

**Becoming the Parent of a School Child: A Psychosocial Approach to
Understanding the Transition Process for Parents of Children with SEN**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctorate in Child, Community and
Educational Psychology

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May 2019

Abstract

Transitions to educational institutions have received growing attention in recent years, with research directed towards supporting effective transition policies, practices and programmes. In UK based research, minimal attention has been paid to what a parent may experience as their child with SEN transitions to school and how parents cope with these changes and adjustments.

This qualitative study looked at how parents in an outer London borough experienced their child with SEN's transition from nursery to school. In this study, the transition to school process was understood in the context of relational change, uncertainty, changes in expectations, as well as internal and interpersonal processes. A psychosocial approach was adopted and Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) Free Association Narrative Interview Method was used to interview five parents about their experience. A thematic analysis was used to gather a rich account of the psychological and social dimensions of the transition process for each of these parents. Themes were then considered in conjunction with relevant psychoanalytic concepts. Findings are presented in relation to analysis, related theory and research. The limitations of this study and implications for educational psychology practice and the role of professionals in the transition to school are discussed, including a reflection on how the conceptualisation of transition may be pertinent to EP practice.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
TABLE OF TABLES.....	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	10
ABBREVIATIONS.....	11
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	12
1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW	12
1.2 TRANSITION THEORY	12
1.3 THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL.....	14
1.4 NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT	17
1.5 TRANSITION TO SCHOOL DEFINITION.....	20
1.6 PARENT EXPERIENCE OF THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL PROCESS.....	22
1.7 RESEARCHER POSITIONING	23
1.7.1 Ontology.....	23
1.7.2 Epistemology	24
1.8 FOCUS OF THIS RESEARCH.....	26
1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY	26
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	28
2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	28
2.2 SEARCH STRATEGY	28
2.2.1 Search terms	29
2.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.....	30
2.3 CRITICAL REVIEW	31
2.3.1 Starting school: the importance of parent expectations (Russell, 2005)	32

2.3.2 Strategies for Supporting transition of young children with special needs and their families Rous, Myers and Stricklin (2007)	33
2.3.3 Experiences of parents whose children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are starting primary school. Connolly and Gersch (2016)	35
2.3.4 The Experience of Parents as Their Children with Developmental Disabilities Transition from Early Intervention to Kindergarten. Villeneuve, Chatenoud, Hutchinson, Minnes, Perry, Dionne, Frankel, Isaacs, Loh, Versnel, Weiss. (2012)	37
2.3.5 Starting School with Special Needs: Issues for Families with Complex Support Needs as Their Children Start School. Dockett, Perry & Kearney (2011).....	38
2.3.6 In transition: Experiences of parents of children with special needs at school entry Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron and Hughes (2008).....	40
2.3.7 Experiences of parents of children with special needs at school entry: a mixed method approach. Siddiqua & Janus (2016)	42
2.3.8 Understanding parent advocacy during the transition to school of children with developmental disabilities: three Canadian cases. Hutchinson, Pyle, Villeneuve, Dods, Dalton & Minnes (2014)	43
2.4 SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE	45
2.5 RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY	47
2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY	48
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	49
3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW	49
3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH.....	49
3.3 PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY IN PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH.....	50
3.3.1 Defence mechanisms against anxiety.....	50
3.3.2 Containment	52
3.3.3 Transference and countertransference.....	53
3.4 IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY	54
3.4.1 Research diary	55

3.4.2 Field notes	55
3.4.3 Psychosocial supervision	56
3.4.4 Research supervision.....	56
3.4.5 Summary	56
3.5 RESEARCH METHOD.....	57
3.5.1 Research participants	57
3.5.2 Data collection	59
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS.....	64
3.6.1 Thematic Analysis as a framework	65
3.6.2 Application of Psychoanalytic Theory	69
3.7 ENSURING RESEARCH CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS	69
3.7.1 Credibility	70
3.7.2 Transferability	71
3.8 ETHICS IN PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH	72
3.8.1 Issues regarding informed consent.....	73
3.8.2 Anonymity and confidentiality.....	74
3.8.3 Power imbalances in the research encounter.....	74
3.8.4 Adhering to principles of honesty, sympathy and respect.....	75
3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY	75
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS	76
4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	76
4.2 *LIZZIE AND HENRY	76
4.2.1 Experience of parenting	77
4.2.2 Earlier experiences of education	79
4.2.3 Navigating the change process.....	81
4.2.4 Significance of starting school	83
4.2.5 Realisation of changes relating to the school transition process	84
4.3 *EMMA AND POPPY	86

4.3.1 Early years' experience	87
4.3.2 Experience of the diagnostic process	88
4.3.3 Adaptation to child's diagnosis and action taken.....	90
4.3.4 Transformative experience of being a mother to a child with Autism	92
4.3.5 Needing a different school experience	93
4.4 *MARK, PAUL AND ARCHIE	96
4.4.1 Becoming new parents of an adopted child	97
4.4.2 Adapting to a newly formed family system	98
4.4.3 Managing subsequent transitions	100
4.4.4 The school experience.....	102
4.4.5 Thinking ahead to the future	104
4.5 *SONIA AND HANNAH	107
4.5.1 Early education experience	108
4.5.2 Journey to diagnosis.....	110
4.5.3 Adaptation and moving forward	111
4.5.4 Needing a different school experience	113
4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY	118
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	124
5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	124
5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	124
5.2.1 Managing earlier transitions.....	125
5.2.2 Navigating the Change Process.....	133
5.2.3 Significance of Starting School.....	140
5.2.4 Awareness of changes as part of transition process	142
5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EP PRACTICE.....	144
5.4 DISSEMINATION.....	149
5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH.....	150
5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH	151

5.7 REFLECTIONS.....	118
5.8 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.....	152
REFERENCES	154
APPENDIX A. EXCLUSION TABLE	168
APPENDIX B. CRITIQUE OF PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW	176
APPENDIX C. INFORMATION SHEET.....	193
APPENDIX D. CONSENT FORM.....	196
APPENDIX E. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS.....	197
APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW 2 SCHEDULES FOR PARTICIPANTS.....	198
APPENDIX G. EXAMPLE TRANSCRIPT.....	202
APPENDIX H. EXAMPLE INITIAL CODING FOR LIZZIE.....	212
APPENDIX I. EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPANT THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES	213
APPENDIX J. SUMMARIES WITH CODED SEGMENTS	217
APPENDIX K. ETHICS	240

Table of Tables

Table 1 Search terms used	29
Table 2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria	30
Table 3 Transcription Key (Silverman, 1993).....	66

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the parents who chose to take part, as this study would not have been possible without them. Your openness and honesty in sharing your experiences has shaped my practice in ways I could not have imagined, and I am so grateful for this.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to Dr Adam Styles, whose patience, time taken, and unwavering support were often what kept me going. I would also like to give special mention to Sue Thompson for her encouragement throughout my research journey.

I consider myself incredibly lucky to have such supportive friends, family and colleagues at the Tavistock who were willing me on throughout this experience.

Last but by no means least, I would like to thank the three men in my life, TJ, my dad and my brother Eoin, even when I have doubted myself you have all continued to believe in me.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
SEN	Special Educational Need
UK	United Kingdom
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
PHE	Public Health England
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
PAG	Parent Advisory Group
EY	Early Years
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
DD	Developmental Disabilities
IOF	Impact on Family Scale
MPOC	Measure of Processes of Care
VABS	Vineland Adaptive Scales
CSQ	Client Satisfaction Questionnaire
CFSA	Conceptual Framework for Self-Advocacy for Children with Disabilities
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FANI	Free Association Narrative Interview
BNIM	Biographical Narrative Interpretative Method
BPS	British Psychological Society
LA	Local Authority

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter is to present contextual information, setting the scene for the following research study on parental experience of their child with SEN's transition to school. To do this I start by referring to how transition is conceptualised in the literature and what assumptions are made by using this term. I continue by describing transition within the context of education and childhood development. Next, I situate these theoretical concepts within national context and government policy, moving to the local context. This is followed by an outline of theoretical underpinnings going forward, situating myself in the debates and issues surrounding transition. I then argue that although the transition from nursery to school is understood as a pivotal time for children and their families, little attention has been paid to understanding parent experiences during this time. The chapter concludes with a foregrounding of my positioning as a researcher, setting the scene for the importance of a psychosocial perspective in understanding parental experiences during their child with SEN's transition to school.

1.2 Transition Theory

Transition theory has its origins in the study of anthropology, and the belief that 'rites of passage' are integral to the human experience and are marked by various socio-cultural practices and rituals (Van Gennep, 1960). These rituals are said to signify meaning and social implications of developmental changes throughout the lifespan, from birth to death (Van Gennep, 1960). From perusal of the literature, how the word transition is defined and the assumptions surrounding the term vary over time and across context, however, most sources agree that transition involves change (Kralik, Visentin & van Loon, 2006). Different types of transition have been identified

including; *“developmental, situational, health and organisational, and the factors influencing transition have been found to differ considerably between individuals, families and organisations”* (Kralik et al., 2006 p.322). For instance, people’s sense of the transition and the meaning they make of the change, their expectations of it, the availability of new knowledge about it, their capacity to prepare for it, their health and emotional wellbeing have all been shown to influence transition outcomes (Schumacher & Meleis, 1994). To transition successfully, it is suggested that feelings of disturbance or heightened vulnerability that arise at this time need to be replaced by a sense of coming to terms with and mastery of the change (Schumacher & Meleis 1994; Kralik, et al., 2006).

The earliest perspectives in research on transition theorised that it occurred in three distinct phases, including an ending, an in-between period, and a beginning (Van Gennep, 1960). This understanding assumed transition to be a linear trajectory with distinct starting and finishing points, a conceptualisation shared with the dominant framework at the time, stage developmental theory. Although a growing body of research has challenged this, asserting that transition cannot be reduced simply to unidirectional change, but rather relates to the ongoing adjustment process that people go through to accommodate the change or new situation into their lives (Kralik et al., 2006). This literature posits transition as a process that requires a re-construction of self-identity to internalise changes and adapt to new roles and responsibilities (Bridges, 2004).

For the transition process to occur, it was proposed that people must show awareness of the changes that are taking place and demonstrate engagement with them, being able to perceive the change that has happened and how things are different

(Meleis, Sawyer, Im, Hilfinger,& Schumacher, 2000). A lack of awareness could denote that the person may not be prepared for the transition (Meleis et al. 2000). It is asserted that, it is pivotal for individuals to recognise that an ending has occurred, or that their current reality is altering, and that this sense of uncertainty needs to happen as part of the transition process (Bridges, 2004). With this acknowledgment, it is then possible for people to make meaning of what is occurring, learn to adapt and reconstruct a new way to live (Selder, 1989; Meleis et al., 2000).

With this in mind I will now consider arguably one of the most significant life transitions in a child's development in western culture, the transition to school.

1.3 The Transition to School

From a young age we experience a number of life transitions, each marks a pivotal point for growth and development, examples include the birth of a sibling, moving to a new house, parental separation, puberty and one of the most significant, the transition to school (Griebel & Niesel, 2005). Transitions for children and young people have been a focus of considerable interest, especially as a successful transition to school is suggested to have long term effects on a child's 'sense of belonging', their academic outcomes and their parent's level of engagement and communication with school (Gutman, Sameroff & Cole, 2003; Dockett & Perry, 2013).

It is inevitable then that the conceptualisation of transition within the context of education is underpinned by child developmental theories of Piaget (1935) and Erikson (1950). Within this framework, "*child development is viewed as a series of progressive stages in children's physical, mental, cognitive, socio-emotional and moral competencies*", with a child's chronological age acting as a social marker for shaping

their life trajectory (Vogler, Crivello & Woodhead, 2008, p.5). The implication of seeing child development as a series of maturational stages emphasises within-child factors and a perception of 'child readiness', wherein these stages become reference points when considering optimal timings for transitions, for example, from home to nursery or nursery to school (Vogler et al, 2008). Readiness for school is therefore a limited construct, which assumes the acquisition of specific skills so that a child is equipped or prepared for the transition. For many decades, this rhetoric has influenced curriculum, educational literature, policy and a societal understanding of children and their needs (Webb, Knight & Busch, 2017).

A growing body of research and theory has contributed to a move away from this sole emphasis on a child's perceived readiness, towards a view of the transition process as occurring within multiple contexts including social and political, and involving family, culture, and community (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Webb et al., 2017). Drawing upon ecological frameworks, this body of literature recognises that children's experiences of transition are embedded within a wider context that includes multiple and inter-related social structures, processes and relationships which impact on the transition to school both directly and indirectly (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Emphasising the importance of establishing links between home and school, in order to ensure positive transition outcomes for children and their parents. As an approach, it acknowledges the variation in transition experiences, with children differing in; educational and family backgrounds, levels of preparation for the new school experience and the setting attended which can vary considerably in ethos, practice, curriculum and structure. It acknowledges that at times of transition, children and their families face changes not only to their physical environment, but also disruption to their

routine, changes in social support systems, educational and behavioural expectations (Dockett & Perry, 2004).

Taking this into account, how is the transition to school impacted when the child in question has a special educational need (SEN)? Does the transition process become even more complex and challenging for the family and the school? The SEN Code of Practice (2015) states that:

“A child or young person has a special educational need (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.”

It is important to note that this definition of SEN and associated legislation (SEN Code of Practice, 2015) refers to extensive and unrelated categories of special need with different origins and severities (Carroll, Bradley, Crawford, Hannant, Johnson, & Thompson, 2017; Youell, 2006). Children with identified special needs starting school often require additional support or intervention to improve their access to the curriculum and school environment, and as such, may present challenges to the transition process (Youell, 2006; Dockett & Perry, 2012; Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010). In the UK, 13.8 % of nursery age children were identified as having SEN in January 2018 (Department for Education, 2018). It is certainly the case that the transition to school experience can bring about stress, uncertainty and disturbance for all those involved, *“as parents and children must relinquish some of the security of the familiar and adapt to the uncertainty of the new”* (Kennedy, Cameron & Greene, 2012, p.20). The success of the transition process for children with SEN has been found to be strongly related to school support offered to the family to assist in this adjustment period and the ability

of the school to accommodate a variety of needs (Janus., Kopecanski, Cameron, & Hughes, 2008; Kennedy et al., 2012).

So, how has transition theory and research discussed stimulated change in national and local transition practices and policies. And how are children with SEN thought about and considered in transition policies and programmes in the UK?

1.4 National and Local Context

Families and parental support have been found to play a pivotal role in both preparing children to start school (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2011) and in trying to preserve a continuity of experience when changing settings (Pelletier & Brent, 2002). In line with international changes, there has been a shift in discussion and policy on transition to school in the UK, to an increasing awareness of the ecological perspective and the development of policies like the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the SEN Code of Practice (2015), as well as a plethora of government commissioned reports which situate responsibility for effective learning, development and transition in the early years with all those involved in the process (Lamb, 2009; Allen, 2011; Public Health England, 2014).

In 2009, the Lamb inquiry set out a framework for working with parents of children with SEN, asserting for a radical change to the way parents, schools and local authorities related to one another, to ensure positive outcomes and future life chances for children with additional needs. Suggesting that the parent-school relationship has a critical bearing on a child's educational outcomes, and with good communication, information sharing and effective parental engagement, schools can make a real difference to the lives of children with special needs (Lamb, 2009).

The EYFS (2012; 2017) brought about significant structural change to how early years settings and schools work together, to support children to meet early learning goals through a focus on the environment and providing a statutory framework to guide practitioner's relationships with parents in understanding the learning profile of their child. Prior to this, there were clear differences between the early years and school sectors in their histories, structures and culture. It was hoped that this framework would create connection rather than division and a continuity of service from nursery to Reception.

Both the Children and Families Act (2014) and SEN Code of Practice (2015) introduced further reforms to the legislation for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families. Of importance was the active involvement and inclusion of children, young people and their parents in conversations and decisions about support arrangements and local provision, putting forward a family centred system. In conjunction with this, it set out guidance for multi-agency linkages to meet the education, health and social care needs of children and young people, as a lack of co-ordinated planning and the discontinuity between services were often recognised as factors contributing to poor transition outcomes for children and families (Janus, 2004). At this time, Public Health England (2014) published guidance on improving transition to school for all children, but particularly those recognised as at risk, including children with special needs. This document provided practical advice for local authorities on what a positive transition includes, based on evidence from those involved in the transition process. This included the need for personalised support, advice for children and families during the transition process and opportunities for parties involved to come together to plan and prepare, as it was

recognised how parents can often feel ill-prepared to support their children through the process (PHE, 2014).

This shift in thinking has influenced guidance at a local level and transition programmes can be viewed as opportunities to build and strengthen positive and responsive relationships which form the foundation for ongoing interactions and future partnerships between children, families and schools (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). The benefits of intervening early are apparent, however, these exist alongside a national culture of cuts to key services. It is arguable that transition programmes will look different around the country dependent on the population, and it is important to be aware of at-risk populations at a local level and the subsequent protective factors to promote positive transitions. According to national data the local authority in which I'm placed recorded that 2.1% of pupils in state-funded primary schools had an EHCP and 11.2% were identified as having SEN in January 2018 (Department for Education, 2018). Even at this time of uncertainty, it is recognised in my LA that there remains a key role for early intervention services and children's centres to achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable families and children within the community, including those with SEN. In line with UNICEF's School Readiness framework (2012), the authority has set out guidance for a joined-up approach between stakeholders of children, families and schools. This includes the importance of making connections prior to the first day of school through visits, visual supports and sharing of information, transition planning for children with SEN and review meetings once settled at school. As part of the transition process, parents are required to decide what type of educational provision will be most appropriate for their child, dependent on context and the nature of their child's special needs. This may involve a long waiting process, as well as working around challenges related to funding and accessing support (Janus et al., 2008).

Feedback from parents on the process has indicated that for some this can be a stressful time, where paperwork is both overwhelming, the process and timeframes can be confusing and the communication between different professionals can be non-existent. I am of the opinion that, there is a pivotal role for Educational Psychologists in supporting early years settings and schools to develop transition programmes and processes for parents and children with SEN that are more personalised, collaborative, inclusive and supportive of parents' views, culture and histories (Kennedy et al., 2012).

Although there is no nationally agreed consensus on conceptualising transition or indeed school readiness, it is apparent that the way in which learning and development is referred to in government policy influences the experiences of children and their parents as they transition at a local level (Webb et al., 2017). This will be taken into consideration when putting forward my positioning as a researcher and the definition of transition that I intend to adopt in this study.

1.5 Transition to School Definition

In this study, 'transition to school' will be defined as a process, which begins whilst the child is still at nursery, when families are starting to explore and seek out information about the respective school, and extends until children and families have settled in the school environment (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Whilst aware of other conceptualisations of transition, within this study I will understand and make reference to the transition process using the following theoretical perspectives; the family developmental transition approach and psychoanalytic theory.

The family developmental transition approach (Griebel & Niesel, 2013) emphasises the relational changes that occur at a family level, when individual roles

are being redefined and transformed as a result of the transition process. This model adopts a systemic perspective and views transition as effecting all parties involved, in this way complementing the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Therefore, a child with SEN's transition to school places multiple demands on the family that results in learning and developmental changes for all (Griebel & Niesel, 2013). Consequently, in this view, successful transition would not be isolated to an individual child's readiness but instead, a function of communication, interaction and partnerships of all those involved (Griebel & Niesel, 2003).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the significance of beginnings and endings in human life pave the way for understanding individual responses to transition (Youell, 2006). Separation, loss and change at times of transition are understood to be difficult but are also deemed essential experiences that are linked with individual growth, development and internal strength (Youell, 2006). Each transition carries with it the anxiety of the unknown and stirs up 'memories in feeling' (Klein, 1957) about past experiences which will impact responses in the present and future. This is applicable to both child and parent. Just as the transition to school is a major life event for a child, becoming a parent is, for most people, a transformative experience that involves a major transition in life (Rutter, 1996; Crown, 2009). Finding out that their child has special needs, or a disability adds further complexity and uncertainty that is likely to continue throughout their lifespan. As parents adjust to accommodate and integrate their child's needs into their daily lives, they engage in a process of negotiating the inevitable changes in the landscape of their family, they too, become transformed (Crown, 2009). The application of psychoanalytic theory to the transition to school process therefore provides the opportunity to explore the unconscious, conflicting and emotional experiences of the transition process for parents of children with SEN.

1.6 Parent Experience of the Transition to School Process

The transition to school, therefore, involves changes for children as they become pupils and a corresponding adjustment for parents as they become the parent of a school aged child (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Research studies suggest that this experience involves significant changes and adjustments for parents in their relationships, roles, and identities before, during and after their child's move to school (Dockett & Perry 2012; Webb et al., 2017) and that there is a direct correlation between a parent's successful transition and that of their child (Dockett & Perry, 2004). Parents are reported to experience a wide range of emotions when their child starts school from feelings of emptiness, worry and a sense of loss, to feelings of excitement and hope for the future (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Lam, 2014). The various responses are thought to relate to an individual's personal histories and their social, cultural and political contexts (Lam, 2014; Webb et al., 2017). It is likely then that parents will develop expectations of their child's educational experience based on theirs, information provided to them by schools, their support networks and wider societal influences (Russell, 2003). It is also likely that as a group parents of children with SEN will have altered experiences because of their child's difference and may have a limited network of others who can share and empathise with their experiences (Russell, 2005).

Yet within the UK, there is a paucity of research exploring what a parent may experience during the transition to school process and how they cope with these adjustments and changes, particularly when their child has an identified special need.

1.7 Researcher Positioning

At this point a description of my ontological and epistemological positioning as researcher seems important, as this influences what I assume about an individual's capacity to know, remember and offer about themselves during the research process, as well as how I have chosen to design this study to generate knowledge on this topic of interest (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

1.7.1 Ontology

Ontology is referred to as the study of the nature of reality or what it is possible to know about being in the world, including the relationship between different elements of society (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Hollway, 2015). In this study, my understanding of parents' experience of their child with SEN's transition to school is in the context of relational change, uncertainty, changes in expectations as well as intrapsychic and interpersonal processes. For this reason, I have adopted a psychosocial ontology, drawing on the psychoanalytic paradigm of subjectivity, whilst acknowledging the social reality in which individual families exist and how these interact (Hollway, 2008). It is my belief that this interaction of the psychological and social is unique to each individual and their context.

It is also my assumption that unconscious processes are pivotal in the construction of our reality and how we view others (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). Adopting this position, I must also acknowledge that as a researcher, I am an active participant in this study and as such my interpretations of the collected data are also unique, providing only a tentative representation of their experience (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). Therefore, in this piece of research, I have sought to question my own

internal reality, social reality, and how the meaning I make from these, have influenced the research process.

Considering this, my interest in the topic of transition and decision to adopt a psychosocial approach derived from my experience as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and prior to that as a Care Assistant, working with families who have young children with SEN and who are transitioning to school. From my experience, this is a time where emotions are high, due to uncertainty, the prospect of change and the different meanings this can have for individual families. From training at the Tavistock, I privilege psychoanalytic theory and the importance of unconscious processes as an integral part of the work that I do. For example, I am reminded of a family who I became involved with as they were going through the EHCP process for their 4-year-old son, who had recently received a diagnosis of Autism. A fundamental aspect of my work with the family became that of a containing function, whilst helping them to explore various provisions, adjusting their expectations, growing in their understanding of their child and mourning the loss of the expected child.

On beginning my research journey, I was aware of how this experience and others may affect my researcher role.

1.7.2 Epistemology

A psychosocial epistemology is therefore more than just a methodology, it is an attitude or approach to the participant that adds a depth of understanding to the everyday encounter, impossible to access without attention to the particularity of each case (Clarke & Hoggett, 2010). The value of using psychoanalytic concepts to inform epistemology, it was hoped in this study, would go beyond language and what is already known and available to researchers about the transition to school process. In

this way, emphasising the importance of the 'in-between' area of experience which mediates the psychological and the social and includes parent affect and unconscious communications, dynamics and defences (Hollway & Frogett, 2012; Hollway, 2015).

In the psychoanalytic tradition, knowing and thinking is understood more affectively and relationally than cognitively (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Instead of viewing emotional expression as an obstacle or biased information, psychosocial research promotes the use of emotional responses as a resource, to produce ways of knowing by adopting a psychoanalytic perspective (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The benefit of noticing this information in the data, is that "*learning how respondents typically defend themselves from painful truths may help researchers to better understand the data that they collect, enriching their research findings*" (Jervis, 2009, p.166).

As researcher, I was also interested in generating an understanding of relational dynamics, be it between researcher and researched or between participants and their past, present and anticipated future (Hollway, 2009). I held the assumption that my relation to the participant in their world would be the means through which meaning would be created (Hollway, 2015) For this reason, it was important to be aware that both myself and participants may engage in dialogue to protect against anxiety, affect and support ideas about identity (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Alexandrov, 2009). This is in contrast with other research approaches, which assume that participants are fully aware of their actions and decision making, and that the researcher can remain objective in their data collection, analysis and interpretation (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

1.8 Focus of this Research

The focus of the current study is therefore, to explore how parent's experience the transition to school process of their child with SEN using a psychosocial approach. I argued that the strength of applying a psychosocial approach is what it offers in the possibilities for conceptualising both the socio-cultural and internal psychological experiences of participants', and how they make sense of this major transformative experience as their child with SEN transitions from nursery to Reception.

It was my assumption in line with Webb and Colleagues (2017) that, parent experiences were likely to be significantly different based on the variation in: their personal and family histories, their prior experience of transitions throughout their life, their child's SEN and level of need and the wider context in which the transition is occurring. For this reason, a case study approach was adopted in order to respect the individuality of experience, where differences were as intrinsically interesting as commonalities (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the transition to school as a time of changing relationships, identities, expectations and roles at multiple levels, marking changes in children's participation in the family and wider community (Dockett & Perry, 2007), as well as changes for the individual child and their parents (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). In line with previous literature, I suggest that the transition to school process becomes further complicated when the child in question has an identified SEN and may increase parent feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and frustration. It is noted that minimal attention in the UK thus far has been paid to this topic and so in the next chapter I endeavour to firstly present the current research base and then position my study amongst it

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter is to systematically explore what insights existing literature can provide on parent experiences of their child with SEN's transition from nursery to school. It starts by referring to the question being asked of the literature, followed by an outline of search strategy and relevant terms, as well as an articulation of the type of literature to be included and evidence of the process. The selected studies are then critically reviewed against relevant appraisal tools, summarising what is known in this area individually and then collectively. It was felt, in line with my positioning that the unique contribution of each study was important to understand prior to considering what was shared amongst them. The chapter concludes by presenting a rationale for the present study with a positioning of it based on the current research base.

2.2 Search Strategy

To uncover existing knowledge on the topic in question, the following was asked of the literature:

What is known about parent experiences of their child with SEN's transition from nursery to primary school?

The following databases were selected to identify relevant papers and were searched between the time period of 05.03.18 and 20.04.19: PsycINFO, PEP archive, ERIC and Education Source. These databases were chosen as they were thought to have relevance to the topic of transition to school, both in terms of psychological theory (PsycInfo, PEP archive) and its application to practice (Education Source, ERIC).

2.2.1 Search terms

I referred to a thesaurus initially to find variations/synonyms of key words representing the main themes of the research question posed (parent, experience, transition, special needs). As indicated in Table 1 the truncation key (*) was used to allow for variations of certain words e.g. ‘disab*’, as well as quotation marks (“”) to ensure specific phrases could be searched for.

An outline of key terms that were derived from the review question and used to identify literature relevant to this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Search terms used

Special needs	Transition to school	Parent	Experience
Disab*	“Starting school”	Mother	Views
Impairment	“transition from	Father	Perspectives
“Special Educational	preschool”	Carer	Narratives
Needs”	“transition to		Attitudes
“SEN”	Reception”		
“Developmental			
Delay/Disability”			
“Additional Educational			
Needs”			

I began this process by carrying out a pilot search of the relevant terms in abstracts only, as a result I decided to add the terms of “transition from pre-school” and “transition to Reception” to indicate the setting children were coming from and going to. I then carried out individual searches for each theme by searching all terms listed in Table 1 using limiters of language (English) and publication date (between 2000-2018). Search terms were then combined using the Boolean operator of ‘AND’. This search retrieved a total of 62 articles, after duplicates were removed. The search process described, provided evidence that there is an absence of research which

explores parent’s experience of their child with SEN’s transition from nursery to school from a psychosocial perspective.

2.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 2 were implemented to filter articles based on their relevance to the research question. I had wondered whether to limit to UK literature only, however, as much of the research on parental experience of transition to primary school has been undertaken internationally, it felt important to include these studies as part of the review. It was felt that the focus of the review question was primarily on the experience of transition, which I argue transcends differences in education systems, school start age and existing policies and is best conceptualised as an interaction of family’s social-cultural and ecological contexts, parent psychological processes, expectations and goals.

Table 2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Language: Published in English	Studies where the focus was on later transitions (primary to secondary, secondary to further education, or transitions to work or college).
Peer-reviewed	Use of secondary data sources e.g. systematic reviews
Empirical Papers	Position papers, editorials, book reviews
Research on parental experience of their child with SEN’s transition from an EY educational setting to school	Studies with a focus on the evaluation of intervention programmes

Research that included multi-perspective of those involved in transition of children with SEN, but emphasised/targeted parent's involvement/narrative in that process	Research with a focus on transition from a clinic or health setting (rather than EY setting) to school
	Research published before 2000 (SEN Code of Practice 2001 and changes this brought regarding SEN and inclusion as well as working in partnership with parents)
	Research on school readiness or within-child paradigms
	Research on parent's experience of TD children's transition
	Research focused on transition from child's point of view

Abstracts were then reviewed against the above criteria, those that were not relevant to the review question are listed in Appendix A with reasons for exclusion.

2.3 Critical Review

Once all inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied 8 articles remained. The qualitative articles were reviewed individually using Walsh and Downe's (2006) appraisal tool and I chose to critique the two mixed method studies using elements of both this and Holland & Rees's (2010) framework for critiquing quantitative studies. I selected these tools, as I felt they could encompass the broad range of methodologies and positions within qualitative and mixed method research, complementing one another. Walsh and Downe's (2006) tool was specifically chosen as it holds in regard the importance of a reflexive disposition and the influential nature of the researcher's personal history, experience of the topic and social graces (Burnham, 2013). This felt intrinsic to the psychosocial positioning chosen. From the outset, I intended to use the

tools in a reflective manner, going through each of the criteria identified to understand how the research was conducted, its theoretical underpinnings, the quality of the study itself and its relevance to the literature question. An appraisal of each article can be found in Appendix B.

2.3.1 Starting school: the importance of parent expectations (Russell, 2005)

Russell (2005) conducted a longitudinal study to explore parents' expectations as their child with a disability started school. Information was gathered through a series of three semi-structured interviews with 19 families over a 21-month period. The families were invited to participate once their children began a statutory assessment of their SEN. The following interviews were held prior to the transition to school and three terms in when families were felt to have settled into their new surroundings. At each point, parents were asked about the content and development of their expectations. The sample included 11 boys and 8 girls, who at the beginning of the study ranged from 1 year 9 months to 4 years 7 months. The children involved had a range of special needs and transitioned to different provisions including special schools, mainstream settings and schools with additional resources to meet their specific needs. Russell (2005) espoused the emancipatory nature of his research by exploring ways to give parents a voice at different points and ensuring their active role within the process. This was done through both data collection and analysis, 19 parents were interviewed and shared their experience whilst another 6 parents were part of a Parents' Advisory Group (PAG) whose role it was to offer support and advice to the researcher, complete parts of analysis and discuss the findings.

Russell (2005) presents a robust argument for why he adopts an interactionist perspective, recognising that parents will develop expectations of their child's

education through their previous experience, information provided by schools, the media and informal networks of parents. For this reason, qualitative data analysis methods suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) were applied, which included a profile of each family and findings recorded using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model (1977) as a framework to understand and provide a summary of content, sources and outcomes of parents' expectations at each level. Russell (2005) appears to show a good use of quotations to reinforce the interpretation of the literature and a clear demonstration of how interpretations led to conclusions drawn at and between each level of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) framework.

Considering the researcher is a parent of a child with a learning disability, it is not explicit how this experience influenced sampling, research design, analysis or interpretation. Reflection about parental involvement in the research process would also have provided insight for future studies to understand how best to do this. Despite this, the researcher has been able to argue the importance of understanding how parent expectations are formed, in order to share information, negotiate responsibilities and consider potential outcomes on transition to school. Perhaps if more parents were given the opportunity to discuss and develop their ideas as is the case in this study, particularly at times of change, then they could develop expectations that are likely to have positive outcomes, and some of the difficulties parents of children with disabilities encounter could be avoided.

2.3.2 Strategies for supporting transition of young children with special needs and their families (Rous, Myers & Stricklin, 2007)

Rous, Myers and Stricklin (2007) set out to identify factors that support families and children in transition from early intervention to preschool (age 3) or preschool to kindergarten (age 5). A focus group methodology was adopted which involved

professionals, family members, EY practitioners and teachers. It seems appropriate that focus groups were used to elicit ideas about successful transition and as a helpful way to confirm and think about existing research on transition with those who are actively involved in the process. Forty-three participants (33 professionals and 10 family members with children who have disabilities) attended a total of 10 focus groups. It should be noted that parents involved attended only two of the focus group sessions and did not meet with the professional group of participants at any point, which appears a missed opportunity for collaborative thinking and may impact on the conclusions that can be drawn. It could also be argued that the voice of the parent was secondary to the voice of the professional, highlighting power imbalances that are often spoken to in the interactions of parents of children with SEN and professionals (Russell, 2005; Connolly & Gersch, 2016; Dockett & Perry, 2011).

Themes that emerged from analysis included the importance of inter-agency variables and supportive systems to be in place, this refers to state and local policies, as well as good communication, provision of information to families and specific strategies to guide the transition process. A second overarching theme related to transition practices and activities. This included intervention at individual child, family and school level such as; preparation and planning meetings with relevant parties, visits to school for both the child, family and staff to support understanding and preparation for changes in activities, expectations and relationships. Although the research did not acknowledge the researcher(s) influence in data collection and interpretation, or consider the role of those involved in the focus group, it's findings can be triangulated with previous studies on earlier transition that describe the importance of inter- and intra-agency collaboration and the need for a supportive infrastructure including guidelines, policy and designated staff responsible for transition planning (Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Rous, Schuster & Hemmeter, 1999). Although parent voice was not as

evident in this study, it does point to implications for future research to focus on outcomes for families and children with SEN following transition and their adjustment over time.

2.3.3 Experiences of parents whose children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are starting primary school (Connolly & Gersch, 2016)

Connolly and Gersch (2016) used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology to explore the experience of transition from the perspective of parents of children diagnosed with ASD. The rationale for this study is presented based on the first author's experience as an EP, asserting that parents identify the transition to school process as a difficult time and how understanding their perspective could be beneficial to effect change. The researchers provide a clear justification for the use of IPA as a research method to access personal accounts of how people make sense of the phenomenon in question, in this case the transition to school. As well as explaining this choice of method and its fit with the researcher's critical realist epistemological stance, in that it links subjective experience to wider psychological literature.

A systematic approach to the literature review is evidenced, considering what is known about the general transition to school, the transition process and ASD and finally parent experiences of their children with ASD starting school. Similarly, to Russell (2005) the researcher's conceptualisation of transition to school is underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), however instead of applying the theory to frame findings as in Russell's study, here the parent was placed at the centre of the model and viewed as a developing agent in their own right situated within a system of relationships. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 parents (5 female and 1 male), a satisfactory justification for the inclusion of a father's perspective is put forward, suggesting this was an essential

contribution to the parent experience, although it would reduce the homogeneity of the group. The authors ensured the interview schedule designed was reviewed prior to data collection and completed a pilot interview to check the feasibility of the script.

Interviews were analysed using Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) six step procedural guidelines. Given that IPA is idiographic, each case was analysed in detail before moving on to the next case. The authors point to efforts to minimise subjectivity by adopting a rigorous approach to reflexivity, acknowledging their role as researcher in data collection and interpretation. Although how this was done is not referred to and so an understanding of the researchers influence in the research process is not fully understood.

The overarching themes to come out of the analysis included the need to be believed by schools and professionals, the labelling nature of the ASD diagnosis, timing of it and how it is perceived by others, the preparation needed for school and fears about the future (Connolly & Gersch, 2016). Adopting a case by case analysis to explore the experience of transition from the perspective of parents of children with ASD corroborated findings from previous transition research and provided new insights into the individual experience. It outlined some of the effects of the transition process on parents and the need for professionals to be aware of the feelings parents have about their children starting school, as well as the difficulty and uncertainty parents face in choosing and finding appropriate school placements for their children. Connolly & Gersch (2016) suggest that further studies could usefully explore the experiences of parents of children with other disabilities who are starting school, in order to build a rich picture of the parental experience of having a child with special needs transition to school. They provide implications for the role of EPs and other

professionals within the early year's context based on reflections as part of the research process.

2.3.4 The experience of parents as their children with developmental disabilities transition from early intervention to kindergarten (Villeneuve, Chatenoud, Hutchinson, Minnes, Perry, Dionne, Frankel, Isaacs, Loh, Versnel, Weiss, 2012)

Villeneuve et al. (2012) sought to understand how parent participation and professional collaboration contribute to effective transitions and successful inclusion of children with developmental disabilities (DD). This was part of a wider four-year multi-method study conducted in three provinces in Canada, each of which is suggested to have developed different ways of promoting the inclusion of children with special needs in schools. In this paper, they used a multiple-perspective case study method to explore the transitions of 3 pre-school children with DD as they entered kindergarten. This included a range of observations and semi-structured interviews with the relevant parties, parents, healthcare and educational professionals involved in the transition process. Like Russell (2005), this study was longitudinal in nature with data collected over a 14-month period across the EY setting, kindergarten and home environments. This was appropriate to describe changes over time without having to reduce the complexity of the experience (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998). It was noted that the number of observations and interviews conducted per participant varied, no doubt related to the availability of parents and professionals over the time period (parent interviews ranged from 6-8, observations 10-11, and professional interviews 3-9). I wondered how this may have influenced the data gathered and resultant findings for each participant. This evidently was not considered by the researcher.

A justification for the use of purposive sampling is outlined suggesting the importance of a diversity of DD and of family contexts of those taking part, this is not only present in the method but also referred to throughout the study's analysis. It is asserted that a case study methodology enabled the researchers to highlight the fundamental similarities of parent experiences (cross-case analysis), whilst acknowledging the unique nature of each experience that likely resulted from the varying characteristics of the children, their families and professional services involved (individual case study analysis) (Villeneuve et al., 2012). The process of analysing interview and observational data using Patton's (2002) inductive analysis approach is clearly detailed, and identified the following overarching themes of, parental perspectives on inclusion and parents' experience of collaboration with professionals, including their satisfaction with this experience and the preparation for transition. What is less clear is how researcher reflexivity was referred to throughout the research process, despite the asserted qualitative nature of the study itself.

However, from the illustrative cases in this study the following reflections are worth considering, the importance of information sharing between professionals and families, the involvement of parents from the beginning and the recognition of transition as a process for the family, not just the child.

2.3.5 Starting school with special needs: issues for families with complex support needs as their children start school (Dockett, Perry & Kearney, 2011)

Dockett et al (2011) conducted research on the experiences and expectations of 24 Australian families as their children with special needs started school. In line with previous research on transition, this paper recognises the transition process as dynamic and influenced by a range of social and cultural contexts (McTaggart & Sanders, 2003).

The authors provide detail of both the local and national context, helpfully situating this study and the relevance of its findings.

Similar to Villeneuve et al. (2012), this study was part of a wider project where 46 families were engaged from 1-24 months. Of the 46 families, 25 had identified special needs. Consent was given for 24 of the 25 families, this included 23 mothers and 1 grandfather, who contributed their views within conversational interviews. This approach was chosen in order to support rapport building between the researcher and participant, and to provide space for the participant to narrate their experience. Researchers met 70% of families up to three times so that previous conversations could be revisited, and rich insight gained into the family's experience of transition to school (Dockett et al., 2011). Although, the researchers do not explicitly refer to their ontological positioning it could be assumed that it is social constructionist as they adopt both grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008) and case study methods to gather and represent the data. However, the researcher reflexivity and relativity that would be expected is not explicitly referred to or reflected on.

The authors approach to analysis is outlined in significant detail and involved a team of researchers reflecting and revisiting codes, eventually coming to a consensus on an interpretation of the data based on contextual factors. Several themes were suggested to emerge from data analysis, including: the importance of choosing the right school; accessing support; advocating for their children; and the impact of transition on the family, as well as the child (Dockett et al., 2011). Echoing the findings of Villeneuve et al. (2012) the unique family experience was suggested to be of interest and how the interplay of a child's needs with socio-cultural factors may position families in a way that can reinforce, rather than reduce, the difficulties they may

encounter in the transition to school (Dockett et al., 2011). The use of case study information helped to provide the details of the social, physical and interpersonal contexts of the data collection. Although the findings from this study provide important information on parent's experience of their child with SEN's transition to school, the link between these findings and the previous research base has been neglected. As well as, a reflective account of the limitations of the study and implications for future studies on transition to school.

2.3.6 In transition: experiences of parents of children with special needs at school entry (Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron & Hughes, 2008)

The authors contextualise the study by referring to recent developments in Canadian policy, where many local areas and schools have developed guidance about transition to school practices for children with SEN. There is further reiteration of the need for this research following recommendations in literature and previous studies regarding the crucial role of parents in the transition to school process to ensure positive outcomes for their child. In light of this, the focus in this study was two-fold 1) to gain parental perception of the quality of care provided to their child with SEN and of the impact their child's disability has on family dynamics at different timepoints (pre or post transition), and 2) identification of the links in services experienced by parents during the transition to school process (Janus et al., 2008).

The sample included 40 parents of children with SEN, 20 preschool age and 20 already in kindergarten. The researchers generated a hypothesis suggesting that kindergarten parents would record a higher rating of the impact of their child's disability on the family and a lower positive experience of care services (Janus et al., 2008). This appeared based on the assumption from the literature that transition to

school becomes more challenging when a child has special needs that require additional support. They assert that triangulation of data from different methods provides better quality results and understanding of the parent experience of the transition to school. However, it could be argued that there exists an element of subjectivity in all participant responses whether closed or open-ended, as well as the personal judgment inherent in the choices we make as a researcher in terms of research area, sampling, method chosen etc (Symonds & Gorard, 2010). And so, in this instance I wondered about the justification for use of a mixed methods approach and what this afforded our understanding of parent experience.

The researchers gathered information on parent perceptions using the following, Impact on Family (IOF) Scale, Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC), Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (VABS) and the Severity of Condition (parent rating). Although detail is provided about each survey measure and its reliability and validity, there does not appear to be consideration of how these measures relate to one another or to the transition experience. I wondered whether the use of descriptive statistics to compare two groups who showed significant differences in the nature of their children's difficulties was the most appropriate choice, this was highlighted in the study's limitations recognising that this was likely to impact on parent experience of services and the transition process more generally (Janus et al., 2008). It is likely for this to have influenced parent survey scores and should be considered when understanding findings. What is of interest from this study is that despite relevant policy and guidance at both a national and local level, there appears to be a gap in what this looks like in practice, with parents in this study suggesting that there is a discontinuity in the quality of services during the transition from preschool to

kindergarten that impacts on parent's experience, perception of and adjustment to the changes (Janus et al., 2008).

2.3.7 Experiences of parents of children with special needs at school entry: a mixed method approach (Siddiqua & Janus, 2016)

A similar mixed method approach was taken by Siddiqua and Janus in 2016, in response to a lack of research evidence on factors contributing to the successful process of transition to school for Canadian children with special needs. As with Janus's earlier study mentioned, the aims of this study were similarly two-fold, 1) to examine parent perceptions of and satisfaction with services before and after their children with special needs started school using quantitative survey methods and 2) to examine how qualitative data may be helpful in gaining a more nuanced understanding of parents' perceptions of and satisfaction with services during transition (Siddiqua & Janus, 2016).

In response to limitations identified in the previous study, adaptations were made to the study design. Data was collected as part of a longitudinal study focusing on the transition to school as a process from prior to school entry until the end of a child's first year. The sample included 37 parents of children (age 4-6) who because of their special needs were considered to need additional support in school (Siddiqua & Janus, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents prior to school entry with two survey measures administered at this time point and at the end of the child's first year. It is suggested that both the Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC) and the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) were chosen as they strongly correlate and gain insight into parent perception and satisfaction with services, although how the measures relate to the transition experience was unclear. Parents who were interviewed were asked questions about their child's diagnosis and wellbeing, about

service history and experience of the transition to school to add context to the quantitative findings. In the case of this research, it was felt that inferences about the transition to school were drawn primarily from the qualitative interviews, as not all questions asked pertained to the survey measures and so this limited the level of content convergence achieved (Siddiqua & Janus, 2016). Similar to the previous research by Janus (2007), I wondered whether the survey methods chosen and the categories within them were the most appropriate to gain insight into parent experience of their child with SEN's transition.

However, in spite of this, the study contributes to the literature on transition by suggesting some of the common challenges that these parents encountered in relation to their uncertainty about services, the need for parent advocacy on their child's behalf and the lack of communication between service providers and at times to families (Siddiqua & Janus, 2016) . The importance of this study is in the recognition of the variation of parental experience and how use of the qualitative interview provides a deeper insight into the differences that exist.

2.3.8 Understanding parent advocacy during the transition to school of children with developmental disabilities: three Canadian cases (Hutchinson, Pyle, Villeneuve, Dods, Dalton & Minnes, 2014)

The authors state how this study follows the previous one by Villeneuve et al. (2012), describing how the following challenges highlighted in preliminary analysis were felt to be important in developing our understanding of parent experience of transition including: the nature of parent–professional collaboration (Villeneuve et al. 2012), transition that promotes inclusion, and parents' advocating for their children. Hutchinson et al. (2014) therefore sought to understand the meanings parents and guardians (n=3) held of their role as advocates for their children with developmental

disabilities during the transition to school process. They did this by considering whether the model of self-advocacy developed by Test and his colleagues (2005) could be applied to parents advocating for their child with SEN. This includes the following components, knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication and leadership (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer & Eddy, 2005). The researchers clearly outline the data analysis process referring to how both etic (from researcher perspective) and emic (from participant data and observations) codes were generated and agreed upon (Hutchinson et al., 2014). What came to my mind when reading this was the ethical implications of potentially re-analysing previously gathered participant data, and whether they were consulted as part of the process, as this is not discussed by the researchers.

Hutchinson et al. (2014) assert that the application of Test et al.'s (2005) Conceptual Framework for Self-Advocacy for Children with Disabilities (CFSA) was useful to gain an understanding of parent advocacy during transition to school. The description of personal and social contexts for each case study provides important information for interpretation of findings from each of the individual family's perspective, as it was found that their emphasis in each theme varied.

The authors discuss the findings in relation to the model whilst recognising the need for alteration and elaboration to include other elements suggested by the data for example, reason and need to advocate for a child with special needs. All 3 female participants (2 mothers and 1 female guardian) in this study referred to the importance of the knowledge they held on their child and their disability, but the meaning made of it was unique to each, how their insufficient knowledge about their children's entitlements in school limited their capacity to advocate, and the difficulties of

communication with the school, although these similarly varied for each (Hutchinson et al., 2014). It could be argued that the case study method adopted cannot provide a generalisable conclusion, however I would suggest that the findings are helpful in developing an understanding of parent's reasons and motivations to advocate for their child with special needs, particularly when they transition to school.

2.4 Synthesis of the Literature

To date, research on parents' experience of their child with SEN's transition into school suggests that, the identification of a child's special need has a profound effect, leading to a change in expectations, creating a sense of uncertainty about the future and how life events will unfold, including transition to school (Russell, 2005; Dockett et al., 2011; Conolly & Gersch, 2016). As referred to in a number of the aforementioned studies parent's experience of the transition to school is influenced by their experience with EY services, who follow a more family-centred model, this is in contrast to how schools provide services to parents and so was suggested to influence their expectations, often contributing to a dissatisfaction on transition to school (Russell, 2005; Villeneuve et al. 2012; Hutchinson et al., 2014).

Key to parent experience of the transition process was the role of the professional. In most studies, parents discussed the challenge of communication and information sharing with professionals involved in the transition process (Rous et al. 2008, Dockett et al., 2011; Villeneuve et al., 2012; Hutchinson et al., 2014; Siddiqua & Janus, 2016). More than this, the parents in Connolly & Gersch's (2016) study suggest that the parent professional relationship can be a challenging one, where often professionals do not realise the feelings of parents as their child starts school. This perceived void in communication and lack of understanding parent perspective was

suggested by some to lead to a feeling of responsibility and need to advocate on behalf of their child to ensure access to support and inclusion within the school environment (Hutchinson et al., 2014; Dockett et al., 2011; Connolly & Gersch, 2016). Where inter and intra agency collaboration and communication was felt to be good, parents were said to value this and noted its importance to ensure a more positive transition experience (Rous et al., 2007; Janus et al., 2007; Siddiqua & Janus, 2016).

From the research to date, it is apparent that as part of the transition to school process parents must make a number of key decisions prior to school start (Russell, 2005; Connolly & Gersch, 2016; Dockett & Perry, 2011). The importance of choosing an appropriate school placement and accessing additional support were mentioned by parents as a source of worry and stress. Particularly, as is discussed in some studies, for most parents this may be their first experience of SEN and so introduces them to unfamiliar territory (Russell, 2005; Dockett et al. 2011).

Only two of the studies detailed suggest the emotional nature of the transition to school experience for parents of children with SEN, and how this not only impacts the child but the family (Dockett et al., 2011; Connolly & Gersch, 2016). Parents in the study by Dockett and colleagues (2011) suggested a change in their roles, responsibilities and in their parenting as part of the transition to school. Although little attention has been afforded to this in other studies, focusing more on the factors that support a positive experience of transition with pre-determined measures or semi-structured interviews.

It is apparent that the researcher positioning, and methodology chosen to understand parent's experience have an impact on the respective findings and

contribution to the literature. When contemplating future research, most studies in this review state the importance for an exploration into the unique and varied experience and consideration as to how the interplay of personal, social and environmental factors may influence the transition to school process for parents of children with SEN.

2.5 Rationale for this Study

From a review of the literature, I could not help but wonder how the use of structured interviews and survey methods up to this point may have ignored the actual meaning of transition for parents of children with SEN, or may have altered its conceptualisation by referring to it as an event rather than a process, overlooking the range of variables that influence its success (Dockett et al. 2011).

Based on this and the limitations identified as part of this review, I felt that adopting a psychosocial perspective would be supportive of my interest to pay attention to the emotions, thoughts and motivations of parents of children with SEN during the transition to school process, not just at a conscious level as in two studies in this review, but also taking into account the unconscious dynamics, psychological and interpersonal processes that are at play during this time of change (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). What I hoped this approach would also afford would be the opportunity to consider my own reflexivity as a researcher at each stage of the research process, something that was noted to be absent from the majority of studies reviewed.

Building on my previous professional experience and review of the literature, the following research question was formulated: *How do parents living in an out of London borough experience their child with SEN's transition from nursery to school?*

2.6 Chapter Summary

To conclude, this review set out to explore what is already known about parent experiences of their child with SEN's transition from nursery to primary school? It was noted that there is a paucity of research adopting a psychosocial approach in this area. Although the majority of studies included take a qualitative approach to research design, I have argued that the use of more structured methods of data collection may overlook the meaning of transition for parents. Thus, in the next chapter I intend to outline my chosen methodology and set out how it hopes to show how parents living in an out of London borough experience their child with SEN's transition from nursery to school.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter aims to present the purpose of the research and illustrate the psychoanalytic concepts that informed my understanding of the research encounters. Next, I elaborate on the importance of researcher reflexivity as part of a psychosocial approach and how this was evident at each stage of the process. This chapter concludes with an assurance of credibility and trustworthiness of the research and details of considerations made to safeguard participants and support ethical research practice.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

This research is regarded as primarily exploratory, in the sense that a psychosocial position has not been adopted prior to this to understand parent experiences of their child with SEN's transition. In line with current policy development and the role of parents as active participants in their child's transition, this study aims to afford parents a voice, prioritising their narratives and gaining insight into their unique experience. From a psychosocial perspective, it aims to explore both the psychological processes and the relational changes that occur for parents as a result of the transition to school process. It was hoped that providing a reflective space would be helpful for parents to consider the meaning they make of the transition to school process for themselves and their family and why this might be so.

This next section introduces a number of psychoanalytic concepts which were thought to be relevant to ethnographic research and were considered to be supportive in making sense of the subjectivity expressed consciously and unconsciously in the interview encounters.

3.3 Psychoanalytic Theory in Psychosocial Research

It should be noted that psychosocial epistemologies have received a number of criticisms, questioning the transferability of psychoanalytic concepts from the clinic to the research encounter, as well as disproving of the suggested ‘top-down’ or theoretical approach to interpretation of an individual’s experience (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). However, I would argue that the application of theory to a practice is common in my professional experience as an EP to make sense of the complexity of everyday situations and encounters. What I have endeavoured to do to address this potential criticism, is to be transparent about what has informed my interpretations and to be sensitive and reflective about the impact of my role in the process to ensure the trustworthiness of my conclusions. The psychoanalytic concepts to be considered as relevant to this research process were those of; ‘defence mechanisms against anxiety’ (Klein, 1946), ‘containment’ (Bion, 1961), ‘transference’ and ‘countertransference’ (Freud, 1915).

The following section provides a theoretical overview for each concept, its relevance to the research process and the relational dynamic between researcher and researched.

3.3.1 Defence mechanisms against anxiety

Defences can be described as arising in order to protect the individual from anxieties provoked by difficult life experiences and the challenge presented in managing our conscious and unconscious lives (Bibby, 2010). As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) noted, the research interview may bring about difficult material for both those being interviewed and those doing the interview, producing both the ‘defended subject’ and the ‘defended researcher’. This repressed unconscious material

then leaves its mark on an individual's narrative, affecting their positioning and often their reliance on or avoidance of certain discourses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Splitting and projection are viewed as two key defence mechanisms against the intolerable unconscious feelings often present in interactions (Pelligrini, 2010).

3.3.1.1 Splitting and projection

Klein (1946) asserted that the self is formed out of unconscious defences against anxiety. Early infant experience is dominated by anxiety associated with the infant's complete dependence on others to meet their basic needs, for example hunger (Klein 1952; Youell, 2006). As the infant is unable to anticipate the satisfaction of a feed, Klein suggested that in order to manage feelings of frustration with its mother when hungry, the infant engages in 'splitting' as a mechanism to preserve the mother as 'good', from the idea of the absent mother and the feeling when hungry as 'bad' (Klein, 1952; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Initially the infant sees the 'good' and 'bad' mother as separate entities, however, over time is able to integrate both aspects of the mother to a whole object and understand that the mother can be both loved and hated (Hinshelwood, 1995). This development was referred to by Klein (1946) as the 'depressive position' and contrasts with the 'paranoid-schizoid position' where 'splitting' and 'projection' dominate.

'Projection' is a development of the concept of 'splitting', wherein parts of the self that are feared as bad are split off and located in or identified as belonging to an external object or person (Klein, 1946). Klein (1946) also highlighted the experience of 'projective identification' wherein the recipient of the projection, through the processes of 'introjection' and 'identification' experiences the feelings of others as if they were their own (Pellegrini, 2010). Whilst Klein's theories originated through

work with children, they have also been applied to adults and the idea that the ‘depressive’ and ‘paranoid-schizoid’ states are two mindsets and ways of responding that we move between throughout our life (Pellegrini, 2010). In self-threatening circumstances the ‘paranoid-schizoid’ position may be adopted by individuals in order to preserve the representation of ‘the good object’ within themselves and therefore compromising that individual’s narratives and actions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This is important to be aware of in interpreting the research encounter and therefore, for the purpose of this research this idea of the ‘defended subject’ and ‘defended researcher’ will be held in mind when understanding parent’s experience of their child with SEN’s transition to school.

3.3.2 Containment

In Bion’s formulation of ‘container-contained’ the infant communicates their feeling to the mother through projection beyond words and gestures (Bion 1962; Youell, 2006). For Bion then, ‘containment’ refers to an individual’s capacity to be emotionally receptive, being open to a feeling in order to think about what it may be communicating (Bion, 1962). It can also refer to the capacity to contain one’s own feelings, not just the feelings of others. How emotional receptivity of unconscious material is shown will vary according to the feeling that is being projected (Hoggett & Clarke, 2009). For this study, the concept of ‘containment’ was important to help in understanding what it is in the research encounter and other relationships that helps to develop trust and growth (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). As well as, developing an awareness of how I, as researcher, may defend against emotive topics, for example by moving onto the next question or trying to frame an experience in a more positive light. Bearing in mind throughout that my actions, as well as, my words would demonstrate whether I had the ability to contain the emotional experience of parents and return it in

a more palatable way, for this to be thought about (Youell, Canham & Tavistock Clinic, 2006).

3.3.3 Transference and countertransference

Freud (1915) was the first theorist to conceptualise ‘transference’ as the idea that individuals carry emotional histories and past experiences with them, and this unconscious material can be imposed onto others in interactions. The concept of ‘transference’ in this study was used to think about how past significant relationships of either the interviewee or researcher could be replicated in the research encounter (Parker, 2010; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Specifically, I was curious to note what may be attributed to me in the role of Educational Psychologist by parents based on their previous experiences of professionals.

‘Countertransference’, in contrast, refers to the way an individual recognises experiences and thinks about projections, using the self as a way of knowing (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In psychosocial research, ‘countertransference’ can be supportive to cue the researcher in to what may be occurring between them and those who are the focus of their study (Parker, 2010). I was interested to explore my response to being positioned in relation to parents in the research interviews, how this evolved from interview 1 to interview 2 and what unconscious dynamics occurred. Within this study it was assumed that the ‘transference’ and ‘countertransference’ between participant and researcher would have an impact on the research relationship and become a means through which the parent’s internal world could be thought about (Hoggett & Clarke, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Continued self-reflection on decisions made, my practice with research participants and how this was achieved was integral to this and will be referred to in more detail in the next section.

3.4 Importance of Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a fundamental aspect of psychosocial research, but what it looks like and how it is done is more ambiguous (Lazard & McEvoy, 2017). Similarly, to Frosh (2010) it was assumed in this study that both participant and researcher were part of the production of knowledge. And so, reflexivity involved attention to the affective, relational dynamics of speech as well as non-speech features including the setting, context and research process (Hoggett & Clarke, 2009).

The objectives and processes of reflexivity varied at different stages of the research journey from topic identification all the way to writing and dissemination. In this study, I approached reflexivity in a number of different ways, including documenting each research encounter in field notes to engage with subjectivity, recording ongoing reflections and considerations in a research diary, attending psychosocial supervision with peers and engaging in discussions with my research supervisor (Elliot, Ryan & Hollway, 2012).

It was assumed, in line with my ontological and epistemological positioning, that reflexivity would provide a rich source of data especially with regard to affective, performative and relational aspects of the research encounter (Butler, 2005; Elliot, et al., 2012). Although it has been argued that an emphasis on researcher's subjectivity can needlessly redirect attention away from the participant who should be the focus of study and that the researcher's feelings may be misinterpreted to the detriment of the study (Jervis, 2009), in this study it was felt that my feelings as a researcher, past experiences and nature of the task would impact on how I approached parents, listened to their story and interpreted meaning (Back, 2007). Therefore, I would contend that

without understanding ourselves and our responses we run the risk of letting our biases, assumptions and prejudices dominate the research (Finlay, 2003). Creating an awareness of myself within the research process was intended to support my ability to hear parent stories, stay emotionally engaged and create a reflective distance from which to interpret meaning and further understand parent experiences of their child with SEN's transition to school (Elliot et al., 2012).

The following outlines the processes used in this study to document and think about reflexivity and unravel my own feelings from those of the participants.

3.4.1 Research diary

A research diary was kept in order to think about the emotional nature of the work involved in recruiting participants, building, sustaining and then ending short-term relationships for the purpose of the research study (Elliot et al., 2012). Any decisions or thoughts that came to mind during each step of the research process were also recorded, in the hope that this would support the transparency and trustworthiness of the study by documenting any assumptions, motivations or biases (Finlay, 2003).

3.4.2 Field notes

Interview records were complemented by reflexive field notes, written soon after each interview. These described details of the setting, context, relational dynamic between myself and the participant, aspects of the research interaction that took place outside the audio record and my subjective response to the encounter (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The use of field notes provided a sense of containment and another source of support in order to understand dynamics that may be at play in this interaction and possibly in others.

3.4.3 Psychosocial supervision

Psychosocial supervision sessions with peers provided a safe and confidential space to discuss the experience of the interview process and explore both the conscious and unconscious communications of what was said, how it was said, why it may have been said in this way at this time and what remained unsaid (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). These sessions were availed of to support thinking about the various facets of my own subjectivity brought by other peoples' perspectives on transference and countertransference (Elliot, et al., 2012). There were five members of this group, all of whom were trainees on the Educational Psychology Doctoral course. At times, a research lecturer would attend to be part of the supervision process. Within each session, two people would present an individual participant and the data surrounding them, including presentation of transcripts and fieldnotes in some cases.

3.4.4 Research supervision

Research supervision was another avenue in which to maintain critical reflection of my involvement and practice within the research process. This was accomplished by understanding any perceived identifications or dis-identifications and their contribution at each stage of the research process (Elliot, 2011). Bringing awareness to my differences, including my value set, beliefs and assumptions as a white Irish female professional, was a critical aspect to understanding the countertransference.

3.4.5 Summary

The emotional work involved in psychosocial research requires the researcher to think about reflexivity through a number of different means which I have presented

here. The triangulation of psychic and social data from different sources including, field notes and supervision, supported my understanding of my own feelings and those belonging to the participant, to ensure that interpretation and meaning made was representative of participant narrative.

3.5 Research Method

This next section outlines the method adopted; providing a description of participant sample, data collection, analysis and interpretation, as well as reflections on the process.

3.5.1 Research participants

My focus was on parent experience of the transition process of their child with SEN, which I have accessed through the voice of the main carer(s). This purposive sampling frame included parents of children who had a child with an identified special educational need and were in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) prior to transitioning to Reception year in September 2018. Having an EHCP was used as an inclusion factor to indicate that their child had needs that required additional support, beyond what could be provided by schools within their core offer (SEN Code of Practice, 2015). I had intended to recruit from the Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) data on EHCPs completed for early years children and their families, however, with the introduction of the Data Protection Act 2018, my recruitment procedure had to be altered.

Following agreement from senior management within both the EPS and SEN teams to conduct this research, initial letters were circulated to 55 families who met the aforementioned criteria. This initial letter provided brief details of the research process

and an invitation to respond within a specified timeframe of six weeks, if parents were happy for their details to be shared and to gain more information. After receiving an email from the SEN Duty Officer with parents' consent to make contact, I spoke with those interested sharing more detail about what participation would entail. Once they agreed with the expectations of participation, I sent out an information sheet and consent form (Appendix C and D) and suggested they contact me with any further questions. The four families recruited, included: Emma, a single parent and her daughter Poppy who was diagnosed with autism; Lizzie, a single parent and her son Henry who was reported to have speech and language difficulties, Sonia, a married female and her daughter Hannah who was also diagnosed with autism, and Mark and Paul, a same-sex couple and their adopted son Archie whose primary need was suggested to relate to emotional and behavioural difficulties. When asked how they would describe their ethnicity, all families identified as White British, except Emma who was Polish. Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) refer to the importance of situating a sample of participants using contextual information to support the understanding of the research findings. This thick description is also helpful to enable transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and interpretation of meaning to people or contexts which are more, or less, similar. For this reason, more detail will be provided on participants in the analysis section.

Given the depth of analysis required within psychosocial research and based on the questions being asked in this study, a small sample size was preferred (Hollway, 2004).

3.5.2 Data collection

In order to capture the conscious and unconscious material within the research encounter, a number of approaches were used. These included the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) and data sheet used to collect relevant demographic information. As mentioned previously, these methods were supplemented by the use of field notes, a research diary and psychosocial supervision with peers and my research supervisor. This section provides a description of the free association narrative interview, interview procedure and content.

3.5.2.1 The Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI)

The FANI was developed by Hollway & Jefferson (2013) to research the fear of crime and is argued to allow interviewees to follow the threads of their emotional experience steering them away from well-worn stories and commonplace narratives (Hollway, 2015). In line with the theoretical foundations of this study and its subsequent questions, the use of the FANI, was to enable parents to provide responses that reflect their own emotions, thoughts and concerns at this time, even if these were not yet consciously accessible (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). In this study, I wanted an approach that went beyond what other qualitative methodologies may uncover about parents' experience of their child with SEN's transition and chose the FANI method as it works from the assumption of a 'defended', rather than rational subject, which includes both researcher and researched, who are mobilised to defend against anxiety and uncomfortable feelings (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

Central to this method is the participant's free association of thoughts in the interview encounter which are suggested to reveal the connections between their internal and external worlds; connections that may not be uncovered except through

dialogue with another, in this case, the researcher (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Narrative approaches such as the FANI claim to empower interviewees by being non-directive, where in the interviewer follows the direction of participant narrative and in this way are argued to be most effective in capturing affective data (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

Parents were asked to share their story through open questions pertaining to their experience of their child with SEN's transition to school. The FANI allowed parents to make choices, such as which story to tell, how it was told, the level of detail provided, and what was emphasised or moved away from, which provided information of unconscious processes and the emotional underpinning of parents' experiences (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

Specific interview principles have been advocated to facilitate this type of methodology such as: use of an open question format to elicit participant stories; enabling each story to be finished uninterrupted; following up using interviewee's word-ordering and phrasing; keeping researcher intervention to a minimum; and use of questions that draw out details of experience rather than intellectualised responses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Hollway, 2015). My assumption was that having established a rapport through use of the FANI, parents' emotional experience would emerge from their told story.

When selecting the most appropriate method for data collection the Biographical Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) was also considered. The BNIM and FANI methods are based on similar underlying principles, indeed Hollway & Jefferson developed the FANI from this method, with both suggesting that within

the research encounter the significance of participant experiences will be revealed (Gabb, 2010). Where the methods diverge is in terms of analysis and interpretation, the BNIM expresses an interest in the life stories of participants and the presentation and process of storytelling and construction by checking out hypotheses at each stage (Wengraf, 2001; Gabb, 2010). Whereas in the FANI, the interpretative framework is underpinned by psychoanalytic concepts and the assumption of the ‘defended subject’ which was in keeping with the positioning of this research and interest in exploring the affective experience of parents.

3.5.2.2 Interview procedure

Eight interviews were completed in total, two with each participant. All were recorded using a digital Dictaphone. Participants were given the option to interview within the local authority offices or their home environment, whichever was most appropriate for them. I suggested to allow 90 minutes for our first interview, to allow time to talk through the information sheet and consent form prior to start. It was interesting to note that second interviews were longer in each case, and I wondered whether this related to the rapport that had been built during the initial interview.

3.5.2.3 Interview content

The use of more than one interview is standard practice within the FANI method and each has a different purpose (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). In the first interview, open-ended questions are posed to elicit experience-near accounts arranged according to participants’ free associations about the chosen research topic. Whilst in the second interview, questioning is guided by the first, and questions are designed based on the participant narrative. In this way, each interview is unique, with an emphasis on the

co-creation of meaning and intersubjective dynamics. The content for interviews 1 and 2 of this research is outlined below.

Interview 1 took place in the first week of the school term September 2018 based on parents' availability. At the beginning of each interview, I revisited both the information sheet and consent form to ensure informed consent. I then reiterated that interviews would be recorded, checking whether it was okay for me to take some notes during the process. Participants were then asked to complete a demographics information sheet to answer questions regarding their gender, ethnicity, occupation, family composition, when their child's EHCP was issued, their child's SEN, type of nursery setting and school (Appendix E). The purpose of this was to provide contextual information, building a more complete picture of the individual, to assist with analysis and the creation of meaning (Hollway, 2008).

The first interview began with a scene setting/ rapport building question which asked parents to tell me a bit about their child.

- As I've never met -----, can you tell me a bit about him/her?

This was followed by three open-ended questions designed to elicit narratives linked to the broader research question and tap into transition as a process accounting for the time prior to, during and after the move to school. There was flexibility in how these questions were referred to as most parents mentioned starting school and the first day experience prior to being asked.

- Tell me about your experience when ----- was at nursery?

- Tell me about your journey with ----- from the time he/she finished nursery to starting school?
- Can you tell me a bit about what it was like when ----- started at school?

Throughout the interview process I endeavoured to follow the principles as referred to by Hollway & Jefferson (2013). Each interview was then transcribed verbatim and a review of the transcripts, as well as reference to field notes and reflections written after each interview, informed the subsequent interview with parents.

Second interviews took place towards the end of half term or just after, six weeks after the initial interview. It was felt that after the first half-term, children and their families would be more settled into school life, and it was assumed that the realisation or meaning of the transition to school for each parent may be coming to fruition.

Each interview began with the following questions.

- Did anything stand out for you from the last interview?
- Has anything else come to mind since our last discussion?

The supplementary questions for each interview were unique to the participant and aimed to explore themes that had come up to elicit further narratives and encourage areas that may have been avoided. In line with guidance from Hollway (2015) these *'questions were not devised to be read word for word'*, but instead represented an area of interest, giving researcher flexibility in the moment (Hollway, 2015 p.45). This meant that in comparison to other qualitative methods, each second interview was dependent on participant free-association and intersubjectivity, rather than the use of a

standardised framework to guide interview structure (Hollway, 2015). The interview schedule for each interviewee are provided in Appendix F.

3.5.2.4 Reflections on data collection

The importance of reflexivity was evident at this stage and I was interested to note how my experience of the first interview was influential in approaching the second interview. Returning to field notes and reviewing of transcripts enabled me to tune into the emotional impact of the interview encounter, how I was left feeling after and how I related to the interviewee at that time (Hollway, 2015). Through engagement with my own subjectivity, my thinking was supported, and I was able to bring awareness to any defences and reflect on them in order to create a line of questioning based on each participant's narrative. Without this, I would likely have run the risk of my assumptions and biases dominating the research (Finlay, 2003).

3.6 Data Analysis

Lorelli, Nowell, Norris and White (2017) suggest that when conducting qualitative data analysis, the researcher becomes the tool and must make decisions about the type of analysis, coding scheme and themes, and how best to represent the data. When considering types of analysis, I was aware of other methods that may have been appropriate for the exploratory purpose of this research, namely Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In line with my interest in the individuality of experience, Smith et al. (2009) state that IPA tends to focus on an exploration of the participants lived experience, their understandings, perceptions and views of this. However, from perusal of the literature, I felt that interpretations made using IPA are often based on and restricted by the assumption that participants are able to adequately articulate their thoughts and experience (Smith et al., 2009). Based on this assumption,

I chose instead to adopt Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, as in comparison to other methods, it does not lend itself to a particular ontology or epistemology and therefore can be compatible with a variety of interpretation modes, in this case psychosocial. This was deemed a more appropriate way to explore my interest to make sense of the psychological and the social including affect, unconscious communications, relational dynamics and defences in the data and better aligned with my ontological and epistemological positioning (Hollway & Frogett, 2012; Hollway, 2015).

The purpose of this section is to describe the approaches taken in analysing the data captured during the research process.

3.6.1 Thematic analysis as a framework

As suggested Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis was chosen to carry out a case by case analysis of participant data. This method was decided upon as it was felt it could be used to identify patterns within the data and would be appropriate for organising and describing each parent's experience in rich detail following a coherent process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, I proposed to include both an inductive approach, derived from the data and an application of psychoanalytic concepts and researcher subjectivity to make sense of the individual participant narrative. In this way, addressing one of the disadvantages of the use of thematic analysis alone, by exploring the continuities, contradictions and the hidden meaning within individual accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A criticism of the use of thematic analysis in other research has outlined that often the detail of an analysis is omitted and therefore impacts on the quality of the

study (Robson, 2011). In order to overcome this and to maintain transparency, what will follow is a description of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase approach used.

3.6.1.1 Phase 1: familiarising yourself with the data

As I collected the data myself, I began this phase with prior knowledge of the families, my responses to them as interviewer and some initial interests in their narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was important to hold onto throughout the process in the form of reflexive field notes and discussions in supervision. To immerse myself in the data I began this phase with all interviews being transcribed verbatim. As well as recording all verbal and nonverbal responses, transcription included notes on pauses, tone and emphasis on words. In order for the transcription to stay true to its original nature, a key was developed which included some of Silverman’s (1993) transcription symbols, this is shown in Table 3. In line with Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidance, following transcription, each interview was read in full at least once before any formal coding occurred. At this initial phase, I made handwritten notes whilst reading through each transcript to record any initial ideas for coding and items potentially of interest to be returned to in the next phase of the process. See Appendix G for example transcript.

Table 3 Transcription Key (Silverman, 1993)

Symbol	Explanation
...	Indicates a pause or elapsed time
=	Both interviewer and interviewee speak at the same time
-	Cut off, does not finish sound or word
<u>Underlined word</u>	Emphasises a word either by pitch or intonation.
<i>(italics)</i>	Non-verbal communication
[square brackets]	Information changed to protect interviewee anonymity

3.6.1.2 Phase 2: generating initial codes

Within this phase, I coded from the data in each transcript, based on the interviewees' experiences. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that coding data into meaningful groups can be done by hand or using a software programme, I chose to use MaxQDA in order to organise, visualise and record codes and themes. Interview transcripts were transported to MAX-QDA and were read line by line, meaningful chunks of data were highlighted and given code names.

In line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) method I coded for as many themes and patterns as possible, coding different extracts in multiples ways including inconsistencies to the dominant narrative and included context to ensure the gestalt (whole picture) was not lost. Coding was completed using a case by case analysis, coding both interviews for a participant, before moving onto the next. To check the trustworthiness of the coding at different points throughout the process, sections of coding were sent to my research supervisor to examine. After the coding of each interview, codes were reviewed to ensure that items were consistent with code name assigned or to modify existing codes to include new material where relevant. See Appendix H for initial coding examples for Lizzie's transcript.

3.6.1.3 Phase 3: searching for themes

Once all data was coded and collated for a set of participant interviews, codes were then sorted and combined into potential overarching themes. This was done by organising codes into colour groups on MAXQDA to support the theming process. Initially the colour groups related to areas that were repeatedly spoken about or referred to a specific point in time e.g. prior to diagnosis or early education.

This phase involved active reviewing of the coded data to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes, identifying topics around which codes cluster. It was important to me that although reducing the volume of data when developing themes, I maintained the richness of parents' accounts and the meaning they had made of the transition process. The process of constructing themes and subthemes, which are the subcomponents of a theme, involves clustering codes that seem to share some unifying feature, so that they reflect and describe a meaningful pattern in the data. Another important element of this phase was to begin to explore the relationship between themes and how they may fit together to tell the overall story of each parent's data. See Appendix I examples of participant themes, sub-themes and categories.

3.6.1.4 Phase 4: reviewing themes

This phase involved a review of developing themes in order to refine them and judge their quality in relation to the data set. This occurred at two levels, firstly, reading the data extracts within a theme to check that they related to it. Secondly, re-reading the entire data set for that participant to check whether themes were relevant and reflected the research interview as a whole.

3.6.1.5 Phase 5: defining and naming themes

Further refining took place, and a name was chosen to represent each theme, checking these with others to ensure acceptability and coherency from others perspective. See Appendix J for example of Mark and Paul's summary of coded segments for theme '*Adapting to a newly formed family system*'.

3.6.1.6 Phase 6: producing the report

The results of the thematic analysis were then written up as case studies and took the form of the findings chapter.

As this research aimed to both honour participant narrative whilst also exploring unconscious and emotional material within the research encounter, the thematic analysis above provided a story of parent experience from their perspective. The application of psychoanalytic theory described in the next section provided a framework to look in detail at individual parent accounts of their experience of their SEN child's transition.

3.6.2 Application of Psychoanalytic Theory

During each case analysis the application of psychoanalytic theory involved the exploration of four core questions outlined by Hollway & Jefferson (2013). This included questioning what I noticed in the data, critically exploring why I may have noticed what I did, the interpretation I placed on what I noticed and how I understood my interpretation to be appropriate (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). For this, I triangulated information from a range of sources including, my inductive thematic analysis, reflective notes, research diary, supervision sessions, and close listening of the audio recordings to develop an account of each parent's experience of their SEN child's transition to school.

3.7 Ensuring Research Credibility and Trustworthiness

In psychological research there is often a pressure to produce findings that are generalisable and objective, as these are perceived to signify a good quality study. However, the concepts of reliability and validity which are applicable to quantitative research to think about quality, cannot be readily applied to judge qualitative research

and instead other criteria have been developed for the qualitative paradigm. In this instance, it is about how trustworthy the results are, whether they tell us something useful and whether they are beneficial to the people concerned (Angen, 2000). Therefore, in order to establish trustworthiness in the research methodology and approach, I employed techniques to ensure credibility and transferability articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is about how confident people can be about the nature of the findings, and how congruent they are thought to be with reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility in the following research a number of techniques were adopted.

3.7.1.1 Multiple Interviews

More than one interview was conducted with parents in an attempt to gain an adequate understanding of their experience of the transition from nursery to school. It was hoped that a trusting relationship may be established during this period of relatively prolonged engagement in comparison to a one-off interview. I felt that the use of narrative accounts would retain the complexity of transition as a real-life event and hold on to the emotional meaning associated with it through an established rapport between interviewer and interviewee (Polkinghorne, 1995).

3.7.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation of multiple sources of data was also used to inform a greater understanding of findings and ensure that they did not arise out of 'wild analysis' as suggested by Freud (1909). Triangulation is based on the premise that a conclusion is

more credible when it is confirmed by more than one source (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). In line with my psychosocial ontological and epistemological positioning I chose to keep reflexive field notes and attend psychosocial supervision in order to provide insight into my own subjective experience so that I could know the difference between myself and the interviewee or situation I was trying to make sense of (Hollway, 2008). Psychosocial supervision and conversations with colleagues provided multiple perspectives which helped to uncover any biases or assumptions in the interpretative process.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability relates to whether the research findings are applicable to other contexts and populations (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that this can be achieved by providing a thick description of the data collection and analysis process.

3.7.2.1 Thick description

In order to increase the credibility and transferability of the findings, I endeavoured to provide a detailed outline of the decisions made throughout the research process so that it could be followed by another researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). As well as this, I have tried to pay close attention to the contextual details of each case study, accounting for the circumstantiality of the data and illustrating that meanings depend on the person, timing and the relational encounter (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). It was intended that the use of case studies and pen portraits would provide a deeper understanding of how each parent's unique context influenced their experience of their child with SEN's transition to school. It was acknowledged that although these accounts may not be transferrable to other parent experiences, they are likely to be

useful and provide reflections for professionals who are involved in the transition from nursery to school and beyond.

3.8 Ethics in Psychosocial Research

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust (See Appendix K). As with any piece of psychological research, ethical issues need to be held in mind throughout the entire research process, from data production and analysis through to the presentation of the data (Robson & McCarten, 2016; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). As suggested by Robson and McCarten (2016), research has the potential to cause harm, stress, and anxiety for the participants involved (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Ethical considerations were therefore crucial in the protection of participants from any adverse consequences.

The ethical challenge raised in psychosocial research for me as a researcher was related to the duty of care to the participant. Psychosocial research acknowledges the existence of the ‘defended subject’ and ‘defended researcher’, suggesting that both engage in avoidance by mobilising defence mechanisms in the interview encounter (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). In light of this, I wondered about the ethical implications of the interview process, as it may bring awareness to emotional experiences that were previously unacknowledged or unknown to participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). It was evident that some parents did recall some painful experiences, some of which may have been “*unprocessed to a lesser or greater extent*” (Gabb, 2010, p.18). It was hoped, similar to Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000) accounts, that participants would experience the interview encounter as positive and supportive to talk about anything that may be upsetting. This reminded me of my role as a TEP, and how often

consultations undertaken can be sensitive and bring up uncomfortable material for those involved. In this way, although the role of researcher was unfamiliar to me, upholding a standard of ethical practice was not. However, this did raise the question of how to ethically conduct psychosocial research and how one can truly gain informed consent for this type of research, which required further thought.

The following steps were taken to ensure that the research was carried out in an ethical way.

3.8.1 Issues regarding informed consent

Informed consent was gained when participants signed a consent form. This was following a run through of the information sheet clarifying the design and aims of the study, what participation would entail and how data would be stored. This introduced the study in an understandable format, as well as an explanation about how/why participants have been selected. Any unintended harmful impacts/consequences of the research were discussed at a check in after interview 1 and prior to interview 2. At the end of the interview process, I asked parents about their interview experience and checked whether signposting to other services may be supportive. Consent was documented in hard copy form, one to be kept by participant and one to be stored by researcher in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and University of Essex guidelines (BPS, 2010). Participants were made aware that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time and stop the interview if they were to feel uncomfortable. As is suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) providing the opportunity for the participant to say 'no' in the research process can be a step towards rectifying power imbalances that exist between them and the researcher.

3.8.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Participant information obtained during the research process was regarded as confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance (BPS, 2010). It was important to state to participants from the beginning that the duty of confidentiality was not absolute and may be breached in exceptional circumstances by more compelling duties such as the duty to protect individuals from harm or in instances of safeguarding where they were deemed as at risk of causing harm to others. Pseudonyms were used and other identifying information e.g. teacher and school names altered to further protect the anonymity of participants and their lives. Data was kept securely at the local authority offices in line with their data storage arrangements and the Data Protection (2018) and Freedom of Information Acts (2000).

3.8.3 Power imbalances in the research encounter

When considering potential power imbalances of the research relationship, parent participation was framed as a collaboration and production rather than an investigation, so that it was not only the researcher that benefit (Polkinghorne, 1995). Each interview was held in the home setting and so deemed to be somewhere where the parents felt more at ease. In each interview I hoped to enable parents to make sense of what had happened, reflect on the content and meaning of their own narrative and so promote learning and further understanding of the self (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Through reflexive fieldnotes I was mindful of my perceived position of power as an educational professional based on parents' past experiences and felt that reflecting on and acknowledging this within the research was another way to maintain ethical practice.

3.8.4 Adhering to principles of honesty, sympathy and respect

Throughout the research process the following principles outlined by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) were adopted to further uphold ethical practice. These included, ‘honesty’ which involved approaching the data openly and applying a theoretical framework that was clear, justifiable and providing interpretation that could be supported by evidence from various sources (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Next, ‘sympathy’ which suggests a commitment by the researcher to understand the individual, whether you agree with their actions or not. To achieve this, it was important for me to try to put myself alongside parent experience, in an attempt to understand their confusions and anxieties (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Lastly, to ensure ‘respect’ for each participant. I was aware that parents had given their time to participate, so it was important to me that I gave them due attention, carefully observing their responses and responding appropriately.

3.9 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to show how my ontological and epistemological positioning have had profound consequences for research design and what a study can uncover about a chosen topic, in this case, parent’s experience of their child with SEN’s transition (Hollway, 2009). In order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study, I have provided a detailed outline of the recruitment procedure, participant sample, data collection and analysis. Concluding with ethical issues of carrying out psychosocial research and the steps taken in considering participant duty of care. The next chapter will present the findings of this study through four individual case studies.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

Interviews were analysed case by case using Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive thematic analysis, this, along with reflexive field notes and close listening to the audio-recordings shaped my representation of each participant's data. I chose to provide a narrative account of each parents' set of interviews, which illustrates the journey embarked on in terms of the transition to school process and becoming the parent of a school child. Each analysis begins with a pen portrait to introduce each parent and their child, setting the context for the research encounters. Each account aims to create meaning using the participant narrative presented, relevant psychoanalytic theory and the use of researcher reflexivity. My reflections on the interview process and analysis of participant data follow, evidencing that these are important sources of data especially with regard to making sense of affective, performative and relational aspects of the research encounter (Elliot, et al., 2012). It should be noted that pseudonyms are used and identifying information altered in this section to protect the anonymity of those involved.

4.2 *Lizzie and Henry

Lizzie is a single parent, aged 29, who separated from Henry's father when he was three months old. Henry had contact with his father for the first two years of his life, but in more recent years they have not had a relationship and his father now lives with his family in a neighbouring borough. Lizzie's mother and friends live locally to her and she suggests that she has "*a good circle around her*". She is of White British heritage and is living in a two-bedroom house in a diverse area of her local community. She recalls that Henry's difficulties began from an early age with his speech and language development and associated behaviours being an area for concern for both

professionals and for her as a parent. As a result of these difficulties, Henry was issued with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) at 3 years old. From that time, he received 1:1 adult support at nursery and this was noted by Lizzie to be key to a change in his presentation. Henry turned five in September, the week before his transition to school. He had been attending his local mainstream nursery and was moving up to the Reception class within the same school. Lizzie said she was feeling okay about the change, as she felt there was a strong sense of continuity, in that Ms Scott would be moving up with him, as well as some other teachers and peers. Although appearing initially blasé about her son's transition to Reception, what transpired over the two interviews was a complex experience characterised by a myriad of emotions in order to manage, process and adapt to the changes that were occurring.

4.2.1 Experience of parenting

4.2.1.1 Being the 'good enough' parent

In our first interview Lizzie discussed how she regularly felt that she could not be a 'good enough' parent to her son, relating this to her inexperience as a first-time parent, her single parent status, her comparison to others and judgement she placed on herself. She appeared to have an idealised image of what the parent role would be like when pregnant, and when the reality did not match her expectation her overwhelming feeling of not being good enough increased.

She described how transformative the transition to parenthood was for her and the difficulty she had in adapting to becoming a mother and responding to her son as he developed, particularly when his speech and language was delayed.

...at the very beginning it's very hard. You don't know what to do, you don't know how to deal with things, you're a first-time parent... it's scary and you question whether you're doin' things right or wrong. So, you don't know... (Interview 2, line 51).

She provided a description of how she had moved from a state of independence to being a part of this dyadic relationship and how from this moment, she was aware of her influence on him and his on her. Through the processes of 'introjection' and 'identification', Lizzie's anxieties about herself in role magnified and she became frustrated towards her son. This was particularly salient when she spoke about Henry's time at nursery, where she felt judged by others because of his unsociable behaviours.

[deep inhale] You get looked at, you get deemed a bad parent and it's that then you start thinking... Oh God! Are they lookin' at me in that way? Am I bein'...am I a bad parent? And then you start questionin' yourself (Interview 2, line 43).

4.2.1.2 Parenting her child with SEN

For Lizzie, when Henry was diagnosed with speech and language difficulties, there was a real sense of an internal struggle, where at one level she saw his difficulties as not being attributed to her and out of her control, but this existed alongside feelings of guilt, failure and embarrassment. She described how she found it difficult to cope with his difference, and how the emotions she was full of impacted on her experience of parenthood and her capacity to parent.

...I think talkin' about how he is behind, and you know, different and you've got to know Henry and learn Henry to know what his triggers are... And I think just over the years doing that it's taken time and it's harder than what it seems... (Interview 2, line 59).

Lizzie explained how stressed and anxious she became about his behaviour and how this influenced their daily functioning as a family.

...and you're just struggling to do that and it's like ... the struggle is just unreal sometimes when you just, you just break...(Interview 1, line 33).

because he would like kick off and.... so we'd be sitting in most of the time. And... I'd feel anxious about going out (Interview 1, line 78).

4.2.1.3 The nature of the parent-child relationship

She often mentioned a lack of understanding between them and how this undermined her self-esteem as a parent and made it difficult for her to empathise with how he was feeling and experiencing the world.

...you're just like oh just go..., like you just can't cope with them sometimes because when they don't understand you but then you don't understand them...(Interview 1, line 33).

I noted this feeling of not being good enough in the 'transference' during our initial encounter, and I became anxious about my role as researcher, questioning my abilities. In response, I was drawn into validating the difficulty of her experience as a parent, whilst acknowledging her strength and the changes she had been able to make. And in some ways, tried to gain validation from her that I had done a good enough job during the interview experience.

4.2.2 Earlier experiences of education

4.2.2.1 Recalling nursery experience

Starting nursery was an important milestone for both Henry and Lizzie. The prospect of this was difficult considering his communication difficulties, and Lizzie recalled this earlier experience as a time characterised by difficult interactions with

staff, a wish for her son to act differently and further internalisations of the feeling that she alone could not adequately meet his needs.

...when he was very young and all that was happenin' that was awful I'd come home cryin' every day. It was awful, absolutely awful (Interview 2, line 43).

I would always go to nursery and they would be like "oh Henry's mum could you just come in for a minute?" And I'd be like ugh somethings happened again...(Interview 1, line 33).

Lizzie said that Henry's behaviour often left him on the periphery as he posed a challenge to the safe running of the nursery, particularly at special events and celebrations. Being excluded from these had a real emotional impact on her.

...and it would be so hard, and it was quite heart wrenching that he wasn't even allowed like he wasn't even - to go in the school play or like every sports day...nothing (Interview 1, line 33).

4.2.2.2 Importance of the key adult relationship and relationships to other professionals

A turning point for both occurred when Henry was issued with an EHCP and Ms Scott was employed as his 1:1. Although Henry's developing relationship with Ms Scott was experienced as painful at times for Lizzie,

... obviously at first it was upsettin' because he was good for her and done this sort of thing for her... (Interview 2, line 41).

Lizzie began to see a real improvement in his behaviour at nursery, which brought a sense of relief.

...since he's had his one to one, he's come like leaps and bounds, he's been amazing! (Interview 1, line 16).

She also was able to benefit from Ms Scott's advice and guidance. This support appeared to provide more of a containing function for Lizzie compared to her relationships with the other nursery teachers. Ms Scott had fostered a sense of attachment to her, acting as a maternal figure, holding Lizzie and facilitating her growth as a parent. Within this relationship, Lizzie was more able to tolerate challenge or seek help in managing her son's behaviour.

She was teaching me a lot as well, dya know what I mean? Like how to deal with it and not tell him off so much about everything... And she'll go, 'right okay well I've been doing this, why don't you try this at home?' (Interview 1, line 41).

Based on her previous experiences of educational professionals, Lizzie appeared to initially attribute the same sense of judgement to me in my researcher role. However, over time through the use of Rogerian principles of congruency, showing unconditional positive regard and empathetic understanding, I was able to provide similar containment which she needed to truly reflect on her experience.

4.2.3 Navigating the change process

4.2.3.1 Transition activities and practices

When thinking about preparing for the transition process, Lizzie described some of the practices that school staff had completed with Henry, including visiting the Reception classroom and spending some time there, as well as a staggered start in September. She provided an image of teachers bringing Henry out of nursery, *...and going to the big boys and the big girl's bit. (Interview 1, line 37).*

From her narrative, it was apparent that Lizzie was unsure of her role in preparing for the transition process or how this related to the schools. She suggested that she had re-introduced the idea of starting school the week before and encouraged

Henry to try on his new school shoes. She reflected on the difficulty she had found in knowing how and when to bring up transition with Henry, not wanting to confuse or unsettle him.

So yeah, it was a bit of a... don't know, danger- not dangerous, but you just feel like it's a win lose situation. You didn't know when to start it without confusing him as such... (Interview 2, line 33).

4.2.3.2 Making meaning of change

Lizzie discussed the meaning she had made of this time of transition and its initial significance to her.

But to me I was just like, oh you know it's the same teachers, he's just goin' into Reception, like I was just a bit like - I dunno...like parents were making such [clears throat] not that it's not a big deal, obviously it's a big deal that - but to me I was just like, oh right just another day kind of thing... but he's goin' into Reception. (Interview 2, line 33).

During our first interview, it was almost as though there was an avoidance on Lizzie's part to think about the transition, as this was an event that was daunting, maybe even risky. I wondered whether discussing it or even thinking about its significance may bring up feelings that would be threatening or too painful to face.

4.2.3.3 Anticipation of change

Lizzie expressed her anticipation of the changes and her worry about how Henry would cope. This appeared especially live in our initial interview as it was his first day of school. Lizzie felt that she may not have fully prepared him for the new expectations and routines of the school environment.

Like I haven't really prepared him to be fair, for him to go into nursery and eat healthy foods (Interview 1, line 22).

Along with a sense that she was not prepared for this either,

...yeah even just like paying for milk and like online stuff and things, going to get their school uniform... it sounds like little things but it's just ugh... (Interview 1, line 114).

It was interesting to note how the meaning of transition evolved within the interview process from being thought about primarily as a change in context, to thinking more about how both Henry and Lizzie were transitioning socially, emotionally and cognitively.

This discussion of endings and new beginnings appeared to stir up Lizzie's fear about future endings, particularly starting Year 1 and the possibility that Henry's key adult may leave. Lizzie's concern was heightened as she felt Ms Scott had played a pivotal part in changing Henry's behaviour and supporting his progress at nursery. She was worried about the inevitability of this change and what it could mean for Henry as he moved through school.

4.2.4 Significance of starting school

4.2.4.1 For her as a parent handing over to school

Lizzie suggested that their separation on Henry's first day was difficult for her to bear, as he appeared nervous and confused, even trying to head back to the nursery classroom initially. She was keen to stay with him until Ms Scott came *to make him feel a bit more at ease (Interview 1, line 44).*

Lizzie described a sense of abnormality and how her experience would be different now that Henry had started school.

4.2.4.2 Awareness of what starting school might mean for them

This seemed to bring up a range of emotions for Lizzie which she at first struggled to articulate, and both she and I moved away from. In this moment, the real sense of loss associated with Henry's transition to school became apparent for Lizzie.

And I'm thinking am I don't know... oh did I do enough when I could've had him or when I had him, dya know what I mean? (Interview 1, line 54). Or have I taken time for granted, now I've got to find work and not be around him so much. (Interview 1, line 56).

The absence of her son was felt and the idea that she would not be able to get this time back with him. She worried whether she had done a 'good enough' job, whether he was ready and how their relationship would evolve as a result of this change.

4.2.5 Realisation of changes relating to the school transition process

4.2.5.1 Change in parent identity

In our second encounter, I noticed a difference in Lizzie, in her presentation, her level of organisation and how she spoke about Henry. She reflected on how the last term had been and how

by two little changes our whole life's changed basically...By me goin' work that, that's it now, there's no baby. (Interview 2, line 7).

Lizzie spoke frequently about the importance of finding work for her and how this provided a sense of purpose, helping her to cope with the loss of her infant.

So it weren't that long after that I got work, so I wasn't just coming home and... sometimes not doing anythin' and yeah, yeah moping about maybe... (Interview 2, line 9).

It was important for her to reform her sense of identity, as prior to the school transition process Henry was all she knew.

4.2.5.2 Change in parent-child relationship

Out of the loss and change experienced there had been real opportunity for growth and development of internal strength. Lizzie showed a real change in her confidence and an increased capacity to manage positive and negative introjections and identifications, leading to a much more balanced and self-assured narrative.

So you just gotta learn from others...and you'll never get it right. It's not something you can get 100 percent. So, once you accept that, once you accept that you will never - you're not always gonna be right (Interview 2, line 53).

This was especially evident when she mentioned the change in family functioning and her willingness to regularly take Henry out with her. Rather than adapting her life to his needs, she was now more able to take up the role of parent.

...and I'm not worried about whether he's going to kick off to be honest, because if he does kick off I just go 'okay you gonna be like that? We can go in the car then'. And 9/10 he'll be like 'no no okay' (Interview 2, line 47).

Lizzie was reflective about their earlier relationship, trying to think back and understand the meaning of his behaviour, moving away from blame to try to empathise with his experience.

I think that's where it all come from, I didn't understand it. I don't understand why you're actin' like this. I don't understand why you - why you're hittin' me. I don't understand why? And he felt, obviously where he was so young, he obviously felt the same way, he didn't understand things (Interview 2, line 43).

In her reflections, Lizzie was noted to be more able to see Henry as both developing independence and separation from her, as well as continuing to be

dependent and connected to her. This more integrated way of viewing their relationship appeared to enable her attunement and satisfaction with how their relationship is now.

So, I feel like maybe yeah, it's definitely more quality time now, instead of like worrying about the hours. It's actually turned out to be better... (Interview 2, line 47).

4.3 *Emma and Poppy

Emma is also a single parent, aged 27 and originally from Poland. She moved to the UK with her parents and siblings over 10 years ago. Emma was working full-time in an office job until recently, she decided to leave this position to become a stay at home parent, following her separation from Poppy's father in June 2018. Emma describes how Poppy was quiet and withdrawn in her early years, but neither her nor her partner were aware that she was developing differently to other children. It was the staff at her mainstream nursery who suggested that "*they noticed signs*" and encouraged them to bring her to be "*checked out*". Poppy received a diagnosis of "*Severe Autism*" from a Paediatrician in February 2018 and was subsequently issued an EHCP. Following this, she received 1:1 adult support at nursery, this relationship was pivotal in helping Emma to cope with and make sense of her daughter's diagnosis. Our initial interview was on Poppy's first day at her new school, she had been agreed a specialist placement for children with ASD and Emma was hopeful that things would go well. When initially asked to tell me something about her daughter, Emma shared that Poppy was non-verbal and so her communication was limited, making it difficult to gauge Poppy's emotional state. Interestingly, the non-verbal nature of her daughter's condition appeared to slip into our encounters, and often the importance in Emma's communication of her story was in her unspeakable experience rather than the dialogue she brought.

4.3.1 Early years' experience

4.3.1.1 Child's presentation at nursery and parent interactions with nursery

Emma said that because neither her nor Poppy's father were aware of her difference, they sent her to a mainstream nursery at 2 years old. As Emma was working full-time her early interactions with nursery staff were limited. To her knowledge, as Poppy developed her behaviour became more challenging at nursery. She would often cry, bite and bang her head when distressed. Emma recalled how her partner would tell her that staff would say,

...she's not settling, she's not happy, come and pick her up... and they kept on sending her home (Interview 1, line 18).

She was in a mainstream, so I don't think they could've, well I don't think they were used to... any kind of behaviour like that (Interview 2, line 32).

Although Emma felt that the nursery setting should be prepared for all kinds of children, she could empathise with the difficulty that her daughter's behaviour presented. I had wondered if the nursery experience had reminded Emma of the unexpected event of having a child with ASD and her own loss of confidence of not feeling ready. In this way she could *...see the nursery's point of view (Interview 2, line 32).*

4.3.1.2 Role of the father

Emma explained how Poppy's father played a primary role in raising her whilst she worked.

... when I was at work during the day he was looking after her when she was coming back from nursery (Interview 1, line 16)...he was working nights, so he wanted to have his sleep, but if she's been sent home after two hours of being in nursery, he obviously wasn't happy (Interview 2, line 32).

She described how his way to cope was to put Poppy to bed, whilst he tried to rest before his next shift. Emma noted that at this time, Poppy turned more and more inward and her progress appeared to come to a halt. This period was characterised as difficult for Emma and from her narrative there was a real sense of a growing disconnect from her daughter and her then partner's experience. This ultimately led to what Emma felt, *...was a kind of am...the push to the split of the relationship...* (Interview 2, line 32).

This painful experience of separation and sense of rejection was communicated in the transference, as I felt very disconnected to Emma at this time. It was apparent that the response evoked in me during our initial interview suggested that she was keeping me at arm's length, not wanting to discuss the interpersonal pain she had felt.

4.3.2 Experience of the diagnostic process

4.3.2.1 Noticing difference and the role of the professional

Emma firmly felt that Poppy's birth and earliest years were unremarkable and so until nursery staff shared their concerns both parents were somewhat unaware.

...they started telling us that they see some signs. And then obviously they started pushing us to go and have her checked out (Interview 1, line 61).

Although over the course of the interviews, Emma indicated that she had worried something was wrong, but felt that maybe it related to a curable health condition or something that would inevitably pass. This understanding of her daughter's presentation changed dramatically once an exploration into the possibility of her having Autism began.

So, she was just in her own world then obviously they started looking into it and the Paediatrician that saw her said that she's got Severe Autism... (Interview 1, line 18).

The Paediatrician confirmed her diagnosis, providing support to the family in the form of signposting and medication for Poppy's sleep difficulties.

4.3.2.2 Developing an understanding of Autism and making sense of your child's diagnosis

What followed, was a period of digestion and time for parents to make sense of and educate themselves on what this diagnosis might mean. Emma suggested that they needed time to process what had happened and the implications for their daughter.

....then you get like um big news like that and then it just hit you. We didn't expect her to have it... so it was a shock. We didn't have a clue what, what autism is about... (Interview 1, line 45 and 50).

She spoke of her and her ex-partner's different ways of coping at this time. Emma feeling the need to act, recognising what had happened and wanting to deal with it. Whereas for her ex-partner the confirmation of the diagnosis was much more difficult.

am I think it's been well... I think it's been too hard on him, like he doesn't know how to deal with it... but the other thing, I took it very hard but just kind of deal with it because... you have no choice (Interview 2, line 28).

Throughout this process, Emma felt that she did not have the capacity to support her partner in coming to terms with his sense of grief, and instead Poppy became her priority.

She spoke of the wider impact of the diagnosis on her relationships to friends and family, sometimes for the better or worse. Emma explained that it took her family time to understand because this was their first experience of a developmental disability. She felt that they had a shared experience that she could no longer be a part of, after Poppy was diagnosed with Autism.

Well obviously, they've got a different - because I've got nieces and nephews and they obviously don't have the same - they're not the same. So, it's a - at first it was upsetting because obviously they were having ties as they were normal kids. But I think now everythin's been explained, they see her, they know how she is. So... they're kind of buildin' up to it (Interview 2, line 91).

This sense of not being understood extended to other relationships and her perception that her friends, at a different stage in their lives, could not relate to what she may be going through and because of this she felt she could not seek support from them.

I'm just 27, so it's a bit more harder for me because I'm still in my 20s, and I've still got like friends around that they - They don't understand it (Interview 2, line 103).

Through the process of 'projective identification' (Klein, 1946) Emma's sense of loss in her relationships and in the daughter she once knew was felt. I recall leaving the interview overwhelmed by sadness to the point of feeling numbed by it. Through the transcription process and psychosocial supervision, I was able to notice and make sense of the feelings that were evoked in me, so that in interview two, I could feed this back sensitively through questioning and paraphrasing. In this way, I had hoped I could provide a space for Emma to think about her feelings surrounding Poppy's diagnosis.

4.3.3 Adaptation to child's diagnosis and action taken

4.3.3.1 Becoming a stay at home mum

Following on from the diagnostic process, Emma suggested that she needed to adjust and familiarise herself with this new terrain beneath her feet. She felt a responsibility to take up a mothering role and decided to leave work to become a stay at home mum. There was a sense that she was pushed into a role that she had potentially

been trying to escape by working full-time, as she felt there was a sacrifice made on her part and she was missing out on a 'normal' experience. With this new-found responsibility and a sense of uncertainty of what to do, Emma reached out to those who may understand at nursery and particularly Poppy's new one to one.

4.3.3.2 Nursery adjusting to her needs and the importance of her 1:1

In response to her diagnosis, nursery staff employed a trained key adult to support Poppy. This person shared Emma's experience as she also had a child with Autism, this was important for Emma to be able to relate to and learn from her.

It was mainly her that I could actually relate to. Because she's been there, she's been working with us, so she knows her as well. So, it was easy cause she was working with her durin' the school hours and if I needed anythin' after school hours she obviously knows her, she knows how she is she knows what she does (Interview 2, line 95.)

Emma also noted the adaptations that the nursery were able to make to accommodate Poppy, increasing a feeling of inclusion of children with different needs. It seemed to me that Emma valued the change in the nursery's approach and noted how Poppy began to make progress, interacting more and taking a step out of her own inner world.

She started bein' aware of kids because I don't think she was aware that they exist... So, she started like interacting from what I seen from nursery, she's been actually acknowledging them, that they're around her (Interview 2, line 70).

4.3.4 Transformative experience of being a mother to a child with Autism

4.3.4.1 Parent experience of her daughter

In our initial interview Emma spoke to her struggle to understand her daughter's needs and their challenge in relating to one another. However, over the course of the interviews her developing sense of Poppy was evident.

yeah that was a bit...hard... for me to cope with at first because I thought she was gonna speak eventually very soon.... (Interview 2, line 87) ...but we kind of found the communication somehow. It's not obviously words but I know what she wants, when she wants it and noises she makes (Interview 2, line 89).

There was a real feeling of hope and the idea that they were continuing on a journey to build their relationship.

4.3.4.2 Mourning the loss of the 'normal' child

This sense of hope continued to exist alongside a process of mourning the loss of her 'normal' child. It was my experience that this process has been one of loss, change and growth for Emma. She has been able to give up her omnipotence and accept her limitations as a mother, not driven to fix the 'problem' based on her own needs, but instead, wanting to work with Poppy and others to support her development. Emma spoke about her growing awareness of Poppy's difference to other children her age, in her communication abilities, level of dependence and play skills, and how she has sought guidance of best practice to support her to thrive.

...everyone's trying to compare her to a normal kid when she's not a normal kid. I mean I'm not saying she's abnormal or anything like that... but obviously she's different (Interview 2, line 65 and 87)

And we're not gonna get nowhere if we just puttin' it on the back all the time... (Interview 2, line 22)

It appeared that over the course of our interviews Emma had grown in acceptance of herself and her child and this had been achieved through the incorporation of change into their lives and a reframing of their future.

It feels like we're makin' progress...and we're actually gonna get her to that - obviously not normal but to the stage that she can actually cope more on her own (Interview 2, line 65).

4.3.5 Needing a different school experience

4.3.5.1 Consideration of provision and preparation to start school

As part of this incorporation of change, it was recognised that Poppy would require a different school experience. Emma was unclear of the process involved in choosing a school placement as the nursery had taken that responsibility away from parents, because they were the people who knew best.

...there's no point puttin' her in a normal school...so they applied for her and she got apparently one of the best ones (Interview 2, line 61).

She appeared confident in their choice of school based on the feedback from other education professionals, specifically Poppy's one to one. Emma felt that she would have suffered in mainstream school as she is currently unable to verbally communicate her wants and needs.

Transition activities and practices were also led by Poppy's new school, Emma explained that she had attended three open days, two without and one with Poppy. In these sessions she was provided information on the school day, their ethos, support structures and guidance in how she could prepare Poppy for the transition to school by starting a routine, trying on her new uniform and reading through her transition book. This appeared to be the start of a supportive relationship between school and home, and Emma expressed her interest and curiosity to see how this would develop over time.

4.3.5.2 First day experience and school to date

Poppy's first day of school elicited a realisation for Emma that she would have less input in her life from now on and that she was handing over to someone else. This was even more profound for her with Poppy commuting to school in a taxi with a chaperone. Emma was reassured to get a call from school once she had arrived and respected the honesty of their feedback in detailing how Poppy was adjusting to her new surroundings. Emma's desire to keep involved was apparent and she looked forward to receiving Poppy's home/school communication book each day.

4.3.5.3 Awareness of change as part of the transition to school process

In our second interview, Emma was delighted to tell me about all the changes that had occurred since we last met. There was a real sense of growth and development for both, with Emma starting to feel more confident in her parenting role and Poppy growing in skills and abilities, showing more engagement with others and the world around her. Emma shared that Poppy is exploring new foods, further along in her potty training and is showing early signs of communication in her babbling behaviour. There was a sense of pride in what she had been able to achieve by working with Poppy. Of real importance to Emma was that Poppy was now engaging in more play like behaviour and she had chosen her first toy, using this as a transitional object between home and school.

But yeah, she's got a toy she rides with to school, she has to have it in her hand on the taxi and on the way back (Interview 2, line 18).

For me, this marked an important step in Poppy's development and evidenced the growth in their mother daughter bond and emotional awareness of themselves and one another. This had developed over time through the family's new routine which at the heart of it involved relationships and spending time together.

She comes back, she eats her dinner with us then we go on a swings... And then she has a bath, has a little cuddle and sits with us on the sofa and then goes to bed (Interview 2, line 54).

These changes coincided with the absence of Poppy's father. Emma reflected on how their difference in parenting styles may have impacted Poppy's behaviour previously, and although she suggested that she would never stop him seeing Poppy, his infrequent and inconsistent presence threatened to ruin the routine she had established with her new partner.

And if you're just comin' in and ruinin' that because he wants to see her for a day and spoil it, it's just not gonna work (Interview 2, line 26).

It appeared to me that to manage the difficulty of the separation with Poppy's father and the sense of rejection she had felt, Emma was engaging in the defence mechanism of 'splitting', focusing on his negative attributes, rather than the experience Poppy might miss out on if he was absent from her life.

Emma discussed how she thought it would be difficult to adjust to Poppy's transition to becoming a school child but felt that she had got back some more time for her and could think about the prospect of returning to work.

I thought because obviously she's been relying on me a lot. I thought she wouldn't be able to cope without me there. Which now I think I'm so glad that they overtake, like overtaken it, because I don't know as much as they do (Interview 2, line 107).

She was no longer worried about being side-lined and instead felt contained by the supportive relationship of the school, and through this relationship felt that she could now be more responsive to Poppy's needs.

4.4 *Mark, Paul and Archie

Mark and Paul are a White British same-sex couple (ages 41 and 39) who adopted their son Archie through a national adoption agency when he was 3 years old. Archie was adopted out of borough and had been in foster placement prior to this from the age of 2. Archie's earlier experiences involved neglect, deprivation with frequent change and disruption to routine. He is reported to have four siblings who are in different placements around the UK. The couple know little about Archie's birth parents, particularly his father, and most information provided has been anecdotal or documented within paperwork. As part of their adaptation to becoming adoptive parents, they are eager to learn more about his background and ensure that they create an environment in which he can explore his identity. Mark and Paul suggest that Archie is over a year behind his peers developmentally and finds it difficult to manage his emotions. In response to this, nursery applied for an EHCP prior to starting school, and he was issued with a plan in July 2018. Archie is now five and in September 2018 transitioned from his local nursery to the feeder primary school. Before the adoption process, Mark and Paul were working full-time in the financial sector and both continue to do this. When first meeting the couple, it was apparent that they had not previously had the space to process and think about their new role as adoptive parents. It was as if they had been flooded by their son's unprocessed fears and anxieties and these were felt in the research encounter whilst they were trying to figure it all out. Adopting a psychosocial perspective enabled me to make sense of the emotional experience they had gone and continue to go through prior to and as their adopted son transitions to school.

4.4.1 Becoming new parents of an adopted child

4.4.1.1 Experience of the adoptive process

Archie's foster placement was out of borough and so he travelled between both family systems for the gradual transition process. Mark and Paul were thoughtful about how this must have felt for Archie, reflecting on how different he presented early on in comparison to the present day. They described how his survival response at the time was almost one of shutdown, either sleeping or being agreeable to everything and how they had assumed he was coping well with the change.

...he seemed to be fine with it but then is that because he didn't know what was happening and sort of, he's – because we had no reference point for it. But he was... well I just can't find the word... well yeah just complied with everything (Interview 1, line 66 and 67).

You think, thinking about it now he was just...probably just too overwhelmed and quite - it's obviously quite sad.... (Interview 1, line 71)

I was curious that neither parent had mentioned what their experience of this time was, but it felt as though it were the calm before the storm.

4.4.1.2 Early experience of adoptive child and what was hoped for in new parent role

There was a sense of newness in the attachment relationship when both parents spoke about Archie. I was interested in their focus on his needs and behaviour when describing him, this made me think about how I was positioned as a professional based on their previous experiences. It was apparent that for them, Archie's needs were a focal point of his developing identity and in their understanding of him. But also, the omnipotence of their son's behaviour was evident in our encounters and the impact he has on the family's dynamic. Archie was described as having social, emotional and sensory needs and that his behaviour is more visible and amplified compared to that of

his same age peers. I wondered about the adaptive nature of his omnipotence and what this may serve for Archie in the parent-child relationship, something that had not yet been explored by his parents.

Neither Mark nor Paul explicitly mentioned how they had imagined the parent role to be, but I was curious as to whether the reality had not met their expectations. They often referred to idealised versions of parenting presented in the media, suggesting that,

...that's not how real life ever works... [laughs] (Interview 1, line 76).

They engaged in a splitting of the past and present, hoping that they as parents were doing everything right by their adopted son. In discussion, it seemed that the couple were optimistic that the life they could provide to Archie would compensate for his earlier experiences. This was alongside a worry that he would not be able to respond to the environment they have created. This appeared to impact their confidence and feeling of competence and I wondered how this influenced their unspoken feelings about Archie's behaviour.

Sometimes, when you see a kids' TV program, you say, "Why can't Archie just do that?" (Interview 2, line 198).

4.4.2 Adapting to a newly formed family system

4.4.2.1 Being a 'good enough' parent and awareness of others' perceptions

During the adjustment period, the couple had referred to research, explored Archie's past and attended peer support groups in order to understand their circumstance. In an attempt to unpick what may be going on for him, it seemed that they were engaging in a process of locating the problem in their son's genetic make-up, repressing the thought that their approach may not be enough at this time.

Now I've been reading about PDA, it's gone off down another tangent. (Interview 2, line 54). Like Mark was saying, it's almost sometimes just on a daily basis you're seeing different things, and it's constantly evolving (Interview 2, line 56).

This uncertainty was clearly communicated in the 'transference' via their dysregulated response and their search for my contribution which was a struggle to ignore.

It's just difficult to know what to do... (Interview 1, line 100).

The couple also spoke about the difference in Archie's emotional reactions compared to other children and their concern of how others may perceive his behaviour, having little understanding of him or his situation. They worried about Archie being constructed as the child who causes trouble.

I think his behaviour is somewhat more extreme than other kids when things go wrong (Interview 2, line 101).

In that moment, you can't say anything, because that is what they've seen, and you can't go into a whole 10-minute spiel of, "He's not a naughty kid" [laughs] (Interview 2, line 106).

Attending adoption support groups appeared to lessen parent's feeling of being misunderstood and provided a space where they could identify with others' experiences.

Knowing there's other people out there that have gone through the same thing and the same thing happens to them gives comfort - but it's difficult... (Interview 2, line 195).

4.4.2.2 Recognising their child's early history

The couple shared a curiosity and interest to explore Archie's family background and history in order to make sense of his experience and get to know him for who he is, but also to share this with him one day. However, being confronted to

think about his earlier experiences was overwhelming for both. Their narrative included lots of pauses and an explicit expression of sadness whenever they gave an insight into Archie's earlier history.

I think a lot of the time they found - social services, he would just be in this really sort of dirty am, dirty am...sort of you know those baby bouncers, he'd just be left in that.... Apparently, it was really grubby, and he'd just be put in front of the TV and just left... So... (Interview 1, line 24).

They described how Archie and his family regularly moved around and he was known to have attended several nurseries before he was placed in foster care.

For Archie, getting the idea there's just one thing changing, because his previous experience when he changed nursery setting, he was possibly changing carer as well. Suddenly he's in a new house, new room, new family, new breakfast routine. At one point he was with his birth family and then overnight he's no longer with them. (Interview 2, line 112).

This supported parent's reflection of Archie's response to change now.

4.4.3 Managing subsequent transitions

4.4.3.1 Early education

Archie started nursery again a few months after his adoption, Paul said initially getting him there in the mornings was difficult, but over time he settled reasonably well. It was felt that having an identified key worker provided the emotional containment that Archie needed. The couple mentioned that there was a noticeable change in his behaviour as the ending of nursery drew closer. Both considered what this ending may have meant to him and it prompted them to think about his experience of previous transitions, the loss of peer and adult relationships and the uncertainty of what was to come.

It's just as Mark was saying, it's just that transition, that jump again... into the unknown (Interview, line 110).

4.4.3.2 Preparing to start school

The couple described how his new school had arranged a picnic for the new families to provide an opportunity for introductions and to begin to build relationships. His teacher had prepared a pack for parents to go through with Archie to familiarise him with the school and staff, although with limited feedback from him they were unsure how engaged he was with this. They questioned how much Archie understood about the transition until it happened because of his level of emotional and cognitive awareness.

You know we've been talking to him about it, but that's fine that we can conceptualise what it means and understand and forward think and - but for him, you're just saying random words (Interview 1, line 29).

4.4.3.3 First day experience and subsequent separation and loss

Mark suggested that the first day went better than expected, reflecting that this may relate to Archie's coping mechanism of potentially shutting down.

But I think he was just a bit - it's obviously a shock isn't it, to the system. So again, like - he'd gotten a bit numb when we first had him. I think he might, might've - he got too overwhelmed (Interview 1, line 93).

Since then, they found separation in the mornings had become more difficult, with Archie often clinging to either dad, wanting them to stay with him. Although the couple were aware of why Archie may need this reassurance, it was evident that that they found it a challenge to comprehend the unconscious memories that may be stirred

up based on his earlier experiences of separation and not having that initial caring relationship.

Mark explained that because both him and Paul are working full-time, Archie attends a childminder three days per week and has a variable routine of who is dropping him off and picking him up. They seemed surprised by his insecurity with the smaller changes of his new routine and explained that he will question each day about what is going to happen.

So he'll keep asking what day is it and who's picking me up. Yeah that kind of thing. So, he's still...clearly he's not comfortable (Interview 1, line 65).

In our initial interview, the couple were worried how best to cope with separation in the mornings and how the experience was emotionally difficult for them. They wondered how he managed for the rest of the school day and explained that they had little communication with school at this point, so were unsure.

4.4.4 The school experience

4.4.4.1 Archie's experience of school and adjusting to new school routines

In our second encounter, both parents were pleased that Archie was starting to develop a relationship to a male class teacher who supports outdoor learning. They shared that the separation in the mornings had also improved as Archie appears to have adjusted to the new routine and so knows whose collecting him.

I think if he knows one of us, one of us three is going to be there for him, then that's enough for him to be calm and that (Interview 2, line 114).

They described their shock at the frequency of change in the school environment compared to preschool, for example in staff, in weekly events, activities and in the expectations of the children. Paul provided an example of an upcoming change to the morning drop-off, *but their plan will be that the parents basically wait at*

the, like an outer gate and the kids then get taken in by a member staff (Interview 1, line 60).

This image appeared too much for both parents to bear and they seemed relieved that these changes would be managed in a different way for Archie considering his needs.

4.4.4.2 The school system and the importance of feedback

The couple discussed their awareness of how the school system is designed for a certain type of child and that Archie requires a different approach to accommodate his needs. Their experience of school to date is that staff have been getting to know Archie and have shown flexibility to meet his needs. In our second interview, they discussed how his entry to school is now less stressful for him, as they have considered his sensitivity to noise and crowds.

...so now they're quite open to if Archie wants to go into, like there's some double doors in the middle, go into that area instead and then sit down with the other kids and then just pass his bag to the teacher, and they'll put them away (Interview 2, line 70).

An absence of feedback characterised the relationship between school and home. I wondered about how it is experienced when someone doesn't have time for you and hoped that their experience of me within the interview process was different to this. Paul provided an example of the enforced separation and lack of communication between parents and school.

It's like they see you way across the playground. [laughs] It's not like you can shout across it to them (Interview 2, line 65).

As Mark is a governor for another school within the academy trust, he had insight into the school's current context and recent changes. He explained that in the

autumn term there had been a sudden change in Head Teacher, and so the school itself was going through a transitional period in its leadership. It was interesting to see how being a part of the organisation potentially influenced his sense of agency. He felt that he could empathise with the difficult position the school is currently in and did not want to be viewed as a “*pushy parent*”. This void in communication, however, did not alleviate their concerns about how their son was being supported.

There's a gap. I don't know what's happening or not happening at school and only finding out by chance that his LSA has changed... Because he's got an EHCP, he clearly needs support. He doesn't have it (Interview 2, line 66).

It seemed that the changing nature of the school system meant that its structures could not provide emotional containment for parents and so this likely influenced the overwhelming nature of their feelings of uncertainty and confusion, as they had not yet been provided the space to process these.

4.4.5 Thinking ahead to the future

4.4.5.1 Evolving understanding of Archie's needs

In an effort to figure things out and find an explanation for Archie's behaviour, the couple told me that they were exploring a potential diagnosis. During our time together they mentioned that they had researched Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). There seemed to be confusion about his needs and the role his background played in how he presented.

I'm now thinking, "How much is that your background now? How much of it is just... something else that's there that's causing this?" (Interview 2, line 157).

I was aware of my own discomfort during this conversation and I was eager to discuss the impact of Archie's early attachment relationships and how it relates to the

multiple and often contradictory ways in which he presents. At the same time, I could understand how his parents in order to manage the messiness of his experiences would seek to compartmentalise it within a category, perhaps providing some form of containment for them.

4.4.5.2 Fragility of his mainstream placement

Mark and Paul spoke in-depth about their concern of where Archie fits within society? They felt his placement at mainstream school is fragile and were unsure whether the environment was set up to intervene for his specific needs and behaviour.

At the moment, his behaviour is fine at school. We're just very, very conscious that at any particular point, it could start deteriorating. That's the scary thing. It's just not knowing (Interview 2, line 146).

They speculated how Archie may present at school in the future, whether he will withdraw or exhibit the challenging behaviour that they see at home. There was an expectation that parents will put up with this but would not expect school to.

It's not a failure on them. It's because Archie's needs are this. You're not set to deal with this... You're just not compatible (Interview 2, line 50).

This made me think about the disturbance that Archie may have caused to their past life and whether at times they felt his adoption placement was delicate and how they may not have been supported enough to cope with him.

4.4.5.3 Reflections on preparation for school

The couple believed that they had done an “*okay job*” in preparing Archie for the transition to school and felt that regardless he was likely to have found it difficult. They continued to be confused about what his needs were and how they could have

supported these better. To improve this, they wondered about school's providing a parent checklist of what could be done in preparation.

4.4.5.4 Changing nature of professional involvement

Both parents spoke of their previous experience of professionals and how this had influenced their perception of the professional role and their desire to seek help. For them, it is important for those advising them going forward to understand and have a shared experience.

It's tricky, because you've got your professionals saying one thing who don't have that experience who are generally trying to help out and say, "You should try this. You should do these things." It just doesn't work. That's what a lot of research and people I've been reading say, "You need help from professionals that have had the background, the experience in whatever your child has got or may have got. If they don't have that, they're not seeing things in the same way." (Interview 2, line 195).

Mark spoke of the importance of the information he had received from adoption support groups and what to be aware of as your child develops and progresses through school.

4.4.5.5 Parent perspective

During the course of the interview process, Mark and Paul discussed the extensive nature of their worries about Archie and his future outcomes. They worry about the impact of his early history on how he will present in the future wondering whether he may replicate the behaviour of his family members. They have researched future outcomes for adopted children which has heightened their anxieties about Archie's academic ability and the current gap between him and his peers. They have also been preoccupied about how to speak to Archie about being adopted when he's

older, among a host of other concerns. Mark suggested that there is always something for them to worry about.

I think that things shift. There are things you focus on now and then something will shift. You'll start worrying about something else and you have to go and find out how to solve problem B and then C and then D (Interview 2, line 200).

This made me consider the process of adoption and how its meaning is likely to evolve and be reworked throughout the family's lifespan. It seemed unsurprising then that the transition to school process resurfaced unconscious anxieties that needed space to be thought about by Mark and Paul.

4.5 *Sonia and Hannah

Sonia (41), a stay at home mum who previously was a teacher, is married to Brian who works in Design. The family have four children, three boys aged 13, 11 and 10 and Hannah their youngest who is 4. Sonia spoke about noticing Hannah's difference early on, comparing her behaviour to her brothers which led her to raise concerns with relevant professionals before her 27-month check-up. Although there was a delay in assessment, Hannah was diagnosed with Autism in February 2018 and she received an ECHP later that June. In comparison to the other parents interviewed Sonia had received support from a number of early intervention services. It appears that these services were pivotal in supporting the family to cope on the emotional journey to confirming a diagnosis and the ongoing adjustment afterwards. When we first met, Sonia apologised for "*the mess*" of the house, saying she'd tried to clean it all away before my arrival. This left me wondering whether this could be an analogy for how Sonia had coped with the emotional experiences she had been through in her role as a parent. During our initial interview her narrative provided a chronology of events that had led to the present date of Hannah starting school. It took the second

interview to really delve into her emotional experience and how her daughter's diagnosis was felt by the family at first, and now as she transitions to school.

4.5.1 Early education experience

4.5.1.1 Starting nursery

The family were initially offered a place at a specialist nursery after a referral from an early intervention service was made. This was described as a blow to Sonia as it confirmed the severity of Hannah's need, something the family were not expecting as she had not yet been diagnosed. Sonia decided to turn the placement down based on the distance and her feeling that the nursery did not share her priorities for Hannah when she was just 3 years old.

I wanted somebody who would look after her. I didn't care too much about the needs in the nursery year. I wanted to know she was safe and happy. That's all I needed. I didn't necessarily need them to be trying to teach her or change her or, any of those things (Interview 2, line 52).

Sonia was clear that she wanted somewhere that would nurture Hannah and for this reason she spoke to her local nursery, brought Hannah along and they supported her to think about the type of provision her daughter would need to attend a mainstream setting.

4.5.1.2 Hannah's behaviour and level of inclusion

In order to cope with Hannah's needs the village nursery provided 1:1 support and started her on a reduced timetable, gradually building her hours up to the full 15 by the summer term. Sonia felt that this different schedule to her peers played into a separation that characterised her mainstream experience.

We always came through a different door to everybody else... And most of the time I would find if I turned up, she would be in a separate room. The other kids would be on the carpet (Interview 1, line 11).

Hannah was suggested to generally be happy at nursery. However, any changes to her routine would cause her to panic, so both parents and nursery staff opted for her to sit these out. Sonia rationalised that it was because of the disturbance Hannah would cause and for her safety that she was often separate from the group, but the impact of this feeling of exclusion could be felt in the 'transference'. In our later conversation it was evident that this segregation extended to Sonia's interactions with other nursery parents and contributed to a change in her perception of her identity.

4.5.1.3 Parent experience

Sonia outlined the treatment she experienced from the other parents and childminders, except for two who had visible differences, in this case physical disabilities. She described how having a child with a disability changed her identity and made her part of an out-group. Based on her daughter's difference she felt as though she did not belong and was prejudiced against, even if it was unintentional.

But having a disabled child, it meant that that I suddenly was more aware of inclusivity, and how having a disabled child made me on the outskirts too, which I hadn't expected (Interview 2, line 61).

Despite this difficult experience, Sonia noted some real change in Hannah's presentation at nursery. Towards the end of summer term, she had demonstrated her first play experiences.

They sent me pictures to say she's partner working with this little boy. I could see she was happy in the pictures. I could see he was happy to sit there with her (Interview 1, line 32).

Sonia felt generally supported by the nursery and although they took a long time to build up Hannah's hours, they assisted her with the EHCP process and completed their evidence in record time. They liaised with other professionals and Sonia saw them as instrumental in getting her early intervention support and helping her cope in those early years of Hannah's life.

4.5.2 Journey to diagnosis

4.5.2.1 Noticing difference

Sonia described how she had noticed Hannah's difference at an early age. An example she gave was when she would point and Hannah would not imitate or follow her, which her brothers did at that age. Another difference was her demeanour in comparison to her brothers.

We started calling her feral because she was just wild, completely wild. Looking back on it, we should have realised. (Interview 1, line 5).

Sonia would hear from others, including her husband "not to worry", or they would find ways to explain Hannah's difference. This left her feeling unheard, knowing that something was wrong, but others would not acknowledge it. This uncertainty was difficult, and she needed confirmation, so that the family would know what they were dealing with in order to find support. Although she did not realise what it may mean for her or their family going forward.

I could see it coming. It was my own research that told me. Then I went to the authorities. It was me that said, "There's an issue here." And I pushed for it cause I didn't want to pretend it wasn't happening (Interview 2, line 42).

4.5.2.2 Role of professionals

Sonia spoke about her dissatisfaction with the diagnostic process and how she felt she was not listened to by health professionals when she expressed concern.

I didn't even get a chance to say what my real concern was. I just got brushed off (Interview 1, line 5).

She explained that there was a delay in getting Hannah's multi-disciplinary assessment but that the family were provided support in the interim, set up by the nursery. Sonia also spoke about the impersonal nature of the diagnostic process which seemed contradictory to what she had expected. For the family, the most important role of professional involvement was in providing assistance with signposting and referring on to early intervention services, helping with procedures and paperwork.

4.5.3 Adaptation and moving forward

4.5.3.1 Adjusting to her needs

Sonia discussed how difficult it had been to go out with Hannah, particularly as she got older. Her and her husband appeared to manage this by keeping her at a safe distance from the world.

Now she's bigger, she wants to get out of the buggy. Before, when I could keep her in and restrain her, things weren't too bad. I tend to stay at home because it's easy I know it sounds bad, but it's easier at home (Interview 1, line 36).

It was felt that, at home Hannah is more able to be herself, this often involves going around the house nude. I wondered if as parents they wanted to protect her innocence from the influences of society, rather than think about how she could fit within it.

4.5.3.2 Mourning the loss of something you never had

Hannah's confirmation of diagnosis had significance for the family dynamic. Sonia described the excitement her boys felt when they knew they were having a sister, but how everything promised to them didn't materialise. It was apparent that this was a loss experienced by every member of the family.

We were saying things like, "Can you imagine when she'll be talking to us, and she'll be bossing us around, and she'll be saying all these things?" Then that didn't come. That didn't happen. Then I'd be like, "You can be playing with her." Again, that didn't happen. All those things we promised them didn't... (Interview 2, line 46).

Sonia expressed the conflicting feelings which often arose from her comparisons to others' situations, feeling that Hannah had been hard done by. The child, relationship and future she thought she would have, was gone and her annoyance made her feel selfish and guilty.

You feel like, "Oh, you're younger and you can do all these things and your life's going to be normal. And yet, she's not." It's weird. It's a weird feeling. You wouldn't take it from anybody else, at the same time, you feel the loss yourself. That's difficult, the comparison of she should be at the school doing reception, painting, reading, all those things, speaking, saying, "Hello, Mummy." All those things that you don't get, that's the difficulty, I'd say. (Interview 2, line 50).

I had visions of me and her going on spa days, and shopping trips, and her dad walking her down the aisle, and all that sort of thing (Interview 2, line 48).

Sonia thought of this as a grieving process, as this is not what she would have wished for her child or her family, although "they love her no less".

4.5.3.3 Role of early intervention services

Without the support of early intervention services, Sonia would not have had time to process the implications of Hannah's diagnosis. She spoke of the importance of her relationship with Melanie from the early autism service who worked with the family for a year. This relationship enabled her to gather her strength to embark on this long and emotional journey. Every "little victory" in Hannah's communication, speech, and behaviour inspired hope and excitement within the family from Sonia and Brian to her brothers.

The fact that all of that stress is taken away, the fact that the early intervention service was able to come in and try to just get her to follow a simple something or other meant that "OK, put your cup down.", "Put your cup down," and then with the early autism service, the talking - every little victory, they go, "Wow," so just being able to have that extra bit of help (Interview 2, line 77).

It made a huge difference. I could see other parents writing on the forum going, "I cannot do this any longer." "The child's gonna have to go into care." "Literally, I cannot. I'm at the point me and my husband are about to divorce," whereas I'm thinking, "Oh, we've been very blessed." I haven't had any of that to deal with. I think that would really have broken me (Interview 2, line 84).

4.5.4 Needing a different school experience

4.5.4.1 Support from the local authority

Sonia described how as a parent of a child with SEN you often stumble across information, "it's almost by luck that things happen". She explained that she knew nothing about the school application process, how to apply for transportation and had never met her SEN caseworker, a key member of support within the LA.

The only thing I would say... is that her caseworker has nothing to do with us. If I have tried to contact her, I don't get anything back. Hannah's never even seen her. I've never met the lady. That feels weird. This lady's fighting for our corner but we have no interaction with her (Interview 2, line 122).

Because you just have dropped into no man's land, and you don't know unless someone comes and holds your hands and said, "Here, I've got this bit of advice." (Interview 2, line 137).

It seemed that this process of facing and making decisions is an overwhelming one when you are in uncharted territory and having support and guidance from professionals can enable parents to develop a different relationship with their child's diagnosis, becoming an advocate for them. Sonia suggested that taking in information at this time can be difficult and so having an SEN guide that could be referred to when needed, or a relationship with their SEN caseworker would make the journey and task of starting school an easier experience for parents.

4.5.4.2 Preparing to start school and parent hopes and fears

As part of the transition process, Sonia visited the school on two occasions, once on her own and a second time with Hannah. The parent day included a tour of the classrooms and completion of relevant paperwork in advance of September. The following visit with Hannah was to introduce her to the new setting and staff. Sonia compared this transition process to that of her boys, suggesting that it was in some ways just as easy because the school supported her through it.

It's down to the way they are that they've made it as easy as another child transitioning in a normal environment in a normal school (Interview 2, line 117).

Sonia shared that she had worried considerably about Hannah starting in a new school and how the separation would go. I wondered what this separation to school

signified for Sonia on her daughter's first day. Sonia had been Hannah's primary carer since her birth and her transition to school signified a change in their relationship, a loss in her role and an uncertainty for the future.

What reassured Sonia was her developing trust in the school, based on her observations of how staff were able to manage separation in a sensitive way.

The teacher was great. The teacher came through. Hannah was going, "Nah, nah, nah, nah." [laughs] Then, the teacher got her two little toys that she bought yesterday. She took her with those, and so she never looked back. She never looked back at all (Interview 1, line 40).

Sonia explained how gentle and nurturing the teacher had been with her daughter and although there was a touch of sadness in how she spoke, I also felt a sense of hope and a readiness for someone else to take over in supporting her daughter.

I don't know how much further I can push her along, if you know what I mean... (Interview 1, line 75).

...I don't know how they're going to do that, but all these things that they're going to bring to the table are what we need (Interview 1, line 77).

4.5.4.3 Adjusting to new routines and parent school relationship

It was clear that it was not just Hannah who had to adjust to the new routines and expectations of the school environment, but Sonia too. She mentioned that the school have a no buggy policy when out, which was a change for her. They also advised parents to encourage Hannah to wear clothes at home, thinking to the future and the impact this could have on family dynamic.

The initial thought is they're at home, but then the Head Teacher's like, "Yeah, but when she gets to be a 15-year-old girl, and her brothers are in their 20s and they're

bringing their friends around you can't have her naked. It doesn't work." (Interview 1, line 13).

Sonia also spoke about some of the parent workshops, she had been able to attend and the different staff members she had met, describing these activities as being different to her experience of mainstream provision previously.

When discussing Hannah's settling in, Sonia said that she had been tearful for the first few days, but now was coping well and seemed to be enjoying all the different experiences. She was thrilled that Hannah is aware of her new routine and she had not experienced the issues and battles she had anticipated. Sonia felt that the adjustment period had been improved by her developing relationship with school. This was based on communication, transparency and the building of trust. The use of a daily home-school communication book means that the family can see how Hannah is spending her day, providing confirmation that she is happy, safe and settled. This has been important for Brian especially.

So, I think he likes it because I can either say what she's done, or he can see it every day (Interview 2, line 95).

A home visit by the class teacher to discuss how Hannah is doing and think about what the family would like for her going forward was appreciated by Sonia, and it was felt that they are very much in partnership in trying to get the best outcomes for Hannah. Although it was relatively early in their relationship, Sonia felt their nurturing approach could keep her daughter safe.

I was thinking whilst I was tidying up how I do completely trust them. It's silly. It's weird because I've only just met them, and I've met them very briefly at the beginning and the end of the day. But they take her out into the world, I guess crossing

roads, into minibuses. So, um I'm thinking that is quite a big thing to trust them to do that without knowing them (Interview 2, line 86).

4.5.4.4 Change as part of the transition process

In our second interview, Sonia recounted her amazement in the changes noticed at home during the settling in period. She made reference to two family outings of significance. One to the swimming pool over half term, where Hannah was able to swim with the family for the first time, as she willingly wore a swimming nappy, something they had encouraged at school. As well as a recent trip to Specsavers, where Hannah was not in a buggy and responded to Sonia's instructions.

I had the whole appointment with her not in a buggy I used to strap her in for everything so she can't touch anything or touch anyone or do anything naughty, but she coped really well. I'd say, "Hannah come back." She'd go, "Come back. Come back." (Interview 2, line 28).

Another poignant example of a change for the family was in how Hannah was truly accepted in this new setting. Sonia showed me her school photographs, amazed at how the photographer had managed to capture her just as she is.

That's just a like little detail of how the new school is different and how they are taking the children's quirks and working with it. It's just brilliant. You've got all the specialists that you need there. Nothing's ever too much, which is great...(Interview 2, line 110).

It was evident as our interview drew to a close that Sonia had also experienced a change as part of the transition to school process. She informed me of a recent course she had completed to become a Civil Celebrant and how she was looking forward to this new opportunity. This made me think about the necessity of this transformation for Sonia at this time of transition, in order to cope and adapt to the changes being

experienced. This along with the support of key services meant that Sonia was enabled to come to terms with her daughter's diagnosis, creating new meanings and a way forward, becoming an advocate and integral support for her daughter and for others.

4.6 Researcher Reflections

Undertaking the interview process prompted a transition for myself as a researcher, from a place of heightened vulnerability in the beginning, to a growth in confidence and adapting what I had learned through the process to my practice as a Trainee EP. My interest in this topic was borne out of previous experience supporting families of children with SEN as they transitioned to school and recognising that this is an emotional time for all, due to the level of uncertainty and the prospect of the changes ahead. My recent involvement with a family whose 4-year-old son had received a diagnosis of autism, furthered my interest as my role involved providing containment, whilst helping parents to explore an appropriate school placement, adjust their expectations, and grow in an understanding of their child.

Since starting my training at the Tavistock, I have been interested in how a psychoanalytic perspective can support an understanding of self in role and the emotional experience of the children, families and school systems we encounter within our work as EPs. Throughout my training I have endeavoured to include this perspective within my practice, which naturally triggered my interest to adopt a psychosocial ontological position and epistemology to explore parent experience, as well as maintain a sensitivity to my own feelings as a researcher in this encounter (Pelligrini, 2010). Creating an awareness of myself within the research process was intended to support my ability to hear parent stories, stay emotionally engaged and create a reflective distance from which to interpret meaning and further understand

parent experiences of their child with SEN's transition to school (Elliot et al., 2012). This was especially evident in the interviews with Emma, Mark and Paul, who said little but communicated a great deal in the 'transference' and 'countertransference'. In meeting Mark and Paul, I recall the sense of anxiety and uncertainty during the interviews was difficult to bear and I found myself slipping into a consultative role and wanting to be helpful, evident in the following extract from my reflexive notes,

I found myself overwhelmed by the couple's narrative, there was a dysregulation in how they spoke about Archie and a sense of confusion and anticipation about the future. Their need for someone to support them was unconsciously communicated and I found it difficult to hold these feelings as a researcher. (20.11.18)

Figure 1 Reflexive Note Example: Mark and Paul

I wondered what might have happened if I had adopted a more cognitive analytic approach to the methodology and what may have been lost in understanding the couple's narrative and presentation (Hollway, 2015).

During the research process I was often preoccupied by my own anxiety as a psychosocial researcher, having to think about what was being brought both consciously and unconsciously at this time for parents. I found myself worrying about the success of data collection and was aware how this likely influenced my questioning at times. This was evidenced during my strained interview with Emma, where I found it difficult not to compare to Lizzie who I had met earlier that day and whose narrative was freer flowing. I was aware of my excessive talking and questioning, moving away from the F.A.N.I. method, unable to bear the silence in our encounter. Reflecting in the moment, I felt that I was unable to ask the right questions to support Emma to open-up about her experience. It was helpful to reflect and notice this using audio recordings, reflexive notes and within psychosocial supervision, to develop an understanding of

my defence against the emotions evoked in our encounter and in this way gain an understanding of Emma's experience. I had found myself operating from a 'paranoid-schizoid position' (Klein, 1946) engaged in a 'splitting' of the good and bad participant during our interview, idealising my experience with Lizzie to manage the difficulty present in my interview with Emma (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). As we concluded interview 1, Emma asked me if she did okay and hoped that she was helpful. I wondered if she had identified with my projection and sense of judgement both of myself and of her.

In the analysis of data and production of findings, in line with Hollway & Jefferson (2013), I wanted to stay near to the individual parent experience, so as not to sacrifice the unique nature of their stories. For this reason, case studies were chosen so that the individual elements of each account could be understood within the whole context of their narrative. Adopting a psychosocial perspective supported my analysis of each parent's narrative in the context of their family structure, gender and setting, as well as reflecting on the relational dynamics within the research encounter (Hollway, 2015). The rich nature of each case study meant that I had ample data, and so had to choose what was written up based on three reference points, in this case an inductive thematic analysis based on parent narratives, a psychosocial interpretation of the research encounter and reference to researcher reflexivity. This presented a challenge and although reflexive notes about the research encounter and setting provided details that were pivotal in making sense of each narrative, with the constraints of the word count it was not possible to detail them in full for each parent. However, this descriptive data was important in the process of interpretation and making sense of the research encounters as evidenced in the following extract from reflexive field notes following my first interview with Lizzie.

I became flustered when I realised Lizzie had forgotten our visit and worried about her level of interest and investment in the research process. Lizzie's son Henry's presence and importance was felt with his toys strewn all over the floor and his photos dominating the room. Outside of the recording, Lizzie explained that it had been his birthday at the weekend, and "she hadn't managed to tidy up just yet". Lizzie's lack of preparation and engagement with the transition process led me to make an initial assumption that she maybe did not care. However, through the interview the significance of her son's transition came to life as Lizzie was provided with a space to make sense of the change and the thought that her child was making the transition from an infant to a school child. (10.09.18)

Figure 2 Reflexive Note Example: Lizzie

Adopting a psychosocial perspective provided the opportunity as researcher to take up as Britton (2004) refers to it, a 'third position', giving me the reflective distance to think about parents' experiences and the 'in-between' area which mediates the psychological and the social and includes affect and unconscious communications, relational dynamics and defences adopted, even when the affect communicated was overwhelming (Hollway & Frogett, 2012; Hollway, 2015). My initial interview with Sonia comes to mind,

I noted feeling more relaxed approaching Sonia's house, as this was my third interview and I had begun to settle into the role of researcher. As Sonia showed me into the living room, I recall her excusing the mess of the house and saying how "she had tried to clean it all away". Sonia's narrative was factual and outlined a chronology of events, with little reference to her perspective or how she felt. She repeatedly used the phrase "so that was fine", but how this was experienced in the transference often did not match with what was being described. I left my encounter with Sonia feeling overwhelmed by the experiences she had gone through as a parent and the sense that she had to hold it all together for the family, keeping the messiness of her emotions in (12.09.18).

Figure 3 Reflexive Note Example: Sonia

To end the interview process, I asked each parent to reflect on their experience of the interview process. I had wondered if use of the F.A.N.I method, which initially had filled me with anxiety because of its open-ended nature, had provided parents with more authority and ownership of the narrative they brought. For Sonia, she described the interview as *“easy and laidback”*, saying that it reminded her how grateful she was and how fortunate her family had been to have the support they had experienced in comparison to others. Emma also shared that she had found the experience *“good”* and how being able to talk to someone about her experience of her daughter had *“taken a weight off her shoulders”*. Mark and Paul suggested the interviews had been therapeutic for them, having the *“opportunity to talk and reflect”* was positive. Mark said that it had made him consider their current situation and although they are coping, he wondered whether they needed more support from professional services going forward. For Lizzie, speaking about her experience brought it to her awareness and she was surprised at how much she had learned during the interview process. She suggested that *“it takes someone to ask the question, that you haven’t thought of yourself”* for you to be able to think and reflect.

What is evident from these responses is the importance for each parent to have the space to reflect on previous transitions and often painful experiences, in order to make sense of this transformative experience as their child with SEN transitions from nursery to Reception. Providing parents with a space such as this, could be helpful to enable their understanding and ability to take up their role as the parent of a school child with greater confidence.

Through this process, I noted my own transformative experience as adopting a psychosocial methodology encouraged self-reflection on my journey as a researcher,

learning about myself through the interview process. Through this, I became more aware of my own internal processes, anxieties, and defences, how these influence and are influenced by my practice as a TEP.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided a case study analysis of the data obtained from five parents of children with SEN, as their child transitioned to school. Demonstrating that parents support their child's transition, and as a result, they themselves experience a transition in becoming the parent of a school child. In line with my positioning as a researcher, I have also included my reflections on the process and provided reflexive extracts used to support my interpretation of the data and understanding of the research encounters. In the final chapter of this thesis, I discuss the findings from this process situating them amongst current research and theory, as well as considering implications for future research and EP practice.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This closing chapter, begins with a discussion of the findings and how they relate to relevant psychological theory and literature, referring to what was pertinent to the individual, as well as where commonalities lie in the transition experience. The limitations of the current study will then be considered, as well as avenues for future research, this study's contribution to theory and implications of its findings for EP practice. An explanation of how feedback of the research will be provided to parents and stakeholders is outlined before concluding with what adopting a psychosocial methodology afforded the researcher.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the unique experience of the transition to school process for parents of children with SEN. It is felt that the findings capture the inherent nature of beginnings and endings to the transition experience and how each family's ability to cope with these represents the transition process for them, rather than the event itself (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). The emphasis in this study has been to explore both the psychological processes and the relational changes that occur as a result of the transition to school experience, in line with the theoretical underpinnings of the family developmental transition approach and psychoanalytic theory. The following section illustrates parent's experience of living their lives within a social context, making sense of the narratives they offered both to themselves and to others regarding their transition to becoming the parent of a school child (Griebel & Niesel, 2013).

5.2.1 Managing earlier transitions

5.2.1.1 *Becoming a parent*

Having children is identified as a life-changing event for most, as with any transition experience this is a time where vulnerabilities and uncertainties can arise, but also when successful adaptation and positive changes can occur (Crown, 2009; Youell, 2006). It is evident from research that the social context in which this happens varies dependent on a family's structure, ethnicity, circumstances, age and socio-economic status to name a few (Perry-Jenkins & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2019). Over time there has been a noticeable shift in the landscape in western societies, with more individuals becoming a parent outside of marriage, mothers returning to full-time employment after the birth of their infants, as well as a comparative increase in same-sex couples having children (Perry-Jenkins & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2019). These changes in societal context, will inevitably alter the experience of becoming a parent.

For three parents interviewed, there was a sense that the transition to parenthood brought significant change, in a unique way for each family. Emma described the impact on her sense of identity which had previously been aligned with her role in full-time work. Emma recalled her time at work as a period where she felt more in control of her life, and how it was all so different now. As a young mother, being a parent meant having responsibility of another life, something she felt her peers could not understand, as they were engaged in activities more typical of their age and stage in life.

For Lizzie, the parent role was not how she imagined it to be, describing how in reality it was more difficult and demanding than expected. Becoming a parent for her coincided with a change in her relationship with her partner and within three months

this had broken down (Salzberger & Wittenberg, 2013). It was apparent for Lizzie that this was a challenging time and it is likely that this influenced her ability to be able to provide what Winnicott (1960) referred to as a 'holding' environment for her developing son. This experience of 'holding' ensures that the infant's anxieties and distresses are safely contained (Bion, 1962). Lizzie's narrative suggested that the transition to become a parent was stressful for her and this continued until she was provided with adequate support and containment that she could then pass onto her son (Stern, 1995).

Mark and Paul shared a similar experience in their anxiety of becoming 'good enough' parents when they adopted their son Archie. Although the couple did not explicitly talk about the pre-adoption assessment process, they did speak about how the support received from the adoption agency was inadequate, both during and after the adoption process. So much so, that they showed a reluctance to reconnect with the agency, even though they sought further information about Archie's early history. Ludlam (2008) details how the pre-selection process for adoption may be exposing for parents, leaving them feeling vulnerable. This level of scrutiny may have acted as a deterrent, preventing the couple from contacting services for support in the period following the adoption as they worried about how they may be perceived (Ludlam, 2008).

In contrast to other parent narratives, Sonia whose daughter was her fourth child, did not refer to the time of becoming a parent. Youell (2006) suggests that when a child is not the first born, their parents may feel more confident and I wondered whether this was a contributing factor to Sonia's differing narrative. What was present for Sonia, was when she started to notice the difference in her daughter's presentation

in comparison to her sons. She described how her fantasies about the daughter she hoped to have were lost and this started a new transition process for her on the journey to a diagnosis.

In this study, it was felt that becoming a parent, involves change and disturbance to a family's dynamic, impacting on parent identity, relationships, roles and confidence (Youell, 2006; Salzberger & Wittenberg, 2013). Having a newfound sense of responsibility for another life but not being prepared for this was difficult for some parents rather than hopeful (Wadell, 2002). The transition to parenthood therefore brings about both a sense of loss alongside an opportunity for growth over time (Salzberger & Wittenberg, 2013). Becoming a parent is even more complex when your child is later identified as having an SEN as was referred to by each parent in interview.

5.2.1.2 Parenting a child with SEN

For each family, as their child matured it became apparent that they were developing in a different way to their peers. Crown (2009) speaks of her own personal experience of this realisation being '*disorganising, shattering and devastating*', when her daughter was diagnosed with autism (Crown, 2009, p.70). She posits that there are phases that parents go through from '*dread and uncertainty*' prior to clarification of their child's difficulties, to '*adaptation and recovery*' and finding a way to move forward with this new knowledge (Crown, 2009, p.71). Psychoanalytic literature emphasises that fantasies about the prospective child are present for all parents and although these may be unconscious, they are likely to impact how they take up the parent role and expectations of their developing child (Hugger, 2009; Crown 2009; Stern, 1997).

Lizzie spoke about how she had struggled to understand her son's externalising behaviours because he could not express his wants and needs. She was often filled with dread and embarrassment when called to nursery to support him. Lizzie's uncertainty about how best to intervene added to her lack of confidence as a parent and feelings of possible failure (Hugger, 2009). Once he was diagnosed with speech and language difficulties and provided support for these, Lizzie began the process of adapting her parenting to his needs with the support of his key adult.

In his study Russell (2005) describes what happens when parents learn that their child has a disability and how their expectations change, needing time to readjust to this new terrain of special needs. This sense of change and adaptation needed in the parenting role is strengthened by Connolly & Gersch (2016), in their study of parents who find out their child has a diagnosis of autism wondering what their future will look like. This was especially evident in Emma and Sonia's narrative as parents of children with autism. Emma suggested that both her and her then partner, were in the dark about her daughter's difficulties, but as she matured her behaviour became more of a concern. Emma described the diagnosis of her daughter as an unexpected blow for the family. She recalled how it had been a lot to bear and eventually led to the breakdown of her relationship with her partner, as they coped with the adjustment in different ways.

Sonia similarly talked about the impact of a diagnosis on her entire family unit and mourning the loss of the normal child she had hoped for. Like Crown (2009), Sonia described a grieving process and although the love for her daughter was still present, she needed to express her loss in order to make meaning of what had occurred for herself, her child and her family.

This brought to mind Mark and Paul's experience, they showed a preoccupation with what their adopted son's needs were and how they could be categorised, as his often confusing and overwhelming behaviour impacted the family dynamic. Similar to a case example provided by Ludlam (2008), I felt, until they as adoptive parents had realised and expressed their feelings of loss that had occurred about the hoped-for child, they would be unable to let go of these and grow in confidence to support him.

It was clear that having a child with an identified SEN impacted how parents saw themselves and their child, changing their experience and introducing them to a world that was unfamiliar (Crown, 2009; Hugger, 2009; Stern, 1997, Russell, 2005). In this study, there was evidence that in response to this some parents took up an advocacy role for their children, but their ability to do so was influenced by their confidence, family context, professional support and attitudes afforded to them (Dockett et al., 2011). In the case of Mark and Paul, it felt that both their confidence and position within the school system made it difficult for them to advocate on behalf of their son, not wanting to be viewed as unable to cope or "*pushy parents*". Similarly, as first-time parents both Lizzie and Emma lacked belief in themselves as having expertise in their child. This changed for Emma over time with the support of her daughter's 1:1. It seemed that this containing relationship was able to facilitate her advocacy role as a parent. Sonia described how once she was aware of her daughter's difference, she "*battled*" on her behalf to ensure she got what was needed, starting from a diagnosis.

Meleis et al. (2000) suggest the importance of preparation and knowledge as facilitators of the transition process, knowing what to expect and how best to cope with it. For the parents in this study, having a child with SEN was an unexpected event

which brought about a sudden change in expectations of the parent role, had an impact on parent self-concept and brought into light anticipation about the future for their child and family. Similar to Hugger's (2009) findings on mothers coming to terms with their child's special needs, the emphasis in this study was on the importance of the psychological processes that parents go through in coping with this change and the implications of this going forward, particularly as children transition from the home to school culture and beyond. Perhaps what was evident in this study in line with others, was that parent's ability to come to terms with their new situation was contingent on a process of mourning and subsequent adaptation (Crown 2009; Hugger, 2009).

5.2.1.3 Transition from home to nursery

Wittenberg (2001) talks about the hope present when a child transitions to nursery, however she suggests that this may be tainted by previous experiences if these have not been managed successfully. For the families in this study the move from home to nursery was characterised as initially stressful where their child's sense of difference to others became apparent and they did not develop and change in line with their peers (Mills & Puckering, 1995). For most, starting nursery was their child's first socialisation experience outside of the family unit and their first encounter with the education system, shaping their experience and expectations of education professionals (Amerijckx & Humblet, 2015).

Lizzie spoke about her son's experience of exclusion because of his behaviour and how he was often not involved in nursery events, as it was felt he could not cope with these. She suggested that in the beginning, she often felt judged in her interactions with nursery staff and I wondered if the adults supporting her son felt that they had failed in their primary task and so projected this unwanted feeling onto Lizzie as his parent (Hayley, 1976). This was similar to both Emma and Sonia's experience, where

their children were also excluded from events or they were called to pick them up when staff were finding it difficult to cope.

In line with this, Connolly & Gersch (2016) found that parents of children with ASD worry about the stigma attached to their child's difference and others' misconceptions of both them and their child. This was true for all parents who spoke about how both they and their child were perceived by others at nursery. Sonia recalled how she was ignored by other nursery parents as having a child with a disability made her part of an out-group (Tajfel, 1979). Mark and Paul suggested that others often misinterpreted their son's behaviour, not recognising his earlier history and why he may respond as he does. For Emma and Lizzie, they felt their parenting capacity was called into question by nursery staff because of their child's difference in behaviour.

Mark and Paul found that starting nursery was a challenge for their son, Archie. They described how prior to adoption he had experienced many changes in his life and wondered how his memory of these impacted any subsequent change. This prompted me to think about Klein's (1957) concept of 'memories in feeling' asserting that our experiences leave memory traces that can resurface in similar situations. For Archie starting at nursery symbolised not only a setting change, but a change in key adults, peers and foster placement and the fear that comes with that, that his parents may not want him (Wittenberg, 2001). They felt that over time he had been able to settle because of his key worker who provided the emotional containment he required.

Despite their children having a different experience to that of their peers, parents in this study described how over time the nursery became a place where their children felt looked after and cared for, where they began to develop relationships with

adults and in some cases peers (Wittenberg, 2001). From this study it was clear that the nature of relationships between children, their parents and nursery staff influenced the organisation's ability to carry out its primary task, in this case providing both a nurturing and supportive learning environment (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry, & Osbourne, 1983). Parents themselves were able to impart trust in nursery staff who supported them in applying for an EHCP and thinking about future implications of their child's difference. How parents described their later interactions with nursery staff reminded me of Bion's (1961) 'Container-Contained' model, the process by which nursery staff would hold and manage parent anxieties about their child's needs, make sense of them and feed them back gradually in a more palatable form (Bion, 1961). In this way the ending at nursery required preparing for as it meant parting with a sense of trust, partnership and established attachments (Wittenberg, 2001).

The findings from this research confirm what was found by Janus et al. (2008) asserting that those parents in the pre-transition group recorded more positive perceptions of the care they received in comparison to the post-transition group, although it should be noted that these scores did not reach statistical significance. Although a departure from the positioning of this research, this was felt to be in line with the experience of parents who spoke about feeling known and held. With parents suggesting that nursery staff always did their best to support their children, there was a worry that with the transition to school this may not be maintained. This is illustrative of Villeneuve et al.'s (2012) finding that families become accustomed to the family-centred model of service delivery provided within the early years and so find it difficult to adjust to this change in contact and involvement on transition to school.

5.2.2 Navigating the change process

When thinking about preparing for the transition to school, each parent spoke about their anticipation of the change in different ways, how they made sense of it, their participation in it and the role of professionals, as well as the transition activities and practices carried out by receiving schools. All parents in this study noted the importance of receiving an EHCP prior to transition to ensure that the appropriate provision arrangements could be put in place to support positive outcomes for their child.

5.2.2.1 Choosing an appropriate provision

It is noted that during this time parents will need to consider the right school for their child, which is variable and dependent on factors such as a child's level of need, school's reputation, locality, options available due to limited provision and whether an assessment is required to be entitled to specialist support (Dockett et al., 2011; Connolly & Gersch, 2016). Connolly & Gersch (2016) supplement this further suggesting that the timing of a diagnosis can impact on educational trajectory and associated outcomes for children.

As part of the adjustment to their daughters' diagnosis, both Emma and Sonia recognised that they would require a different type of school experience. Similar to Dockett et al.'s (2011) findings it appeared as though for Emma her input as a parent had been minimal during the EHCP assessment and school application process, implying that nursery staff had taken the lead in this. Trusted professionals, in this case her daughter's 1:1 support, told Emma that this specialist provision was one of the best, which influenced her acceptance of the offer and her confidence that they would be able to support her daughter and keep her safe. Sonia also reflected on her experience

of choosing an appropriate provision saying that she had known little about the process and how it had occurred through stumbling across information or conversations with professionals from the early intervention service and other parents of children with SEN. For her, choosing an appropriate specialist provision involved incurring a travel cost, something to be supported by the local authority but similarly the process of application was unclear.

Choosing the right school was a different experience for Lizzie, Mark and Paul whose children attended mainstream provision. Lizzie appeared to choose based on location and maintaining a sense of continuity for her son, transitioning from the school nursery to Reception with his 1:1. Maintaining this attachment to both his 1:1, some of his teachers and peers was felt to be important to facilitate his successful transition. Similarly, a sense of continuity was sought after for Mark and Paul's adopted son Archie. They chose his primary school based on its location and because some of his friends from nursery would also be going there. The need to maintain connections was felt to be crucial for Archie in creating a more positive experience of change for him, that he would be able to internalise and take forward to subsequent transitions (Wittenberg, 2001; Meleis et al., 2000). At the same time, Mark and Paul were unsure if they had made the right decision in choosing a mainstream provision as they worried about Archie's safety and the safety of others.

I was reminded of Hutchinson et al. (2014) and Siddiqua et al (2016) findings where they described how parents often found they did not have the knowledge of procedures, processes and opportunities as this was their first child with an SEN. This may explain the reliance on professional support at this time identified by all parents in this study. Some of the most valued support at this critical point was often found to

come from those who had shared a similar experience to themselves, in most cases parents of children with SEN (Dockett et al., 2011).

The families in this research suggested that at the time of interview, they were pleased with their child's placement, despite confusion for some initially about the most appropriate school. Choosing a school placement creates uncertainty for parents of children with SEN. For some parents, finding the appropriate provision was bound up with feelings about how their child would cope in the present as well as later life. Without adequate information and support from professionals, or consideration of parental expertise and knowledge of their child, parent's understanding of this process may be compromised, and they can feel powerless to change it (Dockett et al. 2011).

5.2.2.2 Role of the professional

Each parent described a variable experience of professional involvement, namely health and education professionals. Whilst some parents felt they had been well supported, they also felt that they had to battle to be heard and achieve desired outcomes for their child. These initial relationships are thought to provide a basis for expectations of professionals and school going forward and so are pivotal to the parent experience of the transition to school process (Russell, 2005). For Emma, it was nursery staff who initially noticed her daughter's difference and raised parent awareness encouraging Emma to have her checked out. I had felt that this experience had influenced Emma's positioning of others as experts of her child, maintaining the power differential and internalisations that she alone could not adequately meet her daughter's needs.

Russell (2005) posits that parents of children with SEN will often have unconscious expectations of professional support but will only become aware of these if they are not met. Mark, Paul and Sonia spoke about a feeling of being let down by professionals and not receiving the support that was required at the time. Sonia referred to her experience of a lack of empathy from health professionals when she shared concerns about her daughter's difficulties and recalled how she had not felt listened to. This sense of needing to fight for their children's rights and to get support was reinforced by parents of children with ASD in Connolly and Gersch's study (2016). For Mark and Paul, their expectation of therapy services, including that of OT were not met. They suggested that resources were stretched, and it often felt like a "*tick box exercise*" with the family being closed by the service earlier than expected because of capacity.

Staff expertise, nature of experience and professional attitudes have been found to be indicators influencing positive transition outcomes for children and families (Russell, 2005). This appears evident in the case of all parents in this study. Both Lizzie and Emma discussed the importance of their child's key adult and how their knowledge and guidance provided containment, not just for their child but for them as a parent. For Sonia, collaboration with support workers from early intervention services, particularly the ASD specialist service ensured positive outcomes for her whole family, increasing their understanding of and confidence in supporting her daughter's needs. Conversely, Mark and Paul suggested that professionals do not often have experience of adoption themselves and as a result can suggest strategies that are felt to be unsuccessful. They recalled the most important support provided to them has been from adoption support groups, who have a shared experience and can advise based on this.

This study showed that the psychoanalytic concepts of ‘splitting’ and ‘projection’ are often at play when considering professional involvement, which can lead as Pelligrini (2010) suggests to the ‘demonisation’ of some individuals. Professionals can become the recipient of parent’s ‘splitting’ behaviour when anxiety about their child’s needs not being met is apparent or when they are coming to terms with what these difficulties might mean for them and their families. It was evident that it was often early years educational professionals and early intervention services who provided a containing function or were part of the meaning making for parents, rather than health professionals. I wondered then, if this contributed to parents more positive views of the involvement and care provided in their child’s early years setting. It was evident that transitioning to school parents carried with them high expectations of educational professionals based on these earlier experiences (Russell, 2005; Hutchinson et al., 2014).

5.2.2.3 Preparing for starting school

Wittenberg (2001) suggests that often the pain of leaving nursery for the parents, child and staff can make it difficult to think about and prepare for the transition to school. She asserts the importance of bridge building so that children and families feel held in mind by both the nursery and the new school (Wittenberg, 2001). Promoting connection between the familiar and unfamiliar has been shown to be crucial to ensure successful transition, alongside information sharing between settings and transition practices to support ability to cope with the changes ahead (Janus et al., 2007; Rous et al., 2007; Dockett et al., 2011; Villeneuve et al., 2012, Siddiqua et al. 2016). It was interesting to note that for the parents in this study, the various participants in transition often did not come together and the move from nursery felt more akin to a

linear model rather than a social model where relationships are felt to be central (Huser, Dockett & Perry, 2015).

In line with this, Rous et al. (2007, p.9) discuss the importance of providing a “*supportive infrastructure*” between those involved in the transition process, namely parents, preschool, receiver school and any other relevant professionals from health or the LA. This is further reiterated by Villeneuve et al. (2012) where parents found that the most successful outcomes arose from collaboration between home, professionals and educators during the transition process. In the case of all four families, it was apparent that the support around them varied, those who suggested they had more support, information and collaboration with professionals and school staff appeared to find the transition process to be more positive. Even with this support, Sonia, Mark and Paul proposed the need for clearer guidance about the transition to school process for children with SEN, as roles and responsibilities for those involved are not always clear. This is in line with findings from Villeneuve et al. (2012) who argue for the importance of support for parents in preparation for transition alongside preparation for the child specifically.

It was apparent that parents in this study, like others, held expectations in relation to school structure and how their child would be supported on transition to school (Russell, 2005). A difference was noted between parental accounts, with those transitioning to a specialist setting having more information about support their child would receive within the school day compared to those at mainstream. As part of the transition process, both Emma and Sonia had attended information sessions held by the receiving school. In these sessions, parents were provided with information on the school day, support structures and guidance to prepare their children for transition. This

information sharing continued in the first term with both Sonia and Emma sharing that they had open communication with the school in the form of a home-school book, phone calls, workshops and home visits. Both parents felt that they were working in partnership with school staff to achieve certain outcomes for their children.

In comparison, Lizzie, Mark and Paul spoke about a difficulty in knowing what was best to do, as well as how and when to talk about transition so as not to confuse or unsettle their child. Neither appeared to have a clear understanding of how their child would be supported prior to starting school or how they could work with school towards suggested outcomes. Villeneuve et al. (2012) found similarly that parents were unsure of how to support their children effectively, when teacher expectations had not been shared, especially as their children could not adequately communicate this. For Lizzie, this uncertainty changed over time as her regular communication with Henry's key adult provided her with details of what his support looked like and how he was being included in the setting, something she very much appreciated.

Unlike the other parents, Mark and Paul had found communicating with school difficult and in the first term had received little feedback from staff, this raised their concerns about how Archie was being supported. Russell (2005) posits from his research that parental expectations for school were often not realised because parents did not have the relevant knowledge, understanding or the opportunity to discuss this with their child's school prior to starting. It was clear for Mark and Paul that this sense of ambiguity about support and inclusion in school increased their anxiety about whether Archie was settling in, progressing through the curriculum and making friends.

A commonality to emerge from the research interviews was that each child had participated in transition activities and practices organised by the school in order to promote their readiness. These included visits to the Reception class, meeting with prospective teachers where possible and a staggered start in September to ease the transition to longer days. All families were also provided with a transition pack to go through with their children during the summer holidays in preparation for September. Mark and Paul described how Archie's school had arranged a picnic for the new families joining the school community, although on the day Archie found the experience overwhelming and chose to sit away from the group. Most parents questioned how much their child understood from the packs provided by schools or in fact about the transition more generally, because of their level of emotional and cognitive awareness. Salzberger & Wittenberg (2013) suggest that most schools offer introductory visits and information packs, but as there is so much to take in, this can often leave children confused and uncertain in their new setting for some time.

5.2.3 Significance of starting school

The emotional experience of starting school for all of those involved has been well documented within the literature (Dockett et al., 2011; Griebel & Niesel, 2013; Youell, 2017; Villeneuve et al., 2012). Psychoanalytic thinking highlights the importance of beginnings and endings and endeavours to understand the anxiety evoked in both children and parents on the first day of school (Youell, 2017). For the families in this research the experience of starting school was thought to be complicated further by their child's SEN. It is little wonder then, that most parents spoke about their anticipation of the first day and expressed concern about how their child would cope with the initial separation, as well as their experience of unfamiliar staff and the adjustment to new routines and expectations. The first day also brought with it a

realisation that the parent role would be changed forever, with parents handing over to someone else to share responsibility in the development of their child (Dockett et al., 2011; Youell, 2006).

For Lizzie, it seemed that the first day experience revealed her reluctance to face the transition and her worry about whether she had done a good enough job in her son's earlier years, whilst he was at home with her. Although, in the same breath she shared how she looked forward to the idea that someone else would be responsible for caring for and educating her child. Emma and Sonia too shared this perspective as they felt they had been able to bring their child so far but would benefit from the support of school staff to help them reach their full potential.

The first day experience forced Mark and Paul to reflect on Archie's earlier transitions and how he had coped with them. Although aware that he was likely to find starting school difficult, comprehending his potential feelings of loss and abandonment was a challenge for them (Salzberger & Wittenberg, 2013). This appeared to heighten their anxiety about the fragility of his presentation and the sense that at any moment he could fall apart.

All parents worried whether their child would find it difficult to manage without them there and whether sharing responsibility with school staff would be a challenge. For Sonia and Emma, their child's under-developed communication seemed to increase their concern as they would not be able to let them know if they were not okay. It was apparent that separation signified the move from one phase of life to the next and so was emotionally difficult for all parents.

Separation and change, although painful are fundamental experiences that are associated with growth, development and rebirth (Youell, 2006). Over the life course, an individual will undergo many beginnings and endings in order to develop the capacity to cope with later losses and transitions (Youell, 2017). From this study it is evident that the task for schools, early years practitioners and professionals is to manage the feelings that often arise through the transition to school process, building on these earlier experiences (Youell, 2006).

5.2.4 Awareness of changes as part of transition process

Griebel and Niesel (2004) suggest that transition is associated with life changes that are often characterised by a period of enhanced and accelerated learning. This was spoken to by all parents in negotiating new relationships with their child's receiving school, learning about the school system, adapting to a changed parental role and loss of their infant to a school aged child.

Janus et al. (2008) posit that the transition to school of a child with SEN can reduce parent stress, allowing parents to take some time for themselves to reconnect or become involved in other opportunities. For three of the parents involved in this study the transition to school process signified a redevelopment of their identity with the prospect of starting work. Lizzie spoke explicitly about how finding employment provided a sense of purpose after losing her "*baby*" to school. This was suggested to be of significance to her as prior to this, her life had revolved around her only child. Emma talked about gaining time for herself, the prospect of returning to work but also having time enjoy her own interests. Similarly, Sonia chose to undertake a course and follow a different career path that complemented her moving forward following her daughter's diagnosis of ASD and transition to school. This echoes the findings of

Dockett et al. (2011) who suggest that parents seem content to be supported in their child's development and having someone else to take up responsibility in caring.

Transition to school forces the family and their child with SEN to adapt. Coping with discontinuities can be transformative for some, however for others it may lead to them becoming stuck (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Lizzie was seen to show an outwardly change in her level of confidence as a parent and capacity to manage introjections and identifications from her son and others. She described how she felt more able to take her son Henry out with her and enjoy the time they spent together. Emma was delighted to share the change observed in her daughter's engagement with others and her wider world. She mentioned how Poppy had progressed in her self-care, communication and play skills, all of which were important to Emma in signifying developmental growth. Emma showed more of a belief in herself as a mother and what she, her partner and the school had been able to achieve in supporting her daughter's progress.

Sonia referred to significant changes she had noted in her daughter's behaviour at home, and how this influenced their family dynamic. Like Lizzie, she described how they as a family had been able to participate more in their local community. Sonia also spoke to another transformational outcome for her as an advocate for both her daughter and other parents of children with SEN, following involvement with the early intervention services.

Mark and Paul shared that for them the frequency of change in school life was difficult to adjust to and I was aware of their sense of relief that their son's needs meant that these changes would be reduced and supported in an appropriate way. The transition to school appeared to be more of an unsettling process for the couple

compared to the other families. I wondered about the lack of feedback and emotional containment from school and how this may have contributed to a sense of feeling lost and uncertain. This study is illustrative of the findings from Griebel & Niesel (2009) that parent expectations adapt in line with a child's development in school, and so understandably those parents who noted key progress in their child's behaviour and skills were evidently feeling more positive about the transition.

It is clear that, endings and beginnings are naturally connected and certain in our progression through life. Endings force us to adjust to some sort of loss and beginnings spur us to move on from a previous phase of life to begin anew (Salzberger & Wittenberg, 2013). As Youell (2006) posits, transitions throughout the lifespan build on earlier ones, in this way the resurfacing of previous experiences will influence later outcomes. For parents of children with SEN uncertainty about their child's future is an inherently unsettling position to be in. This is important to hold in mind when considering parent's experience of the transition to school process of their child with SEN and the crucial role of timely and adequate professional support and information to help parents make meaning of what is occurring, learn to adapt and reconstruct a new way to live (Selder, 1989; Meleis et al., 2000).

5.3 Theoretical Contribution

When considering how this study has contributed to a theoretical understanding of the transition to school, I will return to the theoretical perspectives introduced earlier, asserting that this research has been able to provide a rich insight into theory based on the methodology chosen. Firstly, the findings from this study support Kralik et al.'s (2006) conceptualisation of transition as a process involving three elements including; movement between two time points, a transformation and internalisation of these

changes to reform identity. Applying this insight to the transition to school process contributes an alternative interpretation of how this time of change may be understood and managed. It brings awareness to the ongoing nature of the emotional, social and cognitive adjustment for parents as their child transitions to school rather than focusing solely on the practicalities of the change event itself. As well as recognising that the adjustment to the transition to school process is influenced by factors such as a family's social context, relational dynamics, personal resources and wider societal factors.

In line with the family developmental transition approach, parents spoke to the relational changes that occurred as part of the transition process, suggesting that the transition experiences of becoming a parent and parenting a child with SEN impacted differently on each family member, which influenced parent's ability to cope and subsequently the success of the transition process. The parents in this study confirmed how the success of transition was dependent on communication, collaboration and interaction of those involved (Griebel & Niesel, 2013). Application of this theoretical understanding to practice would have implications for how the transition is supported by education systems and professionals.

The parents in this study also spoke to the significance of beginnings and endings and reflected on how the management of these earlier experiences influenced later transitions. How becoming a parent and finding out your child has an SEN, as well as transition to nursery influenced parents' perception of their child's transition to school, how they approached it, thought about it and adjusted to the change. In this study, having the space to think about what and how things were changing and what this may mean for parents and their family, increased their level of engagement with the transition process and related to more positive outcomes. In line with psychoanalytic theory on transition, normalising the inherent nature of anxiety at times of change and uncertainty was important for parents and bringing an awareness to this

was supportive in developing a more integrated position enabling their mastery of the adjustment process, so that they could support both themselves and their child through the changes occurring.

Applying the findings from this study to theories on transition, expands on existing ideas and conceptualisations which in turn contributes to our knowledge on the topic of transition and will have implications for professional practice.

5.4 Implications for EP Practice

The research highlights the significance of becoming a parent of a school child and how this experience is altered for a parent of a child with an SEN. It is evident that the findings from this research could be used to develop the work of EPs at different levels in the transition process, namely universal and targeted support (Kennedy et al. 2012).

The current role for EPs nationally during the transition to school often involves consideration of outcomes and provision arrangements for children with SEN within the statutory process (Kennedy et al. 2012). Echoing previous findings, the parents in this study often had little understanding or active involvement in this process and instead were reliant on EY practitioners and professional views. More recent government legislation relating to children with SEN and their families suggests that parents should be viewed as experts in their child and so key informants whose contribution should be valued. Therefore, it is important to have involvement of parents at all levels of the transition process, so that they understand and feel prepared as this has been shown to influence outcomes (Rous et al., 2007, Siddiqua et al., 2016).

In this study, it is asserted that transition policies at both a national and local level should be informed by what is known from relevant psychological theory and literature. Conceptualising transition as a process which begins before children start school, involves multiple parties and is dependent on the communication and partnership of all those involved (Griebel & Niesel, 2003). Given that EPs are required to provide psychological advice as part of service delivery and organisational change, they would appear to have an important role in collaborating with others involved in transition process to develop relevant policy and guidance with a focus on relationships and multiple transitions over different contexts (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). International research on transition has recommended the role of a key facilitator to support the family's navigation of the transition process (Villeneuve et al., 2012; Hutchinson et al., 2014). Perhaps in the UK, it would be beneficial for EPs to take up this role providing support for those children with SEN and their families transitioning to school, or through the process of training and supervision, EPs could facilitate a member of the school community to assume this responsibility.

Within the current local authority in which I am placed, the EPS have been developing their service offer to settings, with a focus on early intervention and preventative ways of working. It may be as part of this, consideration could be made regarding the psychological approaches adopted by the service and the role of the EP within the transition to school process. The potential role here could be in the provision of training to support EY and school practitioners to develop awareness of the importance of transition and their role within it.

Previous research asserts for the importance of the professional role to support parents to make sense of their child's SEN and implications of this for the future,

including their prospective school experience (Crown, 2009). EPs are well situated within the community context to take up this role at an individual or group level, dependent on capacity and resources. The potential role for EPs in supporting the transition to school process poses the question of how confident and well equipped they may feel in responding to a family's emotions and vulnerabilities at this time of change and adjustment. From the findings in this research, this may include experiences such as; the loss of attachment to key people, peers and setting, a sense of uncertainty in parental role and identity, change in expectations and responsibilities, entering into a new school system, anticipation about the future and emotions aroused from previous beginnings and endings. EPs may find themselves unprepared in this instance for what may arise in the context of this work, and so there is a need for supervision for the EP as well as for others involved in the transition, in order to make sense of the emotional journey embarked on during the transition to school process. This is especially crucial for adoptive parents like Mark and Paul where the long-term impact of trauma and loss needs to be made sense of and understood in order to intervene and prepare for the transition experience in a supportive way.

All families in this study, referred to a feeling of exclusion and being on the periphery of the mainstream environment. The importance for parents to meet others who experience similar challenges was evident. This made me consider the role of the school community in the lives of parents of children with SEN and how it could provide a sense of connection and a reflective space for parents who may feel isolated because of their child's perceived difference or their own. The school's link EP would be well-placed to develop school's capacity to support these parents through information evenings, support groups or coffee mornings to be held prior to and beyond the initial school start to assist the settling in process.

5.5 Dissemination

At the conclusion of the data collection phase, all parents interviewed expressed an interest in having the outcomes of the study shared with them. After discussing this with each parent, it was felt that this would be best in a written summary form. Parents expressed their interest in understanding what others' experiences from the same local authority would be like and whether they would be congruent to theirs. This feedback will be provided at a later date, once the final copy of the thesis has been approved. It is intended that this will focus on summarising each parent's experience of the transition to school process of their child with SEN, and what their reflections might tell us about what could be helpful to support positive outcomes for children and their families starting school.

Given the relevance of this research to the EP role, I intend to present it to my EPS team and other LA professionals as part of a continued professional development day. This presentation will include opportunity for both reflection and peer discussion for people to consider their prior experience of this topic, as well as their psychological approaches to and beliefs about the transition to school process and how these influence practice.

I also plan to submit this study for publication in relevant academic journals and hope that other professionals can benefit from and reflect on their practice based on the insight gained.

5.6 Limitations of the Research

From the outset, the aim of this study was to provide a voice to parents of children with SEN as they went through the transition to school process to understand their experience of this change. I felt that the use of individual case studies could provide a rich understanding that went beyond the measurable aspects of human behaviour and gave insight into each unique parent experience. I was aware of the use of case studies to bring about change in policy and practice at a local and national level, and so felt this was an appropriate way to think about change in the way we understand the transition to school process for parents of children with SEN. However, considering the small sample size, a limitation of this study could be that the findings could be argued to not be representative of other parents of children with SEN, as it cannot be assumed that their experiences can be understood based on those expressed by the participants in this study. Although I would suggest that despite this, there are likely to be some reflections that EPs and other professionals could consider and apply to their practice.

Another limitation could be related to the methodology chosen, I had considered in line with other psychosocial research on identity transformation, what psychoanalytically informed observational data may have added to the parent narrative, providing further contextual information that was not dependent on the parent account. In line with Hollway's (2008) study of the transition to motherhood, I wondered in a similar way, if this type of data would complement what was understood from the research interview, particularly the relational and unconscious processes that exist as part of the transition to school process. Unfortunately, because of capacity and time constraints it was not possible to obtain observational data for the purpose of this study,

but further studies could explore this within the methodology as the family negotiate the 'rite of passage' from home to school culture (Van Genneep, 1960).

5.7 Future Research

This study contributes to a limited body of research on the transition to school experience for parents of children with SEN in the UK. Given the paucity of research on this topic coupled with the limitations of this study, future research is needed to develop a more in-depth understanding of the experience of the transition to school process for those involved, namely EY practitioners, teachers, parents, children and professionals. It is interesting to note that the focus of transition policy and guidance in the UK to date seems to emphasise a 'child's readiness', what they can demonstrate and what their needs are on arrival to their new school. With further study, the inclusion of observations and interviews with other participants in the transition process could be explored, presenting an alternative view of the transition process as social and contextualised involving family, culture, and community in line with transition theory and global research (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Webb et al., 2017).

The experience of Mark and Paul, a same-sex couple with an adopted son also prompts consideration for further research, as it was found in this study that the adoption process and the newness of the attachment relationship can resurface unconscious anxieties for both parents and their child. Future research focusing on adoptive parent's experience of their child's transition to school from a psychosocial positioning, could endeavour to deepen understanding of the emotional experience at this time and how best to support those involved.

In line with psychoanalytic theory, this study found that earlier transitions impact later ones, in this way the resurfacing of previous experiences is likely to influence later outcomes for children and their families (Youell, 2006). Thus, longitudinal studies could provide insight into the way in which parent's experience of their child with SEN's transition to school may evolve over time, from home to nursery, nursery to school and beyond.

In this study I have asserted that parent's personal experiences will influence their narrative of the transition to school process of their child with SEN. Further research could explore a range of personal, social and cultural histories, including parents from lower income backgrounds, non-English speaking parents and different ethnicities to enrich transition research and understand the unique experience of those who may be 'hard to reach' or more difficult to engage.

5.8 Concluding Thoughts

This study used a psychosocial methodology to give voice to the transition experience of parents of children with SEN as their child started school, as although educational practice has grown in its awareness of the need to prepare for changes, it was felt that there is less understanding of the unique parent experience and meaning of transition for them. This insight provides implications for the role of EPs, at a both a national and local level redefining our perception of transition and our involvement in it, not limited to a statutory role but instead supporting key members of the transition process to make sense of earlier experiences, of becoming a parent of a child with SEN and what this may mean for a family going forward as they progress through the education system and beyond. Adopting a psychosocial perspective enabled me to

explore both the psychological processes and the relational changes that occur for parents of SEN children as a result of the transition to school process. Use of the FANI, as suggested by parents provided a space for them to discuss their child's transition in a way that had not been asked before. In undertaking this study, I held my psychosocial epistemology at the forefront of my mind, as it was felt that an awareness of and reflection on this throughout has implications for practice. It is hoped that for those reading this research, this may prompt self-reflection on how they too conceptualise transition and how this could inform their practice going forward.

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Appendix A. Exclusion Table

Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year of publication	Reason for Exclusion
A qualitative case study of five mothers' experiences with early intervention services and preschool choices for their children with disabilities.	Cole.			Related to earlier transition to preschool.
Deaf Young People with Sequential Bilateral Cochlear Implants: The Experience of Parents and Teachers.	Mather, Archbold, Gregory.	N/A	2011	Unpublished Article
Doll Play narratives about starting school in children of socially anxious mothers, and their relation to subsequent child school-based anxiety.	Pass, Arteche, Cooper, Creswell, and Murray.	Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology	2012	Within child focus on school-based anxiety, and identification of risk factors in children starting school.
Adaptation in the transition to school: Perspectives of parents, preschool and primary school teachers.	Correia, Marques-Pinto	Educational Research	2016	Focused on typically developing children
Exploring British Pakistani mothers' perception of their child with disability: Insights from a UK context.	Rizvi	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	2017	Focus on transition to parenthood of a child with a disability.

Glue ear – a common but complicated childhood condition	Capewell	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs.	2016	Retrospective account from child's perspective.
Investigating the transition of young children with intellectual disabilities to mainstream classes: An Australian perspective.	Kemp	International Journal of Disability, Development and Education	2003	Programme evaluation including parent, teacher and principal perspective
Mothers of young children with disabilities: Perceived benefits and worries about preschool.	Mawdsley	Early Child Development and Care	2018	Earlier transition from early intervention service to preschool.
Parents' emotional and social experiences of caring for a child through cleft treatment.	Nelson, Kirk, Caress, and Glenny	Qualitative Health Research	2012	Across the lifespan from 20 months to 21 years. Not explicitly focused on transition.
Satisfaction and desire for change in educational placement for children with down syndrome: perceptions of parents.	Freeman, Alkin, Kasari	Remedial and Special Education	1999	Across the lifespan, parent satisfaction with current educational programme.
Transition to preschool education: A review of the literature.	Malone, Gallagher	Early Education and Development	2009	Addresses earlier transition to preschool services between ages 2-3.
Utilisation and Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Services in Children with Primary Language Impairment Transitioning to	Mazer, Dion, Moryoussef	International Journal of Disability, Development and Education	2017	Focus on transition from early intervention healthcare service to education system

School: Parents' Perspective				
The transition to preschool: A problem or an opportunity for children? A sociological perspective in the context of a split system.	Amerijckx, Humblet	European Early Childhood Education Research Journal	2015	Focus on earlier transition to preschool
Family concerns and involvement during kindergarten transition.	Wildenger, McIntyre	Journal of Child and Family Studies	2011	Focus on families of typically developing children.
Rethinking attachment: Fostering positive relationships between infants, toddlers and their primary caregivers.	Ebbeck, Yim	Early Child Development and Care	2009	Focus on caregiver child relationship and attachment behaviour prior to transition.
Children's affective orientations in preschool and their initial adjustment to kindergarten.	Daniels	Psychology in Schools	2014	Focus on typically developing children and the influence of child's attitude to learning on adjustment when transitioning to school.
Supporting and stimulating the learning of socio-economically disadvantaged children – perspectives of parents and educators in the transition from preschool to primary.	Arndt, Rothe, Urban, Werning	European Early Childhood Education Research Journal	2013	Focus on children from low SES backgrounds rather than SEN.
A primary approach to reading: review	Ogg, Sundman-Wheat,	Journal of Applied School Psychology	2012	Review of literature on interventions

of early literacy interventions implemented in paediatric settings.	Bateman			within healthcare setting prior to school start, including parent beliefs and attitudes.
Drawing stories: The power of children's drawings to communicate their lived experience of starting school.	Macdonald	Australian Journal of Early Childhood	2009	Typically developing student narrative of the experience of starting school.
Picture storybooks and starting school.	Dockett, Perry, Whitton	Early Child, Development and Care	2006	Evaluation of picture storybooks for children on subject of starting school – part of wider research on starting school.
Easing the transition to kindergarten: Demonstrating partnership through service learning.	Duda, Minick	Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning	2006	Focus on typically developing students and set up of pilot transition programme in collaboration with parents.
Parent's causal attributions concerning their children's school achievement: A longitudinal study.	Rytkönen, Aunola, Nurmi	Merrill-Palmer Quarterly	2005	Focus typically developing students and parent attributions with regards to academic achievement throughout schooling.
Children's affective orientations in preschool and their initial adjustment to kindergarten.	Daniels	Psychology in the Schools	2014	Focus on typically developing children's attitudes towards school and learning in preschool and on transition.

Enhancing transition from early childhood phase to primary education: Evidence from the research literature.	Achanfu Yeboah	Early Years: An international Journal of Research and Development	2002	Overview of transition practice and factors that influence it.
Family members' memories about starting school: Intergenerational aspects.	Turunen Dockett	Australian Journal of Early Childhood	2013	Focus on autobiographical narratives of TD children.
Parental perspectives of youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders transitioning from primary to secondary school in the United Kingdom.	Dillon, Underwood	Focus on Autism and other Developmental Disabilities	2012	Focus on parental perspective of transition from primary to secondary.
Making the transition to primary school: An evaluation of a transition programme for parents.	Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews & Kienhuis	Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology	2010	Evaluation study – focusing on parents of typically developing children and what they need to be more informed and prepared for transition.
Voices of children, parents and teachers: how children cope with stress during school transition.	Wong	Journal of Early Child Development and Care	2015	Focus on TD children and how they specifically cope with stress on transition to primary school.
Watching transitions unfold: a mixed method study of transitions within early childhood care	O' Farrelly & Hennessy	Early Years	2014	Focus on earlier transitions in early childhood care and education settings.

and education settings.				
The transition to preschool: a problem or an opportunity for children? A sociological perspective in the context of a 'split system'.	Amerijckx & Humblet	European Early Childhood Education Research Journal	2015	Focus on TD children and transition based on previous experience of childcare/EY education setting.
Transitions for students with intellectual disability and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder: Carer and Teacher Perspectives.	Strnadova, Cumming & Danker	Australian Journal of Special Education	2016	Transition from primary to secondary rather than to reception.
The Oedipal child starts school: Some thoughts about the difference in the experience of starting school for boys and girls at four years of age.	Marsh	Psychodynamic Practice	2012	Focus on TD children starting school and gender comparison in relation to the primary task.
The Starting School Study: Mothers' perspectives of transition to school.	Kaplun, Dockett & Perry	Australian Journal of Early Childhood	2017	Focus specifically on children from disadvantaged backgrounds rather than SEN.
Transition From Day-Care Centres to School: What Kind of Information do Schools Want From Day- Care Centres and Parents, and What Kind of Information do the Two Parties	Thorsen, Bø, Løge, Omdal	European Early Childhood Education Research Journal	2006	Focus on transition from day centre to school. Survey questionnaire about information that is important to share prior to transition.

Want to Give Schools?				
Transitions for Young Children with Autism From Preschool to Kindergarten	Forest, Horner, Lewis-Palmer, Todd	Journal of Positive Behaviour Interventions	2004	Development of survey instrument to include 25 elements important for transition identified from previous literature. Tool for key people to assess their transition process.
'School doesn't feel as much of a partnership': parents' perceptions of their children's transition from nursery school to Reception class	Shields	Early Years – An International Research Journal.	2009	Focus is on TD population rather than parents of children with SEN.
You never transition alone! Exploring the experiences of youth with chronic health conditions, parents and healthcare providers on self-management	Nguyen, Henderson, Stewart, Hlyva, Punthakee, & Gorter.	Child: Care, Health and Development	2016	Transition within health care system and self-management.
The transition to school of children with developmental disabilities: views of parents and teachers	Walker, Dunbar, Meldrum,	Australian Journal of Early Childhood	2012	Evaluation of parent and teacher experience of a transition programme.
The lived experiences of adolescents with disabilities and their parents in transition planning	Hetherington , Durant-Jones, Johnson	Focus on Autism and other developmental disabilities	2010	Focus on high school students

Mothers' experiences of transition planning for their children with disabilities	Ankeny, Wilkins & Spain	Teaching Exceptional Children	2009	Focus on transition planning from school to adult world.
Parent and sibling perspectives on the transition to adulthood	Chambers, Hughes, & Carter	Developmental Disabilities	2004	Transition of family members with cognitive disabilities to adulthood

*It should be noted that 12 theses both UK and international were also omitted based on the exclusion criteria of unpublished material.

Appendix B. Critique of papers included in the literature review

Starting school: the importance of parents' expectations. Russell (2005).		
	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aim of research study stated - to explore the content, origins and development of parents' expectations when their disabled child transitions to school and the extent to which parents perceived that their expectations were met after their child's first year in education. - Situating the importance of why expectations should be discussed to understand responsibilities and outcomes can be considered. - Explicit link between research study and existing knowledge on parent expectations and government legislation on parent voice.
Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rationale provided for use of Parents' Participatory Research Approach and why an emancipatory research paradigm was most appropriate to give parents a voice and more control over the research process. - Use of a Parent Advisory Group (PAG) offered support to researcher, carried out analysis and discussed findings. - Use of three semi-structured interviews carried out over a period of 21 months (starting from statutory assessment process up to half way through first year in school). - Categorisation of expectations by parents each interview.
Sampling Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Families invited to take part when their child had begun a statutory assessment of their SEN.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sample included 11 boys and 8 girls (from 1 year 9 months to 4 years 7 months). The children had a range of disabilities and moved on to different settings. - No details of how this was decided upon or justification for decision process around this.
Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Miles and Huberman (1994) qualitative data analysis approach stated. - Profile of each family built up over time and findings recorded using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to provide a summary of content, sources and outcomes of parents' expectations. - PAG involvement in the analysis and how this fit with empowering parent voice.
Interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of quotes to reinforce the interpretation of the literature. - Clear demonstration of how interpretations led to conclusions drawn at and between each level. - More information could have been included on the process of interpretation and how data was teased out, so that others could replicate.
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness that researcher is a parent of a child with a disability. - However, little reference made to researcher influence on the process or demonstration of insight into the impact of self in role.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to ethical approval.
Relevance and Transferability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limitations of research not explored. - Implications of findings detailed and discussion of how best to support family's expectations for their children with SEN on transition to school.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides insight and understanding into parental expectations and the role of professionals in EY transition plan to use with families who have children with SEN.
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Experiences of parents of children with special needs at school entry: a mixed method approach. Siddiqua & Janus (2016)

	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose (focus, background established and clear aims)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of successful transition and its impact on child outcomes stated. - How transition can be challenging for those who require additional support for SEN needs. - Statistics to identify the percentage of children with SEN entering kindergarten in Canada each year and how support services are often inadequate – identifying need for research. - Lack of research evidence on factors contributing to a successful process of transition to school for Canadian children with special needs. - Objectives clearly stated: (i) to quantitatively examine parents’ perceptions of and satisfaction with their child’s services before and after their children with special needs are enrolled in school and (ii) to examine how qualitative data help us gain a more nuanced understanding of parents’ perceptions of and satisfaction with services during transition. - Although a systematic review of literature was not carried out. There is a use of literature to contextualise the study’s scope and purpose.
Design /Methodology apparent and		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convergent approach adopted and justified based on the parallel objectives of the

<p>consistent with researcher intent/ information on data collection tools provide and justified</p>		<p>study (quantitative and qualitative data collection).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed method suggested to provide a more robust answer to the research question about factors that contribute to a successful transition process. - Information provided on survey measures used prior to school entry and at the end of the child’s first year. The Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC) assessing the perception of service offered and Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ), evaluating satisfaction with services provided. Justification for their use and reference to their established use. Correlation between measures and reference made to internal consistency of CSQ and test-re-test reliability. Both measures previously piloted. - Qual phase: Semi-structured interviews -perceptions of and satisfaction with service provision as their children with special needs entered school – triangulated with survey data gathered.
<p>Sampling Strategy – selection criteria detailed, clear description and justification, any sample bias evident?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justification of sample chosen 37 children, specific age groups (4-6) with range of needs and their families, because of additional SEN considered to need placement in a special education programme. - Exclusion criteria included – those parents who did not speak English or had a cognitive impairment. - Outline of recruitment strategy through a number of channels and justification provided. - For qual phase – use of extreme case sampling where 10 parents were chosen to interview at the end of the first year based on decline in their satisfaction. Use of this not

		<p>justified and could be argued to lead to sample bias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographic characteristics provided to add context – mainly Caucasian, educated beyond secondary school with varied family income and a range of special needs.
Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paired t-tests were conducted to compare the parents' MPOC and CSQ responses in the two time points (pre and post transition). - Qualitative analysis of the interview data was conducted by using NVIVO 10 software. Principles of conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005) guided the coding and analysis. Coding steps outlined and appropriate reflective process followed. - Openness to new insights arising from the data. - Description of mixed method analysis and how data was triangulated – adopted a merged analysis display approach.
Main Findings - what was found in relation to the aim and interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triangulation of data found that while some areas of the MPOC were suggested to be working well and parents were satisfied, others required improvement. - Outline of effect sizes and whether scores reached significance or not, tables adequately explained (including mean and p-values). - Five themes outlined and illustrative quotes presented to reinforce. These provide a more robust understanding of survey responses.
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researcher reflexivity not demonstrated.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment of participants was respectful - families were requested to contact the research team in response to information and flyers, to assure families who were interested in participating contacted the researcher.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board.
<p>Relevance and Transferability (limitations outlined, recommendations for future research)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Findings relate to other literature. - Limitations outlined – in relation to sample size and increased risk of committing Type 2 error in quantitative study and level of generalisability from the qualitative. - Themes arising from the qualitative interviews did not include information pertaining to every component of family-centred services considered in the MPOC. This limited the level of content convergence achieved in the mixed method analysis. Research needed to collect data on the same content to improve on methodology. - Future research to gain an understanding of parent expectations of services as this is suggested to influence their level of satisfaction.

In Transition: Experiences of Parents of Children with Special Needs at School Entry.

Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron & Hughes (2007).

	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of transition from preschool to kindergarten and parent involvement in the process stated. - Evidence and to suggest that lack of joined up working between agencies can impact on transition success. - Recent policy developments locally in Canada to guide successful transition. - Research focus on impact of disability on family and assessment of quality of services prior to and after transition.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploratory nature of the research mentioned with hypothesis that those in school would record higher impact of disability on family and lower positive experience of care services.
Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed method (quantitative and qualitative data collection). - Justification provided in the outline of the factors that have been evidenced to impact transition successfulness. - Information provided on survey measures used. Impact on Family (IOF) Scale, Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC), Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (VABS), Severity of Condition (parent rating). - Interviews to collect information on transition to school. - Query about mixed methods, how measures relate to each other and to the transition to school process.
Sampling Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific age groups (4-6), year groups (preschool and kindergarten) and definition provided for participant population. - Detailed recruitment strategy to enable replication. Supplementary recruitment procedure outlined and justified. - 40 families (20 kindergarten and 20 preschool age) - Demographic characteristics provided to add context.
Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Descriptive stats and mean comparisons were calculated for each survey measure. - Two separate semi-structured interviews were carried out with pre-transition and post-transition families. Questions included. - Details provided for data that was removed.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two researchers coded all 38 interviews, one of them doing it twice for test-retest reliability. Percent agreement was calculated to reflect the major coding and minor coding.
Interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographic outlined to provide brief context. - Evidence contrary to expectations and initial hypothesis explored. - Mean and effect size tables provided to evidence data gathered from surveys and how it fits with data gathered through interviews.
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researcher reflexivity not demonstrated.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment of participants was respectful and informed consent was assured as families who were interested in participating contacted the researcher. - Flexibility in where interviews were held and based on the wishes of the participant.
Relevance and Transferability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limitations outlined – two groups were not homogenous in the developmental severity of need and so may have influenced difference in scores on MPOC. - Transition as an in-between process and so argue further research to explore the effectiveness and quality of links and support between pre and post transition services and parents. - Significance for existing policy in how it is being executed in practice.

Understanding parent advocacy during the transition to school of children with developmental disabilities: three Canadian cases. Hutchinson, Pyle, Villeneuve, Dods, Dalton, Minnes. (2014)

	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of collaborative transition which includes a role for parents.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confusion around how parent advocacy is conceptualised, and the role parents have had in making meaning of this. - Understand how parent experience of advocacy fits with or diverges from Test et al's (2005) framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities. - Breakdown of Test et al's model and evidence provided to assert why it may be applied to parent advocacy of children with DD.
Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little discussion regarding rationale for use of a multi-perspective case study methodology. - Data collection period outlined and appropriate in line with description of transition as a process. - 6-8 interviews with parents/guardians, relevant professionals from healthcare and education and observations ensured that the experience of parent advocacy was captured.
Sampling Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment through agencies involved with families and transitioning to mainstream kindergarten that year. - Reference to father's refusal to participate and so only mothers of children with DD were involved. - More detail of how sampling was undertaken, and justification required.
Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Patton (2002) qualitative method. Steps taken by research team clearly outlined. - Reference to research being part of wider analysis and focus on parent interview data rather than professional interviews or observations. - Adopted constant comparison method to generate themes in each individual case then moved to cross-case analysis. - Use of both emic and etic perspectives

Interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of personal and social contexts provides important information for interpretation of findings from each individual family. - Clear structure provided for themes and how interpretation led to conclusions regarding parent advocacy.
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to influence of the researcher(s) at different stages or their relationship to participants during the process.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little reference to sensitivity towards ethical concerns – reanalysis - However, thoughtful and respectful in how data was reported. Use of context to support interpretations and meaning made. - Issue of consent raised and father’s choice not to participate.
Relevance and Transferability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of existing theories and literature to assert relevance of the study. - Discussion provided how findings relate to Tess et al’s (2005) model but also extend beyond that to include a number of other elements. - The importance of findings to inform parent advocacy interventions and understand parents’ reasons and motivations to advocate. - Reference to limitations of current study based on locality and gender of participants.

The Experience of Parents as Their Children with Developmental Disabilities Transition from Early Intervention to Kindergarten. Villeneuve, Chatenoud, Hutchinson, Minnes, Perry, Dionne, Frankel, Isaacs, Loh, Versnel, Weiss. (2012)

	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous research related to child adjustment and parental perspective on quality of service.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rationale for this research as part of wider HELPs Inc agenda to advance understanding of how parental participation and interprofessional collaboration contribute to effective transitions and successful inclusion of children with DD. - Link between research and existing knowledge/policy on inclusive education and transition referred to throughout. - Literature contextualises the role and importance of parental involvement and interagency collaboration in transition.
Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple-perspective case study approach to explore the transitions of 3 pre-schoolers with DD as they enter kindergarten. - Use of observation and interviews with relevant adults. Transition viewed as a process with data collected over a 14-month period across ECE, kindergarten and home settings. - Cross-case analysis in order to understand the similarities and differences between families.
Sampling Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purposive sampling – participants selected in order to ensure range of need and diverse family contexts. - Education and healthcare professionals who worked with each child and family invited to participate.
Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - X3 Research Assistants completed data collection under the guidance of x3 investigators to ensure consistency of approach across case studies. De-briefing bi-weekly. - Timeline and total number of observations, interviews and who they were with detailed and numbers are noted to vary. - Data analysis in 2 stages using Nvivo software; 1 within case and 2 cross-case

		<p>analysis. Codes developed through clustering and re-clustering (Patton, 2002).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More justification needed regarding method of analysis chosen.
Interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent perspectives on inclusion – context provided, as well as quotations to create a clear understanding of how parental perspective can change and develop overtime. - Cross-case analysis on experience of interagency collaboration demonstrates the similarities and differences in individual’s experiences. - Sufficient evidence is not included in order for decisions regarding interpretation to be replicated.
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference or insight into researchers’ relationships with individual participants on the study or acknowledgement of their potential influence. - Reference to adjustment in data collection method as requested by participant but no further exploration of this or any other complications that were met during the research process.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commitment to integrity of the research and respect for participants in how narratives have been portrayed. - No reference to how autonomy, consent and confidentiality were managed or discussed with participants.
Relevance and Transferability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis interwoven with existing theory on transition and potential challenges including the difference in service delivery models in ECE and kindergarten settings. - A number of limitations and weaknesses are referred to, as well as directions for future research. This includes understanding

		<p>contextual, child and setting factors that interact and impact on transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significance set of how this research provides foundation when thinking about promoting inclusion of children and their parents during the transition to school.
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Strategies for Supporting Transitions of Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. Rous, Myers and Stricklin (2007).

	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research question clearly stated – to identify factors that support families and children in transition from early intervention to preschool (age 3) or preschool to kindergarten (age 5). - Background information provided on previous studies on transition to set context, linking EY research with existing knowledge and practice.
Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justification of use of focus groups in study 3 to elicit transition strategies based on previous experiences and perspectives of different individuals involved (professional, school and home). - 9 focus groups completed and 1 individual interview (this individual data reported to not be included in analyses). - Representation of each focus group outlined and number of attendees at each time recorded. - Each focus group facilitated by research member using same approach to introduce, run and conclude the group.
Sampling Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of a purposive sample to select participants based on study objective to have representation of relevant parties involved in EY transition.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruited through list of registrants at national and regional early childhood conferences. All had experienced /supported a transition either at age 3 or age 5. - Total number of participants (n=43) 33 professionals and 10 family members. From 18 different states and represented a number of different settings.
Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systematic data analysis discussed in detail - included transcriptions, field notes, and responses to an end-of-session questionnaire. - Thematic analysis with transcriptions coded using QSR NVivo. - Two authors involved in data analysis and coding framework – importance of intercoder agreement - Use of observer in each focus group to record dynamics and themes that arose – trustworthiness of codes. - Third coder brought in and final codes compared to conceptual framework on transition to ensure consistency. - Content analysis for each theme coded.
Interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reference to content analysis and parts of data that were excluded as they did not include a strategy. - Enough detail into decisions made in relation to data. - Use of direct quotations in findings and clear discussion of this led to conclusions.
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mention of researcher roles in the wider NECTC organisation. - However, no reference to researcher reflexivity shown.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to ethical approval. - No acknowledgement of power differential between focus group participants.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference as to how consent and confidentiality were managed.
Relevance and Transferability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis interwoven with previous EY literature and reference to other branches of study. - Limitations of the study outlined and suggestions for future research on EY transition made. Representative nature of the participant population called into question. - Findings provide implications for individual preparation for transition, policy development and implementation.

Experiences of parents whose children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are starting primary school. Connolly and Gersch (2016)		
	Present / Absent / Vague	Comments
Scope and Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rationale for research clearly outlined - Link with service development and previous research on transition to primary school and gaps in the literature of parental experience. - Clear evidence of systematic approach to literature review move from general transition to transition and ASD to parent experiences.
Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear justification for use of IPA as a research method to capture how people make sense of different life experiences. - Explanation of ontological and epistemological stance – Phenomenology and critical realist. - Semi – structured interview with 6 parents (5 female, 1 male).
Sampling Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear description and justification of purposive sampling from MDT support services in two different localities. - Planned sample of 6 appropriate for IPA - Clear description for inclusion of one male perspective

Analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview script reviewed by peers and pilot interview conducted. - Participant scripts transcribed verbatim. - Steps adopted during analysis of data clearly outlined. - No acknowledgement of other researcher involvement when developing themes.
Interpretation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation of the data reinforced through participant quotes and evolution of codes referred to. - Clear links between interpretation and conclusions drawn
Reflexivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although the researcher's role was not explicitly discussed the importance of reflexivity was mentioned with regards to data analysis and interpretation.
Ethical Dimensions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical approval sought and granted by relevant professional bodies - Written consent sought from participants - Pseudonyms used for anonymity - More detail required in this section – re transparency, ethical dilemmas with regards to already established relationship with families from the MDT service and participation.
Relevance and Transferability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Findings linked with other literature and studies on transition and importance of parental involvement in this. - Contribution to wider professional network involved in transition and specifically the EP role. - Some limitations of study outlined with regards to generalisability but could be more detailed. - Increased insight and understanding in particular for the role of the professional in school transition practices.

Appendix C. Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Beginnings and Endings: A Psycho-Social Research Study Exploring the Emotional Experience of Transition for Parents of Children with SEN.

My name is Kate Ross – Lonergan. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. As part of my Doctoral studies I am conducting a research project and would like to invite you to take part.

Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve, so please take the time to read this information sheet.

What is the study about?

As a society we have become more aware and sensitive to the importance of transitions for children and their families, even more so for children with additional needs. It is generally understood that children need to be prepared for these transitions and how early transition experiences such as from nursery to school, have an impact on later transitions. However, we still don't know much about what is happening for parents of children with an identified special educational need (SEN) at the early stages of their journey through the education system. Understanding more about parents' experiences of this transition will help us as professionals to clarify our role at this time and develop better programmes of support.

Why have you been approached?

Five families will be asked to take part in this study. You have been asked to participate as your child has been identified as having a special educational need that requires additional support and is transitioning to school in September 2018.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

Participation is voluntary. You will be able to withdraw from the research at any point, without providing a reason for this. If you decide to take part and fill in a consent form (attached), you will be asked to take part in two informal interviews with me (August-October time period). Each interview will be of 40-50 minutes duration and will be arranged at a time and date of your choosing.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Yes. All the information collected about you during the research will be kept in confidence. This means that all identifiable information will be removed in any publications or reports. Your information will be saved using pseudonyms instead of real names and place/setting

Information Sheet

names will not be included. The only time I would reveal anything to an appropriate authority, would be if the information made me concerned about your or others safety.

For how long will my data be stored for?

Interviews will be recorded and then transcribed for analysis purposes. The audio-recordings will be deleted on completion of the research (July 2019). The transcripts will be held confidentially on a password protected encrypted USB stick for 3 years. Only the researcher will have access to the transcripts. Hardcopies of transcripts will be locked in a filing cabinet at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust with completed consent forms and in accordance with guidelines will be kept securely for 3 years. The researcher will give you the option to check the transcripts to see if you are happy with what has been recorded.

What are possible benefits of taking part?

By participating, you will be helping us to reflect and develop upon existing transition practices from nursery to primary school. This knowledge could support us to provide more effective support to parents at this time of change and uncertainty.

Are there potential risks in taking part?

I don't anticipate that there will be any risks in taking part. However, in case the interview was to cause upset or unease, I will be able to provide appropriate support where requested and signpost to local support services.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher or any other aspect of this research project, you can contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The study will be submitted as a Doctoral Thesis to The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. The people who might read this in an official capacity are my project supervisor and external examiners. Additionally, my thesis (or summary) may be submitted for publishing in an internal report or journal. However, all identifying personal information will have been removed and you will not be identifiable in any way. The findings of the research study will be shared with parents on request.

Information Sheet

Who has ethically reviewed the project?


The research has received ethical approval via the Tavistock and Portman Trust Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information:

Researcher: Kate Ross – Lonergan, email:

Thank you for taking the time to consider your participation in this research project. If you would like to take part, please complete and sign the consent form.

Appendix D. Consent form

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Foundation Trust

Consent Form

Title of Research: Beginnings and Endings: A Psycho-Social Research Study Exploring the Emotional Experience of Transition for Parents of Children with SEN.

Name of researcher: Kate Ross - Lonergan

Participant Identification Number:

1. I confirm that I have read the project information sheet above, dated (21.08.18), and understand what is expected of me as a participant.

2. I understand that participation is completely voluntary, and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

3. I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study, and if asked, that questions were answered to my full satisfaction.

4. I agree to interview(s) being recorded.

5. I understand that responses will be anonymised prior to analysis and anonymised quotes will be used in publications.

6. I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

7. I am happy for the research findings to be disseminated in a service report and other publications.

I, _____(Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s)) consent to my participation in the study conducted by Kate Ross – Lonergan.

Parent/Carer(s) Signature:.....

Date:

Appendix E. Demographic questions

Demographic Questions

1. Age(s) of participant(s): _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Ethnicity: _____
4. Previous/current occupation: _____
5. Family composition: _____
6. When EHCP was issued: _____
7. Child's SEN: _____
8. What type of EY setting did child attend and what type of school are they moving to:

Appendix F. Interview 2 schedules for participants

Mark and Paul Interview 2 Schedule

Date: 15.11.18

Q.1 I was wondering if there was anything that stood out from our last interview?

(Or if there was anything you went away thinking about?)

Q.2 Last time we spoke, you said how Archie was finding it difficult going to school. How have things been since we last spoke?

Q.3 You said that Archie reacts differently to other children when upset. Can you tell a bit more?

Q.4 Towards the end of nursery you described how Archie's behaviour began to change. What was your understanding of this?

Q.5 You wondered whether there was more that could've been done to help Archie with transition. Can you say a bit more about this?

Q.6 How would you describe your relationship with Archie's new school?

Q.7 You were thinking a bit about Archie's earlier history and how this may impact his behaviour now. How have you been able to think with school about this?

Q.8 You told me Archie needs time to build trust with adults. From your perspective how have school been able to do this?

Q.9 Last time, you gave some examples of support you had received. Can you tell me a bit more about the help you've received from others?

Q.10 You spoke about your concerns about whether Archie will be adequately supported at mainstream school? Can you say a bit more?

Ending Questions

How have you found the interview process?

Is there anything that has come that you would like to discuss more with someone?

Would you like information about the outcomes of the research and how would you like this presented?

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Q.1 I was wondering if there was anything that stood out from our last interview? (Or if there was anything you went away thinking about?)
Q.2 Last time we spoke, it was Poppy's first day at school, how have you found her first month? (You said you were nervous can you tell me a bit more about that?)
Q.3 You told me about the time when Poppy was being sent home from nursery because of her behaviour. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
Q.4 You mentioned that Poppy changed once she got a one to one. How was that for you?
Q.5 You said you had no choice but to deal with Poppy's diagnosis. Can you say a bit more about this?
Q.7 You mentioned that Poppy was in a mainstream nursery. Can you tell me what made you choose a specialist school for her?
Q.8 You mentioned that you would have less input now that Poppy is in school. I was wondering if you could say a bit more?
Q.9 You said the school send home a book each day saying what Poppy has been doing. What is that experience like for you?
Q.10 You mentioned there were people who helped you when you didn't know what to do. Can you tell me a bit more about the people who helped?
Ending Questions How have you found the interview process? Is there anything that has come that you would like to discuss more with someone? Would you like information about the outcomes of the research and how would you like this presented? Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Lizzie Interview 2 Schedule : 16.10.18

Q.1 I was wondering if there was anything that stood out from our last interview? (Or if there was anything you went away thinking about?)
Q.2 Last time we spoke, it was Henry's first day at school, how have you found his first month at school?
Q.3 You mentioned that Henry didn't take part in events at nursery. Can you tell me a bit more about how you felt about that?
Q.4 You said that you felt on your own managing Henry's behaviour, can you say a bit more about this?
Q.5 You mentioned that you felt Henry wasn't prepared for starting school and how he seemed confused and nervous on his first day, can you say a bit more about this? Pr school?
Q.6 You said that Henry gets on well with his one to one and can act differently with others. What does that feel like for you?
Q.7 You mentioned that you were sad that once Henry starts school things will change and you will be spending less time together. How has that been for you?
Ending Questions
How have you found the interview process?
Is there anything that has come up that has upset you that you would like to discuss this with someone?
Would you like information about the outcomes of the research and how would you like this presented?
Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Q.1 I was wondering if there was anything that stood out from our last interview? <i>(Or if there was anything you went away thinking about?)</i>
Q.2 Last time we spoke, it was Hannah's first day at school and you said you were anxious to hear how she got on. How have you found the first few weeks?
Q.3 You told me the ways you noticed Hannah was different from other children. Can you tell a bit more about how felt about that?
Q.4 You mentioned that you turned down a place at a specialist nursery can you say a bit more about how you came to that decision?
Q.5 You said that integration to the mainstream nursery took a long time and Hannah was not always included. I wondered how that was for you?
Q.6 You mentioned that you have been lucky to be involved with a number of early intervention services. What was that experience like for your family?
Q.7 You said that you have complete trust in Hannah's new school and so feel more comfortable about her attending. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
Q.8 You said that Hannah's move to school was different from your other children. Can you say a bit more?
Ending Questions How have you found the interview process? Is there anything that has come that you would like to discuss more with someone? Would you like information about the outcomes of the research and how would you like this presented? Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix G. Example Transcript

Lizzie*

F.A.N.I Interview 1 (10.09.18)

Researcher: ...so if we could start with you telling me a bit about Henry*, I know you had mentioned some things before the recording started but is there anything else that is helpful for me to know about Henry?

Lizzie: What about how he is...like his personality kind of thing.

Researcher: Yeah absolutely, anything like that.

Lizzie: Am...he's very caring he's always been very caring even through the tantrums. He's always like if someone fall over, "oh are you okay?" Or he'll tell someone if someone's hurt or someone's crying.....like he's very caring.

Researcher: mmmm yeah

Lizzie: And he's always been like that but am when he was 2 and he first went to nursery, he was very frustrated through the language side. There'd be a lot of headbutting, spitting and lashing out...most of the time me leaving the nursery crying.

Researcher: yeah?

Lizzie: yeah - but then I think um but then it was the first year and when he was 3...when he turned 3 he started to calm down a lot.

Researcher: mmhmm

Lizzie: Am he was getting better but his speech was still like...I think he was like 2 years behind everybody else.

Researcher: Okay

Lizzie: So he was learning still but later, he was still really quite behind.

Researcher: Mmm

Lizzie: Am and I think he found that quite frustrating and he didn't really wanna do some of the things that people were like telling him to do, like teachers (**Researcher:** mmmm) and stuff. But since he's had his one to one, he's come like leaps and bounds he's been amazing. He's talking a lot more, am sharing a lot more and just being a bit more understanding and even like sitting on carpet time - like he never used to do sitting on carpet time, like he used to just go off and do his own thing. They used to just let him (**Researcher:** mmmm) because... because if he carried on...if you kept saying no you have to do this, you have to do that he would just be even worse (**Researcher:** mmmm). So they just let him do what he wanted to do, eventually he just would come and join. Like he'd see that no one was giving him attention (**Researcher:** mmmm) dya know what I mean and no ones doing anything with him because everyone's doing that over there (**Researcher:** yeah). He would then go and join them as if he was missing outbut through the 6 weeks holidays it's just been a bit (long pause) manic with him. He's quite chopsy, he's quite like, I'm just like he's like...oh you can't threaten him with anything you can't "like alright if you don't do that you're going have

to go bed with nothing" (**Researcher:** mmm) he'd quite happily or "if you do that I'll have to take your toy away" he's quite happy for you to do whatever....it's a nightmare. So like this morning he was like "I want to take my car" and I said you can't take your car and he said "fine then I just won't go to nursery". And he goes to me fine then, "you're not fair you're not sharing!" And "you're not my best friend anymore" to everybody! [laughs]

Researcher: [chuckles back]

Lizzie: So, it's a bit of a like...he doesn't really care. [Deep sigh] But yeah it's a bit of hitting as well, a bit of hitting over the 6 weeks holiday so apart from that...he was alright.

Researcher: yeah

I do struggle with his eating he's very particular with his eating (**Researcher:** mmm) but like.. you know he'll only eat a chocolate sandwich, peanut butter sandwich, pancakes very like... carb like dry foods dya know what I mean?

Researcher: mmm mmmm

Lizzie: um he would eat, he's got a very sweet tooth but he'll eat crisps and that but this is the sort of thing, like things I can't take to nursery. Like I haven't really prepared him to be fair (**Researcher:** mmm) for him to go into nursery and eat healthy foods but where he was so fussy whatever he ate I just let him eat because it was like well at least he's eating.

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: dya know what I mean like and the health advisor would be like if he doesn't eat it doesn't matter...like if he doesn't eat he doesn't eat but he will get hungry and he will eventually eat. Cause I used to just be so worried (yeah) like he's not eating like I would put like loads of dinners out for him and he'd refuse them. Am what else does he eat? He eats like weetos cereal, coco pops, everything that's got a little bit of like chocolate in it, isn't it?

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: He likes porridge um chips and custard and stuff like yoghurts so there are some things I could put in but I don't think he's going to be able to have a sandwich at school. Unless I can pack pancakes...I don't know...because chocolate spread and the nuts allergy and the peanut butter.

Researcher: yeah

I've tried him with jam he refuses to eat it. He's got a thing with textures as well (mmm) so it's just a bit like he'll touch something and go ugh [gesture] so it's just a bit like...it's very difficult at the moment to even try.... He looked a bit confused going into nursery today because it's like a different class...(yeah) but when he realised that his one to one teacher who he absolutely loves he just like ...like I saw her the other day in Asda and I came back into the car and I was like I've just seen your teacher Ms Scott* and he was like "oh that's not fair" like really upset like "I wanted to see her" and well you should've come in with me.

But um yeah now he's [stumble over words]...when I woke him up this morning and I said you gonna go see Ms Scott he was like well excited (aw). He was just like aw he loves her....um so when I think when I saw her coming in I was like "oh thank god". (mmm) But

he sat down all a bit like eugh but (stumble over words) but it's good because he's got some of his classmates from last year that are gonna be in the same class. (mmmm hmm) if that wasn't the case I think he would be a bit....but yeah and no because he's a bit like "you wanna be my friend and are you my friend?" or "we can be best friends" he's straight away like when he goes to the park he's like mum these are all my friends (aw) and he's never even met them before. Dya know what I mean?

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: So he is quite the social butterfly. (Mmmm hmm) but I don't know when I put him in this morning he just looked a bit nervous bless him (sigh) but it was just quite hard but everything apart from that he seemed fine. Dya know what I mean?

Researcher: yeah, you said he looked a bit nervous and I was just thinking what was your experience of him at nursery, was it similar when he started there? You were saying you used to leave crying and I was wondering if you could tell me a bit more about that.

Yeah because he, when he well he didn't really have much speech. He would like, I would always go to nursery and they would be like "oh Henry's mum could you just come in for a minute?" And I'd be like ugh somethings happened again like he'd have either hit a kid or thrown a toy (mmm) or like an accident had happened and he'd banged his head so hard cause that's why they referred him to speech therapy in the first place (okay) was because his headbanging was so extreme (mmm) that they were really concerned he was going to hurt himself. So I just like.... he would go in and I would try and calm him down and I'd have to like hold him close to me and be like just calm down and then he would like kick off and go headbutting and he would like head butt me in the face or the head (mmm) like just kicking off and I would just be like so upset like cause all the teachers would just sit there and be like ugh like it's just you know it's just it's not embarrassing like but like it is embarrassing because you just think why can't you just not, like why can't you just come into nursery and be happy but then it was frus...like it was sad, I felt sad because I thought this must be.. like this is I'm bringing him up (mmm) where am I going wrong? Dya know what I mean? So I was like...this must be my fault...but I don't know, I don't know what else to do. (yeah) Like it's my first time mum (mmm) and I just don't know what to do and you think you're doing alright and then days like that happens (yeah) and times where you have to carry them home kicking and screaming all the way home and you're just struggling to do that and it's like ... the struggle is just unreal sometimes when you just you just break (mmm) and people just see you crying in the street and you're just like oh just go and sometimes you're just like just go like you just can't cope with them sometimes because when they don't understand you (mmm hmm) but then you don't understand them and you don't know what to do (yeah) it's frustrating (mmmm hmmm) are you're just like what do you want me to do? And I just used to go to nursery everyday praying like oh please don't call me in, please have been a good boy today. (yeah) Like and most of the time it would have been them like calling me in (mmm) and like and things like not joining in on like mother's day plays even the Christmas plays like I think one year they were like "we're not gonna put Henry in the Christmas play (mmm) and I was just like really upset and I was like ugh so it's just getting like singled out cause he's not getting singled out it's just that they knew what he was like (mmm hmm) he wouldn't settle, he wouldn't probably even go in the hallway to do the play dya know what I mean? (yeah yeah) or even just to sit and watch it he would kick off about

leaving the class so it's the most tiniest things but he would kick off about it (yeah) and it would be so hard and it was quite heart wrenching that he wasn't even allowed like he wasn't even - to go in the school play or every PE, like every sports day nothing (mmm). Cause he just wouldn't join in like and it's like and they'd be like you know what just leave him like he'd just want to kick the ball in the net like the goal (yeah) but not move around (mm hmm) to the different things (mmmm) and it's just like oh like and then I was just like, eventually I was just like just stopped getting upset about it and just thought dya know what he's a kid at the end of the day and if he wants to just stand there and play football and he's happy let him be. Why why drag him around and make him unhappy, I know he needs to learn but eventually he won't want to be this odd one out doing the same thing. But I don't know it is hard for me with Henry because of the speech and all that but it's just like, sometimes you just think ughh I wish you'd just wana do

Researcher: mmmm

.... he's not, he's, he can be quite difficult to deal with. And you've got to go certain, different ways around things with him

Researcher: yeah

Dya know what I mean, so like you would know to be like, you almost do kind of like reverse psychology with him dya know what I mean? You have to like compromise with him

Researcher: mmmm

Or you know like if he does something or says something if you [stumble over words] I don't know if I was like "oh can you show me how to", you know like make him feel like he's like I don't know, I don't really know how to explain it, it's yeah mainly it's just ignore, not so much ignoring him but just don't give him the attention

Researcher: yeah

Because as soon as you don't give him the attention he does, he literally just stops (clicks fingers) and goes and carries on with something else

Researcher: yeah yeah

Lizzie: once he sees he's not getting the attention but he's been hitting me a lot over the school holidays and am threatening me with daddy even though he doesn't see daddy

Researcher: mmmm

Lizzie: I think he obviously misses his dad and he wants to see him but mmm I just, he hasn't bothered so I don't know what to do really like he's been saying I wanna go round daddy's or I'm gonna get daddy to hit you

Researcher: mmmmm

Lizzie: and things like that and I was like, which was really like it was actually quite shocking for me because I've never like heard him say anything like that before even daddy's name really and it's just be a lot over the 6 weeks holiday but I haven't, I don't even speak about daddy anything or bring daddy up so it's quite surprising that he's come out and said something like that

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: Yeah it's a bit strange. But this morning we had "I'm not going to school" am "you're not fair, you're not sharing" and "you're not my best friend". So but then I just ignored it and was like "quickly come on let's go" and then he just went out on his scooter and went to school.

Researcher: mmm mmmm

Lizzie: He was fine, he went in, sat down absolutely fine. I don't know what he's like am, I'll soon found out what he's been like when I go and pick him up but yeah

Researcher: And so you were speaking a bit about the summer, so what was the journey like between Henry finishing nursery or coming to the end of it and starting school? What's that kind of journey been like?

Lizzie: Well they've been pretty good with him like am because of the way he is they've been like towards the end of nursery they were taking him to the reception classes once or twice a week to kind of like mould him in it kind of thing. And then am when nursery finished he still didn't quite get that really cause he was a bit like for the first week or so he was like "am I going nursery, am I going nursery" kind of thing and I kept having to explain to him there's no nursery now um [yawn] which it was am yeah he was fine with it really. But they were good with him like going up to it, but I don't know what they done... he went on a school trip as well

(mmm hmm)

Which he done really well, I was pleased with him and they just prepared him to go into reception really. Kept taking him out of class and that and going to the big boys and the big girls bit and he was quite happy with that. Am they said he was doing really well, like he come quite far with everything am and then he was quite good for the first couple of weeks of am he is actually quite good it's just when he's at home and like am he gets frustrated and that or like I just tell him he can't have something he gives it all a big huff and a puff then [yawn]. I've been trying to like tell him like oh look at his new school shoes and stuff and he says oh I like my new school shoes (mmm) so he's quite excited about that. And then am I just put him to bed really early and kept just telling him a few days before or like the whole week, this last week like and saying like oh you gonna go to school like and all this and keep saying it everyday and like before he went to bed or before he went to sleep I'd be like oh guess where you're going to you're going to go see Ms Scott soon or your gonna go nursery soon and he'd be like no stop talking and I'd be like why, where are you going tomorrow and he'd be like no stop talking to me (both laugh) so like yeah

Researcher: (speaking over Lizzie) and you said he was doing well and things were going better towards the end of nursery, what did you mean by that?

Lizzie: am you know he was doing good this last year in nursery it's fine but because of this Ms Scott, because of his one to one...

Researcher: Okay, yeah

Lizzie: He's just been doing so well like I don't know what I would have done without her, if I'm perfectly honest like she just he just loved her, like he just loves her just absolutely

loves her. And like he's just more calm and friendly, like he's always been friendly anyway and caring but like just a bit more... She was teaching me a lot as well dya know what I mean like how to deal with it and not tell him off so much about everything just tell him off for like the big things he does not all these little things am and just like she is teaching me as well. So towards the end he was just doing really good am [long pause]. There was a couple of times where he was like (mumbles when is it) like when it was snowing

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: he wouldn't put like his coat on, he don't really like a coat. He's quite a hot baby so he's like...he always has been. Like you might find it cold but he wouldn't dya know what I mean?

Researcher: yeah yeah

Lizzie: am (shifting position on coach) yeah so he was good towards the end as well yeah he was fine. But I still feel like he was a bit confused even though we went and seen the reception area before we left and stuff we had like am a reception day or morning like we could go in and am even with that I think obviously he just forgotten about. So he went to go to normal nursery and I was like no we have to go in this way and he was just like mmm no

Researcher: laughs

Lizzie: and I was like oh god! And he was like a bit shy when he went in

Researcher: Mmmm

Yeah but he was alright, but he was just a bit like mmm what are we doing? And she was like dya not remember you have to come into this class now? But Ms Scott wasn't in there when he walked in

Researcher: this morning?

Lizzie: yeah but she walked in as I left

Researcher: okay

Lizzie: she was apparently looking for us thinking maybe... cause we was about 3 minutes late, but was fine the doors were still open but she was looking for us. I don't know what he was like when she walked in.

Researcher: Mmmm

Lizzie: But he would have been a bit more at ease when she walked in, I know he would've.

Researcher: Yeah

Lizzie: But it was fine....anything else?

Researcher: So we talked a bit about Henry being a bit confused by the first day. What was the experience like for you on his first day?

Lizzie: am yeah well I didn't really want to leave him because I felt like I just wanted to sit with him for a bit and make him feel a bit more at ease.

Researcher: mmmmm

Am but I know I just had to leave him and I knew that he'd be fine in the end. Cause he is like I said a social butterfly so he would just go up to anyone and everyone. But am it's quite hard the running up of the going back to school, like getting everything

Researcher: mmmmm

Lizzie: And sorting it out and just having them go again and it's like another year dya know what I mean?

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: And now this year's different because I'm going to have to find work, things like that so the realisation that I'm not going to be around him as much and thinking am I don't know oh did I do enough when I could've had him or when I had him dya know what I mean?

Researcher: mmmmm

Lizzie: or have I taken time for granted, now I've got to find work and not be around him so much and yeah I feel a bit upset but oh well.

Researcher: mmm

Lizzie: yeah it's quite sad [long pause] thinking like ughh. Or like having those years where you just like he was crying, or you didn't understand him or telling him off and stuff like that. When really he didn't understand you dya know what I mean?

Researcher: mmm mmm mmm

Lizzie: kind of like miscommunication and misunderstanding from each other's sides you know what I mean not getting each other.

Researcher: yeah mmm

Lizzie: ughh (sighs) yeah he's hopefully, I reckon he'll come out today and hopefully he'll have a good day and she says he's been a good boy.

Researcher: Mmmmm

Lizzie: I think it's just nice as well for him to be around other kids cause obviously we're on our own

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: and obviously if I'm busy tidying up or doing washing, I can't play with him when he wants to play but then he watched bloody ghostbusters during the school holiday and now he's scared of every room so he has to follow me around the house.

Researcher: oh

Lizzie: I know sorry [starts to cry]

Researcher: No you're fine don't be sorry (muffled noise) you know what I might have a tissue. It is a really difficult thing Henry going to school, it's a change isn't it? [rustling for tissue] Let me give you, there you go.

Lizzie: (cries) Sorry

Researcher: No please don't be sorry.

Lizzie: am yeah [continues to cry] Sad innit?

Researcher: No not at all, not at all. I didn't realise today was his first day, I think it's there isn't it?

Lizzie: it's just am [continues to cry] it's just like the thought of going to work

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: and coming back and not am I just feel like I took that time for granted really

Researcher: can you tell me a bit more of why you feel you took that time for granted?

Lizzie: because it was more like frustrating (yeah), not necessarily all good times dya know what I mean?

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: Like you just wish that like, I didn't even take him out as much because he would like kick off and...so we'd be sitting in most of the time. And I'd feel anxious about going out.

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: so now it's like you sin't even got that you've got him, he's going to be there until 3 o'clock. But I'm going to be at work and then you've got a few hours just to do dinner and, that's not really yeah mmmm...I dunno.

Researcher: it's a big change

Lizzie: yeah I just (laughs through tears) sounds silly really but he's all I really know

Researcher: It doesn't sound silly at all.

Lizzie: Apart from my family like when it boils down to it like it's just me and him [long pause and tears]

Researcher: when you mentioned your family are they local?

Lizzie: yeah they're in -----, I'm not like sad, well I'm sad but in a good way dya know what I mean like I'm sad cause obviously I'm gonna miss him.

Researcher: Yeah

And like I do, I dunno, I'm not going to be spending as much time with him but then I'll probably appreciate that when time comes cause that's what I mean cause when you are together you wish you had time apart dya know what I mean? But when you're not it's like oh god I'm gonna miss it.

Researcher: mmmmm

Lizzie: and that's what I feel I've taken for granted like I've kind of always been like I can't wait for you to go to your grans or like or like where he's been naughty all day or just

been kicking off at you, sometimes he'll just kick off at me for no reason I ain't done.. I've just been sitting there.

Researcher: mmm

And he'll just like hit you or go... or just say or I'll just say no the once or look not now go and play with that toy for a second and mummy will get it in a minute or let mummy finish this and then come do it and it's like "fine then no" and just like getting the hump with you and you're just like ughhh. [sniffles] So like just those little things get on top of you when you're around it 24/7.

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: so like his speech therapist or his one to one could be alright with him but when it's me or he'll be good with them he'll be alright with them but when it comes to me, he's just like he's completely different cause I'm his mum.

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: And I'll always be there no matter what whether he's horrible to me or whether he's nice to me. Like he knows that I won't go away. So it's like oh okay. But I think it's the realisation is settling in isn't it?

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: that I'm not going to be seeing him as much and I'm going to be a bit like twiddling my thumbs or even if I'm going to work letting the time pass it's still going to be weird I think for the first couple of weeks.

Researcher: Yeah

Lizzie: but when we don't see each other so like if he stays round his granny's and I go out and I see him the next morning he's like running up to me like "mummy" like we've been apart for ages dya know what I mean?

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: like oh I missed you, he gives me squeezes and kisses and everything yeah it's just going to be weird innit? It's like an extra 3 hours a day yeah bless him. sorry.

Researcher: Don't be sorry honestly. Is there anything that you feel like you haven't said or would like to say before we end interview one? Anything else about your experience of his move to reception that hasn't come up?

Lizzie: No, well as well what's going to be hard is because of the eating problems you can't do pack lunches and the canteen you know he's just going to be like ughh ughh at all their food. But he did like their biscuits, so I think I might just leave him to try the dinners at school and then am his one to one will be there so she'll be able to keep a close eye on him and tell me how he is. So I think we'll do that first and then the next week and see how he gets on if she says maybe try and bring something in I'll just have to try and find. I mean if he's really that hungry he'll eat and if he's not he can just wait till he gets back

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: but see that's just quite frustrating in itself innit just even like school dinners like and then it's just like well if he's not going to eat your things then he's just going to have to eat what I give him and if it's not to your criteria then that's not my problem at the end of the day the boys got to eat.

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: and I just can't, I can't control it he's gonna eat what he's gonna eat but I dunno you just don't want to see your kid go hungry just cause he doesn't like what they will allow.

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: but no I think that's it apart from that I think that's my whole experience through from nursery to now.

Researcher: to first day of school today.

Lizzie: yeah he's staying till 11.30

Researcher: yeah

Lizzie: tomorrow's 11.30 and then 1 o' clock and Friday's his first full day. Yeah cause I dunno when I spoke to you I even thought he was starting last week and then I found the sheet and I was like oh no it's not till, so that was alright. Which was alright because the day before I thought he was actually going back was his birthday so he was very tired that night and I was like ughh got so much to do, getting things washed and all that and am then I found the paper and I was like oh it's not until Monday so it gave me a bit more time but yeah am hopefully he'll be alright when I get back.

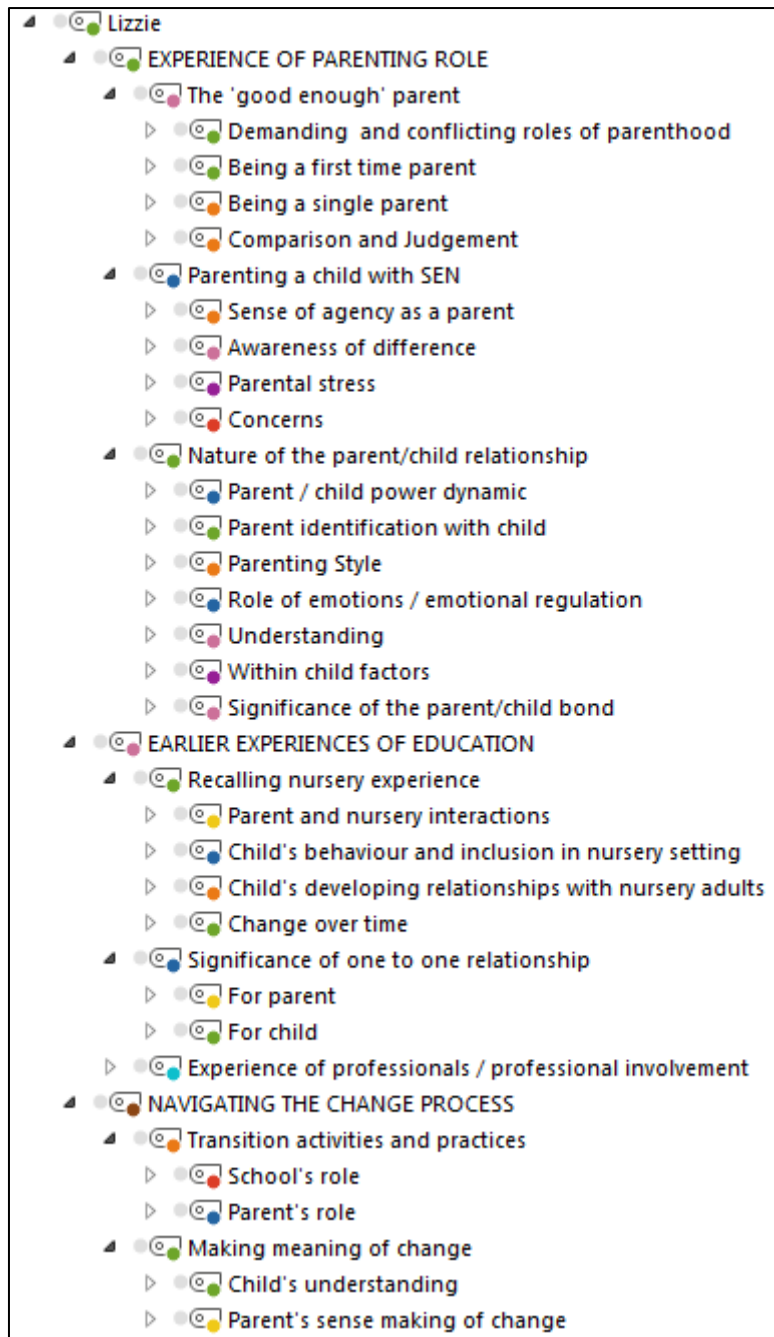
Researcher: mmm sounds like it's stressful. There's a lot to do.

Lizzie: yeah there is yeah like even just to like paying for milk and like online and things, going to get their school uniform it sounds like little things but it's just ughhh no that's it really was that okay?

Appendix H. Example Initial Coding for Lizzie

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ..Shows both prosocial ..Ability to recognise ar 	<p>6 Lizzie: Am...he's very caring he's always been very caring even through the tantrums. He's always like if someone fell over, "oh are you okay?" Or he'll tell someone if someone's hurt or someone's crying.....like he's very caring.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ..Consistent nature o ..Starting nursery ..communication diffi ..Challenging behavi ..leaving nursery upset 	<p>7 Researcher: mmmm yeah</p> <p>8 Lizzie: And he's always been like that but am when he was 2 and he first went to nursery, he was very frustrated through the language side. There'd be a lot of headbutting, spitting and lashing out...most of the time me leaving the nursery crying.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ..Remembering when thi 	<p>9 Researcher: yeah?</p> <p>10 Lizzie: yeah – but then I think um but then it was the first year and when he was 3...when he turned 3 he started to calm down a lot.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ..Showing relative impr ..Remained behind his pr 	<p>11 Researcher: mmhmm</p> <p>12 Lizzie: Am he was getting better but his speech was still like...I think he was like 2 years behind everybody else.</p> <p>13 Researcher: Okay</p> <p>14 Lizzie: So he was learning still but later, he was still really quite behind.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ..Sense of frustration ..Not wanting to do wf ..Positive change since ..Showing more prosoc ..Used to be separate fi ..Adult powerlessness ..escalation in his behavi ..Adult powerlessnes ..Battle with adults ..Wanting to join in 	<p>15 Researcher: Mmm</p> <p>16 Lizzie: Am and I think he found that quite frustrating and he didn't really wanna do some of the things that people were like telling him to do, like teachers (Researcher: mmm) and stuff. But since he's had his one to one, he's come like leaps and bounds he's been amazing. He's talking a lot more, am sharing a lot more and just being a bit more understanding and even like sitting on carpet time – like he never used to do sitting on carpet time, like he used to just go off and do his own thing. They used to just let him (Researcher: mmm) because... because if he carried on...if you kept saying no you have to do this, you have to do that he would just be even worse (Researcher: mmm). So they just let him do what he wanted to do, eventually he just would come and join. Like he'd see that no one</p>

Appendix I. Examples of Participant Themes, Sub-themes and Categories



- ▲ ● ☑ Mark and Paul
 - ▲ ● ☑ BECOMING NEW PARENTS OF AN ADOPTED CHILD
 - ▷ ● ☑ Experience of the adoptive process
 - ▲ ● ☑ Early experience of adoptive child
 - ▷ ● ☑ Getting familiar with child's presentation
 - ▷ ● ☑ Developing an understanding of child's interests
 - ▷ ● ☑ Sense of newness
 - ▷ ● ☑ What was hoped for in new role
 - ▲ ● ☑ ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD
 - ▲ ● ☑ Being a 'good enough' parent
 - ▷ ● ☑ Importance of forming an attachment
 - ▷ ● ☑ Use of research
 - ▷ ● ☑ Sense of agency as parents
 - ▷ ● ☑ Comparison to others
 - ▷ ● ☑ Seeking help
 - ▲ ● ☑ Recognising child's early history
 - ▷ ● ☑ Prior experiences of family
 - ▷ ● ☑ Multiple transitions
 - ▷ ● ☑ Making sense of his earlier experiences
 - ▷ ● ☑ Perceptions of others/wider society
 - ▲ ● ☑ MANAGING SUBSEQUENT TRANSITIONS
 - ▲ ● ☑ Early education experience
 - ▷ ● ☑ Nursery experience
 - ▷ ● ☑ Coping with beginnings and endings
 - ▲ ● ☑ Preparing to start school
 - ▷ ● ☑ Transition activities and practices
 - ▷ ● ☑ Experience of transition process
 - ▷ ● ☑ First day experience
 - ▲ ● ☑ Separation and loss
 - ▷ ● ☑ Handing over to school each morning
 - ▷ ● ☑ As part of school life
 - ▷ ● ☑ Supporting him to cope
 - ▲ ● ☑ SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
 - ▲ ● ☑ School system
 - ▷ ● ☑ Accomodating his needs
 - ▷ ● ☑ Organisational difficulties
 - ▲ ● ☑ Archie's experience of school
 - ▷ ● ☑ Developing attachments
 - ▷ ● ☑ Learning experience
 - ▷ ● ☑ His response
 - ▲ ● ☑ Adjusting to new school routines
 - ▷ ● ☑ Smaller transitions within school
 - ▲ ● ☑ Importance of feedback
 - ▷ ● ☑ From school
 - ▷ ● ☑ From child

- ▲ ●🕒 Sonia
 - ▲ ●🕒 EARLY EDUCATION EXPERIENCE
 - ▲ ●🕒 Starting nursery
 - ▷ ●🕒 Specialist nursery
 - ▷ ●🕒 Mainstream nursery
 - ▲ ●🕒 Child's behaviour and level of inclusion
 - ▷ ●🕒 Separate experience to her mainstream peers
 - ▷ ●🕒 Hannah's experience of nursery
 - ▲ ●🕒 Parent Experience
 - ▷ ●🕒 Stigma experienced
 - ▷ ●🕒 Difficulties
 - ▷ ●🕒 EHCP Process
 - ▷ ●🕒 Change noted over time
 - ▲ ●🕒 JOURNEY TO DIAGNOSIS
 - ▲ ●🕒 Noticing Difference
 - ▷ ●🕒 Early signs
 - ▷ ●🕒 Parent response
 - ▷ ●🕒 Other's response
 - ▲ ●🕒 Role of Professionals
 - ▷ ●🕒 Diagnostic process
 - ▷ ●🕒 Providing support
 - ▲ ●🕒 ADAPTATION AND MOVING FORWARD
 - ▷ ●🕒 Adjusting to her needs
 - ▷ ●🕒 Mourning the loss of something you never had
 - ▷ ●🕒 Role of early intervention services
 - ▲ ●🕒 NEEDING A DIFFERENT SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
 - ▲ ●🕒 Support from the Local Authority
 - ▷ ●🕒 Navigating the SEN process
 - ▷ ●🕒 Transportation
 - ▲ ●🕒 Preparing to start school
 - ▷ ●🕒 Transition activities and practices
 - ▷ ●🕒 Comparison to previous transition experiences
 - ▷ ●🕒 First Morning Experience
 - ▷ ●🕒 Parent Hopes and Fears
 - ▲ ●🕒 Adjusting to new routines
 - ▷ ●🕒 For parent
 - ▷ ●🕒 For Hannah
 - ▲ ●🕒 Parent / School Relationship
 - ▷ ●🕒 Communication
 - ▷ ●🕒 Building trust in them
 - ▲ ●🕒 Change as part of transition to school process
 - ▷ ●🕒 Progress made

- ▲ ● Emma
 - ▲ ● EARLY YEARS EXPERIENCE
 - ▷ ● Child's experience of nursery
 - ▷ ● Parent experience of/interaction with nursery
 - ▷ ● Role of the father
 - ▲ ● EXPERIENCE OF THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS
 - ▲ ● Noticing difference
 - ▷ ● Nursery concern about her behaviour
 - ▷ ● Parent awareness of difference
 - ▷ ● Role of professionals
 - ▷ ● Understanding of autism
 - ▷ ● Making sense of your child's diagnosis
 - ▲ ● ADAPTATION TO CHILD'S DIAGNOSIS AND SUBSEQUENT ACTION
 - ▷ ● Becoming a stay at home mum
 - ▷ ● Nursery adjusting to her needs
 - ▷ ● Importance of 1:1 relationship to parent
 - ▲ ● CHANGE EXPERIENCED BEING A MOTHER TO A CHILD WITH AUTISM
 - ▲ ● Parent experience of her daughter
 - ▷ ● Nature of the parent-child relationship
 - ▷ ● Understanding her daughter's needs
 - ▲ ● Mourning the loss of the 'normal' child
 - ▷ ● Her reliance on adult support
 - ▷ ● Delayed communication
 - ▷ ● Reframing of her future
 - ▲ ● NEEDING A DIFFERENT SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
 - ▲ ● Consideration of provision
 - Curious to see how things go
 - Nursery applied for it and she got in so it's all good now
 - They applied for specialist and she's in one of the best
 - There was no point putting her in a normal school
 - She isn't speaking so would have suffered in mainstream
 - ▲ ● Preparing to start school
 - ▷ ● Transition activities and practices
 - ▷ ● Parent preparation
 - ▲ ● First day experience
 - ▷ ● Child's presentation
 - ▷ ● Parent feeling on the first day
 - ▷ ● Adjusting to new routine
 - ▷ ● Child's experience of school
 - ▲ ● Awareness of changes as part of transition to school process
 - ▷ ● Change in daughter's behaviour
 - ▷ ● Coinciding absence of father
 - ▷ ● Changes to family's daily routine
 - ▷ ● Changes for parent
 - ▷ ● Sense of growth and development

Appendix J. Summaries with Coded Segments

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Summaries with Coded Segments - KRL Research.mx18	
Code	Coded segments
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\Then tried to bring him to a local fair and he liked that	Yeah and the other weekend we went to am (town), they had a (themed fair) so we thought we'd give that a go, and he liked that because unlike somewhere like Disney you've not got the queues, you're just paying per ride (Researcher:yeah). And you might have to wait five minutes if that to get on a ride. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 17 - 17 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\The rides are smaller but they were enough to keep him happy	You're not- okay they're not the big elaborate rides, but they have enough movement to keep Archie happy. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 17 - 17 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\Planning a different trip next time based on what he enjoys	So I put a trigger in my mind it's like, well maybe next year, we do things where we can go maybe camping or go to the Isle of Whyte or something, =where he can go and it's calm.Or something outdoors... Mark and Paul Interview 1: 15 - 15 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\He loves being pushed on swings (seeking movement)	You know he loves going on like swings and being pushed Mark and Paul Interview 1: 3 - 3 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\Adults can be different too but they explain why	Adults are different sometimes. Like yesterday, I had a really bad headache and I explained to him. My interaction with him would have been different with him yesterday, but generally it's going to be very, very consistent. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 189 - 189 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\I change my behaviour with kids too cause they're random	Frequently, I change my behavior with kids because they'd be random and I think that's why he struggles with other children is trust, because he just doesn't know what they're going to do. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 189 - 189 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \importance of forming an attachment\Yes he's a real boy, boys love outdoor stuff	Like a boy. Boys love outdoor stuff. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 87 - 87 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A	He's getting better but I know he is listening (Researcher: mm hmmm). He's definitely - he is

MAXQDA 2018

NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Importance of forming an attachment\This has improved and parents know he's listening	taking it in Mark and Paul Interview 1: 41 - 41 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Importance of forming an attachment\He is attached and trusting but maybe only with us	He's really attached and I think you know he is trusting but only with maybe us Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\I read that technology can regulate kids with ASD	I was reading a report the other day that children with autism or things like PDA will spend three hours a day on technology. It's because it regulates them. It keeps them in their own little world. I'm thinking, "if that's what keeps him regulated and will make him happy so be it." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Reading and research is an important support for parents	The supports come from all angles. Like in the reading, as I was saying, I've done a lot of that work in reading about autism, PDA, recently, so I guess it was the book support. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Reading about why he may be quiet in interactions with others	If he's quiet and not saying anything it's not that he doesn't want attention, it's just because he might not be able to cope with it or he might be too anxious at the time. That's what I was reading. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 98 - 98 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\I read with ASD social skills aren't there and need to be taught	The stuff that I've been reading around autism that also the social constructs, the niceties aren't generally there. They can be taught, but they aren't naturally there. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 98 - 98 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Autism journals mention a gravitation to males	It could be anything, but it's mentioned in autism journals and some of the reading about PDA where they can often gravitate towards... Paul: One gender or more generally men. Mark: Men, generally, often. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 79 - 81 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\The research on autism and PDA suggests it could be true	Then, we thought, "I don't think that is true." It might be. In all the research around autism and PDA, that can be the case where they will gravitate towards men. That could actually be true. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 75 - 75 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM /	Like Mark was saying, it's almost sometimes just on a daily basis you're seeing different things, and it's constantly evolving

MAXQDA 2018

agency as parents)He had breakfast everthing seemed fine	
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)They gave him a countdown to put on his socks and shoes	Then give him his countdown to how many minutes to put his socks and shoes on. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 99 - 99 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)Paul said something and his behaviour changed, he tried to hit	All of e sudden, his behavior hed changed. Paul said something to him, and I don't know what it was. He tried to hit Paul and raised up his arm. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 99 - 99 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)We get the more challenging behaviour at home	Whereas we get the more extreme, the hitting, the biting, throwing, spitting. Although, thankfully he hasn't quite figured out how to spit properly, so it's more just blowing massive (inaudible 27:53) spray.[laughter] Still not the best thing. It's just a whole level further on. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 102 - 102 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)I think if it makes him happy so be it	I'm thinking, "if that's what keeps him regulated and will make him happy so be it." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 193 - 193 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)He loves pasta and some weeks we eat it everyday	Like he's obsessed with pasta for instance, there's some weeks I think we have pasta [laughs] every single day. He just absolutely loves it! Mark and Paul Interview 1: 67 - 67 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)Example from this morning where parents went to get him mcds	This morning is a good example. He was playing around here. We got up early, because I said he was going to have a shower this morning, had a shower, we had gotten all dressed. He was all good, and he said, "Can we go to McDonald's?" Normally we do that just the weekend, but I was like, "Fine." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 38 - 38 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of agency as parents)if we told him to come off it he'll have a massive meltdown	It's really difficult, because he does go into his own little world, and if you break him out of that then you get a massive meltdown. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 193 - 193 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent (Sense of	If he was a neurotypical child, no, I wouldn't want to do that Mark and Paul Interview 2: 193 - 193 (0)

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ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Things are constantly evolving for us	Mark and Paul Interview 2: 36 - 36 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Reading about PDA had led Mark down another tangent	Now I've been reading about PDA, it's gone off down another tangent. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 34 - 34 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Consulting research on screen time for children	But it really soothes him and regulates him and I've been looking online about research about, you know, here in the media about you know screen time with children (Researcher: Yeah) but I don't know.... Mark and Paul Interview 1: 7 - 7 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Reading somewhere about providing too much choice to children	And - but then I read somewhere, I think sometimes too much choice, rather than saying you've got this or this - and like this morning it was difficult for him to get to choose what breakfast he wanted -. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 22 - 22 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Use of research\Use of therapeutic books with him that he seems to like	And then we just bought some kind of therapeutic parenting books and he...bizarrely he'll stop and listen to those he's requested them quite a lot over the past two or three weeks since we had them Mark and Paul Interview 1: 44 - 44 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Sense of agency as parents\Mark talks to him regardless because he knows he's listening	But he is. So I always even if I think he's not listening I carry on with what I'm doing and still have the conversation with him. And I just look like I'm talking to myself [laughs] (Researcher: yeah). But know he is. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 41 - 41 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Sense of agency as parents\When they read to him he's often playing or doing something else	But like at bedtime when you read the books and when I read the books half the time he's busy playing doing something else. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 42 - 42 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Sense of agency as parents\Know that he's listening because he includes the story in play	He's not giving you any sign that he's paying any attention and then in his play bits of the stories will come out. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 42 - 42 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Sense of	We went and got him his breakfast. He ate that. Everything was fine. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 39 - 39 (0)

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agency as parents)if he was a neurotypical child, no, I wouldn't want to do that	
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Sense of agency as parents)It's not the normal way to parent but it works for him	That wouldn't be my natural parenting, but it keeps him happy. He'll look at the phone, and he'll hear you having conversations, and you'll talk, and he will learn through it. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Sense of agency as parents)And you question yourself as a parent	Then after you're thinking, "Should you accept that? Should we just stop doing that?" Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others)His upset or struggle is quite apparent/visible to others	Yeah it's quite apparent. Isn't it? Yeah it's visible. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 63 - 63 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others)So it's better, but he's not as sociable as other 3 year olds	He seems to be a lot better, but he doesn't seem sociable as you would expect a five-year-old to be with other children. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 96 - 96 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others)Comparison to how other children may respond when told no	Cause obviously if you're out with you know other children you know - their parents would say 'no' it would kind of - they might complain a little bit. Mark: Yeah. Just stand there bawl their eyes out in one spot and not do anything. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 19 - 20 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others)but Archie will make a bee line for something won't he?	but Archie will make a bee line for something won't he? Mark and Paul Interview 1: 20 - 20 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others)There's a sense of constancy in other kids lives	When they've been growing up they might have moved to a different preschool but they're still with same mum and dad, same house, same friends. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others)Seeing him with others can be hard, you think he's quite behind	so you can get like a bit of a fall thinking oh crikey he's nowhere near, but it's like well that's like a girl and then date of birth, so actually they're ahead more... Mark and Paul Interview 1: 101 - 101 (0)

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Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)Just because kids say hi doesn't mean they want to be sociable	Just because kids are coming up saying, "Hi, Archie," doesn't necessarily mean that they actually want to be social. It might just be their words they've learned that they do, and maybe in their household that's an encouraged thing where that would be a bit of an advanced thing for us to be... Mark and Paul Interview 2: 97 - 97 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)Maybe it's encouraged for them at home	It might just be their words they've learned that they do, and maybe in their household that's an encouraged thing Mark and Paul Interview 2: 97 - 97 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)That would be advanced for us	where that would be a bit of an advanced thing for us to be... Mark and Paul Interview 2: 97 - 97 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)Other kids are more resilient than Archie to overcome rejection	Whereas I think other kids might, if they ask 10 kids, then 1 of them's going to say, "Yes," and they brush off the other 9 that are not interested on that particular day Mark and Paul Interview 2: 101 - 101 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)His behaviour is more extreme than others when things go wrong	I think his behavior is somewhat more extreme than other kids when things go wrong. Other parents where they get no friends, they say their child's being a bit defiant kind of thing. They might have a little sulk and stamp their feet and huff. That would be lovely if that was the limit of it.[laughter] Mark and Paul Interview 2: 101 - 101 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)Wishing his behaviour was less extreme	That would be lovely if that was the limit of it. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 101 - 101 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)Archie's experience of change compared to other kids	A child who's not come from that background of having to go through an adoption process where they've been had to be removed and foster placements, and then he's been through a few placements. Archie has seen things overnight, everything change. He probably, in his mind thinking, "Everything is going to suddenly change again," because he probably associates change of school with, "I'll get a new family, a new house, a new..." whereas, other kids haven't had that experience. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Being a 'good enough' parent (Comparison to others)But it's taking him longer than others to adjust to transitions	but obviously if he has any trans- transitions, it's taking him weeks Mark and Paul Interview 1: 59 - 59 (0)
Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM /	It's around, I suppose, some people's parenting, I've got a friend, Jean, and she's obsessed with making sure her kid's academic.

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ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Comparison to others\Different priorities as a parent, friend who prioritises academ	Mark and Paul Interview 2: 201 - 201 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Difficulty asking for help	I feel we're fine, but someone else, a social worker, might come and speak to us and go, "Oh, my God, you need so much more support here. We should be doing this for you, or that for you." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 211 - 211 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Trying to access range of supports	It's just trying to access as much, it's talking to as many people, as possible. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Some people get private diagnosis we could do that	I know that people that have got private diagnosis. We could still get that. If the LA will go, "We don't accept that," then you can't access any services because of that, so it's pointless, you've wasted your money. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 44 - 44 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\It's frustrating to deal with inconsistencies between boroughs	That's what I read. It's just frustrating (laughs) to have to deal with that. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 42 - 42 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Meeting with the LA adoption service to make a plan of action	That's a good idea. I might do that. At least get a plan. Then we can follow that. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 35 - 35 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\I just don't have the energy.	I just don't have the energy. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 33 - 33 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Not keen to contact the other borough because of the	I'm loath to contact the borough we adopted from, because it's too much hassle, but if it's for Archie, then nothing's too much hassle. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 31 - 31 (0)

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Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Never contacted them in an official capacity	I've never actually contacted them in an official capacity. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 31 - 31 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\They've been helpful previously	because they've been really helpful Mark and Paul Interview 2: 29 - 29 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\It would be good to speak to the LA adoption service for advice	Yes, I'll speak to them and get their advice, because they've been really helpful. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 29 - 29 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\That's what I was thinking. It's weird, isn't it?	That's what I was thinking. It's weird, isn't it? Mark and Paul Interview 2: 25 - 25 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\We then were matched with a child from that borough	We then matched with a child from that borough, because when we were getting approved for adopters, we didn't know which local authority we would have been... Mark and Paul Interview 2: 21 - 21 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\The adoption was contracted to him and he happened to know them	The adoption was contracted out to a freelancer social worker, and they just contracted him. Then he just happened to know his family. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 20 - 20 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\It's a weird coincidence	That bit, such as it is, I get goosebumps. It's a weird coincidence Mark and Paul Interview 2: 18 - 18 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a	That was just coincidence, because we had a social worker from a national agency who happened to have worked in the borough back in whenever it was, in the '80s and was by chance dealing with that family.

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'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(it was coincidence that our social worker had worked with dad	Mark and Paul Interview 2: 17 - 17 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(Our social worker removed Archie's father from his family	Brian, our social worker who got us approved as adopters, worked with Archie's father, when he was a young person, was part of the team that had to remove him from his birth family, because he didn't have a great start. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 17 - 17 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(Anything we have heard about his father has been anecdotal	I mean, just the fact that the most we know about his father has effectively come anecdotally, just by sheer coincidence Mark and Paul Interview 2: 17 - 17 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(Looking for information to get a picture of family background	We're not looking for a lot, just to get a picture, or just something. We don't want the only things we can ever say to be negative. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 11 - 11 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(Recognising that maybe parents might need to push things along	Yeah, to push that a bit. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 9 - 9 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(Not having much contact with them or support	I thought about it, so with that, they've gone very, very, very quiet. They were talking about, "Are we going to sign you off from...?" Mark and Paul Interview 2: 4 - 4 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Professional support network(We don't know if the agency are going to sign us off	I don't know if the adoption agency is just signing us off. They haven't officially, but she mentioned it a while ago. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 5 - 5 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking	e haven't heard head nor tail from them for months now, whether that's normal, or whether a social worker should still be contacting us. I don't know, it's tricky. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 5 - 5 (0)

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help\Professional support network\Not knowing what common practice should be with adoption	
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Assumption that adoption agency involvement would stop	I assumed it would stop from speaking to... Mark and Paul Interview 2: 7 - 7 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Families who've adopted within LA have access to their services	I don't know if it's because the difference being that people in the LA have access to all the LA services, a lot of the drop-in things, and access to help and different services and to speak to people Mark and Paul Interview 2: 7 - 7 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Speaking to who we need to and knowing where he is will help	After we've been speaking to all the people we need to speak to, but it's just at the moment we don't know where he is. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 100 - 100 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\We have less opportunity as he's under the other borough still	where technically we can't, well, we can speak to the LA, but he's under the other borough's care still. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 7 - 7 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Advice provided on screen time from school family support worke	Cause we spoke to um can't remember what she's called like a family support worker at school before we started and she said we need to try and cut down on how much time he is watching Mark and Paul Interview 1: 7 - 7 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Professional support network\Speaking to a family support worker before he started school	Cause we spoke to um can't remember what she's called like a family support worker at school before we started and she said we need to try and cut down on how much time he is watching Mark and Paul Interview 1: 7 - 7 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a	You think, "There's far worse things." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 198 - 198 (0)

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'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\You think, "There's far worse things."	
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Example of parent whose child took their own life	There's one person that Mark met at a support group and her daughter did something, and very unfortunate, they're no longer with us. We're like, "Crikey, how'd you move on from that?" You think, "There's far worse things." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 198 - 198 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Comparison to other adoptive parents situations	You think or know some of the people in these groups have got things that are 10 times worse than what we, so I think that, "This is not too tricky at all." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 198 - 198 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\idealised version of parenting on media can be dismaying	Sometimes, when you see a kids' TV program, you say, "Why can't Archie just do that?" Mark and Paul Interview 2: 198 - 198 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\There's some people who have got far more complex issues.	There's some people who have got far more complex issues. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 198 - 198 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Attending groups helps to put things in perspective	I think some of the groups as well, what you're saying, knowing that other people in similar boats also, from some of the sessions that Mark's been to also, this'll sound bad, but, it also puts what we have into perspective. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 198 - 198 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\knowing other parents go through similar gives some comfort	Knowing there's other people out there that have gone through the same thing and the same thing happens to them gives comfort, but it's difficult. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Which is why he forces himself to attend events and groups	Just because of who I am, I have to force myself. That's why I go to all these different groups, just to force myself to go and I'm happy talking to other people if people want to talk to me, but I'm not a person that actively goes out and seeks conversation, which doesn't help in some aspects, especially if Archie doesn't want to talk to anyone. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)

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Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Mark recognises that he finds it difficult to seek out others	Just because of who I am, I have to force myself. That's why I go to all these different groups, just to force myself to go and I'm happy talking to other people if people want to talk to me, but I'm not a person that actively goes out and seeks conversation, which doesn't help in some aspects, especially if Archie doesn't want to talk to anyone. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Not part of an NCT group, where relationships build over time	It's not like we're from the NCT groups or anything, where you've got that relationship. That's built up over years. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\The adoption groups create a support network for you	Like I did at the Meet the Adopters group. That's more me giving something back to other adopters, but you still go out to the pub afterwards and everyone talks about things that are working for them and that kind of support network. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\How they cope with behaviour as kids mature, I get ideas from i	how they're coping with some of the behaviours they're seeing, particularly with the older children and getting some ideas around that. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Just going to listen to others' experiences in how they cope	Often I'm just listening to other people's experience, particularly around school, how they're dealing with schools and how they're coping with some of the behaviours they're seeing, particularly with the older children and getting some ideas around that. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Attending monthly support group for adoptive parents	. Then part of the National Association of Therapeutic Parents. They have groups once a month that I attend. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 195 - 195 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Speaking to other families, they have an assigned social worker	This is the bit I'm still confused with, because it seems like a lot of the adopters I speak to when I go to a lot of the Adopters events, they've got children, and they seem to have contact with social workers still. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 4 - 4 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help\Peer support network\Ways	Just the movement, or get a swing in the garden and say you can go out when he needs to and then just regulate himself. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 3 - 3 (0)

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to help him regulate at home -
swing in the garden

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Peer support network)Mark buying a rocking chair to help Archie's regulation

so I've been speaking with some of the people I met this week perhaps getting like a rocking chair kind of thing because they said that helps with their child when they're dis regulated
Mark and Paul Interview 1: 3 - 3 (0)

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Peer support network)Looking to understand if screen time may be beneficial for him

- and I do agree, but I was looking if there's a link between autism and screen time or children with you know traumas. (Researcher: Yeah). Is it helpful for them, is it actually bad because it does completely regulate him and he's completely e.... Kind of very, he's very stable with that
Mark and Paul Interview 1: 7 - 7 (0)

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Peer support network)In Mark's experience it seems to regulate Archie

- and I do agree, but I was looking if there's a link between autism and screen time or children with you know traumas. (Researcher: Yeah). Is it helpful for them, is it actually bad because it does completely regulate him and he's completely e.... Kind of very, he's very stable with that
Mark and Paul Interview 1: 7 - 7 (0)

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Peer support network)Consulting with others about activities to help his regulation

so I've been speaking with some of the people I met this week perhaps getting like a rocking chair kind of thing because they said that helps with their child when they're dis regulated
Mark and Paul Interview 1: 3 - 3 (0)

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Peer support network)Example from support group that reminded Mark of Archie

Because they had, they found the same out with their child where they was having nightmares about like a fire and they couldn't rescue their siblings or their mum and dad and they've been fostered or adopted for a long time, but obviously still they still can't place their trust, and that brought that home it's like, well actually maybe Archie just can't trust people.
Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Being a 'good enough' parent \Seeking help)Peer support network)Getting advice from support meeting for foster/adoptive parents

He doesn't trust adults cause someone else mentioned that in the meeting I was in earlier this week
Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)

Mark and Pau/(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \Some of his siblings have been adopted to different areas

I'm just thinking on that. Some of his siblings have been adopted to different local authorities,
Mark and Paul Interview 2: 37 - 37 (0)

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Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \No one has considered what might have happened to his dad	Not for one second...I'm not saying that we should completely empathise with his dad, but there's not been any consideration from anyone, from us, from the borough, from anyone in the process, that he's anything but a completely horrible, horrible, horrible man, and a really nasty piece of work. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 169 - 169 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \The narrative around dad is completely negative	Yeah, as Paul said, it's just at this moment no one's entertained that possibility, just completely bombarded, just completely negative, versus in my mind, we've met her mum... Mark and Paul Interview 2: 167 - 167 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \Assumptions services have made about his early experience	In my opinion, it's a bit of an oversimplification that the relationship that you saw originally in his birth family was a mum that was effectively under threat and being controlled by a dominant male. Therefore, simplistically they made this assumption in his head he thinks that women are these things to be controlled, dominated, manipulated, and pushed around, and men are these things to be scared of and listened to. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 84 - 84 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \The only link back would be through supervised contact	The only constant you would have, or the link-back would be one or two hours every, whatever it was, week in a contact centre and it being overseen by social workers, which is going to be a very artificial play date as such. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \Image of Archie being left in a dirty bouncer in front of the tv	I think a lot of time they found, social services, he would just be in this really sort of dirty am, dirty am...sort of you know those baby bouncers, he'd just be left in that. Apparently it was really grubby and he'd just be put in front of the TV and just left. So... Mark and Paul Interview 1: 24 - 24 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \So he likes the screen time and movement on the tv	He likes the screen time and he likes the movement - Mark and Paul Interview 1: 26 - 26 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \Before he would eat food off the floor to survive	Cause I think when he was younger, I think they said, Social Services said you know that he would pick stuff off the floor and eat it. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 67 - 67 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \Not knowing when he would eat next	And he didn't know where his food was coming from, it might not have been that consistent but he would eat absolutely everything. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 67 - 67 (0)

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so ate everything

Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \Nothing can be carried over from different placements	None of that is carried over even the silly bits like the friend groups. Obviously for child protection reasons they're not going to carry those over. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \His older brother has had to move from mainstream to special	particularly because his older brother who's a year older is going from mainstream to special needs. He got through reception year, and then year one wasn't going to work in mainstream. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Prior experiences of family \We don't know why he had to move yet	We don't know the exact ins and outs, because we only found out through the contact letter. I don't know whether he couldn't cope with the environment or whether he couldn't cope with the curriculum. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Multiple transitions\His birth mother regularly moved the kids around	And I think his birth mum had used nursery settings, but she kept moving the kids around Mark and Paul Interview 1: 38 - 38 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Multiple transitions\When the nursery began to ask questions she'd pull the kids out	because obviously when the nursery started thinking 'oh that's not right' and asking questions she'd then pull the kids out and move them to different ones Mark and Paul Interview 1: 38 - 38 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Multiple transitions\He's been in a setting and then suddenly moved to another	Cause he's obviously been in settings and then at the drop of a hat been moved to a different setting (Researcher: yeah). Mark and Paul Interview 1: 38 - 38 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Multiple transitions\Had been to nursery prior to that when he was in foster care	He'd had some experience of nursery settings before so where he'd been in foster care he'd been to nursery settings there as well Mark and Paul Interview 1: 38 - 38 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Multiple transitions\His moving around may be impacting his behaviour now	so he'd had yeah very short experiences of different nurseries previously and that may have, that may all be factoring into now. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 38 - 38 (0)

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<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Multiple transitions/His previous experience of change impacts his response</p>	<p>For Archie, getting the idea there's just one thing is changing, because his previous experience when he changed nursery setting he was possibly changing carer as well. Suddenly he's in a new house, new room, new family, new breakfast routine. At one point he was with his birth family and then overnight he's no longer with them. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Multiple transitions/When his foster mum took him anywhere he'd cause chaos</p>	<p>When she took him anywhere he caused absolute chaos. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 83 - 83 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Multiple transitions/He couldn't continue any previous connections when he left home</p>	<p>He may have had, I don't think he did, but if he had had friends that mum had connections with obviously they wouldn't have made any effort deliberately. They wouldn't have wanted to maintain those connections, because of Archie's safety, mum can't know anything about his whereabouts. It wouldn't be right mum can pop over and get a play date with...it wasn't going to happen. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Multiple transitions/Not sure if they based his placement on the scientific evidenc</p>	<p>I don't know if they based it on anything more scientific. They didn't say anything about autism or anything like that. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 83 - 83 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Multiple transitions/The things that ease transition he hasn't really experienced</p>	<p>These things that naturally, I suppose, ease the transition where you've moved to a different school, but you're still seeing the friends, you're still doing play dates, that just doesn't happen. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 112 - 112 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/He ate every food you gave him</p>	<p>Cause he liked any single, every single food he ate everything you gave him. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 67 - 67 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/ never thought about it like that, so he needs to build it up</p>	<p>I never thought about it like that yeah so he needs to build that up and have that confidence Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/This maybe why he's upset at separation</p>	<p>and anyone else is just... he can't trust them and that's why he's upset because he hasn't, he just can't trust in what they're gonna do or not gonna do. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)</p>

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Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\that brought that home it's like, well actually maybe Archie ju	that brought that home it's like, well actually maybe Archie just can't trust people Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\That fits with his attachment style he loves 1:1 attention	And that's sort of goes with the attachment as well where he just loves the one to one attention Mark and Paul Interview 1: 27 - 27 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\and how this impacts his perception of women and men	In my opinion, it's a bit of an oversimplification that the relationship that you saw originally in his birth family was a mum that was effectively under threat and being controlled by a dominant male. Therefore, simplistically they made this assumption in his head he thinks that women are these things to be controlled, dominated, manipulated, and pushed around, and men are these things to be scared of and listened to. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 84 - 84 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\Social Services suggested he was more agreeable to men	The borough we adopted him from did say that he seemed to be more agreeable with men than women. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 75 - 75 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\How the content might relate to Archie's earlier experiences	Oh she, the child was - that's how they saw that happening you know. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 43 - 43 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\Did he have the choice?	There are some people...You can get anybody, no matter what horrific stuff they did, you say, "Oh, well, they're a nice person. They just did some bad choices." That's a bit of a whitewash, but in Archie's father's case potentially he may not have had the choice in those things. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 170 - 170 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\He also can refuse help when it's apparent he needs it	Like when he's got some- he's struggling with a toy and you see he's struggling it's like, let me help you I can show you what you need to do. He will, he he will refuse point blank. And... he won't, he won't be shown. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 75 - 75 (0)
Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Recognising child's early history\Making sense of his earlier experiences\Some of his difficulty is because he struggles to focus	Some of it - it's because he struggles with focusing. You try and tell him stuff he won't listen to you. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 75 - 75 (0)

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Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He looks like he's away with the fairies but he's taking it in	and it looks like he's away with the fairies sometimes but he is - he does take it in because something will happen several days later that will confirm that he was taking in. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 41 - 41 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)If that's like his dad...	If that's like his dad... Mark and Paul Interview 2: 13 - 13 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)His relationship to food is influenced by his background	Because his background is of neglect and neglect where he was just left to his own devices, Mark and Paul Interview 1: 24 - 24 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)It's one reason they placed him with us, his attachment to men	That's why the borough placed him with us as well. That's one of the factors. I don't know if they were just saying that because when he was in his foster care, her partner would take him to sessions. He'd be really fine. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 83 - 83 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)The idea of the defense mechanisms that Archie has learnt	I think he's learned to be...something it's probably like a defense mechanism that he's had to learn... how to cope with things himself Mark and Paul Interview 1: 24 - 24 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He's attending to everything rather than focusing in the moment	The fact he will - he's looking at everything else apart from what he should be doing, not taking care of what of what he's doing. Focusing on an external factors rather than being in the moment of what he's doing Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)This is coupled with his lack of focus	And just, it just seems to I think that's coupled with the lack of focus Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)
Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)And he can just spot things within the supermarket	And then the amount of times he can just spot stuff in supermarkets and at times I've said no that's not Thomas or something. And then I look at it and go god it is. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)

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<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)If I can't find something he can point to it in the room</p>	<p>The amount of times he he knows where - I ask him because I can't find this and I go "well where is it?" And then he'll come and point to it and tell me. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Compared to other children, he clocks everything in a room</p>	<p>And she said it's quite remarkable because normally you know you get these kids and they've not got tunnel vision but they just, they just see that bit in front of them. (Researcher: mmm). But he's obviously come in the room clocked everything, seen everything. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Eg from therapy session where he has noted items around the room</p>	<p>The stuff we've had with speech and language where am he will ask, they will ask a question about stuff on the table and he would start talking about the same kind of items but that were on the am therapist's desk or something or on the shelf. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)At home his behaviour comes out because he feels safe</p>	<p>But um, so I'm thinking it's here because he feels really safe. (Researcher: Mm hmm). And then he can bottle stuff up whenever he is at school, pre-school and then at home it just comes - it comes out especially if it's the end of the day. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 30 - 30 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)How paperwork on Archie suggests that he is always smiling</p>	<p>Cause Archie always uh any report we've read as part of the like adoption process always said he's smiling. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 46 - 46 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Applying it to adults but not realising it might be how he feel</p>	<p>It's just like just cause someone's smiling, doesn't mean that - you know that in adults kind of thing. For some reason I forgot that that might be him. He looks like he's happy but inside he might not be kind of thing. (Researcher: Mmm Yeah). Yeah it's quite interesting. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 46 - 46 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Never thought about smiling as a defense mechanism</p>	<p>which he always does, but then never thought about it until quite recently that can be a defense mechanism. I mean it just never never crossed my mind. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 46 - 46 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He's</p>	<p>every night he asked for the Willie Mobley book, it's about boy that has bit of anger problems and you know hits, pushes his friend over and pushes his teacher, talks about all the feelings and he kept asking for that again and again and again. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 44 - 44 (0)</p>

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<p>been requesting a book about a boy with anger problems</p>	<p>So I just kept reading that to him so...I assume it's a conscious thing because he doesn't ask for other books to be read and he asked for it by name so it's not just random, he specifically wanted it. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 44 - 44 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)So Mark repeatedly read it, assuming it was a conscious choice</p>	<p>He asked for one of the other, we bought like three of them and he asked for the other one by name so, I wonder if they do help or it's just purely coincidence because their new books I don't know Mark and Paul Interview 1: 44 - 44 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He's been asking for them so maybe they are helping</p>	<p>So I think things like that are helping him Mark and Paul Interview 1: 44 - 44 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Will ask for it even if dad suggests something else</p>	<p>but it was consistent for - I'd ask him what he wants and he'd say the same thing (Researcher: Yeah). If I try and read something else cause I'm bored of reading it every night he'll ask for it again... Mark and Paul Interview 1: 44 - 44 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)The therapeutic books do go through some of the issues</p>	<p>I think some of those they sort of do go through some of the issues. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 43 - 43 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)The difficult nature of some of the books</p>	<p>Although, like there's one that's like "Smiling Suzy" I think it's called, I hadn't pre-read it before (Researcher:Yeah) and Archie had asked for it and then it's like ooo! Because it's like this girl her defense mechanism's just to smile, and it's like one day in the supermarket like her mum's not smiling so she's thinking now, she asked like the lady in the checkout "will you be my new mummy now because my old mummy stopped smiling and got rid of me"... Mark and Paul Interview 1: 43 - 43 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Not expecting that in a kid's book</p>	<p>Like you're not expecting that in a kids book. Mark and Paul Interview 1: 43 - 43 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Trigger</p>	<p>And it's different things. Sometimes it's obvious what the trigger is, as you were saying he wants something and he can't have it Mark and Paul Interview 1: 22 - 22 (0)</p>

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for him is wanting something he can't have

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Delayed gratification is just too much for him

either then, and it's that delayed gratification it just pushes him obviously it pushes anyone over he wants something now and he can't have it. It's upsetting but, for people like Archie, children like Archie it's just too much for him.

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 22 - 22 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Having too much choice can overwhelm him as well

Or I think sometimes too much choice, like cereals he mentioned because we've got those like Nestlé or the Kellogg's sometimes or the mini ones and we've got like porridge or cornflakes. So ten or more different things he could have and he didn't want any of it.

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 22 - 22 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Or whether his questioning relates to his trust in adults

or... I don't know if it's a thing where it's just trust, it's trust. (Researcher: yeah) He doesn't trust adults cause someone else mentioned that in the meeting I was in earlier this week

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)Wondering if he is trying to see if parents change their mind

and see I suppose to just see if we change our, just testing I suppose if we're changing our mind

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He was in the situation for a year less maybe hes more resilient

I actually - in my mind thinking, "There is only a year gap. Yes, Archie was in the situation for a year less. The damage is lower, but is that one year going to be enough to make the difference?"

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He gravitates to adults

He seems to gravitate more toward adults.

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 96 - 96 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense of his earlier experiences)He's hyper observant

Yeah he's hyper observant.

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 83 - 83 (0)

Mark and Paul(ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD)Recognising child's early history(Making sense

He just notices yeah all sorts of things

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 86 - 86 (0)

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of his earlier experiences/He just notices yeah all sorts of things

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/Sometimes it's not clear to others what he's looking at

But sometimes he won't tell you what he's noticed and he wants to stop and look at something and you're trying to think what on earth is it.

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 86 - 86 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/So he's hypersensitive

so he's hypersensitive

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 85 - 85 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/Playing us off each other so he doesn't have to do something

He'll do it on purpose just to bounce it off, so he doesn't actually have to do the task.

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 13 - 13 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/Archie can be controlling too in his interactions with us

That's what Archie does is he'll do things like he'll ask me something. If I say, "Well, no," or I'll ask him to do something, then he'll say, "Oh, can dad do it?" Then dad will go and do it and he'll say, "No, I want daddy to do it." He'll do it on purpose just to bounce it off, so he doesn't actually have to do the task.

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 13 - 13 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/He's quick to give negative feedback in situations

He doesn't. He's quick to give negative feedback. That's more due to the situation.

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 125 - 125 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/But it's hard to gauge if he likes/dislikes something

You don't know if he's liking or disliking something. It's a bit tricky to gauge from him.

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 125 - 125 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense of his earlier experiences/He can't trust in others and what they're going to do

and anyone else is just... he can't trust them and that's why he's upset because he hasn't, he just can't trust in what they're gonna do or not gonna do.

Mark and Paul Interview 1: 31 - 31 (0)

Mark and Paul/ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD/Recognising child's early history/Making sense

if one of those was to have a PDA diagnosis, because their local authority recognizes, would that shift things you think to LA or no?

Mark and Paul Interview 2: 37 - 37 (0)

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of his earlier experiences\Wondering if family background would be considered for diagnosis

<p>Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Perceptions of others/wider society\Wanting to explain to them that he's not a naughty kid</p>	<p>In that moment, you can't say anything, because that is what they've seen, and you can't go into a whole 10 minute spiel of, "He's not a naughty kid." [laughs] Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Perceptions of others/wider society\Not wanting him to be labelled as the naughty kid at school</p>	<p>Then you think, "I've got to be so careful." That's the bit I worry with school. I just don't want him to be labeled as the naughty kid. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Perceptions of others/wider society\Scenario where Archie was judged by a parent for his behaviour</p>	<p>There's been one occasion at the school where there was another child, and they were going up to Archie. Archie wasn't interested at all and gave him a gentle push, but it was just gentle. Then the child obviously didn't get the hint, and they went louder, like, "Archie." Archie pushes him harder and pushes this kid back into a thing. Then, of course, the grandparent in this case was like, "Come on son, leave that naughty boy alone." Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)</p>
<p>Mark and Paul\ADAPTING TO A NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SYSTEM / ADJUSTMENT PERIOD\Perceptions of others/wider society\Considering how other people see his behaviour to their kids</p>	<p>It's just a level beyond. I think sometimes other parents see Archie's behavior towards naturally their child or their grandchild. Mark and Paul Interview 2: 106 - 106 (0)</p>

Appendix K. Ethical Approval

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
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<https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/>

Kate Ross-Lonergan

By Email

24 May 2018

Dear Ms Ross-Lonergan,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: Beginnings and Endings: A Psycho-Social Research Study Exploring the Emotional Experience of Transition for Parents of Children with SEN.

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. 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.

Yours sincerely,

Best regards,



Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
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cc. Course Lead, Supervisor