

**What are the key features of good practice when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study.**

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

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Date of submission for examination (May 2022)

## Abstract

School exclusion is a complex social issue which often increases the likelihood of wider social exclusion, crime, and poor educational outcomes. The rates of school exclusion in England are a long-standing issue and, whilst there is guidance for schools around exclusion practice, the numbers of exclusions and referrals to Educational Psychologists (EPs) for these children and young people (CYP) continue to increase. The current research therefore aims to explore the core features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of school exclusion by consulting with a group of EPs with expertise in this area.

As there is no current consensus around ‘good practice’ for EPs when working with this population in the literature, this research used a three-round e-Delphi method, a surveying technique, to explore the group opinion. Using a purposive sampling technique, a final panel of 18 EPs were recruited, first answering an open-ended question regarding opinions on good practice in this area. Thematic Analysis (TA) was then used to code and theme qualitative responses and to generate statements. Participants rated these statements to determine the percentage of group agreement and establish a consensus on how essential certain areas of practice were. Consensus was reached for 115 statements across 5 themes including assessment, consultation, training, the system, and the skills and characteristics of the EP. 112 statements indicated aspects of practice that participants felt were either ‘essential in all’ or ‘essential in some situations’ and 3 statements were agreed to be “not essential”.

The findings demonstrated large amounts of consensus in most areas for practice for working with CYP at risk of school exclusion. The findings have been used to develop a best practice framework (the EPEP framework) to guide and inform EP practice when working with this population.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to say a huge thank you to anyone and everyone who has supported me on my research journey. A particular thank you to Dr Rachael Green, my supervisor, for her always-considered thoughts and views, not only on the Delphi method but my topic of choice. Your containment and support during my 'existential-crisis mode' has been greatly appreciated.

An additional thank you to all the EPs who agreed to participate in my study and kindly dedicated their time - this research would not have been possible without you!

Thank you to my 2019 cohort at the Tavi who, in a very difficult time, have been more supportive than they can ever know – I am proud to know you all. To those of you who looked over my themes and survey, your feedback was invaluable.

Lastly, thank you to my incredible family to whom I owe it all. To my mum and dad - my determination and passion for this research, my practice and life more generally is the product of your continuous support and unwavering belief in me. To my sister, for always listening and being there for me even when I made it hard to be! To my partner, Alex, who made this journey easier just by existing. Finally, a thank you to my lovely cats who have tolerated hundreds of involuntary cuddles and to the many cafés that have fed and watered me along the way.

### Abbreviations list

Alternative Provision	<b>AP</b>
Behaviour Support Team	<b>BST</b>
British Psychological Society	<b>BPS</b>
Child(ren) and Young Person/People	<b>CYP</b>
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	<b>CBT</b>
Critical Appraisal Skills Programme	<b>CASP</b>
Department for Education	<b>DfE</b>
Department for Education and Skills	<b>DfES</b>
Department of Health	<b>DoH</b>
Education and Health Care Plan	<b>EHCP</b>
Educational Psychologist	<b>EP</b>
Educational Psychology Service	<b>EPS</b>
Emotional Literacy Support Assistant	<b>ELSA</b>
Free School Meals	<b>FSM</b>
Health and Care Professions Council	<b>HCPC</b>
Local Authority	<b>LA</b>
Looked After Children	<b>LAC</b>
National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists	<b>NAPEP</b>
Personal Construct Psychology	<b>PCP</b>
Principle Educational Psychologist	<b>PEP</b>
Pupil Referral Unit	<b>PRU</b>
Randomised Control Trials	<b>RCT</b>

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy	<b>REBT</b>
Senior Leadership Team	<b>SLT</b>
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<b>SEMH</b>
Socio-Economic Status	<b>SES</b>
Solution Focused Brief Therapy	<b>SFBT</b>
Special Educational Needs	<b>SEN</b>
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	<b>SEND</b>
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator	<b>SENDCO</b>
Specialist Educational Psychologist	<b>SEP</b>
Thematic Analysis	<b>TA</b>
Trainee Educational Psychologist	<b>TEP</b>
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	<b>UNESCO</b>
Youth Offending Service	<b>YOS</b>

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## **1. Introduction**

### ***1.1 Prevalence of exclusion***

School exclusion is a long-standing phenomenon in the UK, particularly in England, where over 7,000 pupils received a permanent exclusion in 2018-19 (Department for Education [DfE], 2019). Over the last 20 years, the issue of reducing exclusions has continuously been central to discussions relating to educational and social inclusivity, policy and often present in the media (Graham, 2019; Parsons, 1999). Government legislation and policy has broadly discussed issues related to exclusion, including the reasons and purpose of exclusion, as well as prevalence rates (DfE, 2017). Whilst some policies encourage schools to support children who are at risk of exclusion, the issue remains largely unchanged. Initiatives for reducing exclusions have so far seemed to be ineffective in significantly reducing numbers or resolving the difficulties presented by CYP excluded (Forde, 2018).

Whilst the issue of school exclusion exists across the UK, exclusion rates vary according to region, with the rates of both permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions higher in England compared to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Duffy et al., 2021). Additionally, rates vary across school types (such as primary and secondary) and different settings (such as mainstream and specialist provisions; Daniels et al., 2003). Interestingly, whilst the majority of school exclusions occur at secondary school level (peaking at age 14), there has been a recent increase in primary school exclusions (DfE, 2021). Indeed, a recent report from the Children's Commissioner in England has called for a ban on all primary school exclusions by 2026 (Roberts, 2022). Whilst this reflects concern about the increasing numbers of exclusions in primary schools and may have a significant impact on prevalence rates in future, it will be important to consider how schools are supported systemically and financially to meet the needs of all children with additional needs.



In terms of current prevalence rates, data from the DfE (2021) demonstrates that permanent exclusions in England increased from 6,685 between 2015-2016 to 7,905 between 2016-2017 and then decreased marginally to 7,894 between 2018-19. Whilst newer figures suggest that this number fell to 5,057 in 2019/20, the year was interrupted by the first national lockdown occurring from March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When considering numbers of exclusions throughout the Autumn term prior to this, there were already 3,200 permanent exclusions, which demonstrates a 5% increase from the same term in 2018/19. Most of this increase was due to increased exclusions in primary schools. There was also an increase in fixed-period exclusions in the Autumn term of 2019/20, with an increase of 14% compared to the previous year. Thus, in England, it appears that the rate of both permanent and fixed-term exclusions was on the rise prior to the pandemic.

In contrast, Scotland's national data suggest that permanent exclusions have been almost eradicated at only 3 cases in 2018/19 and 1 case in 2020/21. In Northern Ireland there were only 11 permanent exclusions in 2019/20. In Wales, there has been an increase in permanent exclusions from 89 pupils in 2019/20 to 218 in 2020/21. Whilst there is no clear evidence to suggest why these regional differences exist, research has argued that it may be due to differences in legislation, policy and guidance around behaviour and exclusions (McCluskey et al., 2019).

Other data considered in exclusion figures include recorded managed moves. Managed moves are sometimes used when a CYP has been identified as 'at risk of permanent exclusion' and the process involves a transition to another school. This supposedly allows for greater forward planning, the provision of an individualised intervention in the receiving school and more thorough consideration of the young person's needs (Abdelnoor, 2007). Indeed, guidance from the DfE (2016) outlining support for school's regarding behaviour and attendance suggests that secondary schools should be working together to address attendance and improve

behaviour, including through collaborative development of clear procedures for managed moves. Whilst legally schools are only allowed to use options such as managed moves on a temporary basis (up to 12 weeks) so long as the pupil maintains dual registration and stays on roll at both schools (DfE, 2017; Gill et al., 2017), more often pupils are permanently moved to Alternative Provisions (AP) or Pupil Referral Units (PRU) after an exclusion.

Indeed, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR; Gill et al., 2017) and official government exclusion figures suggest that there are currently five times the expected number of pupils being educated in PRUs and APs. It therefore seems that other processes such as “off-rolling” (or unofficially/illegally removing pupils from the mainstream school's roll through processes such as un-recorded managed moves) are happening frequently (Gill et al., 2017). The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted; 2019) has outlined that off-rolling generally occurs prior to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams, often in an attempt to improve the school's perceived academic attainment and ranking. These processes are deemed unlawful regardless of whether parents or carers agree as legislation demands that any school exclusion must be formally recorded regardless of length of time or circumstance (DfE, 2017).

### ***1.2 Reasons for exclusion: Conceptualisation of CYP ‘at risk of school exclusion’ - who is excluded?***

With the number of exclusions seemingly increasing in England (DfE, 2021), it is important to understand the underlying reasons and possible factors that mean a CYP may become ‘at risk of school exclusion’.

As fixed-period exclusions can lead to eventual permanent exclusion, they are often a good indicator of when support for a pupil may be required (Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Strand & Fletcher, 2014). Indeed, if a pupil receives a fixed-period exclusion, they are seventeen times more likely

to eventually receive a permanent exclusion compared to those with no exclusion history (Strand & Fletcher, 2014). This likelihood increases as a pupil receives more fixed-period exclusions. However, interestingly, after receiving nine fixed period exclusions the likelihood of permanent exclusion decreases (Strand & Fletcher, 2014), perhaps depending on the seriousness of the reason for repeated exclusions or due to errors in reporting these statistics (Graham et al., 2019).

When considering factors associated with exclusion, the Government commissioned Timpson Report (DfE, 2019) confirmed that it is primarily the most vulnerable children that experience school exclusion. Exclusion therefore often exacerbates already difficult circumstances for this population. Additionally, national exclusion data suggests that most permanent exclusions occur in secondary schools (83%) and there are significant inequalities related to certain protected characteristics such as gender, with boys being over three times more likely to be permanently excluded or receive a fixed-term exclusion than girls (DfE, 2018). Ethnicity and race also play one of the largest roles in the likelihood of a CYP being excluded (DfE, 2018). Black Caribbean boys and Romany students are nearly three times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion when compared to White British students. Additionally, dual heritage White and Black Caribbean students are two and half times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion. Overall, fixed-period and permanent exclusions across the ethnic groups are highest for Black and Mixed ethnicity pupils (DfE, 2018). Additionally, the same marginalised groups who are over-represented in the exclusion figures are also overrepresented in 'off rolling' (Bradbury, 2018).

CYP with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties (Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice [SEND CoP], DfE & Department of Health [DoH], 2015) also experience the highest number of school exclusions (1.09% or one in two; Gill et al., 2017) due to presenting challenging externalising behaviours, or disruptive

behaviour (Hayden, 2003). This description of behaviour is the most cited reason for exclusion (DfE, 2019; accounting for 35% of all exclusions) and often these pupils are seen as challenging to include (Clough & Lindsay, 2003; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Grieve, 2009). Given that the primary reason given for exclusions is disruptive behaviour, the Timpson report focuses on minimising this behaviour to prevent exclusions (DfE, 2019). However, it is unlikely that minimising the behaviour of CYP is going to lead to an understanding of underlying causes for this behaviour and therefore may hinder positive long-term outcomes.

There are several other factors that mean some CYP are more at risk of receiving an exclusion. Indeed, data from the DfE (2018) shows that in England, marginalised groups are disproportionately receiving school exclusions. This includes Looked After Children (LAC), pupils from low Socio-Economic Status (SES) households, including those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM; DfE, 2017), and pupils on the SEND register. Indeed, CYP with SEND are seven times more likely to be excluded compared to those without SEND and account for 72% of all permanently excluded pupils (Hayden & Dunne, 2001).

A high number of those CYP excluded have also experienced complex personal, family or school difficulties (Hayden, 2003). Other factors that have been shown to place a CYP 'at risk of school exclusion' include the willingness of school staff, parents/guardians and the CYP to work together, the school's implementation of a flexible and differentiated school curriculum and teachers being receptive to support and training (Hallam & Castle, 1999). The combined effect of these risk factors leads to a layering of disadvantage and higher risk of being excluded from school (McCluskey et al., 2015).

Whilst there are therefore several complex and overlapping reasons a child or young person might be at risk of school exclusion, often, schools give similar reasons for exclusion (for example, disruptive behaviour). Indeed, despite anecdotal evidence that schools try to avoid excluding pupils (particularly permanent exclusions), there seems to be great variation

between schools in how they respond to pupil behaviours that lead to exclusions. For example, some schools use a ‘zero tolerance’ behaviour policy, which uses punitive consequences which are undifferentiated for minor and major incidents (McCluskey et al., 2019). Despite claims that punishment likely further adversely impacts those who are already negatively affected by poverty, racism, and academic failure (Casella, 2003), these schools tend to be the highest excluding schools (often also giving longer fixed-term exclusions) and have been thought to entrench racist educational outcomes for Black children (Black Learning Achievement and Mental Health [BLAM] UK, 2021). In contrast, in schools with more relational behaviour policies (for example, that focus on restorative approaches, early intervention and using positive relationships to support pupils at risk of exclusion) rates of exclusions appear to be lower. This is reflected in Scottish policy specific to addressing school exclusions (Included, Engaged, and Involved [IEI]; (Scottish Government, 2017) and may explain lower rates of exclusion compared to England (which has a more punitive, discipline-focused approach to behaviour as outlined in their ‘Behaviour and discipline in schools’ document; DfE, 2016).

### ***1.3 Rationale for exclusion as a research topic***

#### *1.3.1 Impact of exclusion: Why study exclusion?*

CYP excluded from school often experience several adverse short-and long-term outcomes. Research exploring the experiences of CYP permanently excluded suggests that they often feel rejected and stigmatised (De Pear et al., 1996; Pomeroy, 1999). Evidence also suggests that experiencing school exclusion may have a detrimental influence on learning outcomes and educational attainment, particularly as these pupils often miss academic activities, experience alienation, and become demotivated in terms of academic goals (Arcia 2006; Brown 2007;

Michail, 2011). Subsequently, these CYP also receive lower than average educational outcomes (Gazeley, 2010) and higher school dropout (Noltemeyer & Ward, 2011).

Moreover, permanently excluded pupils often spend their entire education in PRUs and APs as schools are often unwilling to re-admit them (Gill et al., 2017; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019; Tate & Greatbatch, 2017). Indeed, the majority of permanently excluded pupils and those offered alternatives to exclusion (85%) do not return to mainstream education (Children's Commissioner, 2012; Pilay et al., 2013). As APs often offer lower quality education, excluded pupils are twice as likely to be taught by an unqualified teacher after their exclusion (Gill et al., 2017). Additionally, rather than offering core subjects alongside vocational qualifications, APs and PRUs often offer a limited selection of GCSEs subjects, which potentially limits the employment prospects of students who attend these settings for longer periods (Mills & Thomson, 2018).

In line with this, research suggests that opportunities for training and employment are considerably reduced for CYP who have experienced repeated exclusions (Brookes et al. 2007; Massey, 2011) and these children are therefore at risk of experiencing higher levels of unemployment in the future (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2006). They are also more likely to show serious behavioural problems such as delinquency, antisocial behaviour, early entry into the juvenile justice system (Costenbader & Markson 1998; Hemphill & Hargreaves; 2010) and be continually involved in crime throughout life (Williams et al., 2012). Pupils excluded from school are also at higher risk of drug abuse (Pepler & Rubin, 1991), poverty (Parsons, 1999) and later physical and mental health problems (Cooper et al., 2000). Consequently, they are also more likely to experience later exclusion at the societal level including lower quality of life, reduced wellbeing, and limited future life opportunities (Levitas et al., 2007).

Whilst causality cannot be determined from the observed relationship between exclusion and negative life outcomes, and given that there is clearly a complex relationship between factors, research has suggested links between school exclusion and later criminality. In one study, over half of the prisoner population reported having received a fixed-period exclusion and just under half had received a permanent exclusion from school (Williams et al., 2012). Furthermore, during an inspection of Young Offenders Institutions and Secure Training Centres in England and Wales, all CYP reported receiving either a permanent or fixed-period exclusion (Ministry of Justice, 2018). According to a recent report (Humphries, 2018), this may be due to pupils in PRUs being vulnerable to exposure to drug dealers who often target these CYP for recruitment in illegal activities.

As legislation clearly highlights the potential impact of exclusion at several levels, for the current research, CYP were considered “at risk of exclusion” if they had previously experienced any fixed-term or permanent school exclusions and were subsequently perceived by their schools to be at risk of further exclusion due to displaying continuous disruptive, challenging behaviour.

Considering the evidence that suggests exclusion is a persistent and complex problem faced by the most vulnerable children in our society, it is important that we continue to explore how we can improve outcomes for this population.

#### ***1.4 Defining school exclusion***

Whilst exclusion terminology and legislation differ across the UK, according to government legislation in England, the context in which the current research is situated, a student may be excluded from school either permanently or for a fixed period, both of which are usually a sanction for a serious breach of the school's behaviour policy (DfE, 2017). Generally, school exclusion is described as denial of access to a particular school rather than to education (Gill

et al., 2017). Munn (2000) identifies and defines permanent and fixed-term exclusions and also highlights the place of ‘unofficial exclusions’:

- Fixed term exclusion – a pupil is removed from their educational setting temporarily for a short, definite period after which they can return to school (the DfE's statutory Guidance defines a fixed-period exclusion as: “when a pupil is barred from the school for a fixed amount of time (including exclusions during lunchtime)” - DfE, 2017, p. 56)
- Permanent exclusion – a pupil is permanently removed from their setting and is not allowed to return (“when a pupil is permanently barred from the school premises” - DfE, 2017, p. 56).
- Unofficial exclusion – a pupil is sent home and the school does not keep a record (families often do not have the right to appeal).

Extensive guidance and legislation relating to school exclusion in the “Exclusion from maintained schools” document (DfE, 2017) guides the use of exclusion for pupils from schools (e.g., maintained mainstream schools, academy or free schools, APs and PRUs). This legislation outlines the use of exclusions as part of a school’s behaviour policy and justifies its use as a definitive response to behaviour which leads to the subsequent removal of a student from their educational setting (Education and Inspections Act, 2006). Whilst the Government has supported head teachers in their use of exclusion as a sanction, the legislation states that this decision must be lawful and used only as a last resort. The decision should not breach a school’s statutory duty (as outlined in the SEND COP; DfE & DoH, 2015; DfES, 2001; DfES, 2005). The Education Act (2002) also makes clear that any reason provided for an exclusion to take place must be related to disciplinary action, either as a response to a serious or persistent



breach of the school's behaviour policy or where the student remaining in the school would harm the safety, welfare, or education of other students (DfE, 2017). When an exclusion occurs, schools are required to inform parents immediately and if, during the 5 days following the exclusion, their child is observed in a public place they may be prosecuted (DfE, 2017).

Statutory guidance outlines that a total of 45 days fixed-period exclusions can be given to a pupil in one academic year (DfE, 2017). From the 6th day of any given fixed-term exclusion, the LA and school have a legal requirement to provide suitable full-time alternative educational provision (e.g., at an AP or PRU; DfE, 2017). If the statutory limit of 45 days is exceeded by a school (e.g., nine, five day exclusions), they might decide to exclude a student permanently. Despite reflecting adversely on schools' exclusion figures, 75% of pupils that experience three or more fixed period are subsequently more likely to be permanently excluded. Importantly, this suggests that school exclusion (both fixed-term and permanent exclusion) may not be an effective disciplinary strategy (Strand & Fletcher, 2014).

### ***1.5 The role of the EP***

Given the detrimental effect of school exclusion on life outcomes, there has been an emphasis on schools' needs to engage in preventative measures and positive alternatives to exclusion in extensive Government legislation. This includes through guidance documents and national strategies that have been produced to tackle behaviour and discipline in schools (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2016).

Inclusive practice in schools is considered a basic entitlement for all children living in developed nations (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994) and, whilst legislation is clear about CYP having a right to attend their local school, it is the school's and the LAs responsibility to consider their capacity to meet all pupils' needs and support CYP with SEN by ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made (Gould,

2018). Inclusive practice is thought to be reliant on several factors, including the ethos of a school and staff attitudes (Cole et al., 2019; Munn et al., 2000; Ofsted, 2010). In addition, there are several specialist support services offered to schools by the LA and other services that aim to develop schools' capacities for inclusion of CYP, including that provided by Educational Psychology Services (EPS).

School exclusion is a relevant topic for EPs due to the high proportion of pupils with SEND, particularly SEMH, currently being excluded. Additionally, EPs seem to be involved with this population frequently, particularly where a school is concerned about a pupil's behaviour (Hartnell, 2010; Waite, 2014). Additionally, the standards required for EP accreditation outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency (HCPC, 2016) both include the EP's role in reducing social exclusion (DfE, 2016; DfE, 2017). Given that school exclusion feeds into wider societal exclusion, EPs seem to be professionally obliged to work with schools to reduce exclusions and support positive outcomes for CYP vulnerable to exclusion (Gross & McChrystal, 2001).

Whilst traditionally EPs may have been more involved with individual casework, which is generally required by the statutory assessment process (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005), when describing the EPs role, the BPS (BPS, 2016) makes reference to more varied work that might be possible outside of involvement at the individual level (e.g., across the five core functions of the EP that have previously been identified; consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research; Fallon et al., 2010). EPs are now seen as practitioners with a central role at the individual, group and whole school level with CYP with SEN, including SEMH, and also have a role in the statutory assessment of these CYP (Bracher et al., 1998; Bradbury, 2004; Swinson et al., 2003; Zaniolo, 2021). EPs are therefore well placed to become involved with cases of CYP at risk of exclusion and have a role to help prevent them.

## ***1.6 Personal and professional context of the research***

There is clearly wide-spread concern about the rate of exclusions in England and the poor outcomes for this population. The following two sections highlight the researcher's personal and professional experience of working in education which has also reflected this complex issue.

### *1.6.1 Personal interest*

Prior to starting the doctoral training programme, in their role as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) the researcher worked with several CYP at risk of exclusion, which started an interest in the topic. The researcher was then provided the opportunity to undertake a project during their doctoral training placement, which involved creating a systemic approach to support a high-excluding secondary academy to reduce exclusions alongside working with individual CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion. Working alongside two EPs and supervised by an EP systemic practitioner, this project contributed to the researcher's interest in how EPs might contribute to supporting CYP at risk of permanent exclusion, particularly those with SEMH needs and given the poor life outcomes for this population.

This project, and a large amount of individual casework with CYP at risk of school exclusion, outlined the importance of the EP being involved early, undertaking preventative work and working collaboratively with school staff, families and the CYP. Within this role the researcher experienced working with several CYP at risk of exclusion with complex circumstances and was required to acknowledge several barriers to successful work in this area. Additionally, working with a school organisation gave the opportunity to reflect upon the importance of working at multiple levels of the system when working with this population. Whilst challenging, acknowledging the often-positive impact of support for these CYP was

rewarding and reinforced the value of the EP role in this area.

### *1.6.2 Professional interest*

Many peer-reviewed papers and professional or governmental statements have outlined the poor life outcomes for CYP permanently excluded from school and some research has argued that EPs are in a good position to support these CYP (Hardman, 2001). Additionally, legislation in the UK has outlined the importance of addressing the increasing numbers of school exclusions (DfE, 2018) and the role of the EP in doing so (DfES, 2003). Nevertheless, discourse within the profession and a lack of literature in this area has suggested that the role of EPs within this field is yet to be fully acknowledged, highlighting a need to develop clarity around EP practice with CYP at risk of school exclusion.

Additionally, the LA within which the researcher was completing their doctoral placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and EPs within the EPS, expressed agreement that the current research was pertinent and timely given the service priority address high numbers of exclusion in the LA. There are also potential new and heightened risks for CYP at risk of school exclusion caused by the recent Covid-19 pandemic (Daniels et al., 2020). Research exploring school exclusion has focused primarily on the negative experiences for CYP and their families (De Pear, 1997; Pomeroy, 1999; Pomeroy, 2000) or on barriers to successful professional involvement (Graham et al., 2019). The researcher was therefore interested in adopting a positive approach by identifying key areas of EP practice that might promote successful outcomes for CYP at risk of school exclusion.

### *1.7 Conclusion and justification of research*

High rates of school exclusions are impacting on social mobility and equity in education (Gill, 2017; McCluskey et al 2019; Levitas et al, 2007) and national data supports the astronomical

social and financial costs involved and the consistent adverse outcomes for this population (Gill et al, 2017; Preston, 2021):

*“Every cohort of permanently excluded pupils will go on to cost the state an extra £2.1 billion in education, health, benefits and criminal justice costs” (Gill et al, 2017, p.7)*

Furthermore, school exclusion is known to have long-term, socially harmful effects and perpetuates both disadvantage and inequality (Gonzalez, 2012). It is therefore vital to explore what support can be provided to schools to avoid and reduce exclusion. Considering the appropriate involvement of the EP in work to reduce the perpetuation of inequity, and their role in supporting CYP with SEMH or behavioural needs and those at risk of exclusion, it will be important to first explore what the literature says about the role of the EP when supporting this population before then gathering views on good EP practice when working with this population to support effective involvement in the current research.

## 2. Systematic Literature Review

### *2.1 Introduction to the systematic literature review*

Given the importance of working to support CYP at risk of exclusion, this review aims to explore what the literature says about how EPs are currently practicing in this area, and what they perceive to be useful for promoting successful outcomes when working with CYP at risk of school exclusion. By exploring this, the review will also highlight any areas that may benefit from further investigation. The review question is:

*What does the literature say about how Educational Psychologists might support positive outcomes for children and young people at risk of school exclusion?*

There are several approaches to systematic literature review syntheses (such as critical interpretive synthesis, narrative synthesis, and meta-ethnography; Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). Whilst there is no consensus for the best methodology (Popay et al., 2006), as the review question is exploratory and much of the existing literature in this area is qualitative, a meta-ethnography (also referred to as meta-synthesis) will be used (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Siddaway et al., 2019; Thorne et al., 2004). The meta-ethnography was originally developed by Noblit and Hare (1988) and is interpretive, with the purpose of combining the findings of research in a particular field to produce new interpretations which then transcend the findings of individual papers (France et al., 2015). To do this, the synthesis method compares study concepts and identifies overarching concepts to eventually create a 'line of argument' (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The current systematic literature review therefore adopts this meta-ethnography approach, following the seven phases proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988; described in Table 1).

**Table 1.** The seven phases of Noblit and Hare's (1988) meta-ethnography

1	Getting started
2	Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest
3	Reading the studies
4	Determining how the studies are related
5	Translating the studies into one another
6	Synthesising translations
7	Expressing the synthesis

### ***2.2 Step 1: Getting started: The review questions***

In line with Step 1, the review question must be clearly defined. As highlighted previously, the present review attempts to address the question:

*What does the literature say about how Educational Psychologists might support positive outcomes for children and young people at risk of school exclusion?*

### 2.3 Step 2: Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest: Search strategies

Step 2 involved identifying relevant studies through the search strategy outlined (inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined in Table 2). Studies were only included from the UK to ensure a focus on contextually relevant EP practice, particularly given the current political context and potential lack of generalisability from research elsewhere. A limited date range (the past 20 years) ensured that any papers explored current practice.

**Table 2.** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Language: English</b>	Any papers not written in English or contextually located outside of the UK (i.e., internationally) were excluded.	This is due to differences in context, particularly surrounding legislation, and prevalence of school exclusion, which reduces the generalisability of findings to the UK context.
<b>Type of source: peer-reviewed research</b>	Any papers that were not peer reviewed or examined theses were excluded. This included commentaries or reflective papers.	It was felt that peer reviewed and doctoral thesis research would have undergone a process to ensure integrity and high quality. Thus, including research outside of this criterion may not have provided rigorous evidence-based research into EP practice in this area.
<b>Operational definitions and outcome(s): the study must refer to fixed term and/or permanent exclusion(s) from school.</b>	Papers related to wider societal exclusion, peer exclusion or other forms of exclusion that do not encompass either fixed-term or permanent exclusions from school were excluded. Papers that focused on CYP who had already been excluded from school were not included in this review.	This is due to both the research and literature review question being specifically interested in EP practice with CYP at risk of school exclusion, with other forms of exclusion being outside the scope of the current work. As the research and literature review question focus on EP practice with CYP at risk of school exclusion, rather than after school exclusion has taken place, papers whose context was situated in alternative provisions or involvement after an exclusion occurred were not considered.



<b>Population targeted and setting: Educational Psychologist involvement with CYP identified at risk of exclusion.</b>	Papers whose primary population or focus of investigation was not EP practice (for example, intervention or practice from other professionals such as teachers or school staff or a focus on the experiences of the young people experiencing exclusion).	The literature review and research question are primarily focused on the role of the Educational Psychologist in school exclusion and papers exploring other topics were deemed not relevant to answer this question.
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### 2.3.1 Search one

Initially, a systematic literature search of published and unpublished research was carried out, which involved using electronic databases and search terms related to the key phrases or words to explore the literature whilst considering the research question and included terms such as ‘exclusion’ (and other related terms such as ‘managed moves’, ‘suspension’, and ‘expulsion’) and ‘Educational Psychology’ (see Table 3 for the search terms). The Boolean Operator ‘AND’ was used to search these areas of practice together. The search was conducted in October 2021 covering two psychology and education databases (PSYCHINFO and ERIC via EBSCO host).

**Table 3.** Search terms and results from database search

Search no.	Database	Search terms	Limiters	Number of search results	Date accessed
1	PSYCHINFO APA PsycArticles ERIC	SU ((educational psychology OR education* psycholog*) AND TI ((school exclusion OR exclu* OR expul* OR managed move OR suspen*)))	English 2001-2021	17 (1 duplicate removed)	10/10/2021

### 2.3.2 *Search two*

Due to finding a limited number of relevant papers in an initial and broad systematic search looking into EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion, and because electronic database searches are known to be somewhat fallible, a hand search for further papers was conducted. As the literature review question focused on peer-reviewed journals about EP practice, the journals hand searched were 'Educational Psychology in Practice' and the 'Educational and Child Psychology' journal due to their known academic rigour and peer reviewed status. An additional search for theses on the topic was conducted using the British Library catalogue and the term 'school exclusion'. A search was also conducted using Google scholar where citation linking was used (e.g., the 'cited by' and 'related articles' links under relevant or previously identified articles were used). The reference section of any relevant articles was also scanned for further sources related to the review question. Seven papers were identified for further review.

### 2.3.3 *Identification of studies for review*

After this, any duplicates were removed and the abstracts from relevant papers identified in the search were screened and reviewed. A total of 24 papers were then screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria and discarded if they did not meet the relevant criteria. In total, 2 papers from the database search and 7 additional studies or theses met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This left a total of 9 papers for the next step and critical analysis (see Appendix A for an overview of the process using the PRISMA).

## ***2.4 Step 3: Reading and critically appraising the included studies***

### *2.4.1 Reading the papers*

During Step 3, papers were read repeatedly to allow for familiarisation. Information was extracted and tabulated from the papers, including details about the participants, aims, methods and key findings. To guide this, the aims of the synthesis were kept in mind, and the original papers were frequently returned to and any extracted themes clarified. Empirical studies relevant to the review questions which met the exclusion criteria are summarised in Appendix B.

Four of the papers included were peer reviewed articles and the remaining five were doctoral theses. The papers took a range of approaches, with the majority using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Three papers used a case study approach. All papers used some form of semi-structured interviews. Of the 9 studies that addressed the role of the EP in exclusions, one paper explored the use of a 1:1 intervention for a young person in secondary school delivered by an EP (Hardman, 2001). Three papers explored the use of a group intervention delivered by an EP with CYP at risk of exclusion in secondary schools (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015; Wilson, 2005). One paper explored the EP's use of a systemic approach to reduce exclusions in a primary school (Williams, 2018). One paper explored how EPs might facilitate managed moves for CYP at risk of permanent exclusion (Bagley & Hallam, 2017). Two papers looked at EP and/or school staff perceptions of the potential role of the EP with CYP at risk of exclusion (Gould, 2018; Waite, 2014). Finally, one paper explored the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary team in reducing school exclusions (Hartnell, 2010).

### *2.4.2 Critical appraisal*

Generally, a critical appraisal considers whether the research included in a review answers the review question adequately and is well executed. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

(CASP) for Qualitative Research Checklist (CASP, 2018) was selected for the current study as it has been previously used for high quality appraisals using meta-ethnography (Atkins et al., 2008; Campbell et al., 2004; Popay et al., 2006). As the majority of papers reviewed were primarily qualitative in nature, this approach fit well. To maintain consistency across the appraisal, where a paper used an additional methodology outside of the CASP appraisal forms (e.g., mixed method study), the form was adapted to consider the use of mixed methods. Outcomes can be found in Table 4 below. Guidance material for the CASP can be found in Appendix C.

**Table 4.** CASP ratings for qualitative studies (3 = yes, 2 = partially, 1 = unclear/can't tell, 0 = no)

Author	Was there a clear statement of aims?	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Was the research design appropriate?	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate?	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Is the research valuable?
Hardman (2001)	3	3	2	3	3	1	1	3	3	2
Bagley & Hallam (2017)	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	3
Chatzinikolaou (2015)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Burton (2006)	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3
Williams (2018)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Waite (2014)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Gould (2018)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Hartnell (2010)	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	3
Wilson (2005)	3	3	2	2	3	1	1	3	3	2

## 2.5 Step 4 and 5: determining how the studies are related and translating the studies

Whilst Steps 4 and 5 are somewhat distinct, they also overlap and are therefore discussed together (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Noblit and Hare (1988) suggest that Step 4 should compare

themes across all papers to match and juxtapose themes from one article with those from another to develop a list of descriptive themes very close to the data. A list of themes was therefore generated for all papers used in this study until no further themes were found. Key themes were checked again across all studies to check for any additional relatedness.

Step 5, or reciprocal translation, involves completing careful comparisons between the themes identified in one paper with the themes in others (Campbell et al., 2004). To do this, each paper was arranged chronologically, and the researcher compared the themes and concepts found in the first paper with the second, followed by the synthesis of these with the third papers and so on. The researcher also considered the identification of any new themes and incorporated these into the initial broad themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008). As this process went on, the initial broad themes were merged and collapsed into more refined categories.

This process revealed twelve initial themes: ‘Individual intervention’; ‘Group intervention’; ‘Collaborative practice’; ‘Building relationships’; ‘Assessment’; ‘Changing narratives’; ‘Consideration of school structures’; ‘Working preventatively’; ‘Multi-disciplinary working’; ‘Facilitating moves’; ‘Whole school/staff training’ and ‘Challenging the system’ (see Table 5).

## ***2.6 Step 6: Synthesising translations***

The reciprocal translation is followed by the development of ‘third-order interpretations’ (or exploratory analysis), which goes beyond the thematic content of the initial studies to generate comprehensive explanations for groups of initial themes (Britten et al., 2002). For this, the initial themes were translated and compared to draw concepts together and generate three third-order interpretations (Table 5).

**Table 5.** The development of third-order interpretations from initial themes

<b>Initial theme (first and second order constructs)</b>	<b>Third-order interpretation</b>
Individual intervention	<i><b>The EP's use of intervention (individual and group level)</b></i>
Group intervention	
Collaborative practice	<i><b>The EP's use of consultation (school and family level)</b></i>
Building relationships	
Assessment	
Changing narratives	
Consideration of school structures	<i><b>The role of the EP at a system level (school and LA)</b></i>
Working preventatively	
Multi-disciplinary working	
Challenging the system	
Facilitating moves	
Whole school/staff training	

### ***2.7 Step 7: Expression of the synthesis and discussion***

Throughout the analysis process, the themes should build to tell a *story* about the information available in the studies (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The following section aims to do this by synthesising the findings of the papers and presenting a discussion of each theme followed by the third-order interpretations, which draw together the findings and are presented in bold. The third-order themes demonstrate the way individual themes were brought together across studies to create a narrative about the role of the EP in this area. Finally, the 'line of argument' provides an explanation for the similarities and differences between the themes and third-order interpretations. It should be noted that the available literature for this search has questionable generalisability due to the small sample sizes and lack of rigorous experimental methodology. However, the impact of these limitations will be noted and considered throughout the review. This section will outline the findings from the systematic literature search to review the question:

*What does the literature say about how Educational Psychologists might support positive outcomes for children and young people at risk of school exclusion?*

## **2.8 Findings of review**

### *2.8.1 Individual intervention*

This small theme was evident across three of the nine papers included in the review. Both Hardman (2001) and Wilson (2005) focus on the use of intervention at the individual level (e.g., delivered 1:1 by an EP with a CYP at risk of exclusion). The third paper (Gould, 2018) does not explore an individual intervention but details EPs' views about the usefulness of individual involvement from the EP in relation to reducing exclusions in a primary school.

The first two papers explore the possible efficacy of interventions delivered by EPs and their role in delivering interventions 1:1 to CYP at risk of exclusion. The theme 'individual intervention' can be further divided into using *Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SBFT) approaches* (Wilson, 2005) and the use of *Personal Construct Psychology (PCP)* (Hardman, 2001). Both papers demonstrate the successful use of applied psychological theory to an EP-delivered individual intervention, with the authors reporting subsequent reductions in exclusions for the CYP involved in the interventions. Additionally, Hardman's (2001) results suggest that the individual pupil participating in the 1:1 intervention had a more positive view of his behaviour as a result, with PCP offering a way to hear and advocate for the young person's voice which then promoted further understanding of the young person. Similarly, Wilson (2005) found that incidents of fighting, disruptive incidents, and temporary exclusions reduced for the 8 pupils with whom the author worked on a 1:1 basis. Whilst Wilson's (2005) study demonstrated positive outcomes, the wide variability in the application of the length and content of the SBFT intervention model for each young person questions whether changes

perceived in the students and subsequent reduced exclusion rates were a consequence of SBFT approaches or other aspects of the EP's practice.

Although Gould (2018) sought EP opinions, rather than evaluating an individual intervention, the author outlines varying beliefs amongst EPs about individual intervention as a useful way of EPs working with primary school children at risk of exclusion. One of the EP participants specifically mentions their views about the benefits of SandPlay (a psychoanalytic intervention) as a potentially successful individual intervention for these children. However, within the same research, another EP questions the purpose and impact of an individual intervention, particularly if the context surrounding a pupil (e.g., the school and home environment) is likely to remain the same.

Whilst there is some tentative evidence that individual intervention might benefit CYP at risk of exclusion, each of these papers are based on subjective opinion (such as the perceptions of EPs), use unreliable measures (such as using teacher ratings as objective measures) or use small sample sizes. Thus, the findings cannot be generalised, and an objective and evidence-based view does not yet seem to be well established in relation to EP practice when delivering interventions. It will be beneficial for future research to use more rigorous, evidence-based methods to explore whether individual intervention represents 'good practice' for EPs when working with CYP at risk of exclusion in terms of positive outcomes for this population. Future research should also use evaluative methods to explore the impact and effectiveness of this type of work.

### *2.8.2 Group Intervention*

Although representing a relatively small theme, two papers included in this review explored the efficacy of EP-delivered group interventions as a way that EPs are supporting positive outcomes for CYP at risk of school exclusion (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015). Unlike



the potential successful outcomes presented by Hardman (2001) and Wilson (2005) using individual intervention, Chatzinikolaou (2015) found that using a strengths-based group intervention with school staff as co-facilitators had variable effects, with quantitative findings showing no significant effect on the CYPs life satisfaction, attendance, teacher-student relationships or learning. Interestingly, in comparison to the quantitative findings, the qualitative findings did detail reductions in overall difficulties at school, fewer peer problems and improved emotional symptoms for CYP at risk of exclusion compared to control pupils. Additionally, the author reported that no CYP involved in the intervention were reported as excluded in a follow-up 7 months later.

Like Chatzinikolaou (2015), Burton's (2006) study examined the efficacy of a group level intervention delivered by an EP, which also included support from a school staff member who had a positive relationship with the CYP in the group. Unlike Hardman (2001), Wilson (2005) and Chatzinikolaou (2015), Burton (2006) draws on several different psychological theories to build a tailored intervention called 'Over To You', which was designed to provide group support and assist CYP at risk of exclusion to reflect on and adjust their behaviour. The intervention draws on theory from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT; Ellis, 1955), motivational theory (e.g., McNamara, 1998) and PCP (Kelly, 1955). Whilst the two group interventions draw on different psychological theory, both draw on the use of strengths-based approaches to promote positive outcomes and comment on the success of the group intervention being partially due to the use of positive peer influence and the space to build relationships with other students within the intervention (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015).

Although Burton (2006) reports positive effects of the 'Over To You' group intervention based on both quantitative pre and post intervention data and qualitative remarks from staff, it is important to note that the perceptions about its efficacy, particularly as the

views of the young people involved are not included, are limited in their objectivity. This therefore impacts the reliability and validity of the results. In contrast, Chatzinikolaou (2015) used both quantitative and qualitative measures to gain an insight into the strength of changes and the views about the efficacy of the intervention directly from the young people and staff working with them. However, as both papers have a small sample size and do not consider other factors that may have led to a reduction in exclusions the results are difficult to generalise and questions the validity and reliability of the findings.

### ***2.8.3 The EP's use of intervention (individual and group level)***

The themes 'individual intervention' and 'group intervention' were taken together to form the third-order interpretation 'the EP's use of intervention'. Whilst the data presented from the review in this section are limited by their methodology and small sample sizes, the papers highlight intervention as a potentially successful aspect of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion.

Brought together, the five papers also highlight nuances within aspects of EP practice to consider when running an intervention to increase the chances of achieving positive outcomes, such as reduced exclusions. Both Burton (2006) and Chatzinikolaou (2015) highlight the importance of carefully selecting members when forming a group for intervention and the benefits of involving students in the contracting process (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015). Hardman (2001) also highlights the importance of including the young people in the process of intervention work, including sharing feedback from staff about the young person's improvements in behaviour. In contrast, in Wilson's (2005) study, the young people were participating in SFBT individual interventions on an 'involuntary' basis. Despite claims of the intervention's success, the lack of active consent may explain why the approach needed to be

adapted to great lengths to keep the young people engaged and perhaps why some members stopped attending the sessions.

Whilst this third order theme demonstrates a pattern in the theme of intervention arising in papers looking at EP practice, there is a lack of clarity about the appropriate length for an intervention and the long-term measurement of the intervention's impact and the recommended time-period to follow-up, which varied greatly. For example, one of the participants in Chatzinikolaou's (2015) study felt that the 6-week intervention was not long enough to promote the application of strengths in the classroom, whereas Burton (2006) suggests that a six-week group intervention is both feasible logistically for EPs and may also allow enough time to develop positive group relationships without being too time-demanding for both the EP and school staff. Hardman (2001) found successful outcomes after an 8-week intervention and Wilson (2005) highlights barriers to engaging the CYP at risk of exclusion and suggest the effectiveness of the intervention varied depending on the number of sessions the young people attended (ranging from 4-10 sessions).

It is also important to consider further limitations of the studies presented, given that all papers exploring the use of an intervention (rather than perceptions of the role of the EP in this area as examined in Gould, 2018) examined the role of the EP in secondary schools. The generalisability of the results to all CYP at risk of exclusion (e.g., those attending primary schools) is therefore limited. Additionally, in every study apart from Gould (2018), the researcher was also the EP involved in running the intervention. It is therefore difficult to know the extent to which this may have led to bias in the perceived and reported findings, particularly in the cases where the views of the YP involved in the intervention were not sought or the overall effect on exclusions was not examined or measured.

Although these papers present an idea about how EP intervention (both individual and group interventions) might support CYP at risk of exclusion, the lack of rigour in the measures

used make it difficult to determine the reliability of the results. As the papers use primarily qualitative methodology with somewhat unclear sampling procedures and design, including often very small sample sizes, it is also difficult to be confident in the validity of the espoused findings. Additionally, many of the papers are based on speculation or the subjective view of the researcher, including their opinions about the efficacy of the intervention.

Whilst most of these studies led to reduced exclusions for the pupils participating, or where the intervention's effect on exclusion was not reported but positive outcomes were observed in CYP behaviour, to claim that the use of intervention by EPs was always effective for CYP at risk of exclusion it would be crucial to undertake further research using more rigorous methodology (such as using Randomised Control Trials (RCTs)). Indeed, future research might benefit from exploring specific combinations of EP skills and elements of practice that promote positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion when using interventions, including the appropriate length, measurement, age-group or setting and follow-up. Indeed, it is difficult to know whether other factors played a role in influencing the situation for pupils, particularly as none of the studies from the review measured the influence of potential confounding factors. There is therefore a need for bigger scale, more rigorous research that considers and controls for these factors and uses evaluative methodology to accurately measure the efficacy of EP-delivered interventions (both group and individual) for CYP at risk of school exclusion.

#### *2.8.4 Collaborative practice*

The theme 'collaborative practice' was evident in five of the nine papers from the literature search. As mentioned previously, collaboratively contracting individual or group interventions with members was deemed important for their success (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015). Additionally, collaboratively involving staff and parents in interventions is thought to increase

the likelihood of continued positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion after the intervention (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015; Hardman, 2001; Wilson, 2005).

Both Williams (2018) and Waite (2014) outline the importance of parents and staff coming together within the consultation process to support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. For Williams (2018), this was through using a 5-stage integrated problem-solving framework and systemic approach to identify risk and protective factors at all levels (e.g., the family, child and school). By collaborating with parents and staff, the EP reported that their involvement allowed for effective assessment, formulation and intervention and subsequent positive outcomes. Similarly, the importance of collaborative construction of recommendations with parents and teachers throughout the consultation process was also highlighted as a factor of successful involvement by the Specialist Educational Psychologist (SEP) in Waite's (2014) study. Interestingly, although based on opinion rather than a measure of efficacy for supporting CYP at risk of exclusion, the SEP in Waite's (2014) study describes that the co-construction and collaborative production of an action plan specific to the individual CYP and their context, rather than a report, was received as more helpful by all members of the system.

Whereas Williams (2018) and Waite (2014) describe the use of collaboration with both parents and staff, EP participants in Gould's (2018) research indicated that working collaboratively with families alone might be a way for EPs to support schools indirectly to reduce exclusions, particularly as it allows families to share the strengths of a YP, not only supporting a more holistic view of the pupil in school but empowering parents to gain agency about change within the home.

Thinking at both the school and LA level, Bagley and Hallam (2019) describe EPs' perceptions of the potential role of the EP to work collaboratively with schools to facilitate managed move transitions for CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion. Whilst this research highlights the perceived importance of collaborative working through conversations with local

authority officers, families and school staff from starter and host provisions in managed moves, it is important to consider that, like other papers mentioned, the research does not measure the effectiveness of EP practice in this area, and only gathers subjective opinions. The research is therefore limited in its ability to describe the efficacy of the EP role in managed moves.

Finally, Hartnell (2010) describes how creating a multi-disciplinary Behaviour Support Team (BST) enabled wider collaboration amongst professionals from different contexts and systems was seen as far more likely to lead to long-term improvements in exclusion reductions. However, it is important to consider that the researchers conclusion about the efficacy of the BST is based on inference from statistics (e.g., that only 5% of the 490 students (25 CYP) that were supported by the BST were permanently excluded). Like the findings discussed from other review studies, the assumption of correlation as causation does not consider other factors that may be influencing reduced exclusions and leads to questionable validity and reliability of the results.

### *2.8.5 Building relationships*

All papers from the literature search referred to the importance of the EP building relationships to support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. Whilst relationships were a key theme and thread throughout the literature, the focus of the EPs role in facilitating relationships differed.

Both Waite (2014) and Wilson (2005) discuss the role of the EP in building relationships with CYP throughout intervention work to facilitate change. Waite (2014) describes how the SEP's ability to build a relationship with CYP enabled her to gauge the appropriate content and pace of the intervention which supported positive outcomes. Wilson (2005) also attaches particular importance to the impact of the relationship and therapeutic alliance in work with individuals, suggesting that these aspects of intervention provide the

groundwork for change. Hardman (2001) places emphasis on the EP's ability to build a trusting relationship with CYP, particularly those with SEMH needs. Interestingly, this was seen as a trait that the SEP possessed due to her level of experience working with these CYP.

Chatzinikolaou's (2015) study also considered the role of relationships in an intervention context and found that staff facilitators of the strengths-based intervention felt the programme allowed the teachers to build positive relationships with the group members which would likely support continued positive outcomes once the intervention came to an end. Considering the role of relationships in an EP delivered intervention, Burton (2006) discusses the importance of the EP's role to promote peer relationships between members of group interventions, with some staff participants describing that these positive peer relationships enabled pupils to change their behaviour in the classroom environment.

Whilst these papers seem to focus on supporting relationships with the CYP themselves, the literature also suggested that the EP's ability to form relationships with other members of the system, including staff and parents, was important for promoting successful outcomes. Hardman (2001) highlights the benefits of the EP using containment, attunement and active listening skills to build equal, collaborative relationships with parents and school staff, gaining their trust and enhancing positive outcomes for the CYP. Similarly, Wilson (2005) mentions that it was difficult to determine whether the positive outcomes of the SFBT intervention were due to the application of solution focused methods or the relationships that the EP built with the staff as a consequence of running the intervention. Wilson (2005) also outlines the role of the EP to encourage year group leads and SENCOs in secondary schools to build relationships with one another and thus help promote one common and positive approach to support CYP at risk of exclusion.

Participant perceptions in both Gould (2018) and Hartnell's (2010) studies felt that it was important for the EP to build relationships with everyone in the system to support

successful outcomes. In Gould's (2018) research, EP's felt they had a role to support positive relationships between professionals and families when supporting CYP at risk of exclusion to transition from Early Years settings to reception. Hartnell's (2010) study outlines participant perceptions about the BST having an important role in maintaining positive relationships between the school and family and by sharing information between them to maintain a collaborative, systemic viewpoint. Hardman (2001) speculates that the EP's ability to establish relationships with all members of the system allows them to become part of the system, which in turn allows for the EP to promote change and leads to positive outcomes for the CYP. Finally, participants in Williams' (2018) research felt that positive relationships within the system act as a protective factor and reduce the likelihood of exclusion. The participants also suggest that EPs could support school staff to reflect on ways to build and sustain positive relationships with parents and CYP to enable the crucial sharing of important and relevant personal information about a child's context (Williams, 2018).

It is again important to consider that the majority of the findings that support the importance of building and maintaining relationships with key members of the system are based on speculation or the subjective opinion of EPs and other participants. This is likely due to difficulties measuring and isolating the influence of relationships on successful involvement with CYP at risk of exclusion but should be considered when making assumptions about the validity of the findings for this theme.

#### *2.8.6 Changing narratives*

Whilst also based primarily on researcher and participant perceptions, another theme present in four of the nine papers was the perceived role of the EP in shifting narratives around CYP at risk of exclusion by using consultation with all members of the system.



During a reflection of the findings, Hardman (2001) suggests that a change in narrative about the CYP participating in the individual intervention played an important role in the YP avoiding subsequent exclusion. Similarly, Chatzinikolaou (2015) felt that by including staff facilitators in the intervention a deeper understanding of the YPs needs and strengths was gained, which allowed a shift from negative and punitive approaches used by staff to empathic responses. According to teacher self-ratings, Wilson's (2005) findings also suggested that using solution-focused approaches achieved a change in the narrative about a CYP by altering teacher perceptions of pupil behaviour, or by 're-framing' interpretations of the behaviour and supported the incorporation of pupil strengths into staff perceptions. The SEP in Waite's (2014) study considers the importance of the EP in shifting narratives around the CYP and outlines the specific skills of the SEP that may have supported this, such as accessible language and clear explanations and communication of a child's behaviour as need.

#### *2.8.7 Assessment*

This theme was identified in Hartnell (2010), Waite (2014), Bagley and Hallam (2017), Gould (2018), and Williams (2018). Williams (2018) suggests that by using a systemic approach to assessment, including the use of pupil, parent and staff interviews, questionnaires, document analysis and discussion groups (all of which support the identification protective and risk factors), the EP can help to prevent an exclusion.

Similarly, Hartnell (2010) attributed a portion of the success of the BST in promoting positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion to completing what staff perceived to be a 'thorough assessment'. Indeed, where Hartnell (2010) highlights dissatisfaction with professional involvement, it was generally due to a perception that the assessment was not thorough.

Waite's (2014) research highlights that the SEP's flexible use of assessment methods, and triangulation of the information gleaned, meant that their involvement was specific and ensured enduring positive outcomes (there were no further exclusions for the CYP with whom she was working).

Participants in Bagley and Hallam's (2017) research felt that where a managed move is being considered and a young person's needs have not been assessed thoroughly, negative outcomes are more likely, particularly as a receiving school is likely to find it more challenging to meet the needs of the CYP without a thorough assessment of the child's needs. Thus, participants suggested that schools should ensure that this takes place prior to a managed move, through consultation with an EP.

By using semi-structured interviews with school staff and EPs, Gould (2018) highlighted that both staff and EP participants generally valued EP's use of assessment as part of their approach to inform intervention, particularly when used to contribute to an increased understanding of the pupil. However, one member of staff from the AP felt that an EP's assessment and subsequent report are not always helpful if completed relatively detached from the system. Additionally, it is unclear whether satisfaction, or lack thereof, with EP assessment leads to changes in outcomes for CYP (e.g., a reduction in likelihood of school exclusion) and, without a robust measure of the effects of EP assessment, it is therefore difficult to determine whether this aspect of practice actually promotes positive outcomes for CYP. Additionally, as there appear to be different subjective views on how EP assessment can be most useful, it will be important to use a more rigorous and objective measure to form a consensus amongst professionals about the importance of assessment for good EP practice.

Whilst these studies acknowledge the potential perceived importance of assessment processes in supporting CYP, there is a lack of clarity about what these assessments might entail. Additionally, none of the studies evaluated or measured the impact of assessment

specifically on the outcomes of CYP at risk of exclusion which makes it difficult to determine the extent to which assessment alone may support these outcomes.

### ***2.8.8 The EP's use of consultation (school and family level)***

The themes 'collaborative practice', 'building relationships', 'changing narratives', and 'assessment' contributed to the third-order theme 'the EP's use of consultation'. Most papers placed assessment within the context of a consultation approach and seemed to detail part of the process of delivering consultation. Overall, every paper mentioned the use of consultation as a method of EP practice that might support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion.

Participants in Bagley and Hallam's (2017) research highlighted the importance of EP's use of consultation to support secondary schools to work with CYP at risk of exclusion. Additionally, Gould's (2018) research suggested that consultation, problem solving and time with the EP were perceived by participants as important ways for the EP to support staff in this area. Some of the research suggests that certain aspects of consultation practice are more likely to lead to positive outcomes such as using consultation to carefully contract individual intervention (Wilson, 2005), having regular meetings with key staff, creating mutual trust and respect (Hartnell, 2010), building relationships, and providing containment (Gould, 2018) co-constructing outcomes or recommendations and changing narratives around a CYP (Waite, 2014).

Interestingly, despite tentatively suggesting that these aspects of consultation might benefit CYP at risk of exclusion, and although consultation was widely mentioned in the literature, there seems to be a lack of detail about the EP's use of this process. Moreover, there is persistent disagreement within the profession around defining the term 'consultation', including a large amount of variability in how it is practised within the EP profession (Kennedy et al., 2008). Whilst some authors specifically mention the type of consultation models or

frameworks they are using (for example, Williams (2018) describes the use of consultation within an integrated problem-solving framework and Wilson (2005) recommends using a solution-focused consultation process), how they were followed to create positive outcomes is not clear. This makes it difficult to determine exactly what EPs are doing when they are using ‘consultation’ and reduces the replicability of the results. As there are several methodological limitations with the papers discussed, including the subjectivity of the paper’s findings, the lack of consistency in the use of the term consultation, a lack of description about the models and frameworks followed and the difficulty in isolating the influence of consultation, it is difficult to determine whether consultation is an effective aspect of practice when working with CYP at risk of school exclusion.

#### *2.8.9 Consideration of school structures*

Four papers mention this theme, which considers the potential importance of the EP’s role to consider the school system, including the schools’ structures, environment, and ethos, when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. More specifically, the literature suggests that the success of an EP’s involvement may be influenced by the receptivity of the school system (Wilson, 2005).

This theme seemed to encompass findings relating to both the individual and system level. For example, the literature discusses the EPs role in influencing the system through work with the individual CYP and also details how EP’s can build wider relationships between the school system and the LA. For example, Burton’s (2006) research suggests that the success of any EP-delivered intervention depends on not only the efficacy of the intervention but the ethos of the school and the commitment of the school staff to support change both during and after the intervention. Wilson (2005) also shares the belief that the success of any intervention, such as the SFBT intervention used in this research, is ultimately dependant to some degree on its

compatibility with school systems and a desire from key school staff to support the process. The author describes several barriers to staff involvement and difficulties with post-intervention implementation of strategies, including the division of SEN and behaviour departments in secondary schools, which the researcher felt led to CYP with 'behavioural presentation' being without support plans due to not being perceived as 'SEN' by the wider system. This is in line with policy guidelines, which recommend a zero-tolerance approach to behaviour in schools (DfE, 2016), which can make it challenging for schools to recognise behaviour as SEN and thus creates barriers in the differentiation of their response to these CYP in school.

Interestingly, participants in Gould's (2018) research outlined EP participant perceptions about the importance of the EP in supporting schools to adapt their systems, such as behaviour policies and the types of interventions used, to ensure that the needs of CYP are identified and met. The participants also shared views about the importance of the EP understanding wider systems, such as at the LA level, and decisions related to funding that may affect the school's decision-making related to exclusionary practice.

Participants in Bagley and Hallam's (2017) research also highlight the influence of varying perspectives of schools and their ethos on the role of the EP at both the school and LA level when facilitating managed moves. The school and LA staff in this study felt that EP involvement in exclusion and as a facilitator for managed moves seemed to vary across schools and was often only seen as a role for an EP if they were already involved with a CYP (e.g., prior to a managed move).

Whilst these papers give an insight into the potential importance of considering school structures and systems when working with a CYP at risk of exclusion, there is a lack of specificity in how an EP might do this. Additionally, there is no direct evidence that doing so would reduce the likelihood of a CYP being excluded from a school and it is therefore unclear

whether this is a necessary part of the EPs role for promoting positive outcomes for this population.

#### *2.8.10 Working preventatively*

Interestingly, given the government's view about the importance of prevention in tackling school exclusions (DfE, 2018), this small theme was evident only in research from Williams (2018) and Gould (2018). However, discussion of the preventative role of EPs represented a substantial thread throughout both theses.

Whilst based again on opinion and with questionable reliability, the nine EPs in Gould's (2018) study shared the opinion that EPs should work preventatively with CYP at risk of exclusion by exploring the demographics of children who have been excluded and then identify any associated patterns of risk within other CYP. Interestingly, unlike the EPs, school and AP staff in this study did not identify prevention as a potential role of the EP, potentially due to a lack of understanding of the breadth of the EP role or since CYP have usually already been excluded at this point and there is therefore less focus on prevention. Similarly, the participants in Williams's (2018) study focus on how the EP can use a systemic approach and the individualised identification of preventative factors at the individual, family and school level, to reduce the likelihood of school exclusion.

As both Williams (2018) and Gould (2018) explore how EPs might contribute to supporting exclusion in primary schools, the fact that this theme was only present in these papers might indicate differences in EP approaches for primary and secondary schools. For example, at primary school level, there may be more scope for preventative involvement before a CYP is 'at risk of exclusion', for example where a child's behaviour changes or becomes challenging for the adults to manage. This may not be the case in secondary schools and therefore the findings from these papers may not be generalisable to all CYP at risk of

exclusion. It may also highlight a lack of clarity about the EP role and the potential for preventative work amongst staff both at primary level and in secondary schools.

#### *2.8.11 Multi-disciplinary working*

This theme was evident across four of the papers and was the main aim of Hartnell's (2010) research, which explored the efficacy of a multidisciplinary team intervention for CYP at risk of school exclusion. Indeed, Hartnell (2010) emphasises the importance of multidisciplinary working, not just to practice in line with the 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003) agenda (now an outdated piece of legislation, which should be considered when interpreting the findings of this paper) but to address and contribute to reducing permanent exclusions and problematic behaviour in schools. Hartnell's (2010) paper is the only piece of research used an evaluation method to explore the effect of a multi-disciplinary team (the BST) at the primary and secondary school level. Although the findings are inferred from the data and claim some causality, the author suggests that the work of the BST reduced permanent exclusions in primary schools and, although exclusions in secondary schools did not reduce, only 25 pupils supported by the BST were permanently excluded. However, this research does not consider other factors that may have influenced this finding, such as environmental changes, and the results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Whilst based on the opinion of a small number of professionals, participants in Bagley and Hallam's (2017) study highlight that one of the roles of the EP should be to work across agencies and bring professionals together from divergent backgrounds which allows for more comprehensive intervention when a CYP is identified at risk of permanent school exclusion. Similarly, the EP participants in Gould's (2018) study expand on this by suggesting that EPs could support links between different professionals from different settings, such as APs, PRUs and schools to contribute to earlier intervention, where the PRU team might help with

supporting a child in school before exclusion. The participants suggest that this would support a shift in narrative away from ‘a child is excluded and then attends a PRU’ to school’s seeking support from the PRU before it gets to that point. However, both papers make suggestions rather than evaluating the effectiveness of this work in supporting positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. This makes it difficult to determine whether this is essential for EP practice when working with this population.

### *2.8.12 Challenging the system*

A small theme arising in four of the papers is the role of the EP to challenge the system when working to promote positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion.

As mentioned previously, a contributory factor to high numbers of exclusions in some secondary schools is thought to be the separation of learning and behaviour support departments potentially lacking a consideration of the overlapping nature of SEN and behavioural presentation. Participants in Bagley and Hallam’s (2017) study suggest that EPs may have a role to challenge organisational problems such as this but may need support to do so. The authors suggest that EPs could challenge these systemic issues through shifting narratives around young people within schools and facilitating transitions during managed moves by collaborating with LA officers and school staff from starter and host provisions. As this research is based on perceptions of EP practice, rather than a measure of the efficacy of challenging the system in this way, it is difficult to say whether doing this in practice would lead to improved outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion.

Based on the views of participant EPs in Gould’s (2018) research, it seems that EPs believe they have a role at the LA level to identify schools with high numbers of exclusion. Participants suggested that during individual casework EPs may also have the opportunity to challenge conceptions that school staff have about CYP at risk of exclusion and potential views



of APs as the solution. This research therefore offers a tentative suggestion for EP practice in this area.

In Waite's (2014) research, the SEP's reportedly holistic approach to the system meant that they felt able to challenge systemic barriers to creating positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. In their interview, the SEP highlights the importance of working in an EPS willing to take risks to challenge schools and to offer a broader range of systemic services to schools. Williams (2018) also outlines the impact of barriers to successful involvement with pupils at risk of exclusion (for example, the school culture, attitudes, systems and environment). Whilst the author does not provide extensive objective evidence, participants in Williams's (2018) research indicate a role for the EP at the school level to act as a 'critical friend' to school leaders and both support and challenge the school to promote good practice in this area.

### *2.8.13 Facilitating moves*

Surprisingly, given the occurrence with which managed moves or moves to alternative provisions (AP) occur, the role of the EP in supporting managed moves or moving a CYP to another provision was only present in two papers. This suggests that whilst EPs may sometimes be involved in this process, there is not yet a clear evidence base for the extent of EP practice in this area. Whilst Gould (2018) touches only briefly on the importance of the EP role here, Bagley and Hallam's (2017) paper focuses solely on this. Although Bagley and Hallam's (2017) research only had a small sample and did not look directly at EP practice in managed moves, it did explore the perceptions of school staff, LA staff and EPs about what EP practice in these cases might look like.

Participants in both Bagley and Hallam (2017) and Gould's (2018) research expressed their perceptions of the role of the EP in this area, stating that EP involvement would promote positive outcomes for CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion if they were involved in

transitions for the CYP from their host school to receiving school (either another mainstream setting or AP) and support the potential return to original educational settings. In particular, EPs were of the opinion that the EP could work with the AP and receiving school to prepare them and support successful integration (Gould, 2018). This was felt to be particularly the case during the primary-secondary transition, as EPs felt that often a lack of preparation for a pupil's transition from primary to secondary school can contribute to subsequent school exclusions (Gould, 2018). Whilst these papers use Thematic Analysis (TA) to provide some practice-based insight amongst EPs as to what EP practice in this area might look like, it is important to hold in mind that these findings are again based on perceptions and do not measure the impact of the EP's role in facilitating managed moves.

#### *2.8.14 Whole school training*

The EP role to provide training for school staff was a theme evident in three papers from the literature search. Three papers (Gould, 2018; Hartnell, 2010; Waite, 2014) discuss perceptions of the positive impact of the EP delivering training to staff to reduce exclusions of CYP at risk of exclusion.

Hartnell (2010) evaluates the impact of whole-school training delivered by the BST on staff's perceptions of the usefulness of this type of involvement. In this study, the whole school training received the most positive rating compared to other aspects of the BST involvement (such as individual interventions). Whilst this was based on the perceptions of school staff, the results from the behaviour questionnaire showed that the pupils had improvements in their behaviour as rated by their teachers 6 months after intervention, suggesting that the training may have impacted the outcomes of CYP at risk of exclusion. However, as three of the CYP in this study were excluded, it is not possible to conclude that the use of whole school training reduced all exclusions. Additionally, this training specifically outlines the use of a multi-

disciplinary training and therefore is not solely examining the impact of EP involvement in this area.

Gould (2018) explores both staff and EP perceptions about the usefulness of EP-delivered training for helping to reduce exclusions. Participants identified training delivered by EPs as effective in supporting school staff's understanding of the needs of a child and how to meet them, which was subsequently perceived to contribute to a reduction in primary school exclusions.

Waite (2014) also outlines the use of training for school staff as a theme for the SEPs methods for supporting CYP at risk of exclusion. Although the SEP described that they sometimes used training as a method, it was not something they used frequently. However, when it felt pertinent, the SEP described delivering positive behaviour training in a way that made sense to the audience and developed the skills of the staff.

Whilst this theme was evident in the literature, it is interesting to note that none of the papers explain in detail the type of training that is beneficial for EPs to deliver to support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. Additionally, the findings are based primarily on the perceptions of EPs and a small number of school staff and do not objectively measure the impact of training programmes to demonstrate evidence for the effectiveness of whole school training on reducing exclusions more broadly using more rigorous methodology and larger sample sizes. This may be an area for further investigation in the future research.

#### ***2.8.15 The role of the EP at a system level (school and LA)***

The five themes 'considering school structures', 'working preventatively', 'multi-disciplinary working', 'challenging the system', 'facilitating moves' and 'whole school training' are brought together here to create the third-order theme: 'the role of the EP at a system level'.

Incorporating aspects of systemic work in good EP practice was a widely reported theme amongst these papers. Systemic approaches or working at an organisational level refers to the way the EP can contribute to situations or contexts outside of an individual case basis. This therefore involves identifying and addressing wider issues by working more broadly, for example by working with the school to create whole-school changes, rather than focusing only on an individual pupil who may have been affected (Wilson, 2005). It may be important to consider how the aspects of EP practice described may be combined to form an example of 'good practice' at the organisational level.

For example, Hartnell (2010) suggests that interventions are most successful when they support collaboration across several contexts (e.g., family, school and the CYP) and are therefore more likely to create long-lasting improvements and sustained reductions in exclusions. Additionally, Gould's (2018) findings explore how EPs feel they can support primary schools to reduce exclusions, detailing participants' perceptions about the role of the EP at the national, LA and school level. Interestingly, school staff were less likely than EPs to identify strategies at national and LA level, which may indicate potential limitations in the scope of EP practice based on the understanding of the breadth of the EP role from school staff (Gould, 2018).

Indeed, when considering good practice and promoting positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion it is important to reflect on the potential barriers of working in this way, such as school staff willingness. Reflecting on the findings from Hartnell (2010), whilst again limited in their generalisability due to being based on perceptions of a small sample of staff, participants rated systemic training at the whole school level as 'most helpful'. Despite this, the team were still delivering most of their work at the individual level, which perhaps indicates barriers to offering training or practicing more often systemically at a whole-school level. For example, it may be that work with CYP at risk of exclusion is more reactive due to EPs joining

at ‘crisis’ point where emotions are high or EPs are following pre-existing narratives about ‘traditional’ ways of working, for example with individual CYP, despite evidence that systemic ways of practising are more helpful.

Whilst based on opinion, the participants in both Gould (2018) and Waite (2014) suggest that working in a broad and more generic way at several levels, including individual, group and organisational may be most beneficial for EP work to promote positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion.

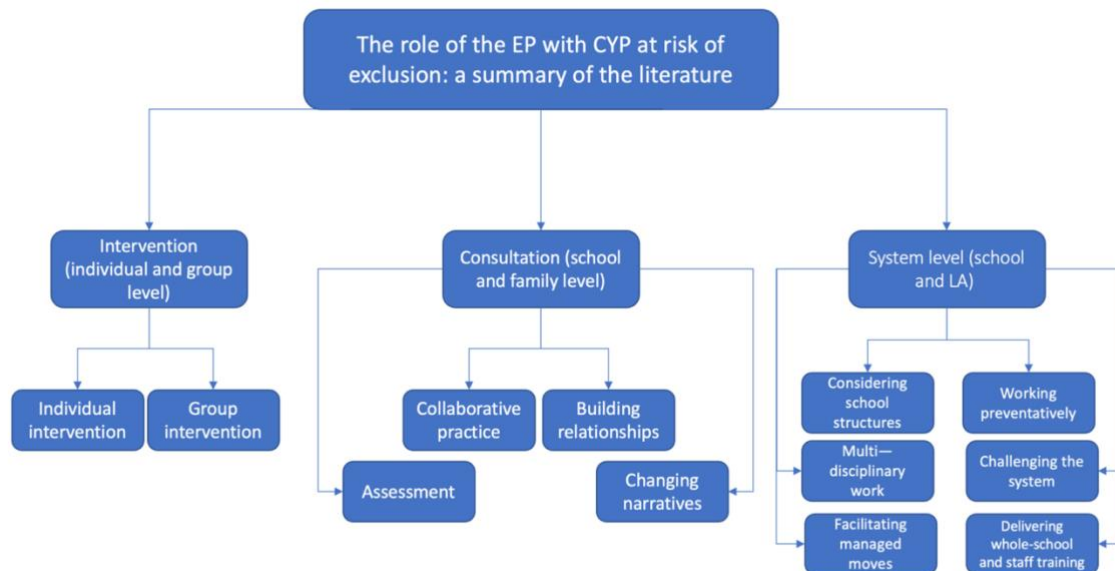
### ***2.9 Line of argument synthesis***

The ‘line of argument’ synthesis involves the construction of a ‘*whole story*’ by interpreting the findings from individual papers and themes (Noblit & Hare, 1988). This synthesis indicates that EPs are practising at a variety of levels, including the individual, group, school, system, and LA level, and employing several methods of practice (such as consultation, assessment, intervention, and training) to support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of school exclusion. Whilst the literature suggests that EPs can support these outcomes, it also considers a variety of barriers to successful intervention at every level. Additionally, although the use of psychological application is mentioned across all elements of EP practice, the details of the involvement (such as what a successful consultation processes look like when working with CYP at risk of exclusion) are not clear. None of the papers present an overview of the aspects of good EP practice needed to create positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. As discussed, many of the papers included in this review also have several limitations. For example, some papers are not clear about the details of their participant samples (such as age, gender, reason for CYP being ‘at risk of exclusion’), with none of the studies outlining the ethnicity of the participants despite this being an important risk factor for being at risk of school exclusion (DfE, 2018). Additionally, the sample sizes are generally small which limits the

generalisability and reliability of the findings. It is also challenging to measure the individual influence of each of the themes (e.g., consultation, assessment, relationships etc.) and so the themes are based on speculation that each influence positive outcomes equally. Many of the papers do not provide a measure of behavioural change in response to intervention. Most of the papers also do not consider other factors that might have influenced reductions in exclusion or reduced difficulties for CYP in school (such as changes in the school or family environment). Most of the papers examine exclusion at the secondary school level (from Year 7 – 10) and the findings may therefore not be generalisable to a primary school context.

Whilst there are clear limitations, the papers from the review give a tentative insight into what is already known about areas of EP practice that may support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of school exclusion. Importantly, this highlights the need for more robust, rigorous research in the area in the future. Figure 1 depicts a model of this line of argument followed by further explanation of the relationships within the model.

**Figure 1.** The line of argument synthesis



### ***2.10 Study rationale and unique contribution***

There is a surprisingly limited amount of literature on the role of the EP when working with CYP identified as ‘at risk of exclusion’. Given the high number of exclusions and espoused role of the EP in working with this population, this perhaps suggests the need for gaining greater clarity around EP practice in this area. The line of argument synthesis seems to present a tentative idea about what EPs believe might be helpful to enhance positive outcomes for pupils at risk of exclusion. However, considering the small sample sizes and further methodological limitations or bias of the papers discussed, careful consideration should be given concerning the reliability of the findings. Additionally, it will be important that the current research explores the views of a larger sample of EPs about good practice. As none of the presented papers draw together aspects of evidence-based practice to present a coherent framework for practice in this area, further research is warranted. The research also seems to suggest that there are somewhat differing views amongst EPs on their role with this population, which indicates a need for addressing the variability around their perceived unique contribution in this area. Additionally, the research has been often carried out at a local level, either across

one or two LAs or even within one school setting. Thus, it will be important to gain the opinions of a wider scope of EPs practicing more broadly in geographical location across the UK.

The current research therefore aims to explore expert opinions of a broad group of EPs about what comprehensive good practice looks like when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. It will later illuminate whether research from the limited literature matches the consensus of practicing EPs in the current study.

### *2.10.1 Research question*

*What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion?*



### 3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods used to investigate the aims of the current study. Firstly, a rationale for use of the Delphi method will be described, followed by the epistemological and ontological position taken in the study. Following this, the design of the current study will be outlined, and details of the Delphi rounds used will be provided.

#### ***3.1 Rationale and summary of the research design***

As the research question for the current study was, '*What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion?*', the research aims to explore EP practice in this area.

The previous chapter highlighted a limited amount of literature examining the role of EPs with CYP at risk of exclusion, particularly when considering what an overview of 'good EP practice' might look like. It therefore felt pertinent to conduct a piece of research to create an outline of EPs' views and build a consensus around which key features are deemed necessary for good EP practice in this area. As exploration studies are particularly appropriate where there are a limited number of studies relating to a topic (Robson & McCartan, 2016), this research is exploratory in nature and aims to benefit the EP profession by highlighting the distinctive contribution of EPs in this work, particularly by focusing on how an agreement amongst EPs about good practice might then serve to help develop a practice framework based on this consensus to guide EP involvement and subsequently contribute to reducing school exclusions. The current research uses the Delphi method to form this consensus given that one of the primary principles of this approach is that a group opinion is more valid than individual opinion (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Whilst other methods may have also helped gain an insight into similarities between EP practice in this area (such as interviewing EPs or using a focus

group), as the aim of this research was to create a consensus about key features of practice that an expert panel of EPs perceived to be important during work with CYP at risk of school exclusion, the Delphi method was deemed most appropriate.

If EPs met the inclusion criteria, they were invited to take part in the study and were required to complete three rounds of questionnaires. The first questionnaire encompassed an open-ended exploratory question asking for EPs' opinions on the key features of good practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. A deductive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was carried out on the qualitative responses to identify key themes, which were then synthesised into statements to form the second questionnaire. This questionnaire therefore featured the key statements of practice in this area and participants were then asked to rate each statement in terms of the level they perceived their importance to be for EP practice in this area. Initial responses from questionnaire two were collated.

EPs who completed questionnaire two were invited to complete the third and final questionnaire. Questionnaire three presented participants with the findings (level of agreement) from questionnaire two, highlighting both their own response to each statement and the group's consensus for each statement. EPs were asked to evaluate, and adjust if desired, their initial responses whilst considering the group opinion. Finally, participants were asked to provide any additional comments on the process of participating. The results of the three questionnaires were synthesised and the agreed key features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion were identified.

## ***3.2 Ontological and epistemological position***

### *3.2.1 Ontology: Critical realist*

The critical realist approach was established and developed by the writings of Bhaskar (1975, 1978; Archer et al., 2013). The approach recognises that a structured and changing reality exists outside of the mind but that knowledge about this reality is a social product and not independent of those who produce it (Bhaskar 1975). The approach also makes a distinction between transitive (e.g., paradigms, facts, theories, methods, models and techniques) and intransitive (e.g., concepts not invented by humans such as death or gravity) dimensions of knowledge and distinguishes between social reality at the “real”, “actual” and “empirical” level (Bhaskar, 1975).

The “real” level refers to existing causal structures, objects or mechanisms, most often underpinned by theory, that enable or constrain human action (e.g., educational structures; Archer et al., 2013). The actions taken at the “actual” level (e.g., political debate) are thought to have a bidirectional influence on events at the “real” level. For example, the “actual” level considers actions that occur as ‘true’ but as separate to personal individual experiences or interpretations. If these actions are then perceived or experienced, they are thought to be real at the “empirical” level (Archer et al., 2013). This level describes individual experiences and observations which, although subject to personal interpretation, are arguably measurable. The combination of these three levels creates what has been described as ‘ontological depth’ (Groff, 2004), with the “real” and “actual” levels acknowledging that what we experience is not necessarily observable, whereas the “empirical” level represents what of these experiences we can observe. Critical realism aims to explain social occurrences with reference to all three of these layers (Fletcher, 2017).

The critical realist approach aligns well with the current research as EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion is thought to be observable and measurable although

driven by unobservable causal mechanisms, such as the constraints of the education or school system (the “real” and “actual” level) and subject to personal experience (the “empirical” level). This was supported by the literature review where EPs have taken different approaches, employing a variety of practices, discussing a range of barriers to good practice and demonstrating contrasting views on what ‘good practice’ looks like. Additionally, it is believed that EP practice can lead to positive outcomes for this population (“actual” level) and the causal mechanisms of ‘exclusion’ can be both explained and defined by theory and legislation (“real” level). As this research aims to gather the subjective experiences of EPs (the “empirical” level) and also attempts to establish an objective reality (at the “real” and “actual” level) by collating several participant responses and reaching a consensus, it fits well within a critical realist stance (Robson, 2002). Additionally, as critical realism endorses the use of varied research methods chosen according to the aims of the study, rather than a specific single type of method (Zachariadis et al., 2010), it fits well with the use of the Delphi method in the current research.

### *3.2.2 Epistemology: Pragmatism*

The critical realist ontological perspective helped to shape the decision of the epistemology of the research: pragmatism. Whilst pragmatism is thought to be orthogonal to the research paradigm continuum (i.e., it does not sit easily on the positivism to interpretivism continuum) and is thought to hold a certain ontological and epistemological agnosticism, critical realists often employ pragmatism in their approach to exploring an understanding of knowledge (Zachariadis et al., 2010). Indeed, the paradigm has been described as a “philosophical and epistemological framework for interrogating and evaluating ideas and beliefs in terms of their practical functioning” (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020. Pg. 3). Whilst the approach is not aligned to a single philosophy, the pragmatist paradigm endorses the use of philosophical or methodological approaches that fit best with a given research question or aim (Tashakkori &

Teddlie, 2008) and seeks to produce useful knowledge rather than be restricted by attempts to understand the true nature of the world (Heeks et al., 2019). Its stance argues that human experiences and beliefs (or the ‘unobservable’) cannot be separated from the observable and measurable actions that arise from them (Goldkuhl, 2012). In this sense, pragmatism holds that our knowledge, or what we *can* know, is therefore based on individual experience (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). It is thought that these experiences can either be individual or rooted within a social context (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatism is also often concerned with advocating for social justice and as such, is suitable for applying to research which is meaningful and aims to make a purposeful difference to practice in a given area (Goldkuhl, 2012; Morgan, 2014). The paradigm is therefore closely aligned with the focus of this research, school exclusion, a social issue for which a purposeful change seems necessary.

Additionally, as the pragmatist position suggests utilising the appropriate methodology for a given research question, it fits well with the Delphi method, which is thought to occupy its own methodological stance somewhere between quantitative and qualitative methods (Cricher & Gladstone, 1998; Mullen, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), allowing the researcher to answer key research questions in an optimal way (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Given that the aim of the current research was to explore what EPs perceive as ‘key features’ of good practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion, and subsequently to create a practice framework to support EP involvement in this area, a pragmatist epistemology clearly complements this as its central tenet is that all research should produce useful, actionable, and meaningful knowledge (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020).

### *3.2.3 Pragmatist-critical realism*

Recent research has suggested that a combination of the pragmatist and critical realist approaches in what has been termed the “pragmatist-critical realism approach” might help to address the inadequacies of either approach individually (Heeks et al., 2019; Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Indeed, both pragmatism and critical realism share complementary philosophical components and a similar purpose, offering an alternative option between positivism and interpretivism (critical realism in an ontological and epistemological sense and pragmatism in a methodological sense; Heeks et al., 2019; Morgan 2007).

The development of the pragmatist-critical realism is structured around the critical realist approach described previously: “real”, “actual” and “empirical” levels of reality (Heeks et al., 2019). The approach argues the following:

1. The need for a practical focus on how knowledge can guide individuals and acknowledging that the truth cannot be known
2. Causal structures can be manipulated through human action, which can guide, adapt, and improve their helpfulness
3. Evaluation of these structures suggests that individual feedback from several independent realities then act in a dual fashion to constrain our actions and experiences

The underlying principles of a pragmatist-critical realist position align with the principles of the current research by combining the critical realist ontological stance and pragmatist epistemological stance on the research topic (i.e., exploring EP practice with CYP at risk of school exclusion) and allowing the researcher to select the most appropriate methodology to explore the topic further to produce useful, applicable knowledge (a feature of the pragmatist

position). Furthermore, the approach aligns with the idea that EPs can make adaptations to their practice and in turn have a positive impact on the systems with which they are working (e.g., the individual child, the school, family or LA).

### ***3.3 The Delphi method***

The Delphi method uses multiple rounds of surveys or questionnaires to reach a consensus on an important, complex issue (McKenna, 1994). In the current research, this issue is what features of EP practice promote positive outcomes when working with CYP at risk of exclusion.

The Delphi method is rooted philosophically in the work of Hegel, Kant and Locke (Turoff, 1970), who emphasise the importance of considering group opinions and perceptions, whilst also contemplating how other empirical data and the nature of reality might also influence decision-making approaches. The Delphi method was further developed by the RAND Corporation (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963) who used it to collate expert opinions in defence and military applications such as aiding decision-making about nuclear bomb target systems during the Cold War. The method has also been used to examine complex problems across many other fields including nursing and health (Keeney et al, 2011; Pope & Mays, 2000) and has more recently been used to explore a range of topics within EP practice, such as developing competency frameworks (Atkinson et al., 2015), exploring sleep deprivation issues in CYP (Anderson & Tyldesley, 2019), exploring the perspectives of young people in relation to online mental health support (Jago, 2019), assessing quality dynamic assessment practice (Green & Birch, 2019) and exploring culturally responsive practice amongst EPs (Sakata, 2021).

The Delphi method has been broadly defined by Linstone and Turoff (2002) as:

*“...a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem”* (Linstone & Turoff, 2002, p.3).

### *3.3.1 Different approaches and variations in the Delphi method*

Several approaches to using the Delphi method exist (Keeney et al., 2011), and it is widely acknowledged that modifications and adaptations to the method are now accepted (Alder & Ziglio, 1996; Brady, 2015; Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

The ‘classic’ or ‘traditional’ Delphi technique typically involves a series of ‘rounds’ (questionnaires/surveys), which are sent individually to a selected panel of experts in a given area of research to facilitate the generation of ideas, elicit views and opinions, and gain a consensus on a topic through using iteration in subsequent rounds (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Each round or questionnaire is analysed, and the results are returned to the expert panel to allow each member to compare their own initial rating with the rating of the group overall. This iterative cycle is continued until a consensus is reached. According to the literature, key features such as maintaining anonymity, cyclical iteration, controlled feedback and presentation of the statistical group response are essential to achieving consensus in the Delphi approach (Pill, 1971; Rowe et al., 1991). Although adopting the same process as the classic Delphi method, the e-Delphi (administered online or by email rather than physical copies received in the post) was chosen for use in the current study.



### ***3.4 The current study design***

#### ***3.4.1 Benefits of the e-Delphi approach***

For the purposes of the current study, which seeks to clarify the core features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion, a three-round e-Delphi method was utilised, by sequentially sending three remote questionnaires (or ‘rounds’) to participants identified as experts in the area.

Whilst some literature suggests that the classic Delphi technique should comprise four rounds, more recent research has highlighted the efficacy of utilising only two or three rounds (Beech 1997, Green, 2014; Proctor & Hunt 1994; Young & Hogben 1978). The number of rounds is thought to depend on pragmatic considerations, such as the time available for the research, the potential level of participant fatigue and drop out, and whether the researcher is utilising a broad question or a list of questions (Hasson et al., 2000). As the researcher hoped to gain participants and complete data collection over the Summer of 2021 to increase the likelihood of participant availability and reduce dropout rates, it was decided that three rounds would fit appropriately within this time frame whilst still offering enough rounds to be effective in developing a consensus.

A benefit of adopting the e-Delphi approach as compared to other approaches is that whilst a group consensus is achieved, the nature of all correspondence is online and, as participants do not meet, participant anonymity can be maintained (although the participants were not anonymous to the researcher). This may serve to remove potential power dynamics or imbalances that may otherwise influence the findings if another method, such as a face-to-face interview or focus group, was used. Consequently, respondents might feel more able to provide a more honest expression of their views and opinions without any influence of peer pressure, which serves to reduce the potential influence of social desirability bias (Hasson et al., 2000; Rudy, 1996; Sumsion, 1998).

Whilst the Delphi method can have a reasonably high dropout rate (Keeney et al., 2011) another benefit of using the e-Delphi is that it is a convenient methodology for the expert panel's participation in a discussion from any place at any time (Msibi et al., 2018) and allows the researcher to recruit a wide scope of participants from different geographical locations and settings of practice as all tasks are completed online. As exclusion is a complex and multifaceted problem it was assumed that several views on the topic may exist within the participant sample. Thus, a method like the e-Delphi enables the researcher to collate views about practice from participants in a variety of geographical locations and contexts of practice (e.g., LA or independent practice). Using methods that require organising face-to-face contact (such as focus groups or semi-structured interviews) would have been more difficult, particularly considering the context of COVID-19 in which the research is located and the time available for collecting and analysing the data. As data collection is online (email and online surveys) in the e-Delphi, these issues would therefore be addressed. Finally, as there is limited literature on the role of the EP when working with CYP at risk of exclusion and no specified consensus about what good practice looks like the Delphi method (often used to develop research from a limited evidence base) is appropriate (Keeney et al., 2011).

#### *3.4.2 The expert panel*

A primary aim of the Delphi method is to recruit 'experts' in a given area of research. An 'expert' has been defined in the literature as a professional with knowledge and experience of an issue in a given area with the capacity, willingness, communication skills and sufficient time to participate in a study (Adler & Ziglio, 1996; McKenna, 1994). Clear inclusion criteria should be used to recruit an 'expert' and should consider a participant's level of experience (in years), necessary qualifications, relevant publications, and geographical location (Keeney et al., 2011).

Whilst the language of ‘experts’ is subjective, it was important for the current research that panellists had sufficient experience working with CYP at risk of school exclusion to participate in the study. To ensure rigour and quality research in a Delphi study, it is crucial to have a clearly determined definition of expertise for the sample and therefore much thought was given to defining ‘expertise’ when thinking about EPs working with this population. Some of the areas considered by the researcher when developing recruitment criteria were level of experience (whilst not definitively, EPs with more years of experience may have more experience working with CYP at risk of exclusion) and specialist positions (for example, EPs who have held specialist positions working with this population, or those with SEMH needs who may be more at risk of exclusion, may be well placed to offer an ‘expert’ opinion).

As this study sought to gain a consensus opinion from a panel of EP experts, it used a highly purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling requires the researcher to be clear and explicit about the criteria for judging expertise and is thought to lead to the identification of individuals with the appropriate level of knowledgeable about or experience with a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2019). A purposive sampling approach was taken to allow the researcher to monitor the expertise and credentials or qualifications of the participants. As the quality of the data in a Delphi study is dependent on the level of expertise of the participants, this was deemed the most appropriate approach.

As Delphi studies usually require a homogenous sample, the current study aimed to recruit participants considered similar in relation to their qualification, expertise and knowledge rather than personal characteristics as might be expected of an experimental design. As practice around exclusions may differ greatly depending on geographical location, it was seen as beneficial to attempt to reach as wide a participant pool as possible to gain a diverse range of participants from several locations.

It is acknowledged that the degree to which EPs who take part may have a pre-existing special interest in this topic and the extent to which perceive themselves to have worked successfully in this area may be based on several factors, such as level of knowledge, exposure, self-awareness, or level of usual practice-evaluation and may not be objective information (Hasson et al., 2000). In line with the above reasons, and to create boundaries around the expert panel (Keeney et al., 2011), participants were selected based on the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Inclusion and exclusion criteria

<b>Inclusion category</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Qualified EP (at either masters or doctoral level) registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).	Essential	The aim of the study requires the participants to be EPs.
Experience of working with at least 3 cases with a CYP at risk of permanent exclusion in the last 3-5 years.	Essential	EPs are required to have knowledge and experience of working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion.
Holds a specialist role working with CYP at risk of exclusion (e.g., those with SEMH needs, PRU work, Youth Offending Service (YOS) work etc).	Desirable	EPs with an investment or special interest or role in the area are likely to have a higher level of experience and expertise.

### *3.4.3 Size of the expert panel*

Whilst there is no consensus on the required number of participants for a Delphi study (Keeney et al., 2011), and although generally the more the better in survey research, there is limited evidence to show that increased sample sizes in the Delphi lead to improved reliability or reduced error (Meskell et al., 2014). However, some acknowledgement of accuracy

deteriorating quickly with smaller sample sizes has been given (Linstone, 1978). Research has therefore suggested that size should be determined in line with the purpose of the research (Cantrill et al., 1996), with consideration of the quality of the expert panel (for example, being in line with the recruitment criteria) rather than only considering the quantity of expert panel members (Powell, 2003).

In the literature, sources have cited varying numbers for expert panels from anywhere between 15-30 for a homogeneous sample and 5-10 for a heterogeneous sample (Beiderbeck et al., 2021; Clayton, 1997; Linstone, 1978; Phillips et al., 2014). Another study only recruited 4 participants for their expert panel (Ferguson et al. 2008), whereas research by Green & Birch's (2019) varied the sample depending on the round, recruiting 5 experts in the first round, 20 for the second and 17 for the third round. Considering previous research and given the time constraints of this study and the potential homogeneity of the participants (e.g., location, experience level etc.), a minimum of 20 participants was deemed appropriate and would allow for any drop-out.

#### *3.5.4 Recruitment*

The 'expert' panel was recruited through purposive sampling by the researcher posting regular advertisements throughout a two-week period on an online professional networking forum, EPNET, which hosts EP members and works as a platform to send and receive emails (see Appendix D for the post used to recruit EPs on EPNET). The recruitment email included a link to the first survey on Qualtrics (an online surveying tool), where the information sheet and consent form were also found. This method of communication immediately outlined the commitment required of participants prior to their consent, which was hoped to allow

participants to make an informed decision about their participation, improve the ease of participation, and limit the drop-out rate.

### ***3.5 Ethical approval and considerations***

The current research was undertaken in accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2018). Ethical approval was granted by the Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust's Research Ethics Committee on 12/07/2021 (see Appendix E for a copy of the ethics application and approval).

#### ***3.5.1 Informed consent***

Importantly, when proceeding with this research after approval, participants were provided with full information about the research using an online information sheet (see Appendix F), including the commitment required for participation in the study, the timescale of the research and the requirement for informed consent to enable their full responses to be included in the research. As participants were qualified professionals they were not perceived to be from a vulnerable group and were considered able to give individual informed consent. Two weeks were given for responses to be returned at each stage of the method to ensure flexibility for participants. The research was conducted in the summer period, which was deemed most suitable for data collection due to being generally less busy for EPs.

#### ***3.5.2 Anonymity and withdrawal***

Whilst participants' names and email addresses were required for this research to provide a contact for receiving the second-round questionnaire and to validate the qualifications of the EPs, the researcher took care to ensure that the names of the participants

were not known to other participants. This was done by providing participant IDs instead of names to any data to ensure anonymity between participants and when writing-up the thesis. Participants were informed about the opportunity to withdraw at any time up to the inclusion of their data in the analysis at each round. Consequently, as a result, they were informed that completely removing their views from previous stages of the data collection and analysis would not be possible if they decided to withdraw from the study.

### *3.5.3 Risk and benefits*

Low levels of risk were assumed in the current study. As participants in this research would not meet each other, and communicated with the researcher only by email, any power imbalance or anonymity difficulties were not considered to present an issue. Participants were informed about the electronic storage of their data to protect their anonymity (which followed GDPR regulations). Additional or special arrangements were not thought to be necessary as participants were all qualified psychologists and proficiency and competency was assumed.

Participants were informed about the benefits of participating in the research, including the importance of their contribution to knowledge in this research area. Additionally, through reflecting on their own practice and having the opportunity to access the practice of other EPs (by viewing the group response) participants were likely to develop their own knowledge. All participants would be entitled to access the findings of the research via the completed thesis and receive the practice-framework created at completion of the research.

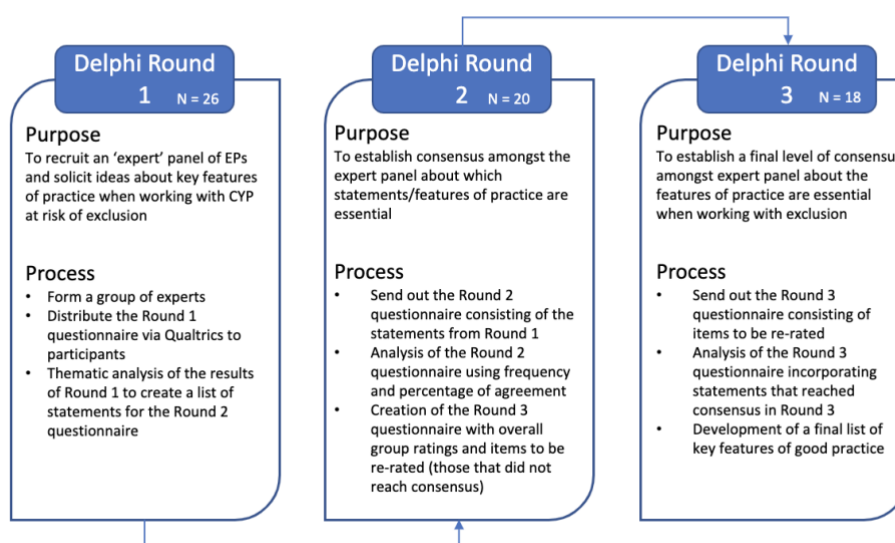
With regards to participant care and safety, it was anticipated that EP participants would have access to supervision which would provide support if any personal or professional feelings were raised by their participation. To mitigate the risks if participants found research

participation distressing, the researcher provided their contact so that participants could request support at a mutually convenient time.

### 3.6 The Delphi rounds

As described, this research used the e-Delphi as a sequential surveying process, which involved collecting and analysing data at each of the three rounds. The first round was used to create statements detailing the key features of good practice that EPs felt were necessary when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. These were then used to guide the development of the Round 2 questionnaire, which aimed to provide an initial consensus on features of practice identified in the first round. If a statement did not reach a consensus opinion, in Round 3 participants were given the opportunity to re-consider their initial rating whilst considering the wider groups opinion (which may influence their final decision). Figure 2 provides a diagrammatic outline of the research process.

**Figure 2.** Outline of the research process





### ***3.7 Development of questionnaire one***

The first questionnaire in a Delphi study is typically used to gather information and ideas (Keeney et al., 2011). In this research, the round one questionnaire aimed to elicit EPs views on good practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. This provided the opportunity for participants to provide practice-based examples of EP work in this area, which could later be used to develop statements and subsequent guidelines.

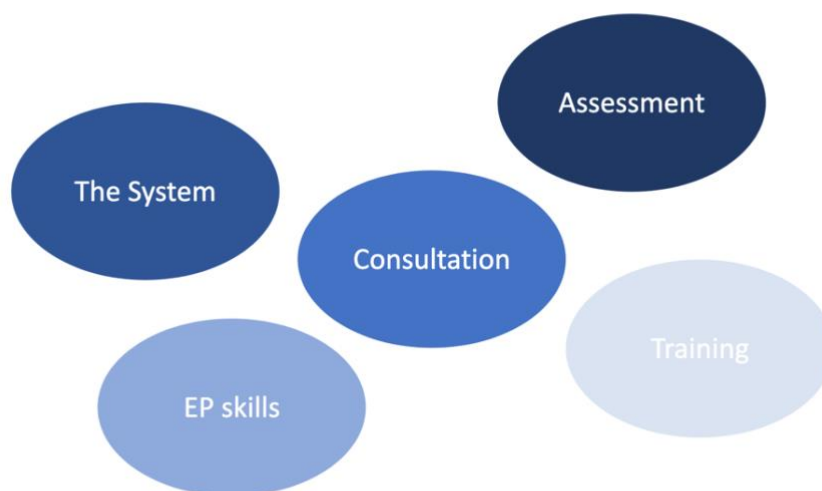
Whilst the development of the initial questionnaire in a Delphi study can be based on the literature (Keeney et al., 2011), the researcher felt that the lack of literature exploring EP practice in this area would limit the scope of the participant's responses in the current research. Instead, as is common with Delphi studies (Keeney et al., 2011), it was decided that the first questionnaire would be exploratory in nature and ask an expert panel to answer a single open-ended question to gain their views. Research has argued that the first round of a Delphi should be open-ended to allow the expert panel to express their views on an issue freely and to gather information outside of that available in the literature (Iqbal & Pippon-Young, 2009; see Appendix G for the questionnaire):

***Question:*** *In your opinion, what are key features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion to promote positive outcomes?*

Whilst recommended for the Delphi study (Keeney et al., 2001), it was acknowledged that providing participants with a single open-ended question might be daunting and could lead to a variety of responses both in content and length. Thus, following a detailed literature review,

the researcher decided to create prompts from themes identified from the literature (as in Figure 1), specifically, by adapting the findings outlined by Waite (2014; see Appendix G for the prompts provided to participants). This paper was chosen as the focus for these prompts as it is the only piece of research in the literature to explicitly explore the broad role of the EP when working with CYP at risk of exclusion and encompassed most of the themes arising from the literature review. Additionally, the areas of practice fit closely with the previously identified five core functions of the EP (Farrell et al., 2006). The prompts were thought to provide participants with a range of practice areas and, by providing a framework for them to structure their responses, would support memory and recall (see Figure 3 for a visual representation of the themes provided as prompts).

**Figure 3.** The themes provided as prompts to participants in Round 1



Qualtrics, an online surveying platform, was used to host the questionnaire given that it has a user-friendly interface and allows for the sharing, collection, and analysis of data (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). The questionnaire also included the information sheet and consent form, which participants were required to complete before starting the study. To give

an insight into the representation of respondents, demographic information was gathered (including ethnicity, experience level, number of years practicing as an EP, context of work and geographical location). Participants were also asked to leave their work email to both verify their status as an EP and to provide a contact for sending the following rounds of questionnaires.

### *3.7.1 Pilot*

Once this questionnaire was developed, the researcher felt it was pertinent to undertake a short, informal pilot study. The questionnaire was therefore piloted on four individuals (Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs); see Appendix H for details of the pilot study). The aim of this pilot was to test the content and technological aspects of the Qualtrics questionnaire. For this informal pilot, the link to the questionnaire was sent to trainees on the same university doctoral programme as the researcher for completion including questions about the contents and ease of the questionnaire. As with the actual questionnaire, the information sheet and consent form were required to be read and signed as part of the Qualtrics questionnaire before the questions could be accessed and answered.

All four trainees completed the questionnaire within the one-week window provided for feedback. Two trainees commented on the practicality and usability of the questionnaire, particularly regarding the demographic information. There were suggestions to more clearly define the categories of ethnicity so that the participant did not need to spend large amounts of time scrolling to find the suitable section. Another trainee commented on the prompts provided for the questionnaire and suggestions regarding the prompts. This feedback was incorporated

into the main survey design. The fourth trainee provided feedback on grammatical issues and commented that the prompt questions were helpful in guiding their thoughts.

Overall, whilst the data gathered were not included in the analysis of Round 1, this informal pilot was helpful in removing any small errors in logistical, technological, or grammatical issues. The pilot completion of the Qualtrics software also gave an indication of how long, on average, the participants spent on the survey, which was then advertised as the approximate time of completion for the main study (see Table 7 for details of the adaptations made).

**Table 7.** Pilot survey feedback

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Adaptions made</b>
<b>TEP1</b>	“Should the label in the demographics section be ‘white’ English/Welsh/Scottish etc? Should you also offer Black English/Welsh/Scottish to keep it consistent? Without the word ‘white’ I found myself having to read the list a couple of times to find the right category for me.”	The labels used in the demographics section were reviewed and adjusted to be more inclusive.
<b>TEP2</b>	“I think the prompts are definitely useful. Perhaps you could add the question again at the end of the list of prompts to remind the participants?”	The open-ended qualitative question was added to the end of the prompts section.
<b>TEP3</b>	“There were some spaces between words, and it seemed that some words were missing in sentences. Prompt questions were really helpful to guide my thoughts. The task was clear.”	Each section was checked carefully for grammatical mistakes and missing words were added.
<b>TEP4</b>	“There were challenges answering such an open-ended question and I felt drawn to offer an essay style response - it felt as though it would need a lot of time to give a thorough answer.”	It was decided to include a section at the end of the survey question to remind participants that they could offer as much or as little as they felt necessary to answer the question.

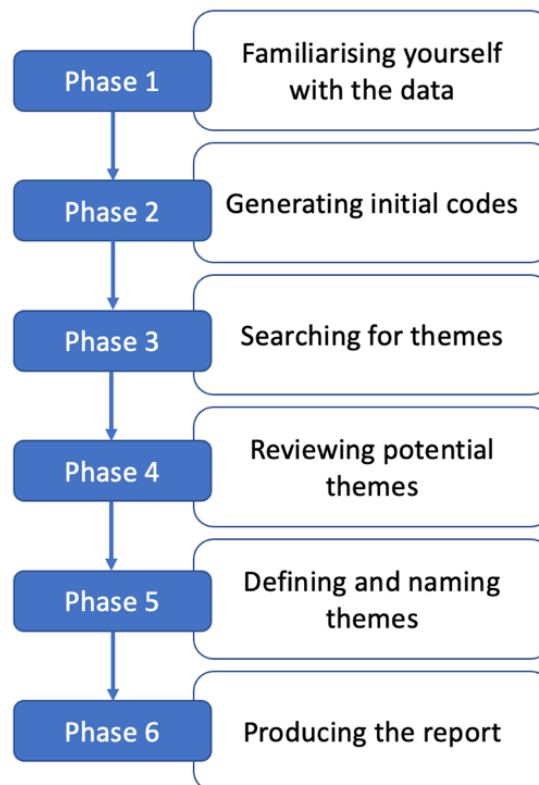
Once adaptations to the questionnaire were made in light of feedback from the informal pilot, the questionnaire was sent to the EP members of the EPNET community via email. Participants were given two weeks to respond and after this time, twenty-six participants completed the first-round questionnaire. Reminder emails were sent every 3 days.

### 3.7.2 Analysis

A transparent and systematic approach was adopted to analyse the qualitative data collected in Round 1. The approach needed to be reliable, robust, and replicable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Whilst Delphi studies often make use of content analysis at this stage of the research, the use of Thematic Analysis (TA) has now been widely recommended (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Indeed, in line with this research, Braun and Clarke's TA (2006; 2019) approach was deemed most suitable to analyse the data from the first round and was used in the current study. A deductive TA allowed for pre-determined aspects of the data to be sought and analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006; 2019) recommend this 'top down' or deductive approach to the data if a researcher is coding for a specific research question. The approach highlights the importance of the researcher assuming an active role to identify patterns and themes within the data and selecting and reporting aspects of interest (Blum et al., 2020). As this study had a clear position - to identify key features of good practice in working with CYP at risk of permanent exclusion, specifically data considering the role consultation, assessment, training, EP skills and the system (Waite, 2014) - this method of TA was seen to be most appropriate.

As the Delphi was seen as a method to create consensus around features of good practice from an expert panels' opinion, there was no requirement to delve deeply into the interpretation of responses (Keeney et al., 2011). Thus, the current study analysed themes at the semantic level, or surface level, by focusing on the descriptions and organisation of content, yet still providing an accurate representation of the data set and topic of exploration (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019). The current study follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) flexible six-phase guide that can be applied to any given research question (see Figure 4 for a breakdown of this).

**Figure 4.** Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to TA



### *3.7.2.1 Stage 1: Familiarising Yourself with Your Data.*

In Stage 1, Braun and Clarke (2006) outline the importance of transcribing, reading and re-reading the data. In the current study, this stage involved reading through qualitative responses from participants in Round 1 and highlighting extracts or phrases of interest and relevance in line with the categories outlined in Figure 1. Additionally, the researcher organised their responses by making a note of any initial thoughts about codes and the data. As anticipated, given the prompts provided to participants from Waite (2014), ideas developed around the areas of EP involvement with CYP at risk of exclusion previously identified (consultation, assessment, training, EP skills and the system).

### 3.7.2.2 Stage 2: *Generating Initial Codes.*

Stage 2 involved systematically coding and collating interesting features from each point of data to form codes relevant to the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As deductive TA was selected for the current study, the generation of codes from the data was done by considering the specific aspects of EP practice working with CYP at risk of school exclusion identified. The researcher then reviewed the entire data set (the participant's qualitative responses) and new codes from aspects of the data were introduced. The author noted different aspects of data could align with more than one code (see Table 8 for an example of a code, data extracts and participant ID from this stage).

**Table 8.** Example of a code for Stage 2 of TA: 'The use of person-centred assessment tools', data extracts aligned to this code and the participant from which they came.

Code	Data extracts aligned to code	Participant ID
<b>The use of person-centred assessment tools</b>	Gain the student's perspective from them directly. This can be done in many ways, including person centred planning (e.g., PATH). Personal Construct Psychology is useful, particularly tools such as Drawing the Ideal Self (Heather Moran) and laddering or pyramiding from asking 'What three words would you use to describe yourself?'	02
	I might suggest me working with the CYP to use person-centred tools to gather their views if they have not been gathered already. This piece of work would include questionnaires around perhaps their Self Image, Sense of Belonging etc.	06
	Being quite person centred and trying as much as possible to hold the YP and their views at the centre of good practice, using tools such as Circle of Adults and PATH.	18
	I might use assessment tools to explore with CYP their thoughts and feelings about what is happening. Sometimes this may involve using projective or PCP techniques that can help to surface experiences that may have been difficult for CYP.	22

### 3.7.2.3 Stage 3: searching for themes

Stage 3 considered the collation of codes into potential themes by sorting data from each code into the relevant theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019). Consideration was given to how codes may be combined to form an overall theme. In this stage, the prompts provided to participants in the Round 1 questionnaire (informed by findings from Waite, 2014) influenced the identification of themes and subthemes within the data, such as ‘consultation’ and ‘assessment’. Most of the codes from the data fit into the subthemes gathered from the overall data (see Table 9 for an outline of the codes, themes and sub-themes generated in Stage 3. Links between codes and subthemes and overlapping themes are presented in bold).

**Table 9.** Codes, sub-themes, and themes generated at Stage 3 of TA

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes under this theme	Links to other codes or sub-themes
The use of assessment	Gaining the views of the CYP	Amplifying the voice of the CYP through assessment	
		Gathering the CYPs views about their needs	
		Placing the CYP at the centre of all assessment work	
		Understanding the CYPs identity and sense of belonging	
		Understanding the CYPs experience of school	
		The use of person-centred assessment tools	
		<b>Developing an understanding of the YP</b>	<b>‘Understanding the CYPs identity and sense of belonging’ and ‘Understanding the CYPs experience of school’</b>
		<b>Supporting the development of goals and targets</b>	<b>‘Exploring the CYPs goals’</b>
		<b>Being an advocate for the CYP</b>	<b>‘Amplifying the voice of the CYP through assessment’</b>
		<b>Using the appropriate tools to gain views of the CYP</b>	<b>‘The use of person-centred assessment tools (e.g., Personal Construct</b>



		<b>Psychology (PCP techniques, ideal self, ideal school, laddering, strengths cards, PATH, MAPS)'</b>
	Gaining the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (e.g., involving a familiar adult)	
	Consideration of the ethical boundaries of assessment work (e.g., duty of care, notifying CYP of visit prior to arrival, transparency around EP role, confidentiality statement)	
	Exploring the CYPs goals	
	Using a strengths-based approach to assessment	
	Amplifying the voice of the CYP through assessment	
Assessment of learning needs	Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP	
	<b>Understanding and exploring low reading ages</b>	<b>'Exploring literacy needs'</b>
	Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs	
	Exploring literacy needs	
	Use of curriculum or criterion referenced assessment information from staff to understanding learning needs	
	<b>Understanding the YPs cognitive needs</b>	<b>'Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP'</b>
	<b>Assessing learning through speaking to school staff</b>	<b>'Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP'</b>
	Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs	
Assessment of SEMH needs	<b>Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT) to understand SEMH needs</b>	<b>'Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP' and 'Wider assessment of support needed'</b>
	Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP	
	<b>Gaining an understanding of the emotional needs of the YP.</b>	<b>'Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP'</b>
Wider assessment of support needed	Assessing what current support is working	
	Exploring what strategies are currently helpful	

<b>The use of consultation</b>	Consultation as a process	Using consultation as an approach to working with CYP at risk of exclusion.	
		Being involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles)	
		Contracting the work clearly (e.g., clearly outlining the role of the EP)	
		Using continuous hypothesis testing throughout involvement	
		Supporting the school to implement interventions	
	Avoiding a within-child approach		
		<b>Needs identified by using consultation over time</b>	<b>‘Being involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles)’</b>
	Approaches in consultation	Using a specific model of consultation	
		Using solution-focused approaches	
		Using motivational interviewing approaches	
		Using a relational approach	
		Using systemic approaches (e.g., systemic questions)	
		<b>Drop in solution-focused sessions</b>	<b>‘Using solution-focused approaches’</b>
		Using psychodynamic approaches (e.g., containment; awareness of unconscious processes)	
		Using narrative approaches	
	Relational aspects of consultation	Building positive, trusting relationships with all members of the system (parents/carers, CYP, staff)	
		Building and maintaining relationships with Senior Leadership Teams (SLT)	
		Viewing relationships as key to promoting change within a system	
		Providing containment to all members of the system	
		Validating the feelings of all members of the system	
		<b>Attunement in consultation</b>	<b>‘Providing attuned/active listening in consultation’</b>
		Providing attuned/active listening in consultation	
	Collaboration in consultation	Using a collaborative approach to practice	
		The EP role in addressing any tension in the system (e.g., between home and school)	

		<b>Making it clear that the consultation approach will be collaborative and non-judgemental helps it to be effective.</b>	<b>‘Using a collaborative approach to practice’</b>
		<b>Working with the family to understand previous experiences through consultation</b>	<b>‘Working with key members of the system including parents/carers, staff, senior leadership, the CYP’</b>
		Working with key members of the system including parents/carers, staff, senior leadership, the CYP	
	Consultation as client-centred	Increasing empathy for the CYP	
		<b>Helping staff to feeling more connected to the YP through consultation</b>	<b>‘Increasing empathy for the CYP’</b>
		Viewing consultation as a form of assessment	
		Being part of reintegration meetings (e.g., for those CYP returning to mainstream school from another provision)	
		Using hopeful approaches	
		Using a child-centred approach	
<b>The use of Training</b>	Training for EPs	Regular opportunity for EPs to have CPD	
		EPS prioritising training for EPs	
		Opportunities for EPs to work together to deliver training to schools linked to exclusion	
		EP training in systemic approaches	
		<b>Training on effective interventions</b>	<b>‘Regular opportunity for EPs to have CPD’ and ‘Developing bespoke training and interventions’</b>
		EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)	
		EP access to supervision (e.g., peer and personal supervision)	
	Training for schools	EP role to up-skill the adults around the CYP at risk of exclusion	
		Delivery of whole school training	
		Training schools in trauma-informed approaches	
		<b>Using Trauma informed and attachment approaches in training</b>	<b>‘Training schools in trauma-informed approaches’</b>
		Training schools in attachment aware approaches	
		Training schools in emotion coaching	
		Training schools to run nurture groups	

		Training about ethnicity and its role in exclusions	
		Delivering drop in solution-focused sessions for staff	
		Delivering training to improve staff understanding of behaviour as communication	
		Training in restorative approaches	
		Offering staff supervision or reflective sessions	
		Developing bespoke training and interventions	
		Training about adolescent psychology	
		<b>Training in relation to the Roma and traveller community</b>	<b>‘Training about ethnicity and its role in exclusions’</b>
		Training for ADHD, ASD, anxiety, EBSA, PDA, attachment, and other specific needs	
		Training on resilience	
		EPS offers a wide range of training options to schools	
<b>EP skills and the EP role</b>	EP skills	EP having strong interpersonal skills	
		EP having a strong sense of competence	
		<b>The EP can be understanding</b>	<b>‘The EP is attuned and actively listening ‘</b>
		EP ability to contain the emotions of stakeholders	
		EP ability to communicate information clearly	
		EP ability to empower members of the system	
		EP ability to maintain curiosity	
		The EP is impartial	
		The EP is attuned and actively listening	
		The EP can validate feelings	
		EP ability to place themselves in the shoes of those they are working with (e.g., CYP, staff, families)	
		The EP has a strong understanding of the school system	
		The EP has a strong knowledge of legislation and ethical codes of conduct	
	EP characteristics	EP confidence	
		The EP is approachable	
		The EP is open-minded and non-judgemental	
	The role of the EP in casework	The EP ensures a CYP has at least one positive relationship with a member of staff	

		The EP maintains relationships with SLT (or those that make decisions)
		The EP is an advocate for the CYP
		The EP signposts families for support
		The EP summarises and synthesises all information about a CYP and the system
		The EP creates a shared understanding between members of the system
		The EP collaboratively works with others (e.g., external services; SEN, LA services, CAMHS, education welfare officers, behaviour leads, youth workers) to reduce exclusions
		The EP applies psychological theory in all areas of practice
		<b>The EP supports the views of the CYP</b>
		<b>‘The EP is an advocate for the CYP’</b>
		The EP uses research and statistics to justify inclusive practice
		The EP supports CYPs transitions to alternative provisions
<b>The role of the system</b>	The EP role and the school system	The EP supports schools with the development and implementation of interventions
		The EP challenges discriminatory practice in schools where appropriate
		The EP challenges systemic barriers (both at the school and government level)
		The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) being part of the SLT team (or having a role in decision making about the system)
		Schools making staff available for meetings with the EP
		EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)
		A culture of inclusion in the school
		Early involvement for the EP (e.g., before risk of permanent exclusion or when a CYP is getting several fixed-term exclusions)
		EP role to support school to apply for Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for CYP
		EP role to work with the school system in a preventative way to reduce the number of CYP being at risk of permanent exclusion
		EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings

Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)	The EP uses an ecosystemic approach and working at all levels (e.g., Bronfenbrenner's model: home, school, community, LA level)	
	<b>EP supports relationship between school and home</b>	<b>'The EP uses an ecosystemic approach and working at all levels (e.g., Bronfenbrenner's model: home, school, community, LA level)'</b>
	Drawing on the wider contexts, policies, practices, and systems (e.g., at the national and LA level)	
	LA position on exclusions (e.g., providing a statement about not excluding/strong support for inclusion)	
	EPS position on exclusions (e.g., having an exclusions working group, being part of external agencies working to reduce exclusion, having best practice guidance for exclusions work, values and principles of inclusion in the service)	
	EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners	
	EPS use of a collaborative consultation model of service delivery	
	<b>LA to provide data on exclusions</b>	<b>'LA position on exclusions (e.g., providing a statement about not excluding/strong support for inclusion)'</b>

#### 3.7.2.4 Stage 4: reviewing themes

Stage 4 involved checking back to see if all themes are related appropriately to any coded extracts and the wider data set. A thematic 'map' of the analysis was also generated at this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006; see Figure 5 for the visual depiction of the thematic map). The first part of stage four involves considering whether the codes within each theme form a comprehensive pattern. If not, codes were used to create a new theme or moved to a different theme.

For example, as the three codes under the subtheme ‘Assessment of SEMH needs’ were all similar, it was decided to merge these into one code ‘Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP’. Additionally, new codes were added where they had been missed from the data, for example, ‘Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT)’ was created and moved to the subtheme ‘Wider assessment of support needed’ (see Table 10 for all additional codes created).

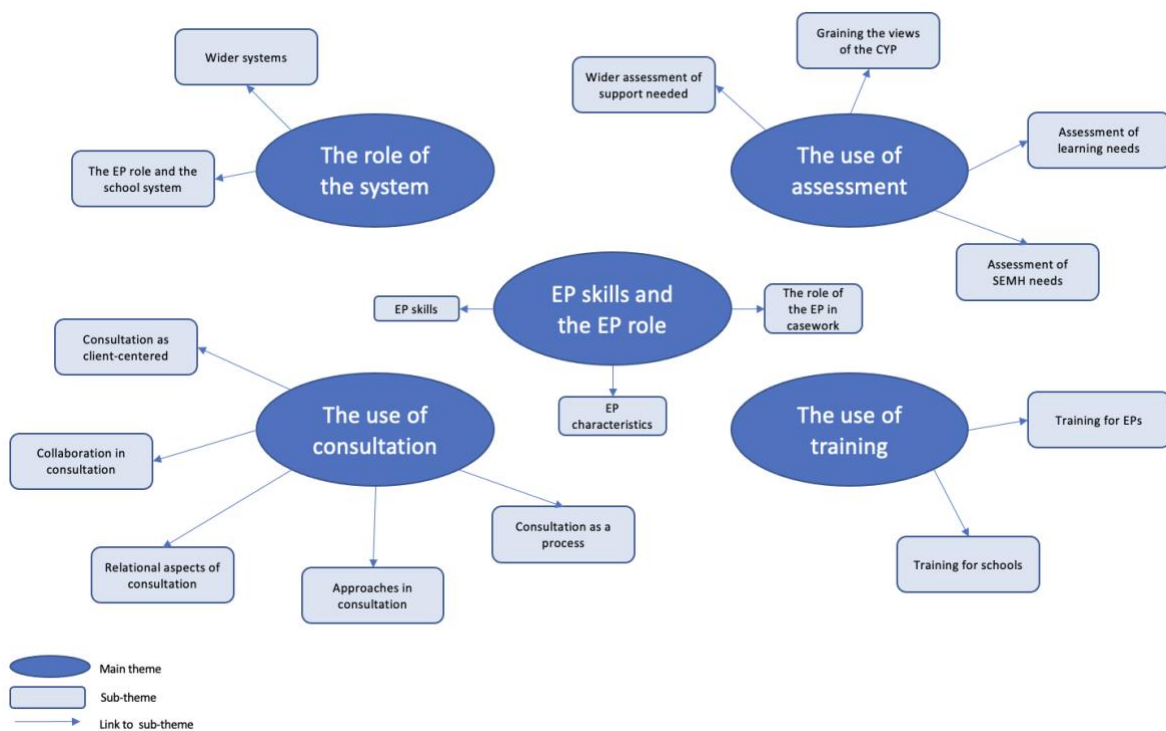
Further analysis at this stage involved going back to review the entire data set (all qualitative responses from participants), to ensure the validity of the themes previously derived from the data. The researcher evaluated the data extracts within each code to ensure they were appropriate (or whether a new code was required) and reviewed whether the themes, and the thematic map generated, created a coherent story reflective of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; see Table 10 for a list of additional codes that were created during this stage).

**Table 10.** Additional codes (and associated themes and subthemes) created during Stage 4 of TA

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Additional codes created</b>
<b>The use of assessment</b>	Wider assessment of support needed	Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools’ data)
		Gaining information about the CYPs previous experience and history
		Assessment of the school environment, ethos and culture
	Gaining the views of the CYP	Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT) Gaining the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (e.g., involving a familiar adult)

<b>The use of consultation</b>	Approaches in consultation	Using an Interactive Factors Framework
	Consultation as client-centred	Using narrative approaches to change unhelpful/dominant narratives around a CYP
<b>The use of training</b>	Training for schools	Working with the school over time to embed training in practice
<b>EP skills and the EP role</b>	EP skills	The EP has a large amount of experience
		The EP can build relationships with schools, CYP and families

**Figure 5.** A visual depiction of the themes and subthemes incorporated in the thematic map at Stage 4



*3.7.2.5 Stage 5: defining and naming themes*

Stage 5 involved refining and analysing themes further to clarify the overall story of the analysis. Further exploration of the initial qualitative responses was undertaken, including ensuring that each theme was created from the relevant data extracts and clear definitions and



names for each theme were generated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was reassuring as most of the data aligned to existing themes and no new codes were generated. However, any codes that overlapped with others that had not already been removed were then removed. For example, all themes highlighted in bold in Table 9 such as ‘Understanding and exploring low reading ages’, which was similar to ‘exploring literacy needs’, felt similar to another theme and were therefore removed and merged with the codes with which they linked to. Additionally, once this was done for the ‘assessment of SEMH needs’ subtheme, this category had only one code and it was therefore decided to merge it with ‘assessment of learning needs’ to create a new subtheme ‘assessment of Learning and SEMH needs’. This process continued until no overlap between codes and themes existed.

At the end of this stage, there were several ‘miscellaneous’ extracts, which were discarded, incorporated into an existing code or supported the creation of a new code. For example, the code ‘The EP supports the views of the CYP’ was discarded and combined into ‘The EP is an advocate for the CYP’.

#### *3.7.2.6 Stage 6: producing the report*

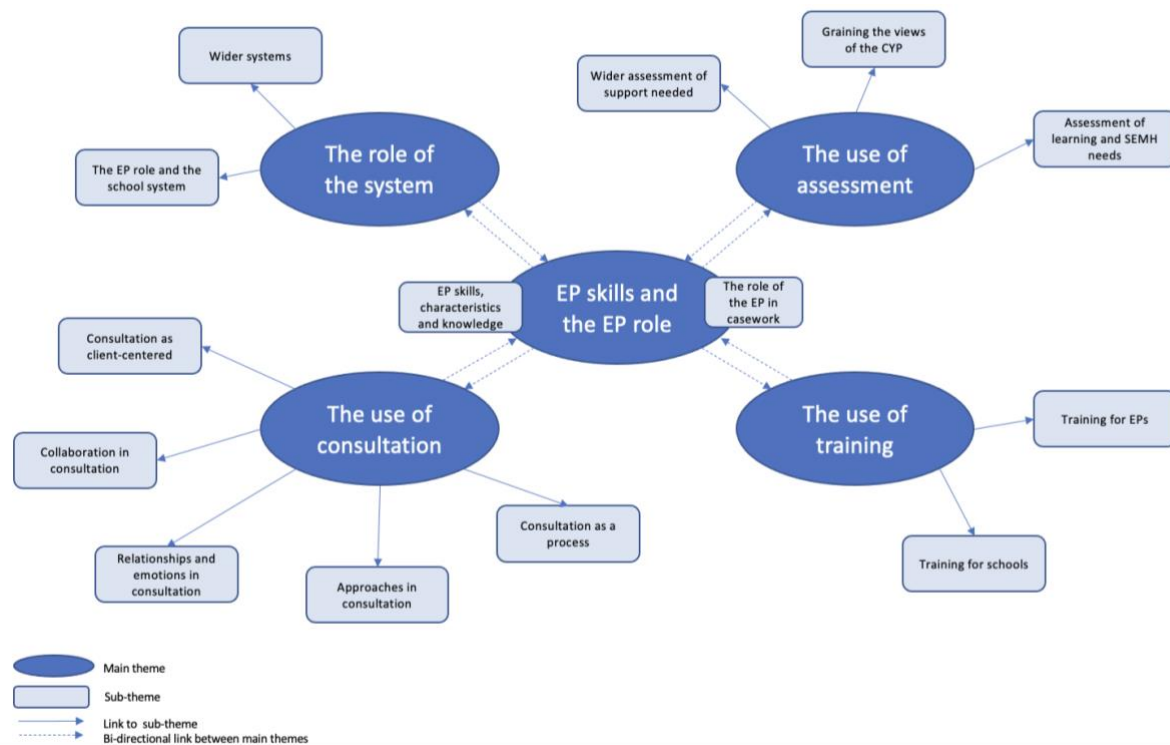
Stage 6 involved stepping back and considering the research question and wider literature in relation to the themes analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the current study, this stage involved seeking feedback and presenting a final adjusted thematic map of the data.

#### *3.7.2.7 Feedback*

Feedback about the thematic map (including the codes and themes that create this) was sought from three colleagues (TEPs). Generally, TEP feedback focused on the distinctiveness and

clarity of codes, subthemes and themes and the relation between them. Considering the feedback, the theme 'relational aspects of consultation' was re-worded to 'relationships and emotions in consultation'. After reflections with the TEPs, it was felt that for the two subthemes 'EP skills' and 'EP characteristics' in the 'EP skills and the EP role' theme, the codes were overlapping and were therefore merged into one subtheme 'EP skills, characteristics and knowledge'. One of the TEPs also commented on the overlapping nature between the codes under the 'EP skills and the EP role' main theme and the nature of the codes in all other main themes. For example, the skills and role of the EP understandably influence the success of all statements in other themes. It was therefore decided to represent this relationship between the main themes by highlighting the bi-directional nature of the relationship between the 'EP skills and the EP role' and the remaining four main themes: 'The use of assessment', 'The use of consultation', 'The use of training', and 'The role of the system' (see Figure 6 for the final thematic map).

**Figure 6.** Final thematic map of qualitative responses, illustrating overall themes and sub-themes



### 3.8 Development of questionnaire two

Following initial feedback, the Round 2 questionnaire was built using Word (the full Round 2 questionnaire is appended in Appendix I) and included statements formed from the TA of the Round 1 qualitative responses. The five main themes from the TA were used as the main headings for the Round 2 questionnaire: ‘the use of consultation’, ‘the use of assessment’, ‘the use of training’, ‘EP skills and the EP role’ and ‘the role of the system’. Within these main headings there were 14 subheadings and a total of 120 statements generated. The subheadings reflected the sub-themes identified in the TA. For example, ‘consultation as a process’, ‘approaches in consultation’, ‘relationships and emotions in consultation’, ‘collaboration in consultation’ and ‘consultation as client-centred’ were within ‘the use of consultation’.

All statements were either directly formed using the name of a code or reflected codes created during the TA. For example, statement 1: ‘Using consultation as an approach to

working with CYP at risk of exclusion’ was formed from a code ‘using consultation as an approach’ with several extracts from the initial qualitative responses that aligned to this code (see Table 11 for a list of the statements created for the Round 2 questionnaire; Appendix J lists the 120 statements from Round 2, their associated codes and supporting references from the qualitative data in Round 1).

**Table 11.** A list of statements in Round 1 questionnaire

<b>Item</b>	<b>Theme/subtheme/statement</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>The use of consultation</b>
<b>1.1</b>	Consultation as a process
<b>1.1.1</b>	Using consultation as an approach to working with CYP at risk of exclusion.
<b>1.1.2</b>	Being involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles)
<b>1.1.3</b>	Contracting the work clearly (e.g., clearly outlining the role of the EP)
<b>1.1.4</b>	Using continuous hypothesis testing throughout involvement
<b>1.1.5</b>	Supporting the school to implement interventions
<b>1.1.6</b>	Avoiding a within-child approach
<b>1.2</b>	Approaches in Consultation
<b>1.2.1</b>	Using a specific model of consultation
<b>1.2.2</b>	Using solution-focused approaches
<b>1.2.3</b>	Using motivational interviewing approaches
<b>1.2.4</b>	Using an Interactive Factors Framework
<b>1.2.5</b>	Using a relational approach
<b>1.2.6</b>	Using systemic approaches (e.g., systemic questions)
<b>1.2.7</b>	Using psychodynamic approaches (e.g., containment; awareness of unconscious processes)
<b>1.2.8</b>	Using narrative approaches
<b>1.3</b>	Relationships and emotions in consultation
<b>1.3.1</b>	Building positive, trusting relationships with all members of the system (parents/carers, CYP, staff)
<b>1.3.2</b>	Building and maintaining relationships with senior leadership teams (SLT)
<b>1.3.3</b>	Viewing relationships as key to promoting change within a system
<b>1.3.4</b>	Providing containment to all members of the system
<b>1.3.5</b>	Validating the feelings of all members of the system
<b>1.3.6</b>	Providing attuned/active listening in consultation
<b>1.4</b>	Collaboration in consultation
<b>1.4.1</b>	Using a collaborative approach to practice
<b>1.4.2</b>	The EP role in addressing any tension in the system (e.g., between home and school)
<b>1.4.3</b>	Working with key members of the system including parents/carers, staff, senior leadership, the CYP
<b>1.5</b>	Consultation as client-centred
<b>1.5.1</b>	Increasing empathy for the CYP
<b>1.5.2</b>	Viewing consultation as a form of assessment

1.5.3	Being part of reintegration meetings (e.g., for those CYP returning to mainstream school from another provision)
1.5.4	Using narrative approaches to change unhelpful/dominant narratives around a CYP
1.5.5	Using hopeful approaches
1.5.6	Using a child-centred approach
<b>2</b>	<b>The use of assessment</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Assessment of learning and SEMH needs</b>
2.1.1	Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP
2.1.2	Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP
2.1.3	Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs
2.1.4	Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs
2.1.5	Use of curriculum or criterion referenced assessment information from staff to understanding learning needs
2.1.6	Exploring literacy needs
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Gaining the views of the CYP</b>
2.2.1	Gathering the CYPs views about their needs
2.2.2	Placing the CYP at the centre of all assessment work
2.2.3	Amplifying the voice of the CYP through assessment
2.2.4	Understanding the CYPs identity and sense of belonging
2.2.5	Understanding the CYPs experience of school
2.2.6	The use of person-centred assessment tools (e.g., Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) techniques, ideal self, ideal school, laddering, strengths cards, PATH, MAPS)
2.2.7	Gaining the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (e.g., involving a familiar adult)
2.2.9	Consideration of the ethical boundaries of assessment work (e.g., duty of care, notifying CYP of visit prior to arrival, transparency around EP role, confidentiality statement)
2.2.11	Exploring the CYPs goals
2.2.12	Using a strengths-based approach to assessment
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Wider assessment of support needed</b>
2.3.1	Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT)
2.3.2	Assessment of the school environment, ethos and culture
2.3.3	Assessing what current support is working
2.3.4	Exploring what strategies are currently helpful
2.3.5	Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools' data)
2.3.6	Gaining information about the CYPs previous experience and history
<b>3</b>	<b>The use of training</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Training for EPs</b>
3.1.1	Regular opportunity for EPs to have CPD
3.1.2	EPs prioritising training for EPs
3.1.3	Opportunities for EPs to work together to deliver training to schools linked to exclusion
3.1.4	EP training in systemic approaches
3.1.5	EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)
3.1.6	EP access to supervision (e.g., peer and personal supervision)
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Training for schools</b>
3.2.1	EP role to up-skill the adults around the CYP at risk of exclusion
3.2.2	Delivery of whole school training

3.2.3	Training schools in trauma-informed approaches
3.2.4	Training schools in attachment aware approaches
3.2.5	Training schools in emotion coaching
3.2.6	Training schools to run nurture groups
3.2.7	Training about ethnicity and its role in exclusions
3.2.8	Delivering drop in solution-focused sessions for staff
3.2.9	Delivering training to improve staff understanding of behaviour as communication
3.2.10	Training in restorative approaches
3.2.11	Offering staff supervision or reflective sessions
3.2.12	Developing bespoke training and interventions
3.2.13	Training about adolescent psychology
3.2.14	Training for ADHD, ASD, anxiety, EBSA, PDA, attachment and other specific needs
3.2.15	Training on resilience
3.2.16	EPS offers a wide range of training options to schools
3.2.17	Working with the school over time to embed training in practice
<b>4</b>	<b>EP skills and the EP role</b>
4.1	EP characteristics, skills and knowledge
4.1.1	EP having strong interpersonal skills
4.1.2	EP confidence
4.1.3	EP having a strong sense of competence
4.1.4	EP ability to contain the emotions of stakeholders
4.1.5	EP ability to communicate information clearly
4.1.6	EP ability to empower members of the system
4.1.7	EP ability to maintain curiosity
4.1.8	The EP is approachable
4.1.9	The EP is impartial
4.1.10	The EP is attuned and actively listening
4.1.11	The EP can validate feelings
4.1.12	The EP is open-minded and non-judgemental
4.1.13	The EP can build relationships with schools, CYP and families
4.1.14	EP ability to place themselves in the shoes of those they are working with (e.g., CYP, staff, families)
4.1.15	The EP has a strong understanding of the school system
4.1.16	The EP has a strong knowledge of legislation and ethical codes of conduct
4.1.17	The EP has a large amount of experience
4.2	The role of the EP in casework
4.2.1	The EP ensures a CYP has at least one positive relationship with a member of staff
4.2.2	The EP maintains relationships with SLT (or those that make decisions)
4.2.3	The EP is an advocate for the CYP
4.2.4	The EP signposts families for support
4.2.5	The EP summarises and synthesises all information about a CYP and the system
4.2.6	The EP creates a shared understanding between members of the system
4.2.7	The EP collaboratively works with others (e.g., external services; SEN, LA services, CAMHS, education welfare officers, behaviour leads, youth workers) to reduce exclusions
4.2.8	The EP applies psychological theory in all areas of practice
4.2.9	The EP uses research and statistics to justify inclusive practice

<b>4.2.10</b>	The EP supports CYPs transitions to alternative provisions
<b>5</b>	<b>The role of the system</b>
<b>5.1</b>	The EP role and the school system
<b>5.1.1</b>	The EP supports schools with the development and implementation of interventions
<b>5.1.2</b>	The EP challenges discriminatory practice in schools where appropriate
<b>5.1.3</b>	The EP challenges systemic barriers (both at the school and government level)
<b>5.1.4</b>	The SENDCO being part of the SLT team (or having a role in decision making about the system)
<b>5.1.5</b>	Schools making staff available for meetings with the EP
<b>5.1.6</b>	EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)
<b>5.1.7</b>	A culture of inclusion in the school
<b>5.1.8</b>	Early involvement for the EP (e.g., before risk of permanent exclusion or when a CYP is getting several fixed-term exclusions)
<b>5.1.9</b>	EP role to support school to apply for EHCPs for CYP
<b>5.1.10</b>	EP role to work with the school system in a preventative way to reduce the number of CYP being at risk of permanent exclusion
<b>5.1.11</b>	EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)</b>
<b>5.2.1</b>	The EP uses an eco-systemic approach and working at all levels (e.g., Bronfenbrenner's model: home, school, community, LA level)
<b>5.2.2</b>	Drawing on the wider contexts, policies, practices, and systems (e.g., at the national and LA level)
<b>5.2.3</b>	LA position on exclusions (e.g., providing a statement about not excluding/strong support for inclusion)
<b>5.2.4</b>	EPS position on exclusions (e.g., having an exclusion working group, being part of external agencies working to reduce exclusion, having best practice guidance for exclusions work, values and principles of inclusion in the service)
<b>5.2.5</b>	EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners
<b>5.2.6</b>	EPS use of a collaborative consultation model of service delivery

Once participants had read the statements in Round 2, they were invited to use a Likert scale to review the 120 statements related to practice with CYP at risk of exclusion. Participants were then required to use the rating to how essential they felt a statement was to good EP practice in this area. Participants could select 'don't know/unsure' if they did not understand or were unsure about their response to a statement.

### 3.8.1 Likert scale

Typically, Delphi studies utilise scales to ensure participants can contribute their views in a way that easily identifies patterns of agreement in the data and can then be reviewed in subsequent rounds by the expert panel (McKenna, 1994). This ensures that extreme outliers are considered within any analysis and limits the effect of averaging opposing views.

The current study required participants to rate how essential they perceived aspects of good EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion according to be for practice. Likert scales of between 4 and 7 items have been shown to be more reliable and valid and similar studies using the Delphi method have used 4-point Likert scales (Cummins & Gullone, 2000; Dawes, 2008; Dillman, 2007; Green & Birch, 2019; Lissitz & Green, 1975). A 4-point Likert scale was therefore used for the purpose of this study with scale items ranging from 1) Essential in all situations, 2) Essential in some situations, 3) Not essential or 4) Don't know/unsure (see Figure 7 for an example of the Likert scale used).

**Figure 7.** An example of the 4-point Likert scale used in the current study.

How essential are the following statements when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion?		Essential in all situations	Essential in some situations	Not essential	Don't know/unsure
<b>Use of Consultation</b>					
Consultation as a process					
1.1.1	Using consultation as an approach to working with CYP at risk of exclusion.				
1.1.2	Being involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles				



### 3.8.2 *Consensus*

Using participant ratings to establish a group consensus, or a demonstrating a ‘collective agreement’ (Keeney et al., 2011) is a key feature of the Delphi method. This section therefore outlines the criteria used for selecting the consensus level for those statements where agreement amongst participants has been reached.

Whilst no clear guidance is available for how to set a consensus in the Delphi, previous research using the Delphi method have set levels between 51%-100% consensus for each statement (Keeney et al., 2011). Several recent reviews of the consensus levels used in EP research are available. Indeed, a study by Green and Birch (2019) reviewed 10 papers using the Delphi method demonstrating that single percentage thresholds were most commonly used to determine consensus level (in 5 out of 10 papers). The level most set ranged from 70% to 80%. Additional reviews of EP Delphi studies set a consensus of 70% (Anderson & Tyldesley, 2019) and 75% (Jago, 2019). As the current study shared a similar sample size to these studies, a relatively large sample for a Delphi study, and is an exploratory study, the level was set at 75%, which represents when the majority (at least fourteen of the twenty participants) provide the same rating.

Whilst this study used examples of consensus percentages from other research to inform the appropriate consensus, it is acknowledged that other Delphi studies have used the mean and standard deviation to set a consensus (Boerner et al., 2002; Higgins et al., 2013; Runyan et al., 2018). However, as it was felt that respondents were unlikely to frequently rate responses using extreme negative outliers (essential in all situations or not essential) to statements around EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion, this research did not use mean and standard deviation to set consensus. Twenty participants responded to the Round 2 questionnaire and completed it in a two-week period. Reminder emails were sent every 3 days.

### *3.8.3 Analysis*

Once participants had completed Round 2, data was transferred from the Word documents into Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistics for statistical and frequency analysis. Frequency analysis was used to determine the percentage of agreement within the responses for each statement. 75% of respondents were required to rate statements as either 'essential in all situations' or 'essential in some situations' for a statement to meet consensus for being 'essential' for good practice. If 75% of participants rated a statement as 'not essential' or 'don't know/unsure', there was consensus that the feature of practice was not perceived to be essential for practice. These statements were excluded from the final list of statements for Round 3.

### *3.9 Development of questionnaire three*

For any statements that did not reach consensus in Round 2, the participant's rating for each statement was calculated and statements were collated into another word document and sent, presented alongside the group ratings, to all participants who participated in Round 2. The 20 participants who completed Round 2 were emailed the Round 3 questionnaire (see Appendix K for an example of the Round 3 questionnaire). The panel were then given two-weeks to evaluate and adjust their responses according to the group ratings and return the form by email. Eighteen participants returned their completed questionnaire within the two-week period. Respondents were also given the option to provide qualitative feedback on the process of the research, and to comment on the statements outlined in Round 2 and Round 3.

### *3.9.1 Analysis*

Once all participants had responded, participant data was again transferred from the Word documents into Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistics, for statistical frequency analysis. The same consensus level of 75% was set for participants rating statements as either ‘essential in all situations’ or ‘essential in some situations’ and then for ‘not essential’ and ‘don’t know/unsure).

## 4. Results

This chapter will present the findings from Round 2 and 3 of this e-Delphi study (the findings from Round 1 can be seen in Table 11). First, the demographic information of the expert panel will be discussed. Following this, any statements that reached a consensus at Round 2 and Round 3 will be discussed. Those statements where no consensus was reached will then also be presented followed by a summary of the findings.

### 4.1 Participant Demographics

To determine how representative of the EP the population the current sample was, particularly as practice around exclusion may vary depending on geographical location and the context of practice, in this study participants were asked to answer questions about their ethnicity, the context of their practice, the geographical location of their practice, and, in line with the Delphi requirements, their level of experience (years of practice and specialist roles held). Table 12 provides details of the participant demographics.

**Table 12.** Participant characteristics for Rounds 1, 2 and 3 of the current Delphi study

<b>Participant characteristics</b>	<b>Round One (n = 26)</b>	<b>Round Two (n = 20)</b>	<b>Round Three (n = 18)</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White European	1	0	0
White	19	15	15
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British			
Pakistani	1	1	1
White Irish	2	2	2
White and Black Caribbean	1	1	1

	Other Black (African Caribbean British)	1	1	1
	Prefer not to answer	1	0	0
<b>Where do you work as an EP?</b>	London	8	7	7
	Scotland	2	1	0
	Northwest	4	3	3
	Midlands	2	2	1
	Southeast	5	4	4
	Southwest	1	0	0
	South (Including Isle of Wight)	2	1	1
	Nationally and/or internationally	2	2	2
<b>Where do you currently practice as an EP?</b>	Local Authority	20	15	13
	Social enterprise/CIC (independent from an LA)	2	1	1
	Private limited company or cooperative	2	2	2
	Self-employed	2	2	2
<b>How many years have you been practising as an EP?</b>	0-4 years	7	5	4
	5-9 years	6	6	5
	10-14 years	2	0	0
	15-19 years	6	4	4
	20+ years	5	5	5

#### 4.1.1 Ethnicity

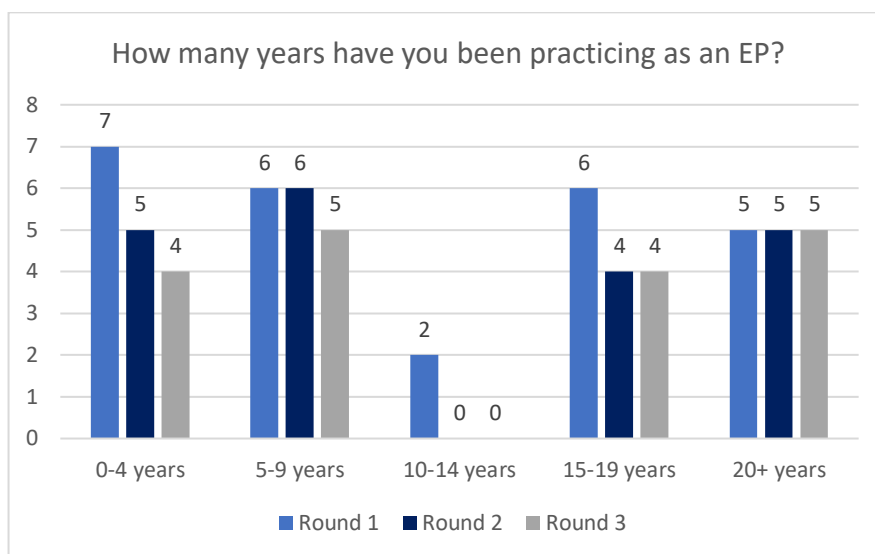
Participants were asked to define their ethnicity, with the opportunity of providing as much or as little information as preferred. In Round 1, just over 73% of participants identified themselves as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (N = 19). 2 participants identified their ethnicity as White Irish, 1 identified their ethnicity as Pakistani, 1 identified their ethnicity as White European, 1 identified their ethnicity as White and Black Caribbean, 1 identified their ethnicity as Other Black (African Caribbean British) and 1 answered, 'Prefer not to answer'.

#### *4.1.2 Location and Context of practice*

The initial geographical spread of participants was relatively wide across England and two participants were from Scotland (see Table 12 for details). The majority of participants worked in Local Authority settings (N = 20), with some participants describing work for a social enterprise (N = 2), a private or limited company (N = 2) or self-employed (N = 2).

#### *4.1.3 Experience*

EPs were asked to provide the number of years they have practised as an EP to outline their experience (see Figure 8 for a graphical representation). Additionally, in Round 2, EPs were asked to define their level of experience of working with CYP at risk of school exclusion by providing the approximate number of CYP in this area that they had worked with. The average number of CYP at risk of exclusion worked with was 70. As this number exceeded the requirements outlined in the inclusion criteria (at least 3 cases with CYP at risk of exclusion in the last 3-5 years), this number was deemed appropriate and suggests a large amount of experience within the expert panel (the minimum number of CYP worked with was 5 and therefore all participants were appropriately experienced to participate in the study; see Table 13 for a breakdown of these numbers). EPs were also asked whether they held a specialist role working with this population. Nine EPs shared holding a specialist role with CYP at risk of exclusion (see Table 13 for details of the roles held).

**Figure 8.** A summary of participant EPs' experience by years of practice**Table 13.** Participant experiences (including number of CYP at risk of exclusion and specialist roles)

<b>Average number of CYP at risk of exclusion worked with</b>	<b>M = 70 (SD = 58)</b> <b>Range min = 5</b> <b>Range max = 200</b>
<b>Specialist roles held</b>	<p>Link EP for Complex Needs Pupil Referral Unit for C/YP who had been permanently excluded</p> <p>Link EP for secondary PRU for young people already been excluded</p> <p>Link EP for key stage 4 Alternative Provision</p> <p>EP for PRUs in the area</p> <p>Link EP for a secondary PRU</p> <p>Specialist EP for residential schools in area, Senior managing a team for behaviour support and CAMHS, lead for SEMH Working within specialist provisions for young people already permanently excluded - supporting outreach services to work in schools.</p> <p>Specialist Practitioner for behaviour and attendance teams and Specialist working in Youth Offending Team</p> <p>Linked EP to PRU</p>

#### 4.1.4 Verification

All participants stated that they had read the inclusion criteria before participating. 24 of the 26 respondents (92%) could be verified by the researcher to be EPs. Most participants (20/26) used a private practice or LA email address which were verified to belong to EPs with the HCPC (2016). Six EPs used a personal email contact and only four of these could be verified. Although two participants were not verified to be EPs, it was clear in the inclusion criteria that participants must be qualified EPs and registered with the HCPC (2016). As the participants responded at length about their current practice as an EP and were recruited through methods largely only accessible to EPs, the researcher felt confident that the sample was verified.

#### 4.1.5 Withdrawal points

A total of 26 participants initially gave consent to participate in the study. 6 participants either withdrew from the study or did not respond to the Round 2 survey distribution. A further 2 participants either withdrew or did not respond to the Round 3 survey. As the information provided by these participants in Round 1 has already been analysed prior to their withdrawal, the responses remained part of the Rounds 2 and 3 survey. Table 14 outlines the point at which participants withdrew from the study and the reasons for this.

**Table 14.** Withdrawal points

Round	Number of participants who withdrew	Reason provided
After Round 2 was sent out	6	Either not disclosed or personal reasons
After Round 3 was sent out	2	Either not disclosed or personal reasons



## **4.2 Round 2 findings**

In Round 2, 108 of the 120 statements achieved consensus of greater than 75% (89% consensus). The remaining 12 statements were carried forward into Round 3. No items achieved consensus for being 'not essential' in Round 2. Figures 9-22 offer graphical representations of the statements which reached consensus after Round 2.

The graphs are separated into the key subthemes from survey one:

1.1 *The use of consultation:* Consultation as a process (Figure 9)

1.2 *The use of consultation:* Approaches in consultation (Figure 10)

1.3 *The use of consultation:* Relationships and emotions in consultation (Figure 11)

1.4 *The use of consultation:* Collaboration in consultation (Figure 12)

1.5 *The use of consultation:* Consultation as client-centred (Figure 13)

2.1 *The use of assessment:* assessment of learning and SEMH needs (Figure 14)

2.2 *The use of assessment:* gaining the views of the CYP (Figure 15)

2.3 *The use of assessment:* wider assessment of support needed (Figure 16)

3.1 *The use of training:* training for EPs (Figure 17)

3.2 *The use of training:* training for schools (Figure 18)

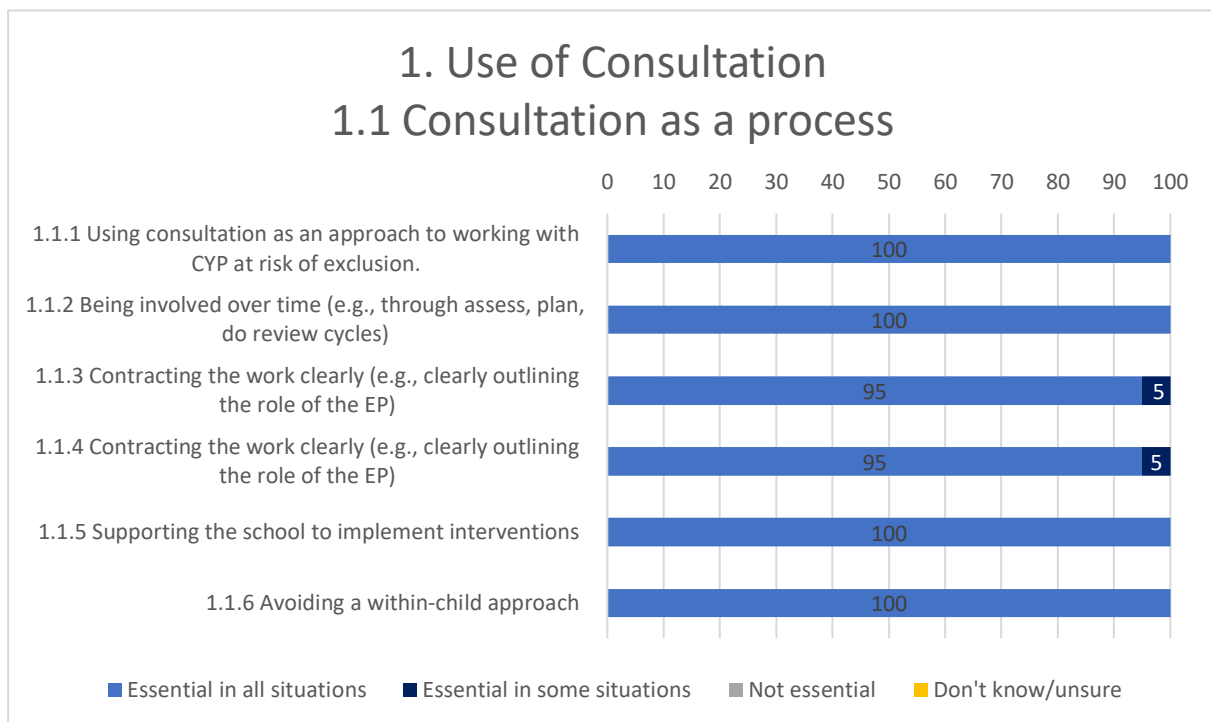
4.1 *EP skills and the EP role:* EP characteristics, skills and knowledge (Figure 19)

4.2 *EP skills and the EP role: The role of the EP in casework* (Figure 20)

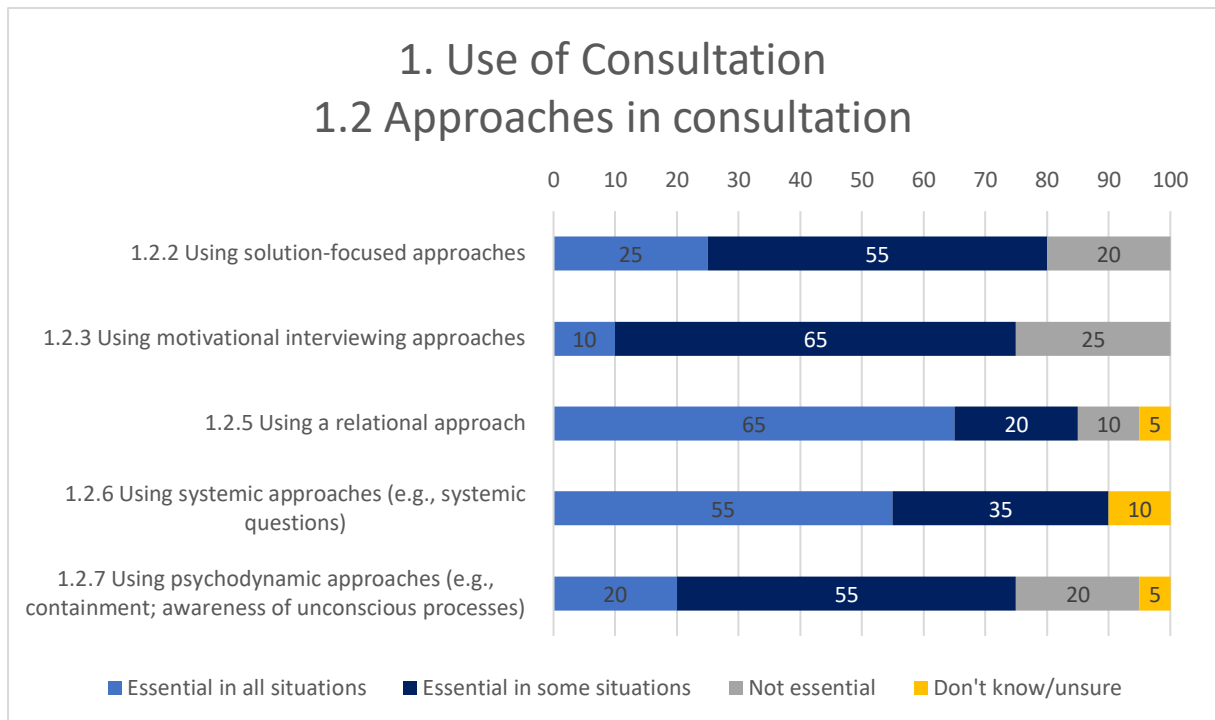
5.1 *The role of the system: the EP role and the school system* (Figure 21)

5.2 *The role of the system: Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)* (Figure 22)

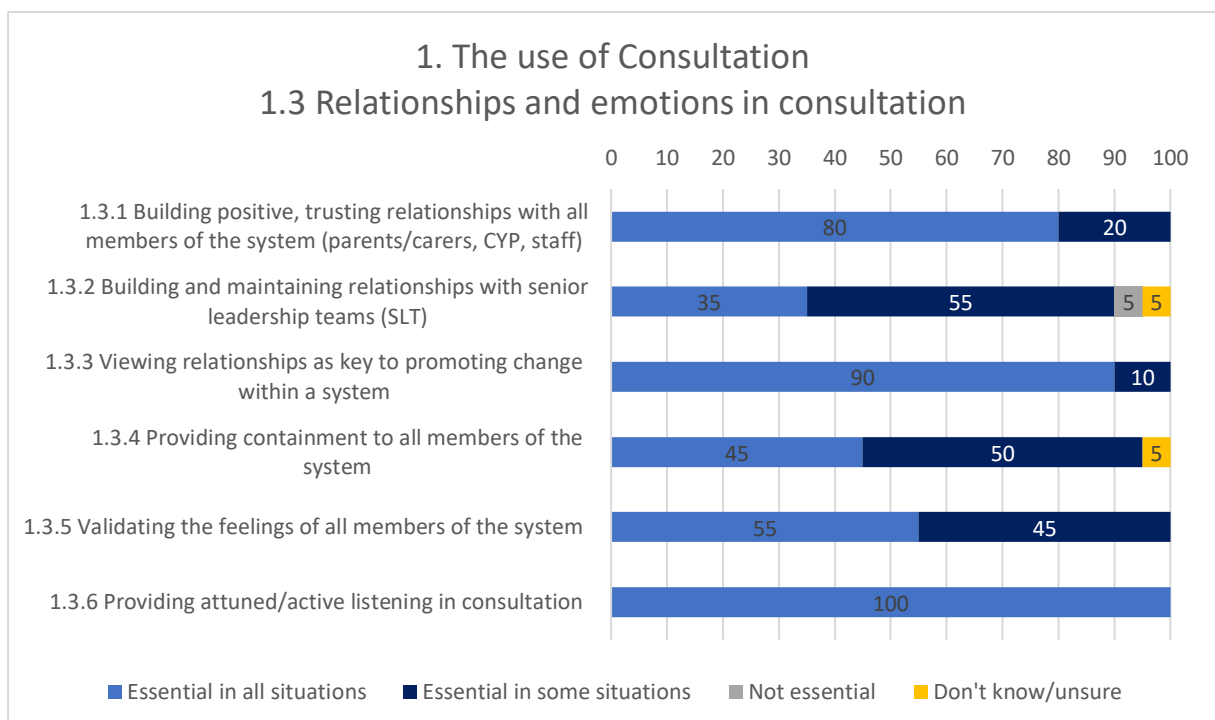
**Figure 9.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 1.1. The use of consultation:  
Consultation as a process



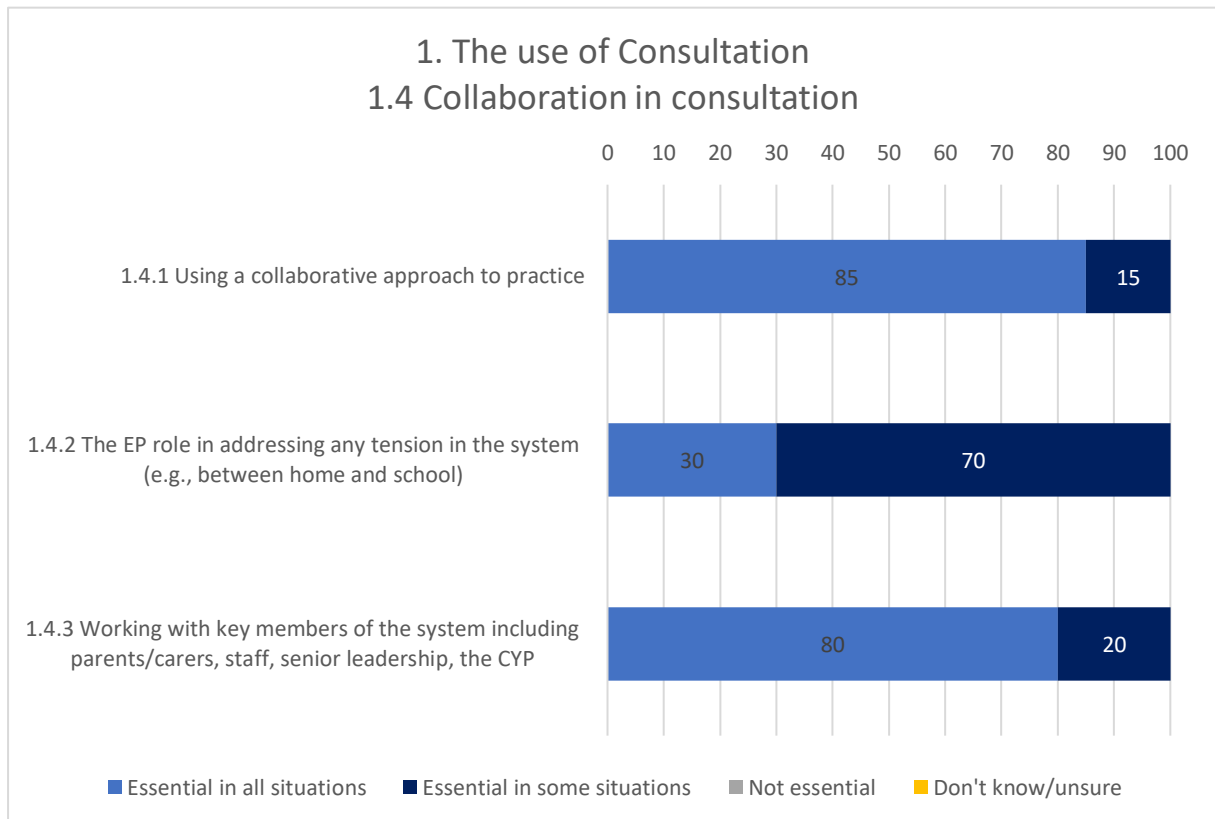
**Figure 10.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 1.2. The use of consultation: Approaches in consultation



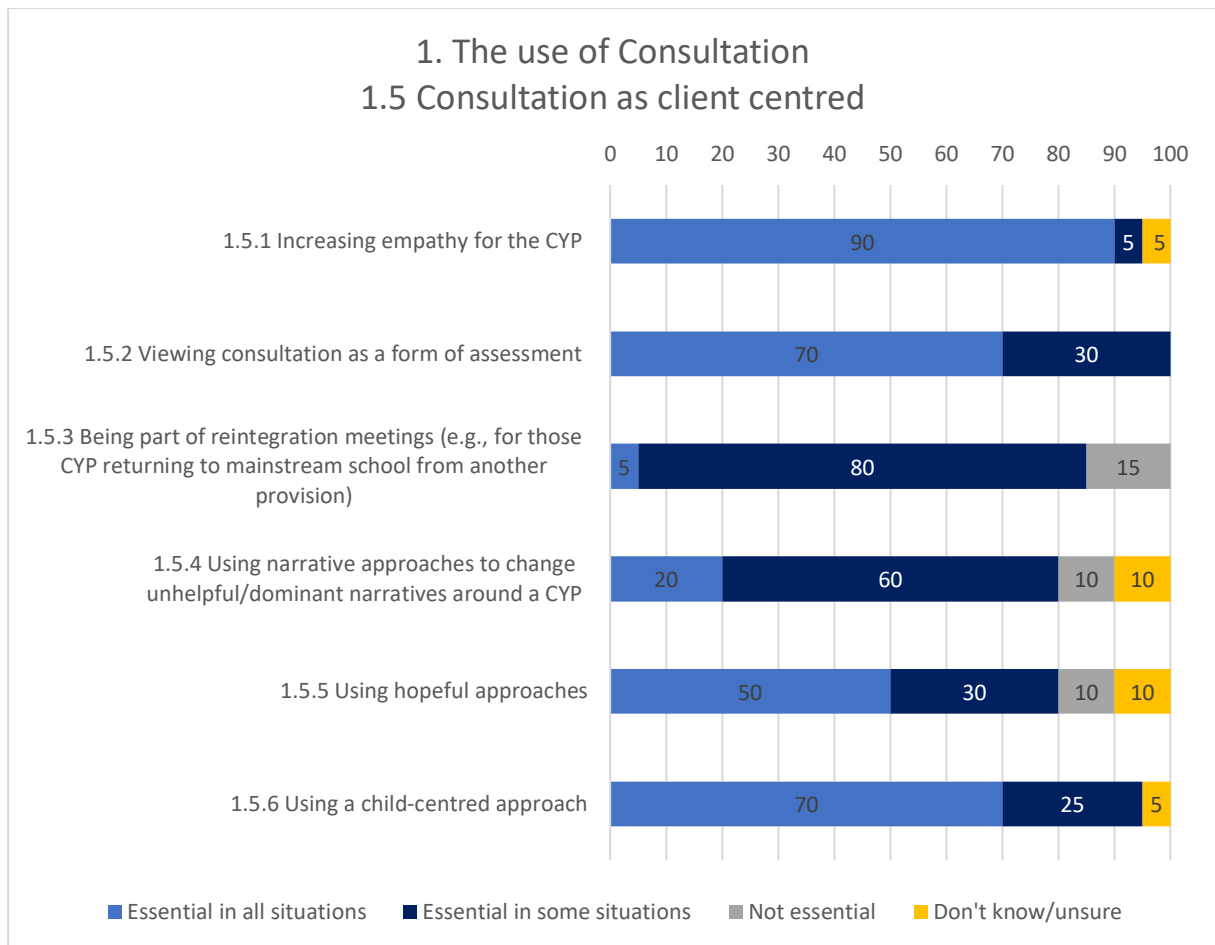
**Figure 11.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 1.3. The use of consultation: Relationships and emotions in consultation



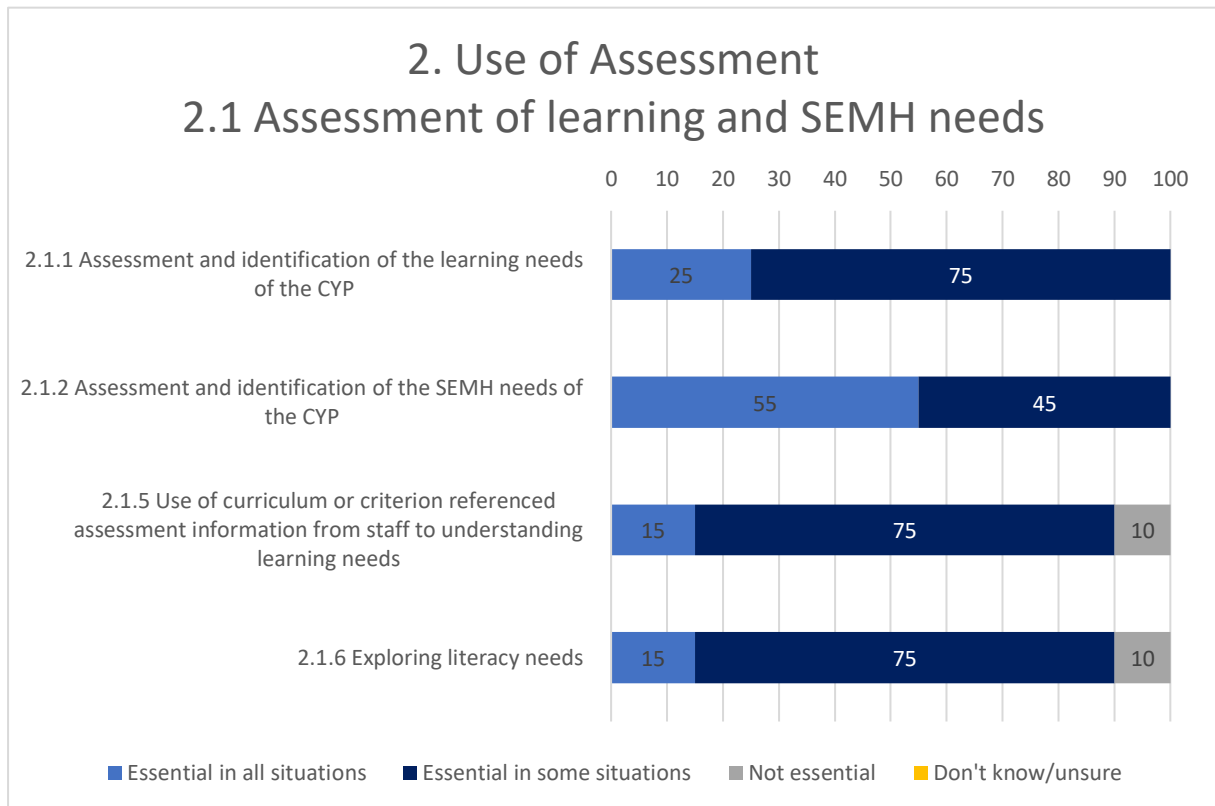
**Figure 12.** Statements reaching consensus from round one, section 1.4 The use of consultation: Collaboration in consultation



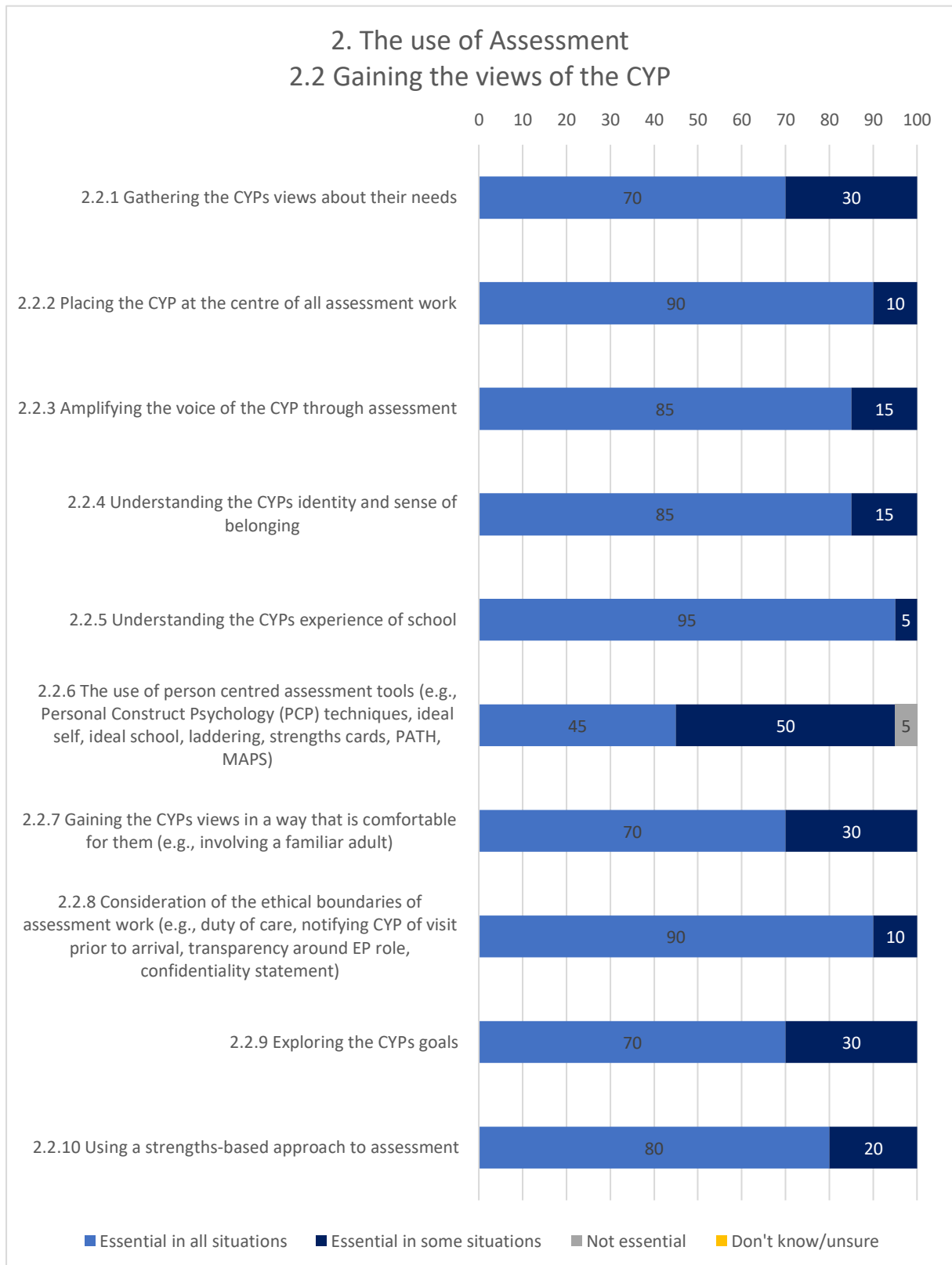
**Figure 13.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 1.5. The use of consultation: Consultation as client-centred



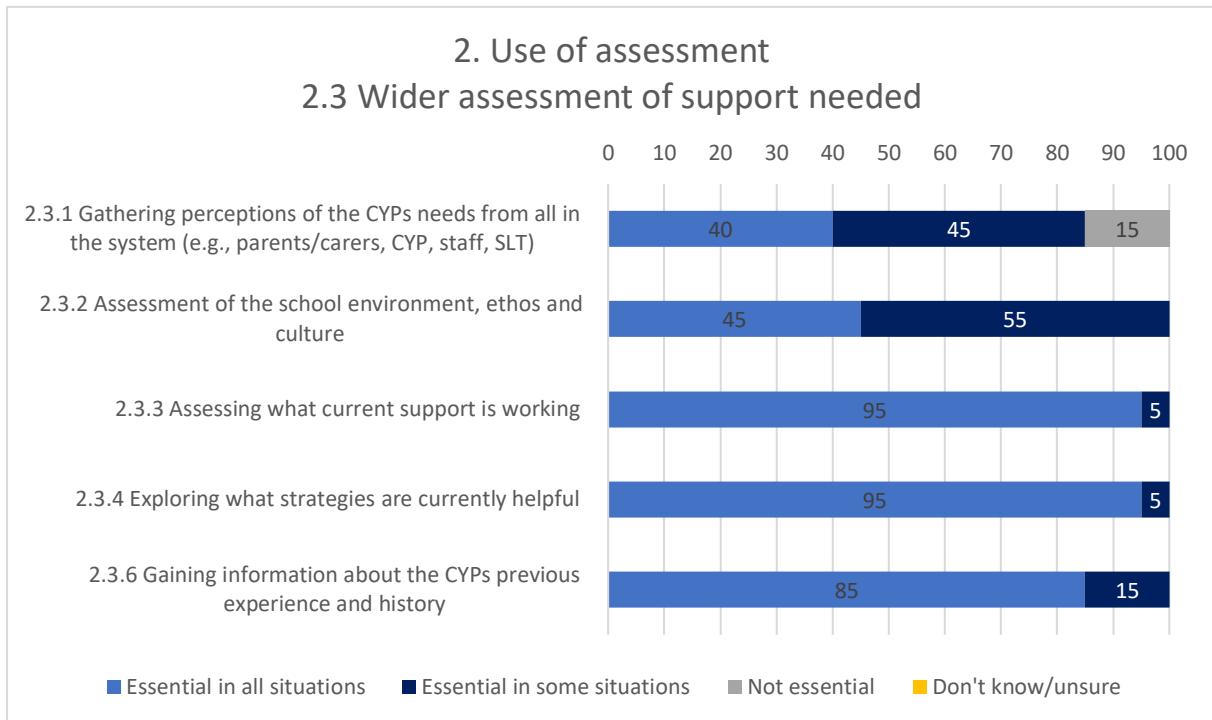
**Figure 14.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 2.1. The use of assessment: assessment of learning and SEMH needs



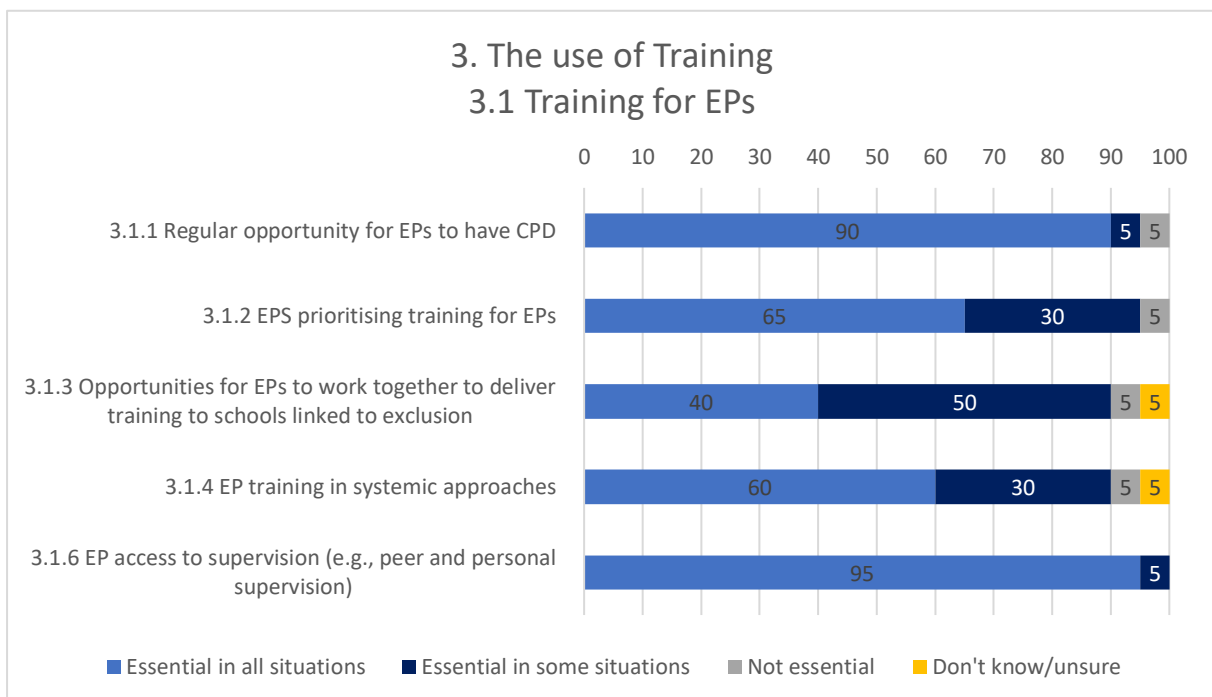
**Figure 15.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 2.2. The use of assessment: gaining the views of the CYP



**Figure 16.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 2.3. The use of assessment: wider assessment of support needed

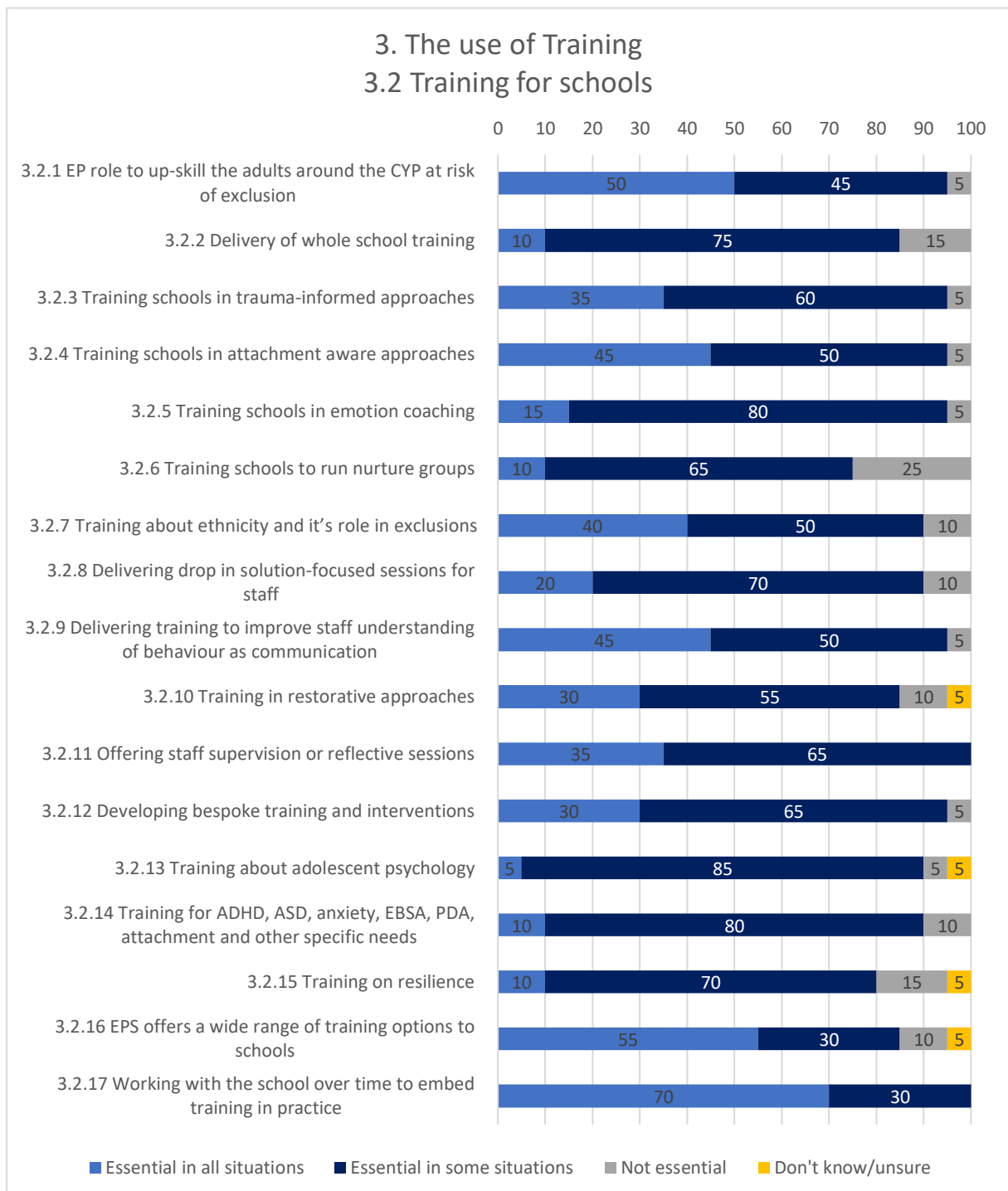


**Figure 17.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 3.1. The use of training: training for EPs

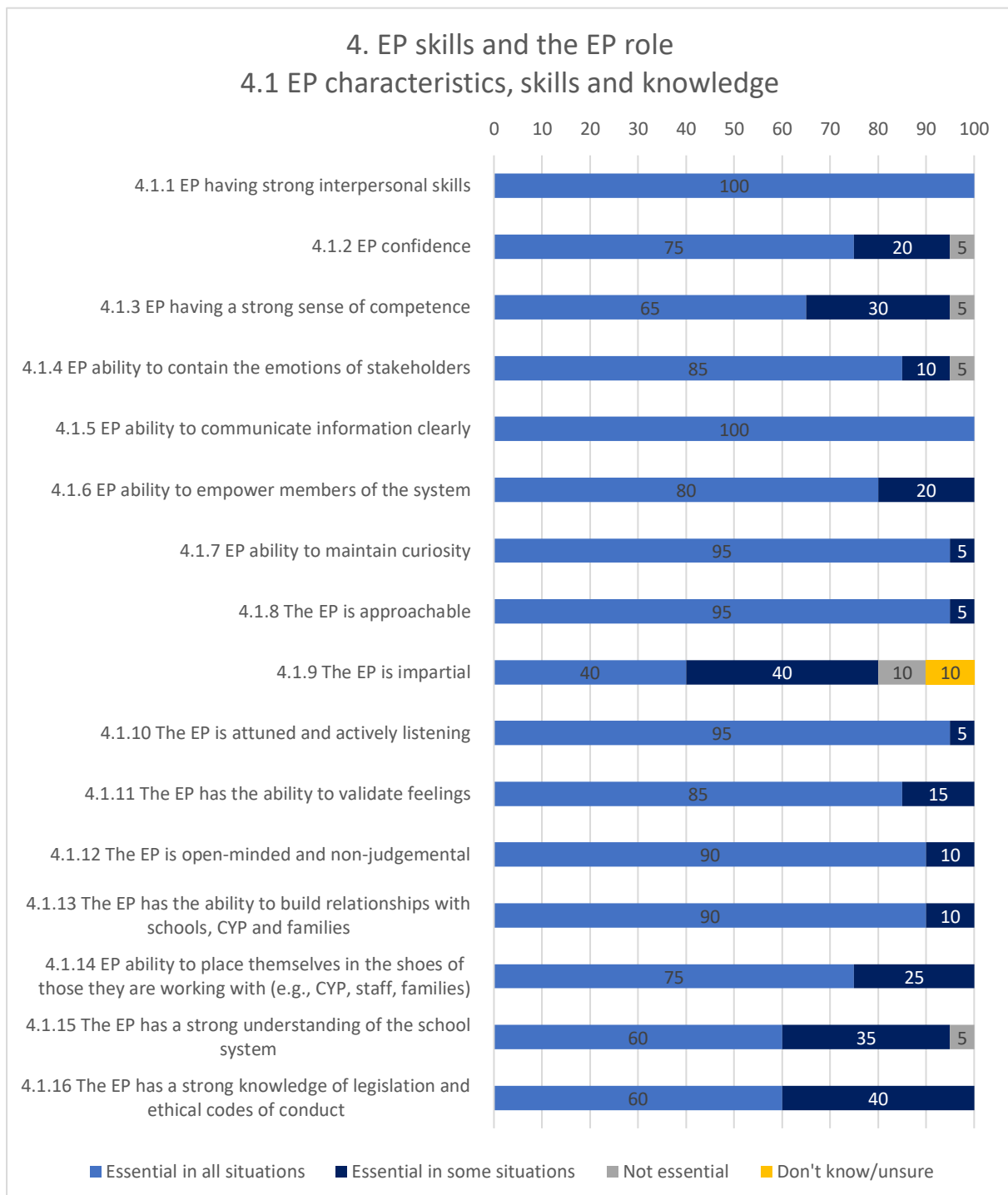




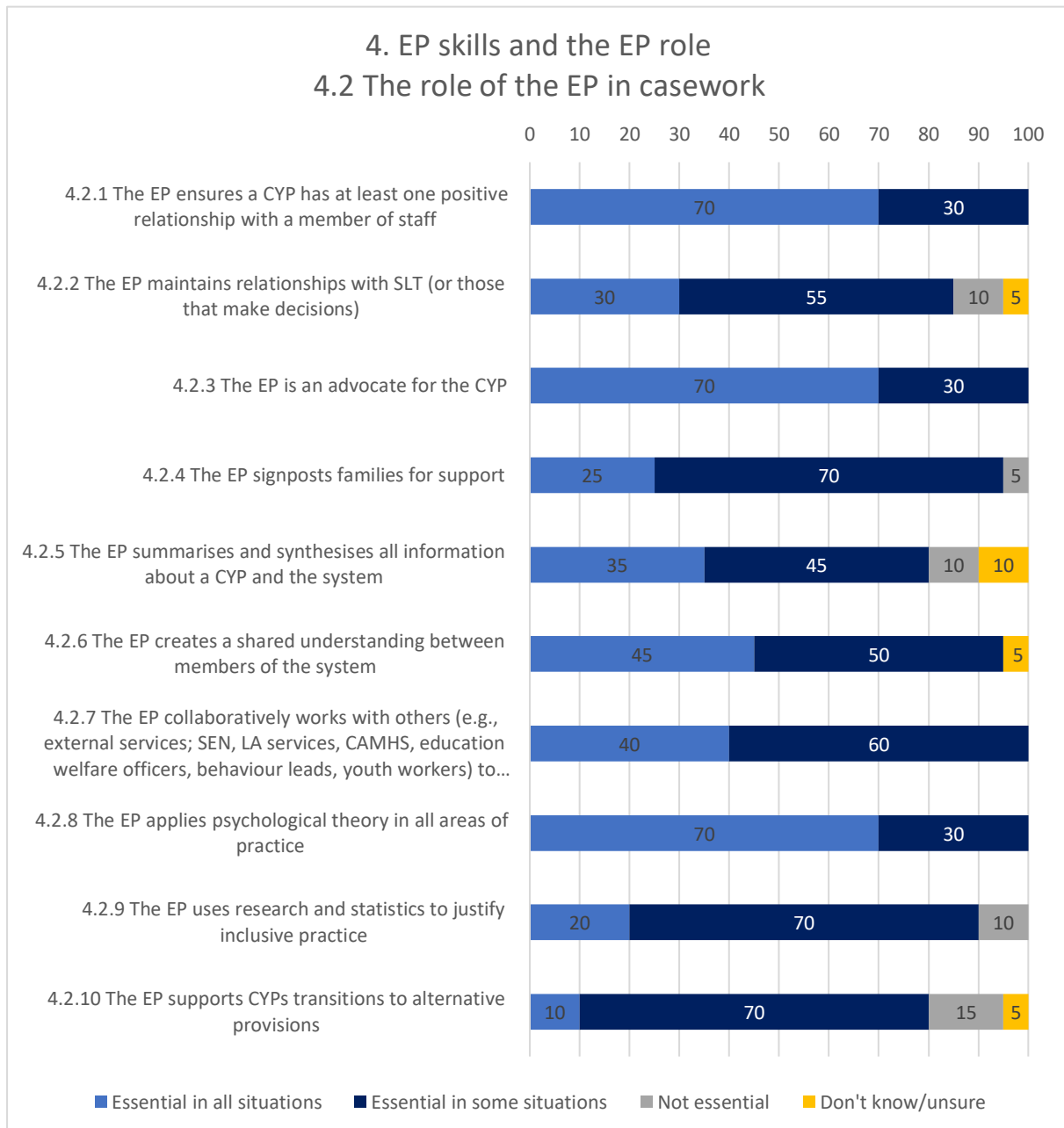
**Figure 18.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 3.2. The use of training:  
training for schools



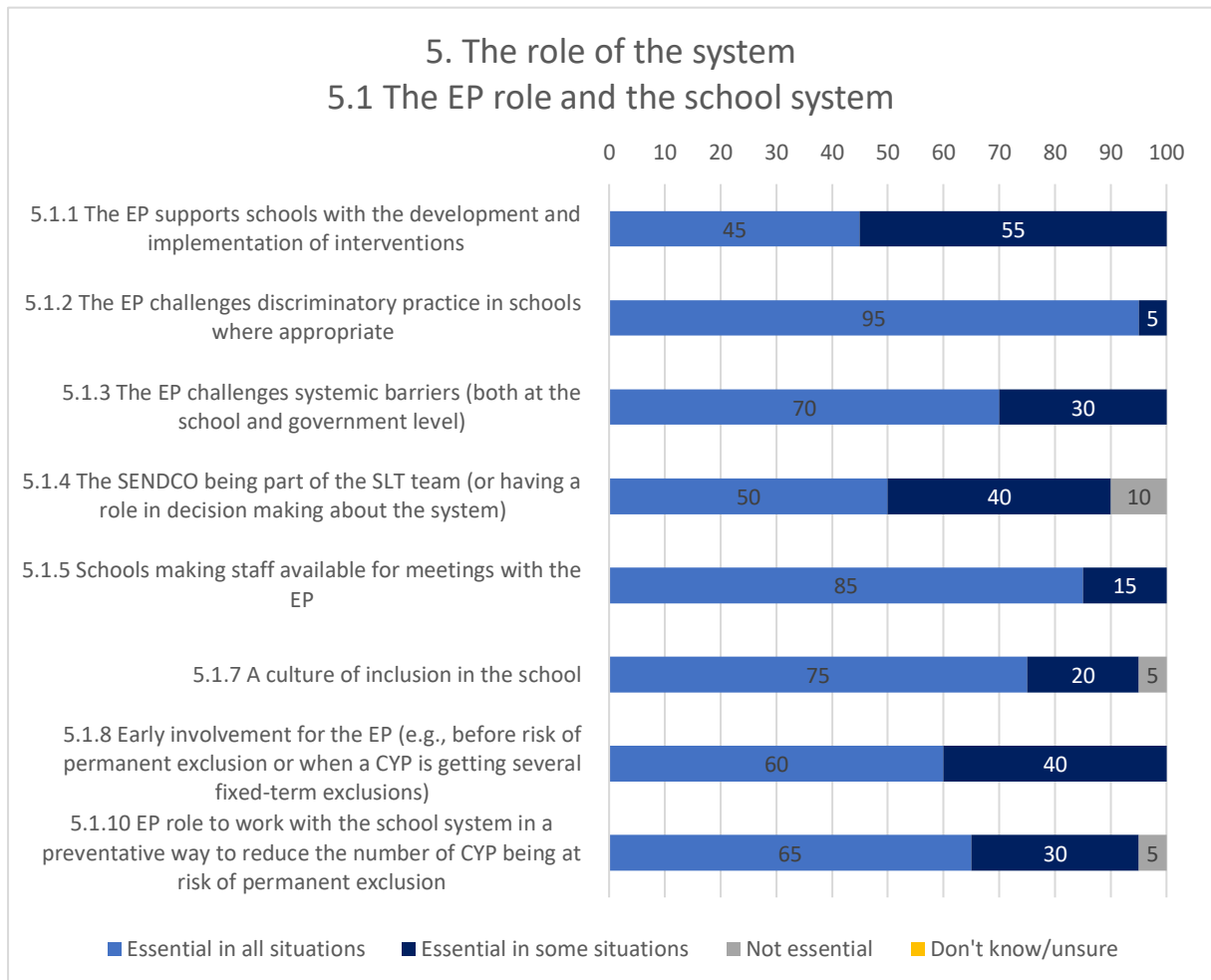
**Figure 19.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 4.1. EP skills and the EP role: EP characteristics, skills and knowledge



**Figure 20.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 4.2. EP skills and the EP role: The role of the EP in casework

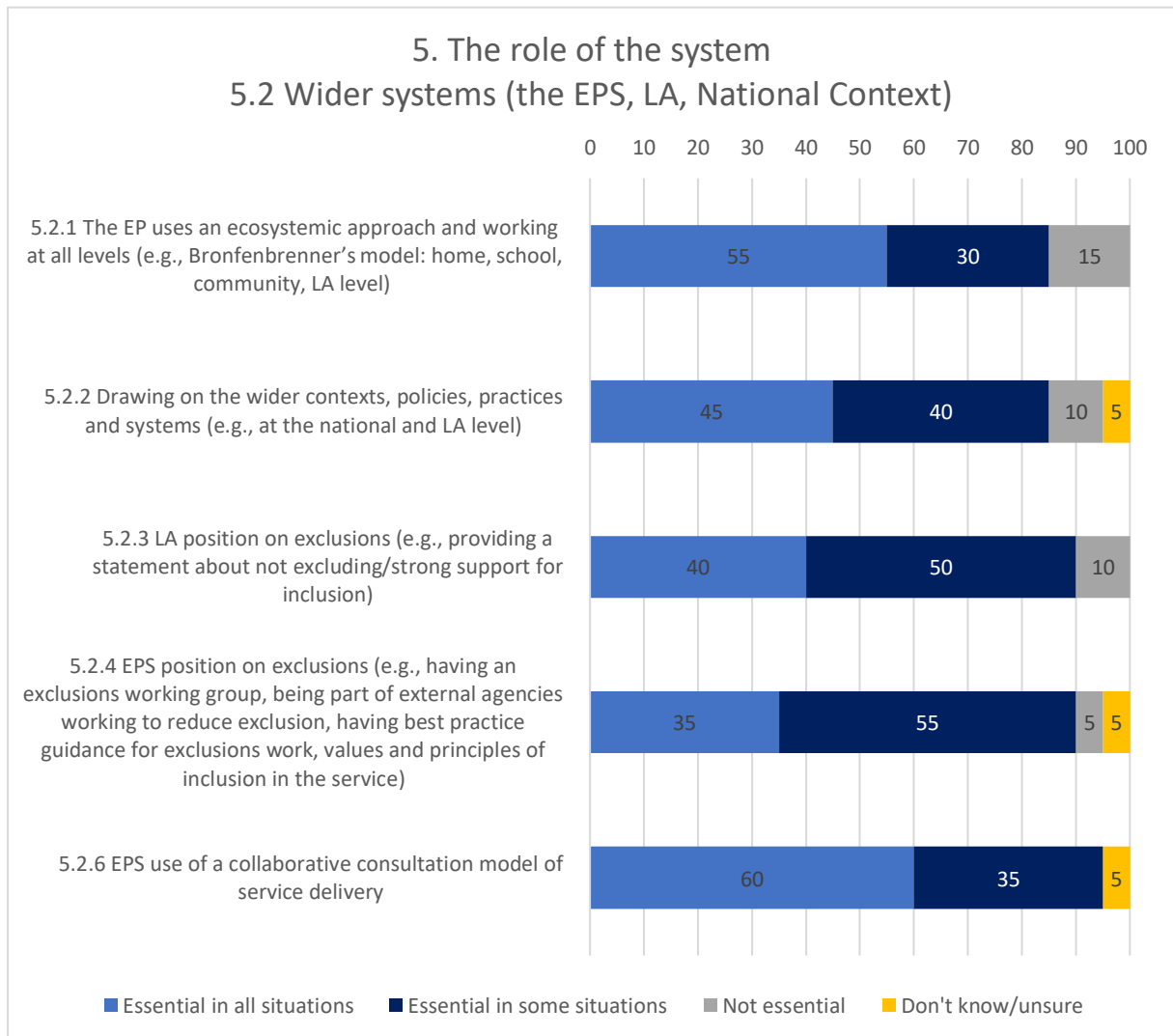


**Figure 21.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 5.1. The role of the system:  
the EP role and the school system



**Figure 22.** Statements reaching consensus from Round 2, section 5.2. The role of the system:

Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)



### 4.2.1 Statements not reaching consensus

At the end of Round 2, 12 of the 120 statements did not reach consensus of 75% or more (10.8% of the statements; see Table 15 for an overview of these statements and the corresponding consensus levels). These statements were subsequently presented back to respondents in round three, along with the group's response to each statement. This was presented as a percentage (indicating what percentage of respondents chose which statement).

**Table 15.** Statements not reaching consensus

<b>Approaches in consultation</b>					
<b>1.2.1</b>	Using a specific model of consultation	0%	35%	65%	0%
<b>1.2.4</b>	Using an Interactive Factors Framework	20%	30%	40%	10%
<b>1.2.8</b>	Using narrative approaches	25%	45%	20%	10%
<b>The use of Assessment</b>					
<b>Assessment of learning and SEMH needs</b>					
<b>2.1.3</b>	Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs	0%	35%	60%	5%
<b>2.1.4</b>	Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs	5%	50%	40%	5%
<b>Wider assessment of support needed</b>					

<b>2.3.5</b>	Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools data)	25%	45%	25%	5%
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### The use of Training

#### Training for EPs

<b>3.1.5</b>	EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)	5%	30%	60%	5%
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### EP skills and the EP role

#### EP characteristics, skills and knowledge

<b>4.1.17</b>	The EP has a large amount of experience	0%	30%	60%	10%
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### The role of the System

#### The EP role and the school system

<b>5.1.6</b>	EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)	5%	60%	30%	5%
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<b>5.1.9</b>	EP role to support school to apply for EHCPs for CYP	15%	50%	30%	5%
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<b>5.1.11</b>	EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings	15%	45%	35%	5%
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#### Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)

<b>5.2.5</b>	EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners	10%	50%	30%	10%
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### **4.3 Round 3 findings**

#### *4.3.1 Statements meeting consensus in Round 3*

Of the 12 remaining statements (Table 15), 7 received a consensus of 75% or above in Round 3 (58.3% of the statements re-presented). Three of these statements reached a consensus as ‘not essential’ and were therefore removed from further analysis (1.2.1 ‘*Using a specific model of consultation*’; 2.1.3 ‘*Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs*’; 3.1.5 ‘*EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)*’).

The largest change in consensus was for the following two statements; 3.1.5 ‘EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)’ and 5.2.5 ‘EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners’, where consensus increased by 25% (3.1.5: from 60% not essential to 85% not essential, reflecting a move towards less importance for EP practice compared to Round 1; 5.2.5: from 50% essential in some situations to 75% essential in some situations, reflecting greater importance for EP practice compared to Round 1).

The second largest change in consensus was for statement 2.3.5 ‘Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the school’s data)’ where consensus for this being ‘essential in some situations’ increased by 20% from 45% to 65%, with participants either changing their response from ‘don’t know/unsure’ or ‘not essential’ to ‘essential in some situations’. After this, statement 2.1.3 ‘Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs’ changed by 15% with participant’s changing their answer from ‘essential in some situations’ to ‘not essential’.

Finally, the remaining three statements changed by 10%. For statement 1.2.1 ‘Using a specific model of consultation’ 10% of participants changed their response from ‘essential in some situations’ to ‘not essential’. For statement 1.2.8 ‘Using narrative approaches’, 5% of

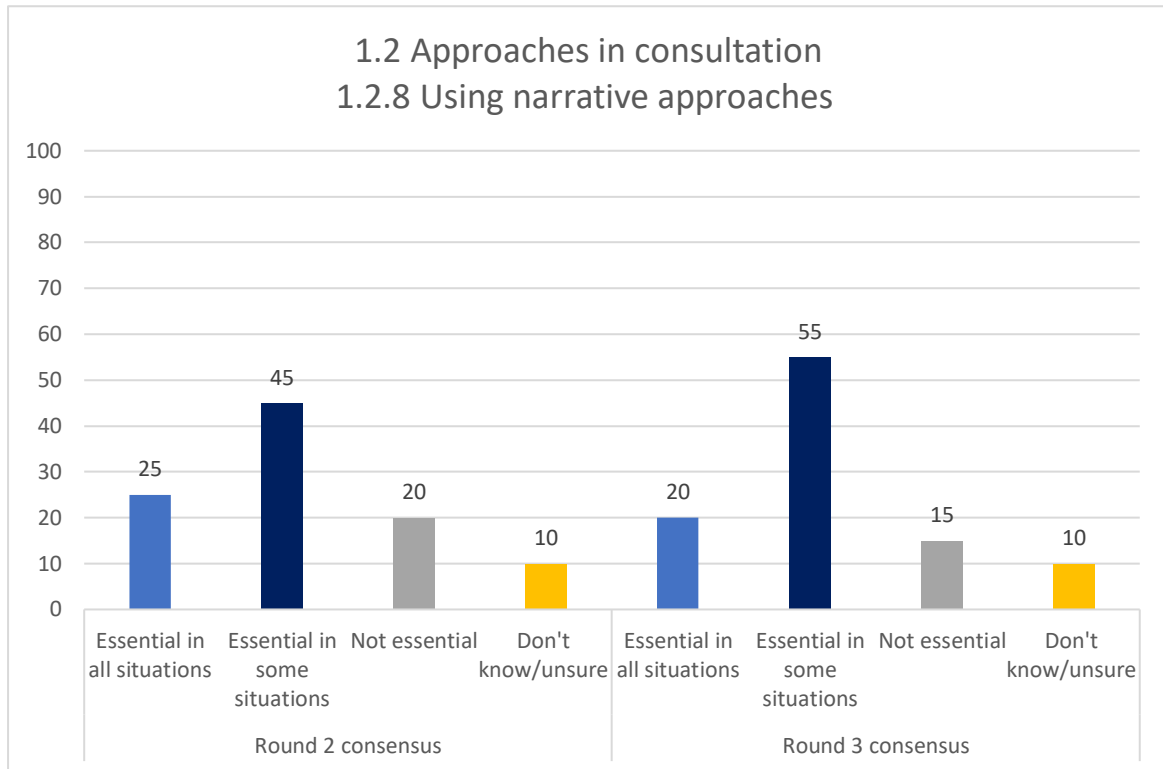


participants changed their response from either ‘essential in all situations’ or ‘not essential’ to ‘essential in some situations’. For the final statement, (5.1.6) ‘EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)’, 10% of participants changed their response from ‘not essential’ to ‘essential in some situations’.

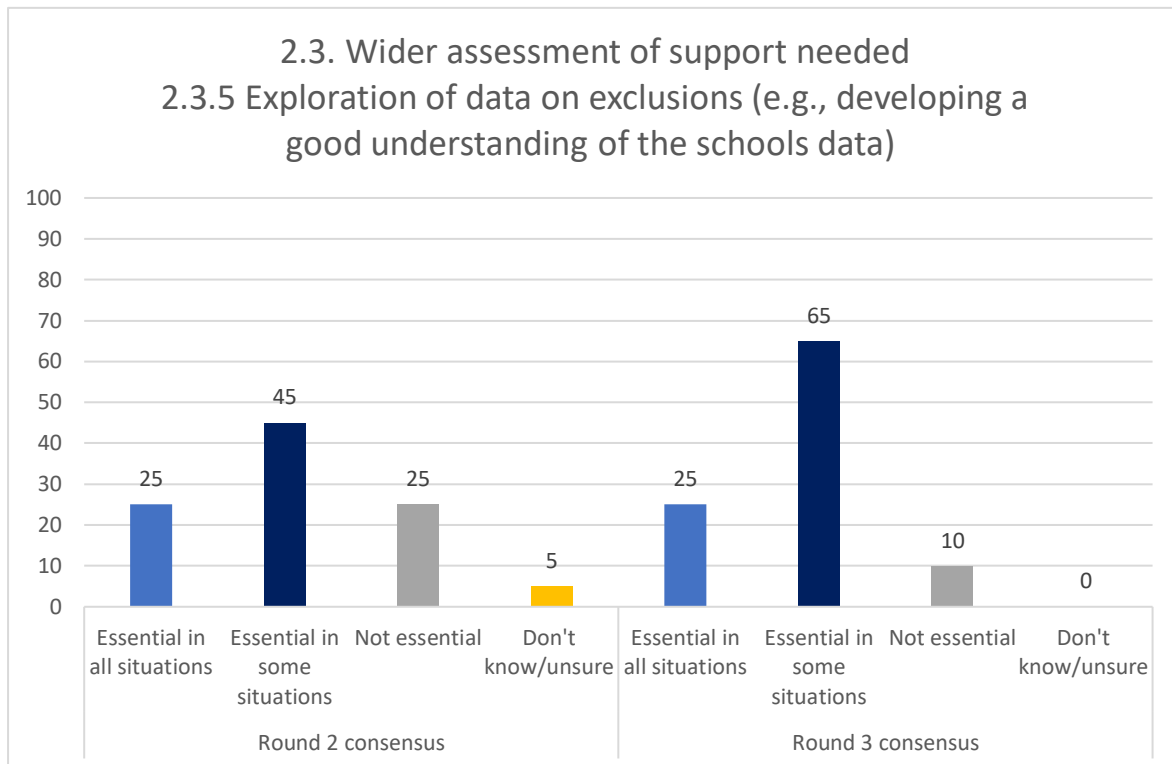
The 7 statements which did not reach consensus after Round 2 but reached consensus in Round 3 are presented in Figure 23-26. The remaining 5 statements did not reach consensus after three rounds. Figure 27-29 represents those statements that did not reach consensus.

*4.3.2 Four statements that reached a consensus of either ‘essential in all situations’ or ‘essential in some situations’ after Round 3*

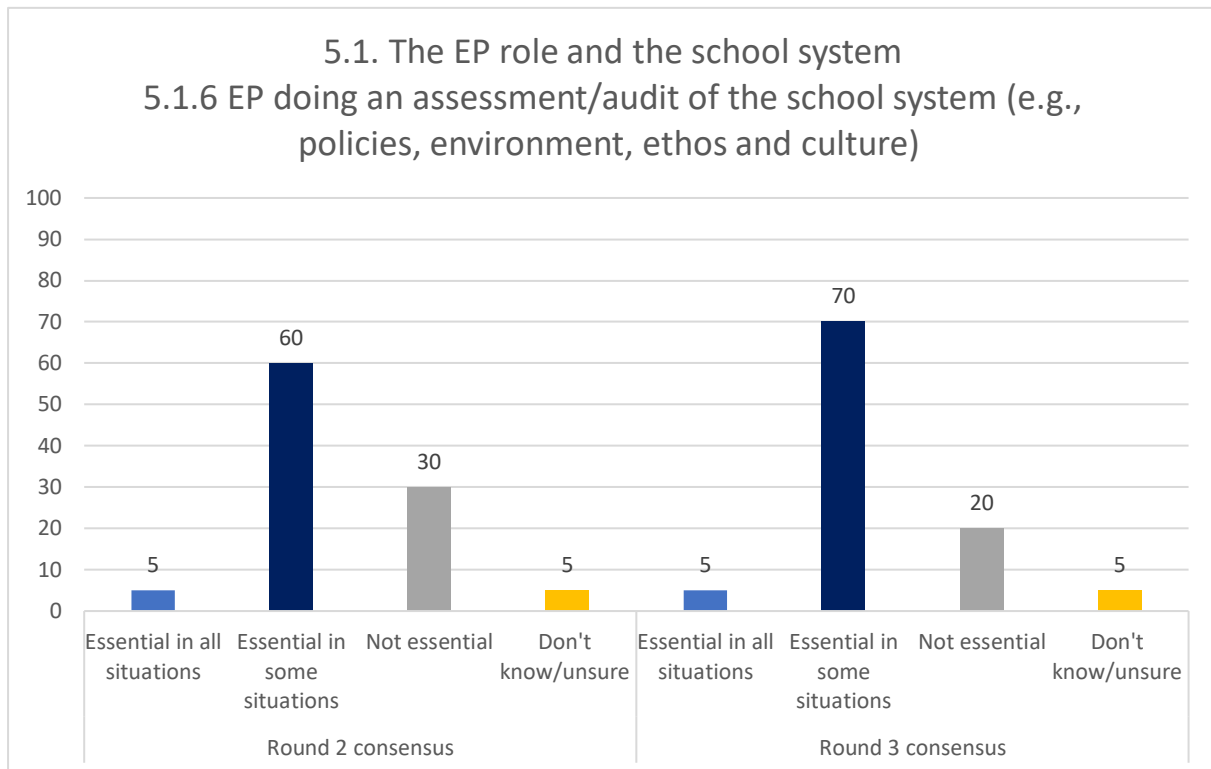
**Figure 23.** Statements reaching an ‘essential in all’ or ‘essential in some’ situations consensus after Round 3, section 1.2 Approaches in Consultation, statement 1.2.8, ‘Using narrative approaches’



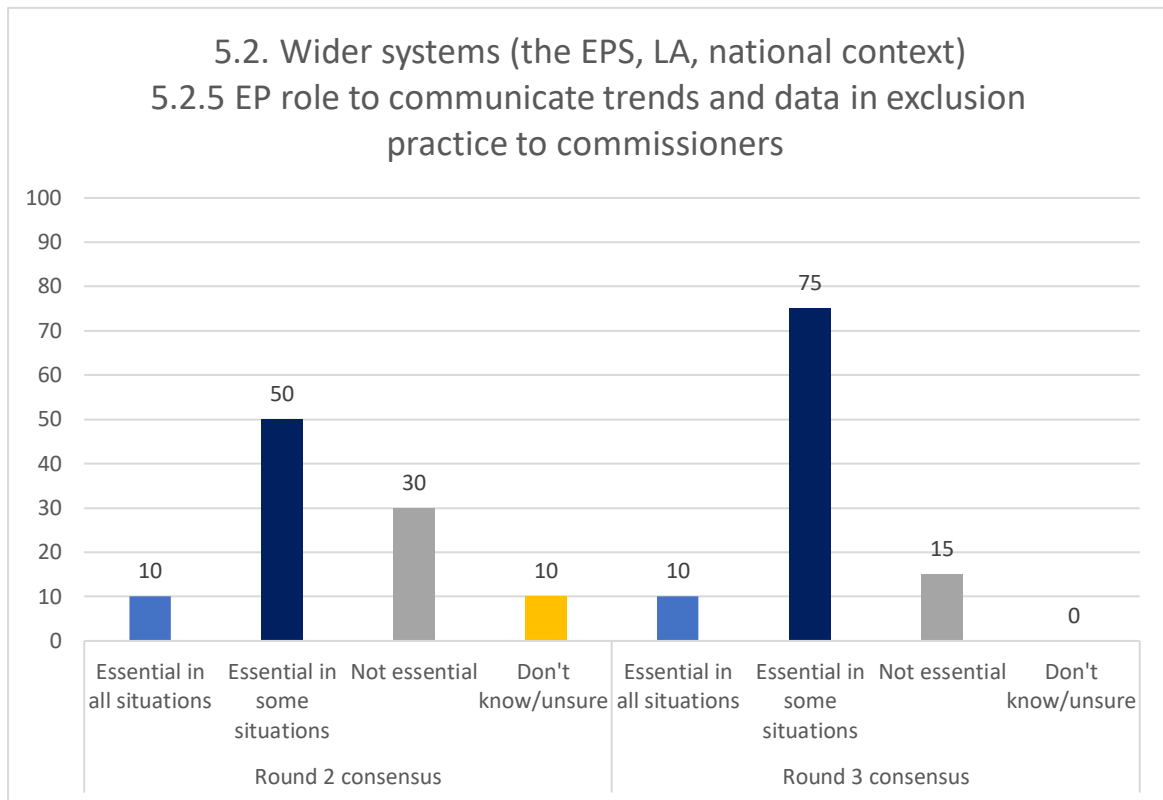
**Figure 24.** Statements reaching an ‘essential in all’ or ‘essential in some’ situations consensus after Round 3, section 2.3. Wider assessment of support needed, statement 2.3.5, ‘Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools data)’



**Figure 25.** Statements reaching an ‘essential in all’ or ‘essential in some’ situations consensus after Round 3, section 5.1. The EP role and the school system, statement 5.1.6. ‘EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)’



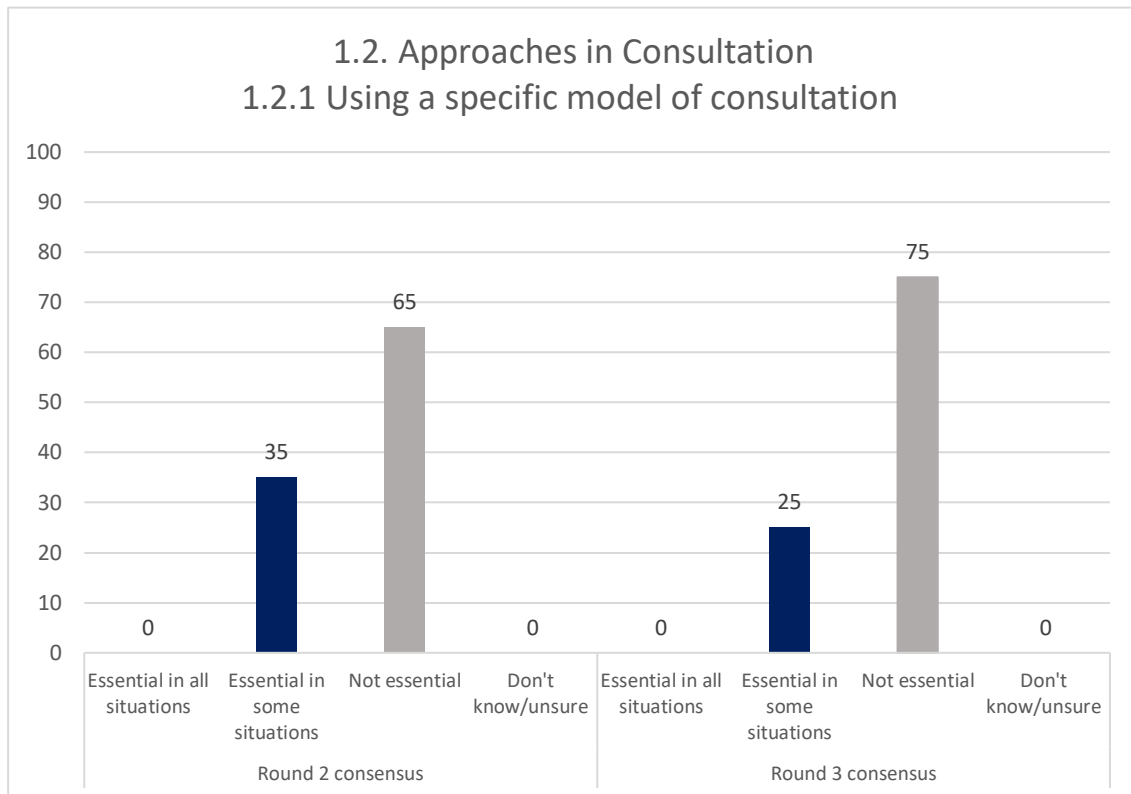
**Figure 26.** Statements reaching an ‘essential in all’ or ‘essential in some’ situations consensus after Round 3, section 5.2. Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context), statement 5.2.5 ‘EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners’



### 4.3.3 The 3 statements reaching a consensus of 'Not essential' at Round 3

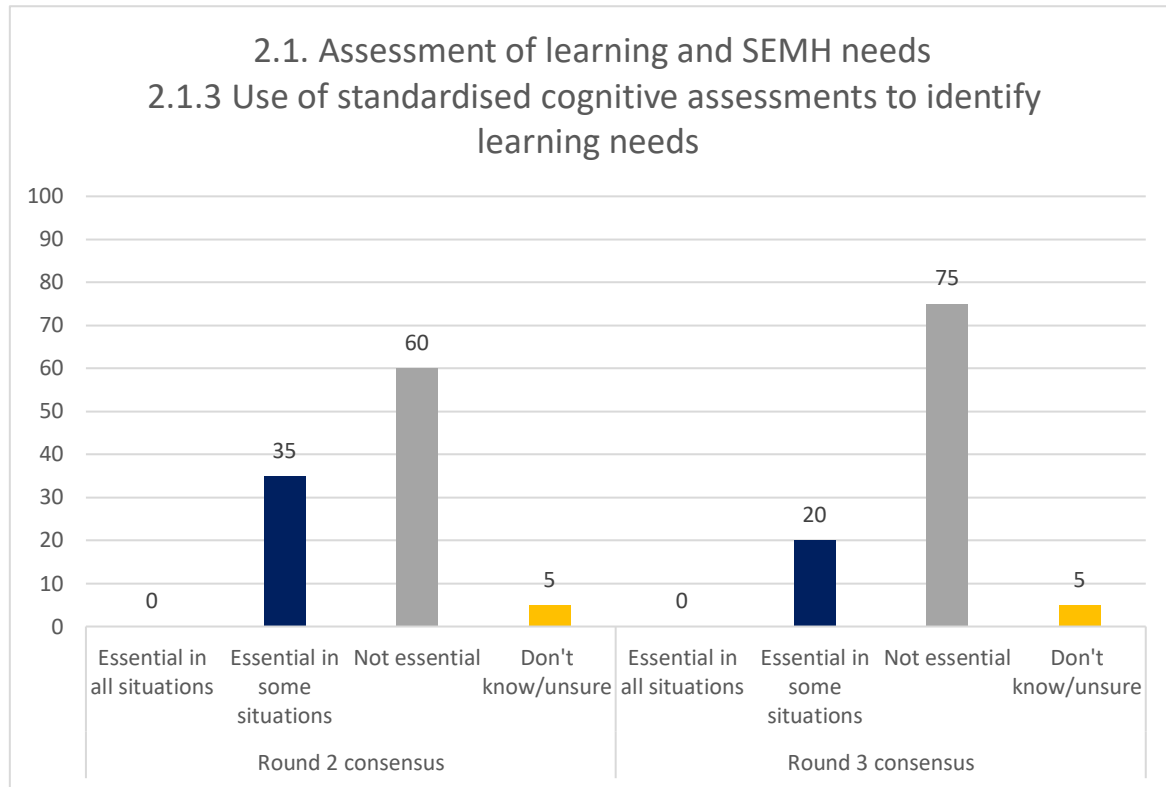
**Figure 27.** Statements reaching a 'not essential' consensus at Round 3, section 1.2.

Approaches in consultation, statement 1.2.1, 'Using a specific model of consultation'

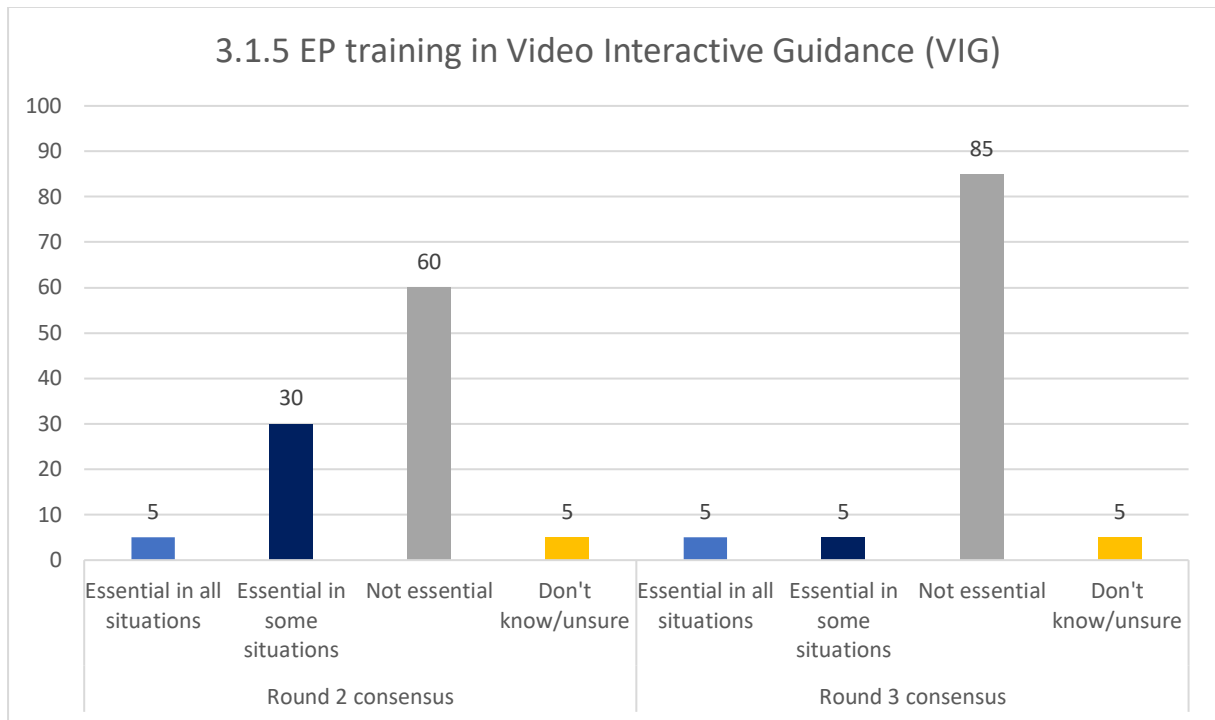


**Figure 28.** Statements reaching a ‘not essential’ consensus at Round 3, section 2.1.

Assessment of learning and SEMH needs, statement 2.1.3, ‘Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs’.



**Figure 29.** Statements reaching a ‘not essential’ consensus from Round 3, section 3.1 The use of training for EPs, statement 3.1.5 ‘EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)’.





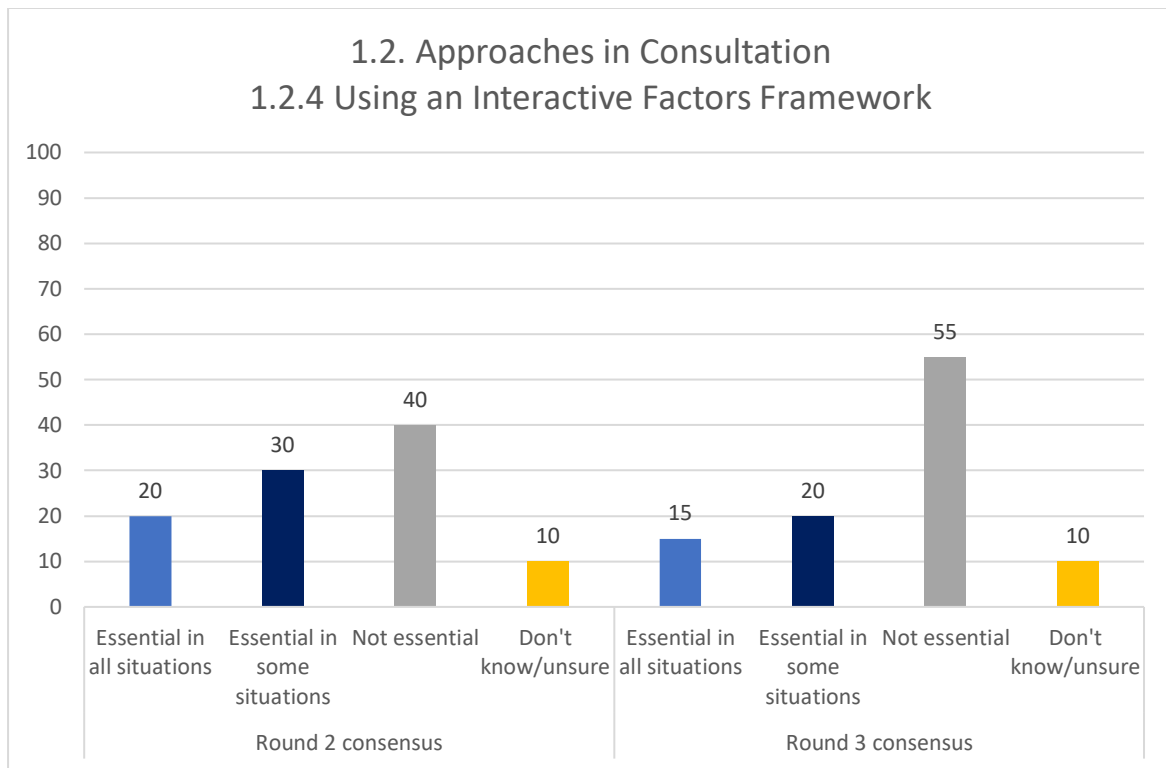
### *4.3.3 Five statements not reaching consensus after Round 3*

Of the 12 statements reviewed by participants in Round 3, 5 did not reach a consensus of 75%. Figures 30-34 shows a comparison of responses from both rounds for statements that did not reach consensus after Round 3.

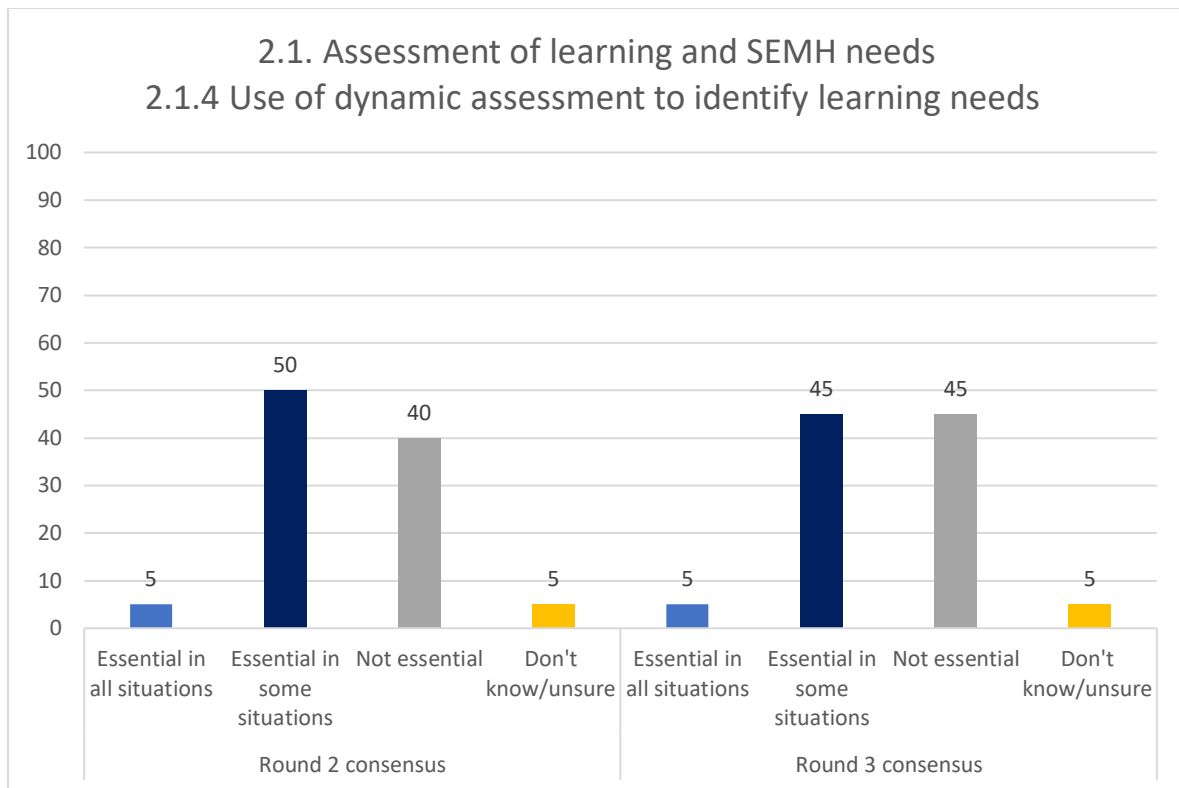
Respondents kept their answers the same for only one of the statements (4.1.17 The EP has a large amount of experience). For the other statements, the amount of change in consensus varied from 5% to 15%. For both the statements 2.1.4 'Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs' and 5.1.9 'EP role to support school to apply for Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for CYP' participants changed their responses by 5%. For statement 2.1.4, 5% of participants changed their response from 'not essential' to 'essential in some situations'. For statement 5.1.9, 5% of participants changed their response from 'essential in some situations' to 'essential in all situations'.

For the remaining two statements 1.2.4 'Using an Interactive Factors Framework' and 5.1.11 'EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings' the percentage change was 15%, with the percentage difference varying across all rating categories.

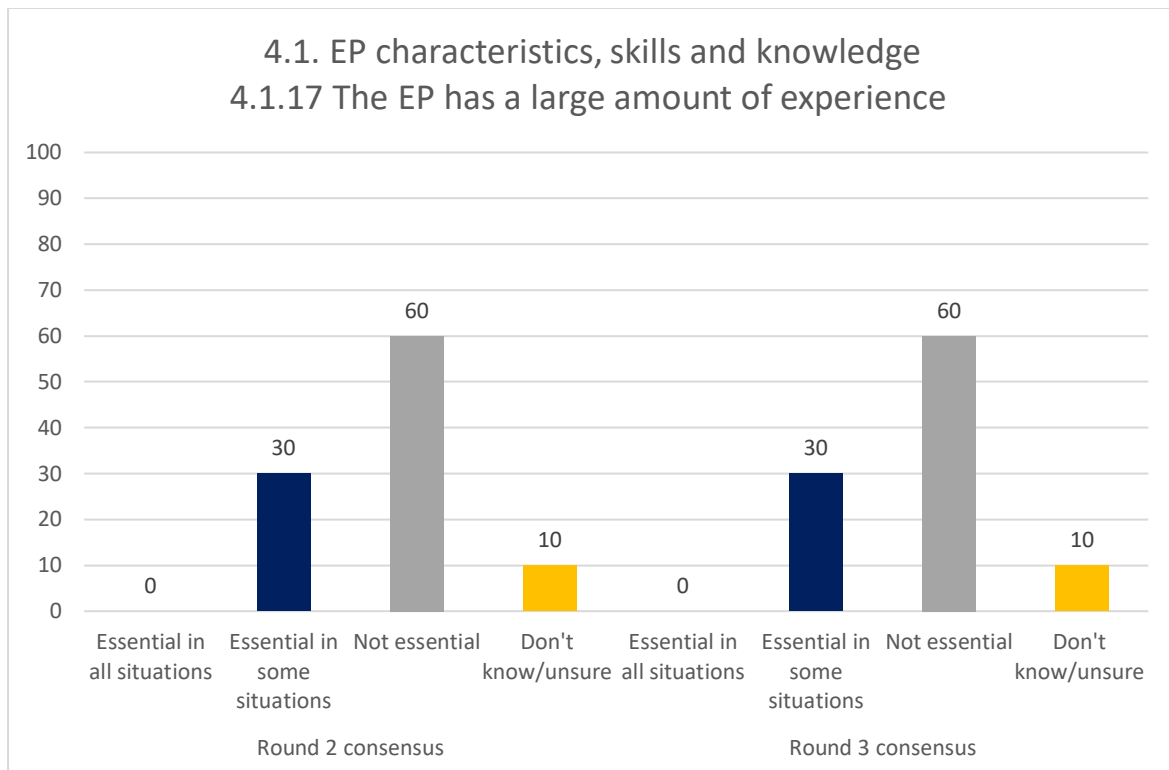
**Figure 30.** Statements not reaching consensus, section 1.2. Approaches in Consultation, 1.2.4 Using an Interactive Factors Framework



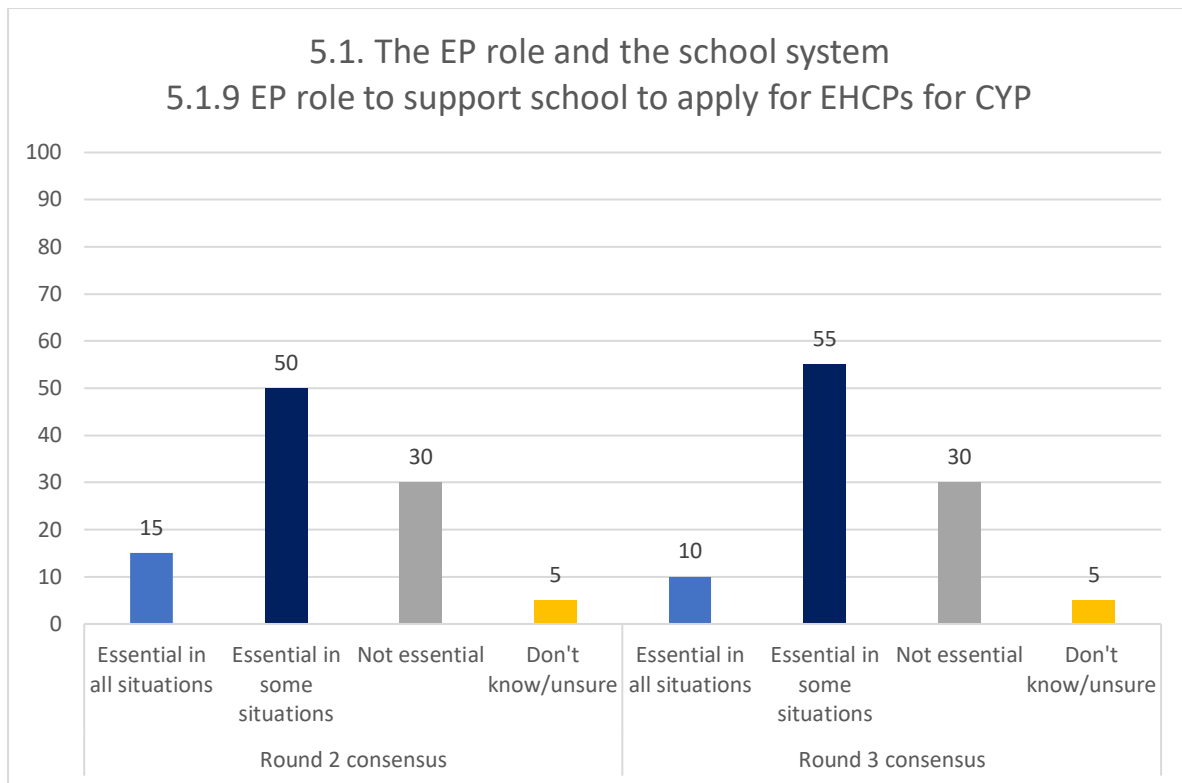
**Figure 31.** Statements not reaching consensus, section 2.1. Assessment of learning and SEMH needs, 2.1.4 Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs



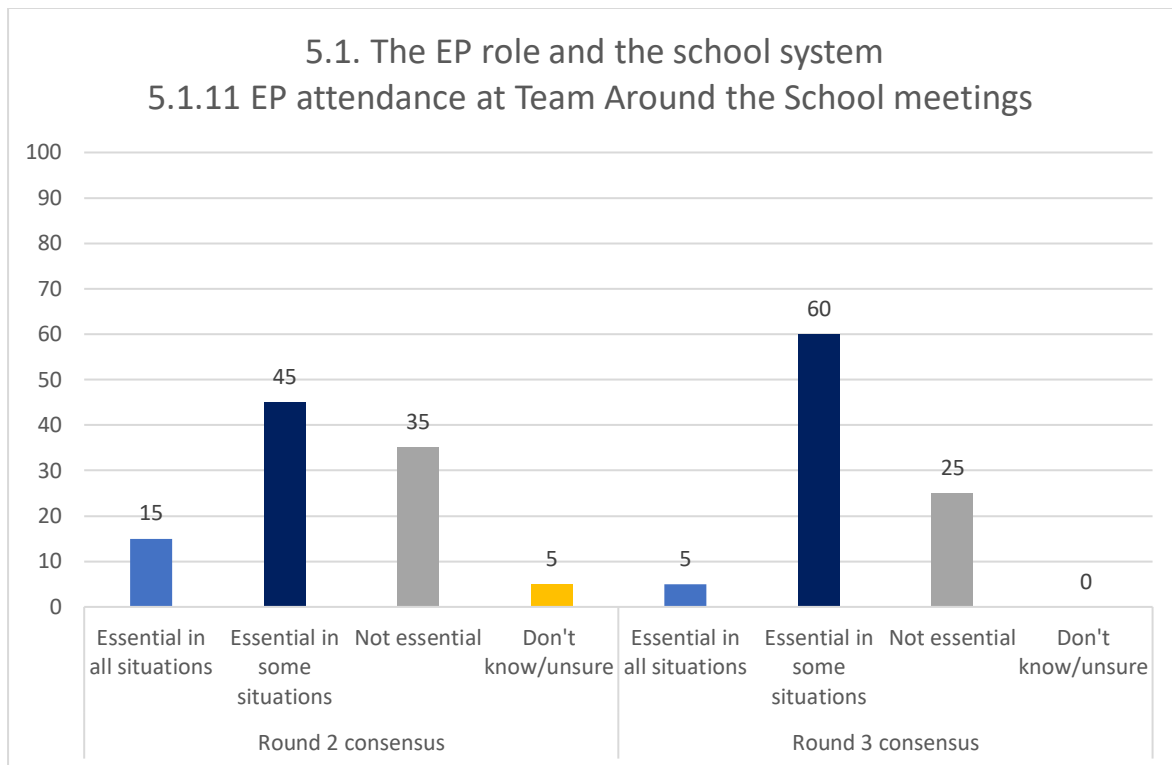
**Figure 32.** Statements not reaching consensus, section 4.1. EP characteristics, skills and knowledge, statement 4.1.17 The EP has a large amount of experience



**Figure 33.** Statements not reaching consensus, section 5.1. The EP role and the school system, statement 5.1.9 EP role to support school to apply for EHCPs for CYP



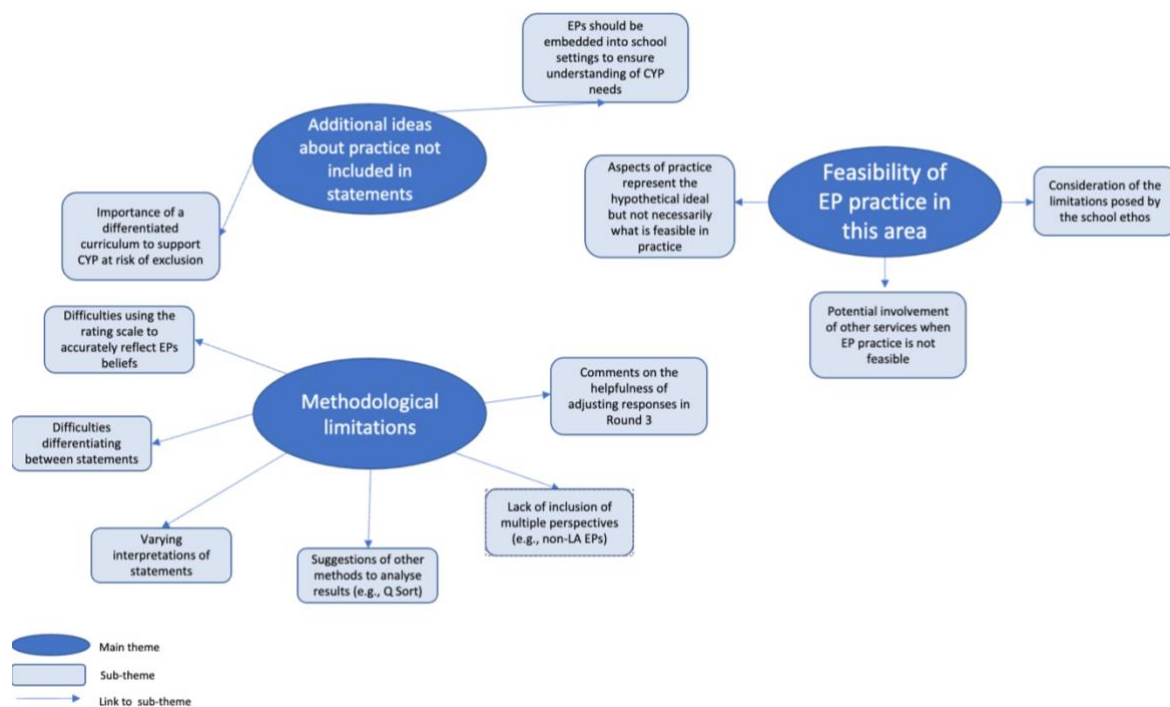
**Figure 34.** Statements not reaching consensus, section 5.1. The EP role and the school system, statement 5.1.11 EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings



#### 4.4 Respondent reflections

Respondents who participated in all rounds were invited to make any reflections or comments on their participation at the end of Round 3. Respondents were given the option to comment on the process of undertaking the research and on the content of the questionnaires. Respondent reflections were thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stage approach (these stages are described in more detail in the Methodology chapter). The TA was inductive as there were no specific aspects of practice or reflections expected to arise in the comments. The data on reflections from participants is illustrated as a thematic map in Figure 35.

**Figure 35.** Thematic map of EP comments and reflections after Round 3



##### 4.4.1 Respondent reflections on the feasibility of implementing identified key areas of practice

Several participants commented on the barriers to, and difficulty of, putting into practice key features of ‘good practice’ identified by the statements presented in the current study.

*“...they [the statements] highlight what we hope on a good day could be an EP role but in practice there is not the time to do all of the above!”*

*“Most of these things are helpful or essential in some situations but I fear that they’re not all feasible given the current EP role and pressures on LAs and EPs.”*

*“All of these areas are relevant/necessary elements of good practice, although there are several items in which I have not been able to embed in practice.”*

Respondents also commented on the limitations of the context or ethos of the school on effectively working with CYP at risk of school exclusion and the potential role of other professionals in this work where it may be more feasible.

*“Exclusion can be an emotive subject and schools that have adopted a zero-tolerance approach and have good/outstanding OFSTED status it can be really difficult to challenge them in their practice.”*

*“Everything cannot be essential as by its very nature schools are messy places where we are dealing with a non-ideal context.”*

*“Some of the above I feel are essential in all cases, but not necessarily by the EP. Some areas could be supported by other agencies, therefore I have selected ‘essential in some cases’.”*

#### 4.4.2 Respondent reflections on additional ideas about practice not included in the statements



Some participants also commented on other aspects of practice that were not highlighted by the statements in the current study. These areas of practice included EPs being more embedded in schools and the potential addition of the importance of differentiating the curriculum for CYP at risk of school exclusion.

*“EPs need to be embedded into school (and specialist settings) better to ensure a comprehensive and cogent understanding of ‘at risk’ children and their needs.”*

*“...personalisation and creativity is often needed. PRUs with all of their faults seem to get the idea that a different curriculum is needed”*

#### *4.4.3 Respondent reflections on the methodological aspects of the current study*

Some participants commented on methodological difficulties and strengths of the process, such as the accuracy of the statements to fully reflect the belief of the EPs and the support provided by Round 3 to aid respondents to reflect on and adjust their responses, as well as suggesting alternative or additional methodological considerations.

*“It was not always easy to use the rating scale to answer the questions”*

*“Some of the responses were difficult to distinguish”*

*“Just to say that these appear to all be very important. I wondered about a Q sort approach possibly being more useful to differentiate here??”*

*“I marked them ‘not essential’ purely because in my work I haven’t had much opportunity to do this as it doesn’t seem to be prioritised by schools (perhaps academies in particular). However, I think it would be greatly beneficial!”*

*“I found this questionnaire difficult to complete. There is something wrong with it. I felt like I, and other respondents, were going around a supermarket and selecting those beans or those beans”*

*“I interpreted ‘Not essential’ to mean I wouldn’t think of using this approach or strategy in a situation related to exclusion”*

*“You are assuming that respondents are working within an EPS context. I found some of these questions hard to answer because I am a freelance EP and often work for schools directly.”*

*“It seems easier to adjust my previous ratings than make the ratings in the first place”*

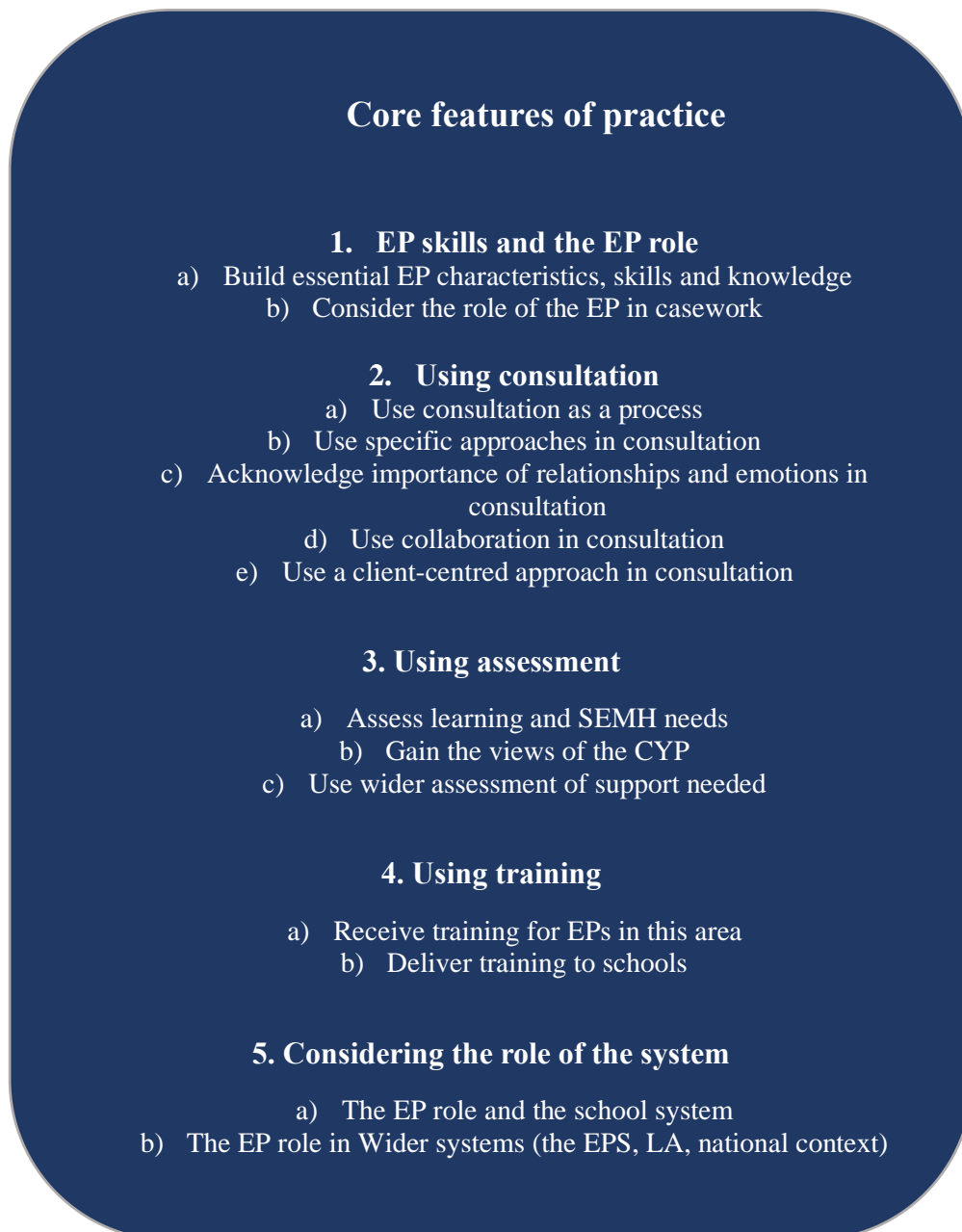
*“I changed my mind about the IFF, as actually considering the factors at different levels is quite important”*

#### ***4.5 Final list of key features of practice and practice framework***

115 total statements reached consensus. As three were removed from the analysis for being perceived as ‘not essential’ to EP practice, a total of 112 statements were perceived by EP respondents as ‘essential in all situations’ or ‘essential in some situations’ for EP practice.

The following section provides a summary of the five key areas of practice identified by the expert panel (Figure 36) and then presents figures 37-41 where these statements are grouped into ‘always essential’ and ‘then consider...’ features of EP practice when working with CYP at risk of school exclusion. Features of practice were considered ‘always essential’ if 50% or more participants rated a competency as ‘essential in all situations’. A feature of practice was considered ‘then consider...’ if 50% or more participants rated a competency as ‘essential in some situations’. Using a percentage of 50% or more represents a majority (2/3) of the 75% required to be considered a key feature of practice.

**Figure 36.** A summary of the five key areas of practice identified by the expert panel.



**Figure 37.** Features of practice: Consultation

## Using Consultation – Always essential

### 1. Use consultation as a process

- 1a. Use consultation as an approach to working with CYP at risk of exclusion
- 1b. Stay involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles)
  - 1c. Contract EP work clearly (e.g., outline the role carefully)
  - 1d. Use continuous hypothesis testing throughout involvement
- 1e. Use consultation to support the school to implement interventions
  - 1f. Use consultation to avoid a within-child approach

### 2. Use approaches in consultation

- 2a. Use a relational approach
- 2b. Use a systemic approach

### 3. Consider relationships and emotions in consultation

- 3a. Build positive, trusting relationships with all members of the system (parents/carers, CYP, staff)
- 3b. View relationships as key to promoting change within a system
  - 3c. Validate the feelings of all members of the system
  - 3d. Provide attuned/active listening in consultation

### 4. Use collaboration in consultation

- 4a. Use a collaborative approach in consultation
- 4b. Work collaboratively with key members of the system including parents/carers, staff, senior leadership, the CYP

### 5. Use client-centred approaches in consultation

- 5a. Increase empathy for the CYP
- 5b. View consultation as a form of assessment
  - 5c. Using hopeful approaches
  - 5d. Use child-centred approaches

## Then consider...

### 2. Using approaches in consultation

- 2a. Using solution-focused approaches
- 2b. Using motivational interviewing approaches
- 2c. Using psychodynamic approaches (e.g., containment; awareness of unconscious processes)
  - 2d. Using narrative approaches

### 3. Relationships and emotions in consultation

- 3a. Building and maintaining relationships with senior leadership teams (SLT)
- 3b. Providing containment to all members of the system

### 4. Collaboration in consultation

- 4a. The EP role in addressing any tension in the system (e.g., between home and school)

### 5. Being client-centred in consultation

- 5a. Being part of reintegration meetings (e.g., for those CYP returning to mainstream school from another provision)
- 5b. Using narrative approaches to change unhelpful/dominant narratives around a CYP

**Figure 38.** Features of practice: Assessment**Using Assessment – Always essential****1. Assessment of learning and SEMH needs**

1a. Assess and identify the SEMH needs of the CYP

**2. Gain the views of the CYP**

2a. Gathering the CYPs views about their needs

2b. Place the CYP at the centre of all assessment work

2c. Amplify the voice of the CYP through assessment

2d. Understand the CYPs identity and sense of belonging

2e. Understand the CYPs experience of school

2f. Gain the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (e.g., involving a familiar adult)

2g. Consider the ethical boundaries of assessment work (e.g., duty of care, notifying CYP of visit prior to arrival, transparency around EP role, confidentiality statement)

2h. Explore the CYPs goals

2i. Use a strengths-based approach to assessment

**3. Wider assessment of support needed**

3a. Assess what current support is working

3b. Exploring what strategies are currently helpful

3c. Gaining information about the CYPs previous experience and history

**Then consider...****1. Assessment of learning and SEMH needs**

1a. Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP

1b. Use of curriculum or criterion referenced assessment information from staff to understand learning needs

2c. Exploring literacy needs

**2. Gain the views of the CYP**

2a. The use of person-centred assessment tools (e.g., Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) techniques, ideal self, ideal school, laddering, strengths cards, PATH, MAPS)

**3. Wider assessment of support needed**

3a. Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT)

3b. Assessment of the school environment, ethos and culture

3c. Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools' data)

**Figure 39.** Features of practice: Training

## Using Training – Always essential

### 1. Training for EPs

- 1a. Regular opportunities for EPs to have CPD
- 1b. EPS should prioritise training for EPs in this area
- 1c. EP training in systemic approaches
- 1d. EP access to supervision (e.g., peer and personal supervision)

### 2. EP should deliver training to schools

- 2a. EP role to up-skill the adults around the CYP at risk of exclusion
- 2b. EPS offers a wide range of training options to schools
- 2c. Working with the school over time to embed training in practice

## Then consider...

### 1. Training for EPs

- 1a. Opportunities for EPs to work together to deliver training to schools linked to exclusion

### 2. Training for schools

- 2a. Delivery of whole school training
- 2b. Training schools in trauma-informed approaches
- 2c. Training schools in attachment aware approaches
- 2d. Training schools in emotion coaching
- 2e. Training schools to run nurture groups
- 2f. Training about ethnicity and its role in exclusions
- 2g. Delivering drop in solution-focused sessions for staff
- 2h. Delivering training to improve staff understanding of behaviour as communication
  - 2i. Training in restorative approaches
  - 2j. Offering staff supervision or reflective sessions
  - 2k. Developing bespoke training and interventions
  - 2l. Training about adolescent psychology
- 2m. Training for ADHD, ASD, anxiety, EBSA, PDA, attachment and other specific needs
  - 2n. Training on resilience

**Figure 40.** Features of practice: Training**EP skills and the EP role – Always essential****1. Essential EP characteristics, skills and knowledge**

- 1a. EP having strong interpersonal skills
- 1b. EP confidence
- 1c. EP having a strong sense of competence
- 1d. EP ability to contain the emotions of stakeholders
- 1e. EP ability to communicate information clearly
- 1f. EP ability to empower members of the system
  - 1g. EP ability to maintain curiosity
  - 1h. The EP is approachable
  - 1i. The EP is attuned and actively listening
  - 1j. The EP can validate feelings
  - 1k. The EP is open-minded and non-judgemental
  - 1l. The EP can build relationships with schools, CYP and families
- 1m. EP ability to place themselves in the shoes of those they are working with (e.g., CYP, staff, families)
  - 1n. The EP has a strong understanding of the school system
  - 1o. The EP has a strong knowledge of legislation and ethical codes of conduct

**2. The role of the EP in casework**

- 2a. The EP ensures a CYP has at least one positive relationship with a member of staff
  - 2b. The EP is an advocate for the CYP
  - 2c. The EP applies psychological theory in all areas of practice

**Then consider...****1. Essential EP characteristics, skills and knowledge**

- 1a. The EP being impartial

**2. The role of the EP in casework**

- 2a. The EP maintains relationships with SLT (or those that make decisions)
  - 2b. The EP signposts families to additional support
- 2c. The EP summarises and synthesises all information about a CYP and the system
  - 2d. The EP creates a shared understanding between members of the system
- 2e. The EP collaboratively works with others (e.g., external services; SEN, LA services, CAMHS, education welfare officers, behaviour leads, youth workers) to reduce exclusions
  - 2f. The EP uses research and statistics to justify inclusive practice
  - 2g. The EP supports CYPs transitions to alternative provisions

**Figure 41.** Features of practice: The role of the system

## Considering the role of the system – Always essential

### 1. The EP role and the school system

- 1a. The EP should challenge discriminatory practice in schools
- 1b. The EP should challenge systemic barriers (both at the school and government level)
- 1c. Support the school to allow staff to be available for meetings with the EP
- 1d. Support a culture of inclusion in schools
- 1e. Outline the importance of early involvement for the EP (e.g., before risk of permanent exclusion or when a CYP is getting several fixed-term exclusions)
- 1f. EP should work with the school system in a preventative way to reduce the number of CYP being at risk of permanent exclusion

### 2. Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)

- 2a. The EP uses an eco-systemic approach and works at all levels (e.g., Bronfenbrenner's model: home, school, community, LA level)
- 2b. The EPS should use a collaborative consultation model of service delivery

## Then consider...

### 1. The EP role and the school system

- 1a. The EP should support schools with the development and implementation of interventions
- 1b. Support the SENDCO to become part of the SLT team (or having a role in decision making about the system)
- 1c. EP should do an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)

### 2. Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)

- 2a. The EP should draw on wider contexts, policies, practices, and systems (e.g., at the national and LA level)
- 2b. Consider the LA position on exclusions (e.g., providing a statement about not excluding/strong support for inclusion)
- 2c. Consider and support EPS to develop a position on exclusions (e.g., having an exclusion working group, being part of external agencies working to reduce exclusion, having best practice guidance for exclusions work, values and principles of inclusion in the service)
- 2d. EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners



## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Aims of the research

This research primarily aimed to answer the following question:

*What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion?*

By using a Delphi study, the current research identified a consensus for 112 statements about aspects of practice thought to be ‘essential in all situations’ or ‘essential in some situations’ for EPs working with CYP at risk of exclusion. As one of the main aims of this research was to use this consensus to develop practice guidelines for EP involvement in this area, these statements have been used to form a tentative framework which can be used by EPs to guide practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. Within this chapter, key findings for the research question are discussed by theme and the level of agreement around each aspect of practice is considered. Links to the literature will be made throughout and a tentative practice-framework is presented alongside accompanying practice checklists. The methodological strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed and implications for EP practice and future research are considered.

### 5.2 The use of Consultation

*5.2.1 Areas of practice achieving consensus (i.e., 75% of participants rated statements at ‘essential in all situations’ (EIA) or ‘essential in some situations’ (EIS))*

The findings for the use of consultation theme demonstrated a large amount of agreement amongst EP participants. For example, EPs agreed that all statements under the subtheme ‘consultation as a process’ were essential to good practice in all situations. EPs highlighted the importance of using consultation as a process when working with CYP at risk of exclusion (100% EIA) and being involved over time (100% EIA). Participants also agreed that within consultation, clear contracting was essential in all situations (95% EIA) and that the approach should be used to support schools to implement interventions (100% EIA) and avoid a within child approach (100% EIA).

Using consultation as an approach in casework is arguably now integral to EP practice (Wagner, 2000; Watkins, 2000) and was also a widely mentioned aspect of practice in the literature review when considering what EPs feel is important for supporting CYP at risk of exclusion (Bagley & Hallam, 2017; Gould, 2018; Hartnell, 2010; Waite, 2014; Wilson, 2005). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that participants highlighted consultation as an area of practice that might be ‘essential in all situations’. However, the use of consultation was mentioned quite broadly by several papers in the literature review and, despite outlining the importance of contracting in relation to intervention work (Wilson, 2005), the specific aspects of consultation that might be effective in promoting positive outcomes were not always outlined. It is important to consider that little research has been carried out exploring the application of the consultation approach (or models of consultations) and there is a lack of clarity and consensus about the definition of, and skills required for, successful consultation in the literature (Kennedy et al., 2008). Despite challenges knowing the efficacy of a consultation approach for promoting positive outcomes with CYP at risk of exclusion, the subthemes identified within this research give some indication as to what the key features of consultation might include. For example, an area of agreement within this theme was the importance of relationships and emotions within consultation. Indeed, participants agreed that building

positive, trusting relationships with all members involved was essential in all situations (80% EIA). These relationships were viewed as being crucial to promote change within the system (90% EIA) and participants outlined the importance of attuned, active listening to develop these relationships (100% EIA). Whilst there are limitations to the existing evidence base, the importance of relationships was a primary theme amongst papers in the literature review. All studies referred to the potential impact of relationships, particularly where relationships were seen to promote positive outcomes for CYP as risk of exclusion when built between staff and pupils (Chatzinikolaou, 2015) between pupils themselves (Burton, 2006), between the EP and the CYP (Hardman, 2001; Waite, 2014; Wilson, 2005) and between the EP and staff (Gould, 2018; Hardman, 2001; Hartnell, 2010; Wilson, 2005). Additionally, the wider literature has considered the importance of relational factors for successful consultation. This is particularly evident in the 'Relational Model of Consultation (RMC)', which, whilst not yet evidence-based, offers a consultation approach that considers the intrapsychic relationship (i.e., the view of oneself that a practitioner holds), relationships between people, and both of these relationships across time, between, with and to systems, as central to successful consultation (Arnold et al., 2021).

Whilst the literature review mentions the broad and varying importance of relationships, the current research goes further to unpick some of the nuances of what it might mean to consider relationships in consultation practice in this area. However, despite the espoused effectiveness of this area of practice, the impact of relationships on the success of EP involvement with CYP at risk of exclusion remains unclear and it may be challenging to measure.

Collaboration in consultation was another aspect of EP involvement that the panel rated as essential to practice (80% EIA), particularly when doing so with all key members of the system (80% EIA). Participants felt that collaboration in consultation was essential for

increasing empathy towards the CYP (90% EIA). Collaborative practice within a consultation approach was also evident in five of the nine papers from the literature review. This is also reflective of the wider literature on consultation, where many models emphasise the importance of collaboration with consultees for successful outcomes (Taylor, 2016).

Whilst the review highlighted the importance of the EP collaborating with CYP to contract intervention work (Burton, 2006; Chatzinikolaou, 2015) and with parents and staff (Gould, 2018; Waite, 2014; Williams, 2018), potential explanations for the success of collaboration and methods for measuring impact were not discussed. Interestingly, two examples of collaborative consultation practice that were found in the literature but not mentioned in the current research in this area of practice were the role of the EP in facilitating managed moves (Bagley & Hallam, 2017) and the place of multi-disciplinary work in EP involvement (Hartnell, 2010). The importance of EPs working in a multi-disciplinary capacity to improve the outcomes for CYP, particularly those who are vulnerable (such as CYP at risk of exclusion), is advocated for in the SEND CoP (2014). Additionally, given the importance of multi-disciplinary approaches for promoting positive outcomes for CYP (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009) and given the tentative yet positive findings from Hartnell (2010) suggesting that a multi-disciplinary team can potentially reduce the number of school exclusion, it is surprising that it is not addressed fully in the current study. Although multi-disciplinary work was mentioned by one participant in the respondent reflections sections, the comment suggested that another professional might be better suited to the involvement, rather than collaborative work between EPs and other professionals. This perhaps suggests that there are barriers to achieving successful outcomes when EPs work with other professionals in this area, for example, a lack of time to invest in working relationships of this type or questions about the suitability of EPs for this role (Kelly & Gray, 2000). Additionally, as managed moves are happening relatively frequently for CYP at risk of exclusion and involve collaboration between

systems and people it is surprising that this was not mentioned. This perhaps indicates that whilst these aspects of practice are supported by small and select samples of EPs in the literature, they may not yet be happening on a wider level due to potential barriers to working in this way (e.g., time constraints and large quantities of statutory work; Wilson & Pirrie, 2000).

Whilst some statements achieved a high level of consensus (where most participants agreed that statements were essential in all situations), most of the statements in the 'approaches in consultation' section reached a consensus of either '*essential in all situations*' (EIA) or '*essential in some situations*' (EIS). Participants felt that using the following approaches were either essential in all or some cases when using consultation in practice; using relational approaches (65% EIA; 20% EIS), using systemic approaches (55% EIA; 35% EIS), using solution focused approaches (25% EIA; 55% EIS), using a psychodynamic approach (20% EIA; 55% EIS) and using motivational interviewing (10% EIA; 65% EIS).

Although previous research highlighted the successful use of solution-focused approaches within an EP-delivered intervention with CYP at risk of exclusion (Wilson, 2005), using specific approaches (e.g., systemic, relational etc.) within consultation were rarely discussed. Additionally, although the current research gives an insight into the perceived importance of using psychological approaches when working with CYP at risk of exclusion, it does not state which approach might be most beneficial to use in consultation and in what situations or, indeed, whether EPs are using a combination of approaches in a flexible manner. This may reflect the complex nature of factors involved in a CYP being 'at risk of exclusion' and perhaps each case requires a different approach depending on the child's circumstances. Additionally, as mentioned in the respondent reflections, whilst the use of all approaches may represent hypothetical 'best practice' it is important to consider that there may be barriers to implementing the use of approaches rigidly in practice.

Many of the statements relating to ‘relationships and emotions in consultation’ gained consensus for being at least sometimes essential for practice, with a majority agreement that building and maintaining relationships with senior leadership teams (SLT) was essential in all or some situations (35% EIA; 55% EIS). Participants also agreed that providing containment to all members of the system (45% EIA; 50% EIS) and validating their feelings (55% EIA; 45% EIS) were important for practice.

Whilst collaboration was a relatively small subtheme in the current findings, one of the three statements, ‘the EP role in addressing any tension in the system (e.g., between home and school)’, met consensus for being important to practice (30% EIA; 70% EIS). As research has suggested that change is less likely to happen if the systems and environments around a CYP stay the same (Russell, 2019), it is surprising that only 30% of EP participants thought this was essential in all situations, particularly as often home-school relationships can be fraught for CYP at risk of exclusion (DfE, 2019). Perhaps this variation in how participants responded to this statement demonstrates potential bias caused by the subjectivity of the Likert scale labels (in this case, it may always be essential but only happens occasionally e.g., depending on how often an EP perceives a piece of casework to encompass tension between the school and home).

Additionally, when considering the statements that reached consensus for ‘consultation as client centred’, participants agreed that taking a child-centred approach (70% EIA; 25% EIS), using hopeful approaches (50% EIA; 30% EIS), using narrative approaches to shift unhelpful narratives (20% EIA; 60% EIS) and being part of reintegration meetings (5% EIA; 80% EIS) were either essential in all or some situations. Participants also agreed that using narrative approaches in a client-centred way was essential in some or all situations (20% EIA; 55% EIS).

### *5.2.2 Areas of practice that reached a 'not essential' consensus*

The only statement that reached a consensus of being 'not essential' for good EP practice in this area was 'using a specific model of consultation' (75% of participants agreed that it was 'not essential'). Whilst consultation is espoused to improve the efficiency of EP work due to targeting the school staff rather than individual casework, there is very little evidence to show the efficacy of any consultation models (Kennedy et al., 2008). This may explain why EPs in the current research agree that using a specific model is not essential, whereas aspects of consultation practice or consultation skills identified by statements in this area generally receive a consensus as being essential to practice and are therefore perhaps perceived as more important.

### *5.2.3 Areas of practice that did not reach consensus*

Only one statement from the consultation theme did not reach consensus overall, with the majority of participants (55%) rating the use of an Interactive Factors Framework (IFF; Frederickson & Cline, 2009) in consultation as 'not essential' (20% EIA; 15% EIS; 10% don't know/unsure).

Whilst the IFF was not mentioned in any papers in the literature review, it is an example of a framework that guides EPs consideration of factors that may be affecting a CYPs development or ability to access learning (Sedgwick, 2019). The IFF therefore seemingly offers a useful tool for supporting CYP at risk of exclusion, particularly due to the often complex and overlapping number of factors that can influence their outcomes. It may be that EPs may be unaware of the IFF, using other tools for this task or a combination of tools, or, perhaps, as EPs also agreed that a specific model of consultation was not essential for practice, rather than using frameworks to inform their thinking they may be working more intuitively.

### ***5.3 The use of Assessment***

#### *5.3.1 Areas of practice achieving high consensus (I.e., 75% of participants rated statements at 'essential in all situations')*

There was a large amount of consensus for statements relating to the use of assessment, particularly when considering how to gain the views of a CYP during assessment. EPs placed importance on using assessment to gain the views of the CYP, including keeping the CYP at the centre of all work (90% EIA), amplifying the CYPs voice (85% EIA), understanding the CYPs identity and sense of belonging (85% EIA), understanding the CYPs experience of school (95% EIA), considering ethical boundaries; 90% EIA) and using a strengths-based approach (80% EIA). Additionally, when considering the wider assessment of support needed for a CYP, EPs agreed that assessing what support is already working (95% EIA), exploring helpful strategies (95% EIA) and gaining information about the CYPs background (85% EIA) are essential to practice in all situations.

Whilst using assessment to better understand the CYP was mentioned in a review of the literature (Gould, 2018), the discussion largely detailed the use of assessment as part of the consultation approach and was discussed in a broad way (e.g., the use of a systemic approach to assessment), rather than focusing on how specific aspects of EP assessment practice might be beneficial in supporting positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. This may be due to a lack of literature in the area and may also indicate that specific assessments were not the primary role of the EP in the papers that were discussed (for example, where the EP involvement was primarily intervention based, the school staff selected the CYP for participation and therefore the EP may not have been involved in assessing their need and instead focused on the delivery of the intervention).

All areas of the subtheme 'assessment of learning and SEMH needs' were identified as achieving consensus for being essential in at least some situations amongst participants. For



example, assessing and identifying the learning needs of the CYP (25% EIA; 75% EIS), assessing and identifying the SEMH needs of the CYP (55% EIA; 45% EIS), using curriculum or criterion assessment information to understand learning needs (15% EIA; 75% EIS) and exploring literacy needs (15% EIA; 75% EIS) were all identified as sometimes or always essential for good EP practice in this area.

Some aspects of practice relating to gaining the views of the CYP also reached consensus, including gathering the CYPs about their needs (70% EIA; 30% EIS), using person-centred assessment tools (45% EIA; 50% EIS), gaining the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (70% EIA; 30% EIS), and exploring the CYPs goals (70% EIA; 30% EIS).

Additionally, in terms of wider assessment of support, participants agreed that gathering and collating the perceptions about the CYP's needs from all members of the system (40% EIA; 45% EIS) and an assessment of the school environment, ethos and culture (45% EIA; 55% EIS) were essential in all or some situations. Participants also agreed that the exploration of data on exclusions was essential in all or some situations (25% EIA; 65% EIS). Interestingly, whilst the literature review briefly touches on the importance of target and goal setting and the use of PCP in the context of individual and group intervention work (Burton, 2006; Hardman, 2001; Hartnell, 2010; Wilson, 2005), there was no mention of specific assessments of learning and SEMH needs in the literature, despite evidence that suggests both of these needs are often present in CYP at risk of exclusion (Gill et al., 2017). Although the current research findings outlined the importance of assessment in several areas, there were again few specific examples of assessments (e.g., certain types of learning/SEMH/literacy assessment) mentioned.

It is also perhaps surprising given the large number of CYP at risk of exclusion with SEMH needs (DfE, 2018), that the EP panel did not achieve higher levels of consensus for

assessing and identifying the learning and SEMH needs of the CYP in all situations. Indeed, the formal assessment of these needs is pertinent (Mowat, 2010), and often schools face challenges implementing best practice (which might be due to a lack of training, skills, or expertise in identifying and assessing SEN, including SEMH, in schools [Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013]). EPs therefore seem well placed to support this assessment and perhaps clearer guidance is needed on how to do this. It also perhaps indicates that the two areas (learning and SEMH) are conceptualised separately despite research demonstrating the bi-directional and inextricable impact learning and SEMH needs can have for a CYPs engagement in learning (O'Brien & Roberts, 2019).

Additionally, although aspects of practice for wider assessment were mentioned by the EP panel, there were few examples of how to carry out these assessments for best practice (e.g., what an assessment of the school environment would include). Considering the importance of understanding the number of exclusions in a school, and the characteristics of the CYP being excluded, it is perhaps surprising that only 25% of EPs agreed that an exploration of the exclusion data was only essential in all situations. It may be these areas of practice, whilst not rated as essential in all situations, could make a difference to promoting positive outcomes and reducing numbers of school exclusion.

### *5.3.2 Areas of practice that reached a 'not essential' consensus*

The only statement that reached a consensus of being 'not essential' for good EP practice in this area was the 'use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs' (75% of participants felt it was 'not essential').

This was, in part, supported by the literature review, where cognitive assessments were not mentioned as part of an EP's role in supporting positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. Whilst this is encouraging given the ethical concerns about using standardised tests

with pupils with SEMH (Warnes et al., 2022), it is difficult to know whether this is reflective of EP practice in this area more broadly considering that other research has suggested that EPs are still using standardised cognitive assessments frequently in practice (Sewell & Ducksbury, 2013).

### *5.3.3 Areas of practice that did not reach consensus*

Only one statement from this theme did not reach consensus overall. Participants did not agree on how essential it was to use dynamic assessment to identify learning needs (45% EIS; 45% not essential). Dynamic Assessment (DA) was also a part of EP assessment that was not mentioned in the literature review in relation to practice with this population. This may be due to DA still being a relatively new and alternative method for assessing learning and cognitive needs (Green & Birch, 2019). However, if EPs are agreeing that assessing and identifying learning needs is essential in some (75%) or all (25%) situations and standardised cognitive assessments are not perceived to be essential for practice (75%), it raises questions about how EPs are assessing these needs. Indeed, as DA approaches such as Feuerstein's LPAD (Feuerstein et al., 1987) were developed for pupils experiencing high levels of trauma and anxiety (and therefore did not respond well to unmediated standardised learning experiences), this approach potentially offers a good alternative for assessing CYP with SEMH needs or those that are at risk of exclusion due to this. Indeed, the mediational component, which can consider what mediation is necessary for the affective barriers these children may face, is likely to lead to more accurate support for this population (Lauchlan, 2001) and may be an area for future research.

### *5.4 The use of training*

*5.4.1 Areas of practice achieving high consensus (I.e., 75% of participants rated statements at 'essential in all situations')*

EP participants agreed that EPs receiving regular opportunities for CPD (90% EIA) and having access to regular supervision (95% EIA) was essential in all situations. Interestingly, given the high level of consensus amongst EPs in this study, neither of these components of practice were addressed in the literature review. Both supervision and CPD are known to be crucial to maintaining good practice in general amongst EPs (Dunsmuir et al., 2015) and may be even more valuable in cases of exclusion, where there are a complex range of factors influencing the CYPs situation which are imperative for the EP to reflect upon.

Most other statements referring to training (either for EPs or being delivered by EPs to schools) reached a consensus of being at least sometimes essential for practice. For example, EPs felt that the EPS should prioritise training for EPs on exclusion (65% EIA; 30% EIS), specifically training in systemic approaches (60% EIA; 30% EIS) and further opportunities for EPs to work together to develop training ideas for schools (40% EIA; 50% EIS).

EPs agreed that it was partly their role to up-skill adults around the CYP at risk of exclusion through training (50% EIA; 45% EIS), particularly through the delivery of whole school training (10% EIA; 75% EIS). EPs also agreed that developing bespoke training and interventions for schools (30% EIA; 65% EIS) and the EPS offering a wide range of training options (55% EIA; 30% EIS) was essential in some or all cases. Some of the training areas that EPs could deliver which received consensus included trauma-informed approaches (35% EIA; 60% EIS), training in attachment (45% EIA; 50% EIS), emotion coaching (15% EIA; 80% EIS), nurture groups (10% EIA; 65% EIS), restorative approaches (30% EIA; 55% EIS), adolescence (5% EIA; 85% EIS), resilience (10% EIA; 70% EIS) and specific needs (such as ADHD, ASD, anxiety, EBSA and attachment difficulties; 10% EIA; 80% EIS).

There was also consensus for delivering training around ethnicity (25% EIA; 65% EIS), delivering drop in solution-focused sessions for staff (25% EIA; 65% EIS), training to improve understanding of behaviour as communication (25% EIA; 65% EIS) and staff supervision or reflective sessions (25% EIA; 65% EIS). Finally, EPs felt that working with the school over time to embed the training in practice was important (70% EIA; 30% EIS). Whilst training was also mentioned in the literature review, it represented a small theme and was primarily in relation to examining the efficacy of a multi-disciplinary team on reducing exclusions (Hartnell, 2010). Indeed, like the current findings, the literature review found that delivery of training to schools was perceived helpful for school staff, despite representing a small proportion of the work the multidisciplinary team was doing. Whilst there is a high level of consensus for several types of training activity in the current study, it is unclear what the basis is for EPs perceiving this as an important part of practice. Although research outlines the importance of approaches such as attachment aware schools (Maynard et al., 2019), trauma informed schools (Rose et al., 2019), emotion coaching (Rose et al., 2015), nurture groups (MacKay et al., 2010) and restorative approaches (Bevington, 2015), there is a limited amount of evidence for the impact of EP-delivered training in these areas on CYP at risk of exclusion.

However, the current research potentially expands on the literature findings by including the specific types of training that EPs perceive might be beneficial (both whole school level and 1:1 with staff members, such as through supervision). Whilst training represented a relatively large theme within the current research, it is interesting to consider whether the opportunity for EP training (both for EPs and delivered by EPs) is equitable across services. For example, with some services operating a 'statutory-only' model of working, or with increasing statutory demands, there may be less scope for this type of involvement and service delivery (Lyonette, 2019).

Additionally, despite statistics highlighting exclusion as a primarily racial and ethnic concern, particularly considering that Black Caribbean pupils are up to three times more likely to be permanently excluded compared to White British pupils (DfE, 2019), it is interesting that neither the literature nor the current findings explore the role of the EP in delivering training specifically related to this or why boys might be particularly at risk. When asked for input to inform the Office of the Children's Commissioner's School Exclusions Inquiry, a representative sample of 1700 teachers rated 'clash of cultures' as the most common reason for why they thought pupils from certain ethnic groups were more likely to be excluded (37%). This, alongside worrying statistics about the outcomes for this population, highlights an important area of need for input concerning understanding and addressing race and ethnicity within exclusionary practice in schools, which may be a role for the EP. As the current findings suggest that only 25% of EPs consider training in ethnicity more broadly essential in all situations and given that EPs espouse a role in challenging discrimination, and indeed is required of them by the HCPC standards by which they practice (HCPC, 2016), it is important to consider why this might not have been addressed in the current findings. Whilst it is difficult to determine why this might be, research has suggested that there are many barriers to successfully challenging racist or discriminatory behaviour in schools and may depend on an EP confidence to do so (DfE, 2019). Additionally, the finding is perhaps biased by the geographical context of the EP participants, for example there may be more or less chance of working with CYP at most risk of exclusion (e.g., those from Black Caribbean, Black Caribbean and White or Roma heritage). However, the avoidance of race as a factor in exclusion (potentially by EPs, schools and at the wider level of the LA) is potentially contributing to the perpetuation of discrimination and inequity and may offer a partial explanation for the lack of progress in reducing school exclusions.

#### *5.4.2 Areas of practice that reached a 'not essential' consensus*

The only statement that reached consensus of being 'not essential' for good EP practice in this area was the 'EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)', which 85% of participants felt was not essential for good practice in this area. This was not an area of EP practice that was referred to in the literature review despite research suggesting that VIG, a relationship-based intervention aimed at supporting parents and staff to become more attuned to a CYPs needs (Kennedy et al., 2011), may be a useful method of practice for improving the outcomes for CYP. As the intervention is still relatively new to the EP field, and requires training and on-going supervision, it's efficacy or appropriate use with CYP at risk of exclusion may not yet be known.

#### *5.4.3 Areas of practice that did not reach consensus*

There were no areas of practice that did not reach consensus amongst the EP participants for the use of training. This suggests that generally, participants in the current study agreed about which areas of EP practice in relation to both training for EPs and training delivered by EPs were either essential in all situations, in some situations or not essential.

### **5.5 EP skills and the EP role**

#### *5.5.1 Areas of practice achieving high consensus (i.e., 75% of participants rated statements at 'essential in all situations')*

Many of the statements associated with the subtheme EP characteristics, skills and knowledge reached a high level of consensus amongst EP participants. Several of these areas included the characteristics or traits of the EP that were thought to be essential to good practice in this area. These included the EP having strong interpersonal skills (100% EIA) such as being confident (75% EIA) and approachable (95% EIA). Other statements involved the EP's skills to contain

and understand the emotions of stakeholders (85% EIA), to empower members of the system (80% EIA), to maintain curiosity (95% EIA), be attuned and actively listening to stakeholders (95% EIA), validate feelings (85% EIA) and understand the perspective of stakeholders (75% EIA). The EP's ability to communicate information clearly was also highly agreed upon (100% EIA). The EP's skills and characteristics included wider aspects of the role such as the EP's ability to build relationships with key members of the system (90% EIA).

Interestingly, despite many EP characteristics and skills achieving high levels of consensus for being essential to good practice in the current study, these were rarely discussed in the literature review. Indeed, the literature review largely comments on the actions of the EP, rather than the skills and characteristics required to implement these actions successfully when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. Whilst desirable skills and characteristics are mentioned in wider research (e.g., facilitating skills such as interpersonal and communication skills are frequently reported as aspects of good EP practice; Farrell et al., 2006) and are described in EP job advertisements and for entry to the doctoral programme for educational psychologists, there is perhaps limited research that has examined the effect of these on practice.

Whilst there was a high level of consensus for many of the EP characteristics, skills and knowledge deemed 'always essential' for EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion, others gained a consensus of being at least sometimes essential for practice. This included the EP having a strong sense of competence (65% EIA; 30% EIS), the EP having a strong understanding of the school system (60% EIA; 35% EIS), having a strong knowledge of legislation and ethical codes of conduct (60% EIA; 40% EIS) and the EP remaining impartial in their involvement (40% EIA; 40% EIS).

There was also consensus for areas of practice related to the role of the EP in casework. For example, most participants felt that it was essential in all situations that the EP ensures a



CYP has at least one positive relationship with a member of staff (70% EIA; 30% EIS). Similarly, many participants felt that the EP should be an advocate for the CYP (70% EIA; 30% EIS) and apply psychological theory in all areas of practice (70% EIA; 30% EIS). This is reflective of findings from the literature review, which commented on the importance of school staff being involved in interventions for strengthening teacher-student relationships (Chatzinikolaou, 2015). Additionally, each of the papers that discussed an EP-delivered intervention mentioned the application of psychological theory to support the efficacy of the involvement.

EPs also agreed about the EP's role to maintain relationships with SLT (30% EIA and 55% EIS) and signpost families to other sources of support (25% EIA and 70% EIS). This was an important feature of Gould's (2018) research, which outlined the potential role of the EP to support families in this way to increase their sense of agency and subsequently improve outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. However, despite the espoused importance of maintaining relationships with SLT within the profession, this was not mentioned in the literature review.

There was also agreement that the EP role involved summarising and synthesising all information about a CYP/the system (35% EIA; 45% EIS) and creating a shared understanding between members of the system (45% EIA; 50% EIS). Finally, participants reached a consensus for the following items: the EP should work collaboratively with other professionals (40% EIA; 60% EIS), use research and statistics to justify inclusive practice (20% EIA; 70% EIS) and support transitions to alternative provisions (10% EIA; 70% EIS).

Whilst the literature review did not mention the EP's use of research and statistics when considering what might be helpful in practice to support CYP at risk of exclusion, one paper did look at the role of the EP in working with other professionals to reduce exclusions (Hartnell, 2010) and another looked at the perceived role of the EP to support CYP transitions to

alternative provisions through managed moves (Bagley & Hallam, 2017). However, the current research did not specifically mention the EPs role in managed moves, despite the espoused potential role of the EP to collaborate with LA officers and school staff from starter and host provisions to support transitions of CYP from one setting to another (Bagley & Hallam, 2017). It might be that this role is not yet widely occurring in practice, particularly given Bagley & Hallam's (2017) finding that EPs involvement in managed moves seems largely dependent on the ethos and practice in schools.

#### *5.5.2 Areas of practice that reached a 'not essential' consensus*

There were no statements that reached a 'not essential' consensus for the EP skills and role theme, which demonstrates a high amount of consensus for the elements of practice associated with the EP skills and characteristics as 'essential' for practice.

#### *5.5.3 Areas of practice that did not reach consensus*

One statement, 'the EP has a large amount of experience', did not reach consensus amongst EPs (30% EIS; 60% not essential). It therefore appears that there was divided opinion about the importance of level of experience for working effectively with CYP at risk of exclusion. It is difficult to determine the reason for participants to be divided on this statement. However, it potentially signifies that overall, having a large amount of experience is not essential for good practice, but might help in some situations (perhaps where a case is particularly complex). Additionally, it may indicate experience in relation to knowledge of a school's systems (for example, if an EP is new to the school, it may be more difficult to work systemically to support reduced exclusions). The researcher also acknowledges that the term 'large amount of experience' is relatively subjective and thus this statement may have been particularly open to subjective bias.

## **5.6 The role of the system**

### *5.6.1 Areas of practice achieving high consensus (I.e., 75% of participants rated statements at 'essential in all situations')*

Only three statements in this theme reached a high level of consensus including the importance of the EP challenging discriminatory practice in schools (95% EIA), schools making staff available for meetings with the EP (85% EIA) and there being a culture of inclusion within a school (75% EIA).

The majority of statements related to the role of the system reached a consensus for being at least sometimes essential for practice, rating areas of practice either as essential in all or some situations. Participants agreed that the EP should support schools to develop and implement interventions at a whole school level (45% EIA; 55% EIS), challenge systemic barriers (such as behaviour policies in a school; 70% EIA; 30% EIS) and be involved before a CYP is deemed at risk of exclusion (60% EIA; 40% EIS) or involved in a preventative way (65% EIA; 30% EIS). Additionally, whilst not specifically related to the role of the EP and more focused on the role of the school system, there was agreement about the perceived importance of the school SENDCO being part of the SLT (50% EIA; 40% EIS).

Like some of the papers discussed in the literature review, it seems that consideration of school systems and structures play an important part in the EPs role in this area as well as the EPs understanding of wider systems such as the LA. Both Burton (2006) and Wilson (2005) highlighted the importance of inclusive and receptive school structures and an inclusive staff ethos for the success of any EP-delivered interventions, suggesting that without this, the intervention would have less impact in the long term for the CYP participating. This factor was outlined as important for promoting inclusive practice in the introduction of this research (Cole, 2015; Munn et al., 2000; Ofsted, 2010). Gould's (2018) research also outlined the role of the

EP to support schools to make changes to their systems, particularly if these are discriminatory in nature (e.g., the behaviour policy). Additionally, the review addresses the importance of challenging the system (e.g., the separation of learning and behaviour; Bagley & Hallam, 2017) and the EP being a ‘critical friend’ to the school (Waite, 2014). Interestingly, whilst interventions are mentioned in the current findings in relation to training or systemic level work, there was no mention of EPs delivering individual or group interventions, despite this being a large theme within the literature review. Perhaps due to the barriers mentioned in the literature review with regards to this type of EP work being time and resource intense.

The literature also tentatively suggests the role of the EP in working preventatively, highlighting the potential of the EP to explore the risk and resilience factors associated with a CYP becoming ‘at risk of exclusion’ before the situation is critical (Gould, 2018; Williams 2018). Wider research has also found that EPs feel their involvement with CYP at risk of exclusion often involves ‘reactive approaches’ such as last-minute individual casework or EHCP needs assessments, where preventative measures may be better suited. Thus, taken together, the current findings and that of the literature review present a similar picture about the important role of the EP in this area of practice.

When considering the wider system, there were also several statements that reached a consensus. For example, EPs agreed that the use of an ecosystemic approach (55% EIA; 30% EIS) and drawing on wider context, policies and practices when working at the system level (45% EIA; 40% EIS) would be essential to some extent in practice. Agreement was also reached about the EPs role to do an assessment or audit of the school system (5% EIA; 70% EIS) and to communicate trends in exclusion data to commissioners (10% EIA; 75% EIS) to support positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion.

At the LA and EPS level, there was agreement that the EPS could use a collaborative consultation model of service delivery (60% EIA; 35% EIS) and should take a position on

exclusions (35% EIA; 55% EIS). Finally, EPs agreed that the LA position on exclusionary practice was an important influencing feature of the role of the wider system (40% EIA; 50% EIS). Interestingly, despite the current study findings and the potentially important role of the EP at the LA and EPS level, few of the papers in the literature review specifically mentioned the role of how the EPS or LA might serve to explicitly promote positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion. This is perhaps due to difficulties in carrying out this type of work given the time constraints EPs face, or the difficulty in researching this topic.

#### *5.6.2 Areas of practice that reached a 'not essential' consensus*

No areas of practice reached a 'not essential' consensus for the role of the system theme.

#### *5.6.3 Areas of practice that did not reach consensus*

Two statements did not reach consensus for this theme. These include the EP's role to support the school to apply for an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and the EP's attendance at Team Around the School (TAS) meetings. Interestingly, whilst EP's did not agree on whether EP's attendance at TAS meetings was essential for good practice, research has suggested that TAS meetings (meetings held regularly to facilitate collaborative conversations about CYP if early intervention may prevent the escalation of an issue) may provide early support to families (including increased autonomy and empowerment) and preventative intervention to reduce the risk of exclusion (Brown & Goulding, 2020). Thus, it may be that barriers to being involved in these meetings prevents the EP from practicing in this way. However, this may be an area of practice to consider in future.

Interestingly, despite suggestions in the research that statutory assessments or high statutory workload can present as a barrier to EP's involvement in other work (Wilson & Pirrie, 2000) and despite the large part statutory work is thought to play in LA EP work (Vivash &

Morgan, 2019) it is interesting that there was little mention of the statutory process in the literature and that EPs did not agree on their role to support in the application of EHCPs in the current findings. This is perhaps an indicator that EP work with CYP at risk of exclusion may not fit well within the statutory model of service delivery. This is concerning given that research suggests CYP with SEND (which includes many CYP at risk of exclusion) without an EHCP are six times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion compared to a CYP without SEND (DfE, 2018). Alternatively, the findings may reflect the context of practice of the EPs that participated in the current study. Whilst only 6 participants worked for a social enterprise (n= 2), a private or limited company (n= 2) or were self-employed (n= 2), this represents almost a quarter of the sample (23%). As the context of practice in these settings may differ, particularly with relation to the amount of statutory work an EP might do, this could have impacted the findings.

### **5.7 The EPEP Framework**

Whilst the extent to which the current findings can be interpreted is limited, when drawn together the results go some way to answering the research question by highlighting key features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion, as well as how these aspects of practice might overlap. Whilst exclusion guidance documents for schools have been developed across the UK, sometimes by EPS', often they are largely reliant on practice-based evidence and do not necessarily explicitly outline the EPs role in this work. Outside of this, there are no frameworks to guide EP practice in this area. As research suggests that practice frameworks are a significant and indispensable resource for clarifying and articulating theory into practice (MacKay et al., 2016), the current framework therefore offers a tool for EPs to guide practice in this area.

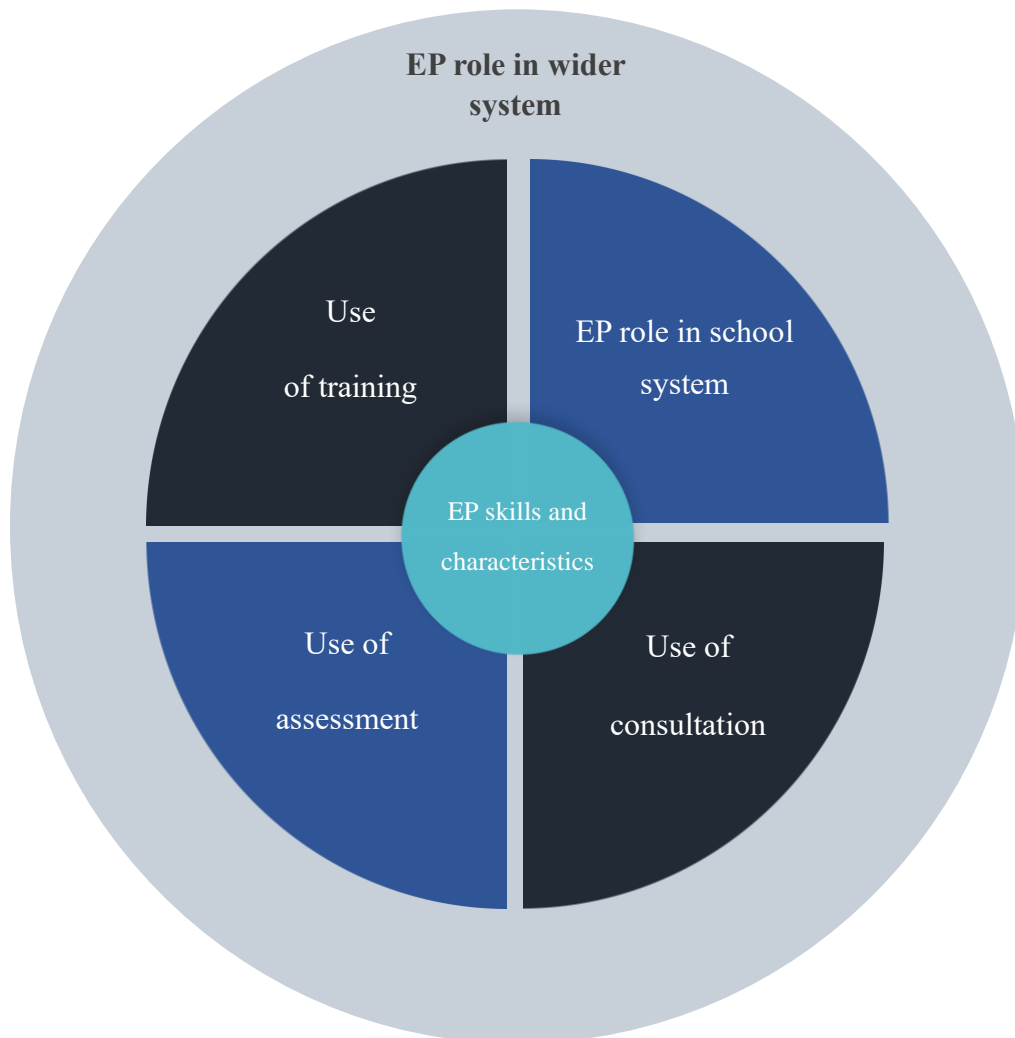
The following framework, the Educational Psychologist Exclusions Practice (EPEP) framework (see Figure 42) and accompanying checklists (Figures 43-48), has therefore drawn these findings together, encompassing both the wider areas of EP practice and specific statements that the expert panel deemed essential when working with CYP at risk of school exclusion to create guidance in this area. Within the framework, the role of the EP in the system has been divided into its two components, 'the role in the school system' and 'the role in the wider system', to represent the concentric nature of the role at the wider systemic levels. The skills and characteristics of the EP were thought by the researcher to be central to all other areas of practice described in the findings and are therefore placed at the centre of the framework. The checklists accompanying the EPEP framework (see Figures 43-48) are inclusive of the features of practice considered 'essential in all situations' or 'essential in some situations'. The framework checklists also encompass those areas of practice that have been identified as imperative but potentially missing from the results of the current findings. The EP can then use the framework to identify any areas of strength or development which may then support EPs to select aspects of practice to adjust or enhance.

It is important to acknowledge that this framework does not necessarily consider all aspects of practice in this area, particularly as prompts were devised by the researcher based on a small pool of literature and the participant sample was still relatively small (compared to the wider population of EPs). Additionally, the framework does not consider barriers to practice as described in some of the participants' reflections (such as the time and feasibility of incorporating all aspects of practice identified into work with CYP at risk of exclusion). However, the statements go some way to highlighting important areas of practice and provide a starting point for EPs to reflect upon, and guide decision making about practice when working with this population. Future research should be conducted to explore the efficacy of the

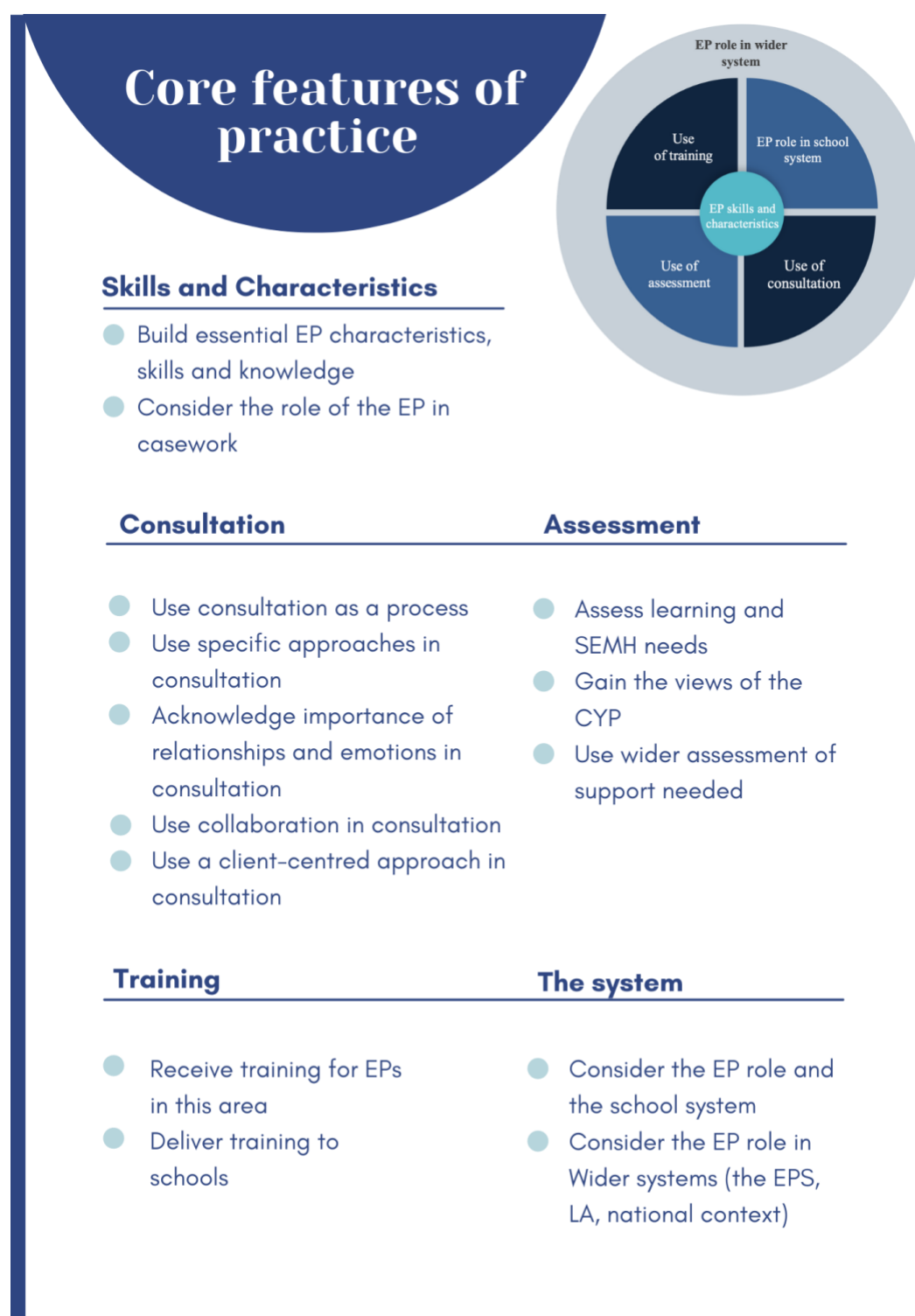
proposed EPEP framework. This might be through evaluating its usefulness in practice or exploring potential barriers to successful implementation when working in this area.



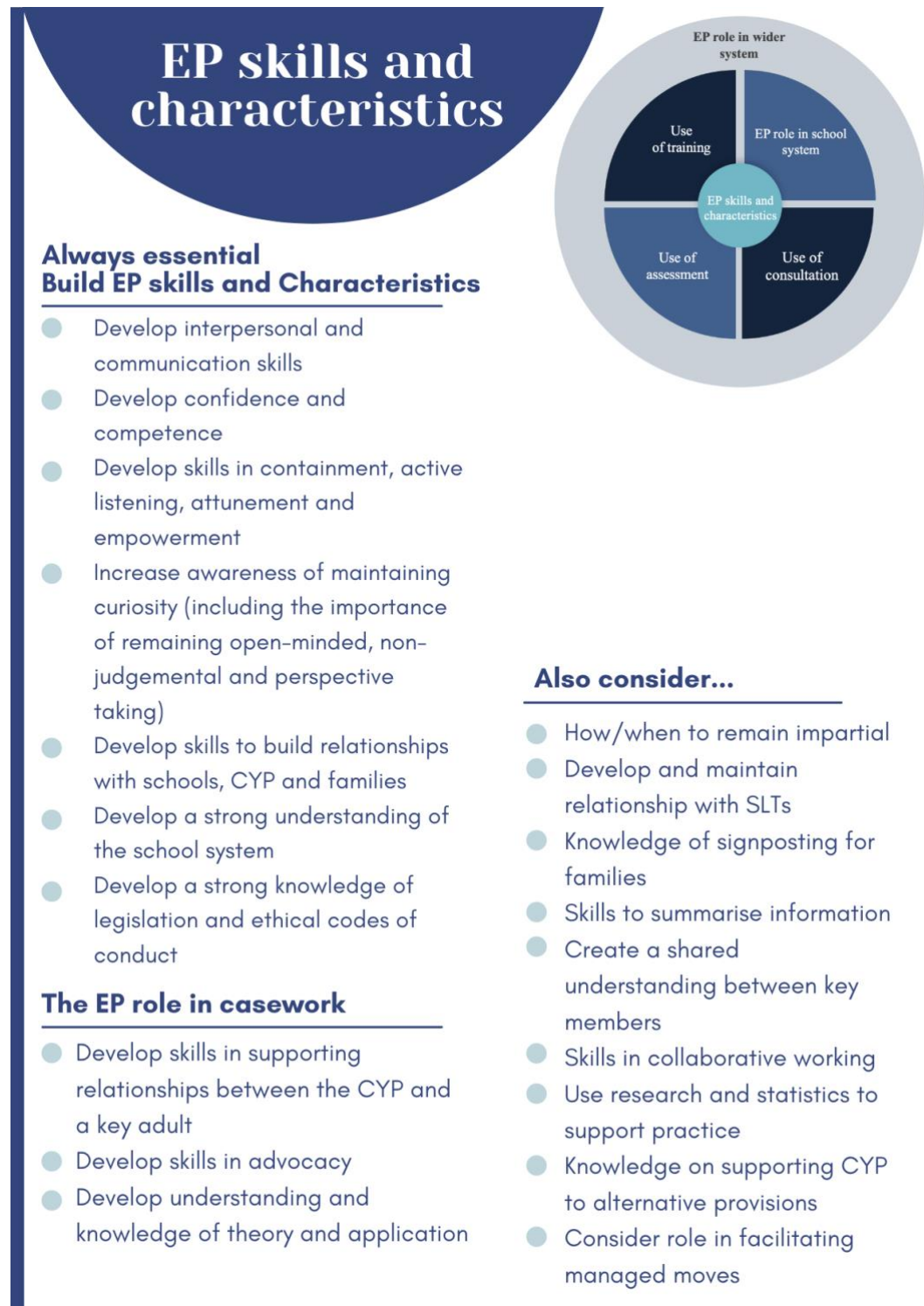
**Figure 42.** The Educational Psychologist Exclusions Practice (EPEP) framework for guiding EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion.



**Figure 43.** Checklist to show the summary of core features of practice identified by EPs

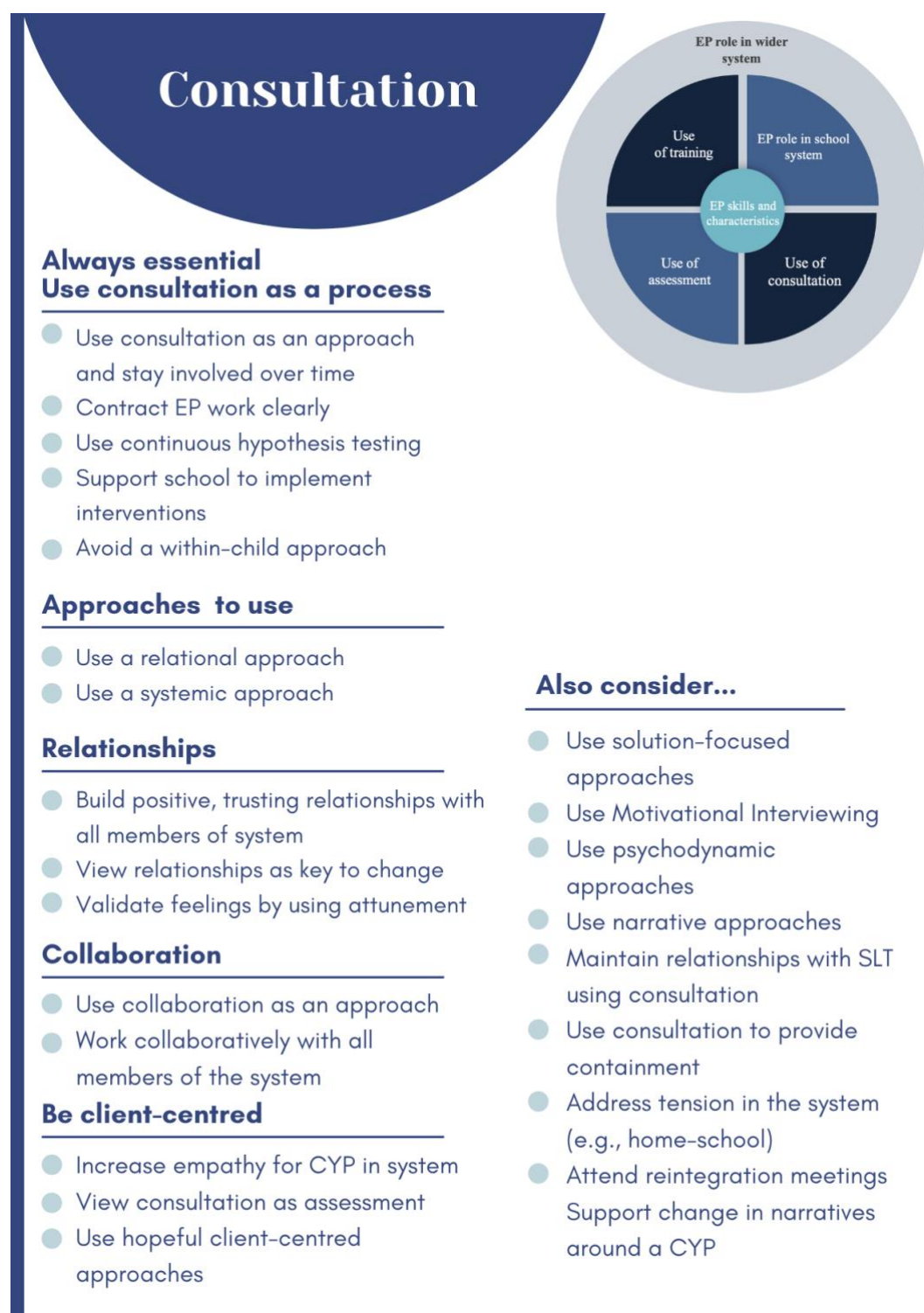


**Figure 44.** Checklist to show the summary of EP skills and characteristics essential for practice identified by EPs

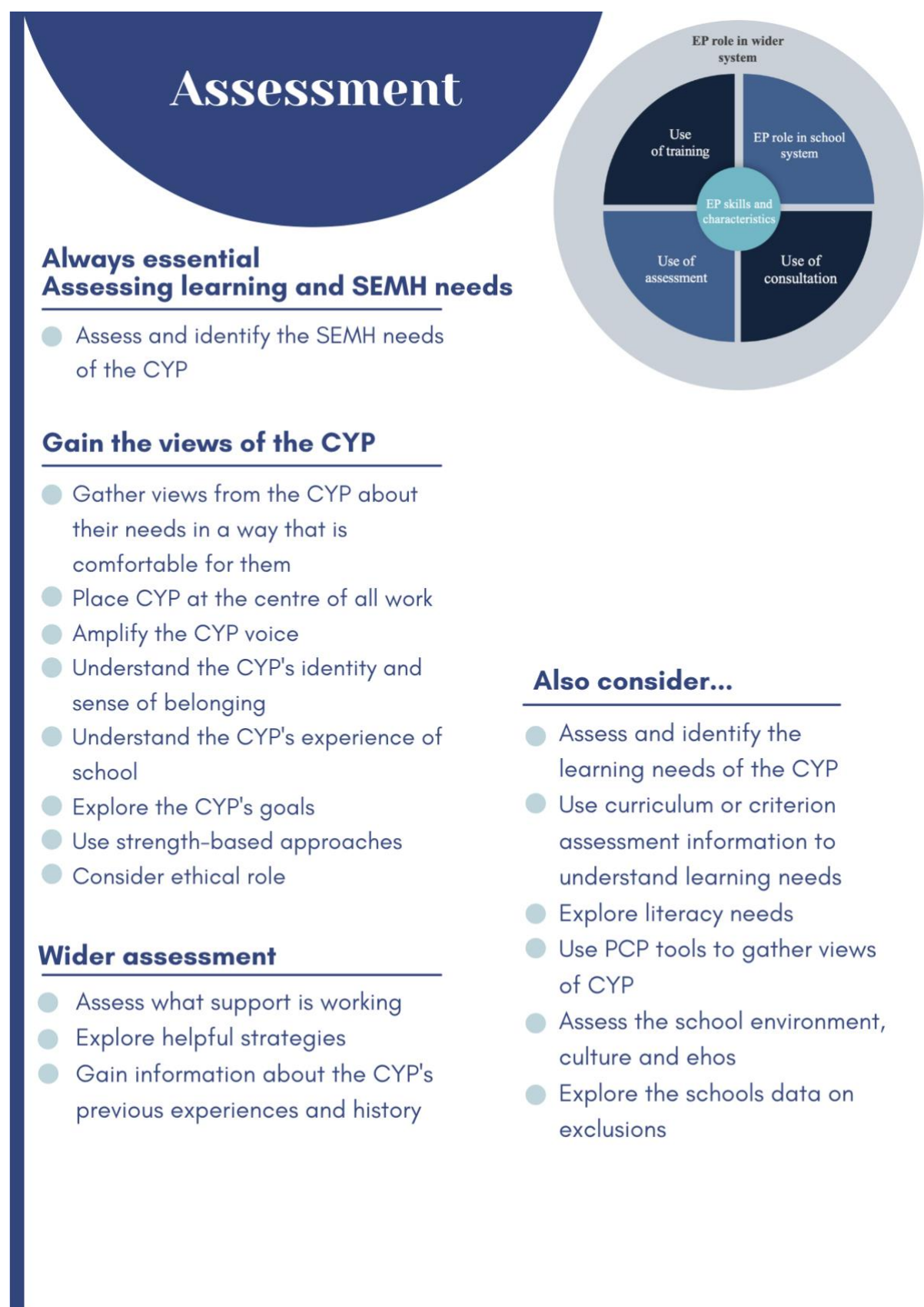


**Figure 45.** Checklist to show the summary of consultation features of practice identified by

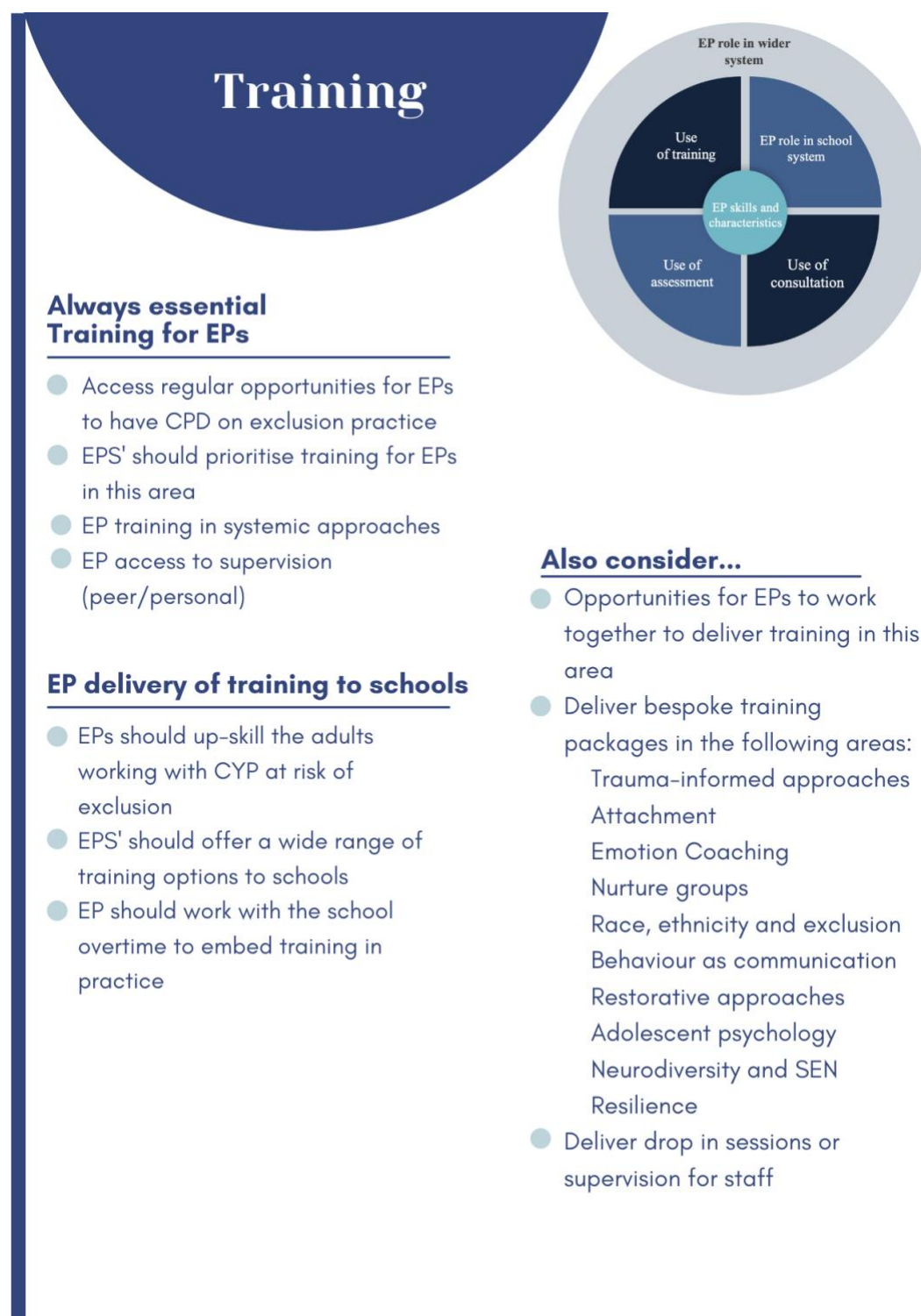
EPs



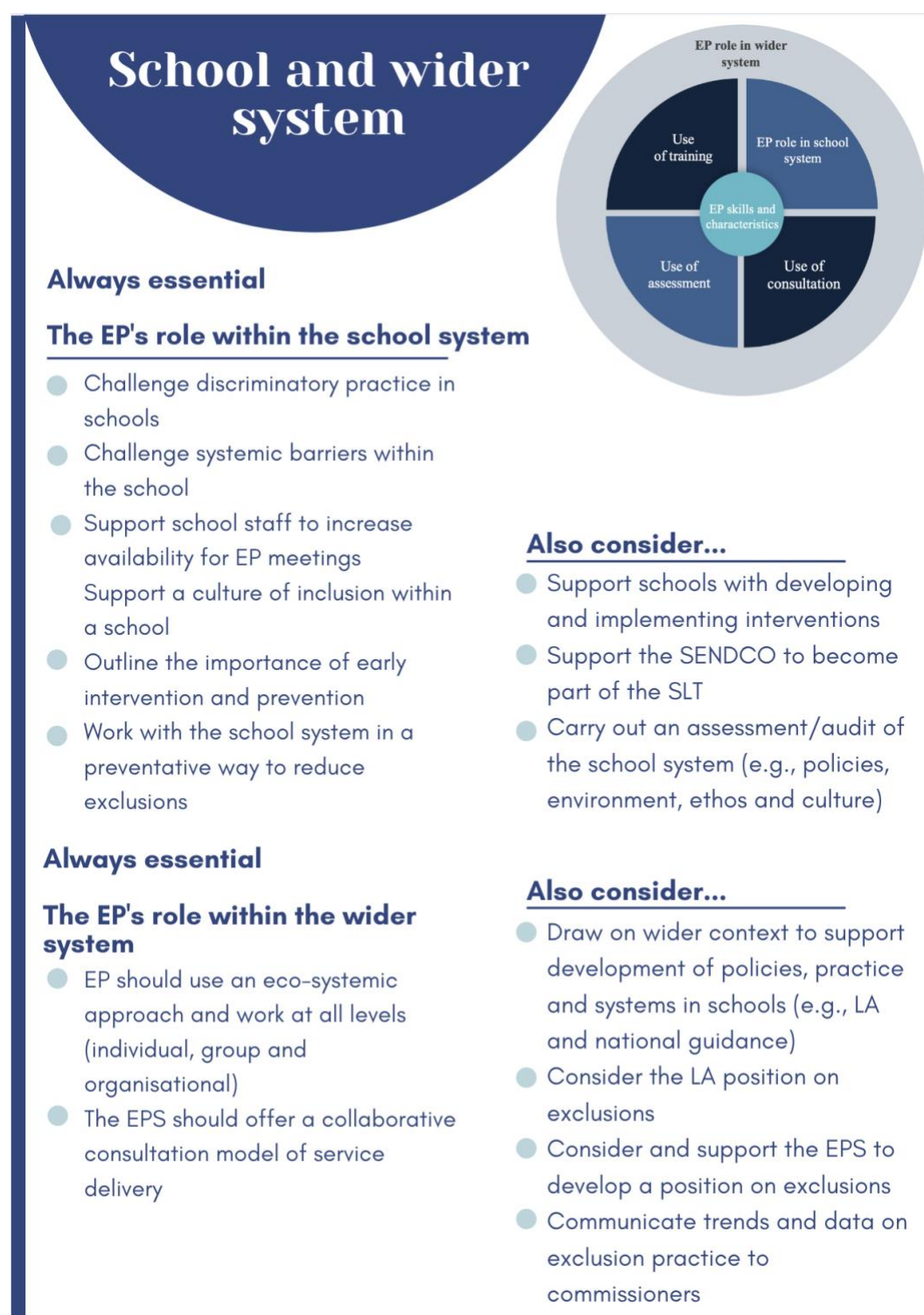
**Figure 46.** Checklist to show the summary of assessment features of practice identified by EPs



**Figure 47.** Checklist to show the summary of training features of practice identified by EPs



**Figure 48.** Checklist to show the summary of the EP role in the system identified by EPs1



## ***5.8 Strengths and limitations of the current study***

Whilst the findings have enabled the EPEP framework to be tentatively developed, it is important to consider both the strengths and limitations of the current research which may impact the efficacy of the findings.

### *5.8.1 Strengths*

#### *5.8.1.1 Paradigm and application*

There are several strengths of the current research. Firstly, the research aligned well with the proposed pragmatist paradigm as it goes some way to identifying key features of practice in this area to develop a framework and meaningfully guide practitioners when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. Indeed, it is the first piece of research to develop a consensus about EP practice in this area and offers a unique contribution to the field. In particular, whilst previous research only explored aspects of practice in a very narrow (e.g., the EPs role in specific individual/group interventions) or broad way (e.g., EP role in ‘assessment’ and ‘consultation’ without describing the content of this practice) the current research offers an insight into the nuances of practice within each area. This may guide practice more clearly in future by outlining specific constructs within larger areas of practice that might also benefit from more rigorous research in the future. This is in line with research that highlights the need for more clearly defined constructs in this area of research and the use of measures such as process analysis to investigate the interactions between areas of practice for complex topics such as school exclusion (Sheridan et al., 2000).

Indeed, the current research is also arguably socially justifiable (another feature of the pragmatist paradigm) as it addresses a complex, social issue rooted primarily in wider societal inequity (Rorty, 1979). Through outlining practice thought to promote successful outcomes for



CYP at risk of exclusion, and therefore supporting inclusion, the research goes some way to tackling the complexities of EP involvement in cases of school exclusion.

Whilst the current research does not provide an exhaustive list of practice features, and still highlights a need for further exploration of EP practice in this area, the information provided does contribute to further understanding and consensus about this area of practice for EPs. In this way, the current findings may have a positive impact on practice within the profession.

#### *5.8.1.2 Participant experience and drop-out rate*

Although EPs who participated in the research were self-selected, which may have biased the findings, they also espoused vast experience of working with CYP at risk of exclusion, with all participants confirming that they met the inclusion criteria. As the validity of the Delphi is reliant on the expertise of the participants, this suggests a potentially good level of validity in the current research. Given the importance of maintaining participation throughout the rounds of a Delphi study, it is a strength of the research that 20 out of 26 respondents from round one participated in round two (77%) and 18 participants completed all three rounds (69%; Jago, 2019). As the research topic was likely of particular interest for participants who agreed to be involved, perhaps suggesting that they felt they had a particular stance to offer and were therefore motivated to continue their participation, this may have contributed to this low drop-out rate. Comments provided by some participants in Round 3 support this, suggesting that the research was helpful for their practice and that they were motivated to participate.

The low drop-out rate might also be explained by participants only rating a relatively small number of statements ( $n=120$ ) compared to other Delphi studies. For example, previous research has required participants to rate up to 459 statements (Lopez & Rogers, 2002). However, the number of statements in the present study was similar to more recent research

from both Green and Birch's (2019) Delphi study (n= 138) and Saktata's (2021) Delphi study (n= 102 statements), both of which reported low drop-out rates. Whilst using fewer statements may diminish the breadth of EP practice covered in research, the researcher felt that by using TA to carefully group raw data into relevant key themes, the questionnaire was reflective of the participant's initial qualitative responses and was then more accessible to complete.

#### *5.8.1.3 Diversity of participant sample*

Another strength of the research is the participation of a wide pool of participants in terms of their level of experience, geographical location of practice and context of practice (for example, LA, social enterprise, independent practice etc.). As the participants in previous research have been more homogenous in their location (e.g., all from the same LA) the scope and generalisability of the results has been limited. Whilst individual geographical location was not considered explicitly in the analysis, the current research perhaps gives a greater insight into the broad scope of work across the areas from which participants were participating. As rates of exclusion vary across the UK, it was hypothesised that EP practice may differ somewhat depending on region of work. Thus, the current findings give a unique insight into practice more broadly across many parts of the UK. It is interesting that there was a large amount of consensus for many statements despite differences in location, suggesting there is perhaps limited differentiation of practice depending on the region.

#### *5.8.1.4 The Delphi method*

A final strength of the study was the method chosen. The Delphi method is the only methodology that can create a consensus in areas of research that are deemed to be complex in nature, such as school exclusion. The method also enables the maintenance of anonymity, encouraging participants to give a balanced and honest portrayal of their ideas whilst reducing

negative group dynamics (Donohoe & Needham 2009; Iqbal & Pison-Young 2009). As the method has allowed for the identification of several areas of practice (both broad and specific), experts have been able to contribute to the understanding and resolution of important and long-standing problems (Donohoe & Needham, 2009).

Additionally, the method allowed for three rounds of questionnaires to be completed before concluding about EP consensus, with only 5 statements out of 120 (4.17%) not reaching a consensus opinion. Given that the iterative quality of the process encourages members of the expert panel to adjust their initial ratings based on the group information (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), participants have the opportunity to contemplate the problem across several rounds, rather than in a single session (as would be the case in an interview or focus group) thus enhancing the validity of the data (Donohoe & Needham, 2009).

### *5.8.2 Limitations*

Whilst this research provides key contributions to good EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion, it is important to acknowledge any potential limitations with the methodology. This section will first focus on limitations of the Delphi method and then examine limitations related specifically to the findings of the current research.

#### *5.8.2.1 The method*

There were several limitations when considering the process of creating the questionnaire for Round 2 of the current study. Whilst the use of an open-ended question in the first-round questionnaire (i.e., inviting participants to share their views of key features of good EP practice working with CYP at risk of exclusion) perhaps ensured that the data was representative of the broad views of the expert panel, thus maintaining the power balance between researcher and respondents (Mullen, 2003), the use of specific prompts may have also limited the responses.

For example, there is a great deal of similarity between the prompts provided based on the review of the literature (and in particular the findings from Waite, 2014) and the themes for the current findings. Whilst the researcher felt it was appropriate to provide prompts to ensure participants considered all areas of EP practice in their response, it is consequently difficult to determine whether participants responses were biased when providing their opinions on practice and questions the unique contribution of the content current research. Similarly, there are perhaps limitations to separating the data into wider themes (e.g., consultation, assessment, training etc.) in the current study. Depending on how these areas are conceptualised, they may be viewed as being concentrically encompassed by one another rather than separate areas of practice (e.g., assessment might be seen as a component of consultation rather than a distinct aspect of practice).

Additionally, although there was a high level of consensus about practice for most areas identified in the current study, indicating a good level of reliability of the findings, this may suggest that the statements were too broad or not specific enough to draw out more nuanced aspects of practice within each subtheme. There were also several areas of practice that the researcher felt were missing from findings based on their own knowledge of wider research and in relation to the statistics mentioned in the introduction. This is perhaps due to the nature of the Delphi method, which requires participants to engage fully with the first questionnaire when providing initial views on practice. It was noted by the researcher that there was great variability in the detail provided by participants (with some participants only giving a brief response detailing their opinions and experiences), which likely impacts the depth of opinions that could be gained through this method and might explain the absence of some areas of practice (such as multi-disciplinary work, the role of the EP in relation to race and equality and the role in managed moves or the statutory process).

The researcher wondered whether the lack of depth in some of the responses might be due to the potential mismatch between the philosophical assumptions of the Delphi method and the current topic of research. For example, the exploration of a complex socially constructed phenomenon such as exclusion may be better suited to a method rooted in a social constructionist epistemology. Indeed, one of the respondents made a comment suggesting that they felt as though rating the statements was akin to adding items to a shopping cart which felt morally 'wrong' – the researcher can only assume that this is due to the nature and complexity of school exclusion, given its roots and implications at several levels (e.g., wider societal discrimination and inequity). However, as another method would be required for this approach, it would not be possible to gain a consensus amongst participants, which was the aim of the current study.

Another known limitation of using the Delphi method is the lack of direct interaction between the researcher and the expert panel. Although this can prevent a small number of participants dominating the narrative or heavily influencing the findings, it can lead to a lack of clarity (for example, for some more broad or general statements it may have been helpful to explore a participant's response further to gain greater specificity). This limitation may go some way to explaining the partial lack of participants' engagement with the initial question. As the method, particularly with the e-Delphi, is limited in its interaction, it is more challenging to fully explore participants' understanding and perceptions of working with CYP at risk of school exclusion. For example, what factors might have informed their understanding and how this might influence subsequent ratings. Additionally, due to the Delphi's 'hands-off' approach, it is difficult to know how the terms used in the current research (i.e., 'at risk of exclusion' or 'good practice') were interpreted. However, many opportunities were provided for participants to expand their responses (for example, by including questions relating to ethnicity, the provision of prompts to aid recall for the core areas of EP practice, and an opportunity to discuss

additional pertinent aspects of work in this area, as well as providing comments on the process of participating in the research).

#### *5.8.2.2 The sample*

In addition, a limitation of using the Delphi method to answer the research question is that, like in the literature review, the findings are only based on the perceptions of EPs, rather than using rigorous evaluative methods. However, in contrast to the smaller sample sizes and individual perceptions used in the literature, the current study enabled a consensus amongst a larger sample of expert participants, which may improve the generalisability of the findings and potentially provides higher reliability and validity compared to other approaches. Whilst the use of an expert panel can be seen as a strength, it is recognised that defining ‘expertise’ when working with CYP at risk of exclusion is complex and subject to debate (Sackman, 1975). For example, how EPs measure their success with this population is potentially very subjective, particularly as the impact of EP work is challenging to measure. Additionally, as participants were self-selecting there was no way to verify participants if LA emails were not used and their personal emails could not be verified with the HCPC (2016). Whilst the experience level of the participants on the expert panel met the researcher’s inclusion criteria, it may have been beneficial to approach more specialised EPs (e.g., those who have published research in this area) to gain more detailed or comprehensive data. However, with nine members of the panel holding specialist roles in relation to CYP at risk of exclusion, low drop-out rates and the comments outlining high motivation, it seems that participants were committed to sufficiently completing the research.

### 5.8.2.3 *The analysis*

When reflecting on the themes, codes and statements derived from the TA and used for the Round 2 questionnaire, it appeared that there was potentially more overlap between statements and themes than might be expected. For example, the statements referring to ‘narrative approaches’ were present under two subthemes for the use of consultation (e.g., ‘approaches in consultation’ and ‘consultation as client centred’), which may have presented as repetitive and confusing for participants. However, it is acknowledged that much of EP practice is overlapping and it is challenging to separate different areas of practice seamlessly. Additionally, the inclusion of these areas of practice within different subthemes allowed for an insight into when or where a particular aspect of practice might be perceived to be most or least appropriate. For example, whilst using narrative approaches to maintain a client-centred perspective in EP practice reached a consensus for being essential in either all or some cases in Round 2, participants initially did not reach consensus for using narrative consultation approaches in Round 2 (although this was then achieved in Round 3). This highlights the lack of guidance or agreed standards for interpreting and analysing the results of a Delphi and represents an overall weakness of the approach (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019).

Whilst the Delphi allows for the identification of many areas of practice where a consensus opinion is gained, it is not possible to interpret the reasoning for a participant’s decision making. For example, why a participant might rate a statement as ‘essential in all situations’, ‘essential in some situations’ or ‘not essential’ is difficult to determine (e.g., whether this was based on EP knowledge of evidence-bases or personal preference). For example, taking the use of collaboration in consultation, it is perhaps challenging to know participant’s definition of conceptualisation or collaboration (and perhaps how this is distinct from relationship building). It is likely that EP participants were drawing on different experiences and evidence bases to inform their opinions on best practice. As the reasoning

behind EP's decisions was not explored and given the potential subjectivity of the interpretation of the Likert scale labels (e.g., how a participant interprets 'essential in some situations'), there is likely a need to display some caution when interpreting and applying the findings in practice.

### ***5.9 Implications for future research and practice***

As discussed previously, the literature review highlighted a lack of research exploring the role of the EP when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. Additionally, where research has been conducted, it is based primarily on the perceptions of a small sample of participants and does not rigorously measure the influence of the aspects of practice that they are exploring (e.g., intervention, facilitating managed moves, role of a multidisciplinary team).

Despite the limitations outlined, the findings from the current study offer a clear starting point for future practice and research. This might include using the EPEP framework to guide EP involvement in this area and to support more rigorous evaluative methodology examining the impact of specific aspects of practice identified. It is important to consider the main implications of the findings in detail, both for practice and research, by further considering questions and ideas raised by the research.

#### ***5.9.1 What is missing?***

As mentioned throughout the discussion, one of the limitations of the findings and an implication for both EP practice and future research is the absence of some aspects of practice that, based on knowledge of the wider literature on exclusions and the statistics mentioned in the introduction of this work, the researcher feels are pertinent to EP work in this area. Whilst several areas were alluded to throughout the discussion, this is particularly true for the absence of cultural, racial, and ethnic factors and their complex relationship to exclusions, particularly



the consideration of how EPs might address discrimination in relation to these areas. It is challenging to determine whether this omission was an issue with the process of the current research or a wider problem of an absence of this work in practice. For example, perhaps the prompts provided in Questionnaire 1 were too rigid, and potentially exclusionary of considering racial and ethnic factors in relation to exclusion. It may have been helpful to have included a prompt specifically focused on the EPs role in this area (given the statistical information available to support this). Additionally, given that systemic and institutional racism is embedded into our culture, and given that a large percentage of the EPs participating in the current study identified their ethnicity as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (over 73%), it is perhaps a more complicated dynamic between white privilege, whereby the inherent advantages of a white person on the basis of their race may lead to lack of awareness of factors that are outside of their own experiences (McIntosh, 1988), and difficulties knowing how to appropriately address racial discrimination at a systemic level that have influenced the omission of these factors. Indeed, the absence of these factors perhaps reflects an absence of practice in this area and/or a lack of knowledge about addressing these issues in casework.

Due to the potential oversimplification and separation of factors (and themes) in the current research, it may be that further research is needed to explicitly explore EP practice in relation to race, ethnicity and culture and exclusion rates, particularly by considering the potential overlap between areas of practice when working in this way. For example, by acknowledging the role of the EP in addressing racial and ethnic discrimination in relation to exclusions at both an individual and systemic level. Whilst research has explored the exclusion experiences of CYP from racial and ethnic minorities (Boyd, 2019; Demie, 2021; Standen et al., 2005) it would be interesting for future research to evaluate the specific role of the EP when working with CYP racialised as Black or Roma heritage who are most at risk of exclusion. This

might include exploring how EPSs or LAs might serve to explicitly promote positive outcomes for these CYP (e.g., by challenging existing, inequitable structures and policies in schools). Further exploration of the role of the EP to work preventatively (perhaps with primary schools) to prevent exclusions whilst considering equity, diversity, and inclusion in relation to race, culture and gender will also be important.

Additionally, it is hoped that the omission of this finding will stimulate thinking about the potential 'blind-spots' for EPs in this area of practice and lead to the development of strategies for reflecting on this. Indeed, as the importance of training was raised in the findings of this research, the development of training for EPs and potentially also EP-delivered training for schools, on the links between race, discrimination and exclusionary practice will be important to consider. In particular, as the EPEP framework does not yet adequately cover these areas, it is hoped that further research can be undertaken in future to measure the efficacy of the current framework and to help develop the tool for EP use in this area in the future. For example, the researcher hopes to refine the framework and accompanying checklists through seeking feedback from several EP (and TEP) networks, including those who focus on creating change in the profession from a racial/cultural perspective (such as the newly developed Trainee Educational Psychologists Initiative for Cultural Change [TEPICC]).

It is important to consider that despite EP intervention and work around exclusions, current increases in school exclusions are a reflection that this involvement, alongside other measures in place by schools and other professionals, are not effectively reducing overall numbers of exclusions. This calls into question whether areas of practice that are largely missing, particularly where this reflects wider social and racial inequity and discrimination, may be critical to creating change and essential to consider in the future.

### *5.9.2 Is 'good EP practice' when working with CYP at risk of exclusion distinct?*

Another important question raised by the findings is whether EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion is distinct from other areas of EP practice. For example, many of the areas identified (particularly in relation to the main themes; consultation, assessment, training, EP skills and characteristics and systemic role shown in the EPEP framework) are aspects of practice that are common to EP involvement in several types of casework. Consideration should be given to whether some areas of practice are specific to work around exclusions, such as addressing racial and ethnic discrimination at the school, EPS and LA level, both when working with individual exclusion cases and potentially as part of the role of working groups for exclusion. Additionally, other aspects of practice highlighted throughout the literature review and discussion, including the EP role in managed moves, working systemically, working in multi-disciplinary teams and working preventatively, may also be more specific to work relating to exclusions and will be important to research further in the future. Whilst the aim of this research was to highlight distinct features of practice when EPs work with CYP at risk of exclusion, the researcher acknowledges the ambitious breadth of the task and the subsequent reduced detail within each area of practice identified. Future research should more explicitly explore the distinct and unique contribution of EP work when working with this population by building on the factors highlighted by the current findings.

### *5.9.3 Conceptualisation of practice areas*

As alluded to in the discussion, the findings raise several questions about the conceptualisation of different areas of EP practice. It is well known that certain areas of EP practice, particularly assessment and consultation, are difficult to define clearly (Kennedy et al., 2008). Some of the findings from this research perhaps suggest that the concept of assessment was potentially ill-defined amongst participating EPs and potentially more widely in the profession. Given the

wide variety of factors included in the 'use of assessment' theme, which span across systemic assessment, school assessment, learning and SEMH assessment (as well as assessment of data and policies) and the overlaps between assessment practice and consultation practice (particularly evident in the literature where consultation was viewed by some as a form of assessment) it raises questions about the definition and conceptualisation of assessment. For future research to comprehensively explore and evaluate EP assessment work with CYP at risk of exclusion, a consensus of its definition will be necessary.

Additionally, given that only 25% of participants thought it was 'always essential' to assess learning needs, despite the relationship between learning and SEMH needs being a known barrier to engagement in learning for CYP at risk of exclusion, it is perhaps unclear what assessments EPs are using to explore the needs of these CYP and how effective they are. Considering both points, research should potentially explore in more detail the distinct assessment processes for effective involvement with CYP at risk of exclusion (for example, what psychological frameworks and assessment approaches should be used to highlight strengths and areas for intervention for these CYP and which of these seem to lead to the most change).

As mentioned previously, consultation in EP practice is also thought to be conceptualised differently across the EP profession (Kennedy et al., 2008). Whilst the current findings demonstrate a strong consensus for using consultation as an approach, EPs also agreed that using a specific model of consultation was not an essential aspect of practice. This perhaps indicates that EPs do not necessarily perceive consultation approaches to involve using specific models. Indeed, perhaps some EPs conceptualise the term 'consultation' as the skills required for delivering consultation meetings in practice rather than reflecting the descriptions of consultation presented in theories, models, and frameworks. This echoes wider difficulties within EP practice where there is often a distinct divide between what is possible in theory and

the reality of EP practice. As with assessment, future research would benefit from determining a consensus about consultation's definition. Additionally, it would be useful to know whether the consultation process looks different for EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion or whether consultation approaches used in other areas of practice are valid (as the current research suggests). It will be important to consider what consultation approaches are most beneficial for promoting positive outcomes for these CYP, how EPs are selecting and applying these approaches in practice and the evaluation of specific aspects of consultation, such as the relationship or collaboration – arguably challenging to separate – on outcomes for these CYP.

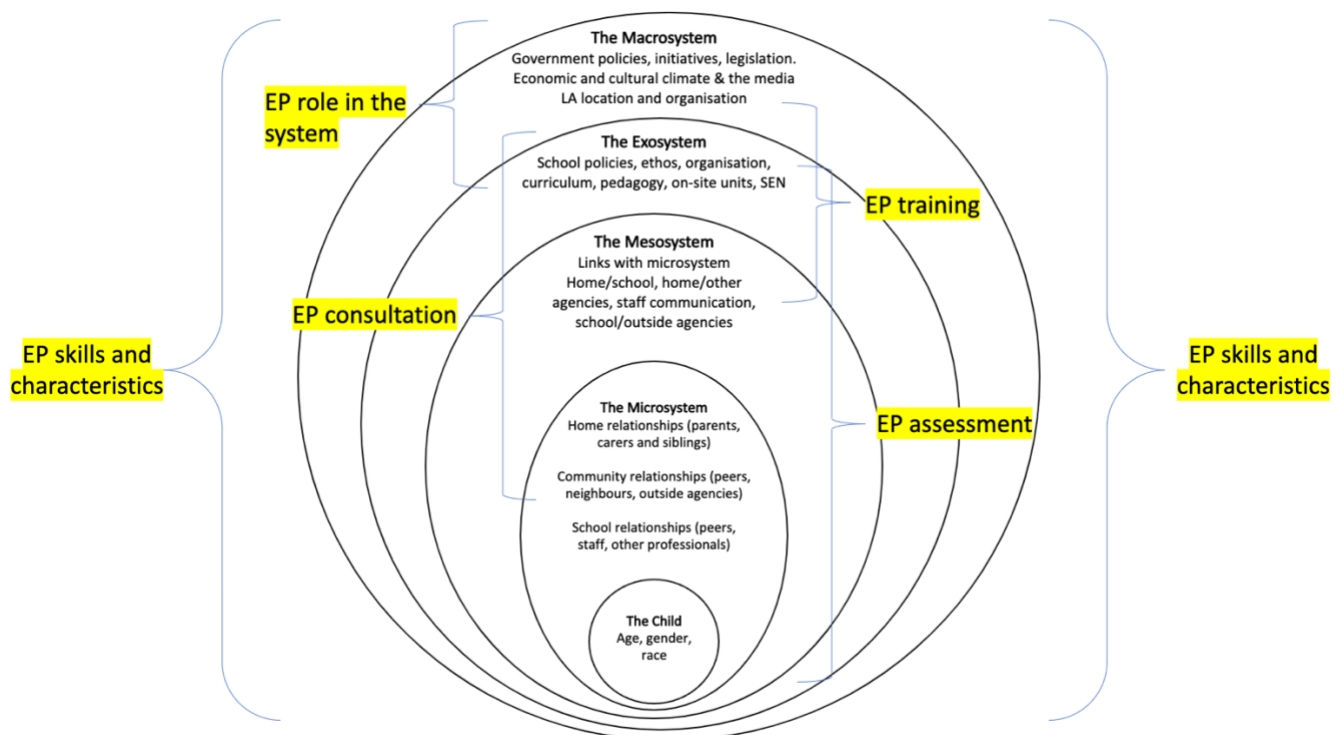
It is acknowledged that whilst the current research offers a great deal in terms of important areas of practice for EPs to consider when working with CYP at risk of exclusion, it also potentially attempts to address an overwhelming number of factors and therefore is limited in its ability to offer detailed information about specific areas of practice. More precise research is therefore needed to clarify, expand, and evaluate the areas of practice identified. Further research should also consider exploring EPs reasons for selecting the areas of practice they use when working with this population and address the difficulties with measuring the efficacy of EP practice both broadly and in specific relation to CYP at risk of exclusion.

#### 5.9.4 Making sense of the findings from a theoretical perspective

Many of the research findings, including the areas that have been highlighted as 'missing' from the current research, can be partially understood by using several theoretical stances. For example, given that the findings outline the EP role when working with CYP at risk of exclusion at several levels (including the individual, group and system/organisational level) it is useful to consider the findings in relation to ecological systems theory, which considers how examining the multitude of social environments in which a CYP finds themselves can help support understanding of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). To demonstrate this, Figure 49 is adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Collins (2013) and outlines how the findings

interact with exclusion work at the different levels of the ecosystemic framework. This highlights that both layers of the ecosystemic framework, and the areas of EP practice are not discrete or static but rather are interwoven as bi-directional interactions take place.

**Figure 49.** An adaptation of the ecosystemic framework for EP practice with CYP at risk of school exclusion



In the model, the child and their individual characteristics are at the centre, followed by relationships that directly influence the child (home, community, school) which are located in the microsystem. The mesosystem highlights the interconnections between the child's relationships with home, school, outside agencies and the community, and provides further consideration of how these areas interact outside of the individual child. The exosystem outlines social structures that may be impacting on both the microsystem and mesosystem, for

example school structures, the organisation, policy, and ethos (all of which clearly impact CYP at risk of exclusion). Finally, the macrosystem details political, social and cultural attitudes, as well as government initiatives and legislation which have a complex and layered impact on structures and individual behaviours both within and outside the school are positioned.

As is shown in the model, it seems essential that EP skills and characteristics are present at each of these levels when working, whereas consultation seems more related to practice at the microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem. EP assessment was thought to be essential at every level outside of the macrosystem (particularly when considering the variety of assessment methods suggests (from standardised cognitive assessments to an assessment of the school environment). EP training can be thought to bridge the mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem depending on the type of training (e.g., EP-delivered training vs. EP CPD). Finally, the EPs role in the system (both the school and wider system level) maps onto the exosystem and macrosystem in the model. Using the ecosystemic approach to understand and situate the findings through considering all levels of the system therefore highlights both how a complex series of factors, from both outside and within school and child, impact on both CYP at risk of exclusion and EP practice when working with these CYP.

Whilst this theory goes some way to explaining the findings, it perhaps does not establish or explain missing aspects of practice mentioned previously. By considering the ecosystemic stance alongside a systems-psychodynamic perspective, it is perhaps possible to illuminate explanations for the absence of addressing race and ethnicity within good EP practice in this area as found in the current research findings. Systems psychodynamics refers to a range of psychological behaviours within and between groups and organisations as well as related conscious and unconscious motivating forces (Lawlor & Sher, 2021). It combines and applies psychoanalysis, group dynamics and systems theory to facilitate a deeper understanding of the impact of social defences and the unconscious (Lawlor & Sher, 2021) in organisations.

One commonly discussed aspect of systems-psychodynamic perspectives is object relations theory, which provides an interpersonal perspective on psychoanalysis (Townley, 2008) and highlights primitive defence mechanisms such as splitting, introjections, projection and projective identification against anxiety (Stapley, 2018). One way of understanding the absence of discussion around race and ethnicity in the current findings (and potentially at a practice-level) may be partially explained by considering the role of these defense mechanisms at both the individual, group (EPS) and system (organisation) level, as well as wider societal-level defense mechanisms in what has been termed “white defensiveness” (Cram, 2021). Given that the majority of the participants in the current research (and more widely in the EP profession) identified themselves as white, it is possible that there was some avoidance (the dismissal of thoughts or feelings that are uncomfortable; Klein, 1930; 1946) or denial (ignoring the reality of a situation to avoid anxiety; Klein, 1930; 1946) of race at the individual level (e.g., by individual EPs but potentially as a product of these defenses at an organisational level) as an important factor in school exclusions (e.g., the avoidance of exclusions as being a primarily racial concern).

Finally, by considering this finding from a critical race theory perspective (Roithmayr, 2019), which holds that social institutions (including the LA, EPS’, the education system) are institutionally racist, it is likely that these defense mechanisms are at play at a societal and organisational level, which has a potentially powerful impact in suppressing thought and discussion about race in exclusions work at the full variety of levels outlined by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecosystemic framework in Figure 49.



### 5.10 Concluding comments

Despite the limitations outlined in the current research, the results clearly offer practical implications for the EP profession and several areas for future research to pursue. This is the first piece of research exploring a consensus opinion on what good EP practice might look like when working with CYP at risk of school exclusion (at the time of writing and to the researcher's knowledge), and which offers a tentative framework to guide good EP practice in this area.

The research adopted the Delphi method to establish what features of good EP practice were deemed important to develop practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. A review of available literature exploring the EP role in this area revealed a surprising lack of research. Whilst there is potentially a vast amount of literature looking at the wider role of the EP with CYP vulnerable to becoming at risk of exclusion (e.g., those with SEMH difficulties, LAC or those from certain ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds), relatively little research examined the specific role of the EP when working with CYP identified as being 'at risk of exclusion'.

The EP respondents reached consensus on 115 statements related to EP practice when working with this population and by drawing together the current findings and those from the literature review, there seems to be an agreement that EP practice in this area spans across all levels of work, including individual, group and the organisational level, as well as incorporating intrapsychic aspects of practice such as a practitioner considering their own skills and characteristics.

There was a high level of consensus for most statements which potentially indicates some heterogeneity within practice in this area. Additionally, the core features of practice outlined aligned well with the five core functions of the EP role that have been identified in

previous research, including consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Fallon et al., 2010). Statements that did not reach consensus were varied, but were largely around using specific approaches, assessment tools (e.g., DA) and EP characteristics (e.g., level of experience). The statements and areas of practice which reached consensus amongst the expert panel have formed a tentative framework for EPs to use when working with CYP at risk of exclusion to support the consideration and selection of relevant and useful aspects of practice. It is hoped that future research will attempt to build upon this study by evaluating the efficacy of the framework and to research further the areas of practice identified as useful when working with CYP at risk of exclusion from the current study to expand on existing literature.

In conclusion, EPs have a key role when working with CYP at risk of exclusion, particularly considering the increasing rates of exclusion, the potential impact of the pandemic and the negative outcomes for this population. This is addressed to some extent by guidance of EP governing bodies, but it is widely acknowledged that there are several barriers to practising in this way, particularly regarding the structures and systems of schools, the EPS and LAs and the time constraints faced by EPs. However, it is hoped that despite these barriers, this research has provided a framework for EPs to use and develop their practice when working with this complex and multifaceted social issue to achieve the best outcomes for this population of CYP.

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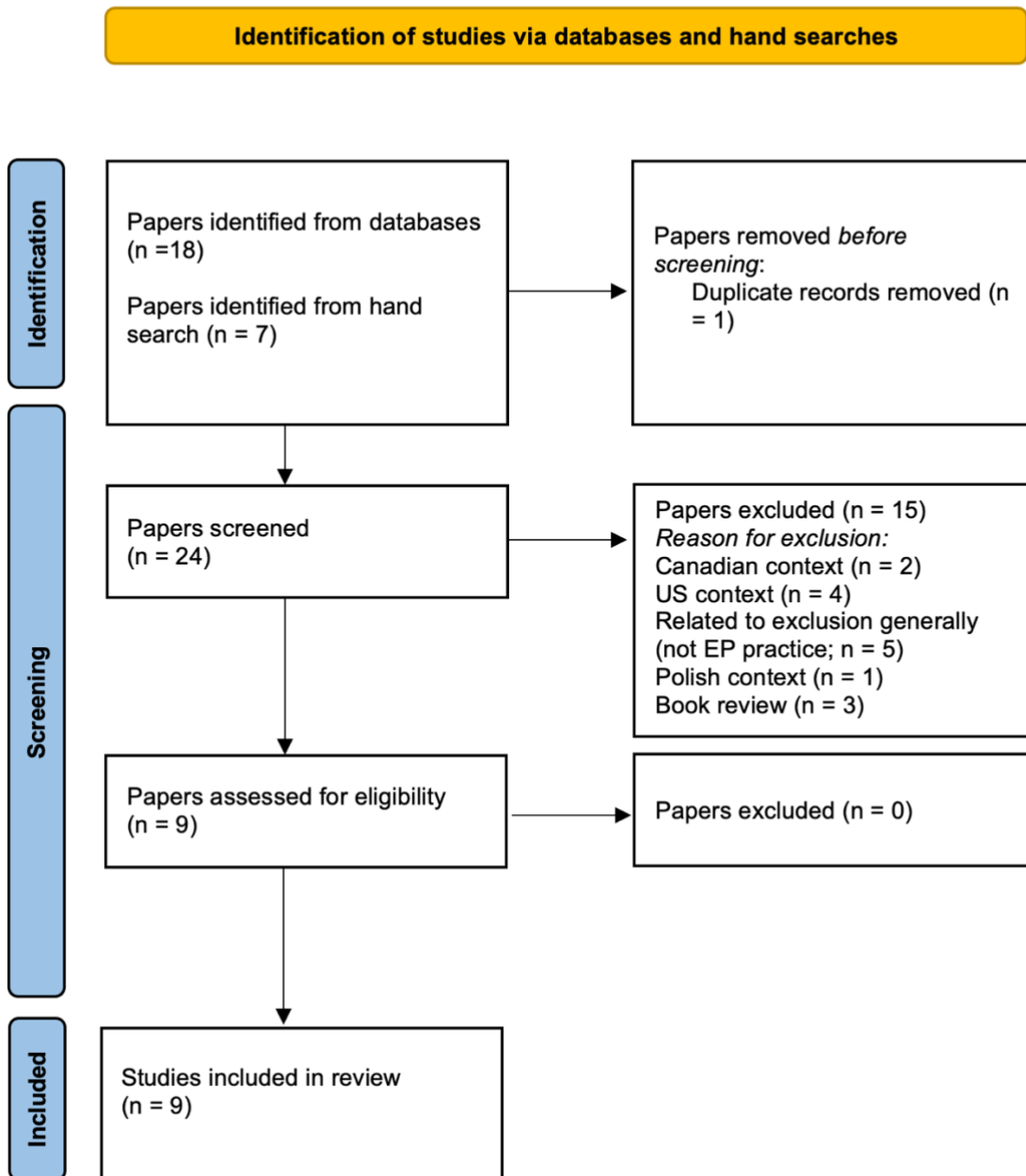
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## Appendices

### Appendix A. PRISMA flow diagram

#### PRISMA flow diagram



## Appendix B. A summary of the empirical papers and theses reviewed in the current research

Title & Author	Participants	Type of study	Aims	Methodology/approach	Key findings
<p><i>Using personal construct psychology to reduce the risk of exclusion.</i></p> <p>Hardman (2001)</p>	Individual, male, Year 10 (14-15 years old), considered to be at risk of permanent school exclusion.	Peer reviewed	The paper aims to provide a detailed description of the techniques used during an 8-week intervention with a Y10 pupil at risk of exclusion, which included work with the individual pupil, staff and parents.	Qualitative single case study detailing an individual 8-week intervention using Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) 1 x per week, 40-minute sessions, facilitated by an EP.	<p>The YP was able to engage in the 8-week PCP intervention, including the activities, and was motivated to become his 'ideal self'. YP wanted his family to believe he could change and was able to recognise that he could be perceived as 'cool' by peers and have a 'good attitude' in school. The YP attended all sessions.</p> <p>The PCP activities enabled the YP to consider alternative 'world views' and accordingly adjust his behaviour in school. Verbal and written reports from child, school staff, parents and qualitative reports indicated that the pupil had a more positive view of his behaviour. At 4-month follow-up pupil was not excluded.</p>
<p><i>Is there a role for Educational Psychologists in facilitating managed moves?</i></p> <p>Bagley &amp; Hallam (2017)</p>	Eleven members of school staff (Head-teachers, SENDCOs and Inclusion Officers) and Five authority staff (Education Welfare Officer, Head of multiagency team for Looked After Children) in an English Local Authority.	Peer reviewed	The aim of the research is to explore with Local Authority and school staff whether they perceive that Educational Psychologists might have a role in supporting managed moves.	Semi-structured Interviews	<p>EPs might have a role to play in relation to managed moves which constitute an alternative to permanent exclusion.</p> <p>A range of themes emerged from the analysis including lack of role clarity; variability between schools; reactive in relation to crisis; capacity; and possibilities for further involvement (transition, early preventative work, assessment of needs).</p>

<p><i>Strength-based interventions in secondary schools: How can they be most helpful for pupils at-risk and not-at-risk of exclusion?</i></p> <p>Chatzinikolaou (2015)</p>	<p>A group of ten YP selected from KS3 (Year 7, 8 and 9) from each of three mainstream secondary schools with reportedly high ethnic diversity.</p> <p>Of the 10, five had to be randomly selected from the school population and five had to meet 'challenging behaviour' criteria (the CYP were identified as being at risk of exclusion).</p> <p>In total, nineteen pupils (N = 19) participated in the study and intervention and of them the majority (n = 16) were boys, with only three 43 girls. The participants attended years 9 (n = 1) and 8 (n = 2), with the majority attending year 7 (n = 16). The final population consisted of 11 CYP At Risk of Exclusion (AROE) and 8 non-AROE pupils.</p> <p>Five pupils AROE and three pupils non-AROE were interviewed following the intervention.</p> <p>There were also three school staff co-facilitators (Assistant Manager of Behaviour, Inclusion Curriculum Coordinator and Pupil Premium Learning Support Assistant).</p>	<p>Thesis</p>	<p>The paper aims to explore the effectiveness of strength-based techniques for adolescents, including those who are at risk of school exclusion.</p> <p>Specifically, the study aimed to investigate the effect of a strength-based intervention on CYP's school engagement, life satisfaction, strengths and difficulties, and school attendance.</p> <p>It also aimed to clarify how to improve professional practice for educational psychologists (EPs) and educators when using these approaches.</p>	<p>A mixed methods approach: Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>5-sessions strength-based intervention programme was not sufficient to affect school attendance</p> <p>Both pupils at risk of exclusion and those not at risk had the same attitudes towards coming to school before and after the intervention</p> <p>Information from the pre- (Time 1) and post- (Time 2) questionnaires was obtained to measure life satisfaction, attendance, school engagement, and strengths and difficulties. There was no significant change in the dependent variables examined, this was noted for the sample after the completion of the intervention.</p> <p>However, qualitative staff feedback suggested improvements in overall difficulties of the pupils At Risk Of Exclusion (AROE) seemed to be more noteworthy than the improvements for pupils non - AROE.</p> <p>Emotional symptoms and peer problems seemed to have improved more for pupils AROE than for those non AROE</p> <p>Social competencies and personal development seemed to improve; empathy seemed to have developed for the pupils, alongside self-reflection and improved self-awareness; Self-esteem and confidence improvements were prominent in pupils and staff accounts.</p> <p>The intervention seemed to enable pupils to become less judgmental and acknowledge that other individuals have strengths and positives in them.</p> <p>The author does not outline whether or not the intervention led to a reduction in exclusions for these CYP.</p>
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<p><i>'Over To You': Group work to help pupils avoid school exclusion.</i></p> <p>Burton (2006)</p>	<p>Two girls and three boys were selected from a Year 8 cohort by staff at a Secondary school and invited by the EP to participate in the group. All were frequently in trouble with teachers because of their behaviour in school.</p> <p>A key member of staff for each pupil completed a self-rating social skills assessment for. All five members of staff completed the form.</p>	Peer reviewed	<p>The paper aims to describe the effectiveness of support of secondary pupils at risk of school exclusion by delivering an EP led group intervention designed to promote individual responsibility for behaviour based on CBT approaches.</p>	<p>A mixed methods approach: Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Pupils' self-ratings and teacher ratings increased for the following: social skills, paying attention when spoken to, expressing emotions, using appropriate body language, speaking in a pleasant tone, better at asking for help, following the rules of play. All five participants were said to have improved in listening and responding to staff. All the cumulative teacher ratings increased by between 10 and 15 points. Seven months after the group ended, the assistant head teacher was again contacted by the EP and reported none of the YP had been excluded from school and had shown either small or significant improvements in behaviour.</p>
<p><i>A research project to prevent the exclusion from school of 'at risk' primary aged pupils.</i></p> <p>Williams (2018)</p>	<p>Five Year 5 pupils highlighted as at risk of school exclusion by their school.</p> <p>The adults working with these children (Headteacher, SENCo, Behaviour Support Advisory Teacher, Primary 143 Mental</p>	Thesis	<p>The aim of the research was to investigate whether the exclusion of a group of primary school pupils within a Local Authority primary school who had been identified as 'at risk' of exclusion by</p>	<p>A case study approach using mixed methods: Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as well as school-based assessment</p>	<p>The findings suggest that a systemic approach to assessment can produce a rich picture of risk and protective factors at individual, school and family levels. The research found many key themes across and common to the five cases, including: misperceptions of developmental delay/learning difficulties by school staff. high pupil satisfaction with school.</p>

	Health therapist, Trainee EP and main grade EP (multi-agency), parents, teaching assistants/learning support assistants)		school staff, could be prevented through an EPs systemic approach to assessment and intervention.  The researcher also collected longitudinal data to track the short- and long-term outcomes of the research project.		differences between predicted and actual levels of self-esteem. low levels of hope. external loci of control. absence of the child's voice in previous assessments. identifiable behavioural antecedents. complexity of home circumstances. a lack of home/school liaison. a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the interventions used with pupils experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The researcher found that 4 years after the beginning of the project (following the YP from Year 6 to Year 9) none of the participants were perceived as 'at risk of exclusion'.
<i>An Exploration of Educational Psychology Support for Children at Risk of School Exclusion.</i>  Waite (2014)	One Participant Specialist Educational Psychologist (SEP) and the parents/guardians and key school professionals involved with the individual children the SEP was involved with.  A total of eight participants were involved in the study. In casework 1 the participants included the Participant Specialist EP, the head teacher, the child's class teacher and one of the child's parents.  In casework 2 the participants included the Participant Specialist EP, the head teacher, the child's class teacher and both of the child's parents.	Thesis	To explore the strategies and methods employed by the Participant Specialist Educational Psychologist when working with CYP at risk of exclusion and perceived unique contribution from the SEPs and those of the school professionals and parents involved in the two pieces of casework.	In-depth single case study.  The data was gathered through one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the Participant Specialist EP, the parents/guardians and the school professionals. For casework 1, individual interviews were conducted with the Participant Specialist EP, the head teacher at the school, the child's class teacher and with one of the child's parents. For casework 2, individual interviews were conducted with the Participant Specialist EP, the head teacher of the school and the child's class teacher. A joint interview was conducted with both of the child's parents in casework 2. The one-to-one semi-structured interviews addressed all the research questions. The Participant Specialist EP was interviewed twice; once for casework 1 and once for casework 2. All the other participants were interviewed once.	The strategies and methods applied by the Participant Specialist EP in effective specialist work to support CYP with SEBD, at risk of school exclusion and successfully reducing exclusions, were inclusive of: Consultation - used consultation as a method to aid collaborative problem-solving conversations with school staff and parents, to form a joint action plan for an individual child Assessment - used assessment as a method to formulate understanding of the situation surrounding the child from an ecological perspective to then inform the action plan in the consultations. Use of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) and observation Training - used training as a method of supporting school staff to develop their skills to implement the action plan. Participant Specialist EP trained people and developed their skills through presenting to a group of welfare staff and through using consultation. Connecting Socially - consultation and training were used as methods to connect socially, whilst the positive outcomes of the consultation and training were supported by the Participant Specialist EP's skills and ability to connect socially (e.g., friendly and approachable manner)



					<p>Staying in the Process - Participant Specialist EP stayed in the process by offering additional follow up support and by being available to schools and parents, when they needed her. The Participant Specialist EP's ability to stay in the process enabled her to keep changing the strategies until the children were settled in school. The criteria for selection of the SEPs casework was positive outcomes for the CYP with whom the SEP was involved. Thus, in both pieces of casework the CYP was no longer at risk of exclusion after the SEPs involvement.</p>
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<p><i>The increasing use of permanent exclusion by primary schools a thematic analysis of the perceptions of school staff and Educational Psychologists.</i></p> <p>Gould (2018)</p>	<p>Perceptions of twelve school staff from two mainstream primary school settings and one alternative provision.</p> <p>A Head Teacher, SENCO, class teacher and a pastoral support assistant were sought from each setting (thus, four participants were recruited from each setting)</p> <p>Nine Educational Psychologists were also recruited from the researchers EPS</p>	<p>Thesis</p>	<p>The research aimed to answer the following questions were:</p> <p>What reasons do primary school staff and EPs give for the apparent rise in primary school exclusions?</p> <p>How might EPs contribute to supporting primary school staff to reduce permanent exclusion, from the perspectives of school staff and EPs?</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>School staff and EPs' reasons for the increasing numbers of exclusions from primary school related to three main overlapping themes: 'changing educational landscape' (including 'performative pressures' on primary schools'; 'reduced resources' and 'curriculum changes'); 'systems of non-mainstream provision' (including 'support for pupils' and 'Local Authority systems') and 'changing demands of staff skills' (including 'changes in staff relationships with parents', 'challenging home life of pupils' and 'changes in pupil's readiness for school').</p> <p>The EP and school staff perceptions of EPs contribution to this area involved their impact at a national (e.g., through informing policy), local authority (including through training LA staff to develop understanding of exclusions from primary school) and school level (including 'systemic approaches'; 'supporting staff'; 'the EPs role related to behaviour and SEN'; 'research' and 'direct work with pupils'. The role of the EP is outlined by the research as fitting into the five core purposes; consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research.</p>
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<p><i>Multi-disciplinary approaches to pupil behaviour in school – the role of evaluation in service delivery.</i></p> <p>Hartnell (2010)</p>	<p>Four identically staffed multidisciplinary Behaviour Support Teams (each in a large Local Authority).</p> <p>Each of the four teams contained two specialist EPs working with the team for three days per week each (one EP was the team manager and supervised other team members); two full-time teachers with a specialist in behaviour management in school; one and a half full time equivalent family support workers; one full-time primary mental health worker.</p> <p>37 pupils were also recruited to complete the behaviour questionnaire.</p> <p>Six of these pupils (and separately their parents and teachers) were interviewed.</p>	<p>Peer reviewed</p>	<p>This study aims to evaluate the work and intervention of a multi-disciplinary Behaviour Support Team by exploring the factors that did or did not contribute to effective intervention outcomes around problem behaviour in schools for CYP at risk of school exclusion. The second aim was to use these findings to begin to develop an evidence base to inform practice, reduce exclusions and shape future service delivery.</p>	<p>The study uses an evaluation approach employing a mixed method design using a range of data sources including local permanent exclusion data, a questionnaire to gather information about service use by schools and how interventions were rated, a behaviour questionnaire and interviews.</p>	<p>Only 5% (25 pupils) of the 490 pupils supported by the BST in this first year of service operation were amongst those permanently excluded. This indicates that permanent exclusion was avoided for the vast majority of the pupils supported by the service in this first year of service operation, referred to the BST because they were at serious risk of permanent exclusion 88.5% of the pupils permanently excluded were not known to the BST. This demonstrates the importance of increasing knowledge of how to use the service most effectively Interventions by the BST were generally rated well by schools, with 71.5% of all interventions receiving ratings of 3 or 4. Whole school work received the largest percentage of rating “4” (33%) including training given to staff (this is despite this being the smallest proportion of intervention with individual pupil intervention being the majority of the input (75%). Results from the behaviour questionnaire showed that the pupils had improvements in their behaviour as rated by their teachers 6 months after intervention. Three of the pupil’s interviewed experienced positive outcomes after the BST involvement and three pupils experienced negative outcomes (they were permanently excluded). The following themes emerged as differentiating more successful from less successful outcomes: a thorough assessment was crucial to a successful intervention; successful interventions relied on BST workers developing a range of realistic, appropriate and effective strategies, teaching new skills and helping to evaluate outcomes. With pupils it was critical to develop personalised targets and rewards helped pupils to develop their own strategies and monitor their own behaviour; ability of the BST workers to be responsive and available (practically and emotionally) to the needs and views of the clients (mutual trust and respect); the role of the BST in</p>
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					<p>systemic work such as fostering joint working between home and school was often cited as a key factor by those interviewed; importance of the impact of the BST on CYPs outcomes (e.g., increased awareness, self-reflection, positive engagement with learning and ability to express and deal with emotions.)</p>
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<p><i>Using solution focused brief therapy to support secondary aged pupils facing exclusion from school.</i></p> <p>Wilson (2005)</p>	<p>Eight Year 7 pupils (11-12 years old): 2 girls, 6 boys. All pupils were considered at risk of permanent exclusion. These CYP had already received fixed-term exclusions at primary school and in the first term at secondary school. All young people were nominated by the school SENDCO or year leader as in need of additional support due to behavioural presentation.</p>	<p>Thesis</p>	<p>The research hoped to use a SFBT intervention delivered by the EP to address the following aims: To support the pupils' continued attendance and at the same time evaluate the impact of intervention To simultaneously develop and evaluate a flexible model of SFBT that was responsive to pupil need from an initial model based on a review of current literature to consider the compatibility of this approach with the school context.</p>	<p>The study uses a mixed method evaluation and action research approach. The researcher employs several methods including a solution-focused based questionnaire; case notes; researcher diaries; school records (e.g., behaviour reports and exclusion figures); verbal feedback on pupil's progress at weekly staff meetings; pupil satisfaction of progress; parent informal and unstructured interviews.</p>	<p>Qualitative findings: All pupils identified improvement in at least one target. One pupil only set one target. 5 out of 8 pupils reported improvements in all of their targets. One pupil progressed in 2 out of 3 targets. One pupil reported improvement in only one target with no change in others. Overall, 21 problem behaviours were identified by pupils. 18 of these behaviours were rated as improved by the final session. At approximately 14 weeks post-intervention (at end of school year) none of the pupils had been permanently excluded. Quantitative findings showed that fighting incidents, disruptive incidents, and temporary exclusions reduced. 7 of the 8 pupils improved significantly in relation to individualised targets and teacher ratings of pupil's showed behaviour as more in keeping with classroom expectations.</p>
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## Appendix C. Guidance materials for the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP; 2018).

CASP Qualitative Checklist. [online] Available at: [https://casp-uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CASPQualitative-Checklist-2018\\_fillable\\_form.pdf](https://casp-uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CASPQualitative-Checklist-2018_fillable_form.pdf)



Paper for appraisal and reference: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section A: Are the results valid?**

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

Yes

Can't Tell

No

HINT: Consider

- what was the goal of the research
- why it was thought important
- its relevance

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

Yes

Can't Tell

No

HINT: Consider

- If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants
- Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Is it worth continuing?**

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?

Yes

Can't Tell

No

HINT: Consider

- if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected
- If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study
  - If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)

Comments:

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5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If the setting for the data collection was justified
- If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)
- If the researcher has justified the methods chosen
  - If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide)
    - If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why
  - If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.)
    - If the researcher has discussed saturation of data

Comments:

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6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location
- How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design

Comments:

Section B: What are the results?

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained
- If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)
- If approval has been sought from the ethics committee

Comments:



8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

Yes

Can't Tell

No

HINT: Consider

- If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process
- If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data
- Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process
- If sufficient data are presented to support the findings
  - To what extent contradictory data are taken into account
- Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation

Comments:

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?

Yes

Can't Tell

No

HINT: Consider whether

- If the findings are explicit
- If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments
- If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)
- If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question

Comments:

Section C: Will the results help locally?

10. How valuable is the research?

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature)
- If they identify new areas where research is necessary
- If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

Comments:

## Appendix D. Recruitment information

### Brief Advertisement to participants

Hi everyone,

I'm currently a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist from The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. I'm researching EP's opinions about the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of permanent school exclusion.

I am looking for the following participants:

- Qualified EPs (at either masters or doctoral level) who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- EPs who hold a specialist role working with CYP at risk of exclusion (e.g., those with SEMH needs, PRU work, YOS work etc.) **OR** an EP with who has worked on at least 3 pieces of case work with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion in the last 5 years.

If you meet these criteria and agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a series of 3 surveys, each of which will build on the previous survey responses. The amount of time needed for completion of each questionnaire (or 'round') will vary for each panellist but should range from approximately 15-30 minutes for Round 1, 10-20 minutes for Round 2 and 20-30 minutes for Round 3.

If you follow the link for survey one, you will be prompted to leave your email to be contacted for the second and third survey. The first sections of the survey include the information sheet and consent form. Please read this information carefully before starting the survey.

I would be grateful if you could complete my survey and/or pass it on to any colleagues that meet the inclusion criteria.

Having a variety of opinions would be helpful and I am hopeful that the research will help inform practice in supporting CYP at risk of permanent exclusion. If you wish to complete the study, please use the following link for the first survey:

\*[insert link](#)\*

I have ethical approval from \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Kind Regards,

Jessica Rowley

## Appendix E. Ethics Application and approval form

### **Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)** **APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS**

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact Paru Jeram ([academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk))

#### **FOR ALL APPLICANTS**

**If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters. You need only complete sections of the TREC form which are NOT covered in your existing approval**

Is your project considered as 'research' according to the HRA tool? ( <a href="http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/index.html">http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/index.html</a> )	No
Will your project involve participants who are under 18 or who are classed as vulnerable? (see section 7)	No
Will your project include data collection outside of the UK?	No

#### **SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS**

<b>Project title</b>	What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study		
<b>Proposed project start date</b>	May 2020	<b>Anticipated project end date</b>	May 2021
<b>Principle Investigator (normally your Research Supervisor): Dr. Rachael Green</b>			
<b>Please note: TREC approval will only be given for the length of the project as stated above up to a maximum of 6 years. Projects exceeding these timeframes will need additional ethical approval</b>			
<b>Has NHS or other approval been sought for this research including through submission via Research Application System (IRAS) or to the Health Research Authority (HRA)?</b>	<b>YES (NRES approval)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>YES (HRA approval)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>Other</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>NO</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters.</b>			

#### **SECTION B: APPLICANT DETAILS**

<b>Name of Researcher</b>	Jessica Rowley
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<b>Programme of Study and Target Award</b>	M4 - Child, <u>community</u> and educational psychology
<b>Email address</b>	JRowley2@tavi-port.nhs.uk [REDACTED]
<b>Contact telephone number</b>	[REDACTED]

**SECTION C: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

**Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research?**

YES  NO

If YES, please detail below:

[REDACTED]

**Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES  NO**

**Are you proposing to conduct this work in a location where you work or have a placement?**

YES  NO

If YES, please detail below outline how you will avoid issues arising around colleagues being involved in this project:

[REDACTED]

<b>Is your project being commissioned by and/or carried out on behalf of a body external to the Trust? (for example; commissioned by a local authority, school, care home, other NHS Trust or other organisation).</b>	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<small>*Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)</small>	
If YES, please add details here:	
<b>Will you be required to get further ethical approval after receiving TREC approval?</b>	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, please supply details of the ethical approval bodies below AND include any letters of approval from the ethical approval bodies (letters received after receiving TREC approval should be submitted to complete your record):	
If your project is being undertaken with one or more clinical services or organisations external to the Trust, please provide details of these:	
[REDACTED]	
If you still need to agree these arrangements or if you can only approach organisations after you have ethical approval, please identify the types of organisations (eg. schools or clinical services) you wish to approach:	
[REDACTED]	

<p><b>Do you have approval from the organisations detailed above? (<u>this includes R&amp;D approval where relevant</u>)</b></p> <p>Please attach approval letters to this application. Any approval letters received after TREC approval has been granted MUST be submitted to be appended to your record</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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#### **SECTION D: SIGNATURES AND DECLARATIONS**

<p><b>APPLICANT DECLARATION</b></p> <p>I confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date.</li> <li>• I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research.</li> <li>• I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding ethical principles and to keep my supervisor updated with the progress of my research</li> <li>• I am aware that for cases of proven misconduct, it may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research.</li> <li>• I understand that if my project design, methodology or method of data collection changes I must seek an amendment to my ethical approvals as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.</li> </ul>	
<b>Applicant (print name)</b>	Jessica Rowley
<b>Signed</b>	Jessica Rowley
<b>Date</b>	15.03.2021

#### **FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY**

<b>Name of Supervisor/Principal Investigator</b>	Dr Rachael Green
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<p><b>Supervisor –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	
<b>Signed</b>	
<b>Date</b>	22.03.21

<p><b>COURSE LEAD/RESEARCH LEAD</b></p> <p>Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<b>Signed</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

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## SECTION E: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

- 1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)**

This is an exploratory study which aims to develop a framework to be used by Educational Psychologists (EPs) to guide good practice when contributing to successful outcomes for Children and Young People (CYP) at risk of permanent exclusion.

School exclusion is a complex social issue and is known to increase the likelihood of wider social exclusion, crime, poor educational achievement and can perpetuate cycles of disadvantage (Daniels & Cole, 2010; Munn & Lloyd, 2005). In England, a pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year: 'fixed-term' exclusions), or permanently (DfE, 2017).

Despite attempts to reduce permanent exclusions at local and national levels, for example through the identification of factors associated with increased likelihood of exclusion and the implementation of interventions for those CYP at risk of exclusion, the numbers remain high and have detrimental personal and economic costs. The current research therefore aims to explore how EPs, who are often involved in supporting CYP at risk of school exclusion, can best offer support to reduce the likelihood of this outcome.

The proposed research aims to use a classic Delphi method as a surveying technique to reach a consensus of opinion regarding good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of permanent exclusion. This method will involve recruiting an 'expert' panel of EPs who participate in a series of iterative surveys, with two rounds presented using Qualtrics, an online surveying software, and the final round emailed in a word document.

The first Qualtrics survey will first include the information sheet and consent form followed by an open-ended question about the participants opinion regarding good practice. This will be supported by prompts informed by the literature on good practice in this area, including questions related to consultation, assessment, training, the EPs skills and the influence of the system (Waite, 2013). These responses will then be analysed using thematic analysis, collated, and sent back to the panel in the form of statements or questions for a second-round survey. The expert panel is then asked to rate or rank their agreement with these statements in a second survey.

Three rounds of surveys will be used, with the hope that a consensus will be reached on some or all items. For the third and final survey EPs will be provided with their own and other panellists' responses and the opportunity to adjust their responses depending on how they interpret the group's response.

I intend to recruit a minimum of 20 qualified EPs within the profession taking into account the purpose and timeframe of the study. I will attempt to recruit EPs with experience of at least 3 pieces of case work with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion over the last 3-5 years or those who hold a specialist role in supporting these CYP.

The desired outcome is a list of key features for which a consensus of opinion is received about what EPs, practitioners with particular expertise in this area, believe is inherent to supporting those at risk of exclusion in their practice. This is with the intention that this consensus can inform guidelines around practice with CYP at risk of permanent exclusion and will benefit all practicing EPs (in-training, newly qualified and experienced) by functioning as a tool to help guide EP decision making when working with exclusion.

**2. Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community. (Do not exceed 700 words)**

The current study aims to address a gap in the literature about the EPs role in supporting CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion, and more specifically come to a consensus regarding what the key features of 'good practice' are.

Exclusion from school is clearly linked to negative life outcomes such as unemployment, imprisonment, and mental health difficulties. Despite extensive evidence of its adverse impact on young people and families, rates of permanent exclusion are on the increase in England, increasing by 56% between 2013/14 and 2016/17 (DfE, 2014).

Additionally, some groups of children remain overrepresented; boys, children whose ethnicity is Black Caribbean or White and Black Caribbean as well as Roma and Irish travellers are more likely to be excluded (DfE, 2014). Children receiving free school meals or who have a statement of Special Educational Needs, particularly those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, thought to be linked to the most common reason for school exclusion – persistent disruptive behaviour, are also more likely to receive a school exclusion than other groups (DfE, 2014).

There is also a wide variation between exclusion rates in different schools, with higher rates of exclusion in secondary academies than other settings (Hallam & Rogers, 2008) and considerable disparities in rates of exclusion from schools across the four jurisdictions of the UK. For example, in 2016/7 for every million young people in Scotland, where policy states that permanent exclusion must only be used as a last resort, there were approximately 5 permanent exclusions, whereas in England there were approximately 650 per million (McCluskey et al., 2019).

Whilst an emphasis on schools' need to engage in preventative measures and positive alternatives to exclusion can be seen in the extensive Government legislation, guidance documents and national strategies around behaviour and discipline in schools (DCFS, 2008; DfES, 2005), the increasing practice of school exclusion in England is a cause for concern to both policy makers and educationalists.

Governing bodies of EPs clearly address their role in inclusion in their guidelines as an important component to their practice. The British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct states that EPs are required to recognise that they have a professional duty to actively to promote equality and opportunity and challenge discrimination and any social conditions, both at an individual and systemic level, that contribute to social exclusion and stigmatisation (BPS, 2018). The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) also guides practitioner psychologists by acknowledging their need to adapt practice "to meet the needs of different groups and individuals" (HCPC, 2015, p. 8).

Indeed, EPs often have a significant role in supporting children and young people with SEMH needs who are at risk of school exclusion by promoting inclusion through assessment, consultation, therapeutic practice and intervention at an individual and systemic level (Hardman, 2001).

Although research into the EPs role in school exclusion is limited, positive outcomes have been reported through EPs' application of psychological to support those at risk of exclusion at the individual, group and system level (Burton, 2006; Clarke & Jenner, 2006; Smith & Cooke, 2000).

Within the literature, one doctoral thesis used a single case study of a Specialist EP to explore support for children at risk of school exclusion (Waite, 2013). The study addressed what strategies and methods are effective, and the distinctive role of the specialist in cases of school exclusion. Waite (2013) acknowledges the importance of consultation, assessment, training, connecting socially and staying in the process as strategies and methods applied by the Participant Specialist EP in effective specialist work to support CYP at risk of school exclusion.

Since EPs are called upon in crisis situations, there will always be complex casework for CYP at risk of exclusion and research in this area will provide a more comprehensive exploration of how EPs can support positive outcomes for these CYP. However, current available research lacks clarity on how EPs' support may differ depending upon



the severity of a CYPs situation and level of associated risk of exclusion. Additionally, the role of more generalisable good EP practice at all levels remains unclear.

The present research therefore aims to establish a clearer understanding within the EP profession of what knowledge, skills and attitudes are needed to promote successful outcomes by reducing the likelihood of permanent exclusion. It is hoped that findings from the present research will help to inform trainees, newly qualified and experienced EPs, and more specifically promote good practice and act as a framework to guide their practice in this area.

**3. Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, tasks assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)**

The proposed research will use the Delphi method as its research methodology. The Delphi method is an approach that uses multiple surveys to help reach a consensus on an important issue (McKenna, 1994). In this instance, this research seeks a consensus about how Educational Psychologists can demonstrate good practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion. One of the main premises of the Delphi method is that a group opinion is more valid than individual opinion, therefore the aim is to reach a general consensus among EPs regarding this topic.

EPs who self-report as meeting the inclusion criteria for participation and respond to the brief email advert by following the link to the first online Qualtrics survey, which will lead the participant first to an online informed consent sheet, which they will need to complete before continuing participation of the Qualtrics survey.

Overall, participants will be invited to take part in three surveys. The first two surveys will use Qualtrics, an online surveying software. The final survey will be sent via email in a word document to allow for the presentation of the group consensus score alongside the individual's own response before they select their final rating. As is typical of the Classic Delphi study, the first survey will use an open-ended question with the purpose of information gathering to generate ideas about the core features of good EP practice with CYP at risk of exclusion (Keeney et al., 2011). This open-ended question will ask about panel members views on the key features of good practice, which will allow for freedom in their responses and will adopt an inclusive, qualitative stance towards the data.

The open-ended question will be supported by prompts. These prompts will be developed based on findings from the literature. Specifically, Waite (2013), who used a single case study to explore the role of a Specialist EP in working with CYP at risk of exclusion, highlighted several overarching themes that are thought to make up the key features of EP involvement for successful outcomes when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion. These themes (consultation, assessment, training, the EPs skills and the system) will be adapted and used to structure the prompts for the first questionnaire to ensure that each area of practice is addressed.

The results from questionnaire one will be analysed using deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) to identify themes that reflect areas of good practice, such as those found by Waite (2013) and any other themes that arise from the data. Statements will be generated from these themed areas and used for the round 2 survey questions. I am intending to follow established ways of using thematic analysis to create statements taken from other Delphi studies (Keeney et al., 2011).

Whilst thematic analysis is a well-established method for finding themes in qualitative data, it can be subjective and can potentially miss nuances in the data set. It will therefore rely on good researcher reflexivity throughout the process to reflect carefully on the chosen themes and interpretations.

Round 2 will therefore take the form of a structured questionnaire and will include the statements identified from the thematic analysis of Round 1. These key themes and statements will be listed in a second Qualtrics survey and the expert panel will be required to rank or rate each on a 5-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with a given statement in terms of its significance for good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of permanent exclusion. Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse Round 2 data to produce group ratings for each statement as a way of collating and collapsing responses, which will then be re-circulated in Round 3.

Round 3 will be sent as a word document by email and will also use 5-point Likert scales to allow participants to rate or rank statements from Round 2. Those areas that have already reached consensus in the previous round will be eliminated. This round will also provide feedback on the participant's responses to each feature alongside the

group consensus for each feature. Participants will then be invited to re-evaluate their responses in the light of the group opinion.

As the Delphi method employs several phases, it requires a high level of commitment from participants, which can lead to a high drop-out rate. However, to reduce the likelihood of drop-out and as recommended by Keeney et al., (2011), the current study design will be limited to a total of three rounds.

It is advised that panellists are given two weeks to respond to each questionnaire (Delbecq et al., 1975). Following the collation of survey responses from round one, analysis and production of survey two will be approximately one month. Following the collation of survey responses from round two, analysis will take approximately one month.

Following participant recruitment and data collection, all records will either be stored securely on a password protected device or protected cloud-based system (such as Qualtrics) and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (2018), GDPR guidance and in accordance with the Trusts' Data Protection and handling Policies. The data will be kept until analysis is complete.

Participant names and contact details will be required with permission from participants for the duration of the data collection process as the Delphi technique requires specific surveys to be sent to specific participants. The participants will be de-identified by assigning numbers to participants. Participant's personal details will be kept confidentially on a password protected device and only the researcher will be able to access these details: they will not be shared with anyone else and will be deleted after research completion. Any reported data will be presented anonymously, and efforts will be made to ensure that statements generated for round 2 will not be attributable to any individual participant.

Whilst the Delphi method enables a consensus of opinion between experts in a given area, as participants will be presented with the group ratings for each item there is potential for conformity to occur. In this case it will be difficult to determine whether respondents have answered truthfully and may limit the impact of the results.

## **SECTION F: PARTICIPANT DETAILS**

### **4. Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why these criteria are in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)**

The Delphi method aims to recruit 'experts' in the field that the researcher is interested in. Whilst the language of 'experts' is subjective, it is important that panellists have sufficient experience working with CYP at risk of school exclusion.

The degree to which psychologists perceive themselves to have worked successfully in this area may be based on several factors, such as level of self-awareness, level of knowledge, level of exposure or level of practice evaluation. EPs with higher levels of experience are more likely (although not definitively) to have had more experience working with CYP at risk of exclusion. Additionally, EPs who have held specialist positions working with this population, or those with SEMH needs who may be more at risk of exclusion, may be well placed to offer an 'expert' opinion.

To create boundaries around the expert panel (Keeney et al., 2011), the following inclusion criteria will be used:

#### Essential

- Qualified EPs (at either masters or doctoral level) who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council
- Holds a specialist role working with CYP at risk of exclusion (e.g., those with SEMH needs, PRU work, YOS work etc.) OR has experience of working with at least 3 cases with a CYP at risk of permanent exclusion in the last 3-5 years.

The Delphi method can use a sample size of anything between 3 and 80 participants. The literature suggests that it is important that participants who are recruited are knowledgeable in the area of study and are willing to commit to

multiple rounds of questions (Grisham, 2009). The study aims to recruit a minimum of 20 EPs, given the time frame of the research.

The proposed study aims to approach participants by first sending a brief email (see attachment at the end of this form) including an outline of the study details, the inclusion criteria, and a link to the first survey which will include the information sheet and consent form. Simple and specific instructions will be provided for each survey. The brief email will be sent via the following forum:

- The email will be posted on EPNET, an online professional networking forum - EP members of this forum will therefore be sent the advertisement by email

If this does not yield enough participants an email will be sent to the administrator of the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP), a group for PEPs to promote professional development for leaders of EPS' requesting that the message is circulated to all PEPs on their email forum. The message will ask each PEP to either participate and/or distribute the brief email advertisement to the EPs in their services, which will include the link to the first service.

It is acknowledged that EPs practice with many time-constraints, especially those with high levels of experience and responsibilities. Therefore, the Delphi method was chosen as it allows inclusion of a large number of participants and across a number of locations. Whilst participants will be homogenous in their profession and level of 'expertise' (experience), it is with hope that there is heterogeneity amongst the sample to reflect the demographic of the EP population.

An anticipated challenge in participant recruitment is the idea that "those who are willing to engage in discussion are more likely to be affected directly by the outcome of the process and are more likely to become and stay involved in the Delphi" (Keeney et al. 2011, p. 8). The present study recognises that the findings may be most helpful for EPs who are less experienced in this area, such as trainee or newly qualified EPs, who will not be taking part in the survey. It is recognised that "the commitment of participants is related to their interest and involvement with the question or issue being addressed" (Keeney et al, 2011, p. 8). It is with hope that addressing participants as 'experts' in this area and the importance for their views to support the profession, will encourage participation.

**5. Please state the location(s) of the proposed research including the location of any interviews. Please provide a Risk Assessment if required. Consideration should be given to lone working, visiting private residences, conducting research outside working hours or any other non-standard arrangements.**

**If any data collection is to be done online, please identify the platforms to be used.**

Data collection will be done online using a secure surveying site, Qualtrics. This will be accessed via Essex university, which is accessible through my student privileges.

**6. Will the participants be from any of the following groups?(Tick as appropriate)**

- Students or Staff of the Trust or Partner delivering your programme.
- Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research).
- Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)<sup>1</sup>
- Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness.
- Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research.
- Adults in emergency situations.
- Adults<sup>2</sup> with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007).
- Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).
- Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
- Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
- Healthy volunteers (in high risk intervention studies).
- Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent<sup>3</sup> relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients).
- Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6).

- Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility.
- Participants who are members of the Armed Forces.

<sup>1</sup>If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability<sup>3</sup>, any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.  
<sup>2</sup> 'Adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, or a reduction in physical or mental capacity, and living in a care home or home for people with learning difficulties or receiving care in their own home or receiving hospital or social care services.' (Police Act, 1997)  
<sup>3</sup> Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

**7. Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? YES  NO**

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from:

- the participant's personal characteristics (e.g. mental or physical impairment)
- their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g. socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness).
- where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable
- children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable.

**7.1. If YES, what special arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable participants' interests?**

**If YES**, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check **within the last three years** is required.  
 Please provide details of the "clear disclosure":

Date of disclosure:
Type of disclosure:
Organisation that requested disclosure:
DBS certificate number:

(NOTE: information concerning activities which require DBS checks can be found via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance>). Please **do not** include a copy of your DBS certificate with your application

**8. Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? YES  NO**

If **YES**, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.

**9. What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words)**

Participants are qualified Educational Psychologists. As part of their training, a certain competency level of literacy is required to train, such as holding an Undergraduate degree or master's conversion in Psychology. Qualified EPs will have either a doctorate or master's qualification. Therefore, the present study does not envisage difficulties regarding understanding of written information. Where participants may have certain requirements regarding their literacy, this will be highlighted on the information form where they can make the researcher aware if there are any adaptations that need to be made to the surveys to support their participation.

**SECTION F: RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

**10. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? (Tick as appropriate)**

- use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)
- use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection
- use of written or computerised tests
- interviews (attach interview questions)
- diaries (attach diary record form)
- participant observation
- participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research
- audio-recording interviewees or events
- video-recording interviewees or events
- access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent for use of these data for research purposes
- administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process
- performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfort, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction
- Themes around extremism or radicalisation
- investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)
- procedures that involve the deception of participants
- administration of any substance or agent
- use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions
- participation in a clinical trial
- research undertaken at an off-campus location (risk assessment attached)
- research overseas (please ensure Section G is complete)

**11. Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life?**

YES  NO

If YES, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.

No research is ever 100% risk free, however, the anticipated risks posed by the current study, such as mild psychological distress, are likely to be very small. For example, participants may feel some psychological discomfort when reflecting on their practice and potentially feel it is not adequate. However, participants will have the right to withdraw at any time and I will be available to address any concerns via email where I can forward details of support charities if necessary to mitigate or address any risk.

**12. Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research.**

<p>I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, who has regular supervision both on placement as well as accessing regular research supervision. As part of the doctorate course, I have been provided with training to work with those experiencing psychological distress.</p>
<p><b>13. Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words)</b>  <b>NOTE:</b> Where the proposed research involves students, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition.</p>
<p>Participants will help to form guidelines regarding good practice for working with CYP at risk of exclusion in the Educational Psychology profession. This has the potential to be of significant benefit to a large proportion of the profession, largely trainee and newly qualified EPs, but also experienced EPs. Participants will be involved in research which may have a positive impact on more of a systemic level, for example to support EPs to reflect on and develop their practice, and as such has the potential to be a gratifying experience.</p> <p>By supporting EPs by guiding practice in this area, the overarching aim is for this to positively benefit the children and families that EPs work with. If a development and subsequent improvement in practice leads to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families, participants and their profession will have benefited from the research.</p> <p>Having the time and space to review features of good practice when working with school exclusion may also benefit participants in the sense that it might act as a helpful reflective exercise, for example it may prompt actions or next steps regarding their own practice.</p>
<p><b>14. Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)</b></p>
<p>As part of the reflective nature of participants engaging in the surveys, such as reviewing components of practice when working with CYP at risk school exclusion and considering their importance, participants may reflect on significant experiences within their own practice regarding this topic. This may result in some adverse experiences, for example, if participants reflect on a specific case experience which may have been particularly distressing or question their level of competence in previous experiences.</p> <p>As such, participants will be encouraged to reflect on this process in their own supervision they receive. There will also be a space to contact the researcher, should participants feel they would like. As part of the Delphi methods, participants will be contacted for a second phase when reviewing their own results/the results of the group. At this stage the researcher can use this opportunity to re-highlight the space to contact the researcher, should they have any concerns.</p>
<p><b>15. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants.</b></p>
<p>Participants will be debriefed using a debrief form either attached to the end of the Qualtrics survey or via email for subsequent rounds. They will also <u>have the opportunity</u> to contact the researcher to ask any questions if they wish.</p> <p>Participants will be informed with regards to anonymity, <u>confidentiality</u> and the right to withdraw.</p> <p>Using the Delphi method, participants will be shared the group results from survey one. Following survey two, findings will be collated and shared back with participants.</p>

<p><b>16. Please provide the names and nature of any external support or counselling organisations that will be suggested to participants if participation in the research has potential to raise specific issues for participants.</b></p>
<p>Details of support charities such as Samaritans will be supplied if necessary.</p>
<p><b>17. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)</b></p>
<p>N/A</p>

#### **FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN OUTSIDE THE UK**

<p><b>18. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><b>If YES, please confirm:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/">http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/</a></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have completed a RISK Assessment covering all aspects of the project including consideration of the location of the data collection and risks to participants.</p> <p>All overseas project data collection will need approval from the Deputy Director of Education and Training or their nominee. Normally this will be done based on the information provided in this form. All projects approved through the TREC process will be indemnified by the Trust against claims made by third parties.</p> <p>If you have any queries regarding research outside the UK, please contact <a href="mailto:academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk">academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk</a>:</p>
<p>Students are required to arrange their own travel and medical insurance to cover project work outside of the UK. Please indicate what insurance cover you have or will have in place.</p>
<p><b>19. Please evidence how compliance with all local research ethics and research governance requirements have been assessed for the country(ies) in which the research is taking place. Please also clarify how the requirements will be met:</b></p>
<p></p>

#### **SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL**

<p><b>20. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in <i>plain English</i>)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.</b></p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:</p>
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<p><b>21. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in <i>plain English</i>)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.</b></p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:</p>
<p><b>22. The following is a participant information sheet checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clear identification of the Trust as the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher and Principal Investigator (your Research Supervisor) and other researchers along with relevant contact details.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/<a href="#">video-recording</a> of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC or other ethics body.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the <a href="https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/">Trusts 's Data Protection and handling Policies</a>.: <a href="https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/">https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/</a></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (<a href="mailto:academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk">academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk</a>)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.</p>
<p><b>23. The following is a consent form checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trust letterhead or logo.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confirmation that the research project is part of a degree</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confirmation of <a href="#">particular requirements</a> of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.</p>

## **SECTION H: CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY**



**24. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.**

Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?

The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).

The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers are able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).

Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.

Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (i.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)

The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.

Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

**25. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.**

YES  NO

If NO, please indicate why this is the case below:

**NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.**

#### **SECTION I: DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT**

**26. Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES  NO**

If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

**27. In line with the 5<sup>th</sup> principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.**

1-2 years  3-5 years  6-10 years  10> years

**NOTE: In line with Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance, doctoral project data should normally be stored for 10 years and Masters level data for up to 2 years**

**28. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.**

- Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.
- Research data will only be stored in the University of Essex OneDrive system and no other cloud storage location.
- Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.
- Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See 23.1).
- Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the UK.
- Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the UK.

**NOTE:** Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).

Essex students also have access the 'Box' service for file transfer: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/it-services/box>

- Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.
- Collection and storage of personal sensitive data (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political or religious beliefs or physical or mental health or condition).
- Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.
- Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops).

**NOTE:** This should be transferred to secure University of Essex OneDrive at the first opportunity.

- All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.

**NOTE:** For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.

- All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.

**NOTE:** For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

**29. Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.**

**30. Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the UK:**

**SECTION J: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

<p><b>30. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? (Select all that apply)</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer reviewed journal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-peer reviewed journal</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer reviewed books</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publication in media, social <a href="#">media</a> or website (including Podcasts and online videos)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conference presentation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Internal report</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Promotional report and materials</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reports compiled for or on behalf of external organisations</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dissertation/Thesis</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other publication</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Written feedback to research participants</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation to participants or relevant community groups</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify below)</p>
---

#### **SECTION K: OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES**

<p><b>31. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?</b></p>
<p>N/A</p>

#### **SECTION L: CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS**

<p><b>32. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Letters of approval from any external ethical approval bodies (where relevant)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment advertisement</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participant information sheets (including <a href="#">easy-read</a> where relevant)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent forms (including <a href="#">easy-read</a> where relevant)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assent form for children (where relevant)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Letters of approval from locations for data collection</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaire</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interview Schedule or topic guide</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment (where applicable)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Overseas travel approval (where applicable)</p>
<p><b>34. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.</b></p> <p>The proposed study will use the Delphi method, which asks participants to complete three sets of surveys. The first survey is attached to this ethics form and will be sent to participants as part of the first round. The second and third surveys depend on the responses to the first survey and have therefore not yet been created.</p>

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement  
Directorate of Education & Training  
Tavistock Centre  
120 Belsize Lane  
London  
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699  
Fax: 020 7447 3837

Jessica Rowley

**By Email**

12 July 2021

Dear Jessica

**Re: Trust Research Ethics Application**

**Title:** What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study

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.

The Assessor wanted to advise on a reference for your research. Please see below comment:

*A number of classifications for Roma groups is now available for GP systems which identify their country of origin, followed by Roma: e.g. Slovak Roma, Polish Roma. This is acceptable to Roma groups. See P. 75 of [Slovak Roma HNA](#)*

**Please note that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc, must be referred to TREC as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.**

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,



**Paru Jeram**  
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee

T: 020 938 2699

E: [academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

cc. Course Lead, Supervisor, Course Administrator

## Appendix F. Information sheet

### Who can take part in this research?

I am looking for the following participants:

Qualified EPs (at either masters or doctoral level) who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

EPs who hold a specialist role working with CYP at risk of exclusion (e.g., those with SEMH needs, PRU work, YOS work etc.)

OR is an EP with who has worked on at least 3 pieces of case work with CYP at risk of exclusion in the last 3-5 years.

### What does participation involve?

As this research will be carried out using a Delphi technique, if you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a series of three online surveys (known as 'rounds'). The aim is to achieve a consensus opinion amongst a panel of experts in the area. Although there may be some professional discomfort with the term 'expert', in this context it relates to each panellist having extensive experience working with CYP at risk of exclusion. If you choose to participate you will be asked to first complete the consent form and then complete the first survey. Simple and specific instructions will be provided for each survey. The amount of time needed for completion of each questionnaire (or 'round') will vary for each panellist but should range from approximately 15-30 minutes for Round 1, 10-20 minutes for Round 2 and 20-30 minutes for Round 3. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions as this study is seeking your expert opinion. You will be sent reminders to complete the Round 2 and 3 Questionnaires.

## Participant Information Sheet

**Research title:** What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study

### Consent and approval to participate:

This study has been approved by Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC). The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider whether to participate in this study.

### Who is doing the research?

The research will be carried out by Jessica Rowley, a Trainee Educational Psychologist at The Tavistock & Portman NHS trust. The research will be supervised by Dr Rachael Green

### What is the aim of the research?

This research aims to seek a consensus opinion about 'good practice' in Educational Psychology when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion, with the hope to develop a framework to be used by Educational Psychologists (EPs) to guide practice when contributing to successful outcomes for these CYP.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be contributing to forming guidelines regarding good practice when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion in the Educational Psychology profession. This has the potential to be of significant benefit to a large proportion of the profession. Additionally, participants will be involved in research which may have a positive impact on a systemic level, for example to support participating EPs to reflect on and develop their practice, and as such has the potential to be a gratifying, reflective experience. By guiding EP practice in this area, the overarching aim is for this study to positively benefit the children and families that EPs work with. If a development and subsequent improvement in practice leads to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families, the participants and their profession will have benefited from the research.

**What are the possible risks of taking part?**

As part of the reflective nature of participants engaging in the surveys, such as reviewing components of practice when working with CYP at risk school exclusion and considering their importance, participants may reflect on significant experiences within their own practice regarding this topic. This may result in some adverse experiences, for example, if participants reflect on a specific case experience which may have been particularly distressing or question their level of competence in previous experiences. As such, participants will be encouraged to reflect on this process in their own supervision they receive. There will also be a space to contact the researcher, should participants feel they would like. As part of the Delphi methods, participants will be contacted for a second phase when reviewing their own results/the results of the group. At this stage the researcher can use this opportunity to re-highlight the space to contact the researcher, should they have any concerns.

**What will happen to the findings from the research?**

The findings from this research will be used as part of a thesis for the Child, Community and Educational Psychology (M4) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS trust. The findings may also be used to develop a framework for practice and, if considered valid and useful, further dissemination of the findings may be considered.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with this research?**

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time prior to analysis of data at each stage. You may request that any data collected before your withdrawal is destroyed at any time prior to data analysis being carried out.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Yes. All records will be stored securely on a password protected device and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (2018), GDPR guidance and in accordance with the Trusts' Data Protection and handling Policies. The data will be kept until analysis is complete. Personal details such as name and contact details will be required through express permission from participants and will only be known to the researcher. You will also remain anonymous to other participants throughout the Delphi study and only the researcher will be able to identify your specific answer. Any information that you provide will be confidential and when the results of the research are reported you will not be identifiable in the findings.

**Are there times when my data cannot be kept confidential?**

Confidentiality is subject to legal limitations or if information is disclosed that suggests there is imminent harm to self-and/or others.

**Further information and contact details:**

If you have any questions about any aspect of the research, please contact me or my supervisor via the following email addresses: JRowley2@tavi-port.nhs.uk; RGreen@tavi-port.nhs.uk. If participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

**I have read the information sheet and can confirm that I meet the required criteria to participate:**

Yes

No



## Appendix G. Questionnaire for Round 1

### **Identification of best practice in EP work for CYP at risk of exclusion**

According to Waite (2013), who used a single case study to explore the role of a Specialist EP in working with CYP at risk of exclusion, there are several overarching themes identified that make up the key features of EP involvement for successful outcomes. These themes have been adapted and used to structure the prompts for the following questionnaire to ensure that each area of practice is addressed. The questions are designed to seek your personal opinion about the key features of good practice when EPs are working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion.

Please include details of any resources, approaches, processes or any other aspects of practice that you have found useful when working with CYP at risk of exclusion.

**Question: In your opinion, what are key features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion to promote positive outcomes?**

#### **Prompts:**

You may want to consider case examples and the following prompts identified by previous research to be involved in good practice with CYP at risk of exclusion:

#### Consultation

Have consultation approaches been useful? Do you use a particular model of consultation? Who do you feel consultation should take place with? What do you feel made this approach successful?

#### Assessment

Has assessment been useful? What types of assessment have you used? In what way were these assessments useful?

#### Training

Was training used and if so with whom (e.g., additional training on exclusion/SEMH for staff; CPD etc)? What was helpful about this training?

#### The Educational Psychologist's skills

What distinctive skills or personal qualities do you feel help to ensure positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion? Do you think experience level influences how successful EP involvement is for these CYP?

#### The System

Do you feel that your EPS context influences your practice? If so, how? Do you feel you worked with various systems to promote positive outcomes (e.g., the school, family, etc.)? If so, what was useful about this approach? What influence do you feel the school system had in supporting good practice for CYP at risk of exclusion?

**Question: In your opinion, what are key features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion to promote positive outcomes?**

Please reply to the question with as much detail as possible and do not feel limited in the length or style of your answers.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to write their answer to the question. The box is currently blank.

## Appendix H. Pilot study

### Participant Information Sheet

**Research title:** What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study

#### Consent and approval to participate:

This study has been approved by Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC). The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider whether to participate in this study.

#### Who is doing the research?

The research will be carried out by Jessica Rowley, a Trainee Educational Psychologist at The Tavistock & Portman NHS trust. The research will be supervised by Dr Rachael Green

#### What is the aim of the research?

This research aims to seek a consensus opinion about 'good practice' in Educational Psychology when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion, with the hope to develop a framework to be used by Educational Psychologists (EPs) to guide practice when contributing to successful outcomes for these CYP.

#### Who can take part in this research?

I am looking for the following participants:

Qualified EPs (at either masters or doctoral level) who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

EPs who hold a specialist role working with CYP at risk of exclusion (e.g., those with SEMH needs, PRU work, YOS work etc.)

OR is an EP with who has worked on at least 3 pieces of case work with CYP at risk of exclusion in the last 3-5 years.

#### What does participation involve?

As this research will be carried out using a Delphi technique, if you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a series of three online surveys (known as 'rounds'). The aim is to achieve a consensus opinion amongst a panel of experts in the area. Although there may be some professional discomfort with the term 'expert', in this context it relates to each panellist having extensive experience working with CYP at risk of exclusion. If you choose to participate you will be asked to first complete the consent form and then complete the first survey. Simple and specific instructions will be provided for each survey. The amount of time needed for completion of each questionnaire (or 'round') will vary for each panellist but should range from approximately 15-30 minutes for Round 1, 10-20 minutes for Round 2 and 20-30 minutes for Round 3. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions as this study is seeking your expert opinion. You will be sent reminders to complete the Round 2 and 3 Questionnaires.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be contributing to forming guidelines regarding good practice when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion in the Educational Psychology profession. This has the potential to be of significant benefit to a large proportion of the profession. Additionally, participants will be involved in research which may have a positive impact on a systemic level, for example to support participating EPs to reflect on and develop their practice, and as such has the potential to be a gratifying, reflective experience. By guiding EP practice in this area, the overarching aim is for this study to positively benefit the children and families that EPs work with. If a development and subsequent improvement in practice leads to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families, the participants and their profession will have benefited from the research.

**What are the possible risks of taking part?**

As part of the reflective nature of participants engaging in the surveys, such as reviewing components of practice when working with CYP at risk school exclusion and considering their importance, participants may reflect on significant experiences within their own practice regarding this topic. This may result in some adverse experiences, for example, if participants reflect on a specific case experience which may have been particularly distressing or question their level of competence in previous experiences. As such, participants will be encouraged to reflect on this process in their own supervision they receive. There will also be a space to contact the researcher, should participants feel they would like. As part of the Delphi methods, participants will be contacted for a second phase when reviewing their own results/the results of the group. At this stage the researcher can use this opportunity to re-highlight the space to contact the researcher, should they have any concerns.

**What will happen to the findings from the research?**

The findings from this research will be used as part of a thesis for the Child, Community and Educational Psychology (M4) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS trust. The findings may also be used to develop a framework for practice and, if considered valid and useful, further dissemination of the findings may be considered.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with this research?**

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time prior to analysis of data at each stage. You may request that any data collected before your withdrawal is destroyed at any time prior to data analysis being carried out.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Yes. All records will be stored securely on a password protected device and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (2018), GDPR guidance and in accordance with the Trusts' Data Protection and handling Policies. The data will be kept until analysis is complete. Personal details such as name and contact details will be required through express permission from participants and will only be known to the researcher. You will also remain anonymous to other participants throughout the Delphi study and only the researcher will be able to identify your specific answer. Any information that you provide will be confidential and when the results of the research are reported you will not be identifiable in the findings.

**Are there times when my data cannot be kept confidential?**

Confidentiality is subject to legal limitations or if information is disclosed that suggests there is imminent harm to self-and/or others.

**Further information and contact details:**

If you have any questions about any aspect of the research, please contact me or my supervisor via the following email addresses: JRowley2@tavi-port.nhs.uk; RGreen@tavi-port.nhs.uk If participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

**I have read the information sheet and can confirm that I meet the required criteria to participate:**

Yes

No

**Consent form**

**Research title:** What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study

Researcher: Jessica Rowley (Trainee Educational Psychologist, The Tavistock and Portman NHS)

Research Supervisor: Dr Rachael Green

I have read the information relating to the above piece of research in which I have been asked to participate. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed as part of this doctoral research and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me. I understand that my involvement in this study is voluntary and that data from this research will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research has been completed. I understand that the research will be published as part of a doctoral thesis and possibly shared more widely with the Educational Psychology profession. I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time prior to analysis of data at each stage. You may request that any data collected before your withdrawal is destroyed at any time prior to data analysis being carried out.

**I give my consent to participate in the current research study;**

Yes

No

Please indicate your ethnicity

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

White and Asian

Other Asian background (please state)

Black African

Black Caribbean

Black British

White and Black African

White and Black Caribbean

Other Black background (please state)

Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background (please state)

White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

White Irish

Other White background (please state)

Arab

Any other ethnic group (please state)

Please state the region you carry out your work as an EP

Northern Ireland

Scotland

North East

North West

Midlands

East Anglia

Wales

South East

South (including Isle of Wight)

South West

London

Other (please state)

What type of organisation do you work as an EP for?

Local authority or organisation commissioned by the LA to carry out statutory EP work

Social enterprise/ CIC (independent of a Local Authority)

Private limited company or cooperative

Self-employed

School or Academy/ Academy Trust

Foster or adoption agency

Charity

Other (please state)

How many years have you worked as an EP?

0-4 years

5-9 years

---



10-14 years

15-19 years

20 years +

### **Identification of best practice in EP work for CYP at risk of exclusion**

According to Waite (2013), who used a single case study to explore the role of a Specialist EP in working with CYP at risk of exclusion, there are several overarching themes identified that make up the key features of EP involvement for successful outcomes. These themes have been adapted and used to structure the prompts for the following questionnaire to ensure that each area of practice is addressed. The questions are designed to seek your personal opinion about the key features of good practice when EPs are working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion.

Please include details of any resources, approaches, processes or any other aspects of practice that you have found useful when working with CYP at risk of exclusion.

**Question: In your opinion, what are key features of good EP practice when working with CYP at risk of exclusion to promote positive outcomes?**

#### **Prompts:**

You may want to consider case examples and the following prompts identified by previous research to be involved in good practice with CYP at risk of exclusion:

### Consultation

Have consultation approaches been useful? Do you use a particular model of consultation? Who do you feel consultation should take place with? What do you feel made this approach successful?

### Assessment

Has assessment been useful? What types of assessment have you used? In what way were these assessments useful?

### Training

Was training used and if so with whom (e.g., additional training on exclusion/SEMH for staff; CPD etc)? What was helpful about this training?

### The Educational Psychologist's skills

What distinctive skills or personal qualities do you feel help to ensure positive outcomes for CYP at risk of exclusion? Do you think experience level influences how successful EP involvement is for these CYP?

### The System

Do you feel that your EPS context influences your practice? If so, how? Do you feel you worked with various systems to promote positive outcomes (e.g., the school, family, etc.)? If so, what was useful about this approach? What influence do you feel the school system had in supporting good practice for CYP at risk of exclusion?

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## Appendix I. Round 2 Questionnaire

*What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study*

### Round 2 questionnaire

#### Specific participant information

<i>Question</i>	<i>Please record your response here:</i>
How many years have you been practicing as a qualified EP?	
Approximately how many CYP at risk of school exclusion have you worked with?	
Do you hold/have you held a specialist role working with this population?	
If so, what has this role entailed?	

Please provide your **professional email** below to receive the third and final round survey

.....

Below is a list of statements that have been generated following thematic analysis of your collective responses. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please put an **X** in the box which you feel best describes how essential the statement is to your practice. Please put only one **X** per statement.

How essential are the following statements when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion?		Essential in all situations	Essential in some situations	Not essential	Don't know/unsure
<b>Use of Consultation</b>					
Consultation as a process					
1.1.1	Using consultation as an approach to working with CYP at risk of exclusion.	20			
1.1.2	Being involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles	20			
1.1.3	Contracting the work clearly (e.g., clearly	19			

	outlining the role of the EP)				
1.1.4	Using continuous hypothesis testing throughout involvement	19			
1.1.5	Supporting the school to implement interventions	20			
1.1.6	Avoiding a within-child approach	20			
<b>Approaches in consultation</b>					
1.2.1	Using a specific model of consultation				
1.2.2	Using solution-focused approaches				
1.2.3	Using motivational interviewing approaches				
1.2.4	Using an Interactive Factors Framework				
1.2.5	Using a relational approach				
1.2.6	Using systemic approaches (e.g., systemic questions)				
1.2.7	Using psychodynamic approaches (e.g., containment; awareness of unconscious processes)				
1.2.8	Using narrative approaches				
<b>Relationships and emotions in consultation</b>					
1.3.1	Building positive, trusting relationships with all members of the system (parents/carers, CYP, staff)				
1.3.2	Building and maintaining relationships with senior leadership teams (SLT)				
1.3.3	Viewing relationships as key				

	between members of the system				
4.2.7	The EP collaboratively works with others (e.g., external services; SEN, LA services, CAMHS, education welfare officers, behaviour leads, youth workers) to reduce exclusions				
4.2.8	The EP applies psychological theory in all areas of practice				
4.2.9	The EP uses research and statistics to justify inclusive practice				
4.2.10	The EP supports CYPs transitions to alternative provisions				
<b>The role of the System</b>					
The EP role and the school system					
5.1.1	The EP supports schools with the development and implementation of interventions				
5.1.2	The EP challenges discriminatory practice in schools where appropriate				
5.1.3	The EP challenges systemic barriers (both at the school and government level)				
5.1.4	The SENDCO being part of the SLT team (or having a role in decision making about the system)				
5.1.5	Schools making staff available for meetings with the EP				
5.1.6	EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system				

4.1.10	The EP is attuned and actively listening				
4.1.11	The EP can validate feelings				
4.1.12	The EP is open-minded and non-judgemental				
4.1.13	The EP can build relationships with schools, CYP and families				
4.1.14	EP ability to place themselves in the shoes of those they are working with (e.g., CYP, staff, families)				
4.1.15	The EP has a strong understanding of the school system				
4.1.16	The EP has a strong knowledge of legislation and ethical codes of conduct				
4.1.17	The EP has a large amount of experience				
<b>The role of the EP in casework</b>					
4.2.1	The EP ensures a CYP has at least one positive relationship with a member of staff				
4.2.2	The EP maintains relationships with SLT (or those that make decisions)				
4.2.3	The EP is an advocate for the CYP				
4.2.4	The EP signposts families for support				
4.2.5	The EP summarises and synthesises all information about a CYP and the system				
4.2.6	The EP creates a shared understanding				

	behaviour as communication				
3.2.10	Training in restorative approaches				
3.2.11	Offering staff supervision or reflective sessions				
3.2.12	Developing bespoke training and interventions				
3.2.13	Training about adolescent psychology				
3.2.14	Training for ADHD, ASD, anxiety, EBSA, PDA, attachment, and other specific needs				
3.2.15	Training on resilience				
3.2.16	EPS offers a wide range of training options to schools				
3.2.17	Working with the school over time to embed training in practice				
<b>EP skills and the EP role</b>					
EP characteristics, skills, and knowledge					
4.1.1	EP having strong interpersonal skills				
4.1.2	EP confidence				
4.1.3	EP having a strong sense of competence				
4.1.4	EP ability to contain the emotions of stakeholders				
4.1.5	EP ability to communicate information clearly				
4.1.6	EP ability to empower members of the system				
4.1.7	EP ability to maintain curiosity				
4.1.8	The EP is approachable				
4.1.9	The EP is impartial				

	previous experience and history				
<b>The use of Training</b>					
Training for EPs					
3.1.1	Regular opportunity for EPs to have CPD				
3.1.2	EPs prioritising training for EPs				
3.1.3	Opportunities for EPs to work together to deliver training to schools linked to exclusion				
3.1.4	EP training in systemic approaches				
3.1.5	EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)				
3.1.6	EP access to supervision (e.g., peer and personal supervision)				
Training for schools					
3.2.1	EP role to up-skill the adults around the CYP at risk of exclusion				
3.2.2	Delivery of whole school training				
3.2.3	Training schools in trauma-informed approaches				
3.2.4	Training schools in attachment aware approaches				
3.2.5	Training schools in emotion coaching				
3.2.6	Training schools to run nurture groups				
3.2.7	Training about ethnicity and its role in exclusions				
3.2.8	Delivering drop in solution-focused sessions for staff				
3.2.9	Delivering training to improve staff understanding of				



	Psychology (PCP) techniques, ideal self, ideal school, laddering, strengths cards, PATH, MAPS)				
2.2.7	Gaining the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (e.g., involving a familiar adult)				
2.2.9	Consideration of the ethical boundaries of assessment work (e.g., duty of care, notifying CYP of visit prior to arrival, transparency around EP role, confidentiality statement)				
2.2.11	Exploring the CYPs goals				
2.2.12	Using a strengths-based approach to assessment				
<b>Wider assessment of support needed</b>					
2.3.1	Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT)				
2.3.2	Assessment of the school environment, ethos, and culture				
2.3.3	Assessing what current support is working				
2.3.4	Exploring what strategies are currently helpful				
2.3.5	Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the school's data)				
2.3.6	Gaining information about the CYPs				

1.5.6	Using a child-centred approach				
<b>The use of Assessment</b>					
Assessment of learning and SEMH needs					
2.1.1	Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP				
2.1.2	Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP				
2.1.3	Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs				
2.1.4	Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs				
2.1.5	Use of curriculum or criterion referenced assessment information from staff to understanding learning needs				
2.1.6	Exploring literacy needs				
Gaining the views of the CYP					
2.2.1	Gathering the CYPs views about their needs				
2.2.2	Placing the CYP at the centre of all assessment work				
2.2.3	Amplifying the voice of the CYP through assessment				
2.2.4	Understanding the CYPs identity and sense of belonging				
2.2.5	Understanding the CYPs experience of school				
2.2.6	The use of person-centred assessment tools (e.g., Personal Construct				

	to promoting change within a system				
1.3.4	Providing containment to all members of the system				
1.3.5	Validating the feelings of all members of the system				
1.3.6	Providing attuned/active listening in consultation				
<b>Collaboration in consultation</b>					
1.4.1	Using a collaborative approach to practice				
1.4.2	The EP role in addressing any tension in the system (e.g., between home and school)				
1.4.3	Working with key members of the system including parents/carers, staff, senior leadership, the CYP				
<b>Consultation as client-centred</b>					
1.5.1	Increasing empathy for the CYP				
1.5.2	Viewing consultation as a form of assessment				
1.5.3	Being part of reintegration meetings (e.g., for those CYP returning to mainstream school from another provision)				
1.5.4	Using narrative approaches to change unhelpful/dominant narratives around a CYP				
1.5.5	Using hopeful approaches				



**Appendix J.** A list of all 120 statements from questionnaire two, the codes they were formed from, along with their supporting references from the qualitative responses in Round 1.

Statements (codes), themes and subthemes	Reference and participant ID
<b>Use of Consultation</b>	
Consultation as a process	
1.1.1	<p>Using consultation as an approach to working with CYP at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>'Eliciting the views of the young person often involves consultation, either face to face or virtually' – 01</p> <p>'I routinely consult with the young person and their parents/family (including siblings, if this is appropriate), key adults in school including pastoral support, and any adults that the young person themselves has directed me to' – 01</p> <p>'It can help to work with the YP and their family to understand their prior experiences which may have contributed to a lack of sense of belonging or anxiety, which can be done through consultation' – 02</p> <p>'I feel that a consultation with key adults is really important. I find the aim of the consultation is often to highlight to staff how much they already know, to identify what has worked in the past (either for this pupil or others)' – 03</p> <p>'The ability to co-construct a way forward together with all stakeholders using consultation - with transparency and good communication between all concerned.' – 04</p> <p>'I would start with a solution focused approach and use the Joint Action Framework model to identify key outcomes which support the school in looking at other ways of working with the the CYP at risk of exclusion' – 06</p> <p>'When it comes to day-to-day practice, I use solution-focused frameworks for consultation and conversations lean on skills such as motivational interviewing to promote goal-based outcomes.' - 07</p> <p>'The use of consultation and problem solving in a non-judgemental way. Methods such as Circle of Adults are useful.' – 08</p> <p>'Consultation with parents and school staff is key this should be collaborative' – 10</p> <p>'consultation with all relevant parties is central' – 12</p> <p>'I use a Consultation model in most of my work and find it appropriate and useful for CYP at risk of p-ex.' – 13</p> <p>'I am of the opinion that consultation is always the best starting place - ideally a home-school consultation' – 15</p> <p>'Assessment tends to be through consultation and observation.' – 17</p>

		<p>Maintaining good relationship with school and being available, where appropriate through consultation and training to support school's confidence and capacity in working with YP at risk of exclusion. – 18</p> <p>‘Consultation with key people is a must’ – 19</p> <p>‘In my practice with individual CYP, consultation is key in understanding the individual in context.’ – 22</p> <p>‘I most frequently use a consultation model with most in common with Patsy Wagner's model, with some flexibility.’ - 23</p> <p>‘Involving the parents and school staff in working together to look at what the young person is experiencing, unmet needs and different perspectives through consultation.’ - 26</p>
1.1.2	Being involved over time (e.g., through assess, plan, do review cycles)	<p>‘This needs to be set up for a time that suits them and be arranged so that there is adequate time to move through the stages of working towards a positive resolution.’ - 03</p> <p>‘This doesn't happen easily and it takes time and a trusting relationship to develop for a school to move from using the EP as a 'fire fighting' response to something more sustainable and interventionist in nature.’ – 21</p> <p>‘This is where the EP-SENCo planning and reviewing process happening over time can be helpful.’ - 22</p> <p>‘This can take time and the capacity to be able to create hypotheses and formulations in a relativity pressurised situation and continuously over time is an important and relevant skill.’ – 24</p> <p>‘Work over time is important - a one-off assessment is unlikely to change anyone's mind or practice. Likewise, work with the same school over time can be helpful’ - 25</p>
1.1.3	Contracting the work clearly (e.g., clearly outlining the role of the EP)	<p>‘roles being clearly defined in involvement.’ – 01</p> <p>‘It is important to me that the young person understands the parameters of my role’ - 01</p> <p>‘Making it clear that the approach will be collaborative and non-judgemental helps it to be effective.’ - 02</p> <p>‘The situation you are entering may be unknown and unpredictable - You need to ascertain this before you make a significant contribution.’ – 19</p> <p>‘One thing that I have learned that is key for me is the contracting phase of the work- the 'why now' part feels particularly relevant.’ - 22</p>
1.1.4	Using continuous hypothesis testing throughout involvement	<p>‘I do find that generating hypotheses helpful to decipher appropriate assessment information to gather.’ – 17</p> <p>‘I think stating the hypotheses and evidence to confirm and disconfirm can help schools and families see how complex it is and also helps to ‘name’ the underlying issue- which is always multi faceted.’ – 18</p>

		‘This can take time and the capacity to be able to create hypotheses and formulations in a relatively pressurised situation is an important and relevant skill.’ - 24
1.1.5	Supporting the school to implement interventions	<p>‘EPs can refer to research and psychological theory and know which strategies and interventions support children to achieve good outcomes in their learning and mental health. EP can support implementation and review of bespoke interventions for children’ – 10</p> <p>‘Also work directly with the people who work with the child to support their practice.’ – 12</p> <p>‘Good practice included SEMH interventions and workbooks for children’ 21</p> <p>‘Often it can be helpful to become involved in the intervention directly, so the team around the student feel that you are giving extra, practical input. Interventions can be even better when co-delivered so that the adults can continue the work between sessions’ - 25</p>
Using models of consultation		
1.2.1	Using a specific model of consultation	<p>‘I use the Monsen et al. model in consultation.’ – 02</p> <p>‘I would start with a solution focused approach and use the Joint Action Framework model’ – 06</p> <p>‘I use solution-focused frameworks for consultation and conversations lean on skills such as motivational interviewing’ – 07</p> <p>‘I would argue for the use of a model such as COMOIRA’ – 11</p> <p>‘The Basic Model or At The Very Least consultation model’ - 19</p> <p>‘I most frequently use a consultation model with most in common with Patsy Wagner's model, with some flexibility. I may use Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic model’ - 23</p>
1.2.2	Using solution-focused approaches	<p>‘I offer unnamed/anonymous regular bookable and drop in solution focused consultation sessions for teaching and non-teaching school staff’ – 01</p> <p>‘I would start with a solution focused approach’ – 06</p> <p>‘When it comes to day-to-day practice, I use solution-focused frameworks for consultation’ – 07</p> <p>‘I use solution- focused Consultation to draw out exceptions and to help focus on best hopes/ preferred future, which is a hopeful process. Solution- focused - to preserve hope in challenging contexts.’ – 13</p> <p>‘Remaining solution focussed and identifying yp skills with them. I like to use solution focused questioning - what would they like things to be like? How could things be different? What could they do, and what could other people do that would help?’ – 15</p> <p>‘I have used both Monsen and solution focussed approach when consulting with cyp at risk of exclusion.’ – 17</p> <p>‘Using solution focused questions can be more engaging at an early stage as it reinforces hope’ – 20</p>

		‘Collaborative consultation models - e.g. PATH or other solution focussed models Including the YP in the conversations’ - 21
1.2.3	Using motivational interviewing approaches	‘Training on effective interventions/training to support children at risk of exclusion e.g. emotion coaching, motivational interviewing’ – 05 ‘I use solution-focused frameworks for consultation and conversations lean on skills such as motivational interviewing to promote goal-based outcomes’ – 07 ‘The use of MI within consultation with school staff. The use of MI within direct work with CYP.’ - 08
1.2.4	Using an Interactive Factors Framework	‘Exploring narratives through the interactive factors framework’ - 09
1.2.5	Using a relational approach	‘we use a collaborative consultative model of service delivery, social construction, relational, restorative approach.’ 13 ‘I try to use relational approaches and systemic thinking in consultations.’ - 21 ‘Systemic and preventative approaches are therefore very important e.g. schools having relational/ attachment aware/ trauma informed/ restorative thinking embedded within their school ethos. Relational support plans have been a practical way of developing plans for CYP with staff and families that help to communicate how to respond in trauma informed ways that also help the adults feel supported too.’ 22 ‘My EPS context also influences my practice through opportunities such as shared CPD on relational and trauma informed approaches to supporting young people. Examples of work EPs have been involved in as part of this programme include offering reflective sessions for staff, reviewing behaviour policies to make them more relational and trauma informed and reflecting on and changing the playground environment.’ – 23 ‘I find a relational approach is usually more effective than a behavioural approach.’ - 25
1.2.6	Using systemic approaches (e.g., systemic questions)	‘There’s a strong system in place for supporting inclusion and avoiding exclusion at the school and corporate/authority levels with our roles being clearly defined in each.’ – 01 ‘I think it helps when the SENCo is part of the senior management team, as they seem to be more easily available to make adaptations to the pupil's timetable or environment that would be helpful.’ – 02 ‘The ability to draw upon a deep understanding of the context (including the systems and processes which are inherent in it and any policies or practices which are guiding it).’ 04 ‘understanding the system of a school, who is in which roles, how does the SENCo link with pastoral systems including the behaviour lead’ – 05 ‘Adopting an eco-systemic viewpoint is necessary - what is happening for the CYP at home, at school, in the community, what are their



		<p>relationships like, where do they experience a sense of success, purpose and esteem?’ 15</p> <p>‘I think knowing the school system and their behaviour policy helps.’ – 20</p> <p>‘EPS context largely influences as this can impact the sort of work you can do, who you are commissioned to do the work with, systemic messages about exclusion, research in the borough etc.’ 21</p> <p>‘Systemic and preventative approaches are therefore very important e.g. schools having relational/ attachment aware/ trauma informed/ restorative thinking embedded within their school ethos. I try to use relational approaches and systemic thinking in consultations.’ - 22</p> <p>‘For example I may use Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic model to structure understanding of the systems and contexts influencing the young person, and then intervening at the different levels.’ – 23</p> <p>‘Training in family therapy, systemic thinking is helpful in these situations.’ – 24</p> <p>‘you might not be able to prevent this individual exclusion, but you can use the experience to help the school look at a systems level to avoid future exclusions’ - 25</p>
1.2.7	Using psychodynamic approaches (e.g., containment; awareness of unconscious processes)	<p>‘would argue for the use of a model such as COMOIRA, arguably overlaid or underpinned with a conscious understanding of unconscious processes which may well be going on in the room’ – 11</p> <p>‘This is because these situations are often complex and can be require emotional containment. Facilitation skills - to keep communication open between those involved and to contain emotion where necessary.’ – 13</p> <p>‘My practice is also informed by the use of psychodynamic and attachment ideas to discuss and explore with consultees how emotions and relationships are shaping the responses to the CYP and the responses from the CYP’ – 22</p> <p>‘Supportive relationships which also crucially contain the potential to challenge’ - 24</p>
1.2.8	Using narrative approaches	<p>‘Reframe some of the narratives around children at risk of exclusion - notice strengths, consult with key people’ – 05</p> <p>‘Exploring narratives through the interactive factors framework’ – 09</p> <p>‘What is underlying their behaviour, and what are the narratives about the CYP and their behaviour in school and at home?’ – 15</p> <p>‘I think narrative psychology also plays a role in getting to hear the stories leading up to this situation.’ - 20</p> <p>‘Finally, improving the relationships between home and school can be a key outcome in my work, by aiming to reduce narratives around blame and trying to foster collaborative approaches to solving difficulties.’ – 22</p>

		<p>‘This may be done by using reframing language in consultation to challenge the dominant narrative, and then with agreement of next steps and strategies supporting change in the systems around the pupil.’ – 23</p> <p>‘Assessment can be useful - especially in the context of feeding in difference to challenge a stuck narrative - ie observing positive behaviour that contradicts the dominant discourse or highlighting something that might be contributing to the specific dynamics of relational breakdown.’ - 24</p>
<b>Relationships and emotions in consultation</b>		
1.3.1	<p>Building positive, trusting relationships with all members of the system (parents/carers, CYP, staff)</p>	<p>‘effectively building a positive rapport and finding things that work well for them.’ – 01</p> <p>‘Gaining the views and beliefs of the YP helps the EP to understand how they interpret and anticipate the educational environment and their relationships within it. Restorative approaches are very helpful for repairing relationships which have been strained through a student's behaviour - we can train schools in that and promote them.’ – 02</p> <p>‘Relationship!! Therapeutic Alliance (Martin et al 2000). There is so much evidence about the importance of relationship. This applies to my role as the school's EP, the snr leadership's relationship with teaching staff, and ultimately (and most importantly) the teacher's relationship with the student. The first focus must be on the quality of the relationship between the student and at least one-key member of staff. My experience has indicated that the more staff that have good quality relationships, the better.’ – 07</p> <p>‘EPs have working relationships with key members of staff including senior leaders in the school.’ – 10</p> <p>‘the first and most important aspect is actually to have a relationship with the relevant school in the first place. if there is a positive and trusting relationship then it is much more likely that the school will listen to and trust the involvement of the EP and may then seek to maintain the young person despite difficulties’ – 11</p> <p>‘Build a positive relationship with school staff and the family.’ – 12</p> <p>‘The key feature for me has been the development of strong relationships with senior leaders in a school, especially secondary schools. This relationship is then helpful in opening discussions about patterns that are being seen for yp with SEMH needs and can then influence discussions’ – 16</p> <p>‘Observing the pupil-child relationships are very helpful in identifying a child’s sense of belonging with a school which then further impacts in their learning and motivation.’ – 17</p> <p>‘think knowing the school system and their behaviour policy helps. Also, establishing relationships with school leaders and if you can't as EP then linking in with services that do and have a bit if clout- e.g standards team, education welfare, parent advisory service.’ – 20</p>

		<p>‘Important qualities are being able to relate to YP and school staff. Developing good relationships with school staff so they feel you are on their side’ – 21</p> <p>‘This doesn't happen easily and it takes time and a trusting relationship to develop for a school to move from using the EP as a 'fire fighting' response to something more sustainable and interventionist in nature. Improving the relationships between home and school can be a key outcome in my work.’ – 22</p> <p>‘fundamental feature is the relational skill of the psychologist in being able to create supportive relationships with both school, young person and family. Supportive relationships which also crucially contain the potential to challenge.’ – 24</p> <p>‘The relationship parents have with school staff is key.’ - 26</p>
1.3.2	Building and maintaining relationships with senior leadership teams (SLT)	<p>‘The key feature for me has been the development of strong relationships with senior leaders’ – 16</p> <p>‘My relationship with those in SLT has then been crucial for them to trust my advice, be able to hear my perspective and consequently see the positive impact of maintaining a community that meets the needs of all.’ - 20</p>
1.3.3	Viewing relationships as key to promoting change within a system	<p>‘The key feature for me has been the development of strong relationships with senior leaders in a school’ – 16</p> <p>‘My experience has indicated that the more staff that have good quality relationships, the better’ – 07</p> <p>‘Supportive relationships which also crucially contain the potential to challenge.’ - 24</p>
1.3.4	Providing containment to all members of the system	<p>‘This is because these situations are often complex and can be require emotional containment.’ – 13</p> <p>‘Facilitation skills - to keep communication open between those involved and to contain emotion where necessary.’ - 14</p>
1.3.5	Validating the feelings of all members of the system	<p>‘By that, I mean that it is critical that school staff feel that their concerns and worries are listened to, heard, validated and taken seriously’ – 01</p> <p>‘The Principles of Attunement help me to stay focused on validating the lived experience of the person I am sitting with and helping them to feel truly heard and understood.’ - 13</p>
1.3.6	Providing attuned/active listening in consultation	<p>‘I mean that it is critical that school staff feel that their concerns and worries are listened to, heard, validated and taken seriously’ – 01</p> <p>‘A willingness to safely and respectfully hold, credulously listen to, and compassionately appreciate and include the diversity of ideas and information that all stakeholders have about the situation.’ – 04</p> <p>‘I am also keen to listen the views of all involved with the the CYP's view being crucial in the process.’ – 06</p> <p>‘Active listening to all parties involved Seeking supervision and support from colleagues’ - 09</p> <p>‘EP skills: active listening, empathy etc. The Principles of Attunement help me to stay focused on validating the lived experience of the</p>

		<p>person I am sitting with and helping them to feel truly heard and understood.’ – 13</p> <p>‘I have found that by really listening to parents experiences and adopting an open and non-judgemental stance can support parental engagement.’ – 15</p> <p>‘It also means he parent can be listened to without judgement. The EP role of being curious, open minded and being ready to listen is crucial.’ - 20</p> <p>‘it’s also hopefully offers a space to discharge some difficult feelings and for staff to experience some empathy and collaborative thinking.’ – 22</p> <p>‘If the EP can come alongside the young person, and the adults important in their life, really listen and help them come up with an action plan that they think might help’ - 25</p>
Collaboration in consultation		
1.4.1	Using collaborative approach to practice	<p>a ‘Making it clear that the approach will be collaborative and non-judgemental helps it to be effective.’ – 02</p> <p>to ‘Collaboration Amplifying the voice of the CYP Maintaining contact with the school &amp; family eg through plan, do, review.’ – 09</p> <p>‘Consultation is also a collaborative process, which enables all those involved to work together to find ways forward and to develop a shared understanding of the current context/ next steps needed. we use a collaborative consultative model of service delivery, social construction, relational, restorative approach.’ - 13</p> <p>‘Staying connected to other professionals such as Education Welfare Officers to work collaboratively with schools and YP at risk of exclusion.’ – 18</p> <p>‘Getting in early also means staff and parents are more willing to collaborate and using person centred tools/ language also helps - what are your hopes, how can we get there, who do we need to help.’ – 20</p> <p>‘Collaborative consultation models - e.g. PATH or other solution focussed models Including the YP in the conversations, so assessment might be used to elicit their views and how they would like things to change, as well as what they agree to do moving forward.’ – 21</p> <p>‘It also hopefully offers a space to discharge some difficult feelings and for staff to experience some empathy and collaborative thinking.’ - 22</p>
1.4.2	The EP role in addressing any tension in the system (e.g., between home and school)	<p>‘if there is a significant breakdown between home and school, it may be more helpful to engage in initial consultations with home and school separately and work towards creating a shared understanding at a later point in the EP involvement.’ – 15</p> <p>‘EPs have to be able to ask hard questions and challenge both family and school while taking them with them in supporting their child.’ – 17</p> <p>‘The first meeting can be quite hostile depending on the communication between home and school and I try to work out how this dynamic may be contributing to the tensions.’ – 20</p>

		<p>'Finally, improving the relationships between home and school can be a key outcome in my work' - 22</p> <p>'I think the position of the EP can be used helpfully in terms of not aligning oneself to either side within the conflict or at least strategically and consciously / deliberately choosing to do so.' - 24</p>
1.4.3	Working with key members of the system including parents/carers, staff, senior leadership, the CYP	<p>'By that, I mean that it is critical that school staff feel that their concerns and worries are listened to, heard, validated and taken seriously. It is always my intention to gather and triangulate information from all sources.' – 01</p> <p>'I feel that a consultation with key adults is really important.' 03</p> <p>'A willingness to safely and respectfully hold, credulously listen to, and compassionately appreciate and include the diversity of ideas and information that all stakeholders have about the situation. The ability to co-construct a way forwards together with all stakeholders' - 04</p> <p>'Reframe some of the narratives around children at risk of exclusion - notice strengths, consult with key people. Work with key partners e.g. virtual school, SEN to think together about approaches with school and how to reduce exclusions ' – 05</p> <p>'have working relationships with key members of staff including senior leaders in the school.' – 10</p> <p>'Consultation with key people is a must' - 19</p>
<b>Consultation as client-centred</b>		
1.5.1	Increasing empathy for the CYP	<p>'I think it can be helpful to bring staff frustration, exhaustion and stress to a place of child-centred empathy and curiosity' – 01</p> <p>'An EP often needs to generate empathy for a YP' – 02</p> <p>'bviously this is helpful for staff knowing how they might meet that need, but also seems to generate empathy for the YP and give staff understanding of their behaviour.' – 03</p> <p>'I feel that helping adults around the child to develop more empathy for the children and understand their lived experiences as much as possible is of great importance.' – 04</p> <p>'Raising empathy for the CYP's unique situation' – 09</p> <p>'This sometimes draws on empathy and perspective taking on the school's part.' – 20</p> <p>'It also hopefully offers a space to discharge some difficult feelings and for staff to experience some empathy and collaborative thinking.' – 22</p> <p>'After seeing the Digital Story, staff appear to have greater empathy and willingness to try and help the child, at least for a while.' - 25</p>
1.5.2	Viewing consultation as a form of assessment	<p>'Consultation is a form of assessment, as it allows information and perspectives to be shared.' – 13</p> <p>'I feel the cyp always has to be present and fully involved at every stage of consultation and assessment' - 17</p>
1.5.3	Being part of reintegration meetings (e.g., for	<p>'A big challenge is not being part of reintegration meetings, when I have spoken to parents it seems that the language used by senior</p>

	those CYP returning to mainstream school from another provision)	members of staff can be unpleasant, threatening and the power dynamics unhelpful.’ – 20 ‘Parents have often said that it was more productive and supportive meeting when I have attended reintegration meetings’ – 22 ‘However, myself and another EP supported PRU staff to develop their induction and reintegration systems’ - 23
1.5.4	Using narrative approaches to change unhelpful/dominant narratives around a CYP	‘Reframe some of the narratives around children at risk of exclusion - notice strengths, consult with key people’ – 05 ‘aiming to reduce narratives around blame and trying to foster collaborative approaches to solving difficulties’ – 22 ‘This may be done by using reframing language in consultation to challenge the dominant narrative’ – 23 ‘Assessment can be useful - especially in the context of feeding in difference to challenge a stuck narrative’ - 24
1.5.5	Using hopeful approaches	‘The intention to bring clarity, consensus and hope to the situation and to all those concerned’ – 04 ‘I use solution- focused Consultation to draw out exceptions and to help focus on best hopes/ preferred future, which is a hopeful process.’ – 13 ‘Solution- focused - to preserve hope in challenging contexts.’ – 15 ‘Using solution focused questions can be more engaging at an early stage as it reinforces hope.’ - 20
1.5.6	Using a child-centred approach	‘It is vital that the EP is viewed as approachable and child-centred but impartial at the same time.’ – 01 ‘I think it can be helpful to bring staff frustration, exhaustion and stress to a place of child-centred empathy and curiosity.’ – 04 ‘Consultation with parents and school staff is key this should be collaborative and person centered involving the young person or child and their views.’ - 10
<b>The use of Assessment</b>		
Assessment of learning and SEMH needs		
2.1.1	Assessment and identification of the learning needs of the CYP	‘Assessment of learning through dynamic assessment or standardised cognitive assessment (e.g. BAS) can be useful if the information gathered in consultation indicates their might be an unmet learning need.’ – 02 ‘to improve provision for pupils with needs they can provide information about children’s needs from detailed psychological assessments.’ - 10 ‘Where there are concerns that the CYP may have some unmet and unidentified learning needs which are being masked by behaviour’ – 15 ‘Observing the pupil-child relationships are very helpful in identifying a child’s sense of belonging with a school which then further impacts in their learning and motivation.’ – 17

		<p>‘I will offer to do direct assessment with YP, to rule out any underlying learning needs (as these are often missed and delays purely put down to bad behaviour)’ – 20</p> <p>‘ometimes I do "traditional" assessments to quantify the difficulties and identify any learning issues, if that is going to be helpful in arranging the right level and type of support in school.’ - 25</p>
2.1.2	Assessment and identification of the SEMH needs of the CYP	<p>‘The importance of accurate identification of any language, cognitive, SEMH needs and awareness of possible sensory needs.’ – 08</p> <p>‘assessment is a useful aspect and usually would involve a consideration of any educational special needs, peer relationships, history of the child.’ – 11</p> <p>‘Consultation is a form of assessment, as it allows information and perspectives to be shared.’ – 13</p> <p>‘Assessment tends to be through consultation and observation. Motivation Assessment a scale is very helpful.’ – 17</p> <p>‘so assessment might be used to elicit their views and how they would like things to change, as well as what they agree to do moving forward.’ – 21</p> <p>‘In individual work with CYP, i might use assessment tools to explore with CYP their thoughts and feelings about what is happening. Sometimes this may involve using projective or PCP techniques that can help to surface experiences that may have been difficult for CYP to articulate.’ – 22</p> <p>‘In terms of individual assessment, approaches I have most commonly found useful are those which seek to understand pupils' experiences and give them a voice, using tools such as kinetic family drawing, the Ideal Self or Ideal School, or dynamic assessment to help pupils to achieve success in context in which they may have little experience of it.’ – 23</p> <p>‘EP assessment and clarification of underlying needs has been important as it allows school staff to see beyond the behaviour.’ - 26</p>
2.1.3	Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs	<p>‘I rarely undertake any direct assessment, such as cognitive or attainment testing, as I prefer to gather curriculum based and criterion referenced assessment information from school staff.’ – 01</p> <p>‘Assessment of...standardised cognitive assessment (e.g. BAS) can be useful if the information gathered in consultation indicates their might be an unmet learning need.’ – 02</p> <p>‘I tend to avoid formal or standardised assessment and instead focus on gathering the voice of the YP.’ – 03</p> <p>‘I have rarely used direct assessment with CYP at risk of exclusion for a number of reasons’ - 13</p> <p>‘Where there are concerns that the CYP may have some unmet and unidentified learning needs which are being masked by behaviour, I will sometimes use standardised assessments to explore these, with the consent of the CYP.’ – 15</p>

		‘In terms of assessment, yes sometimes I do "traditional" assessments to quantify the difficulties and identify any learning issues, if that is going to be helpful in arranging the right level and type of support in school.’ - 25
2.1.4	Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs	‘Assessment of learning through dynamic assessment’ – 02 ‘In terms of individual assessment, approaches I have most commonly found useful are those which seek to understand pupils' experiences and give them a voice, using tools such as kinetic family drawing, the Ideal Self or Ideal School, or dynamic assessment to help pupils to achieve success in context in which they may have little experience of it.’ - 23
2.1.5	Use of curriculum or criterion referenced assessment information from staff to understanding learning needs	‘I prefer to gather curriculum based and criterion referenced assessment information from school staff’ - 01
2.1.6	Exploring literacy needs	‘I am particularly interested in the young person's literacy skills and will seek to gather views about their reading, writing, oral/auditory listening skills, etc.’ - 01
<b>Gaining the views of the CYP</b>		
2.2.1	Gathering the CYPs views about their needs	
2.2.2	Placing the CYP at the centre of all assessment work	‘It is vital that the EP is viewed as approachable and child-centred but impartial at the same time.’ – 01 ‘I think it can be helpful to bring staff frustration, exhaustion and stress to a place of child-centred empathy and curiosity.’ – 04 ‘Consultation with parents and school staff is key this should be collaborative and person centered involving the young person or child and their views.’ - 10
2.2.3	Amplifying the voice of the CYP through assessment	‘I tend to avoid formal or standardised assessment and instead focus on gathering the voice of the YP.’ – 03 ‘The ability to put the young person at the centre of the work - to enable their voice, their lived experience, and their needs to be respected and protected’ – 04 ‘Exploring narratives through the interactive factors framework Collaboration Amplifying the voice of the CYP Maintaining contact with the school & family eg through plan, do, review.’ – 09 ‘The power of the voice of the child might not be known to you. Some children speak powerfully on their own behalf and you might only



		<p>have to facilitate their voice. Other children cannot speak powerfully on their own behalf and you, the EP, will have more work to do.’ – 19</p> <p>‘Managing the power differential between family and school, ensuring the family has a voice in these situations and the CYP’s experience is considered and thought about is another essential element.’ – 22</p> <p>‘I have most commonly found useful are those which seek to understand pupils’ experiences and give them a voice, using tools such as kinetic family drawing, the Ideal Self or Ideal School, or dynamic assessment to help pupils to achieve success in context in which they may have little experience of it.’ – 23</p> <p>‘Finally, the child’s voice can be very powerful, if you can enable it to be truly heard.’ - 25</p>
2.2.4	Understanding the CYPs identity and sense of belonging	<p>‘Understanding the YP’s sense of identity and also sense of belonging is important as theory suggests these largely drive behaviour.’ – 01</p> <p>‘It can help to work with the YP and their family to understand their prior experiences which may have contributed to a lack of sense of belonging or anxiety, which can be done through consultation’ – 02</p> <p>‘This piece of work would include questionnaires around perhaps their Self Image, Sense of Belonging etc as well as some other more informal but structured questions around their likes/dislikes’ – 06</p> <p>‘it is also important that the results of this are framed within a focus on the needs of the YP, belonging needs and suchlike’ – 11</p> <p>‘identifying a child’s sense of belonging with a school which then further impacts in their learning and motivation’ – 17</p> <p>‘Using therapeutic strategies to promote attachment and connectedness tends to help the young person feel a sense of belonging in the school, that no rewards or punishments can bring.’ - 25</p>
2.2.5	Understanding the CYPs experience of school	<p>‘It is important to me that the young person understands the parameters of my role, the scope of questions and prompts I use and why I’m asking or wondering about their lived experiences and what I will do with the information they share with me’ – 01</p> <p>‘I feel that helping adults around the child to develop more empathy for the children and understand their lived experiences as much as possible is of great importance.’ – 03</p> <p>‘In my local authority we have adopted a therapeutic thinking approach which involves considering a child’s past experiences, how these will have impacted their feelings and behaviours and then working to help adults to give children the experiences they need to feel better.’ – 05</p> <p>‘the YPs perspective is always important also and in my view, being able to reflect back to the child what he / she has said and my understanding of it, their experience of school can create a joining which can lead to positive change.’ – 11</p>

		<p>‘what is happening for the CYP at home, at school, in the community, what are their relationships like, where do they experience a sense of success, purpose and esteem?’ – 15</p> <p>‘Managing the power differential between family and school, ensuring the family has a voice in these situations and the CYP’s experience is considered and thought about is another essential element.’ - 22</p>
2.2.6	The use of person centred assessment tools (e.g., Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) techniques, ideal self, ideal school, laddering, strengths cards, PATH, MAPS)	<p>‘Gain the student’s perspective from them directly. This can be done in many ways, including person centred planning (e.g., PATH). Personal Construct Psychology is useful, particularly tools such as Drawing the Ideal Self (Heather Moran) and laddering or pyramiding from asking ‘What three words would you use to describe yourself?’ – 02</p> <p>‘I might suggest me working with the CYP to use person-centred tools to gather their views if they have not been gathered already. This piece of work would include questionnaires around perhaps their Self Image, Sense of Belonging etc’ – 06</p> <p>‘Being quite person centred and trying as much as possible to hold the YP and their views at the centre of good practice, using tools such as Circle of Adults and PATH.’ – 18</p> <p>‘I might use assessment tools to explore with CYP their thoughts and feelings about what is happening. Sometimes this may involve using projective or PCP techniques that can help to surface experiences that may have been difficult for CYP’ - 22</p>
2.2.7	Gaining the CYPs views in a way that is comfortable for them (e.g., involving a familiar adult)	<p>‘eliciting the views of the young person in whichever way they feel most able and comfortable doing.’ - 01</p>
2.2.8	Gaining information about the CYPs previous experience and history	<p>‘I also aim to offer a view of any historical information that might be relevant’ – 01</p> <p>‘assessment is a useful aspect and usually would involve a consideration of any educational special needs, peer relationships, history of the child’ – 11</p> <p>‘I would argue for the use of a model such as COMOIRA, arguably overlaid or underpinned with a conscious understanding of unconscious processes which may well be going on in the room and historical factors relating to the history of the relationship between different partner.’ - 13</p>
2.2.9	Consideration of the ethical boundaries of assessment work (e.g., duty of care, notifying CYP of visit prior to arrival,	<p>‘A strong foundation in ethical principles, a duty of care towards the young person and the ability to seek good supervision and support for aspects which may be delicate or difficult.’ – 04</p> <p>‘hey also have a knowledge of the legislation and children and families rights EPs operate within an ethical code of practice and are committed to maximizing inclusion for children especially those with SEND’ – 10</p>

	transparency around EP role, confidentiality statement)	<p>‘he CYP often has involvement from many professionals and introducing another person may not be helpful or ethical’ – 13</p> <p>‘These spaces are where tricky and uncomfortable ethical dilemmas can be unpicked and thought about with other psychologists- this is a very precious resource in this type of work that can often feel heavy with emotion’ – 22</p> <p>‘So to sum up, good practice involves drawing on a range of skills allied to an emotional and ethical determination to challenge exclusion.’ - 24</p>
2.2.10	Avoiding a within-child approach	‘I have rarely used direct assessment with CYP at risk of exclusion for a number of reasons: it feeds into a within- child explanation of the situation’ - 13
2.2.11	Exploring the CYPs goals	‘I will offer to do direct assessment with YP, to rule out any underlying learning needs (as these are often missed and delays purely put down to bad behaviour), identifying strengths and goals with the YP.’ - 20
2.2.12	Using a strengths-based approach to assessment	<p>‘It is essential for me to paint a picture, to put together a summary of the young person's strengths and assets. This helps with a strengths-based approach’ – 01</p> <p>‘Reframe some of the narratives around children at risk of exclusion - notice strengths, consult with key people’ – 05</p> <p>‘Where appropriate I will offer to do direct assessment with YP, to rule out any underlying learning needs (as these are often missed and delays purely put down to bad behaviour), identifying strengths and goals with the YP.’ - 20</p>
Wider assessment of support needed		
2.3.1	Gathering perceptions of the CYPs needs from all in the system (e.g., parents/carers, CYP, staff, SLT)	<p>‘By that, I mean that it is critical that school staff feel that their concerns and worries are listened to, heard, validated and taken seriously. It is always my intention to gather and triangulate information from all sources.’ – 01</p> <p>‘assessment aims to take into account the many, potentially differing, perceptions and constructs of the young person's presentation.’ - 02</p> <p>‘A willingness to safely and respectfully hold, credulously listen to, and compassionately appreciate and include the diversity of ideas and information that all stakeholders have about the situation. The ability to co-construct a way forwards together with all stakeholders’ - 04</p> <p>‘Reframe some of the narratives around children at risk of exclusion - notice strengths, consult with key people. Work with key partners e.g. virtual school, SEN to think together about approaches with school and how to reduce exclusions ’ – 05</p> <p>‘have working relationships with key members of staff including senior leaders in the school.’ – 10</p> <p>‘I draw upon the Principles of Attunement during consultation and find these a helpful framework when navigating competing perceptions and constructs of a young person's presentation.’ - 13</p>

2.3.2	Assessment of the school environment, ethos and culture	<p>‘Gaining the views and beliefs of the YP helps the EP to understand how they interpret and anticipate the educational environment and their relationships within it.’ – 02</p> <p>‘I then focus a lot of my energy on the school system and the ways in which they understand the student. This extends to the environment the student is in (how inviting is the school environment etc).’ – 07</p> <p>‘Child at the centre approach has to be key and organisational culture generally lends a great deal of weight in terms of exclusions.’ - 16</p> <p>‘By gaining others’ views of the child and then seeing the child in situ there are usually a number of contextual, environmental and learning factors that have not been challenged. In my experience the LA position on exclusion and school leadership team and culture of inclusion is key to successfully including and reducing exclusions in school. ’ – 17</p> <p>‘Systemic and preventative approaches are therefore very important e.g. schools having relational/ attachment aware/ trauma informed/ restorative thinking embedded within their school ethos.’ - 22</p>
2.3.3	Assessing what current support is working	<p>‘gain an understanding about what strategies and supportive measures are already in place to help.’ – 01</p> <p>‘as the EP could naively ask questions like 'So what have you done to support their sense of belonging?' and 'So what happens when they return to school after a temporary exclusion?'.’ – 02</p> <p>‘EPs can refer to research and psychological theory and know which strategies and interventions support children to achieve good outcomes in their learning and mental health’ - 10</p>
2.3.4	Exploring what strategies are currently helpful	<p>‘gain an understanding about what strategies and supportive measures are already in place to help.’ – 01</p> <p>‘as the EP could naively ask questions like 'So what have you done to support their sense of belonging?' and 'So what happens when they return to school after a temporary exclusion?'.’ – 02</p> <p>‘EPs can refer to research and psychological theory and know which strategies and interventions support children to achieve good outcomes in their learning and mental health’ - 10</p>
2.3.5	Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools data)	<p>‘Have an understanding of data in your LA on CYP at risk of exclusion and how it affects your school, key vulnerable groups 9. have a planning meeting in your schools where data is discussed and consideration given to exclusion and how to reduce them and alternatives’ – 05</p> <p>‘EPs need to be confident with the data and outcomes for children who are excluded and be able to articulate and deliver that to schools in a nurturing way.’ – 17</p> <p>‘EPs involved with Exclusion Working Group that look at exclusion trends and works with schools to address issues as well as communicating data to commissioners and cabinet members.’ – 20</p>

		‘Reviewing together patterns in referrals, patterns in school behaviour data can help to open up more reflective and creative conversations about how to make better use of EP time. It can also help with the challenge function, by using data and patterns and being curious about these might mean, can reduce defensive responses in some schools.’ - 22
<b>The use of Training</b>		
Training for EPs		
3.1.1	Regular opportunity for EPs to have CPD	‘My EPS context supports person centred planning through CPD and regular opportunities for EPs to work together to do PATH-style meetings for young people.’ – 02 ‘My EPS context also influences my practice through opportunities such as shared CPD on relational and trauma informed approaches to supporting young people.’ - 22
3.1.2	EPS prioritising training for EPs	‘There could be a stronger emphasis on the EP role in supporting positive outcomes for children at risk of exclusion through childrens Services, the EPS and training.’ - 26
3.1.3	Opportunities for EPs to work together to deliver training to schools linked to exclusion	‘My EPS context supports person centred planning through CPD and regular opportunities for EPs to work together to do PATH-style meetings for young people.’ - 02
3.1.4	EP training in systemic approaches	‘Training in family therapy, systemic thinking is helpful in these situations.’ - 24
3.1.5	EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)	‘I am an accredited Video Interaction Guidance practitioner and I draw upon the Principles of Attunement during consultation and find these a helpful framework when navigating competing perceptions and constructs of a young person's presentation.’ – 13 ‘Given the cost of EP time, contained interventions are often helpful, such as Video Interaction Guidance.’ - 25
3.1.6	EP access to supervision (e.g., peer and personal supervision)	‘A strong foundation in ethical principles, a duty of care towards the young person and the ability to seek good supervision and support for aspects which may be delicate or difficult.’ – 04 ‘Active listening to all parties involved Seeking supervision and support from colleagues’ – 09 ‘Peer supervision and personal supervision are also essential elements of my practice in this area.’ - 22
Training for schools		
3.2.1	EP role to up-skill the adults around the CYP at risk of exclusion	‘discussions about training needs for staff and closer analysis of school systems which are unhelpful.’ – 16 ‘where appropriate through consultation and training to support school's confidence and capacity in working with YP at risk of exclusion.’ – 18 ‘I find that those that work directly , understand and care take on the training and over the years are responding better to students at risk of exclusion’ - 20

3.2.2	Delivery of whole school training	<p>‘I have contributed to trauma-informed training in the secondary schools that I work in, both on a nurture group/room basis and a whole school approach. The helpfulness of all of these trainings have been a focus on the concept commonly referred to as 'behaviour is communication'.’ – 01</p> <p>‘our service delivers training on teenage psychology, impact of poverty on neurodevelopment, sense of belonging, anxiety, trauma, attachment difficulties, autism, ADHD, PDA, emotional based school avoidance and a range of other needs to support staff's understanding of a range of students.’ - 02</p> <p>‘All schools have been offered this training and many are now embedding it into their policies and practices.’ – 03</p> <p>‘Training on effective interventions/training to support children at risk of exclusion e.g. emotion coaching, motivational interviewing’ – 05</p> <p>‘They can provide training for staff around inclusion and strategies to improve provision for pupils with needs and they can provide information about children’s needs from detailed psychological assessments. They can support implementation and review of bespoke interventions for children’ – 10</p> <p>‘I have delivered training on topics such as Emotion Coaching, restorative practice, attachment and trauma, and I have also talked through these approaches during consultative conversions.’ – 15</p> <p>‘This could be through EPs sharing their understanding of the impact of complex trauma, in consultations or school training, to help others to understand pupils' needs differently.’ – 23</p> <p>‘If staff are up for training, then concepts like PACE are often the most useful.’ - 25</p>
3.2.3	Training schools in trauma-informed approaches	<p>‘I have contributed to trauma-informed training in the secondary schools that I work in, both on a nurture group/room basis and a whole school approach’ – 01</p> <p>‘I have delivered training on topics such as Emotion Coaching, restorative practice, attachment and trauma, and I have also talked through these approaches during consultative conversions.’ - 15</p> <p>‘his could be through EPs sharing their understanding of the impact of complex trauma, in consultations or school training, to help others to understand pupils' needs differently.’ - 23</p>
3.2.4	Training schools in attachment aware approaches	<p>‘our service delivers training on teenage psychology, impact of poverty on neurodevelopment, sense of belonging, anxiety, trauma, attachment difficulties, autism, ADHD, PDA, emotional based school avoidance and a range of other needs to support staff's understanding of a range of students.’ - 02</p> <p>‘I have delivered training on topics such as Emotion Coaching, restorative practice, attachment and trauma, and I have also talked through these approaches during consultative conversions.’ - 15</p>
3.2.5	Training schools in emotion coaching	<p>‘Training on effective interventions/training to support children at risk of exclusion e.g. emotion coaching, motivational interviewing’ –</p>

		05 'I have delivered training on topics such as Emotion Coaching, restorative practice, attachment and trauma, and I have also talked through these approaches during consultative conversions.' - 15
3.2.6	Training schools to run nurture groups	'I have contributed to trauma-informed training in the secondary schools that I work in, both on a nurture group/room basis and a whole school approach.' - 01
3.2.7	Training about ethnicity and its role in exclusions	'I have delivered training in relation the gypsy, roma and traveller population and the challenges that this cohort may experience engaging with education (which is a particularly prominent group in my local area).' - 01
3.2.8	Delivering drop in solution-focused sessions for staff	'I offer unnamed/anonymous regular bookable and drop in solution focused consultation sessions for teaching and non-teaching school staff in relation to children and young people who are care experienced as a preventative approach to managed moves and exclusions of this vulnerable group of children.' - 01
3.2.9	Delivering training to improve staff understanding of behaviour as communication	'The helpfulness of all of these trainings have been a focus on the concept commonly referred to as 'behaviour is communication'.' - 01
3.2.10	Training in restorative approaches	'I have delivered training on topics such as Emotion Coaching, restorative practice, attachment and trauma, and I have also talked through these approaches during consultative conversions.' - 15
3.2.11	Offering staff supervision or reflective sessions	'Examples of work EPs have been involved in as part of this programme include offering reflective sessions for staff, reviewing behaviour policies to make them more relational and trauma informed and reflecting on and changing the playground environment.' - 23
3.2.12	Developing bespoke training and interventions	'They can support implementation and review of bespoke interventions for children' - 10
3.2.13	Training about adolescent psychology	'our service delivers training on teenage psychology' - 02
3.2.14	Training for ADHD, ASD, anxiety, EBSA, PDA, attachment and other specific needs	'I have done training on particular SEND (ADHD- highest cohort that I work with who may get excluded) and SEMH and resilience.' - 20
3.2.15	Training on resilience	'have done training on particular SEND (ADHD- highest cohort that I work with who may get excluded) and SEMH and resilience.' - 20
3.2.16	EPS offers a wide range of training options to schools	'our service delivers training on teenage psychology, impact of poverty on neurodevelopment, sense of belonging, anxiety, trauma, attachment difficulties, autism, ADHD, PDA, emotional based school

		avoidance and a range of other needs to support staff's understanding of a range of students.' - 02
3.2.17	Working with the school over time to embed training in practice	<p>'This needs to be set up for a time that suits them and be arranged so that there is adequate time to move through the stages of working towards a positive resolution.' - 03</p> <p>'This doesn't happen easily and it takes time and a trusting relationship to develop for a school to move from using the EP as a 'fire fighting' response to something more sustainable and interventionist in nature.' - 21</p> <p>'This is where the EP-SENCo planning and reviewing process happening over time can be helpful.' - 22</p> <p>'This can take time and the capacity to be able to create hypotheses and formulations in a relatively pressurised situation and continuously over time is an important and relevant skill.' - 24</p> <p>'Work over time is important - a one-off assessment is unlikely to change anyone's mind or practice. Likewise, work with the same school over time can be helpful' - 25</p>
<b>EP skills and the EP role</b>		
EP characteristics, skills and knowledge		
4.1.1	EP having strong interpersonal skills	'The ability to co-construct a way forwards together with all stakeholders - with transparency and good communication between all concerned' - 04
4.1.2	EP confidence	<p>'An open mind and a non judgmental attitude. A sense of confidence and competence but also a willingness to learn and to recognise any lack of knowledge or limitations.' - 04</p> <p>'where appropriate through consultation and training to support school's confidence and capacity in working with YP at risk of exclusion' - 18</p> <p>'having the confidence and skill to be able to introduce difference in the what have often become very stuck situations.' - 24</p>
4.1.3	EP having a strong sense of competence	'An open mind and a non judgmental attitude. A sense of confidence and competence but also a willingness to learn and to recognise any lack of knowledge or limitations.' - 04
4.1.4	EP ability to contain the emotions of stakeholders	<p>'This is because these situations are often complex and can be require emotional containment. Facilitation skills - to keep communication open between those involved and to contain emotion where necessary.' - 13</p> <p>'Supportive relationships which also crucially contain the potential to challenge' - 24</p>
4.1.5	EP ability to communicate information clearly	'Early intervention and communication with schools and families before crisis point' - 08



		‘Facilitation skills - to keep communication open between those involved and to contain emotion where necessary.’ - 13
4.1.6	EP ability to empower members of the system	‘I find the aim of the consultation is often to highlight to staff how much they already know, to identify what has worked in the past (either for this pupil or others)’ – 01 ‘The ability to co-construct a way forwards together with all stakeholders - with transparency and good communication between all concerned. The ability to empower and encourage the group to explore, try or commit to alternative ways of construing or changing the course of exclusion (if this is agreed to be appropriate).’ – 04 ‘Consultation enables those involved to feel heard, empowered and supported.’ - 13
4.1.7	EP ability to maintain curiosity	‘I think it can be helpful to bring staff frustration, exhaustion and stress to a place of child-centred empathy and curiosity.’ – 01 ‘I think it is essential that EPs working with this group are open and curious to understanding the CYP's situation’ – 05 ‘The EP role of being curious, open minded and being ready to listen is crucial.’ – 20 ‘At this stage the EP involvement may be used to confirm the necessity of that decision, so being curious about 'why now' is important and the earlier the intervention the better. It can also help with the challenge function, by using data and patterns and being curious about these might mean, can reduce defensive responses in some schools.’ – 22 ‘To be able to remain curious and a commitment to resisting the exclusion imperative that the school present is important’ - 24
4.1.8	The EP is approachable	‘It is vital that the EP is viewed as approachable and child-centred but impartial at the same time.’ - 01
4.1.9	The EP is impartial	‘It is vital that the EP is viewed as approachable and child-centred but impartial at the same time.’ - 01
4.1.10	The EP is attuned and actively listening	‘I mean that it is critical that school staff feel that their concerns and worries are listened to, heard, validated and taken seriously’ – 01 ‘A willingness to safely and respectfully hold, credulously listen to, and compassionately appreciate and include the diversity of ideas and information that all stakeholders have about the situation.’ – 04 ‘I am also keen to listen the views of all involved with the the CYP's view being crucial in the process.’ – 06 ‘Active listening to all parties involved Seeking supervision and support from colleagues’ - 09 ‘EP skills: active listening, empathy etc. The Principles of Attunement help me to stay focused on validating the lived experience of the person I am sitting with and helping them to feel truly heard and understood.’ – 13

		<p>'I have found that by really listening to parents experiences and adopting an open and non-judgemental stance can support parental engagement.' – 15</p> <p>'It also means he parent can be listened to without judgement. The EP role of being curious, open minded and being ready to listen is crucial.' - 20</p> <p>'it's also hopefully offers a space to discharge some difficult feelings and for staff to experience some empathy and collaborative thinking.' – 22</p> <p>'If the EP can come alongside the young person, and the adults important in their life, really listen and help them come up with an action plan that they think might help' - 25</p>
4.1.11	The EP has the ability to validate feelings	<p>'By that, I mean that it is critical that school staff feel that their concerns and worries are listened to, heard, validated and taken seriously' – 01</p> <p>'The Principles of Attunement help me to stay focused on validating the lived experience of the person I am sitting with and helping them to feel truly heard and understood.' - 13</p>
4.1.12	The EP is open-minded and non-judgemental	<p>'Making it clear that the approach will be collaborative and non-judgemental helps it to be effective' – 02</p> <p>'An open mind and a non judgmental attitude.' – 04</p> <p>'The use of consultation and problem solving in a non-judgemental way.' - 08</p> <p>'Facilitation skills - to keep communication open between those involved and to contain emotion where necessary.' – 13</p> <p>'I think it is essential that EPs working with this group are open and curious to understanding the CYP's situation. I have found that by really listening to parents experiences and adopting an open and non-judgemental stance can support parental engagement.' – 15</p> <p>'The EP role of being curious, open minded and being ready to listen is crucial. It also means the parent can be listened to without judgement.' - 20</p>
4.1.13	The EP has the ability to build relationships with schools, CYP and families	<p>'effectively building a positive rapport and finding things that work well for them.' – 01</p> <p>'Gaining the views and beliefs of the YP helps the EP to understand how they interpret and anticipate the educational environment and their relationships within it. Restorative approaches are very helpful for repairing relationships which have been strained through a student's behaviour - we can train schools in that and promote them.' – 02</p> <p>'Relationship!! Therapeutic Alliance (Martin et al 2000). There is so much evidence about the importance of relationship. This applies to my role as the school's EP, the snr leadership's relationship with teaching staff, and ultimately (and most importantly) the teacher's relationship with the student. The first focus must be on the quality of the relationship between the student and at least one-key member of</p>

		<p>staff. My experience has indicated that the more staff that have good quality relationships, the better.’ – 07</p> <p>‘EPs have working relationships with key members of staff including senior leaders in the school.’ – 10</p> <p>‘the first and most important aspect is actually to have a relationship with the relevant school in the first place. if there is a positive and trusting relationship then it is much more likely that the school will listen to and trust the involvement of the EP and may then seek to maintain the young person despite difficulties’ – 11</p> <p>‘Build a positive relationship with school staff and the family.’ – 12</p> <p>‘The key feature for me has been the development of strong relationships with senior leaders in a school, especially secondary schools. This relationship is then helpful in opening discussions about patterns that are being seen for yp with SEMH needs and can then influence discussions’ – 16</p> <p>‘Observing the pupil-staff relationships are very helpful in identifying a child’s sense of belonging with a school which then further impacts in their learning and motivation.’ – 17</p> <p>‘think knowing the school system and their behaviour policy helps. Also, establishing relationships with school leaders and if you can’t as EP then linking in with services that do and have a bit if clout- e.g standards team, education welfare, parent advisory service.’ – 20</p> <p>‘Important qualities are being able to relate to YP and school staff. Developing good relationships with school staff so they feel you are on their side’ – 21</p> <p>‘This doesn’t happen easily and it takes time and a trusting relationship to develop for a school to move from using the EP as a ‘fire fighting’ response to something more sustainable and interventionist in nature. Improving the relationships between home and school can be a key outcome in my work.’ – 22</p> <p>‘fundamental feature is the relational skill of the psychologist in being able to create supportive relationships with both school, young person and family. Supportive relationships which also crucially contain the potential to challenge.’ – 24</p> <p>‘The relationship parents have with school staff is key.’ - 26</p>
4.1.14	EP ability to place themselves in the shoes of those they are working with (e.g., CYP, staff, families)	<p>‘Many of the best EPs I have worked with have the ability to place themselves in the child’s shoes but also the shoes of the adults around them.’ - 03</p>
4.1.15	The EP has a strong understanding of the school system	<p>‘I think it helps when the SENCo is part of the senior management team, as they seem to be more easily available to make adaptations to the pupil’s timetable or environment that would be helpful.’ – 02</p> <p>‘understanding the system of a school, who is in which roles, how does the SENCo link with pastoral systems including the behaviour lead’ – 05</p>

		<p>'I then focus a lot of my energy on the school system and the ways in which they understand the student. This extends to the environment the student is in (how inviting is the school environment etc).' – 07</p> <p>'Understanding the school system eg links (or not!) between pastoral/behaviour and SEND teams.' – 09</p> <p>'The school system is the key to this work, as often they are rigidities that create barriers to inclusion, e.g. unable/ unwilling to make reasonable adjustments that would enable the CYP to be better included. The system of MATS can also be a barrier, e.g. 'Trust policy' where flexible decisions cannot be made by principals/SLT.' 13</p> <p>'discussions about training needs for staff and closer analysis of school systems which are unhelpful.' – 16</p> <p>'I think knowing the school system and their behaviour policy helps.' - 20</p>
4.1.16	The EP has a strong knowledge of legislation and ethical codes of conduct	<p>'They also have a knowledge of the legislation and children and families rights EPs operate within an ethical code of practice' – 10</p> <p>'strong awareness of legislation such as Equalities Act, to push back with schools that engage in illegal fixed term or unspecified exclusions and highlight good practice around PSPs and exclusion processes' - 18</p>
4.1.17	The EP has a large amount of experience	<p>'I think experience helps as families and schools are complex systems to work with and there has to be a lot of support &amp; challenge which can be tricky if new to the post.' – 17</p> <p>'This does take a bit of experience and confidence.' – 20</p> <p>'In my view, experience can help however an experienced EP is not necessarily better than a newly qualified.' - 21</p>
<b>The role of the EP in casework</b>		
4.2.1	The EP ensures a CYP has at least one positive relationship with a member of staff	<p>'Restorative approaches are very helpful for repairing relationships which have been strained through a student's behaviour - we can train schools in that and promote them.' – 02</p> <p>'This applies to my role as the school's EP, the snr leadership's relationship with teaching staff, and ultimately (and most importantly) the teacher's relationship with the students' – 07</p> <p>'Observing the pupil-staff relationships are very helpful' - 17</p>
4.2.2	The EP maintains relationships with SLT (or those that make decisions)	<p>'The key feature for me has been the development of strong relationships with senior leaders' – 16</p> <p>'My relationship with those in SLT has then been crucial for them to trust my advice, be able to hear my perspective and consequently see the positive impact of maintaining a community that meets the needs of all.' - 20</p>
4.2.3	The EP is an advocate for the CYP	<p>'As an EP, I advocate for the rights of young people with determination' – 01</p> <p>'It also helps to have an advocate for the YP involved who works in the school, such as a tutor or favourite class teacher.' – 02</p> <p>'Ensure the parent has access to advocates, being on their own can be really daunting.' - 20</p>

4.2.4	The EP signposts families for support	'The support of families and signposting to relevant advocacy agencies' - 08
4.2.5	The EP summarises and synthesises all information about a CYP and the system	'It is essential for me to paint a picture, to put together a summary of the young person's strengths and assets, difficulties or things that they do/might find a challenge and what this all means for what they need from an educational setting and the adults working with them.' – 01 'The ability to seek, synthesise and summarise the key factors which may be influencing the situation and any outcomes.' - 04
4.2.6	The EP creates a shared understanding between members of the system	'Consultation is also a collaborative process, which enables all those involved to work together to find ways forward and to develop a shared understanding of the current context/ next steps needed.' – 13 'it may be more helpful to engage in initial consultations with home and school separately and work towards creating a shared understanding at a later point in the EP involvement.' – 15 'The aim was to improve young people and families' experiences of the setting from the moment of exclusion onwards (eg. the PRU working with mainstream schools so that accurate information is shared with families from the beginning rather than hearsay).' - 23
4.2.7	The EP collaboratively works with others (e.g., external services; SEN, LA services, CAMHS, education welfare officers, behaviour leads, youth workers) to reduce exclusions	'The importance of multi-disciplinary working to provide a full 'buffer' around the child, family and school setting.' – 08 'Also, establishing relationships with school leaders and if you can't as EP then linking in with services that do and have a bit if clout- e.g standards team, education welfare, parent advisory service.' – 20 'The EPS I work with advocate consultation and thinking about our most vulnerable students. It is typical for us to attend TAC meetings and work with our partners in other departments.' - 21 'There could be a stronger emphasis on the EP role in supporting positive outcomes for children at risk of exclusion through childrens Services, the EPS and training.' - 26
4.2.8	The EP applies psychological theory in all areas of practice	'Ps can refer to research and psychological theory and know which strategies and interventions support children to achieve good outcomes in their learning and mental health.' - 10
4.2.9	The EP uses research and statistics to justify inclusive practice	'A firm foundation in inclusive practice and the ability to use scientific research, statistics and real world examples to support and justify the importance of this' - 04
4.2.10	The EP supports CYPs transitions to alternative provisions	'I also am mindful that at times the situation in a school can be so toxic/ negative that a move to alternative provision is the better outcome for a CYP. CYP is referred to an EP, the school commissioning the work may have already made plans for the CYP to move to alternative provision.' - 22 'As an EP working with a secondary PRU, the pupils there had already been excluded. However, myself and another EP supported PRU staff to develop their induction and reintegration systems.' - 23

### The role of the System

The EP role and the school system		
5.1.1	The EP supports schools with the development and implementation of interventions	<p>‘EPs can refer to research and psychological theory and know which strategies and interventions support children to achieve good outcomes in their learning and mental health. EP can support implementation and review of bespoke interventions for children’ – 10</p> <p>‘Also work directly with the people who work with the child to support their practice.’ – 12</p> <p>‘Good practice included SEMH interventions and workbooks for children’ 21</p> <p>‘Often it can be helpful to become involved in the intervention directly, so the team around the student feel that you are giving extra, practical input</p> <p>. Interventions can be even better when co-delivered so that the adults can continue the work between sessions’ - 25</p>
5.1.2	The EP challenges discriminatory practice in schools where appropriate	<p>‘Firstly, EPs working in this area must embody and demonstrate anti-discriminatory practice, with the ability to challenge inequality and discrimination with stakeholders. EPs to monitor and supportively challenge (be a 'critical friend') the exclusion patterns from schools and to support schools to notice trends and inequalities in this regard.’ – 23</p> <p>‘EP skills: active listening, empathy etc.</p> <p>Balance of support and challenge, using the language of unmet need, particularly to reframe notions of the CYP as consciously, deliberately non-conforming. I will both acknowledge and challenge these barriers, and emphasise that it is these that are part of the problem.’ – 13</p> <p>‘So to sum up, good practice involves drawing on a range of skills allied to an emotional and ethical determination to challenge exclusion.’ - 24</p>
5.1.3	The EP challenges systemic barriers (both at the school and government level)	<p>‘I think experience helps as families and schools are complex systems to work with and there has to be a lot of support &amp; challenge which can be tricky if new to the post.’ – 17</p> <p>‘EPs have to be able to ask hard questions and challenge both family and school while taking them with them in supporting their child.’ – 19</p> <p>‘Reviewing together patterns in referrals, patterns in school behaviour data can help to open up more reflective and creative conversations about how to make better use of EP time. It can also help with the challenge function, by using data and patterns and being curious about these might mean, can reduce defensive responses in some schools.’ 22</p> <p>‘This may be done by using reframing language in consultation to challenge the dominant narrative’ - 23</p>

5.1.4	The SENDCO being part of the SLT team (or having a role in decision making about the system)	<p>'I think it helps when the SENCo is part of the senior management team, as they seem to be more easily available to make adaptations to the pupil's timetable or environment that would be helpful.' – 02</p> <p>'understanding the system of a school, who is in which roles, how does the SENCo link with pastoral systems including the behaviour lead' – 05</p> <p>'Ensure you are talking to the people who make the decisions (eg. the deputy/ head, especially if the SENCo is not part of SLT).' - 12</p>
5.1.5	Schools making staff available for meetings with the EP	<p>'Schools which make staff available for meetings with and about students are also more successful at understanding and meeting these students' needs.' - 02</p>
5.1.6	EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, ethos and culture)	<p>'Gaining the views and beliefs of the YP helps the EP to understand how they interpret and anticipate the educational environment and their relationships within it.' – 02</p> <p>'I then focus a lot of my energy on the school system and the ways in which they understand the student. This extends to the environment the student is in (how inviting is the school environment etc).' – 07</p> <p>'Child at the centre approach has to be key and organisational culture generally lends a great deal of weight in terms of exclusions.' - 16</p> <p>'By gaining others' views of the child and then seeing the child in situ there are usually a number of contextual, environmental and learning factors that have not been challenged. In my experience the LA position on exclusion and school leadership team and culture of inclusion is key to successfully including and reducing exclusions in school. ' – 17</p> <p>'Systemic and preventative approaches are therefore very important e.g. schools having relational/ attachment aware/ trauma informed/ restorative thinking embedded within their school ethos.' - 22</p>
5.1.7	A culture of inclusion in the school	<p>'There's a strong system in place for supporting inclusion and avoiding exclusion at the school and corporate/authority levels with our roles being clearly defined in each.' – 01</p> <p>'A firm foundation in inclusive practice and the ability to use scientific research, statistics and real world examples to support and justify the importance of this.' – 04</p> <p>'In my experience the LA position on exclusion and school leadership team and culture of inclusion is key to successfully including and reducing exclusions in school.' - 17</p>
5.1.8	Early involvement for the EP (e.g., before risk of permanent exclusion or when a CYP is getting several fixed-term exclusions)	<p>'Early a is key, as an EP you want to be involved before the school have decided to exclude...more flexible involvement earlier on is more helpful in my experience' – 02</p> <p>'Early intervention - how to support schools to identify students early enough and to work with whole system including family and school to plan how to support the child 6. Reframe some of the narratives around children at risk of exclusion - notice strengths, consult with key people' – 05</p>

		<p>‘Early intervention and communication with schools and families before crisis point. Within our EPS so often EP involvement is at crisis level and it isn’t possible to get in at an early intervention stage.’ – 08</p> <p>‘The first key feature is getting involved early, I ask SENCO to let me know about those that are getting several fixed term exclusions. When I have got involved early it seems to slow down the escalation of permanent exclusions. Joint up working can really help, but essentially early intervention is key.’ - 20</p>
5.1.9	EP role to support school to apply for EHCPs for CYP	<p>‘Sometimes the YP requires an EHCP, which we can help school to identify then become involved through this statutory advice process. this is quite restrictive on time and 'boxes' to fill for giving statutory advice though, so more flexible involvement earlier on is more helpful in my experience.’ – 02</p> <p>‘Help them get an EHCP quickly if this will help avoid exclusion or help them increase EHCP funding if they already have one.’ - 12</p>
5.1.10	EP role to work with the school system in a preventative way to reduce the number of CYP being at risk of permanent exclusion	<p>‘drop in solution focused consultation sessions for teaching and non-teaching school staff in relation to children and young people who are care experienced as a preventative approach to managed moves and exclusions of this vulnerable group of children.’ – 01</p> <p>‘Systemic and preventative approaches are therefore very important e.g. schools having relational/ attachment aware/ trauma informed/ restorative thinking embedded within their school ethos.’ – 22</p> <p>‘If we almost retrospectively reconstruct 'good practice' as resulting in a successful outcome (preventing exclusion) then I think that the most fundamental feature is the relational skill of the psychologist in being able to create supportive relationships with both school, young person and family.’ – 24</p> <p>‘Likewise, work with the same school over time can be helpful - you might not be able to prevent this individual exclusion, but you can use the experience to help the school look at a systems level to avoid future exclusions.’ - 25</p>
5.1.11	EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings	<p>‘This may take place in school planning meetings or team around the school meetings. It is important for the local authority to monitor exclusion patterns within and between schools so that training and support can be offered to schools with the highest rates of exclusion.’ - 23</p>
Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)		
5.2.1	The EP uses an ecosystemic approach and working at all levels (e.g., Bronfenbrenner’s model: home,	<p>‘For example I may use Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic model to structure understanding of the systems and contexts influencing the young person, and then intervening at the different levels.’ - 23</p>



	school, community, LA level)	
5.2.2	Drawing on the wider contexts, policies, practices and systems (e.g., at the national and LA level)	<p>‘The system of MATS can also be a barrier, e.g. ‘Trust policy’ where flexible decisions cannot be made by principals/SLT.’ – 13</p> <p>‘I think knowing the school system and their behaviour policy helps.’ – 20</p> <p>‘I would like to be more proactive about helping schools with organisational change processes, policy development and using my research skills etc.’ – 22</p> <p>‘Educational psychology as a profession has an important role to play in challenging the government with regard to policy and practice around exclusions.’ - 23</p>
5.2.3	LA position on exclusions (e.g., providing a statement about not excluding/strong support for inclusion)	<p>‘In my local authority we have adopted a therapeutic thinking approach which involves considering a child’s past experiences, how these will have impacted their feelings and behaviours and then working to help adults to give children the experiences they need to feel better.’ – 03</p> <p>‘Strong support within the local authority and the wider educational community for inclusive practice and for seeking and supporting alternatives to exclusions.’ -04</p> <p>‘This may take place in school planning meetings or team around the school meetings. It is important for the local authority to monitor exclusion patterns within and between schools so that training and support can be offered to schools with the highest rates of exclusion.’ – 23</p> <p>‘In my local authority, we have a trauma informed practice programme, which is a two-year process in which primary and secondary schools receive training and undertake an audit of practice, leading to an action plan of changes to be implemented to help them to support pupils who have experienced complex trauma.’ - 24</p>
5.2.4	EPS position on exclusions (e.g., having an exclusions working group, being part of external agencies working to reduce exclusion, having best practice guidance for exclusions work, values and principles of inclusion in the service)	<p>‘The EPS that I work in is fully committed to the t of all young people in education and for young people’s educational needs to be identified and met in school settings, with support and consultation from external professionals such as EPs. Our service is fully embedded and there are no traded elements to our provision of support.’ – 01</p> <p>‘Within our EPS so often EP involvement is at crisis level and it isn’t possible to get in at an early intervention stage. This can be frustrating.’ – 08</p> <p>‘The EPS I work with advocate consultation and thinking about our most vulnerable students. It is typical for us to attend TAC meetings and work with our partners in other departments.’ – 20</p> <p>‘EPS context largely influences as this can impact the sort of work you can do, who you are commissioned to do the work with, systemic messages about exclusion, research in the borough etc’ – 21</p>

		<p>‘My EPS context also influences my practice through opportunities such as shared CPD on relational and trauma informed approaches to supporting young people. These have given the service a form of practice or approach that provides some consistency on the ways to support at risk CYP.’ - 22</p>
5.2.5	EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners	<p>‘Have an understanding of data in your LA on CYP at risk of exclusion and how it affects your school, key vulnerable groups 9. have a planning meeting in your schools where data is discussed and consideration given to exclusion and how to reduce them and alternatives’ – 05</p> <p>‘EPs need to be confident with the data and outcomes for children who are excluded and be able to articulate and deliver that to schools in a nurturing way.’ – 17</p> <p>‘EPs involved with Exclusion Working Group that look at exclusion trends and works with schools to address issues as well as communicating data to commissioners and cabinet members.’ – 20</p> <p>‘Reviewing together patterns in referrals, patterns in school behaviour data can help to open up more reflective and creative conversations about how to make better use of EP time. It can also help with the challenge function, by using data and patterns and being curious about these might mean, can reduce defensive responses in some schools.’ - 22</p>
5.2.6	EPS use of a collaborative consultation model of service delivery	<p>‘Making it clear that the approach will be collaborative and non-judgemental helps it to be effective.’ – 02</p> <p>‘Collaboration Amplifying the voice of the CYP Maintaining contact with the school &amp; family eg through plan, do, review.’ – 09</p> <p>‘Consultation is also a collaborative process, which enables all those involved to work together to find ways forward and to develop a shared understanding of the current context/ next steps needed. we use a collaborative consultative model of service delivery, social construction, relational, restorative approach.’ - 13</p> <p>‘Staying connected to other professionals such as Education Welfare Officers to work collaboratively with schools and YP at risk of exclusion.’ – 18</p> <p>‘Getting in early also means staff and parents are more willing to collaborate and using person centred tools/ language also helps - what are your hopes, how can we get there, who do we need to help.’ – 20</p> <p>‘Collaborative consultation models - e.g. PATH or other solution focussed models Including the YP in the conversations, so assessment might be used to elicit their views and how they would like things to change, as well as what they agree to do moving forward.’ – 21</p> <p>‘It also hopefully offers a space to discharge some difficult feelings and for staff to experience some empathy and collaborative thinking.’ - 22</p>

## Appendix K. Round 3 questionnaire example

*What are the core features of good practice in Educational Psychology when working with children and young people at risk of exclusion? A Delphi Study*

### Round 3 questionnaire

Thank you for your contribution to the previous round.

For the purposes of coding the following numbers were applied to the rating statements

- 1 - Essential in all situations
- 2 - Essential in some situations
- 3 - Not essential
- 4 - Don't know/unsure

107 of the 120 statements achieved consensus of greater than 75% in Round 2. The remaining 13 statements are listed below

You now have the option to change your final response. **Please review your previous answer considering the group response.**

**If you would like to change your final response**, please put the corresponding number in the final column (coloured green). If you do not wish to change your final response, you may leave the cell blank.

How essential are the following statements when working with CYP at risk of permanent school exclusion?		Group Ratings				Your ratings	
		Essential in all situations 1	Essential in some situations 2	Not essential 3	Don't know/unsure 4	Your previous response	Your final response
<b>Approaches in consultation</b>							
1.2.1	Using a specific model of consultation	0%	35%	65%	0%	2	
1.2.4	Using an Interactive Factors Framework	20%	30%	40%	10%	2	
1.2.8	Using narrative approaches	25%	45%	20%	10%	2	
<b>The use of Assessment</b>							
<b>Assessment of learning and SEMH needs</b>							
2.1.3	Use of standardised cognitive assessments to identify learning needs	0%	35%	60%	5%	4	
2.1.4	Use of dynamic assessment to identify learning needs	5%	50%	40%	5%	3	
<b>Wider assessment of support needed</b>							

2.3.5	Exploration of data on exclusions (e.g., developing a good understanding of the schools data)	25%	45%	25%	5%	3	
<b>The use of Training</b>							
Training for EPs							
3.1.5	EP training in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG)	5%	30%	60%	5%	1	
<b>EP skills and the EP role</b>							
EP characteristics, skills and knowledge							
4.1.17	The EP has a large amount of experience	0%	30%	60%	10%	4	
<b>The role of the System</b>							
The EP role and the school system							
5.1.6	EP doing an assessment/audit of the school system (e.g., policies, environment, <u>ethos</u> and culture)	5%	60%	30%	5%	3	
5.1.9	EP role to support school to apply for EHCPs for CYP	15%	50%	30%	5%	4	
5.1.11	EP attendance at Team Around the School meetings	15%	45%	35%	5%	3	
Wider systems (the EPS, LA, national context)							
5.2.5	EP role to communicate trends and data in exclusion practice to commissioners	10%	50%	30%	10%	3	

*Any other comments or reflections*

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