon as we put the WOW day in place [mm] that they knew. So I emailed them all and said this is what's happening [mm] love you to join in urm and if any of you have got any suggestions ideas [yeah sure] experiences anything you want to share [mm]. And in they were really good. Four out of five of them came back. One came back with some website links [okay], one came back and said that they were working on. They were working on. You know the project on the Southbank with the...

I: Oh yeah the..

S: Head above water not sure if that's what its called. Something like that [mm]. But it's a massive structure [mm] Urm he was one of..part of one of the teams [oh okay]. So if Id known that a little bit earlier I probably would have (spoke faster)..I would have love to prototype of that [yeah]. You know that we could have done something with [yeah]. Urm..but yeah so that gave me another link [mm]. So I read somewhere else...and then there was more information. There were a couple of others. And you know they all wished us success and everything. I can't remember seeing a governor on the day at all. But that's fine...Urm..and yeah then obviously I will feedback. I haven't done the report following that [yeah sure] so it will be the next one..that will be the report. Because I've got evaluations from staff and evaluations from children [mm]. I will put some. probably put some quotes in about. But yeah they don't ever come back and say [mm] thank you for the report [mm] or it was interesting to find out about that [yeah]. So I don't get any feedback (said faster) [okay]. The only person I might get feedback from is headteacher [mm]...When I first started writing them he said to me that its absolutely fine, they're really great whatever [mm] (cough). Other than that no. So that is a little bit disappointing [mm]. That there's not a...Its almost like a tick box exercise [mm]. That's how I feel it is [yeah] for them. Yet for me its really important [mm] because its my opportunity to communicate what we are doing as a team [mm mm yeah]. So it would be nice if they were little bit more on board [mm]. urmm....I don't know headteacher is on board [mm]. But im not sure...So I don't feel let down by them [okay]. I just feel...Yeah...[mm]. It would just be nice. Do you know what (faster) Even if they. Like even if. I email it to the secretary. It has to go to them a few weeks before the date [mm okay]. And I always make

sure its on time [mm]. And...I think occasionally she has said oh thanks for the report...but sometimes its not even acknowledged that its been received [mm]. Urm. I always get headteacher to read it before I send it [okay]. In case I've said anything controversial [mm]. Or ive said something in correctly [mm]. He's proof reading it. So yeah. Because actually I think I put quite a lot of effort into it [mm mm]. And for me its important. Because if the staff say something to me I say oh im making sure that the governors know of the report. Of the training that you're doing. urm yeah and I put that in [yeah]. So say for example something like our speech and language champion has been really good impact on a child she has been working with [mm]. I put that in our successes [yeah] and id name that person [mm]. Because otherwise they're not going to know about that. So...you know. And things like if the EHCPs have been successful [mm] I would tell them these had been successful [mm]. So yeah...So I think there's a lot of work goes into it [mm]. We've not..(inaudible) [yeah]..so that's how it feels. But that's just..I'm obviously not too worried about it because I've taken an hour before I've talked about it (laugh) [laugh]. Its not like I'm losing sleep about the fact they haven't come back to me. Im not angry with them about it [mm]...I like the word disappointed (drinks tea)

I: You like that word

S: Yes. Because it means you're not cross. You're not sad. You're just a little bit let down [mm]. Its not major. I'll get over it...

I: About getting over it

S: I will carry on doing different things. There was a point though when I was really busy and I did say to headteacher. I feel like saying to them sorry cant send you a report this time too busy [mm]. But that was my sarcasm which is horrible..Urm..so there was that point. But I would never not do it [mm]. Because to me its really important. It's the way of communicating..[mm]. you know what we are doing [yeah]..So I suppose in a way it's a bit like patting yourself on the back (actions) [mm]. Which is really not like me at all. But its not really for me its for the team its going well. And not necessary asking them to recognise it but just letting them know [umm umm]. You know just this is okay. And I did go when I was doing my SENCO award I went to one governors meeting [okay]. I thought I would be really brave and I actually thought it would be useful to know what happens at the governors meeting [mm]. But I was quite...[mm]. But I had to I was told I had to ask for permission (facial expression) [okay]. Which I thought was a bit because I appreciate if there are personnel or confidential issues Im not allowed to hear [mm]. I would just come away [yeah]. urm..but it was just a little bit and so that was my opportunity then the report I handed in I could talk about it [mm]. So I suppose then they did comment on it. But that was two years ago [mm]. So I don't know is it up to me to go along to the governors meeting [mm] Or is it up to them to acknowledge what's going on [mm]. Or is it that they think everything is okay so don't worry about it [mm]. you can read into it what ever you want [yeah]. Urm..hmm..it doesn't matter. I suppose I would probably beat myself up more if they emailed me back saying oh that's disappointing this, this and this is happening [mm] when they hadn't said [yeah] oh were really pleased to hear about this this and this [urm]. So yeah...have I talked for long enough

I: You can talk for as much as you like. The time is like an hour or whatever you've got

S: Is there anything I've missed out. I mean I can talk for England

I: It's whatever you would like to share. What it feels like

S: I feel like sometimes I'm like this (hands everywhere). But when were doing the working party for mental health X said X you've got ADHD (laughing both). You're so random. But when I'm planning something [mm] I can be quite structured. But if someone asks me to talk about something it will come out at all levels [mm]. its not. Like if you started me off saying right first I want you to tell me about this [mm]. then I want you to tell me about this [mm] I could do that I could follow that structure. So I mean..I've been diagnosed with ADHD now (both snigger). Which is fine and X used to say I'm dyslexic. Which is fine. I don't think I am. I probably have tendencies. I don't think I am bit that's okay I don't mind (both laughing). Whatever you want to throw at me. So yeah. I probably am quite random...Cos when im talking to you one thing links to another [mm] so I've forgotten all about governors.

I: And then you were linking

S: Yeah

I: Things

S: Yeah. Because that's how the job is. That's how the role is [mm yeah]. I cant predict [mhmm] what's going to happen that day. Apart from things that are set in stone [mm]. But even then they can go...wibbly wobbly [yeah] you know [mm]. Its not a straight road [yeah]. So I think you have to be a person that can cope with that [mm mm]. If you were really ridged and..felt and you know needed to be able to focus [umm] I don't think you could do the job (both laughing). Actually maybe you might do a better job (both laughing). I don't know. Maybe that's what I need to be ridged and focused [laughing] and then my pile of paperwork might go down [laughing]. I don't know...No I believe. My philosophy in life is you are who you are [mm]. People take you for who you are. You know..and you do the best with what you've got [mm]. Quite simple really [yeah yeah]...Right I'm not going to say any more now.

I: You're not going to say anymore

S:

I: So is that where you want to finish?

S: I think so. Unless there's anything you think you particularly want me to say

I: No no that's fine

S: I will probably go away

I: But that's why we come back

S: from here and think about things

I: That's why it's really nice to do the two interviews [yeah no that's fine]. Urm you know because that feels comfortable space where you feel to end to day [mm]. Then next time we will just be picking up from maybe some of the things we've talked about today [okay]. Or if it is that you go away and think oh there's all these other things

S: Yeah I probably will try and think of...things that we do

I: It will come on the day as well with how you feel and what you want to share.

S: Okay

I: But how did that feel today? To just kind of do it then

S: That's fine. I just feel like I waffle

I: No

S: I do

I: Not at all

S: I am a waffler though. Terrible

I: I think that was helpful just to hear you say it [say it straight]. Its what comes from you. That's what I'm interested in

S: I always say that I'm a layperson and so my language. You're not gonna get the..the posh stuff from me [mm]. It is as it is [mm] You know and maybe part of where X used to think that I struggled. I really find people's names difficult to say [mmhmm]. And that is part of something I find. But I just say to people oh. If they've got an unusual name [mm]. Either link it to something else or urm. I say to them look I do find names difficult. I say that to children right [yeah]. If your Tom Dick or Harry Im fine [mm]. Well I don't say that. But that's what I'm thinking. Ur, but if your anything different. If your X or whatever you are. I will have to think of a pattern [mm]. I wont remember that name [mm]. I know who you are [mm] I know what I want to say but my brain wont process that name [mm mm]. Then I can. After a little while its fine [mm mm]. But that's embarrassing for me [mm] because name should be good [mm]. You should be okay with names [mm]. You cant have everything can you. Now I've got to go to my year 2 class maths group

Recording stopped and discussed about next steps: 59:12 mins

**Appendix J. Example of raw transcript for interview 2 – Samantha  
Samantha interview 2**

I: But yeah I guess this week is more about what I was saying, revisiting some of the themes [mhmm] But were there any thoughts or comments that youuu would like to make about the previous interview. Or anything you went away thinking about.

S: Do you know what I didn't. Which I don't know whether that's a good thing [slight laugh]. As we were coming closer towards this one I thought is there anything else I haven't talked about. But because we talked for such a long time that it felt like a lot came about the role [yeah]. Because the role just is evol evolves all the time. Every day is different so urm..yeah. You I think you're constantly plugging the gaps if that makes sense [yeah that makes sense yeah]. You know we have had a lot of staff sickness over the last two weeks [okay] So I can't say I went away thinking oh I didn't say this I didn't say that Urm. But I was trying to think leading up to this one [mm] But no nothing stuck in my mind. Which is a good thing in some ways because that it didn't bother me whatever I said [yeah mm]. But them I'm just transparent anyway. I said that. So urm yeah

I: So like you say there wasn't anything you felt coming up

S: Yeah, no

I: And did you have any thoughts or feelings about coming back to today

S: No no

I: for

S: Only what hadn't I thought of

I: Yeah

S: Because I think as a SENCO your almost spontaneous [mm] so you have to be so you have to be. So like on. Just for example on. What day was it. Monday On Monday the music teacher had to go to A&E

I: Okay

S: So at five to two I had to. I was asked can you take a music group at quarter past two

I: Yeah

S: And for me that's. I never I don't mind dipping into class [mm]. I think you should. I think you should keep your hand in knowing how the class runs. You know spending time with the children that's what really important [mm]. Because you could get bogged down with the paperwork [yeah]. You know I never let that me. You know she said to me let me come into one of your interventions because at the end of the day that is what we're doing it for [yeah]. Urm...yeah. So...And an actually at the end of the lesson with the children I loved it yeah].

As much as actually your thinking oh my goodness what are you going to do [yeah] because I haven't even had time to think about this... Yeah. I mean I'm not a music teacher by any means [slight laugh mm]. Yeah. In effect the children take the lead [okay] and you learn from them its quite nice.

I: Yeah I remembered you saying that last time as well learning from them

S: Yeah definitely

I: Being alongside them

S: Yeah because you can see what they're understanding. We just had a TA meeting actually and we..went through with the TAs. Mr X has done an audit with the TAs because he is the new deputy head [okay]. Its something I did a couple of years ago [okay] when I was doing my SENCO award.

I: Oh okay sure

S: Part of me initially thought oh not it's a repeat. However, he is new to the school. It's a nice way of him to get to know the staff [yeah]. And also its other things come up. Things change. People have different needs. Children are different. Urm then we were doing a follow up from that. I mean I did a little bit of speech and language [okay] because we were shown the talk me video

I: Oh

S: At the SENCO forum we had the two senior speech and language [yeah]. And I thought its something to get the message across [yeah]. And I thought if I get the TAs on board with it. Although they totally understand how to speak to little ones [yeah] it was asking them for ideas. Any other ways to get this message across [brilliant] to our parents you know. And then we talked about. We're doing a focus evening and maybe tagging it on to that. We're doing e-safety [mm]. So in effect it is about social media [yeah]. It is about stopping social media. Social media is good. Sometimes its vital. But no social media is good as well because we are losing the ability to communicate [mm yeah] and talk. And its evident by the cohorts that are coming through [okay yeah]. So its getting that message across that way. So urm it was quite good for them to watch it as well to see what message we're trying to get [sure]. Obviously we've got an audience there that can give you ideas (taking a breath)

I: Yeah

S: I was it watching it for like seventh time I'd watched it. At the end it comes up with a hand [yeah] and five things [ahh] have you seen that

I: Yeah yeah

S: And I was thinking why don't we send that message home. We could draw around the childs hand [yeah] and it can be because its talk to me, sing to me [yeah] you know urm. Play

with me [yeah]. So I thought why don't we do as they come into nursery the child's hand. And actually put that and laminate it [yeah] and send it home [yeah yeah]. And then it's there...[yeah]...So um it's only by. You suddenly think of another way of. And and the staff will come up with ideas as well [yeah] so it's nice to get them involved.....So yeah I digressed then didn't I. I don't know where that came from (laughs)

I: No. I think like you said last time that sometimes when you think of something it links to something else

S: Yeah it does

I: And that's really helpful for us to think about

S: And we had the language link yesterday. And we thought rather than meet every parent individually and say your child is being assessed this is what we do. Urm..[mm] and you know now they need further support. We thought because there was a few of them we could do it as a group thing so without saying your child is struggling [yeah] we said this is an intervention we are offering and we would like to give it to your children [yeah]. And we gave them information but [yeah]. But they also met the people that are going to deliver that intervention. And at the end of it I showed them that video as well. And I said I'm not showing this to be patronising

I: No

S: I'm showing you this because it's a really good important message [mm] and I want to get it out to everybody [yeah]. So yeah. Nobody said why did you do that. Everybody. It was only a short video it was good [yeah]. So hopefully it will have an impact [yeah]. So um...yeah I think what you are saying is something happens and it links to something else [mm]. And that is often the way...

I: Yeah

S: And after this I am meeting with the governor to try and work out like staffing [mm]. Because we've now got another 5 EHCPs [okay]. So yeah that's a that's just another aspect of SENCO role (slight laugh and smirk to side)

I: [laugh] Yeah another area

S: It is like plugging the gaps if people are off sick [yeah]. You know it's like working out today. One to ones yesterday we had one of the SEN staff off how are we going to support that one to one [mm]. That one to one is used to a familiar face. If we take a one to one off another how are parents going to feel [mm]. And then X and I had a conversation about other schools [mm] use their SEN support in a different way they don't allocate. And I can see advantages to that and disadvantages [mm]. It's good when someone's off the children doesn't get used to one person [yeah]. But we would be changing the dynamics of how we work [yeah]. So I was thinking about how about how you do it [yeah]. So that's another string to a SENCO bow if you see what I mean [yeah sure]. Thinking about staffing and how children

are getting the benefits or to meet their needs [mm]. And then yesterday one of the class TAs came up to me yesterday for one of the children who has recently got an EHCP and said to me urm...I need you to tell me what they should be doing. And I want something to say these are their goals

I: Okay

S: I said to her. I did say to her actually that is the teacher's responsibility to differentiate the planning [mm]. No names mentioned. I said I could show you the other one to ones planning that is in place [yeah]. So when they first came in I started them off. I took the EHCP I took the outcomes. Looked at how we would break that down. Looked at differentiating it. Looked at it where they were at individually and then shared it. Then that was in a weekly plan differentiated every week linking to the class teacher. But the teacher then took that on board. So I started that off. I suppose in hindsight I need to start that off again for this new child. Urm..however there is part of me that is thinking that's the teacher's responsibility [mm]. How much do you take on. Cos that. It is quite a big...to do it properly. I want to do it properly

I: Yeah and kind of take on what is their's

S: And how much do you think actually this is an experienced teacher that is a year leader [mm] that had children with EHCPs before [mm]. So knows the format. But how much do you think okay actually I will just do it....And while your doing that your not doing something else you should be doing which is like the early support plan for some of the other children coming through [mm]. So that's the..yeah. I think for me I will start it off [yeah] and the expectation for me would be that they carry it on...urm. Ideally I expect to be copied in to that weekly planning [yeah] so that I can see its happening [mm] And then I will comment against it. Not in a patronising way. I might say oh you know [mm] thanks for sending me the weekly planning. Its good to see that your doing this this and this [mm]. Pleased progress in this. Have you have you thought about tried blah blah blah

I: Yeah

S: But not in a

I: Yeah

S: Urm....yeah and often like the other week I just set up an assessment for a child with down syndrome in year 1 and I said oh you could use this to monitor the impact of positional language [mm] and they came back and said oh that's really helpful. So its nice because its that two way dialogue

I: Yeah

S: A I'm not doing stuff for the sake of it and B they're not sending me planning for the sake of it [mm] because I do look at it...urm...yeah

I: Because it was one of the things you spoke about last time and them being a huge part of your work I guess [mm] and you noticed you maybe hadn't talked about them as much

S: Right

I: Yea

S: During the thing

I: Yeah

S: Because the paperwork takes over.

I: Because I was wondering yeah if you could tell me more about children being a huge part of the role. You kind of mentioned it and then you said oh

S: More so for me its individual children that have got additional needs. So like yesterday I I supported a child that was struggling in the classroom for a short time. At lunchtime I went out to the playground and brought in the ones the one that were struggling. So it tends to be the ones more that...are on the SEN register [okay] that have got difficulties. Or a parent might say to me something happened today do you think you could. But I will always pop into the groups and say do you need an extra pair of hands. So I wont necessarily resource it and plan but I will try and be there if they need it

I: Yeah sure

S: Then my SEN teachers been off Friday Monday Tuesday this week [okay]. So therefore I will pick up the interventions she would usually do. Like year two maths, year three maths which is every day. But id already seen the planning [yeah] because it had been emailed to me. And I do do that group on Friday anyway so I already know. So it takes up part of your day. I think meetings take up a huge part of your day. But as far as spending time with the children I don't think I do that as much as I did [mm]. As an SEN teacher I ran the nurture groups, I ran [mm] any of the you know fine motor skills groups which X is now doing[okay]. But its something I have to now let go of [okay]. Otherwiiiise I would have to do that all the time [yes]. Then you would just do your paperwork at home [yes].

There are times when. Like on Monday I had to actually type up the minutes and an action plan from it and make sure everything is in place...Urm. But I could say go into a group and do that. So its like. But you cant. I cant go into every single group [mm]. I used to enjoy when I first started as an SEN teacher I used to deliver like attention and listening to nursery [okay yeag] so I would go down and try to train the nursery staff up. But for a term I would be delivering it and set up like a chatter box group [mm]. But I know I don't need to do that any more because the T the TAs have the skills to do it [yeah]. And actually my time could be used for something else.

I: Mmm

S: Otherwise I think you I would revert back to something else. Back to just being the children...which would be lovely but. You know when our reception teacher was out the other day I said oh I'll do it I'll do it [slight laugh]. Because that's what I love. I love like the early years [yeah]. But actually X sometimes has to remind me that while you're doing that you're not doing your SENCO role [yeah]. He says as much as Im grateful for you doing that nobody is going to be doing your job [mm]. So yeah....

I: Okay

S: So its about balance. I always remember X saying to me. Oh I really miss the children...that's why. Some SENCOs have class teacher role and SENCO [mm]. So I suppose im lucky im not actually responsible for a class [yeah]. But I still think you need to make sure you spend time with children.....

I: Like you say

S: Yeah because you cant train other people or suggest things to other people unless you don't actually. If your not hands on yourself. I think you should be hands on. And X leads from that point of view [oh okay]. He does a lot of cover in classes [oh okay]. Urm....and I think I get the feeling. And I agree with other staff there is a lot of respect for that [mm]. You know he has an understanding of how much pressure the teachers are under

I: Mmm

S: So I think that's important. That's part of the teamwork really

I: Yeah

S: And X said to me today. Oh so and so is off at lunchtime and we need to get cover can you do it. And I said I can after my meeting but equally I have the hub at lunch time. But I don't mind [mm] doing things like that picking up because it is an SEN child [yeah]...I might be having lunch with X today (slight smile/smirk) [laugh] So...

I: You also mentioned the word resilience last time in relation to being a SENCO. So I just wondered if you could tell me a bit more about what that means in your role or yeah.

S: For me it means...for me personally it means about showing I'm not under pressure [yeah]. I am under pressure all the time [mm]. But I wouldn't want to show that [okay]. So the way I might have said last time. The way I cope with it is I look at the priorities [mm]. So urm..And I try not to leave it so im doing the priorities at the last minute if that makes sense [yeah]. So I know yesterday what I am doing for the TA meeting today. Ive got all the paperwork together [mm] over the last few weeks knowing it was going to come up at somepoint. Urm...so I can't really plan for this as such

I: No (slight laugh)

S: So I think that's where I try and make sure. I'm a list person as well [mm]. So my resilience is being able to offload what's in my head [mm] because I think you can panic then. Then I can actually see right this is my urgent [mm]. So those phone calls have got to be done today [mm]. That has got to go to that parent today. Urm and there's other things at the bottom that are constantly there [mm]. Someone said to me once that in order to cope and build up like resilience you have an A B and C list. You put on A what is like your priority urm and it might take longer [mm]. You put on B like your quick fixes [mm]. And then on C you put things that are going to take longer but not so urgent [okay]. So you might tackle one of A but it's really hard because it's a big document even though it's important. Then you will break it up with a few things on B so you can actually things are being done

I: Yeah kind of being

S: So that's a way of. Because I think to keep on top of everything you have to have that resilience to think yeah I can do this

I: Mmm

S: And I think that's what I'm trying to instill in the children. Have a look if you have come across that situation before and you managed it

I: Yeah

S: So I look at my role and I think something is difficult I managed it before. Or you know a governors report needs doing and I managed to fit it in before [mm]. I think. I don't know if that's the right way of talking about resilience. I'm trying to put it across to the children as well that it feels uncomfortable at the moment and it feels like you're under pressure but in the past you've managed it [yeah]. And you can only do what you can do [mm]. And if you do it to the best of your ability

I: Yeah

S: And I said to X when people come to me and they say you haven't done this you haven't done that and you haven't done the other [mm]. That's when I start to feel under pressure and my resilience might break down [mm]. But as of yet that hasn't happened. Touch wood. You know [mm]. But I have got people saying to me can you do this, can you do that, can you do the other [mm]. And I am mindful that those things need to be done....yeah

I: Yeah mm

S: I don't know. People see resilience in different ways don't they. They see it that you know you're really laid back nothing phases you so you get on with it you've got resilience [mm]. I see it a bit differently. Like the fact you've had problems in the past and you've managed you've coped with them [mm] and then dealt with them [mm] and then you've moved on from them [mm]. So...urm to me that means you've got quite a good resilience. Like X said to me (spoken faster) you're probably one of the most resilient people I know. Which is a massive compliment [mm]. But what I think he means by that is because I might not show. If

something is thrown at me I'm like we'll just deal with this [yeah]. And often as part of senior management team we will talk to each other about it because that helps [yeah]. Then your almost talking out loud and solving a problem. I think that helps your resilience as well [yeah] because you know someone else is on board of they have solved a problem or a difficulty and come up with a solution.

I: Yeah

S: I was trying to say this to someone the other day. I look at it as a strength..

I: Mmm

S: If someone says to me I need change of face or I need. Am I repeating myself now?

I: No no

S: But if you had a teacher who was struggling with a child and think I'm just getting to get to the end of the day and cope with it but it spirals out of control. I look at it as a strength part way through that day the teacher says to me I'm really struggling with so and so could you give me a break this afternoon. Or could you you know do a sensory circuit with them this afternoon [mm] I think that is a strength and that is what I try and put across to my TAs

I: Mmm

S: So I say it's a strength to say you need a change of face. And I learnt that at X school because the chal the behaviour was massively complex challenging children. And you couldn't possibly cope [mm] all the time. And you could feel your level of patience going down or your level of resilience going down and you had to say to someone I really do need a change of face [mm]. And because we all worked as a team and knew each other. That person wouldn't say oh you can't manage that child [yeah] or whatever. It would be like that's fine okay I will take over for a while

I: Mmm

S: And that's what I try and encourage them to do here because..I think that's a strength [yeah]. And I would do the same. I find delegation really hard because I feel like I should do my own job myself [mm]. However having had an admin assistant which has been amazing. I have to say I'm leaving my filing for you to do [yeah]. Even though I feel that's a really horrible job that's the only way you can get through the amount of tasks

I: Yeah

S: And I think as long as you're grateful for what they're doing [mm]. And also there are times when you roll up your sleeves and you say right I'll do this bit you do that bit. You know sometimes there's like ten boxes of shredding to do. I wouldn't let someone. It's having that understanding. But part of that is about building that rapport with the person in the first place [mm]. Because I'm not a person that would go right you do that you do that you do the other

(said quickly). Im more likely to say oh lets do this together. Then I might say oh do you mind carrying on because I need to do something else

I: Yeah

S: So...I don't know I think people respect you more [mm]. I always said to people when I started work I wouldn't ask someone to do something I wasn't prepared to do myself. That was like my philosophy [mm]. So when I worked at retail store I said im not going to ask someone to empty the bins if I wouldn't. I know that's a silly example but that's how I feel [yeah]. I wouldn't ask someone to go clean up a child if I you know [mm]. Just because I don't want to do it [mm] or don't think I should do it. I do it.

I: Yeah

S: You know and I think it's a bit like picking up fox poo off the playground [slight laugh]. You know its like why should I say to someone else can you go and get that fox poo when in 5 seconds I can do it [yeah mm]. And that is an example (laughs) [laughs]. Because people will talk well who should pick that up, where should it go, oh what should we do with it. And you can just do it

I: Yeah

S: Mmm...it's the same with a child [mm]. If they soil themselves why should I get someone else to do it if im able to do it. If im not I would have to say im really sorry. But I do think people think oh yeah X wont mind cleaning a child or changing a child or [mm] doing whatever

I: Yeah

S: I suppose that's probably me as a person. That's probably not always a good thing because you are meant to be able to delegate and manage. So that's not my strength (smile and look away) [laugh]. My strength is the teamwork definitely

I: Yeah yeah I could hear that coming through

S: Mmm....well I think I used the phrase I don't teach someone something I learn alongside them

I: Yeah I think I remember you saying that last time

S: Yeah because I'm learning from them as much as they are learning from me [mm]. In fact im usually learning more

I: Mmm

S: So....I mean an example of that was yesterday we had a school trip to the library [mm]. The one to one wasn't in. So in the morning we asked the other lady that does the one to one

was with the child. In the afternoon it didn't seem fair the other one to one wasn't getting any. So I said it was a trip and we've asked mum to come on the trip so I felt she could be responsible for the child [mm] so the other lady could go back to her normal one to one [mm]. And the mum came in...they wanted to bring the child to mum her and the child was resisting. But I said think about what he is thinking. The helpers are here and all the others have gone down [mm]. Why are you taking me here because this means im going home. So I said hang on a minute lets get mum. I can talk to mum while we're bringing her down [mm]. He can be part of the group and when she walked down the corridor and he stayed on the carpet with his friends. And mum she said to me Im really glad he hasn't come running over to me. Because it means he wants to be with his friends. I think she felt that she was a helper as a opposed to feeling I have to come along because I have to be with him [mm]. And they trotted off really excited and it was a really good visit. And its sort of trying to get into what hes thinking [mm]. So yeah...that's just an example of...what a days like. Thinking on your feet. Or trying to get into the childs head really [mm]. Which is what you are trying to do with ASD children [mm].....

Im continuing to waffle. You need to stop me.

I: No no your

S: I don't know if im repeating myself that's the thing.

I: Yeah

S: I think what im trying to show is that you whats part of the day. Part of the challenge part of the reward. If it goes well. If it doesn't go well you have to go back to the drawing board and think okay well what can we do about it

I: Yeah yeah

S: Because...its also being prepared for the unknown and the unexpected. I do some voluntary work and it is unknown. I have learnt a huge amount from it. It is urm...I will say it for this but I don't want it to go anywhere else. I do X. No one knows. Well X knows. And its been a huge challenge. But a huge...learning curve [mm]. Ive learnt a lot from it. Its awful to say ive learnt from people's difficulties. But its not that that Ive learnt. Its about how important it is to listen to people and give up your time.

I: That's one of the things I was going to ask you actually because you said listening is important

S: Yeah and ive learnt that...I think. Maybe to the point. I think maybe you need to take your listening hat off [mm]. Because I...you sort of attract people that need to talk

I: Mmm

S: And when I said to X I'm going to go and talk for an hour. I said I find that really difficult. He said I don't believe you [laugh] If anyone said who can talk I would say that's you. That

shows he doesn't know me because that's not true [mm]. Because I listen for hours when I do that job that role [mm]. Because its about listening its not about talking

I: Mmm and in your SENCO role as well you said that's it kind of coming into the SENCO role. Can you tell me a bit about

S: What in the SENCO role

I: Yeah

S: Because I think a lot of times theres a difficulty its because people feel like they haven't been heard [mm]. And even if you don't agree with whats being said...urm...you. You still need to. Its still their view [mm]. Theyre entailed to their view [mm] And that's often what the problem is with the child. Something has happened as a result of something else. And if you haven't heard the something else and you've just responded to whats happened [mm] and it might not be a good thing. That's often the trigger. I think X always said to us behaviour is communication [mm]. And I think that is such an important thing to remember in a SENCO role. They are telling you something by that behaviour [mm]. So you have to work out what they are trying to tell you. Because they probably don't mean that behaviour

I: Mmm

S: So again it's a bit like that child yesterday. Trying to understand what they are trying to tell us [mm] because they cant communicate it. And Ive learnt in my volunteer role that sometimes people aren't ready to talk [mm]. They aren't ready to tell you [mm]. But they just need to know that someone is there for them. Urm...and the reason I ended up telling X is because at one of the secondary schools they were doing a presentation...and I wanted to see how we were putting it across to children. Because X is too grown up for our children [yeah]. But I still. Its still taking on board how to encourage children to talk so that they don't bottle it up. And its about building up their resilience. Urm because a lot of the people I listen to don't have any resilience [mm]. You know what is resilience. They're on they're last...But you do. And theres something about doing something for someone else. I always say this to people. I don't mean it as if Im fantastic I do this. Because I don't mean it like that at all. I think you sort of have a wellbeing feeling yourself [mm]. Because your doing something for others but its making you feel worthy [mm]. So I suppose the SENCO role is a little like that [mm]. When you listen to parents and you listen to children you know, your giving them time. Your...its not always about the advice. There is the time and the place for that. Yeah so my voluntary role has helped me a lot in my...role. But that wasn't the reason I went for it. So its for me when people say oh you talk a lot. I am in this because I have to [mm]. That's not something I feel comfortable about.

I: Its not something you feel comfortable about.

S: Not at all. When I did the mental health thing. I had to stand in front of the teachers. There was no way I could get them to tell me how they were feeling if I don't talk about myself. Im almost saying well you don't need to know about me [mm]. Im not going to talk about myself Im just going to listen to you [mm]. So at the end of the term I was doing some training

where...I gave them a body image and I said to them I want you to completely confidently. Its opt. Its voluntary you don't have to do it. If you feel uncomfortable about it that's understandable. But if you feel you do you can write in the body all the things going for you at the moment. It might be at school it might be at home. And then outside the body you write everything that's making you feel.

I: Mmm

S: And we did that. There were a few people that couldn't do it. We did have a few....difficult. You know. It brings out a lot of emotion in people. But I had to do it myself. And that was really uncomfortable for me. But if I didn't do it. But I had to put mine up on a powerpoint and say this is why. And it was about me. When actually I don't want to talk about me. This is why its not a good urm...Then after the summer holiday I asked them to rethink about it after having that break [mm]. So it was trying to work. To work out every week we cant have six weeks off [yeah]. But how can we manage our time so that we can have that work life balance

I: Mmm mmmm

S: But we also did like a resilience jar where everyone wrote something that they do for them. And the idea was that you try to do that for yourself during the holidays or at somepoint...urm. Just to remember you've got to be in the right state of mind. Have the right wellbeing [mm] in order to urm....you know to be able to teach. So actually its about how your feeling to be able to teach

I: Yeah

S: And actually we had someone. When we had the WOW day someone, one of the teachers came up to me and said we need to keep this and have another meeting. Its not just about the WOW day. And I said no your completely right. We will have another lunch time meeting next week because I need to feedback something. She said well I think you should have another wellbeing day but something for staff. And she's right you know....So urm. Its just another thing to do (slight smile)

I: Just another thing

S: But its important.

I: Yeah

S: So I don't know how we got onto that. But we just got onto the fact that the volunteer work I do has helped my job all the voluntary stuff [yeah]. And I hear myself saying to people when they are feeling low. Have you thought about doing some voluntary work. Some of it is because people cant get out of how they are feeling [yeah]. But it has also helped support staff here. Even though they don't know. There are probably two staff now that know. Soemone actually said to me once. Are you sure you don't do. Maybe I was doing things a bit text book [slight laugh] (smile and sort of looking away). Are you sure you don't do something where

you. I said well actually I do. So I thought then I had to say to them because it was unfair. But it was outside of school. It wasn't in school.

I: Mmmm

S: I don't know why I am so precious about it. I just think....its not something you can talk about it because its confidential. So therefore the less people that know you do it the easier it is

I: Yeah yeah

S: Urm....just because then people cant say to me oh are you doing X tonight (slight mocking tone) [yeah]. So...its easier. But I would recommend it to people

I: Yeah....Something else you mentioned last time was stress levels and I think you mentioned it earlier. That you cant do everything in your role. Can you tell me a bit more about this. Yeah just because you mentioned stress levels

S: Yeah because I don't know how you recognise stress in yourself. Because you recognise it in people. I would never say that I. I do get stressed but I never show it. I don't know if that's because I don't know how that feels. It probably feels that very occasionally Im not going to get on top of this [mm]. But it never gets to the point where. Probably once I've said this has become impossible. Probably once. And if I said that to X he would probably panic probably...You know I really need to do something. I mean I did obviously get my admin support [mm]. Because I did say in order to do this job. But there are times when the SEN teacher is off for four weeks at the beginning of the year. Like I had two terms with no SEN teacher and like when X left...I was doing my role and the new role [mm]. So it is constant. I come back to prioritising you have to prioritise constantly what you manage on a daily basis [yeah] and you do the best you can. And I do reflect back to manage the stress. I reflect back and think actually I did five EHCPs last year. Touch w. Well they've all gone through [mm]. So I must be doing something right. Even if. Even if my work balance isn't hundred percent right [slight laugh] (smile). I must be doing something right.

Those couple of staff that have struggled to stay in school. I've kept them in school even if it means giving up some time. So you can't measure that impact [mm] bit if you then have to get a supply teacher or another teacher in because that teacher needed you to understand where they were [mm] they were struggling. Urm...and I suppose for me I am lucky I don't have a class.

I: Yeah

S: So I can give them that time. X does understand. He does some time say why do they always come to you. But part of it I say is because I am the female.

I: what does that look like

S: they will go to him if its anything malee instead of me. So if it's anything female

Orientated then they do. But I would never not encourage them to go to X or Charlie because they ate equally understandable. And equally supportive.

I: Mmm

S: So I don't see it as they don't come to you they come to me. I don't see it like that at all. I said If I have time available then I will. But equally I know you would do the same [mm]. So urm...Yeah. so I. I think...I don't know how to say about stress...how do you measure stress. I think because the knock on effect of other people I know you have to keep your head above water...But equally I've been. I can't ask other people to say they're not coping if I can't say it myself. So I rarely see myself as not coping

I: Seems

S: I think I would be worried if I felt I wasn't coping...But I think I also said to you about my five year plan. So I know that at I'm at the end of my second year. So to get to where I want to I feel like I've still got three years to go [yeah] urm and you can only hope..like getting all the stuff electronically. It's not like I haven't thought about it. I've made enquires about it. It's just that sometimes you jump in. We were saying that at the SENCO forum. Sometimes you can say oh I'll d that ill do that. Sometimes it's worth holding back a bit u til people do some trials or pilot things whatever. Then thinking oh okay. Because I said. One other other SENCOs X said to me talking about the pilot transition for last year. She said I don't tend to get involved in pilot schemes because otherwise you're having to do everything and then you. If you wait and see the results of it you can take on the good things. That's one way of doing it. I totally understand. But in my head if you don't have anyone on the pilot scheme. Your never. Never going to have anyone on the pilot scheme are you [mm]. Like the transition one last year. I won't take everything from it but I will take the good bits and use it this year [mm]. We were talking about now doing loads of pilot schemes. Do it, review it move on to another one. But as SENCOs if we do it review it. There is not point unless we take the good bits from it. So for the transitipn one. I would try and do like last year have the meeting with parents in years four five and six and try and get the SENCOs in. [Mm] That bit worked.

I: Yeah

S: there were some bits that were just too time consuming to do. But I will take the good bits from it l[mm] But if I hadn't done the pilot scheme because I'm not sure that has been cascaded. That was another thing that came out of our send forum. Because all these good projects are going. Are happening how are they being cascaded to everybody [mm] Beacuse there is another pilot going on at the moment. I don't know what that's for. We are looking at different different things. And obviously there is also the mental health and well-being which is another pilot scheme. Well not a pilot scheme. Well its not a pilot scheme it's another training thing. It's a bit like the inclusion commitment isn't it [mm] we took that on for two years. And then it finishes [mm]. Do I feel that it's finished and I'm not getting any support. No. Because I learnt so much in those two years [mm] it sort of helped me stand on my feet. And I knew I had someone to go to if I was struggling [mm] when I was new to the role. So..No I don't feel like I've been dropped [yeah]. I feel like if I rang them and said I'm really

struggling with this [mm]. They would still support me. Buuuut they're not...holding me. Holding me tightly now because I'm finding my own feet [mm] or I've found my own feet to some extent.

I: Yeah

S: So maybe that's making me sound confident. I'm not confident (laughs)...right I st. I will be quiet now.

I: Be quiet now

S: Yeah weve got 10 minute

I: We've got ten minutes is that okay

S: Yeah Yeah. I'm just making sure I've covered everything

I: No. Again it's just what's coming from you. I mean the only. There were just a couple of others but I think we've already touched on. I guess one you also said last time was maybe feeling accountable for your time. Or. That was just coming up a bit. So I just wondered if you could tell me about that a little bit

S: Yeah I still don't feel I'm 100% effective with my time. But then how do you. How can you be accountable. How hard to say actually i've listened to a member of staff for 45mins [yeah]. Theyd be like. Or like you know. I've spent time with a child for twenty minutes because they were having difficulties on the playground. Or I did playground duty and this was a result of the playground duty [yeah]. So I do do a timetable every week and I do put in all my meetings [mm]. But it doesn't tell you I spent half an hour on the phone [mm] to a SENCO at another school because a child has transferred. It doesn't tell you all of that detail. So no I always think I could be more effective....but yeah.

I: Mmm

S: I don't know how I can do that. I spend too much time with people rather than just getting on with paperwork (slight smile and laugh) [laughs]. I do keep thinking I need to shut my office door. Put do not disturb on it and then I would get that. I would get so much more done. I can't bring myself to do that. It feels really rude [mm]. I did it once. I did the medical ...urmone of the ladies in medical. The welfare officer said can you help me with a care plan. I said okay I will arrange a time [mm] were going to get you cover. Your going to come to my office. Were going to put do not disturb on the door and I reckon we will do it in an hour. And we did do it in just over an hour. The task it was done. It was something we had been meaning to do for ages. So yeah. That was effective [mm]. But I don't work like that (slight laugh). Unless its for someone else.

I: Not your job

S: No if X said I need this I would do it straight away [yeah]. Like my emails are. I look at them all [mm]. I respond to those that I have to. I need to be putting them all in little neat files. And they are [mm]. Some of them. Not all of them [yeah]. So that type of a thing is not a priority to me.

I: Yeah

S: Because as long as ive read it, actioned them. If I havent had time to file them [mm] which is really quick. There some people no names mentioned that get really stressed if they have a page of emails [yeah] How can you possibly action [slight laugh] all those emails in you know [yeah]. All you would be doing is reading and actioning emails you wouldn't be doing anything else....So...And again nobody has said to me you didn't reply to me [yeah] body has said oh you werent where you were meant to be [mm]. So. That's where I think the system is going wrong....when people start constructively criticising you. Then I think. Yeah actually I'm not on the ball. I need to get my act together [mm]....becasuse who was it that said to me X said you've got ADHD. Which I might have. She said your so random [slight laugh]. Like when you were planning the WOW day. Im a mind map person. Right bung it in the middle [yeah] where are we going with this. She said your just all over the place. Which is what im like doing these interviews [slight laugh]. But I said. I said to her maybe that is how I work.

I: Yeah

S: I've tried so many times to have a LOVELY diary and a LOVELY notebook and record every single phone call and whatever I get in it. But no. As long as the phone call is actioned recorded [mm]. I would probably have stacks of paper. I don't know. It works for me....Yeah. It looks a mess [laugh]. So that's the only thing. If I got run over by a bus tomorrow. Well I wouldn't know would I. I wouldnt be here. [slight sigh]. But I...Id worry. Well I wouldn't worry. But someone is going to have to take over my mess. Buuuuut. I brought in somebody I was helping. Somebody who I was helping helped me. So I was helping them from a counselling listening point of view. They helped me by their OCD clearing files point of view [ohh]. It's a win win situation. I love it [great]. Because I couldn't have thrown those files away [mm] but they could do it...So that was fantastic I loved it. So that was a helping...Im listening to you whilst you sort my files out [yeah]. That's fine [yeah]. Because I cant throw files of stuff away because Im a hoarder

I: Yeah yeah

S: But Ive never looked at those files. I don't miss those files. If I do need them im not going to worry about it and now theyre gone [yeah]...

I: Im conscious your going to have to go soon.

S: Yeah

I: So I just wanted to. Well first of all I wanted to say thank you for just sharing

S: For waffling (laughs)

I: Not waffling. Not at all. For sharing like. Just having the time. Because I know time is very precious so I really appreciate you taking the time to share.

S: No its important. When Ive had to. When ive had to do stuff for qualifications. Not as high as your qualification. But you have to ask other people. You have to research its important

I: And experiences. I guess just the last few things was if there was anything else you felt needed to be added. Or do you feel that's kind of captured everyhing

S: Urrrr....No I don't think so. I I I...I know im not in the same place as lots of SENCOs[mm]. And I do occasionally. Like on Tuesday I went to visit X school. Massively experienced SENCO or inclusion head. I call upon her for her knowledge because its amazing. Im very grateful because shes really happy to share [mm]. Shes a really good contact. Urm. I always come away from there thinking oh my godness I wish I was in the same place [mm] being that organsied. But after an hour I think its not happening at the moment so I cant worry about it [mm]. So yeah that's....but yeah I do think I call upon. In the same way people ask me things I ask. Im not afraid to say I don't know. Or please can you advise me. Or I should know but I don't [yeah]. You know its

I: And is there anything you would like to say I guess about this process. How its been for you talking

S: Talking is hard for me even though X doesn't think it is [laugh]. Urm because I waffle. But hopefully. What Im hoping from the time element is that you will be able to pull from it what is important to you. Urm...Im not very structured as you can tell.

I: And how have you felt in the process I guess.

S: Yeah im fine. Im fine about it. I just worry there is a lot of waffle and not a lot of content. It would be like me writing (laugh)

I: There's a lot of content don't worry.

S: But its how. I mean that's your job extracting from it what you need for your [mm]. So I hope ive said enough that gives you a picture...of the role. But the role. Im sure youll find this and it will be interesting. Whoever you talk to. I might learn what I should be doing

I: [laugh] Everyone is very different

S: I might be talking of job description

I: I don't know if there is its very different.

S: Well at the bottom it says be prepared to do anything at any time [laugh] (laugh) for anybody. That's what it is isnt it [yeah] You sign up to whatever needs doing...And X always

says. I must say I am very lucky that he is so supportive. Because if he says to me oh so and so. I say oh don't worry Ill help. He says no you've got your job to do. And I say but okay if your stuck you know im there [yeah]. So...in affect he protects my role [mm]. Which is a huge complement because it means he recognises the importance of it [mm]. So that point is important. If I wasn't in. Say X was off sick the SEN teacher and I cant cover for her. And I put my flag up saying but her role is important why cant she be covered [mm]. Is it because im doing it. And thats still important [mm]. And part of its like that. Its very...yeah....I have to think you've got to have a teacher in front of the class that's a priority [yeah] So you feel important sometimes and then other times your like oh maybe im not so important (slight laugh) [quiet laugh]

I: And is there anything urm...that you've told me that you don't want to use in the analysis

S: Only the X bit

I: So when you've referred to X

S: I don't mind you saying I do voluntary work.

I: So if I put

S: It depends who its going to. Im not embarrassed by it. Its just to protect the confidentiality side

I: Mmm yeah I understand

S: of it. Beause lots of X tell everyone they are an X. But I think

I: But if that's for you or how you feel

S: Yeah for sur

I: So what information in terms of where it would be. I know you said you would be interested in

S: Yeah like I said I don't mind people knowing I do voluntary work

I: So maybe if I just said in that way

S: If you leave it at that. You know it could be I am taking an old lady for a walk

I: Exactly. So if I put voluntary and related to listening but not

S: Yeah yeah

I: Does that sound okay?

S: It could be anything. I listen to children read

I: Yeah

S: Or I...yeah....I think its about protecting me [yeah]. Because if people...I don't know. I never know where the boundaries are with it [mm]. Because obviously you don't talk about...what you hear [mm]. Only to the people your allowed to [sure] talk to it about. Because you have to offload

I: Yeah

S: Urm and because that's really important to do

I: Mmm

S: And therefore I think if people know. Then people say to you. Oh how was your shift last night [yeah]. Oh what sort of people rang up. Oh what did they talk about [mm mm]. And actually I cant tell I cant say. So that's easier

I: That's fine

S: So

I: But yeah I mean that's been everything I guess. And this has been our final kind of interview together. Urm..

S: But if you go away and transcribe that and think actually Im not really sure about that you can drop me an email that's fine. And say can you

I: Oh thank you

S: expand on this. Then I might waffle on paper (laughs)

I: No. Thank you. And I might check in with you if there is anything that comes to mind

S: Yeah yeah

I: And I appreciat that as well

S: No I hope it goes well though.

I: Thank you

S: because its not easy to extract from waffle (laugh) [laugh]

I: Its not waffle at all its not. And I mean if there was anything that came up [yeah definitiely] that we talked about that you wanted to support with. Support from SENCO forums or theres the NANSENCO

S: Yeah yeah

I: Or theres other things that came up that you feel you need to talk through with someone please let me know

S: Yeah no no that's fine

I: Ill pop on here. Rather than do this

S: when have you got to have all this done by

I: Well the final submission is.....May and then I have to

### **Appendix K. Example excerpt of scenic understanding interview 1 – Samantha**

Scenic understanding notes typed up on iPad immediately after interview. It was important to allow time for this process.

#### **Interview 1 with Samantha**

I waited in the reception area of the school. I felt relaxed and perhaps a bit nervous about carrying out my first interview. I received an occasional smile from the receptionist which reassured me. I noticed that Samantha was late by 5 minutes. I checked my watch a couple of times, as if I wasn't sure if the interview would happen. After 10 minutes the receptionist tried to call Samantha to find out where she was. She could not get hold of her but said that she would probably be on her way. I wondered about the meaning of this waiting, was it simply the busyness of her role, or was Samantha perhaps a bit nervous about the interview.

Samantha appeared 15 minutes late apologising about how busy she was. She showed me to a room near to the reception area and shared that she needed to be finished in the next hour. I was curious about her need to boundary the time, did she not want to be there or was her role so busy that she couldn't spare the time. Samantha chose to sit herself near to me at the other side of the round table, she was almost looking towards me whilst at the same time being able to angle herself away.

Samantha started to talk about her busy day. I thanked her for making the time and reassured her the interview would be based on how much she wanted to share and, as stated in the information sheet, it would be approximately 1 hour. Samantha started to ask about the research and how many participants I might need. I explained around 4 would be preferable. She started to think of other SENCOs who she knew and could contact. I felt slightly on edge

at this point, reminding myself of the researcher role and the anonymity of the research. I redirected the topic. Samantha continued to try to be helpful. I wondered how her desire to be helpful could play out in her SENCO role. I thanked Samantha again and redirected her to the interview focus.

I switched on the recorder after initially taking time to make sure it was on correctly. I thanked Samantha again and she smiled tentatively looking at the recorder as she explained it was nice to stop. I felt almost a sense of relief or pause as she said this. Samantha's shoulders appeared to slump down as almost as if she had allowed her body to release. I continued to check whether Samantha had any questions and again explained the purpose of the interview and how it might be different to others she had experienced. Samantha smiled and seemed to quickly respond 'yeah' 'okay' and 'that's fine'. Before I had a chance to repeat my opening question/statement (tell me what it's like to be a SENCO) Samantha started to talk about the previous SENCO at the school and the time she had been at the school. She then checked if this was okay to do and continued. I found it interesting that Samantha had started to talk about her previous experiences and working history. A part of me was hesitant because I had not intended to find out about her 'lived experience'. Another part of me recognised that this is what Samantha wanted to talk about when asked about her experience of being a SENCO. I left my tension aside and refocused on Samantha as she spoke.

Samantha spoke quickly, almost listing her range of experiences. I wondered whether she felt the need to do this because she is relatively new to the SENCO role and may have wanted to highlight her experiences. It seemed Samantha was also reflecting how her experiences may have influenced her to getting to her SENCO role. When Samantha talked about being asked to act as the Inclusion Manager, she seemed hesitant. It appeared Samantha

lacked confidence in herself and talked about having an ‘arm twist’ to carry out the SENCO role.

As Samantha was talking, she appeared to be animated and continued to talk, sometimes not taking much breath. On occasion she moved her arms and gestured whilst speaking. She seemed to pause at times, looked at me, but then continued. It felt overwhelming to listen to her. I wondered if this was my feeling or if this could reflect how she may feel in her role at times. She talked about trying to manage everything by having a plan and feeling like there is still a way to go. At this point I felt a pull to reassure Samantha, as she appeared to be placing pressure on herself to achieve.

I noticed that she started to speak faster and use more hand gestures when she compared herself to other SENCOs. I began to also feel overwhelmed, a feeling I was noticing throughout points of the interview.

## **Appendix L. Example of second participant interview based upon the first – Samantha**

### **Interview 2- Samantha**

#### **Introduction**

The last time we met we talked about your experience of being a Primary School SENCO.

1. Are there any thoughts or comments that you would like to make about the previous interview? Or anything you went away thinking about?
2. I wonder if you have any thoughts or feelings about returning to take part in this second interview?

#### **Further questions**

Would it be helpful for me to refer to some of the things we spoke about last time?

I have some more questions which we didn't fully explore in the last interview which could be helpful to talk about- follow this with questions developed from the analysis of the first interview

1. Last time we spoke you said that the children are a huge or main part of the work, and noticed you hadn't talked about them much. Can you tell me a bit about the children being a huge part of your role?
2. You mentioned the word resilience last time in *relation* to being a SENCO. Can you tell me a bit more about what this means in your role?
3. You referred to your stress levels and that you can't do everything. Can you tell me more about this?
4. You mentioned that your coping strategy is to prioritise. Can you tell me about other times you have had to use coping strategies in your role?
5. You said last time that you feel accountable for your time. Can you tell me a bit more about this?
6. Last time you said that listening was a really important part of the role. Can you say a bit more about this?

#### **Conclusion**

Thank you for sharing your experiences with me...

- Is there anything else that I did not ask which you expected me to raise?
- Would you like to comment on how this interview process has been for you?
- Is there anything that has come up that has upset you that you would like to discuss this with someone?
- Is there anything in this interview which you have told me that you do not want me to use in the analysis?
- Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

Thank again for taking part in the research and for meeting for a second time for the final interview. If you have any questions about the research, or you would like a summary of the findings I can share these with you upon completion. If you feel you would like further support following the interviews I can direct you to support from SENCO forums or the National Association for Special Educational Needs.

**Appendix M. Confirmation of Ethical Approval from the Tavistock and Portman NHS  
Trust Research Ethics Committee**

The Tavistock and Portman   
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement  
Directorate of Education & Training  
Tavistock Centre  
120 Belsize Lane  
London  
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699

<https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/>

Abigail Plender  
**By Email**

10 July 2018

Dear Ms Plender,

**Re: Research Ethics Application**

**Title:** "Fighting Fires" What Primary School Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have to say about their role; a psychosocial approach

I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me. I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Best regards,



**Paru Jeram**  
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee  
T: 020 938 2699  
E: [pjeram@tavi-Port.nhs.uk](mailto:pjeram@tavi-Port.nhs.uk)

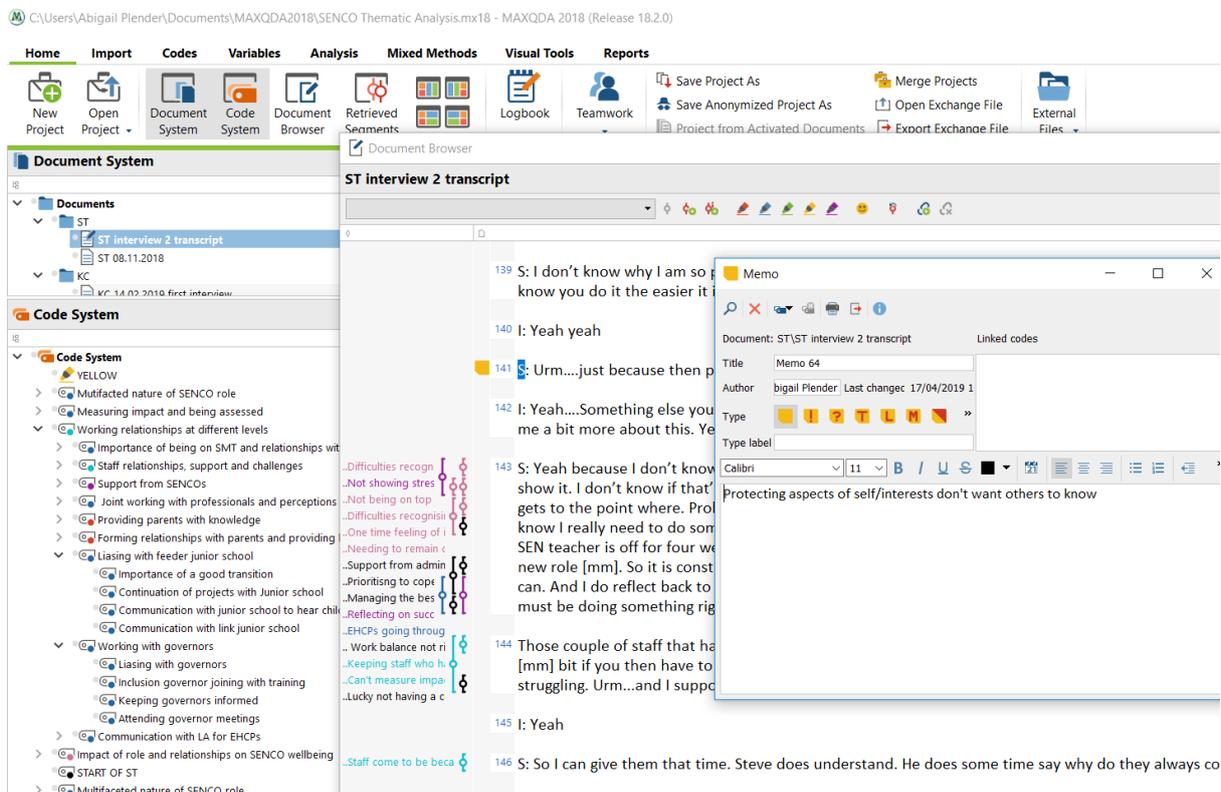
cc. Course Lead, Research Lead, Supervisor, Course Administrator, Academic Quality

### Appendix N. Example of organising themes

Organising an overview of themes, subthemes, codes and example quotes for Samantha				
Overarching Theme	Subtheme	Example of codes	Quotes which link to example codes	Psychoanalytic concepts which are emerging from the data
Supporting emotional wellbeing and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and children wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging children to share feelings</li> <li>Giving parents and children time to talk and feel heard</li> <li>Building up children's resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>"It's still taking on board how to encourage children to talk so that they don't bottle it up."</i></li> <li><i>"So I suppose the SENCO role is a little like that [mm]. When you listen to parents and you listen to children you know, your giving them time."</i></li> <li><i>"And it's about building up their resilience."</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening and providing time for children and parents to talk could represent Samantha's role in containing their feelings so that they are able to express themselves and build resilience.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting teacher's personal needs</li> <li>Keeping staff who have struggled to stay in school</li> <li>Allowing teachers time to offload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>"Urm...and within school I think a lot of the time supporting the personal side of the teachers as well."</i></li> <li><i>"Those couple of staff that have struggled to stay in school. I've kept them in school even if it means giving up some time."</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing containment for class teachers e.g. they need to 'offload to be able to teach. Samantha can contain their feelings and help them to process and make sense of both personal and work life.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“You know, allowing the teachers to offload [mm]. So a lot of time spent where teachers have to. You know, they need to offload [mmm].”</i></li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience and management of stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not showing pressure is resilience</li> <li>• Plans to manage stress</li> <li>• Resilience is remembering how coped before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“I am under pressure all the time. But I wouldn’t want to show it.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“5 year plan because for my own stress levels you can’t. I can’t do everything you want to do.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“So I look at my role and I think something is difficult I managed it before.”</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Samantha could be supressing her emotions so that she is able to be in a present state to contain others.</li> <li>• Bion (1963) – container/contained suggests the more resilient the container the more stresses and unprocessed feelings they can contain and think about. Perhaps the positive relationship with the headteacher supports Samantha’s resilience. EPs could also be a form of containment for SENCOs through supervision.</li> <li>• When Samantha spoke fast I felt overwhelmed perhaps reflecting the experience of the countertransference and Samantha projecting her feelings she was unable to contain onto me.</li> </ul>

## Appendix O. Screenshot of MAXQDA to demonstrate use of memos and recording themes



### Appendix P. Overview of themes for Samantha

Themes and subthemes identified for Samantha from thematic analysis.

Theme	Subthemes
Multifaceted nature of the SENCO role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of SENCO role</li> <li>• Demands of SENCO role</li> <li>• Management role</li> <li>• Recording SEN and statutory processes</li> <li>• Inclusive practice</li> <li>• Strategic work: whole school and staff development</li> <li>• Direct work with children and promoting pupil voice</li> <li>• Writing reports for school governors</li> </ul>
Working relationships at different levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disappointed by lack of communication from governors</li> <li>• Relationships with parents</li> <li>• Positive relationship with SMT</li> <li>• Respect from staff and teamwork</li> <li>• Male and female roles in school</li> </ul>
Supporting emotional wellbeing and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and children wellbeing</li> <li>• Staff wellbeing</li> <li>• Resilience and management of stress</li> </ul>
Support networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from LA</li> <li>• SEN support in school</li> <li>• Support from SENCOs</li> </ul>
Knowledge transfer and reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison to other schools and SENCOs</li> <li>• Continuous learning and reflecting</li> <li>• Drawing upon experience from other roles</li> </ul>

### Appendix Q. Overview of themes for Jackie

Theme	Subthemes
Multifaceted nature of the SENCO role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of SENCO role</li> <li>• Demands of SENCO role</li> <li>• Frustration of where time is spent</li> <li>• SENCO role as leader</li> <li>• Whole school influence and training staff</li> <li>• Encouraging inclusive practice</li> <li>• Direct role with children</li> </ul>
Changes in SENCO working context and statutory processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of practice improving joint working</li> <li>• Demands of EHCP process and increased accountability</li> <li>• Annual reviews and criticisms of the process</li> </ul>
Experience, knowledge and not knowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience provides others with confidence</li> <li>• Credibility from being hands on</li> <li>• Sharing ideas and being open about not knowing</li> </ul>
Working relationships at different levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff dependency upon the SENCO</li> <li>• Influence of headteacher on SENCO role</li> <li>• Relationships with parents</li> <li>• Supporting anxious parents</li> <li>• Difficulties managing parent expectations</li> </ul>
Isolating role and support networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolating role within school</li> <li>• SENCO support and sharing knowledge</li> </ul>

### Appendix R. Overview of themes for Parveen

Theme	Subthemes
Multifaceted nature of the SENCO role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of SENCO role</li> <li>• Additional roles</li> <li>• Demands of SENCO role</li> <li>• Demands of EHCP process</li> <li>• Inclusive practice</li> <li>• Focus on supporting EAL students</li> <li>• Early intervention and identification</li> <li>• Whole school projects and upskilling staff</li> </ul>
Assessment of children and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations and support for children</li> <li>• Quality assessment of school</li> </ul>
Working relationships at different levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of being on SLT and relationships</li> <li>• Staff relationships: support and challenges</li> <li>• Support from SENCOs</li> <li>• Joint working with professionals and perceptions of roles</li> <li>• Relationships with parents</li> <li>• Providing parents with knowledge</li> <li>• Liaising with feeder junior school</li> <li>• Working with governors</li> </ul>
Impact of role and relationships on SENCO wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling unappreciated</li> <li>• Significant impact on health</li> <li>• Relationship with headteacher</li> </ul>

